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Abstract	<p>Akan “soul names” of Ghana possess a ubiquity as <i>kente</i> cloth in global marketplaces, and yet they have been rarely studied as archives of histories and knowledge. These patterned fe/male names for each day of the week have naturally caught the attention of linguists, who approach them from the perspectives of syntax and semiotics, and for dehistoricized “ethno-linguistic” data. Less visible in the literature are studies from historical linguists and virtually absent are historians who have probed them as (re)sources for historical reconstruction. This chapter argues Akan “soul names” (<i>akradin</i>) function as indices of historic and cultural content and, viewed from this perspective, archives of indigenous knowledge. Our guide in making this case comes from one of the earliest documented “soul names” of an African woman recorded as Adua (Adwoa). To that end, I advance three related views: histories of Akan (and African) peoples can be decoded and made more intelligible according their own logic by paying attention to names as archives of knowledge; this knowledge can offer new perspectives on pre-nineteenth-century colonial and Christian encounters, and how African peoples engaged them over time; and, finally, a historicized study of names provides an additional method for reconstituting cultural forms, norms, and meanings across historical time.</p>	
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# Akan “Soul Names” as Archives of Histories 1 and Knowledge: Some Preliminary Thoughts 2

*Kwasi Konadu* 3

## INTRODUCTION 4

Akan “soul names” possess a ubiquity as *kente* cloth in global market- 5  
places, and yet they have been rarely studied as archives of histories and 6  
knowledge. These patterned fe/male names for each day of the week have 7  
naturally caught the attention of linguists, who approach them from the 8  
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studies from historical linguists and virtually absent are historians who 11  
have probed them as (re)sources for historical reconstruction. This 12

<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, Kofi Agyekum, “The Sociolinguistic of Akan Personal Names,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 15, no. 2 (2006): 206–35; Samuel Gyasi Obeng, *African Anthroponymy: An Ethnopragmatic and Morphophonological Study of Personal Names in Akan and Some African Societies* (München: Lincom Europa, 2001); idem, “From Morphophonology to Sociolinguistics: The Case of Akan Hypocoristic Day-Names,” *Multilingua* 16, no. 1 (1997): 39–56.

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O. Oyěwùmí, H. Girma (eds.), *Naming Africans*, Gender and  
Cultural Studies in Africa and the Diaspora,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13475-3\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13475-3_7)

13 chapter argues Akan “soul names” (*akradin*) function as indices of historic  
 14 and cultural content and, viewed from this perspective, archives of indig-  
 15 enous knowledge. Our guide in making this case comes from one of the  
 16 earliest documented “soul names” of an African woman recorded as *Adua*  
 17 (*Adwoa*). In what follows, I advance three related views: histories of Akan  
 18 (and African) peoples can be decoded and made more intelligible accord-  
 19 ing their own logic by paying attention to names as archives of knowledge;  
 20 this knowledge can offer new perspectives on pre-nineteenth-century  
 21 colonial and Christian encounters, and how African peoples engaged them  
 22 over time; and, finally, a historicized study of names provides an additional  
 23 method for reconstituting cultural forms, norms, and meanings through-  
 24 out their elongated histories.

### 25 “[THEY] CALL THEMSELVES BY HEATHEN NAMES”

26 In September 1572, a Portuguese official stationed at the São Jorge da  
 27 Mina fortress on the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) wrote,

28 I rejoice that they [the Catholic priests] have put into effect the saying of  
 29 mass at a certain hour, and have taught the blacks the stations of the cross;  
 30 and I believe that eventually there will be a roll-call, as is done in many parts,  
 31 including Spain, which seems to me very necessary because the blacks are an  
 32 indolent and careless people; and also so that they can hear their Christian  
 33 names repeated, because I understand that all the other [converts] after  
 34 leaving the company of Christians and returning to their village, call them-  
 35 selves by heathen names, [for instance,] the man named Joane being  
 36 known as Tabo and the woman [named] Maria as *Adua* [*Adwoa*].<sup>2</sup>

37 There are several stories packed into this observation, the least impor-  
 38 tant of which concern Europe or Portugal. That the converted “blacks”  
 39 should “hear their Christian names repeated” echoes less indoctrination or  
 40 even Christian proselytization. Proselytization was woven into a colonial  
 41 project, where fortified coastal enclaves settled by Portuguese nationals  
 42 were governed by political allegiance to Portugal and its laws and customs.  
 43 This exercise of power, however tenuous and partial, explains why  
 44 Portuguese overseas personnel and officials in Lisbon claimed the São  
 45 Jorge da Mina and its adjoining lands as “our district” and why the

<sup>2</sup>António Brásio, ed., *Monumenta Missionaria Africana* (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1952-88), 3: 90-91. Hereafter, “MMA.”

anonymous official distinguished the “company of Christians” from “their village.”<sup>3</sup> That village Adina, situated on the west bank of the Benya lagoon. The Portuguese called it “the village of two parts,” since Adena and the São Jorge da Mina fortress stood on land claimed by the local polities of Fetu and the Eguafó]. According to oral histories, Adena was the outgrowth of an earlier village named Anomansa or Anomee founded by a hunter named Kwa Amankwaa before the Portuguese arrived in 1471. For the Portuguese, then, a return “to their village” meant defecting from Christendom and a relapse into its demonic inverse, including “heathen names.” Christian conversion was situational and incomplete, but the real or imagined ideological control the anonymous official and the Catholic priests saw as “very necessary,” in any colonial encounter, was thwarted when Adwoa spoke or heard her name. Indeed, her name is a rare specimen among the sixteenth-century records for Akan interaction with the Portuguese empire, when Portugal enjoyed something of a trade monopoly vis-à-vis their European adversaries on the Gold Coast. The name Adwoa, more importantly, has its own story.

Tabo seems to be Tabi, a personal or praise name corresponding to Agyei.<sup>4</sup> Though the meaning of Tabo as a personal name is less clear, there is no doubt about the name Adwoa. Adwoa remains the “soul name” (*kradin*) given to an Akan female child born on Monday (*Dwoada*). Rarely is this *kradin* tampered with or altered. Though we lack every detail of this Adwoa’s life except her soul name, we know she would have undergone a naming or “out-dooring” ceremony (*abadinto*) on a week after the day of birth. Soul names and the process of naming were requisite parts of personhood, and guides for achieving a person’s mission (*hyɛbea*) in the temporal world. Soul names reflect an individual’s human purpose in life; said another way, they index the particular “soul” revealed on a day, assigned to a specific person. Adwoa’s *abadinto* would have taken place at her father’s house, after waiting a calendar week (*nnaw]twe*) to ensure she came to stay on earth (Asase Yaa) and would not prematurely return to the ancestor’s abode (*asamandoo*) to her spiritual mother. Until the Monday after her birth, Adwoa the infant would have been regarded as a stranger (*ɔbɔho*) and thus greeted, *woaba a tena asee* (“now that you have come, sit down [and stay]”), to wish her a long life (*nkwa soo*).

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, John W. Blake, *Europeans in West Africa, 1450–1560* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1941), 96, 133.

<sup>4</sup> A. A. Opoku, *Obi Kyere* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corp., 1973), 77.

81 Before the scheduled day of the *abadinto* ceremony, items such as palm  
 82 wine or an alcoholic drink (*nsa*), cups (*nkuruwa*), water (*nsuo*), mat (*ketε*),  
 83 calabash (*koraa*), and broom (*ɔprae*) were gathered for the girl child. Boys  
 84 would have a cutlass (*nkrante*). Early in the morning of the scheduled day,  
 85 two elders of high character from the father’s family would have been sent  
 86 to retrieve Adwoa and her mother from the mother’s house. One of the  
 87 elders—a woman for a girl child, and a man for a male child—is chosen to  
 88 perform the ceremony. Adwoa’s mother would then bathe the infant and  
 89 both would dress in white cloth and stay indoors until the ceremony begins.  
 90 Certain sacred beads (e.g., *bɔdɔm*, *abɛnewa*, and *abobɔe*) are placed on the  
 91 child, and marks made with white clay (*hyire*) and specific to this ceremony  
 92 are drawn on the child and mother. Just before daybreak (*anɔpa-hema*),  
 93 close relatives and friends of the mother help in the preparation, as the  
 94 ceremony starts with an opening libation (*mpaeε*) poured by an elder who  
 95 announces the occasion and its purpose. The family (*abusua*) of Adwoa’s  
 96 mother would have provided the drink used for the opening libation, which  
 97 is poured at every doorstep and the main entrance to the house. Adwoa  
 98 would have belonged to one of eight matrilineal clans, each associated with  
 99 a sacred animal (*akrabɔa*) and a basic character—}yoko (falcon; patience),  
 100 Asona (raven; wisdom), Aseneε (bat; diplomacy), Aduana (dog; skill),  
 101 {koona (buffalo; uprightness), Asakyiri (vulture; cleanliness), Agona (par-  
 102 rot; eloquence), and Beretuo (leopard; aggressiveness).<sup>5</sup> The father’s family  
 103 provides the drink for the second libation. After this libation, Adwoa would  
 104 have been taken out of the house, stripped naked, and then placed on a  
 105 prepared area of the ground or on a comfortable cushion. Early that morn-  
 106 ing (*anɔpa*), when all guests have arrived, a female or male elder of the  
 107 father takes the child to her or his lap and both the water and the alcoholic  
 108 beverage are poured into separate cups.

109 Naming the child is the responsibility of the father’s family. It is quite  
 110 likely Adwoa’s name would have been provided by her father (*agya*) and  
 111 the officiating female elder would have spoken something to this effect:

112 Yebefre wo Adwoa ne asekyere din ye yewoo wo Edwoada  
 113 (We will call you Adwoa and this name means your [feminine] soul  
 114 decided to come to this earth on a Monday)

<sup>5</sup>The Akan *mmusua* (matrilineal clans) are associated with an equivalent group of stars the Akan identify as the original ancestress (*aberewa*, “the old woman”) and her six or seven children. That constellation is called *Aberewa ne ne mma* (“the old woman and her children”).

Efiri nne rekò yèbefrè wo Adwoa (agyadin) 115  
 (From today onward, we will call you Adwoa [and at least her patrilineal 116  
 clan/family name—*agyadin*]). 117

The name Adwoa is even more revealing. On its own, and without any 118  
 other details in the documentary record, we know Adwoa was born on 119  
 one of six Mondays on the Akan calendar consisting of 378 days, orga- 120  
 nized into nine cycles of 42 days. This cycle or *adaduanan* was sub-divided 121  
 into six weeks of seven days each. The root of Adwoa’s name—*dwo*—is 122  
 shared by the day on which she was born—*dwoada*—and this root term 123  
 also linked her to an *ɔbosom* (spiritual force) which the Akan conceptual- 124  
 ized as a soul or emissary of their Creator (called *Onyankopon*, among 125  
 other praise names).<sup>6</sup> These *abosom* (e.g., *ɔbosom*, “that which serves an 126  
 unlimited purpose”) were deeply integral to notions of personhood and 127  
 culture. Those *abosom* located at the foundation of the calendar and the 128  
 naming system were recorded by lexicographer J.G. Christaller in the 129  
 nineteenth century: “The seven days of the week are named after seven 130  
 personal beings or Genii called Ayisi [Awusi], Adwo, Bena, Wuku [Aku], 131  
 Yaw [Awo], Afi, Amen.”<sup>7</sup> Widely held is the idea that these *abosom* shape 132  
 the persona and basic conduct of each soul name bearer. 133

Those born on the same day were thought to share similar qualities and 134  
 personal challenges. The Sunday-born is a leader society looks upon for guid- 135  
 ance and leadership and s/he is appropriately known as *obue-akwan*, “clearer 136  
 of the way.” However, they are very inquisitive and tend to be easily pulled 137  
 into a thing of interest. The Monday-born, such as Adwoa, is a calm person 138  
 (*okoto*), peacemaker (*adwo*), protector, and supplicant, but have such a con- 139  
 fidence that they tend to be unreceptive to advice external to their own. The 140  
 Tuesday-born, like the Monday-born, has some arrogance and is known as 141  
*ɔbarima*, “manly” or “courageous”; but once tempered, they tend to be 142  
 nurturing and achieve a balance between strength and compassion (*ogyam*). 143

<sup>6</sup>The Akan conceived Creator is realized as part and parcel of an unfolding process of creation and this may explain why the Akan acknowledge first but almost never pour libation to their Creator. As manifestations of the Creator, the *abosom* reside in specific locales and permeate the ocean (*ɛpo kesee*), rivers (*asu*), lakes (*atara*), streams (*asuwa*), mountains (*mmepow*), forests (*akwae*), trees and plants (*nnua*), and microorganisms and animals (*mmoa*) that exist in the temporal domain of Asase Yaa (“earth”). These natural features are part of creation and, by extension, Onyankopon—one of several “praise names” for the Akan Creator.

<sup>7</sup>J. G. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language Called Tshi* (Basel: Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1933), 599.

144 The Wednesday-born is a champion (*ntoni, atobi*) of the cause of others and  
 145 thus a hero, but s/he can be mean-spirited (*obrisii*, “dark hearted”) and  
 146 tenacious. The Thursday-born is courageous and aggressive in a warlike  
 147 manner (*preko*), and thus tend to be very guarded, judgmental, and appear  
 148 to be ungrateful (*aye-anya-nya*, “one who suffers from ingratitude”). The  
 149 Friday-born is an adventurer (*ntefo-a-ɔkyin*, “stubborn one born to be a wan-  
 150 derer”) and indecisive and thus take time to settle, but are highly motivated  
 151 and competent. Lastly, the Saturday-born tends to be talented (*atoapem*),  
 152 wise, and problem-solvers, but also very sensational (*nya-beasa-wo*, “the sen-  
 153 sationalist”) and often have a very healthy appetite.<sup>8</sup>

154 Through the optic of her *kradin*, the spiritual and temporal persona of  
 155 our guide Adwoa is revealed against the backdrop of the *ɔbosom* with  
 156 which she was associated (*dwo*) and the praise name (*okoto*) which func-  
 157 tioned as shorthand for her temperament (see Table 1). “The [Akan] cel-  
 158 ebrate every week the day on which they are born,” observed  
 159 eighteenth-century Danish clergyman Christian Oldendorp, “for instance  
 160 Monday. On that day in the morning before washing themselves, they  
 161 grind up [a plant] ... in water and take a mouthful of the water three times  
 162 and every time they spit out the water they pray to Jankombum  
 163 [*Onyankopɔn*].”<sup>9</sup> For Adwoa, the Monday-born female with a cool and

**Table 1** Soul Names, Guiding Forces (*abosom*), and Praise Names

<i>Abosom</i>	<i>ɛda</i> (day)	<i>ɔbarima-din</i> (male)	<i>ɔbaa-din</i> (female)	<i>Mmmrane</i> (“praise names”)	
Awusi	Kwasiada	Kwasi	Akosua	Bodua (protector, leader)	t1.4
Adwo	Dwoada	Kwadwo	Adwoa	Okoto (calm, humble)	t1.5
Bena	Benada	Kwabena	Abena	Ogyam (good, humane)	t1.6
Aku	Wukuada	Kwaku	Akua	Ntonni (advocate, hero)	t1.7
Awo	Yawoada	Yaw (formerly Kwaw)	Yaa	Pereko (firm, fearless)	t1.8
Afi	Fiada	Kofi (formerly Kwafi)	Afia	Okyin (itinerant, adventurer)	t1.9 t1.10
Amen	Memeneda	Kwame	Amma	Atoapem (ancient, heroic)	t1.11

<sup>8</sup> On some of these personal qualities, see Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 172.

<sup>9</sup> Christian G.A. Oldendorp, *Historie der caribischen Inseln Sanct Thomas, Sanct Crux und Sanct Jan, insbesondere der dasigen Neger und der Mission der evangelischen Brüder-Unität Herrnhut, Erster Teil*, eds. Gudrun Meier, Stephan Palmié, Peter Stein, and Horst Ulbricht (Berlin: Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, 2000), 386.

peaceful character but with episodes of ingratitude, this morning ritual affirming her connection to her Creator and the *bosom* anchored in her soul (name) and day of birth would have been no different. Adwoa would have been taught this and other ritual practices, after her introduction to the world, beginning with her naming ritual. After Adwoa received her *kradin*, the female elder would have then dipped her forefinger into an alcoholic beverage-filled cup or used a leaf and afterward placed droplets on Adwoa’s tongue and uttered three times, *ɛ yeka se nsa a ka se nsa* (“when we say that it is intoxicating drink [symbolic of untruth], say that it is intoxicating drink”). The elder does the same with the water: *ɛ yeka se nsuo a ka se nsuo* (“when we say that it is water [symbolic of truth], say that it is water”).<sup>10</sup> These tasting rituals advise Adwoa the infant to seek and tell the truth and to distinguish it from falsehood as she strives to live a righteous and ethical life (*abrabo*).

If there are other names after the *kradin*, those names usually derive from consultations with spiritualist-healers (*ɔkɔmfɔɔ*; *ɔbosomfɔɔ*), an elder or ancestor of the father’s family of high character (*suban pa*), or particular circumstances surrounding the child’s birth. Some birth circumstantial names include *Anto* (“did not meet”) and *Y[mp]wo* (“we don’t want you”), for a parent, usually father, passed before child’s birth; *B[koe]* (“came to fight” [born during tragedy/war]); *Humuu* (born at time of harvest festival); *Dwira* (born at time of new year yam harvest festival of purification); *Sika* (born during discovery of gold); *Afiriye/Baayie/Abayie* (born during time of abundance, wealth and peace); *Br[nya]* (born when

<sup>10</sup> Kofi Agyekum, professor of linguistics at the University of Ghana (Legon), recounts below (in English translation) the *adinto* ceremony of his daughter held in June 1985 in Kumase. The form and text is strikingly similar to the “general” form outlined above for Adwoa. Professor Agyekum’s daughter, Afua Ataa Boakyewaa Agyekum, was named after his mother, a female twin born on Friday. The elder officiant of the *adinto* ceremony said the following: “Baby, you are welcome to this world. Have a longer stay, just do not come and exhibit yourself and return. Your mothers and fathers have assembled here today to give you a name. The name we are giving to you is Afua Ataa Boakyewaa Agyekum. You are named Afua because that is the day your soul decided to enter into this world. We are naming you after your grandmother Afua Ataa. Your grandparent is Ataa because she was born a twin. Her real name is Boakyewaa, the feminine form of Boakyee. Remember that your grandmother is a twin and therefore a deity and sacred figure that must be kept hallowed. In view of this, come and put up a good moral behavior. Again we are attaching your father’s name Agyekum to your name. Follow the footsteps of your father and come and study hard. When we say water, let it be water, when we say drink let it be drink” (Agyekum, “Sociolinguistics,” 217).



188 mother had been declared barren); and *Onyina* (born underneath a silk  
 189 cotton tree). If Adwoa was born in a sequence of children, she would have  
 190 had an added name signaling her birth order: *Piesie* (first born; lit. “erupt  
 191 from an anthill”); *Manu*, *Mensa* and *Mansa* (female), *Anane/Annan*, (*A*)  
 192 *num*, *Nsia*, *Nson*, *Nw]twe*, *Nkroma*, *Badu/Beduwaa*, *Duku*, *Adunu*, and  
 193 *Adusa*. If Adwoa was a twin, she and other would be called *Ata* (male) or  
 194 *Ataa* (female). A child following twins is called *Tawia*, then comes  
 195 *Nyankomago*, *Atuak]sen*, *Abobakorowa*, and *Damusaa*.<sup>11</sup>

196 In line with “soul name,” Adwoa was guaranteed a second, family name  
 197 (called *agyadin* since it derives from the father’s patrilineal clan) if no  
 198 peculiar circumstances or deceased person from whom to her name exists.  
 199 Such family names are clan names based on twelve patrilineal clans  
 200 (*ntoro/ntɔn*)—rather than the complimentary eight matrilineal clans  
 201 (*mmusua*; sg. *abusua*) to which all Akan children belong. These names are  
 202 given by the father in consultation with his parents or wife, and, in earlier  
 203 times, with family or community spiritualists. Each of the twelve *ntoro* or  
 204 *ntɔn* has a “soul day” (*kra da*), or a specific, and usually overlapping, day  
 205 on which certain rituals associated with the *ntoro/ntɔn* are performed.  
 206 Thus, in Table 2, each of the following patrilineal clans represented has  
 207 their own day of observance (*kra da*) where members ritually cleanse their  
 208 soul typically near a body of water, exchange greetings with specific  
 209 responses (*nnyesɔ*) among those sharing the same *ntoro/ntɔn*, uphold a  
 210 set of taboos or avoidances (*nkyiwadɛɛ*), respect a sacred animal (*akraboa*;  
 211 pl. *akrammoa*) which members taboo, share basic character (*suban*), and  
 212 assume one of several patrilineal clan names (*agyadin*).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Agyekum, “Sociolinguistics,” 217–27.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to interviews and conversations with knowledgeable Akan peoples over the years, I have also consulted the following with regard to the patrilineal lines in the incomplete Table 1: Agyekum, “Sociolinguistic,” 218; T. C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-colonial Asante* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 170–72; Gerald Pescheux, *Le Royaume Asante (Ghana): Parenté, Pouvoir, Histoire, XVIIe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Karthala Editions, 2003), 293–98; A. Abu Boahen, E. Akyeampong, N. Lawler, T. C. McCaskie, and Ivor Wilks, “*The History of Ashanti Kings and the Whole Country Itself*” and *Other Writing by Otumfuo Nana Agyeman Prempeh I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); A. A. Opoku, *Obi Kyere* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Co., 1973), 20–23, 26–30; B. S. Akuffo, *Tete Akorae* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1970), 71–74; E. R. Addow, *Edin ne Mmrane* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1969), 6; Thomas Yao Kani, *Akanfoɔ Amammere* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1962), 54–62; Kofi A. Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951); Christaller, *Dictionary*.

**Table 2** Akan Ntoro/Nton (patrilineal clans)

	<i>Ntoro/n̄ton</i>	<i>Kra da</i>	<i>Nnyeso</i>	<i>Akyimadɛ</i>	<i>Akrammoa</i>	<i>Suban</i>	<i>Agyadin</i>
t2.1							
t2.2							
t2.3	Bosommuru (Muru river in Akyem or Adanse; a family <i>ɔbosom</i> )	Tuesdays	Yaa aburu	Cattle, dog, <i>ɔkpankwa</i> (Mona monkey), <i>asokpa</i> (a bird), corn, palm wine, Tuesday dancing	Python, mouse	Respectable, distinguished	?
t2.4							
t2.5							
t2.6							
t2.7							
t2.8							
t2.9	Bosompra (Pra river that flows through Asante to the coast; a family and a state <i>ɔbosom</i> )	Wednesdays	Yaa aku/eson (and Yaa anyaado)	White fowl, black snail, antelope, water yam, <i>ɔkpankwa</i> , tortoise, leopard, carcass	Crocodile	Tough, strong, firm	Agyeman, Asare, Amoako, Ofori, Boatan, Kwaakye, Adu, Boakye, Ori, Opoku, Amankwa, Boahene, Safoa, Akyeampon, ado
t2.10							
t2.11							
t2.12							
t2.13							
t2.14	Bosomtwe (sacred lake in Asante; a family <i>ɔbosom</i> )	Sundays	Yaa awisi (and Yaa ahenewa (and Yaa amu))	<i>ɔkpankwa</i> , snail, wild dog, tortoise, antelope	Leopard	Humane, kind, empathetic	Ofofu, Gyadu, Kwatia, Boafo, Boate, Atakora, Ɔsafo, Anteadu, Agyei, Akyaw, Aniapam, Ɔkyem
t2.15							
t2.16							
t2.17							
t2.18							
t2.19	Bosomafam (Afram river)	Saturdays	Yaa amen (and Yaa anyaado)	Palm wine, goat, cattle, antelope, crocodile	<i>Ɔkpankwa</i>	Liberal, kind, empathetic	Amponsa, Anokye, Peasa, Awua, Afram, dame, Afrane, Ɔrwe, Akwaa
t2.20							
t2.21							
t2.22	Bosomnketeaa (river or sea; it is combined with Bosompo (sea) <i>ntoro/n̄ton</i> ; it is a family <i>ɔbosom</i> )	Tuesdays	Yaa anyaado Yaa opeafo	Dog, dove, tortoise, potamus	Hippo-	Proud, audacious	Apea, Ayim, Kusi, Poakwa, Osi (Ɔsec), Otutu, Ayimadu, Okurofa
t2.23							
t2.24							
t2.25							
t2.26							

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

<i>Ntoro/n̄ton</i>	<i>Kra da</i>	<i>Nnyeso</i>	<i>Akyimadɛ</i>	<i>Akrammaa</i>	<i>Suban</i>	<i>Agyadiin</i>
t2.27 Bosomkretɛ <sup>a</sup>	Thursdays	?	Ape, carcass, kyenkyen (bark cloth)	Python	Chivalrous	?
t2.28 t2.29 Bosomdwerebe (a cave; a family <i>ɔbosom</i> )	Sundays	Yaa ahenewa	Spotted animals, palm wine, tortoise, snail	Leopard	Eccentric, jittery	Sakyi, Amponsa, Ofieku, Aboagye, Sekyerɛ, Ataara, Antwi, Akuatamao
t2.30 t2.31 t2.32 Bosomafi (earth <i>ntora/n̄ton</i> ; a family <i>ɔbosom</i> )	Fridays (or Tuesdays)	Yaa afi (and Yaa ɔpeo or ɔpeafo)	Water yam, black snail, monitor lizard, boar	Goat	Chaste	?
t2.33 t2.34 t2.35 Bosomayensu (Ayensu river; a family <i>ɔbosom</i> )	Fridays	?	White hen, antelope, black snail	Wild hog or boar	Truculent	?
t2.36 t2.37 Bosomsika (“gold/currency”)	Fridays	?	Mixture of food	Monitor lizard	Fastidious	?
t2.38 t2.39 Bosomakom (associated with spiritual [ɔkɔm] mediumship)	Tuesdays (or Fridays)	?	Palm wine, spotted animals	Dog	Fanatic	Adu, Oben, ado, Anim, Akomaa, Asuman, Ankomahene
t2.40 t2.41 t2.42 Bosomkonsi (associated with <i>ɔkɔmfɔɔ</i> ’s work)	Tuesdays	?	Palm wine, Tuesday dancing	Tortoise	Virtuoso	?

<sup>a</sup>Krete is supposedly an *ɔbosom* venerated in Aburi, the Akuapem region of eastern Ghana. See A. C. Denteh, “Ntoro and Nton,” *Research Review* 3, no. 3 (1967): 92 fn. 5, 96; Pescheux, *Royume Asante*, 296; Opoku, *Obi Kyere*, 23

Those clustered within the same patrilineal clan—marked by one of the *ntorɔ/ntɔn* above (see Table 2)—would possess one of the several *aggyadin* or paternally derived family names, as the name which follows their *kradin*. All the ritual practices and observances, including the *aggyadin*, would have been bequeathed by the father. We have no way of knowing the *aggyadin* or *ntorɔ/ntɔn* of Adwoa, but if we speculate further, Adwoa might have been associated with the Bosomnketeaa/Bosompo *ntorɔ* for it is linked to the ocean where Adwoa and presumably her family lived and where she would have purified her soul (*kra*) on all six Tuesday on the *adaduanan* calendar system. The veracity of this association between Adwoa and an *ntorɔ/ntɔn* is not what is important here; rather, this exercise in probability allows us to role-play what would have happened during Adowa’s naming ceremony and thus anchoring her in family and community life. In this world of probability, Adowa would have responded to others sharing the same Bosomnketeaa/Bosompo *ntorɔ* with “Yaa anyaado or opeafo” and learn to bathe her soul on Tuesdays by the ocean. She would have learned to avoid dogs, doves, and tortoises on Tuesdays, but regard the Hippopotamus, appropriately called “sea horse,” as sacred and not to be harmed or killed. This Adwoa would have been socialized to be proud and audacious—the basic character of Bosomnketeaa/Bosompo *ntorɔ*—and would have been given an *aggyadin* such as Dakwa, Boadu, Bonsu, Kusi, Poakwa, Otutu, Ayimadu, or Okurofa. Let us call her, for the sake of argumentation, Adwoa Bonsu. Bonsu, meaning “whale” or another sea animal spouting water, seems appropriate in this context.

After the naming of Adwoa Bonsu, a mat would have been placed on the floor or ground. The child then elevated three times, placed on the mat naked and with a broom in her hand, and afterwards covered with a calabash. After a few seconds, the calabash was removed. This process symbolized the ethic of hard work, preserving a household and family, and working with her future husband. If it were a boy, a cutlass was placed in his hand; the cutlass symbolizes a similar work ethic, providing for and protecting his family, and working with his future wife. Adwoa Bonsu would then have been presented to her community, hence, the common translation of the naming ceremony as “out-dooring,” since this would have been the first time she was taken out of the house. A final libation was poured to consecrate the ceremony, and blessings for the child and her family were articulated along with requests for the child to be an obedient, truthful, and righteous member of the community. Thereafter, Adwoa would be addressed by their name and her ears would receive what family

252 and community members expect of her. Songs of praise would have also  
 253 been sung to the child. Those in audience bearing gifts such as money  
 254 (*sika*) or clothing (*ntadee*) offered them to the family of the newborn,  
 255 while the father presented gifts to the mother and child. General feasting  
 256 with singing and dancing then followed, providing festive closure to the  
 257 *abadinto* ceremony and the welcoming of Adwoa Bonsu to her new world.

258 “THEY PAY REGARD TO THE DAY OF BIRTH”: FORMS  
 259 AND MEANINGS IN A NAMING CULTURE

260 Somewhere between the Georgian calendar years of 1616 and 1620,  
 261 Samuel Brun, a German who worked in the Dutch West India Company  
 262 on the Gold Coast, observed, “As soon as a mother give birth to a child,  
 263 the father [would] call all his neighbors together; they lay the child on the  
 264 leaf of a tree (for they have no cushions) and drink over the child’s body,  
 265 so that the wine drips on it. As soon as it begins to scream, they give a  
 266 name according to the scream the child lets forth, such as Corankin  
 267 [Korankye], Quaku [Kwaku], Apeidaba [Afia?], Jafury [Gyamfi?]. *They*  
 268 *pay regard to the day of birth, too.*<sup>13</sup> Located some 12.5 miles away at  
 269 Adena and perhaps an elderly woman by 1620, Adwoa Bonsu would have  
 270 easily recognized whatever veracity lied in Brun’s observation while he was  
 271 stationed in Fort Nassau at Mori and certainly in the name “Quaku”  
 272 (Kwaku)—male whose “day of birth” is Wednesday. But Adwoa would  
 273 not have found strange the presence of other non-Akan, even non-African,  
 274 names among the same individuals who bore one of the fe/male soul  
 275 names. “[W]hen we [the Dutch] came to them,” Brun continued, “they  
 276 gave [their children] Christian names, such as Peter, Paul, John etc. This  
 277 is very pleasing for them [the Africans], as if they were being very highly  
 278 honored. They now give their children Christian names of their own  
 279 accord.” Since Adwoa was archived in the Portuguese record as “Maria”  
 280 and by her “soul name” Adwoa, we can be sure the likes of Kwaku or  
 281 Peter, depending on their level of interaction or interests shared with one  
 282 or more European trading company, would have undergone some version  
 283 of the *abadinto* ceremony Brun described and assumed a Christian name  
 284 in the company of Europeans. For some indigenes, the deployment of  
 285 Christian names even served to underscore stature and power among their

<sup>13</sup>Adam Jones, *German Sources for West African History, 1599–1669* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983), 88 (emphasis added).

own, and that they were deserving of not only the names but also the titles which the powerful in Europe bore. In effect, Brun's observation of the use of *akradin* and Christian names around the first two decades of the seventeenth century and Adwoa's *kradin* and Christian name recorded more than four decades earlier suggest continuity in the use of *akradin* among a new cast of European first names.

Earlier in the mid-sixteenth century, a few African elites on or with access to the coast and its commerce assumed Christian names, but as an overture to establish or maintain trade relations with Portugal and other European nations. In 1557, the governor of the São Jorge da Mina fortress wrote to the Queen of Portugal:

I had to [send] a [Portuguese] man to the kings of *Acanes Grandes* ["Big Akan"] and the *Acanes Pequenos* ["Small Akan"] to get them to mend relations and open up their roads to this fortress. This man spent more than eight months there and reconciled these kings and made them friends, and he opened roads that had been blocked for many years. As a sign of reconciliation and friendship he brought to this fortress a son of each of the kings. The son of the King of the *Acanes Grandes* is his oldest son and heir, and is called António de Brito, the António de Brito who used to be [Portuguese] captain here [between 1543 and 1545] having once visited him. These hostages I received at this fortress very warmly, and I ordered them to be given their customary food.

After these roads had been opened up and all was completed, there happened to come here a brother of the King of the *Acanes Pequenos*, and over a black whom he killed in this town a great fight broke out.... To have this set right also cost me afterwards a great deal of trouble, and in bringing the matter to a peaceful conclusion some expense. Dom João [baptized ruler of Fetu] also helped in this, and now I have everything settled and all runs well.

After these ships came to port, the wife of António de Brito came here to be with him. I warmly welcomed her and soon made her a Christian, and she took the name Dona Catarina, in recollection of Your Highness, and I and Cristovão d'Oliveira were her godparents.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo (IAN/TT), Corpo Cronológico (CC), pt. 1, maço 101, no. 25, Letter of Afonso Gonçalves Botafogo to the Queen, 18 April 1557. See also A. Teixeira da Mota and P.E.H. Hair, *East of Mina: Afro-European Relations on the Gold Coast in the 1550s and 1560s* (Madison: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1988), 64–66.

318 Located in the forested interior, “Akan” signaled a non-ethnic but lin-  
 319 guistically and culturally related group of peoples claiming to be indigenes,  
 320 not migrants, settling the forest and its fringes for several millennia. These  
 321 peoples were also the principal merchants who held a monopoly on the  
 322 sixteenth-century gold trade through a commercial network that included  
 323 many of the coastal polities. Fetu, a reference to the polity and its people,  
 324 were less than 9 miles away from the São Jorge da Mina fortress and  
 325 Adena, where Adwoa presumably lived. Both Fetu and Adena were nodal  
 326 points within the Akan trading network, and the meaning of renaming  
 327 rulers, local officials, or even non-elite individuals under Portuguese pro-  
 328 tection would not have been lost to Adwoa. Having been baptized and  
 329 assigned the Christian name Maria, Adwoa would have known through  
 330 observation and experience that Portuguese colonial claims to overseas  
 331 land and peoples could only become reality through ideological coloniza-  
 332 tion—“renting” land on which to maintain a fortified presence, but enact-  
 333 ing subjugation through baptisms, chapels, renaming, bribery, military  
 334 force, and the symbolic power and prestige derived from membership in  
 335 the Portuguese empire.

336 The imperialist John II, who ascended the Portuguese throne in 1481,  
 337 proclaimed himself the “Lord of Guinea,” which most notably included  
 338 his West African base of commercial operations at Sao Jorge da Mina, and  
 339 some decades later an anonymous reporter and an official in Portugal’s  
 340 Council of State pushed for an all-out colonization of the Gold Coast,  
 341 from Akyem to Nkrān (Accra).<sup>15</sup> The king’s claim was meaningless outside  
 342 of Portugal and a settler colony was unrealistic against the backdrop of a  
 343 tropical climate and its diseases, sovereign African polities which competed  
 344 with each other and the various Europeans along the Gold Coast, and the  
 345 inability to coerce the producers and distributors of the gold which kept  
 346 the Portuguese in the region. These realities forced the Portuguese on the  
 347 Gold Coast to use a mixture of force, fraud, and overtures to get powerful  
 348 merchants, such as the Akan, to open the paths upon which the gold travel-  
 349 ed to the coast and to maintain this unstable cooperation through  
 350 Christian baptisms. The Portuguese tacitly, if not explicitly, viewed bap-  
 351 tism, renaming, and ongoing (though haphazard) indoctrination as rituals  
 352 of submission to Portuguese overlordship. The Africans had other ideas,  
 353 even among those who acquiesced.

<sup>15</sup> Blake, *Europeans in West Africa*, 1: 18; Brásio, MMA, 3: 89–113; John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469–1682* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), 122.

In 1503 the Portuguese baptized Sakyi ("Sasaxy") of Fetu "through the great cleverness of the [Portuguese] captain" and renamed him Dom João (effectively erasing his "African" identity and memory in the historical record), but the "Xeryfe," a principal figure of neighboring Komenda, only entertained the idea of baptism.<sup>16</sup> These actual and potential conversions, whatever their full meaning to the targeted, were part of a mutually attractive commercial package generally formed between Portuguese and African ruling factions.<sup>17</sup> The price of Portuguese support included an acceptance of Christianity and its God, "especially where Portuguese troops or shipments of arms were requested" and where the Portuguese viewed their protection or support of a sign of overlordship.<sup>18</sup> The Sao Jorge da Mina fortress and the village of Adena were placed under the Portuguese king and both were referred to as "our city" and "our village of Mina" from 1503 onward; the overlordship, effectively, carved out a geographically small but economically profitable colonial enclave between the late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Adwoa lived in the village but likely worked in the fortress and was certainly known to Portuguese officials residing in the fortress. That the likes of Adwoa was a hindrance to Portuguese ideological conquest and its contemplated colonial project provides a measure of these processes: few Africans on the coast and proximate to the Portuguese, including Adwoa, practiced the Christian faith and even the inducement of cash rewards to Portuguese captains at the fortress for each convert failed as most converts did not remain so.<sup>19</sup> With the exception of a few baptized rulers and their sons, the killing of all the Augustinian clergy but one in the decade the anonymous official wrote about Adwoa suggests that Christianization was as strong as the waning

<sup>16</sup> Blake, *Europeans in West Africa*, 1: 95; ANTT, CC, parte I, maço 4, doc. 32, Letter of Diogo D'Alvarenga to King Manuel I, 18 August 1503; CC, parte I, maço 3, doc. 119, Letter of Nuno Vaz de Castello to King Manuel I, 2 October 1502. This letter notes de Castello's arrival and reception at Mina, and as well as his visit to Xarife (Xeryfe) of Komenda and perhaps the "king of Efuto [Fetu]" as well.

<sup>17</sup> Brásio, MMA, 1: 191. On the Portuguese courting African rulers while Duarte Pacheco Pereira was governor of the Mina fortress and town, see ANTT, CC, parte II, maço 85, doc. 200 (20 November 1519), CC, parte II, maço 87, doc. 30 (21 January 1520), CC, parte II, maço 88, doc. 137 (3 April 1520), CC, parte II, maço 89, doc. 80 (7 May 1520), CC, parte II, maço 89, doc. 82 (8 May 1520), CC, parte II, maço 90, doc. 13 (7 June 1520).

<sup>18</sup> Ivana Elbl, "The Portuguese Trade with West Africa, 1440–1521" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1986), 226.

<sup>19</sup> da Mota and Hair, *East of Mina*, 93; Vogt, *Portuguese Rule*, 55.



380 Portuguese presence and power on the Gold Coast.<sup>20</sup> If Adwoa was a  
 381 young woman in the 1570s, the elder Adwoa, if alive by the 1630s, would  
 382 have witnessed the ouster of the Portuguese from the Gold Coast and new  
 383 European competitors, but also the persistence of a naming system which  
 384 features the widespread *akradin* in the face of as many alternative names  
 385 (and identities) as there were Dutch, British, Swedish, Brandenburger  
 386 (German), French, and Danish nationals on 350 miles of contested  
 387 Atlantic coastline.

388 By the 1670s, Adwoa would have likely made her transition from the  
 389 temporal to the ancestral world (*asamandoo*), while European dominance  
 390 on the Gold Coast littoral would have shifted from the Portuguese to the  
 391 Dutch and the British. Other than the line which includes her name(s) in  
 392 the anonymous Portuguese report of 1572, we know virtually nothing of  
 393 Adwoa's life. With so many questions to ask about that life but with no  
 394 way to answer them I have had to use her "soul name" to engage in  
 395 informed speculate—with the goals of this chapter in mind—on a life she  
 396 could have lived. We know her parents would have been married since  
 397 marriage among the Akan is never fully consecrated or complete until a  
 398 child is born. We can also be certain her parents were Akan peoples since,  
 399 beyond her name, there is nothing in the records suggesting she was a so-  
 400 called "mulatto" and since she lived in Adena and not the São Jorge da  
 401 Mina fortress. Her mother would have spent the last month of her preg-  
 402 nancy with Adwoa in her (matrilineal) clan's village—Adena—and would  
 403 have delivered Adwoa the infant in her mother's house (*ofie*), where no  
 404 men, including Adwoa's father, would have been allowed. The *ntoro/nton*  
 405 of Adwoa's father, however, would have been invoked in the *Afodie* cere-  
 406 mony when Adwoa's mother was six or seven months pregnant, further  
 407 underwriting the inborn spiritual bond between father and child. Adwoa's  
 408 successful entrance to this temporal world would have been seen as evi-  
 409 dence of her father's *ntoro/nton* taking good care of the developing fetus,  
 410 and Adwoa's mother would have observed the taboos and rituals of her  
 411 father's and her husband's *ntoro/nton*—in the latter case, for the benefit  
 412 of Adwoa.

413 During fetal development, the Akan claim one chooses—in a one-to-  
 414 one conversation with the Creator—his or her mission to be achieved in

<sup>20</sup> Vogt, *Portuguese Rule*, 56. See also Brásio, MMA, 1: 426, 444, 502, 519; 2: 351, 513; 4: 87, 136; 8: 185; Ralph M. Wiltgen, *Gold Coast Mission History, 1471–1880* (Techny, Ill.: Divine Word Publications, 1956), 20.

the temporal world. Akan coded wisdom proverbially tells us, *obi kra ne* 415  
*Onyankopɔn na obi nnyina ɔ* (when one takes leave of Onyankopɔn, no 416  
one stands there). This negotiated life mission (*hyɛbea*) is realized as *abrabo* 417  
(“ethical ideal and existence”). Ethical existence is regarded as both per- 418  
sonal and communal whereas one’s existential mission is individuated, but 419  
the community must safeguard its content. In effect, the elder who 420  
becomes an ancestor without fulfilling his or her *hyɛbea* would return to 421  
the temporal as many times as necessary to fulfill their mission. The elder 422  
who fulfills his or her *hyɛbea* becomes one of the “evolved” ancestors 423  
(*nananom nsamanfo*), having “crossed the waters” from the mundane to 424  
*asamandɔ*. Since the personhood of Adwoa, and all Akan persons, would 425  
have been constituted by her *kra* (imbued with *hyɛbea* and *honhom*, “breath 426  
of life”), *sunsum* (“spiritual personality”), and the blood (*mmogyɛ*) of her 427  
mother and semen (*ahobaa*) of her father, each of these elements of the 428  
whole human being had their own destination at the time of death. The 429  
*mmogyɛ* that formed the physiological bond between Adwoa and her 430  
mother, including the formation of her flesh (*honam*) and physical body 431  
(*nipadua*), became a corpse (*efunu*) that faded into Asase Yaa, the earth. 432  
Adwoa’s *kra*, which sustained her conscience and life, returned to the 433  
Creator. Her *sunsum* either perished or was transformed at death, where 434  
either it or the *mmogyɛ* became an ancestral spirit (*ɔsaman*) that awaited 435  
rebirth through a woman of the same *abusua* or matrilineal clan. 436

The distinctive, “soul name” pattern of which Adwoa’s name was a part 437  
persisted stubbornly into the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, 438  
and in the records of various European observers who had no particular 439  
interest or need to record them. French merchant and slaver Jean Barbot 440  
published his account in 1688 based on experiences—some first-hand, 441  
others through acquaintances—a decade earlier. Barbot made two voyages 442  
on French slaving vessels to West Africa between 1678–1679 and 443  
1681–1682. Barbot’s data was geographically and socially limited to the 444  
coastal fringes, where African-European interactions—both coerced and 445  
free—were most intense and where he collected his information from resi- 446  
dents, traders, officers, European agents, and local acquaintances. Around 447  
1678, Barbot wrote: 448

As soon as the Confoe [*ɔkɔmfɔ*], or priest, has blessed the child, if we may 449  
so call it ... the next thing is to give it a name. If the family be above the 450  
common rank, the infant has three names given it; *the first is the name of the* 451  
*day of the week on which it is born*; the next, if a son, is the grand-father’s 452

453 name; and if a girl, the grand-mother's; others give their own name, or that  
454 of fame of their relations.

455 ... The names for boys are commonly, Adom, Quaou [Kwaku], Quaw  
456 [Kwao], Corbei, Coffi [Kofi], &c. and for girls, Canow, Jama [Amma?],  
457 Aquouba [Akua], Hiro, Accasiaffa [Akosua], and many more. Besides these  
458 names of their own for boys, they frequently add our Christian names, as  
459 John, Antony, Peter, Jacob, Abraham, &c. being proud of those European  
460 names; *but that is practiced only by those that live under the protection of the*  
461 *forts on the coast.*<sup>21</sup>

462 Barbot's account underscores two major themes present during the life  
463 and afterlife of Adwoa Bonsu. First, the *abadinto* ceremony and the nam-  
464 ing of children based on their day of birth remained as it did in the six-  
465 teenth century, if not earlier, under the aegis of the healer-spiritualist  
466 (*ɔkɔmfɔɔ*). Second, the presence of both "soul names" and European/  
467 Christian names is not at all surprising; rather, it is the qualification. The  
468 use of a European/Christian name in the place of or in addition to a "soul  
469 name" seemed a male preoccupation, but even so this practice was "only  
470 by those that live[d] under the protection of the [European] forts on the  
471 coast," as in the case of Adwoa and her village of Adena under Portuguese  
472 protectorate status.

473 Certainly, variously ranked local rulers and their sons often assumed a  
474 European name in addition to their own, and since indigenous warriors,  
475 merchants, and clergymen were almost always male and who interacted  
476 most with Europeans and their ideologies, Barbot's observation suggest a  
477 "gendered" naming tradition where it seems more Gold Coast men than  
478 women carried European names. This was indeed the case in the scant  
479 sixteenth-century records. But what is more remarkable is not only the  
480 gender-balanced nature of the "soul names"—where each day carries a fe/  
481 male name sharing the same root term (e.g., Monday-born Adwoa [female]  
482 and Kwadwo [male]) indicative of basic temperament—but rather the ways  
483 in which this naming tradition shaped how Africans on the Gold Coast  
484 named themselves *and* the Europeans they encountered. Ludewig

<sup>21</sup> Jean Barbot, "A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea, 1678–88," in Awnsham Churchill, *A Collection of Voyages and Travels ...* (London: Messrs. Churchill, 1732), 244 (emphasis added). Among those in Accra, Barbot observed or was told circumcision occurred "at no place on the whole coast, but only at Accra; where infants are circumcised by the priest, at the same time that they receive their names."

Ferdinand Rømer, Chief Merchant and slaver in the service of the Danish establishments on the Gold Coast, wrote in the mid-eighteenth century: “Those Europeans whom the Blacks especially like are known most of the time by black [*sic*] names. It is a common practice that, *when new Europeans arrive in that country they are each given a name during their first eight days*, and it is amusing that *the names they are given are rather well suited to their temperaments and the condition of their bodies.*” In effect, the European was named as an Akan person would, using the same cultural understandings and criteria but without the meaning of incorporation into and obligations flowing from membership in both patrilineal and matrilineal clans. “Names are changed, too,” Rømer acknowledged,

when the European changes his behavior. For instance, an Assistant at Christiansborg who spoke French and had to manage all the trade with the French captains carried on at our fort was called ‘Frenchman’ by the Blacks. Sometime later, on a number of occasions, he revealed that he did not lack courage. The Blacks then unanimously gave him one of the ‘great names’ of Oppoccu [Opoku], *Tentjen* [*tenten*, ‘the tall one’] *Koko* ([*korkor*,] the [bright one]). In nearly all the towns there are children who are called ‘Frenchman,’ and when you ask them why they do not call their children by that man’s [new] ‘great name,’ since they have named their sons after him, they answer that the son must first prove his virtue before he can receive the man’s ‘great name.’<sup>22</sup>

Finally, Rømer notes, “Little girls are sometimes called [but not named] ‘Madame,’ after a European woman.” By issuing “both bad and good names to the Europeans,” Africans on the Gold Coast employed their naming system within and outside their cultural world, and, in some ways, contested rather than yielded to the ideological or doctrinal subjugation various European nationals on the Gold Coast desired.

## CONCLUSION 513

As the story of the “soul name” pushed into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from the likes of the Thursday-born Yaa Asantewaa to the Friday-born Kofi Annan, European/Christian names became more

<sup>22</sup>Ludewig Ferdinand Rømer, *Tilforladelig Efterretning om Kysten Guinea—A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea (1760)*, trans. and ed. Selena A. Winsnes (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2000), 162–63.

517 commonplace but contested as they moved beyond the coastline and into  
 518 the villages, and as a more strident British imperialism paved the way for  
 519 churches, colonial cash crops, and foreign rule consolidated in the late  
 520 nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the Americas, where we find  
 521 Akan and Akan-descended peoples since the seventeenth century, the  
 522 *akradin* intrudes onto the present, remaining persistent in some contexts  
 523 and assumed by a range of African-descended peoples and morphing into  
 524 last name positions or various phonetic permutations.<sup>23</sup> For instance, we  
 525 find individuals such as “Coffij” (Kofi), “Cokoe” (Kwaku), “Anna Maria  
 526 Aba,” and husband and wife “Amboa” and “Adjou” (Adwoa) in early-  
 527 eighteenth-century Dutch America, and a range of Akan *akradin* in the  
 528 Americas during the first half of the nineteenth century, decades after the  
 529 British abolished transoceanic slaving across the Atlantic in 1807 (see  
 530 Table 3).<sup>24</sup> Those in the Akan homeland would also carry culturally  
 531 authored names, for these names were not simply artifacts from a “past”  
 532 that was “traditional” and awkwardly existing in the “modern”; they rep-  
 533 resent a continuous present for history as human action simply accumu-  
 534 lates and that accumulated knowledge shaped the names and the lives of  
 535 its holders. Viewed from this perspective, the European colonial encoun-  
 536 ter beginning in the late fifteenth century was a process of securing coastal  
 537 liaisons through commerce and Christian names, hoping these baptismal  
 538 mechanisms would ensure dependency and place indigenous culture on  
 539 inquisitional trial among the Africans encountered. But there was and is  
 540 something in the underwriting effect of those “soul names” which did not  
 541 (yet) yield to five centuries of colonial and missionary overtures.

542 Today, many Akan culture bearers, regardless of their registered  
 543 Christian names assigned from missionary or government schools, still  
 544 hold that such names affect their lives in concrete ways. According to  
 545 Kwabena Darko, who was interviewed by linguists Samuel Obeng in  
 546 1994, “Senea yede wo to Temanmuhunu a, woremme bra pa biara, na  
 547 yede wo to Kɔɔayie a, ayie mpa wo fie da no, saa ara nso na se yede wo to  
 548 Afiriye a, bere biara na siadeɛ di w’anim” (Just as one leads an unproduc-  
 549 tive life if one is named Sit-in-a-country-do-nothing, or one’s life is

<sup>23</sup> For fuller discussion, see Kwasi Konadu, *The Akan Diaspora in the Americas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> National Archives, The Hague, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (WIC), 1.05.01.02 (Ingekomen brieven met bijlagen van Curaçao), 201–208, 213, 6 April 1703–16 November 1739. These are, of course, composite dates, covering not all—but most—volumes and dates in the range.

**Table 3** Akan “Day Names” from Captive Africans Procured East of the Gold Coast, 1810–1829<sup>a</sup>

	<i>Marquis de Romand<sup>b</sup> (1810)</i>	<i>S. Jos (1813)</i>	<i>Des de Ferreiro (1822)</i>	<i>Firmé (1828)</i>	<i>Voladora<sup>d</sup> (1829)</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
t3.1					
t3.2					
t3.3					
t3.4					
t3.5	Kwadwo (9)	Adwoa (1)	Kwadwo (8)	Adwoa (1)	Kwadwo (0)
t3.6	Kwabena (0);	Abena (0)	Kwabena (0);	Abena (1)	Kwabena (0)
t3.7	Kwa-mena (7);		Kwa-mena (5)		
t3.8	Kobina (2)				
t3.9	Kwaku (7)	Akua (2)	Kwaku (15)	Akua (2)	Kwaku (6)
t3.10	Yao/w Quao,	Yaa, Aba (2)	Yao/w Quao,	Yaa, Aba (3)	Yao/w Quao,
t3.11	Kwao (6)		Kwao (2)		Kwao (2)
t3.12	Kofi (9)	Afia, Afia	Kofi (6)	Afia, Afia	Kofi (4)
t3.13		(2)		(1)	
t3.14	Kwame (0)	Ama, Amba	Kwame (0)	Ama (2)	Kwame (9)
t3.15		(6)		(3)	
t3.16	Kwasi (3)	Akosua, Esi	Kwasi (6)	Akosua, Esi (4)	Kwasi (7)
t3.17		(2)			

<sup>a</sup>The names and numbers of individuals named in the table come from the combined searches of two related databases: the “Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database” [TASTD] ([www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces](http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces)) and the “African Origins: Portal to Africans Liberated from Transatlantic Slave Vessels” database (<http://african-origins.org/african-data>). I first searched the latter by known “day names” and then by vessels, selecting the sample used in the table and comparing the details of the “African Origins” database with the TASTD

<sup>b</sup>101 captive Africans disembarked at Freetown, Sierra Leone. Seventy percent among the group were male; the number of Akan male “day names” should be against the total number of male captives, estimated at sixty-nine or seventy

<sup>c</sup>The “country” for these voyagers was “Mina,” but clearly this trademark did not refer to the coast of Dahomey/Benin exclusively or most importantly, given the numbers and kinds of stubbornly Akan names. For instance, nowhere else in these registers of names for the enslaved did I find “full” Akan names such as Kwaku Mensa, Kwame Fuch (Buaht?), Kofi Eson, Kwame Esa, Kwame Apea, Kwasi Kuma, and specific non-soul names (kradin) such as Amanakwa, Nkansaa, Sakyi, Okyere, Osafo, Onipa, Akyampon, Mensa, Nkrumah, Afram, Obosom, and Onyame

<sup>d</sup>The “country” of the individuals named was “Mina janti” or “Mina Asante,” that is, Akan peoples originating either from the Asante heartland or between the “Mina coast” and the forested Asante region

550 riddled with deaths [funerals] if one is named S/he-went-to-a-funeral, so  
 551 does one have good luck in abundance if one is named He-came-at-a-  
 552 good-time). For Ama Dapaa, also interviewed by Obeng, *akradin* remain  
 553 markers of historical time and circumstances: “Na me nana-baa fr̄e me  
 554 Ama Kɔ̄ayie efise yewoo me Memeneda; ɛda a ɔhene panin no wuie no.  
 555 Nso nnipa a yene wɔn bɔ afipam no fr̄e me Ama Dapaa efise saa Memeneda  
 556 no ye dapaa” (My grandmother used to call me Ama Kɔ̄ayie “Saturday-  
 557 born female person who went to a funeral” because I was born on Saturday,  
 558 the day on which the big Chief passed away. However, the people in our  
 559 neighborhood call me Ama Dapaa because that day was “Holy” Saturday).<sup>25</sup>  
 560 European colonialism, whenever we mark its beginnings, was not this  
 561 great rupture between “traditional” and “modern” African societies nor,  
 562 therefore, should its periodization of African history. Naming African his-  
 563 tories “pre-colonial” or “post-colonialism” stands at odds with the histo-  
 564 ries of Africans like Kwabena and Ama, who are participants in a naming  
 565 culture and a set of histories encoded in each “soul name.” If a study of  
 566 Akan *akradin* through one specimen—our guide Adwoa—can reveal what  
 567 has remained and what has been archived in a naming culture over five  
 568 centuries, just imagine if the people for whom these names were designed  
 569 begin to view them as critical markers of personhood and as new areas of  
 570 serious study.

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