**PAPER TITLE**

**EUROPEANISATION OF GHANAIAN NAMES AND THEIR**

**REPRESENTATIONS IN DRAMA**

**Introduction**

This paper deliberates on Ghanaian indigenous naming, names and their significance furthering on the colonial influence and attempts to Europeanize. The paper also discusses the reasoning that informs how some selected Ghanaian playwrights craft each of their characters courtesy the curiously noteworthy names they drape them in. The concentration on names and naming practices although not limited to, will be more on the Fantes of Ghana. The reasons are that the Europeans had first contact with the Fantes, thus Fante names were to a large extent Europeanised than those of other tribes in Ghana. It is also worth noting that authors of a number of the plays under discussion in this paper are Fantes and the characters in their plays mostly bear Fante and Europeanised names.

**Names as Identity**

Although the culture of naming differs from culture to culture, a name given often soon after birth becomes the person’s identity. Identity often denotes your country of origin, the specific area of the country you hail from and in some cases your extended and nuclear families. For instance, names such as Chung, Jeong and Jung are typical Korean names whilst Wang,  Zhang, Liu, Chen, Yang, Huang, Zhao, and Zhou are Chinese names. Adebayo, Adeyemi Okonkwo, Kolawale, Obi and Adeoye are archetypical Nigerian names. Names such as Aboagye, Agyeman, Mawugbe and Amatewee are all Ghanaian names but the first and second are usually used by Akan tribes whilst the third and forth are distinctive Ewe names. Names and identity are so significant to many cultures such that name change is not required in any circumstances. The American news magazine, TIME, reports that

In Malaysia and Korea, it is local custom for women to keep their maiden names, and although there is no law stating that they cannot take their husband’s surname, it is a relatively foreign concept. Custom dictates that women keep their surnames in many Spanish-speaking countries as well, including Spain and Chile (Koffler, 2015).

The report indicates that there are laws in Quebec, Greece and France that allow women to keep their names after marriage. It is not surprising that a survey conducted on 23 professional female graduates showed that these women are not ready to adopt their husbands' names because it counts to a mislaid identity, an unwelcome compromise to who they really are (Laskowski, 2010).

The use of a name as unique identity is explored in the novel, *Jane Eyre*, which is largely the author, Charlotte Brontë's own personal story*.*  In a discussion on name and identity, it is clear that Jane's name and change of name contribute to the twists and turns in the novel. 'Despite living in the same house, St. John Rivers and Jane Eyre do not realize that they are related. This is because Jane does not see St John’s full name written out — St John Eyre Rivers — and because Jane, hoping to escape her connection with the potentially bigamous Rochester, calls herself ‘Jane Eliot’' ( Earnshaw, 2012: 181). Although, this citation is from an analysis of a novel, it is worth noting because the story in *Jane Eyre* is a true story of the author that has been communicated to the world camouflaged in a creative mode. These are a few instances indicating that names given at birth remain a major source of identity in many cultures. This is largely the case, but as we shall demonstrate further on in this paper, names in some cultures represent more than just identities.

**Pre-Colonial Names and Naming Practices in Ghana**

In a lot of traditions in Ghana, a newborn is named on the 8th day of its birth when it is believed the baby had come to stay, thus the baby had crossed postnatal death. Our research revealed that the disease that deprived some babies from seeing the eight day was Neonatal tetanus (NNT). In NNT,

the affected baby usually establishes sucking after birth, but stops sucking 2 days later, and about the same time develops a fixed expression on the face resembling a smile, sometimes referred to as the smile of the wicked (risus sardonicus). This is later followed by stiffness or spasms. Usually death occurs by the end of the first week (Oruamabo 1997).

Some children died of NNT before the eight day; such were called *nawotwe anton* (literally “She/he-who-a-week-failed-to-meet”) locally. This mishap was prevalent because of the absence of unsafe prenatal and delivery practices that posed great risk to both mother and child. Thus, it was only when the child had survived to the eight day that it could be officially and traditionally named. In the Fante and many other tribes of Ghana, if the baby survives it is the sole prerogative of the father to determine its name. This is so in many African cultures. Ngade (2011) recounts that among the Bakossi of Cameroon, 'it remains the routine privilege of the man to decide which name is to be given to the first child'. However, unlike most Ghanaian traditions, a Bakossi wife has the privilege to name the second child, notwithstanding the child's sex. In Ghana this is only possible when a special request is made to the man and his family for permission to name a child after the relative of the mother.

In the Fante tradition, as it is in many other cultures in Ghana, a name could connote the story of a person’s birth or that of an ethnic group. This depends on when a person is born, how the person is born or some special event at the time of their birth. The Fante day names are automatic as it is acquired based on the day of the week one is born. These names from Sunday to Saturday are as follows: Kwesi, Kodwo, Kobina/Ebo, Kweku, Ekow, Kofi, Kwame/Kwamena and females have Akosua, Adwoa, Abena/Araba, Ekua/Kukua, Yaa/Aba, Efua and Ama. Before colonization, children did not bear the name of their biological fathers. The second name was usually that of an elder in the family, dead or alive. These could be grandparents, uncles, aunties and in some cases friends or people who had contributed immensely to the family. In some cases, the entire name of the person they are honouring with the naming is given to the baby. In this case, although the baby was born on a Saturday for example, and must be called Ama, she is named Abena Ahemaa. In some cases, it becomes uncomfortable for people to mention the name when the baby is named after a respectable person and as such, if it is an old lady whose title is Nana meaning grandmother, the child is called Nana Abena or Maame Abena. Arthur (2016) buttresses the same point when he reveals that a ‘child may be affectionately called Ouma (grandma) or Oupa (grandpa) in southern Africa. Similarly, in Senegal, a child who is named after a grandfather tends to bear the grandfather's nickname as well. So, a baby boy often ends up being called Vieux (old man)’. Similarities in the naming trends in various African societies are an interesting phenomenon; per Ngade's account, a Bakossi father 'normally prefers to name the first child (male or female) after his father/mother or grandfather/mother (living or dead) respectively'. The wife follows this same trend when it is her turn to name a child.

In most of Africa twins are often peculiarly named. Among the Fantes and other Akan tribes of Ghana, a first twin irrespective of which sex, is named Panyin and the second is Kakra. A third male child is Mensah and a third female is Mansa. Arthur (2016) in reinforcement says that:

If you meet a Ugandan boy or man called Kakuru or Wasswa, he is likely to be an elder twin. The younger male twin is usually called Kato. These are names specially reserved for twins. Similarly, the Kalenjins in Kenya refer to the first born as Yator (first to open the way) and the last born Towett meaning last. The Yorubas call the first twin Taiwo (taste the world) and the second Kehinde (came after).

In mostly Akan cultures in Ghana, there were these names that were intended as ‘number names’ given by virtue of which position in the sibling line or queue the child was at the time of its birth. Some of these names typically for males, in chronological order are Abakah (the first), Manu, Mensah, Annan, Anum, Nsia, Esuon, Awotwe, Nkrumah and Badu (the tenth).

As pointed out in Pewissi (2008), a name in some cultures often goes beyond an identity of an individual. “Apart from the role of identification and classification, names are means through which people express their wishes, despairs, satisfaction and hopes that are believed to affect the bearers’ lives” (Pewissi, 2008, p. 148). Some children are named based on the circumstances of their birth. Some stories in names could be readily perceived by many in same ethnic group, but in some cases, it must be told at an opportune time. For instance, a child named *Antobam* signifies a posthumous child (i.e. the child’s father died before its mother gave it birth). ‘Ajuji (born on a rubbish heap) is a Hausa name given to a baby after those born before it failed to survive. One of such names in Fante is Menntawoho (one not worth being paid attention to). It is believed that giving the child a "terrible" name will deceive evil spirits into thinking the child is not loved and as a result, allow it to live’ (Arthur, 2016).

Pewissi (2008: 149) informs that cultures everywhere give prominence to well-meaning names which invariably have a telling effect on the bearer. Consequently, names that smack of negativity in any measure are anathema just in case a bearer literally lives out the pessimism that surrounds the name. Such were some of the naming practices and the underlying rationale that informed them. It is interesting to read from Jagieła & Gębuś (2015) who cite Wyszkowski (2011), that 'legal regulations in Poland prohibit names that are humiliating, indecent, or in diminutive form and that do not differentiate between the sexes' (p. 33). It is revealing that the study conducted on 90 Polish students showed all respondents were happy with their names and believed that they must live out the purposes for which their names were given. The writers refer to living up to a name as a 'life script' (Jagieła & Gębuś, 2015). Names and naming trends are peculiar and of great value to varied cultures and peoples. What happens then, when interlopers usurp a state and mangles its identity?

**Colonial Intrusion and Adulteration of Names**

In the latter parts of the 1500s when the colonizers arrived on the shores of today's Ghana, they needed people to interact with as they had come to do business. They also introduced Christianity and established schools which were initially for children of mixed race (children born out of illicit affairs colonisers had with local women, then so-called mulattoes). Difficulties in pronunciation, as well as misinterpretation of local names by the then colonial masters resulted in alterations of many local names to the convenience of the British and Portuguese, resulting in evolution of some local names over the years to new pronunciations and spellings. For instance, Dankwa was changed to Danquah, Okyere to Otchere etc. From the late 19th century to the latter parts of the 1900s, many children whose parents accepted the Christian faith had two sets of names; the *fie-dzin* (literally, ‘house-name’), given by parents at the traditional naming ceremony and the other set conferred during the child’s christening or admission to school.

It was from the time of the colonial entry that children started bearing the names of their biological fathers, especially as surnames. The first name (Christian name so referred to) apparently depended on which colonial master one served under and their denomination of worship. So, a child Christened in a Catholic Church initiated by the Portuguese is named Nataniel, which although is a typical Portuguese name was alluded to as a Christian name for the child. In the event that the father is *Kuntu* (literally, ‘blanket’), this child is named Nataniel Blankson (son of a blanket). Formal education was started by the colonial masters and as such children who entered school were registered with these names; reinforcing the child’s two sets of names: the house-name, and school/church name.

Many towns where Europeans settled as well as towns they had some contact with were not spared this double naming on same principle of convenience of pronunciation and spelling. For instance, the town *Akyemfo*, which implies migrants from the *Akyem* state to their present abode, was named Saltpond by the Europeans because of a pond along the coast that produced salt. Similarly, the town *Simpa* originally named after their migration leader *Osimpa*, was named Winneba by sailors who docked their ships along the bay on the *Simpa* coast and appreciated the strong winds that complimented sailing and docking, and called this place ‘Windy-bay’. Today, *Akyemfo* and *Simpa* remain the local names of these towns whilst Saltpond and Winneba (corruption of Windy-Bay) are accepted as their English names respectively. Other coastal towns that have such dual names are Cape Coast, Elmina, and Komenda, locally called Oguaa, Edna and Akatakyi in that order; Kumasi in the Ashanti region used to be spelt “Coomassie” or “Comassie” by the colonisers, keeping the sound of its name largely intact; though an ‘i’ took the place of the ‘e’ in the original indigenous spelling ‘Kumase’. The colonisers named the unified states the Gold Coast because of the vase gold deposits they discovered. The country was however renamed Ghana, after an extinct African empire, after independence in 1957.

This trend of naming was common in other African countries that were colonised. Mayo (2012) indicates that in Malawi and South Africa, ‘the Europeans that colonized them, gave them European names when they were christened at church or enrolled in school. This was because they could not write or pronounce the local names that were the original names of the indigenous people’. Ngade (2011) discloses that naming in Bakossi has gone beyond colonial influence to a post-modern trend. Parents are interested in names that evoke a sensual appeal or names honoured through mere passions of popularity and stardom, for example: Whitney from Whitney Houston; Kelly from Kelly Clarkson; Angelina from Angelina Jolie; Vanessa from Vanessa Paradis; Tracy from Tracy Chapman; Michael from Michael Jackson. The effect of this invasion and acculturation is diverse, but for the sake of this paper we stick to creative works.

**Influence on Literary Works**

In probable subtle and overt ways, this colonial sway gets showcased in the works of colonial into post-colonial Ghanaian playwrights such as Kobina Sekyi, Ama Ata Aidoo and Efua Sutherland. They used names for their characters that reflected this perplexity, imbedding in their characters, traits that depicted such misrepresentations as well as the specific roles they as playwrights assigned them. Zhou (2016) shares similar views in her analysis of some Zimbabwean literary works. Similarly, in a paper titled *Names as a Narrative Complement in Chinua Achebe’s Novels,* Pewissi (2008:148) notes the “remarkable connection between the names of the characters and their actions.” Furthermore, he points out that somewhere in between the convergent and divergent points in the roles that characters play, lies the confluence of names they bear and the stories they aid in telling. Pewissi’s spot-on observation is one that this paper relates to as the next section reflects on the character names in relation to the settings in selected Ghanaian plays and how these characters reveal Ghanaian naming philosophies from pre-colonial through to present-day, in the ways these characters play their roles.

As indicated early on in this paper, the colonizers introduced formal education in Ghana and in due course as a result of Ghana’s status as a British colony some Ghanaians had opportunity to study in England. Within the pre-colonial and immediate post-colonial eras in Ghana a lot of Ghanaians including the early playwrights were exposed to tertiary education in England and the USA. Over time however, one notices an attempt by some playwrights to drop their European names altogether or could be identified by a hybridized form that played up the African names much more poignantly. The table below shows the names and transitions thereof in the process of time of some of these playwrights, where they attended tertiary education and some of the plays they wrote at the time.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Playwright Given Names | Pen Names | Tertiary Institution Attended | Plays |
| William Essuman-Gwira Sekyi B | Kobina Sekyi | Philosophy at the University of  London and later law | The Blinkards (1915). |
| Ferdinand Kwasi Fiawoo | F. Kwasi Fiawoo | Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina Arts and Divinity and a certificate in Education. | The Fifth Landing Stage (1925). |
| Joseph Kwame Kyeretwie Boakye Danquah | J. B. Danquah | University of London in law  and philosophy. | The Third Woman  (1939). |
| Joseph Coleman de Graft was awarded a grant | J. C. de Graft | United Kingdom and the  United States observing  amateur, professional, and university drama. | Visitor from the Past  (1962) Now Through a  film darkly), Sons and Daughters (1963). |
| Christina Ama Aidoo | Ama Ata Aidoo | University of Ghana Aidoo herself won a fellowship to Stanford University in  California, | The Dilemma of a Ghost (1965) Anowa (1970). |
| Theodora Efua Sutherland | Efua T. Sutherland | Homerton College, Cambridge University and at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. | Edufa (1967) (based on Alcestis by Euripides),  Foriwa (1967), The Marriage of Anansewa  (1975). |
| Martin Okyere Owusu | Martin Owusu | Post graduate degrees: M.Litt. from Bristol (1973) and a Ph.D. from Brandeis (1979). | Adventures of Sasa and Esi (1968), The Story Ananse (1970), The Sudden Return and  Other Plays (1973),  The Mightier Sword (1973). |
| Mohammed ben Abdallah | Mohammed ben Abdallah | University of Georgia in the United States.  PhD at the University of Texas. | The Slaves 1972 The  Trial of Mallam Illya (1987). |
| Emmanuel Yirenchi | Asiedu Yirenkyi | Yale University | Kivuli, Blood and Tears, Lovenet, The Firefly (1980), Dasebre (1990).  The Red Ants (2003). |

*Table 1. Given names and pennames of selected playwrights, educational institutions attended and their plays.*

Undoubtedly, literary works written during the colonial occupancy and soon after independence were greatly influenced by the colonial imprint on the colonized, most likely because the dominance was an effusive one. Although some writers tried to escape this influence they could not in totality do away with them. The links range from the very obvious to the subtle. However, to stick to the focus of this section, we will look at the naming of characters in their plays and try to identify the taints of colonization. Table 2 shows the playwrights, their plays and names of characters. References will be made to these in the subsequent discussion.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Playwright | Title of Play | Characters |
| J. C. deGraft | Through a film  Darkly | Fenyinka. (Henry Wilson), Sewah, Addo Mensah, John, Adamu, Rebecca, Ofori and  Janet. |
| F. K Fiawoo | The Fifth  Landing Stage | Gbadago, Agbedada, Kumasi, Dzakpasu, Togbui Zanyido, Fudzikomele, Dzkunya,  Ametamenya, Awadada, Kwawu, Ewi, John, William etc. |
| Mohammed  Ben Abdallah | Verdict of  the  Cobra | The child (Nunyira), the Grandmother, the ‘Na’ (chief), the first twin, the second twin,  the Ewe Priest, Hight Priest of the Cobra, The cobra’s (drummer, xylophonist and  flutist), the guards, Acolytes, Virgins, Dangers. |
| Mohammed  Ben Abdallah | Ananse and the  Golden Drum | Grandfather (the chief), kwaku (Kweku Ananse),Yaa, (Okonore Yaa), Grandmother  (old witch), Kwasi (Ntikuma), Kwadwo (linguist), Kwame (the bird). |
| Ama Ata  Aidoo | Anowa | Anowa, Kofi Ako, Badua, Boy and Girl (slaves) Osam, The-mouth-that-eats-salt-and-pepper, Panyin-na-Kakra. |
| Ama Ata  Aidoo | Dilemma of a  Ghost | Ato Yawson (Ebow), Eulalie Yawson, Monka, Nana, Akyere, Mansa, Petu, Akroma,  Ist Woman, 2nd Woman, Boy, Girl. |
| Efua T.  Sutherland | Edufa | Abena, Edufa, Seguwa, Ampomah, Kankam, Chorus of women, Senchi, Sam. |
| Efua T.  Sutherland | The Marriage of  Anansewa | George Kweku Ananse, Anansewa, Christina, Aya, Ekuwa, Chief who is chief, Chief  of Sapase, Togbe Klu, Chief of Mines. |
| Kobina Sekyi | The Blinkards | Mr Borofosem (A Merchant), Mr. Borofosem (A Leader of Fashion), Mr Onyimdze  (A young barrister), Mr Tsiba (a cocoa magnet), Dr. Onwieye (a physician and  Surgeon), Mr. Okadu (a young blood), Nyamekye (servant to Mr. Borofosem),  Half-crown, A Krooboy, (servant to Mr. Onyimdze), Miss Tsiba (Daughter of Mr Tsiba), Na Sompa (wife to Mr Tsiba and mother to Miss Tsiba), Nana Katawerwa ( Mother to  Na Sompa) A Parson, Officers and Members of the ‘Cosmopolitan Club’, Some Ahyentarfo (Old and Young, Male and Female), Some Female Atamfurafo, An old fisherman, Two young fishermen, Some boys, A policeman, A Whiteman. |

*Table 2: the playwrights, their plays and names of characters*

The use of English and Fante names as mentioned earlier in this paper is reflected in some plays which authors are from the Fante tribe. Despite the acculturation of traditional naming and names, traditionally, the local name 'fie-dzin' helped to identify ones family and which region or part of the region your name hailed from. Ama Ata Aidoo in The Dilemma of a Ghost captures an essence of this strongly Fanti-tainted quest:

ESI: Ato my son, who is your wife?

ATO: (Quite embarrassed) Eulalie.

MONKA: Ato, you know that some of us did not hear the school bell when it rang. Therefore, we will not be able to say this name. This Uhuhu ... I want her real name, my son.

ATO: But Maami, this is her only name.

MANSA: Our master, isn’t your wife ... eh ... Fanti? (11).

This trend is also evident de Graft’s *Through a Film Darkly*. As Fenyinka introduces himself to the audience he says “My name is Fenyinka. That’s my Fante name. My English name, as you may put it, is Henry Wilson” (1970:5). If a name denotes a person's identity, then where does this character belong? Is he a Fante or an Englishman? Or probably, as his wife is a British, he qualifies for dual citizenship. These are our speculations; the playwright does not project him so. The other characters in the play are: Sewah, Addo Mensah, John, Adamu, Rebecca, Ofori and Janet. It is understandable that a female character (of English origin) is named Janet, but John and Rebecca are indigenes, yet they have European names. In Mohammed Ben Abdallah’s play *Verdict of the Cobra*, he uses mostly English title names rather than local names or titles save in the case of ‘The child’ who the grandmother calls Nunyira (see table 2). In the ensuing dialogue from *Verdict of the Cobra* the ‘child’ uses both local and English titles for the old lady.

Child: The dream, Nana, I dreamt the dream again.

Grandmother: What dream…?

Child: Look grandmother, look! They have come! They have come to hear my dream.

Grandmother: Who have come? What dream?

Child: The dream, Nana. The dream of the story.

Grandmother: But I have told it many times, my child. People are tired of it.

Child: Please, Nana. Just one more time Nana. The last time, please.

Grandmother: Oi! What am I seeing today? (Eyes roll up towards heaven).

Child: Please, Grandmother … before they get up and go.

Although, the play is set in the Northern Region of Ghana, the playwright, with his intent of abibigoro, in which he attempts to integrate other African cultures in his writing, is probably teaching his audience/readers the Akan equivalent of grandmother. But it is worth noting that the use of Grandmother and Nana interchangeably is very typical of the Fantes who were greatly influenced by the colonizers. Again, in his *Ananse and the Golden Drum*, Abdallah gives his characters actual names save for two English titles ‘Grandfather’ and ‘Grandmother’. In Aidoo’s *Anowa* the twins are given local Fante names, Panyin-na-Kakra. The other characters have local names except ‘Boy and Girl’ (the slaves) and ‘The-Mouth-That-Eats-Salt-And-Pepper. In, Aidoo’s *Dilemma of a Ghost*, the main character is Yawson, as in the colonial naming style, he will be son of Yaw. This best suits him as one who though is a Fante, has been colonized by circumstances and name. The playwright had probably thought of the confusion in his mind, as to which culture to turn to, his westernized education and wife or his extended family and traditions. In Sutherland’s *Edufa*, almost all her characters have local names; however, the servant who is described as an idiot is named Sam. Sutherland might have had a special reason for giving him an English name, but it points to the high probability that these playwrights’ contact with the Europeans left its deep imprints. This influence is surprisingly seen in the naming of some of the characters in *The Marriage of Anansewa,* a play that seeks to depict the traditional storytelling form, a peculiar culture of Ghana*.* The main character is named, George Kweku Ananse, very typical of the naming style of the Fantes. Christina Yamoah, who is appointed to train Anansewa to become a lady like herself, also has an English name. Then there is this character Chief-who-is-Chief, the one who eventually becomes the winner of the marriage contest. It becomes clear that the characters that have English names are placed higher, in terms of achievements and influence, than the rest. Do we revere our colonisers so?

The naming of characters in Sekyi’s *The Blinkards* is a parody of sorts reflecting the colonial influence while advocating a rejection of the trend. Hitherto ‘Mr.’ and ‘Mrs.’ titles had never been used by the Gold Coast people. When people got married they kept to their original names; it was the European style for the woman to take on the name of the man and be referred to as Mrs. (plus the man’s name). In the play we have Mr and Mrs Borofosem representing this trend. Then comes Mr. Tsiba; it is strange that Tsiba who is not educated is given a title Mr. His wife is called Na Sompa but then again their daughter is named Miss Tsiba as in European culture. In Fante we say *Owura nye Owurayer* if the marriage is by ordinance, a kind of marriage introduced by the colonisers. It is also interesting that the characters by their nature live their names. Tsiba, connotes a person with low intelligence level; this is portrayed by the roles played by Mr. Tsiba and Miss Tsiba who tend to believe anything the educated persons tell them. Mrs. Abrofosem, plays an African Europeanised lady portraying the exact meaning of her name. Okado, which means a follower, plays a minion to Mr. and Mrs. Abrofosem.

In *The Fifth Landing Stage* – all the characters have local names, except John who is – A Portuguese slave dealer, and William – Native Interpreter to John. Of course, although a native, once he is working for the Portuguese, he must have a European name, undoubtedly given by those he is working for. Fascinatingly, a number of characters in *The Fifth Landing Stage* live the names given to them by the author and also provides the meanings through the characters as seen in the ensuing dialogue.

KUMASI: How different is man, the violent. even children are not spared. Oh, Fudzikomele, child of woe! Why did your mother name you thus? Are you to justify your name in endless trouble? And you, Dzikunya, daughter of sorrow. Is your name also prophetic, that you should share the destiny of your sister? Then let it be also true according to my name I should never fear death. Thus may I save you at all cost, even if I have to pluck you from the jaws of death. So now goodbye beloved land of Anlo. I ask no more of life. Farewell home that I loved. I leave you now (34).

In the play Fudzikomele and Dzikunya are sisters who elope from home to avoid marrying Agbedada who also live his name by doing many evil things including sleeping with people's wives, lying and cheating. When the deeds of Agbedada eventually came to light, he was condemned to the fifth landing stage, 'where a convicted wrong-doer is buried up to his neck and assailed by crows' (Gibbs 2009: 56). When he was eventually rescued by Kumasi, his rival, he decides to change his name and his behaviour as shown in the ensuing dialogue.

AGBEDADA: Why did I not know you for what you were all this long time? Always suspecting you and never appreciating your real goodness. Wickedness stopped my ears and blinded my eyes. I am ashamed.

KUMASI: All belongs to the past. Go now and cross the Anlo boundary before daybreak. Be very careful Agbedada.

AGBEDADA: I will bear that name no more. call and think me as Amegbedzi, for ''obedience''. I have done with ''evil life''. I go, Kumasi (79).

This mode of naming characters in African literary works is common to other many countries that were colonized. Zhou (2016) has observed that ‘A close analysis of Zimbabwean literary works indicates that there is consistency in the inconsistence use of names. The current practice gravitates between a Western and African style and whether deliberate or inadvertently, it achieves a sematic effect’ (206). She cites examples from the short story *Who Will Stop the Dark* in a collection of books titled *Some kinds of Wounds* which characters include local names such as Zakeo and Sekuru, as well as English title names, ‘mother’ and ‘father’. She further cited Vera’s *Under the Tongue* and indicates how the writer named characters to depict roles such as; mother, father, grandmother, used throughout the novel. She indicates that the names “plainly articulates the roles that each of these characters ought to play in the life of the innocent yet brutalized child heroine, Zhizha” (Zhou 2016: 206).

The meaning of character names and their relevance to their roles dates back to the 5th Century Greek playwrights to the present. In classic Greek literary parlance with quite a depth of foundations in mythological philosophy that impacts nomenclature in dramaturgy, we learn that Oedipus’ name means ‘swollen foot’. Further analytical assessment would suggest that the timeless tragic hero brandished a pride that swelled beyond the circumstances that earned him the name in primus. Deductively then, Oedipus as an eponymous title hints at the several pronged inferences that could be made courtesy the sometimes mundane-seeming assigning of a name to a character in the world of a given play. The trend of characters playing their names is also prevalent medieval drama such as *The Second Shepherd's Play* and *Everyman*. Allegorical characters such as Everyman, Death, Knowledge among others in *Everyman* play roles that depict the meaning of their character names. Similarly, In Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, premiered in 1592, characters such as; Helen of Troy, The Devil, Envy, Sloth and others play what their names represent. In Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, characters such as Lady Sneerwell and Sir Benjamin Backbite live their names by gossiping and spreading rumors.

The probability that the early Ghanaian playwrights who studied abroad have been influenced by their contact with such cannot be ruled out. A higher possibility that these earlier Ghanaian writers have been a greater influence on contemporary Ghana playwrights is plausible. For instance, in Brew's *Murder of the Surgical Bone*, characters include Kofi Abebrese, Kwame Abebrese, Domelevo, Amanda, Dorcas, Maa Charity, Uncle Willie among other title names. The mixture of English and local names are evident in this play. And the Abebrese's, a name that locally means, one who is born to go through suffering, live their name as they both go through tremendous anguish throughout the play. Mawugbe's *In the Chest of a Woman*, uses local names for most individual characters except, the Elders, Executioner, Town Crier, Guards and Queen Mother. Locally, a queen mother is called *Ohemaa and* Executioner *is Obrafo*. The playwright might have had good reason to use the English equivalent of these title names, if contrary to our assumptions that he was influenced by his predecessors.

**Conclusion**

We have deliberated on meaning of names and the philosophies behind naming in parts of Ghana and how European invasion of coastal Ghana corrupted names and towns in these locations. The paper has established that the naming traditions and names in Ghana as well as some African countries have been greatly adulterated by their colonisers. Such adulteration has penetrated into the writings of writers whose works dates within the colonised period, rolling on to the 20th century, thus many years after independence. Comparing plays written by early playwrights to contemporary writers however, there seems to be a gradual shift and attempts to stick to Ghanaian local names in their plays, possibly, to redeem the identity of the Ghanaian and promote Ghana’s uniquely diverse yet interrelated cultures.