

An Introduction to Hausa Personal Nomenclature*

PAULINE M. RYAN

Although there exist a number of articles on personal nomenclature in Africa and elsewhere, little work has been carried out on this subject among the Hausa of Northern Nigeria. This paper presents an introduction to the topic in Hausaland.

The majority of Hausa in Northern Nigeria are Muslim and, in consequence, the Islamic form of personal nomenclature predominates. This study focuses attention primarily on Muslim Hausa, but the naming-practices of the non-Muslim Hausa, hereafter referred to as the Maguzawa, are also included, particularly where these differ from those of Islam.

Each of the individual categories of personal names is examined in turn, together with a discussion of factors governing name choice, the process of naming and usage. A discussion of kinship terminology is not included here, as this subject merits a separate study and is beyond the scope of this paper.

CATEGORIES OF PERSONAL NOMENCLATURE

a) *The secret name*

The first name given to either a Muslim or Maguzawa infant is classified as a 'secret' or 'hidden' name. Names in this class serve initially to identify and differentiate the infant as a person in space and time; as such, they are held to represent one of the essential aspects of individuality.¹ But, according to Hausa thought, these aspects of individuality are particularly vulnerable to any malevolent influences in the Universe (Tremearne 1914:249). On account of this, it is necessary to take precautions to protect them. Hence the

*I would like to thank Professor Joseph Greenberg, Mohamed A. Tairu, and Richard P. Brady for reading earlier drafts of this paper and for their helpful comments and advice. However, none of these is responsible for the views expressed herein. My particular thanks go to A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, who not only suggested that I should revise the chapter on personal names in Hausa in his *A Preliminary Inquiry into Hausa Onomatology* (1964) but also gave me his notes for such a revision. Finally I would like to thank Ilse Dignam for her generous secretarial assistance.

¹The other major aspects being *rai*, which may be glossed as 'life,' and *kurwa*, 'soul.'

classification of the first name as a “secret” name and the procedure of ensuring that it remain “hidden” from everyone, once it has been bestowed. Such procedure demands that the name be whispered rather than spoken aloud, into the infant’s ear or over its body by either one of its parents (real or classificatory) when it is three or four days old and before it has even been taken outside its mother’s hut. It is held that the name immediately passes to the interior of the infant’s body, where it will remain most protected from evil influences by this natural barrier (*Ibid.*, 103). In addition to the type of name chosen to differentiate the infant as a member of a particular sex, sexual identity is also given further social recognition at the moment of birth. The female members of the compound ululate three times to announce the arrival of a male and four for that of a female. In addition, the umbilical cord is knotted three times for a male and four for a female and the secret name is bestowed, following this same numerical symbolism, on the third day for a male and the fourth for a female. The numbers themselves are held to symbolize the sexual organs of the infant. (Nicolas, 1968:570-1).

b) *The Public Name*

In order to distinguish the infant socially and to incorporate it fully into the wider society, on the seventh day after birth, it is taken outside its mother’s hut for the first time, brought into public view and given its public name. In this context the number seven consisting of the addition of the “male” and “female numbers,” three and four respectively, is held to represent the uniting of an individual with the Universe and society and as such is an apt symbol for this first rite of passage (*Ibid.*) For a Muslim infant, this category of name will be bestowed upon it by the *Liman* (“officiating Muslim priest”) at its naming-day ceremony (*ranar suna*). The name itself is classified variously in the literature as *sunan rana* (lit. sun name), emphasizing the ceremony itself; or *sunan yanka* (“name of slaughtering”), referring to the ram that is customarily slaughtered to celebrate this event; or *sunan littafi* (“name of book”), referring to the religious source from which the name was selected, usually the Koran. In Sokoto, this category of name is also known as *zannanen suna*² (“drawing of name”) and in Katsina as *sunan fito*³ (“name of guiding”). The name will usually be selected by one or other parent, but in some cases the choice is left to the *Liman*. In the case of the Maguzawa, the public name is usually chosen by the parents but it is

²*Zana* also refers to “cutting tribal marks on a person” and “to draw or ornament with designs” (Abraham 1962:966).

³*Fito* also refers to “ferrying (across)” and to “conducting or guiding through unfamiliar country” (Abraham 1962:272).

classified as *sunan kakani* (“name of grandparents/ancestors”). For both groups, the name may be used for purposes of reference and address.

THE ISLAMIC NAMING-CEREMONY (RANAR SUNA)

The Hausa naming ceremony is the first rite of passage in the life of the individual and in order to express the notion of transition from “nature” to “culture” brought about by naming, Hausa describe the event in terms of an equestrian image. A name is likened to a horse’s bridle, *suna linzami ne* (“a name is a bridle”), and the naming-ceremony to the initial breaking in of an unschooled horse. Just as a bridle is first placed on a young horse (*sa masa linzami*) so likewise is a name placed upon a young child (*sa suna*). And, as a young unschooled horse must be tamed and trained to accept and respond within this new framework of physical restriction, so likewise must the unschooled infant be taught to respond within the framework of cultural restrictions and rules which govern society.

On the day of the naming ceremony the child is brought out of its mother’s hut (*daki*) by the midwife and carried on her back across the compound (*gida*) to the entrance hut (*zaure*) where the males of the compound are assembled with the *Liman* for the actual name conferrel. The chosen name is first whispered into the child’s ear by the *Liman* and then he announces it to those present. Once named, the child is carried across the threshold of the *zaure* into the area in front of the compound (*gari*) to be shown to the assembled friends and well-wishers. The name is then proclaimed loudly by the waiting *maroka* (“professional beggars”) for all the crowd to hear, and after the proclamation the infant is returned to its mother. From this brief account of the stages in the naming ceremony it can be seen that the major spatial zones of the Hausa dwelling unit, *daki*, *gida*, *zaure*, and *gari* are used to symbolize the stages of this rite of passage: separation, transition and incorporation.

SELECTION OF A MUSLIM NAME

The majority of names to be given at the naming-ceremony are selected from the Koran, and the more popular choices are the various names of the Prophet and his relations. In addition to the many forms and contractions of these names, the personages themselves also acquired numerous additional names during their lifetime, derived from their outstanding personality traits. Over time, such additional names became associated with the original names and were often used to replace them. Gradually these additional names have come to be considered as “book”⁴ names themselves, and offer further

⁴i.e., derived from the Koran.

choice. For example, Abubakar, companion of the Prophet, acquired the additional name *As-siddiq* (the Truthful) which in Hausa form became *Siddiku*. This name, together with its variants, is considered to be a basic *sunan rana*. The following table gives examples of some of the more commonly found Islamic names for males and females.

Table I. A Selection of Islamic Name Choices for the Naming Ceremony

Name	Source
<i>Female Only</i>	
A'ishatu	Aisha, a daughter of the Prophet
Aisha	
Amina ¹	The Prophet's mother
Tako	
Fadimatu	The Prophet's daughter Fatima
Fadima	
Algaje ²	
Hadejiya	The Prophet's first wife
Hadizatu	
Hafsatu	One of the Prophet's wives
Halima	The Prophet's foster mother
Maryamu	Mary, Miriam
Mairamu ³	
Mairan ⁴	
Rakiya	Ruqayya, a daughter of the Prophet
<i>Male Only</i>	
Abdullahi	"slave of Allah"; among the notable Abd Allah's are included the father of the Prophet.
Abubakar	First Islamic Caliph
Siddiku	Ar. "truthful"
Adamu	Adam
Ali	Son-in-law of the Prophet and the fourth Caliph
Amadu	The Prophet
Bello	Fulani, derived from "the helper of Islam"
Ibrahim	Abraham
Mamudu	Ar. "praised"; Hausa, "reflection," "shadow"
Muhammadu	The Prophet Mohammed
Dan Amina	Reference to the Prophet's fostermother, Amina
Musa	Moses
Kallamu	<i>Kallamu</i> = word (of God) because God spoke to Moses
Sahabi	One of the companions of the Prophet; <i>sahabi</i> means "companion."

Table I. (contd.)

Male Only

Umaru	Companion of the Prophet and second Caliph
Usuman	Companion of the Prophet and third Caliph
Shehu	Reference to Usman dan Fodio, leader of the Fulani <i>jihad</i> in the Hausa states
Yusufu	Joseph
Maitama	Reference to skin marks with which Joseph is said to have been born

¹Has nickname *Kura* ("hyena"), from animal epithet *amina mai dare*, lit. *amina* "owner of the night" (Abraham, 1962:30).

²Also name for any *magajiya*: a) title for Chief's mother or his elder sister or his father's younger sister; b) title for senior procuress (Abraham, 1962:633)

³*Mairamu* may also be glossed as "scorpion"; therefore by play on meaning any woman called *Mairamu*, *Maryamu*, or *Mairo* has title *yar kunama*, lit. "daughter of a scorpion" (Abraham, 1962:639).

⁴Usually a name given to the daughter of a chief; the male equivalent is *Maina*.

If the parents so desire, it is possible to name all their male offspring after the Prophet Mohammed and to distinguish between these children by giving them an additional name. The names given in this case denote the birth order of the children, and are used to replace the "book" name.

Table II. Names for males in the same family who share the book named Mohammed

First child	Lawal
Second child	Sani
Third child	Salisu
Fourth child	Rabi'u
Fifth child	Hamisu
Sixth child	Sadisu
Seventh child	Sabi'u
Eighth child	Saminu
Ninth child	Tasi'u
Tenth child	Ashiru

Not only religious personages but also religious events in the Islamic calendar provide a further set of choices for the first public name. For example, the two major Islamic festivals, known as Id-el-Fitr and Id-el-Kabir, are popular choices from which to derive the public name, as are the various stages of fasting and the events surrounding Ramadan. The following table lists a selection of the most common calendar-derived names for both sexes.

Table III. Calendar derived names

Male & Fem.	Festival	Fem. Only	Festival	Male Only	Festival
Salla	any	Ta Salla	any ¹	Na Salla	any ²
		Alhajiya	Id-el-Kabir	Alhaji	Id-el-Kabir
				Baito	Id-el-Fitr or
				Baitullahi ³	Id-el Kabir
				Bi Salla	Day after
					Festival
				Bawa ⁴	Month before
					Rajab
Ramadan					
Cilayya	Layya Salla				
	10 Zulhaji				
Azumi	Ramadan			Dan Azumi	Ramadan
Sharu	During				
	Ramadan				
		Tamadi	During		
			Hajj ⁵ or		
			on arrival		
			at Mecca		

¹Particularly Id-el-Fitr or Id-el-Kabir.²Particularly Id-el-Fitr or Id-el-Kabir.³*Baitu*—room, house; *Allah*—of God; lit. “house of God.”⁴“Slave” second month Ar. Dhul Qu’ida = *Watan Bawa*, lit. “month of the slave.”⁵Pilgrimage to Mecca.

From the foregoing tables it can be seen that there are many variations on a single name, and many additional forms based on the same name. If the infant, when it matures, chooses to be known by any one of these variants, then this variation will still be classified as a *sunan littafi* (book name) rather than as a *lakabi* (nickname) and will have restricted usage⁵ until adolescence.

“NICKNAMES” (LAKABI)

In addition to the secret and the public name, the infant also acquires a number of other names from the general category known as *lakabi*, usually glossed as “nickname.” Names in this category may be bestowed by parents, grandparents, siblings, relatives or friends. However, within the general category “*lakabi*,” a distinction is made between nicknames given by relatives, especially grandparents, and those given by friends and peers. Names given by the former are classified as *sunayen kakani* (names given by

⁵One of the various categories of nickname being the most frequently used until then.

grandparents or ancestors), and those given by the latter as *sunayen wasa* (play names), which will be discussed later. For both Muslims and Maguzawa, names in this general category usually reflect a wide variety of sentiments and personal experiences of the name-givers. For example, a name may be selected to portray or commemorate particular social circumstances surrounding the infant's birth. In this context, it may focus special attention on the mother, the parents, the infant, or the events themselves.

Focusing on the mother, there is a wide variety of names available for children whose mother has had constant miscarriages, or a number of whose other children have died in early infancy. The mother herself is classified as a *wabi*. Names given to the surviving offspring of such a mother are either derogatory or invocatory. The intention in selecting a negative name is that the evil spirits who have been in some way responsible for the death of earlier offspring will be deceived by the parents' apparent indifference to the fate of their newborn, as shown by the name itself, and will therefore ignore it (Tremearne, 1913:179). The intention behind the selection of a positive name is to invoke the assistance of both Allah and the good spirits to spare the life of the child and to protect it from the evil influences that befell its deceased siblings. The following table lists a selection of nicknames given to the offspring of a *wabi*.

Table IV. Names for Children of a *Wabi*

Male and Female

<i>Derogatory</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
A Jefas	“Let it be thrown away”
A Juji	“On the dung heap”
Juji	“Dungheap”
Toka	“Ashes”
Na-Toka	“Of Ashes”
Ayashe	“Let it be abandoned”
Akware ¹	“Let it be thrown away”
Audi	“Let it be thrown away”
Boyi	“Let it be hidden”
<i>Invocatory</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
Kan-Da-Rai ²	“If there is life”
Dangana	“Resignation”
Kyauta	“Gift”
Na-Bara	“May he/she be spared”

Table IV. (contd.)

Female only

<i>Derogatory</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
Amfana	“Let it be thrown away”
Amanta	“Let her be forgotten”
Kande ³	“Cow Dung”
<i>Invocatory</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
Barauka ⁴	“May she be spared”

*Male only**Female Equivalent*

<i>Derogatory</i>	<i>Gloss</i>	
Bawa ⁵	“Slave”	Baiwa
Mantau	“Forgotton”	Mantai
Dan Wabi	“Son of a <i>Wabi</i> ”	Yar Wabi
Wa Ka So	“Who will love you”	Wa Ki So
<i>Invocatory</i>	<i>Gloss</i>	
Barmini ⁶	“Leave it to us,”	Barmata
Barmani ⁷	i.e., spare it	Bari
A Bar Shi ⁸	“May he be spared”	A Bar Ta
Barau ⁹	“May he be spared”	
Bara’u ¹⁰		
Yahaya	“He lives”	Hayatu
Barmo ¹¹	“Spare Him”	Barto

¹Also name of a notorious Zaria thief (Abraham 1962:16)²i.e., if there is life, there is hope.³Abbreviation of *Kandilu* (“cow dung”).⁴Also name for any woman called *Kande* (Abraham 1962:79).⁵Derived from *Bawan Allah*.⁶⁻¹¹Their female equivalents are all based on the invocations: *Allah ba barwa baiwa* and *Allah bara bawa kansa*: i.e., may God give him a gift (of his life); may God give him his freedom, respectively.

Nicknames may also be given to the infant which indicate the mother’s personal problems or psychological state prior to or after the birth. Such names may reflect physical problems during pregnancy, marital status immediately prior to conception, marital history in relation to coevals, or infertility, prior to the arrival of the newborn. A selection of these name choices is listed in the following table.

Table V. Names Which Indicate Mother's Problems or Psychological State Prior to or After the Birth

Male or Female	Context of Meaning	Female only	Context of Meaning	Male only	Context of Meaning
Sadau	After divorced mother has returned to her husband because found pregnant				
Naito ¹	Mother waited many years before giving birth—or her friends in same age group started giving birth long before her				
Auta ²	When mother had given up hope of children	'Yar Auta	ditto	Dan Auta	ditto
Tuni ³	Mother long childless	Tune	ditto	Tunau	ditto
Sha Rubutu ⁴	Mother drank a lot of Koranic medicine written from texts—or one whose mother had a hard confinement, necessitating prayers for her safe delivery				
Sha Tambaya Tambai	as above				
Kyauta ⁵	Born after long expectation				
Shawai ⁶	Mother suffered trouble or difficulty at, before or after birth				
Dawai	Child of divorcee who remarried her husband because found pregnant after divorce				
So Giji	Return home after longish absence				

Table V. (*contd.*)

So Dangi	Love of relatives	Gagare ⁷	Parents who tried local medicine to effect his birth, but failed
		Garba	as above
		Gagarau ⁸	as above

¹Derived from *Ku ka sha ta furar Naito*, referring to the Hausa food *fura*, with stale *fura*, i.e. *kwantai* mixed into it. The term is used in this context to refer to both stale and unsold foodstuffs. Used as a nickname, the implication is that the mother for some time was like unsold food, i.e. of no value, because she had no offspring, a disgrace among Hausa (see Abraham 1962, 547–548).

²Also names given to last born in family, or to the last one of the man's wives.

³This name recalls the goodness of Allah, from the phrase *Alla ya tuna de ke* ('Allah remembered you').

⁴The ink is washed off in water and drunk as an infusion.

⁵Also name for first and only child.

⁶Derived from *Sha wuya* ('to suffer trouble or to brave difficulty').

⁷Also name for any *Abubakar*.

⁸Epithet of any *Abubakar*, or of warrior or difficult person or thing (Abraham 1962:285).

Focusing on the child, nicknames in this category may also record the death of a parent during the child's infancy, delivery problems and birth defects. For example:

Table VI

Male or Female	Context of Meaning	Female only	Context of Meaning	Male only	Context of Meaning
Audi	Name for child whose father died before its birth				
Abaici	"				
Mayau	"				
Maida	"				
Maimako	"				
Iri ¹	"				
Talle ²	Name for child fostered or adopted				
Mai Riga ³	Child born with a caul				
Bakwaini ⁴	Child born prematurely				
Bakwami ⁵	"				
		Shekara ⁷	Child born overdue	Shekarau	Child born overdue

Table VI. (contd.)

Sha Rubutu ⁶	Child considered		
Sha Tambaya	to be stillborn,		
Tambai	but who lived		
		Amina ⁸	Child con-
		Tako ⁹	sidered
			stillborn

¹Lt. "seed." This name found only in Sokoto.

²Derived from Hausa verb *tallafa*, "to leave child with someone to bring up" (see Abraham 1962:846).

³Lit. "owner of a gown."

^{4,5} Derived from *bakwai*, "seven."

⁶Ref. to written Koranic charm given to mother to drink.

⁷*Shekara*, "year."

⁸Used to indicate anything considered very ancient and whose origin is forgotten (see Bargery 1934:29).

⁹Also epithet for any *Amina*.

An infant's birth order in the family may similarly be recorded in its nickname, as may the general composition of the family prior to the birth. As mentioned earlier, it is equally possible to record birth order among males with the identical "book" name "Mohammed," by the addition of another name, based on the Arabic numerals. However, this additional name is used to replace the "book" name, and, as such, is considered to have more of the qualities of a "book" name than a nickname.

Table VII. Names Denoting Birth Order and Composition of the Family

Birth Order	Male of Female	Female Only	Male Only
Child born directly after twins ¹	Koko	Bilkisu	
	Gado	Mai Gado ²	
Second child born after twins	Kadarko		
One of twins (different sex)	Tagwai ³ Yan Biyu ⁴	Awwa Hawwa Sa'adatu ⁵	Adamu Sa'adu
One of the twins (same sex)	Hasana ⁶	Hasan	
A first and only child born after very lengthy expectations	Kyauta (Gift from God)		
First boy/girl of the same mother		Gama	Dikko
Boy born after two or more successive girls			Tanko ⁷ Ka Talo ⁸
Boy following a long line of males			Sambo Tabari
Girl born after two or more males		Kande Kandala	

Table VII. (contd.)

		Dela + ⁹	
		Delu +	
		Duduwa ¹⁰	
		Ige (Sk.) +	
		Amaza ¹¹	
		Ina-Maza ¹²	
		Barauka +	
		Gwamma	
Girl born after long line consisting only of girls			
Girl whose mother only bore girls		Hakama	
Girl/boy whose mother was long childless	Tuni ¹³	Tune	Tunau
Child born long after previous one	Boyi ¹⁴		
Last born in a family or last born to last wife	Auta	'Yar Auta	Dan Auta
Child born of an old woman		'Yar Tsofuwa	Dan Tsofuwa
Second son of the same mother			Sambo
Fourth son of the same mother			Tabari ¹⁵
Child born before twins	Gambo		Dabo ¹⁶
Child of second wife whose children have previously died or who has continually had abortions due, in her opinion, to the machinations of the jealous first wife	Barmini	Barmo	
		Waya ¹⁷	

¹Such children are said to have the supernatural power of twins (Tremearne, 1913:180).

²Also an alternative name for any *Bilkisu*.

³Derived from *tagwaye*, "twins." This name is also given if one of the twins dies.

⁴Also given if one of the twins dies. Literally, "children of two."

⁵Derived from Ar. *Sa'ida*, "good luck," H. *sa'a*, since in addition to their special powers Hausa consider twins to represent good fortune both for their parents and for others with whom they come in contact.

⁶*Hasan* and *Hasana* may also be given to children not necessarily twins, but are a more common choice for twins. *Hasana* = first born, *Husaina* = second. From two sons of Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam.

⁷Originally derived from *Tankoshe*, "repelled" (Tremearne, 1913:180).

⁸Katsina form.

⁹"+" are names used alternatively for *Kande*. Also a name for a "yar wabi," "daughter of a woman who constantly loses children through miscarriages."

¹⁰Also a type of children's song (Abraham 1962:228).

¹¹"Let there be males."

¹²"Where are the males."

¹³Derived from *Tuna* (Vb.), "to remember."

¹⁴Considered to have been "hidden" for years in the womb. Derived from the verb *Boye*, "to hide something or to be hidden." Deriv. *Boyoto ajiyar Allah* (see Abraham 1962:111).

¹⁵Also the name of any "Mohammed."

¹⁶Also the name of any "Ibrahim."

¹⁷Waya = *Wa yaya Allah*, "Who is like unto God."

Among Muslim Hausa, nicknames, like book names, may also be chosen to recall historic personages and events connected with them. In such cases, as with a book name, there is frequently the additional wish that the infant, in bearing the name of an illustrious personage, may acquire some of his or her admired characteristics. Similarly, the secular epithets which these individuals acquired during their lifetime are also used as additional nickname sources. For example, the nickname *Mai Kano* is usually given to a child born in Kano whose "book" name was *Abdullahi*. This nickname is a reference to the late Emir of Kano, Abdullahi Bayero (1876–1953). If the boy was born in *Gwandu* and given the same "book name, his nickname would be *Mai Gwandu*, here commemorating the first Emir of Gwandu (1767–1828). In Abuja, a boy named *Ibrahim* at the naming-ceremony will usually later acquire the nickname *Dodo* in memory of Ibrahim, the third Emir (1877–1902), who conquered the Gwandu areas of Abuja, Keffi and Minna, and became known as *Dodon Gwari*, usually glossed as "the scourge of the Gwari."

Not only the famous rulers of Hausaland, but also the individual Emirates may be used as a source of nicknames. However, these place nicknames are usually only given to those who were born in a particular Emirate, rather than to those who take up residence there at a later date.⁶

PHRASE NAMES

Yet another class of nickname, known as a "phrase-name," may be given in order to record important events concerning the child's family. An example of this style of naming may be found in the Daura legend in which the ruler, Bayajida, had a son by a concubine, which was given the nickname *Karba Gari*, "receive the town." This name recorded the fact that the son would eventually inherit the town and his father's position as ruler. However, later Bayajida had a second son, this time by his wife Daura, and the son was nicknamed *Bawo*, an abbreviation for *Ba mu garimmu*, "give us back our town," here recording the fact that as the first son of his father's wife, Bawo would now take precedence in inheritance over *Karba Gari*, since, according to Islamic law, a son of a concubine does not inherit over the offspring of a legal wife. Thus phrase names may not only be used to record events important to the parents and an individual child, but also to relate circumstances concerning interrelationships between parents and a number of their offspring. In this way such names differ from other styles of nickname discussed so far, which usually focus on a single child.

⁶This particular style of nickname has declined in popularity in recent years as social mobility has increased.

SLAVE NAMES

Like a phrase-name, a slave-name also consisted of a phrase or abbreviated form, but in two complementary halves which, taken together, completed a phrase or a sentence. The first half of the phrase was used for reference and address and the second half solely as a response by the person summoned. The content of these names usually reflected the social circumstances of the slave-owner, or his or her pious wishes or exhortations. For example, see Table VIII below.

Table VIII. Slave Names¹

Male or Female	Female Only	Male Only	Gloss
Zatanku ² /Alla Ya Yi Damuna			You thought/ God gives the rains
	Mada ³		No English equivalent
		Allah/Magani	God/The remedy for all things
	Songiji/Laraba		Love of home/ Wednesday
		Me Ya Fi Da/ Dan Uwa	Who is best off?/ He who has a mother
Dankamuku/ Madogara ⁴			Let us follow you/ God our support
		Allah/Kyauta	God/A gift
Kullum Safiya/ Ina Godiya Bia Maradi/Allah			Every morning/I give thanks The Giver of Joy/God
Kun So ⁵ /Na Samu ⁶			You wanted me to go without/ But God caused me to obtain
	Wane da yi? Sai Allah		Who can do aught/ Save God
Allah Bai ⁸ / Bakudai/ Bakudayi			You've got no power to work evil on me only God can do so
		Nasamu	"I have found him"
	Arziki ⁹		"Prosperity" ¹⁰

Table VIII. (contd.)

Nagode	Risku	“Prosperity” ¹¹
	Baba da rai	“I thank you” ¹²
Nadogara	Dangana	“Father was alive then” ¹³
	Bamayi ¹⁶	“Patience” ¹⁴
Zamangirra		“I lean upon God” ¹⁵
Zamangira	Allah ba Sarki	“The existence of the eyebrow” ¹⁷
		“God reward the Chief” ¹⁸

¹When a slave is freed, he or she is given a Muslim name (*sunan littafi*). (M. F. Smith, 1954:1285 Tremearne, 1913:181-2)

²Name given to a slave by a mistress unexpectedly becoming rich.

³Also used in the expression: *Gari ya yi daurin ridim Mada* (“The town has tied Mada’s cloth”) = These are hard times. (Abraham 1962:628)

⁴Derived from: *Allah madogarar bawa*, God brings a means of livelihood to man (lit. his slave).

⁵Abbreviation of *Kun so 'n rasa*, “You wanted me to lack.”

⁶Abbreviation of *Allah ya sa na samu*, “God caused that I obtained.”

⁷This name can also be given to a female slave bought somewhat unexpectedly by a man previously thought to be poor. “Save (except) Allah” is implied. (Harris 1931:275 MAN)

⁸Abbreviation of *Allah shi ba babu mu samu*, “God gives, we obtain nothing (ourselves).”

⁹Name given to first slave owned by a young man determined to become a wealthy man.

¹⁰Name given to first female slave owned by a man.

¹¹Name given to second slave.

¹²Name given to female slave given to a man as a present by his superior.

¹³Name given to a male slave presented to a man by a chief.

¹⁴Name given to a male slave of master who was an unsuccessful trader or farmer who eventually achieved riches.

¹⁵Circumstances same as *Dangana*.

¹⁶Given to slave bought somewhat unexpectedly by a man thought previously to be poor.

¹⁷Just as the eyebrow (the first wife) and the eye (the second wife) cannot be separated from one another, much as they dislike one another, so the second wife’s slave girl cannot be taken away from her by the first wife, however much she dislikes her acquisition of such a possession.

¹⁸Name given to slave presented to a man by a chief.

SUNAN KAKANI

The various classes of nickname discussed so far have been those usually bestowed by parents or those in *in loco parentis* on their children. However, within the general category of nickname (*lakabi*), there is a sub-category known as *sunan kakani*, which consists of names given by grandparents to their grandchildren mainly during childhood. Such names are usually affectionate and flattering, but sometimes the reverse, and refer to some aspect of the child’s physical characteristics, accomplishments, character, or development. On account of this, names in this category are frequently a source of embarrassment to their holders in later life (Greenberg, 1946:23).

Table IX. Names Denoting Special Physical Characteristics of the Child

Characteristic	Male or Female	Female Only	Male Only
Short Stature	Bakutu	Gajera	Gagere
Short and thin		Tsigirgira	Tsigirgiri
Short and fat		Gimbiya ¹	
Tall person	Zangwarmadi		
Born with sixth finger or toe	Cindo ²	Handuwa Shidaniya	Dangoli Shidani
Large forehead	Goshi ³		
One-eyed	Uwairu ⁴		
Big-buttocked	Bakutu		
Tiny	Firi	Afire	Dan Firo
Fair skinned		'Yar Ja Turai	Jatau Bature
Stumpy/ugly		Gunduru	

¹*Gimbiya* 'yar zaki. Also the epithet of a chief's daughter.²Sixth finger only.³*Goshi* may also be glossed as "to be auspicious," and this name is also given to a child whose birth is coincident with some luck (Abraham 1962:334).⁴Derived from Arabic.

SUNAN WASA

Another similar category of nickname is that known as *sunan wasa*, "name of play." Names in this class may be bestowed by siblings, peers, and other family and friends during childhood and adolescence, as a form of negative sanction or rebuke. However, in contrast, such names are frequently flattering and complimentary. But these names are usually only given during this early period of development, and as the individual matures such names are not usually used as forms of address. In addition to focusing on the parents or the infant, nicknames may also be selected to record the state of the Universe at the time of the infant's birth. The birth may be placed in a temporal perspective and allied to the progression of the heavenly bodies. Its exact relationship to the celestial or seasonal cycle may be recorded in the name. Alternatively the name may record a particular historic or socially important event for the social group. In this way individuals act as "chronicle" for the society as a whole. In particular, the seasons and the agricultural cycle associated with them are a very popular source of nicknames and are especially favored by the Maguzawa for both secret names and nicknames.

Table X. Names Given for Special Temporal Circumstances Surrounding Birth

Circumstances	Male or Female	Female Only	Male Only
Born at Night	Dare	Bakuwa	Bako
Born in the Evening		Daren Tuwo ¹	
Born at the time of the Muezzin's call to prayer			Ladan
After gathering in the compound has dispersed after waiting for birth			Korau ² Buwayi ^{3*} Shamaki ^{4*} Cizgari ^{5*} Kariya ^{6*} Barga ^{7*} Rakasa ^{8*} Agudima ^{9*}
Child born in times of trouble	Sha Wuya ¹⁰ Shawai		
Child born when town was crowded (e.g., in the past, as on return from a campaign)			Mijin-Yawa Jabbo Jabba
Child born in times of panic		Ta Gudu	Na Gudu ¹¹
Born during abundance	Yalwa ¹²	Yelwa Bute Baturiya Goshi ¹³	Wada ¹⁴ Mai Wada ¹⁵
Born when people in the household were eating beans	Ci Wake ¹⁶		
Born when people in the household were eating guineacorn	Ci Dawa		
Born when people in the household were eating Indian hemp	Ci Rama		
Born at early sunrise	Hantsi ¹⁷		
Born in the daytime	Ranau	Ta Rana Gamzaki ¹⁸ Zaharatu	
Born when the morning star is in the sky			Harande
Born within first 2-3 days of the appearance of the new moon			
Child born when the father is away at war		Ta Yaki ¹⁹	Mazawaje ²⁰

¹Tuwo is the usual food eaten at night, and the meaning of the name is that the mother is preparing the nightly meal when her labor pains assail her, and she has to go inside her hut for the birth of her child (Harris 1931:273).

²=Buwayi. In Katsina this name is also the epithet of any chief.

³Epithet of any *Shamaki* "stable master" or "head slave"; literally something amazing. In the context of, *Buwayi gagara misali* ("there is no equal") is the epithet of God (Abraham 1963:127).

⁴"Stable master" or "head slave." The epithet is *Korau, kam bayi*, "Korau, head of the slaves" (Abraham 1962:800).

⁵Literally, "eat the town." Among other associations, this name also refers to a big, strong person, or a difficult task, used in the epithet *Cizgari bawan yarda*, "eat the town slave of consent" (Abraham 1962:150).

⁶Epithet of *Shamaki*. Derived from the English, "carrier."

⁷Literally, stable or tethering place in the compound for horses: in other contexts it has associations of fineness, e.g., fine mare, fine woman.

⁸Literally, "what a strong person," "what a tall person."

⁹The official who looks after a chief's horses (Bargery 1934:9).

¹⁰Literally, "drink difficulty."

¹¹Formerly name given to a child born to parents who are running away to escape war or slave raid.

¹²Literally, "abundance."

¹³Also given to a child born after a good harvest or on the eve of an event, e.g., *goshin kaka*, "eve of the harvest."

¹⁴Literally, "wealth."

¹⁵Literally, "one who has/owner of wealth."

¹⁶See also under "Seasonal Names."

¹⁷Time between 8 a.m. and about 11 a.m. The epithet is *kuturim bushiya* (Abraham 1962:373).

¹⁸Venus. Epithet: maharbar dare = *Gamzaki, uban taurari*. Lit. Gamzaki, "father of the stars" (Abraham 1962:294).

¹⁹Literally, "child of war."

²⁰Literally, "the men are away."

*All names marked with an asterisk are synonymous for, or epithets of alternative titles of, a stable master (*Shamaki*). Since all the references include associations of strength or command, it is suggested that the reference is to the fact that the child must be something special since he has kept the entire compound waiting for his arrival and then still not appeared. Therefore, when he does arrive, he will be an important child in some way or another. Hence, the laudatory references implied in his name (see Abraham 1962:800).

Table XI. Seasonal Names

Season	Male or Female	Female Only	Male Only
Height of rainy season		Marka	Anaruwa
		Malka	Aruwa
During cold season	Sha Dari		
During bean harvest	Wake ^{1*}		
When beans were being eaten	Ci wake		
When guineacorn was being eaten	Ci rama		
When Indian hemp was being eaten	Ci dawa		
During the Harmattan	Dari		
When groundnuts were being gathered in; during the gleaning season of beans	Ta-Roro		
Born at harvest time	Kaka ⁴	Kakale ⁷	Dan Kaka
		Kakandi ⁸	
		Kakande	
		Kakando	
		Kakanduwa	

Table XI. (contd.)

Born during farming season	Nomau	
During dry season	Ramau	
During sowing season	Shikkau ²	
	Shibkan ³	
During hemp harvest	Ci Rama ^{4*}	
During bullrush millet harvest	Ci Gero ^{5*}	
	Cige*	
When first ripe heads of bullrush millet appear	Ci Tuma	
During guineacorn harvest	Ci Dawa ^{6*}	
	Cida ⁸	
When type of guineacorn was grown		Wayo

¹Also a type of bean.²Katsina form.³Sokoto form.⁴Indian hemp (*Hibiscus cannabinus*).⁵Bullrush millet (*Pennisetum typhoideum*).⁶Guineacorn (*Sorghum vulgare*).⁷Also name for a girl called after her grandfather.⁸Abraham (1962:457) lists this as name given to female, but Bargery (1934:532) lists it as name given to male.⁹Abraham (1962:456) notes this name is less common for a boy.*Names marked with an asterisk are frequently given to children of meat-sellers (*mahauta*) or to Maguzawa by parents or grandparents of the child when the latter is born at a time of harvest of crops mentioned.

Among other temporal nickname choices, the days of the week and the names of the regular markets held on specific days are also found. These names have numerous variant forms, and where particular days have special fortunate associations in a local area, the associations attached to that day will often be used as alternative names. However, if a particular day is considered to have unlucky associations, then that specific day name will be avoided and the name of the nearest market which takes place on that day will be used as a substitute nickname choice. Among Muslin Hausa, a day is often chosen for its religious associations rather than for secular reasons (e.g., Friday, for its association with Friday prayers at the Mosque. For example, see Table XII.

Table XII. Names Derived from the Days of the Week

Derived Day	Male or Female	Female Only	Male Only
Monday (Littinin)		Altine Adama ¹ Tani Attanin ²	Tine Tanimu Dan Tani ³ Dam Liti

Table XII. (*contd.*)

		Inna	Almustapha Almustafa ⁴ Almusdafa Almu Mustafa ⁵ Tafa
Tuesday (Talata)	Tatu	Talata Talla Talatu Lantona Lantana Lanti Tala	
Wednesday (Laraba)	Larai	Balaraba Balarabiya Narai ⁶ Laraba Larba Naraba ⁷ Narba ⁸	Bala Labaran
Thursday (Alhamis)	Alami ⁹	Lami Laminde	Dan Lami
Friday (Jumma'a)		Jummai Jimmai Juma Jimma Jimo ¹⁰ Jummalo Hawa Hawwa Kuluma Ma'undiya	Danjuma Jume Jumare Aljumma'a Dan Jimma Adamu ¹¹ Manzo* ¹² Jibirin* Jibir* Jibo* Ma'unde
Saturday (Asabar)	Sati (der. English)	Asabe Assibi ¹³ 'Yar Asabe	Dan Ashibe Dan Asabe
Sunday (Lahadi)	Lando	Ladi Ladingo Ladindima ¹⁴ Ladidi Lado Laderigo Ladiyo	Dan Ladi

¹Also names for twins; "Adamu" for twin male.²Sokoto form.³In the feminine form, the female equivalent ('Yar) is usually omitted.⁴Abuja name.

⁵Mustapha in Adamawa = Cibado.

⁶Sokoto form.

⁷Sokoto form.

⁸Sokoto form.

⁹Sokoto form.

¹⁰Katsina form.

¹¹See footnote no. 1.

¹²Asterisked names are also alternative names for *Adamu*.

¹³Katsina form.

¹⁴Sokoto form.

PRAISE-NAMES (KIRARI)

Changing the focus from the individual as a private citizen, there is yet another category of name known as *kirari*, "praise name," in which names are usually acquired by virtue of holding public office or membership in an occupational group. These nicknames may be subdivided into two classes: a) *kirari* which belong to a particular office rather than to an individual incumbent, and b) *kirari* which belong to the individual as an office-holder but reflect the way in which he personally fulfills the office.

Each hereditary and non-hereditary office, like each occupational group, has its own praise-name, which is fixed and invariable. But these *kirari* may vary from one Emirate to the next. Nevertheless, all *kirari* related to an office may be used for both reference and address. All *kirari* belonging to the various offices are laudatory, but the *kirari* given to their individual holders may be quite the reverse. In such cases, these uncomplimentary praise-names are seldom used for purposes of address, unless it is the express intention to offer insult to the holder. For example, Sultan Atiku of Sokoto acquired the nickname *Danyen Kasko* which may be glossed as "Raw, i.e. Unbaked Pot." (Last, 1967:127). This name reflected two aspects of his personality and behavior: firstly, that he did not behave in accordance with the Hausa expectations of a Caliph and a religious leader; and secondly, that it could be construed that he was suspected of consorting with those categories of spirit forbidden by orthodox Islam,⁷ since a facility with these spirits demands that a neophyte undergo initiation into their cult by being "cooked." The suggestion behind Atiku's nickname is that he may have been about to undergo this process, since the state of a neophyte, prior to initiation, is known as "unbaked." Initiation itself is described in terms of setting an unbaked pot over the fire to cook, the total process being referred to as *girka*, "cooking" (Hassan and Shu'aibu, 1946:19). At another level of interpretation, this nickname could also be taken to be a reference to Atiku's disposition,

⁷i.e., the non-Islamic spirits of the *Bori*, "spirit possession cult."

considered to be hot-tempered and irrational by his subjects. In this case, the implication is that, like all people who suffer from such disturbances, Atkiu's problem was caused by spirit possession. On account of this, he was in need of initiation into the cult, so that he could learn to control these spirits which troubled him.

Not only offices and occupations may acquire *kirari*, but also certain "book" names. These *kirari* are always complimentary and, like *kirari* of office and occupation, are considered to belong to the name itself rather than to its individual holder. If the individual so wishes, he or she may choose to be known by this *kirari* rather than by the "book" name. Below (Table XIII) are listed a selection of the more well-known *kirari* attached to some of the titled offices in the Emirates, and those attached to "book" names.

Table XIII. Sarauta Epithets

Sarauta	Kirari ¹	Gloss
Ciroma	Gimba	No English equivalent
Barde	Garaza	"
Makama	Togai, Rumfar Sarki	"
	Gabi	Bateleur eagle
Wambai	Giwa Marin Dawa	No English equivalent
Galadima	Gardaye	"
	Kashin Gari	"
	Babba Tomo Kashin Gari	"
	Gwauran Giwa	"
	Gubri Sha Bakosani	"
	Daudu	"
Madaki ²	Kaura	"
	Goje Gaban Gayya	"
	Gumi Shashin Sarki	"
	Jirgin Aska, Wa Zai Tari Goshinsa	"
	Kaigama ³	"
	Gagu	"
	Katuma Warkin Aiki	"
Waziri	Basilla, Abin Dinkin Duniya	"
	Hanyar Abar Bi	"
	Gwandabe Abim Biya ⁴	"
Sarki	Dimau	"
	Sukuku Makaka	"
	Dikakau	"
	Dirkakau	"
	Damamusau	"
	Toya Matsafa	"
	Dakaki Biya Kora	"

Table XIII. (contd.)

	Wandara	"
	Kogi Matukar Tayi	"
	Gigama	"
	Uwar Gwazi A Ci Da Lura	"
	Gwantal ⁵	"
Shamaki	Korau ⁶	"
	Buwayi ⁷	"
Magaji	Gado, Dano	No English equivalent
Alkali	Kuliya Manta Sabo	"
	Gero Abokin Sarki	"
	Musa Geran Taki	"
	Ga Goran Zuma, Ganamadaci	"
	Tadawar Karkashi, Buwaya Malamai	"

¹Only the first word of the larger praise-names is usually used, the rest being known to all.

²In Sokoto this office is known as *uban dawaki*.

³A Kanuri term.

⁴A Sokoto epithet.

⁵Used by professional beggars (*masarta*) (see Abraham 1962:353) in the praise epithet: *Gwantal, gwabal, gwamal, kulkim foran giwa; in aka fori san gida da shi, sai yanka*, "the club for training an elephant; if it is used on an ox, then it is to be slaughtered."

⁶In Katsina, epithet of any chief (Abraham 1962:538).

⁷Used in *Buwayi gagara misali* ("there is no equal") as epithet of God (Abraham 1962:127).

Table XIV. Personal Book Name Epithets

<i>Male Only</i>	<i>Epithet¹</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
Hasan	Magaji	"heir"
	Magajin Giwa	"heir of elephant"
Usuman	Sangamin Tama	no English equivalent
	Shehu	scholar ²
Haruna	Ginsau	no English equivalent
Ali	Gadanga	Implying great strength
	Mai Sango	Owner of elephant harpoon
	Garga	no English equivalent
	Gargami	"
Yusufu	Mai Garko	"owner of handsomeness"
Usufu		
Yusi		
Bello	Dibgau	"Thou storm!"
Ballo		
<i>Female Only</i>	<i>Epithet</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
Amina	Gwarje	no English equivalent
Hadija	Gadangama	no English equivalent
Hadijatu		

Table XIV. (*contd.*)

Zainabu	Agaddabu Taka Shiba	teasing cotton
Sainabu		
Abu		

¹These epithets frequently do not have an English equivalent.

²See (Abraham 1962:806).

CHRISTIAN NAMES

A number of Hausa have become converts to Christianity and have acquired Christian names in addition to their Hausa names. In such cases, the Bible and the events of the Christian year provide the most common name sources. As with the Koran, names of venerated Biblical personages are frequently selected in hopes that the infant will acquire some of their qualities. All Christian names may be used for both reference and address without the addition of a Hausa title. For example, an individual may choose to be known as *Mr. Jacob*, or alternatively as *Malan Yakubu*, all such Christian names having a Hausa form. When an individual wishes to stress religious affiliation, then the Anglicized form of the name is usually retained. Nevertheless, the possession of a Christian name only replaces the Islamic public name; it does not preclude the holder from possessing any number of nicknames from the other categories of personal nomenclature already discussed. In the following table, a selection of Hausa Christian names based on the calendar are listed. Some examples of Biblical names can be found in Table I, for example; Abraham, Adam, Joseph and Mary, since the Koran and the Bible have many religious personages in common.

Table XV. Names Derived from Months of the Christian Calendar¹

Month	Male or Female
January	Janairu
February	Fabrairu
March	Maris
April	Afril
May	Mayibi Mayu
June	Yunihi Yuni
July	Yuli Yulizi
August	Ungushat Augusta Augushat
September	Satumba Sitamba

Table XV. (contd.)

October	Oktoba
November	Nuwambar
	Nuwamba
December	Dujambar
	Disamba
	Dizamba
	Dijambar

¹Months of the year are all English loan-words.

CONCLUSION

From this introductory survey of the various categories of Hausa personal nomenclature, it can be seen that the bestowal of a name is a complex procedure and that naming may be viewed as a continuous procedure rather than as a single event. By the gradual acquisition of a selection of personal names from the various categories available, the individual's personal and social development may be recorded as he or she passes through the life cycle. Successes and failures may be noted, and a set of checks and balances may be applied to individual behavior by judicious nickname selections which help to maintain social conformity to Hausa norms and values. Thus an individual may acquire during his lifetime a name from at least one of each of the discussed categories and may choose from among all these names, except the secret name, his desired style of address. The content of the first two categories of name tend to be fixed over time. However, the content of the various classes of nickname does change and tends to reflect over time, to a certain degree, the effects of social change and mobility in Hausaland.

Hoover Institution
Stanford University

REFERENCES CITED

- Abraham, R. C. *Dictionary of the Hausa Language*, London: University of London Press, 1962.
- Bargery, Rev. G. P. *A Hausa-English Dictionary and English-Hausa Vocabulary*, London: Oxford University Press, 1934.
- Greenberg, J. *The Influence of Islam on a Sudanese Religion*, New York: J. J. Augustin, 1946.
- Harris, P. G. "Some Conventional Hausa Names," *Man* v. XXXI, no. 265, pp. 272-4, December 1931.
- Hassan and Shu'aibu Na'ibi *Tarihi Da Alladun Habe Na Abuja (II)*, Zaria: Gaskiya Corp., 1946.

Last, D. M. *The Sokoto Caliphate*, London: Longmans, 1967.

Nicolas, G. "Un système numérique symbolique: le quatre, le trois et le sept dans la cosmologie d'une société hausa (vallée de Maradi), *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, VIII(4) (1968):566–627.

Smith, M. F. *Baba of Karo*, London: Faber, 1954.

Tremearne, A. J. N. *Hausa Superstitions and Customs*, Reprinted London: Frank Cass Ltd., 1913, *The Ban of the Bori*, Reprinted London: Frank Cass Ltd., 1914.