

Appellative Names: Nanuŋ Towns in Context

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Abstract

In this paper, we focus on studying the appellative names of some towns in Nanuŋ and how these appellative names came into existence so as to uncover the important historical information, such as settlement history, folklore and social conditions about these places. Town names (toponyms) have attracted a lot of scholarly attention. However, appellative names, Nanuŋ appellative town names for that matter is yet to catch the eyes of scholars. No study has been sighted in relation to this study and thus triggers the study. Nanuŋ appellative town names are not haphazardly labeled, but sociocultural driven with sociocultural functions and meanings. Therefore, analysis is done with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. We established that numerous appellative town names of Nanuŋ reveal the culture of Nanuni speakers over many thousands of years. Many of these place names are complex and their meanings can only be explained by tracing the formative history and not the phonological, orthographic or morphological underpinnings. The researchers also established that, the processes of appellatively naming new places varies: contracted proverbial name, role of the place in the kingdom, expected behaviour of the skin occupant, socioeconomic activities, surrounding feature or place descriptive name, names after an earth-spirit/god and contextual obscure and opaque are the variations in the naming process. It is also evident that, the appellative town names of Nanuŋ are metaphorically constructed. However, these names

have connections with the identity of the community members, since they taboo certain animals believed to be the gods of which these places are named after. The researchers employed purposive random sampling in the selection of the towns. However, snowballing technique was also employed to select the participants for primary data through interviews which were recorded with audio recorder and notepad.

Keywords: Nanuŋ, appellative, names, sociocultural and Nanuni

1. Introduction

This study of appellative (common) place names of Nanuŋ, triggered by non-availability or unknown study on place names of Nanuŋ. It attempts extending the investigation of place names and to provide an additional aid in the study of the cultures of Nanumba. It is argued that the recognition of proper names is seen as a reaction on the right side of the brain, where information concerning a composite, complete perception is generally processed, and the recognition of appellatives is located on the left half of the brain, which generally is key regarding linguistic activities and analytical processes (Müller 2003).

The study of names and references within different cultures provide extensive evidence in support of the view that the name does not only show the uniqueness of the individual but carries and delivers a range of different meanings derived from social and cultural environment in which they are embedded (Dima, 2020). Names are one of the products of people interactions, language community, and the environment (Ariwibowo, 2019).

Place names are expressions that differentiate places from others for easy identification. They are normally formed from ordinary linguistic elements, words and derivational affixes or through Nanuni own grammar and structural principles. Place names also known as *toponyms* are universal but the characteristics of each language and culture have an effect on what structurally and contextually brands place names. Name can either be a word or the combination of words referring to an identified individual subject or object (proper name/noun) or a word or the combination of words referring to subjects or objects representing their classes (appellative or common noun). Interestingly, what account for a name to be seen as a proper name is one of the fundamental concepts in onomastics that has been debated on and off for centuries, as described by Nicolaisen (1995) and Coates (2006).

Just like many Western languages, Nanuŋ appellative/unofficial/traditional town names are compound expressions, made up of one or two and or more elements, with *yili* ‘home/settlement/town’ which signifies the class or type of place and the other(s) signifying certain special features. In Nanuŋ, the most common specific part and a place in relation to which other places are identified the most that refers to a natural place is *yili* which may come from the fact that settlements are homes and a labeling feature of many places regarding settlements. It is impossible to trace the precise time of the origin of these names but the way they came to be are orally preserved in some specific individuals passed on from one generation to the other as they have been used since there has continuously been a reason to speak about places. Place names can be official, sanctioned by a legally constituted names authority and applied within its jurisdiction and the unofficial that do not have any legal

sanctioning. Unofficial names commemorate local people remembering local events and people (Nash, 2021). According to Dakubu (2000), most traditional names of the Dagbamba are in Dagbani. That, the division of names is thus linguistic, social, and historical, and entails important ritual differences. The traditional/indigenous names also reflect a major regional cultural distinction. These unofficial/primary/traditional names may gain the status of official names but the appellative also considered to be unofficial/primary/traditional names, which are *microtoponyms* is thus central in this paper. With unofficial names, different motives and explanations are often connected to them. *Microtoponyms* are the names of small geographical places or objects, such as micro-names (Segin and Rukhlenko, 2017).

Appellatives are phenomenal groupings of human surroundings by finding common features between humans, objects or things on the basis of which they can be grouped (Terhi et. al., 2012). This is based on the ability to break down the details and traits of different subjects. Appellatives are lexical-semantically opaque. They are not easily recognizable as names because they have exactly the same semantic features. The central objective of this paper is to account for the background and origin of Nanuŋ place appellative names and how they serve as one identity. The Nanuŋ appellative town names accumulate unique information about the culture, history and language of the people.

In place naming, names are given in relation to a kind of idea for naming the place, thus, a principle of naming. A principle of naming is a subject regarding extralinguistic reality, such as the shape of a place. Principles of naming are divided into four main groups: location of the place, the natural qualities of the place, what occurs or appears at the place and the place's relationship to people. Sometimes, one name can have more than one principle.

Al-haj (2016) has it that everything around us has to be identified with a suitable given name, for distinction. Many scholars and linguists have focused on investigating how names can reveal cultural insights, linguistic features, and the historical background of a society. Nanuŋ appellative town names crucially use language efficiently through words. They are emotionally attached words that carry all the information about the people, the place or object and the environment. These appellative names of the towns show their identity, history, tradition, kinship, ownership, power and money associated with the names at the emotional level. Because these appellative names are of special quality, they fascinate people and arouse many questions of what they are stand for. In line with this, Al-Zumor (2009) postulates that lexemes found in anthroponomastics bear witness to the values and ideas of the society concerned, reveal details about the people's origins and professions, tradition and fashion, social rank, and so on. That anthroponomastic studies are therefore based on the theory that there is a strong interface between a people's language and their cultural practices. It reflects how language is used as a cultural practice and how language is used as a powerful tool to view and understand the world view of a particular society. One can therefore use language as a microscopic lens to view and understand the social practices and day-to-day activities of a society.

1.1 About the People of Nanuŋ

Nanumba ‘Nanumbas’ are an ethnic group whose traditional homeland is at the Southeastern part of the Northern Region of Ghana. They speak Nanuni, a dialect of Dagbani, a Mabia language family (Awedoba, 2010; Wundow, 2004). Though Nanumba constitute a homogeneous cultural and linguistic group, they are closely related to *Dagbamba* to the North and East and the Mamprusi further to the north of Ghana, and more-remotely to the Mossi of Burkina Faso. Traditionally, the originating ancestors of the paramount chiefly lines of the former three brothers, that is, Tɔhigu, Shitɔbu and ɔmantambo and the Mossi paramounts descended from a daughter of the Mamprusi line. The capital town of the Nanuŋ Kingdom is Bimbilla, a town located on latitude 8.8593° or 8° 51' 33.7" north and longitude 0.0557° or 0° 3' 20.5" east in the Northern Region of Ghana (Angela, 2003). It is also the seat of the Overlord of Nanuŋ, the Bimbilla Naa. The Bimbilla Naa is the Paramount Chief of the Nanumba ethnic group. The Nanumba have a particularly close relationship with *Dagbamba*, but the larger group have rarely exercised direct power over them. Politically, the Nanuŋ Kingdom is divided into two assemblies, Nanumba North Municipal and Nanumba South District with Bimbilla and Wulensi as the respective capitals.

Nanuŋ Kingdom was founded by Naa ɔmantambo, the youngest son of Naa Gbewa, after moving south from his elder brother Shitobu, the founder of the present day Dagbaŋ state. The new state was subsequently called Nanuŋ, a compound word made up of two nouns *Naa* ‘King or Chief’ and *nua* ‘hand’. Naa Shitobu is said to have pointed his hand towards the south and asked Naa ɔmantambo and his followers to go and settle there. So, Naa ɔmantambo and his followers went in the direction indicated by the hand and settled in the present day Bimbilla. Therefore, *Naa nua* ‘the King’s hand’ metamorphosized into Nanuŋ as the place name and the people known as Nanumba.

On the other hand, it also established that, the name Nanuŋ as the place name and Nanumba as the name of the people came into existence through Nawuries, the settlers Naa ɔmantambo met at the first place of settlement (present day Nanuŋ). According to this particular thought, that when Naa ɔmantambo arrived with his warriors and followers at the present day Nanuŋ, he first settled closer to the place now known as Daalanyili. The then people who were already settlers (Nawuries) heard some noise from afar and asked a princess to go and find out what was happening at where the noise were coming from. Again, after Naa ɔmantambo settled, anytime he wanted to pass any information to the Nawuries, he will send a messenger to go and call one of them and when the Nawuries appoint one of them to go and listen, they will also tell the person to go and listen to whatever Naa ɔmantambo have and come bac. And in Nawuri, *Na nu mba* literally means ‘go and listen and come’. As the Nawuries kept using this expression often as and when there are any dealings with Naa ɔmantambo. This expression eventually became a referent name to Naa ɔmantambo and his people which also metamorphosized into *Nanuŋ* as the name of the place. This assertion is closer to how the language and its speakers acquired the name Nanuni and Nanumba respectfully since these two names linguistically are closer to the Nawuri statement.

The place can also be called by the name of the first King and the first settler, *Ɖmantambo* or add *yili* 'home/settlement/town' to *Ɖmantambo*, as *Ɖmantamboyili*, to mean a name of *Bimbilla*. Among the numerous towns created in the early period around 1350 were *Nakpa*, *Bakpaba*, *Juanayili*, *Dokpam*, *Chamba*, *Gbungbaliga*, *Dalanyili*, *Wulensi* and many more *Nanumba* towns in Northern Ghana. *Nanuŋ* has a land area of 2260.8 sq/km and shares boundaries with *East Gonja Municipal* to the west, *Yendi Municipal* to the north, *Zabzugu District* to the east and to the south with *Kpandai District*.

Nanuŋ and for that *Ɖmantambo* or *Ɖmantamboyili* was therefore born out of an event and after the first King (*Ɖmantambo*). It has also been named after the name of the group of people who are owners of the place. This is made known to public through the historical background of the place. This paper thus hinges on the historical background of the names of these places and the relationship this historical background of these names has to do with the cultural identity of the people/settlers using selected places/towns within the Kingdom. The study however delimits itself to the appellative names of these selected places.

2. Theoretical Background

Sociocultural theory studies how human beings can be understood only as a part of society, culture or history and not in isolation. It focuses on the relationship between the individual's physiological features and the contexts and socially or culturally produced artifacts that reflects the thoughts of this individual. These relationships transform the individual's cognitive functions. According to (Vygotsky, 1978), human beings do not have accumulated knowledge in their heads. With sociocultural theory, that, meanings are transferred from interconnections the individuals have with the culture and activity these individuals find themselves in. Sociocultural theory thus explicates the role social mediation plays in the construction, reconstruction and transformation of meanings derived from cultural and historical situations (Vygotsky, 1978). That, the sociocultural theory explores the relationships between external and internal processes as it is centered on the creation and usage of mediating tools that play a role in how humans think. It facilitates a systematic investigation of cognition in social context. Human development as a socially mediated process varies from one culture to another. The historical study of behavior forms the base for the sociocultural theory. Hence, the historical narration of how these places in *Nanuŋ* acquired their names are essential in this study.

3. Methodology

This research is a qualitative with case study as its design since the researchers' aim was to primarily understand what prevails in the appellative names of some *Nanuŋ* towns without any statistical analysis. As Frankel and Wallen (2003) rightly stated that, in a case of study, the researcher is mainly interested in understanding a specific individual's or group's prevailing situation.

The researchers have collected the names from the research area by interviewing inhabitants of these selected towns, earth-priest and drummers. In order to compile a comprehensive data, a total of 10 towns made up of a municipal and villages were purposively sampled due to the chieftaincy status of the town in the *Nanuŋ* kingdom, the town or community's involvement

level in the performance of the funeral rites of the Bimbilla Naa ‘King’ and the involvement of the town or community’s chieftaincy occupant in the selection and “enskinment” or coronation process of Bimbilla Naa ‘King’. They were selected across the long and breath of Nanuɲ for representativeness. Each of the selected towns has an earth-priest. So, 10 male earth-priests, were interviewed on what accounted for the appellative names given to these towns. At least, one resident from each of these towns was also interviewed. Among these residents were five males and five females. Three (3) male drummers, including the chief drummer of the Kingdom were also interviewed on the appellative names of these towns. The goal was to interview residents of these towns so they could shed light on the appellative names of these places as well as other nomenclature of the area. The essential objective of compiling these names was to obtain old and native toponymy. The information given in Nanuni were recorded with an audio recorder and a notebook and transcribed using native speaker intuition. One of the researchers was moderating the interview and recording responses with the audio recorder while the other jotted responses in the notepad. Apart from the earth-spirits who were sampled through snowballing, the rest of the participants were purposively sampled. At least, one earth-spirit was identified who in turn directed the researchers to at least one earth-spirit of a different community.

All the data sources were primary since all the data were gathered in the field. Again, there is no known work in relation to this study available to the researchers. Analysis of the compounded names and comparison of the etymological origins or semantic concepts surfacing from the underlying sub-structures, revealed various evolutionary appellative formatives in these place appellative names in Nanuɲ.

4. Analysis

According to Reaney (1960: 17-18), it is possible to etymologically determine the original meanings of the elements of the name before attempting to interpret the name. Different mode of analysis ought to be adapted where the data is composed of a large number of names in a single form of occurrence. That, place names are regarded as fossils of human geography. Each appellative town name is thus individually examined with an in-depth knowledge of the phonetic history of the language after a wider collection.

In conformity to Cameron (1961: 28) assertion on English place names, majority of the appellative town names in Nanuɲ are of a compound character. The two elements in certain times stand in a case relationship. The compounds are of noun-noun, adjective-noun, or verb-noun or sometimes noun-verb-noun forms.

According to their meanings, Nanuɲ appellative town names (though not grouped accordingly in this paper) are observed following the features under the classification of (Cameron, 1961: 27; Sankalia 1949: 47). On classifying English place names, Cameron (1961: 27) says topographical meanings denote inhabited places since the first naming, with the first element either being a descriptive word or a personal or tribal name and the second describing the type of habitation. That, topographical names were originally descriptive of some physical feature, artificial or natural and were adopted as names of nearby settlements. Sankalia (1949: 47) on the hand similarly grouped India place names according to the

meaning of the name, in seven categories. That, they are named after an event, a person, customs and superstitions, geographical and physical features, flowers, fruit trees and crops, animals, birds and reptiles and named after existing places. On this score, place names according to Dauzat (1960) is the representative of the contemporary stratum of human geography. However, there are also some appellative town names that are a contracted form a proverb. They do not belong to any of the categories of any of the above and so we refer to them as proverbial appellative names.

Note that their gazette names or the documented names are the ones in the brackets. The categories of Nanuḡ appellative names are as follows;

4.1 Role in the Kingdom

Cognition and culture play a very significant role in the naming process of the appellative names in Nanuḡ. Naming of some places in Nanuḡ are done through the participation of some individuals from these places in an essential activity and their place in the as far as the performance of these cultural activities are concerned. Some of these cultural activities include, funeral performances and or enskinment or installation of a king. Names giving to places/towns are thus as a result of the role these places play in the kingdom. Depending on the essential role the place plays, it could be given a name associated with the activity they have been playing a role in. If it is for example, burial and or installation of the King of Nanuḡ, the place will accordingly be given a name that depicts the specific role they play in either burial performance or installation of a king.

Gabilḡrayili (Dalanyili)

Dalanyili is one of the villages in Nanuḡ. The settlement is located at the eastern part of Bimbilla. Dalanyili road is at the eastern part of Nabayili. It is about 3km away from Nabayili. Nabayili is on the Bimbilla-Salaga main road and also under the jurisdiction of the King of Bimbilla. Dalanyili has a strong place as far as traditions and culture of the people of Nanuḡ is concerned. It is believed that, the founder of Nanuḡ first settled near the present day Dalanyili where his swords are still fixed to the ground at his first settlement. These swords are now one of the earth-spirits, thus, one of the villages of the earth-priests in Nanuḡ. Until recently, the residents were idol worshipers and no man-made machine such as motor bikes, cars and so on were not allowed to be rode or drove into the community because oral tradition holds that modern machines broke down upon entering *Gabilḡrayili* township. The community is responsible for the burial and performance of the funeral of any late King of Nanuḡ. This is also the place where every new King would have to go and select *Damli* ‘a spiritual walking stick’ after enskinment or installation. Notably, the community has two names, the appellative name and the gazette name and both of these names are sourced from each of the roles played in the burial and enskinment of the Bimbilla King.

For the appellative name, *Gabilḡrayili* a combination of three nouns *gabiga* ‘rope’, *lḡra* ‘fastener) and the default settlement attached to it. When the King of Bimbilla passes on, they will have to find a way of informing this community and no one there sees the time they will arrive at the palace. They set off from this community empty handed but would need items

like fowls, sheep, goat and the others that are not made known. So, when people hear that they are coming, they will go into hiding because it is believed that anything, even human, they meet on their way to the King's palace will be cached, use as a sacrifice to the grave of the King. They often therefore move with ropes and catch sheep, goats, dogs and fowls. Again, during the course of the performance of the late Kings funeral, the blood and liver of a dog are part of the items needed for the pacification of the King to rest well. As a practice, they offer sacrifice to the gods and await the messenger of the gods. It is believed that during this process, a dog will appear suddenly to be used for the sacrifice. Stones and all sort of things will then be thrown against it till it is weakened so they can put a rope around the neck. The dog to be sacrificed is then pulled round the palace three times before it is sacrificed to the King. The liver is then thrashed out of the dog and added to the meet of other sacrificed animals and cooked for the children of the late King to take. It is believed that any of the male children who happens to eat the liver of the dog will eventually ascend to the throne. The act of fastening the rope therefore founded the appellative name, that is, *Gabilɔrayili* 'the fasteners' settlement.'

The name Dalanyili as the place is also called came about because of the role the community plays in the installation of the Bimbilla Naa. A King will be installed in the night of the very day the funeral performance ended. After the installation of the King by the king makers, the King will find a day, send a message to the earth-spirit that he would be coming on the said date for the pacification of the gods at Dalanyili. On that said date after the pacification, the King would have to go into a dark room of the gods, where there are a number of spiritual walking sticks. He would then be asked to come out with the one he chooses for himself. He has to then struggle around the room to come out with one since the place is dark, but will eventually come out with one no matter how much time it will take him. Notably, when a King is installed without going through this, he is installation is incomplete. This act of picking *damli* 'a spiritual walking stick' and *lana* 'the owner' of the spiritual walking, the earth-spirit. That is, *Damlilanayili*, is compounded to form the name *Dalanyili* by deleting a coda of the first syllable and the entire second syllable of the first word *damli* and adding the owner and the default settlement name to it.

Gabilɔrayili (Dalanyili) thus plays a very vital role as far as the culture and traditions of Nanuŋ is concerned and thus, the community is awarded with the names that signify their role in the Nanuŋ Kingdom. *Gabilɔrayili* as the appellative name is thus a symbol that is used to convey spatial information linguistically and transferred orally as Devereaux (2017) cited in Ingram (2020:17) observes. This thus reflects in the appellative town names in Nanuŋ.

4.2 The Expected Behaviour of the Skin Occupant

In addition, places that had their names as a result of the things the occupant of the skin are classified under this section. There are socially ascribed behaviours and activities expected from a chief who intends ascending to the highest throne as far as Bimbilla skins are concerned. These types of names may describe some habit characteristic of the person especially, the skin occupant. These activities are culturally motivated and directly linked to chieftaincy. The appellative names of these particular places thus relate the culturally

expected behaviour of these individuals in Nanuḡ and the cognition of the society as a whole through the names these places bear. These places include;

Zɔbayisiyili (Dokpam)

Zɔbayisiyili is located 4km away from Bimbilla, along the main road of Bimbilla-Salaga Road. The emergence of its appellative name is in connection with the cultural practice of *Nanumba*. The name is a noun/verb-verb compound word made up of the elements/parts *zo* ‘friend/to run’, *bayisi* ‘diviners/to grind’ and *yili* ‘house/town’ and thus denotes the settlement of diviners’ friend. *Yili* ‘house/town’ as the structural generic part of the name signifies the place itself which ends the name qualifies the place name and the specific part *Zɔbayisi* ‘diviners’ friend’. This name is made up of units of the language that form a network of connected meanings in our minds. So, folk etymologically and connotatively, it is interpreted as running around from one diviner to the other or run around town. The name, which signifies a special feature, is also interpreted in a situation of language use and the meaning is connected to the form of the name. Though as a royal, one needs to be mindful of the activities that could assist in aspiring to the highest skin of the kingdom and thus would involve in divination since diviners foretell the future and gives a clear direction. It is believed that, anyone who ascends to the throne of this town is aspiring to be the overlord of the Nanuḡ Kingdom and thus will make the diviners his friends. He therefore knows where every diviner within the Kingdom is and visits them just to be told what to do in order to remove every single barrier in his way in order to ascend to the highest throne in the Kingdom. Dokpam is the highest throne of the *Banyili* gate of the two gates to Bimbilla Kingship as far as Nanuḡ Kingdom is concerned. Anyone who thus ascends to this throne as part of his appellations would be called *Zɔbayisi tiḡlana* ‘the owner of the diviners’ friend’s town’. This is certainly a motivated expression describing its referent. The name could also be identified and interpreted as *zo m-bayisi yili* ‘running around settlement’ since it is believed that whoever is enskinned the chief of this town would definitely have to run around in order to ascend to the highest throne of the Kingdom. The principle behind the name of this town therefore is what occurs or happens at this place. This thus creates a direct meaning relationship between the name and the place.

On the other hand, metaphorically, the name of the place is derived from *zoya* ‘mountains’, *bayisi* ‘to walk stealthily, with a purpose’ and *yili* ‘town/house’, so it is a compound word. This metaphorically see Bimbilla as the ultimate mountain of which the chief is walking stealthily around with the purpose of climbing to the top of the mountain being the throne of Bimbilla. When the occupant of Bimbilla skins who hails from the *Gbuyimayili* gate passes on, the very next to ascend to the throne is the chief of Dokpam, indeed if his grandfather or his father ascended to the throne. The activities leading to the processes of becoming the King of the Kingdom by the chief of Dokpam stealthily with the purpose of ultimately becoming the King of the Kingdom is metaphorically used to name the place.

Nnaanwalimyili (Chamba)

This community is also located about 5-6km away from Bimbilla, along the main road of Bimbilla-Salaga road. It is the largest community along that stretch of Nanuḡ. On naming,

events of the place find their way into the naming of the town. The name is a noun/pronoun-aux-verb compounding made up of the elements *N* 'I', *naan* 'would have' *walim* 'market' and *yili* 'town/house', hence 'I would have done business town' is what the name denotes. In Nanuŋ, Chamba market is noted to be the second most patronized market after Bimbilla, therefore, the second highest tax paid town. As a result of this, chiefs of this town are believed to be rich through the collected or paid taxes on market days. Chiefs of this town thus do market when they are enskinned to accrue wealth pending when they will announce Bimbilla kingship vacant since the ascension onto the throne of the paramountcy also require wealth aside qualification. Apart from the chief becoming wealthy through taxes, it is also believed that, residents of this town are also become wealthy since engaging in any type of business here brings prosperity partly due to huge patronage by people across the Southern and Northern Regions of Ghana. The chief of this town is the second next to the throne of Bimbilla of the *Banyili* gate of the two gates to Bimbilla Kingship in Nanuŋ Kingdom after Dokpam. The chief of this town is believed to have shown the other chiefs within the Kingdom business because it was there other chiefs copied the art of money making through taxing subjects. Therefore, the principle behind the name of this town is also what occurs or happens at the place. This does relate to the economic activities the people of Nanuŋ engage themselves in apart from farming. Farm produce such as pieces of yam are marketed on Wednesdays and Thursdays and on Fridays is the climax of the market. Until now, Chamba was the only place that was recognized to have yam market in the Northern Region.

4.3 Contracted Proverbial Names

Proverbs are a medium through which the culture of the people are transmitted. They are enacted through the existing relationship of the cognition and the participation in the activities of society and artifacts that exist within that society. Places/towns sometimes obtained their names through existing proverbs within the Nanumba culture. The names given to these places are either the first part of an existing proverb or the contracted form of these existing proverbs. The places with these features are;

Sayingaliyili (Bincherataanga)

This community is at the Northern part of Bimbilla. It is about 6-7km away from Bimbilla along the Bimbilla-Yendi Road. The name is the combination of *sayim* 'to spoil/destroy', *gali* 'thread' and the default *yili* 'town/settlement/house', thus literary, the meaning of the place is 'settlement of thread spoilage'. The name of the community is actually derived from an experience of wasting thread to patch tattered cloth! It is undoubtedly clear that, when one tries stitching tattered clothing, as soon as a portion is stitched another part of the clothing would be torn since the garment is weak and this thus spoils thread, hence the name 'settlement of thread spoilage'. So, the better one restrains from stitching tattered clothing, otherwise one will spoil the thread and the clothing will still be thrown away. By oral tradition, in the past, there was a shea nut tree in the community where a tattered clothing was seen on the tree. People use to describe the community with the shea tree and the tattered

clothing, *Binchera* tattered clothing’ *taanga* ‘shea tree’ and this description eventually became the other name of the place. This might have triggered the adaptation of this name *Sayingaliyili*. This thus fits very well in Vonen (1986: 67) assertion, that a name must contain a significant amount of identifying descriptions agreed upon by a reasonable amount of name users. The meaning of the name is however derived contextually which demands extra knowledge for an individual or a group to readily tell the meaning.

Banlayimsɔŋ yili (Layinja)

Also located along the Bimbilla-Tamale road. Its appellative name is the contracted form of a proverbial name of the first chief who was enskinned by the Bimbilla Naa to occupy the skin of the village. It is thus a compound name with three lexical items *ban* ‘those’ *layim* ‘together’ *sɔŋ* ‘mat’ without the default equivalent of settlement. Its literary meaning is that, those who sleep on one mat but there is more into the meaning than just the literary meaning. The complete or the full proverb says *Ban layim sɔŋ ni wali dɔyim* ‘those who sleep on the same mat will break family ties.’ The question one will ask is how will people break ties just after sleeping on one mat. The ‘mat’ in this case is personified, it represents a lady in the proverb. The proverb simply means that ‘brothers who sleep with the same lady, will break family ties.’ Thus, men who sleep with the same lady will break ties regardless of their relationship. Sometimes, two good brothers or friends becoming worse enemies because of a lady. The name is therefore cautioning humanity against such in other to maintain relations.

Bulabulayili (Makayili)

Bulabulayili as it is called, is a repetitive name, it is twice the repetition of *bula* ‘trivial’. The name *Bulabula* takes its meaning from the way people despise certain things. History has it that, picking without despising or discrimination makes ones’ basket become full up. In every aspect of human endeavor especially, in terms of leadership or acquisition of wealth, one is not supposed to discriminate what they think they want; whatever position or title is given to you, you should accept it in good faith for it is only when you start picking up trivially that you will get to the highest position that you are aiming at. One basket does not become full if they decide on picking what they think is big or good for them leaving the smaller ones.

4.4 Surrounding Feature

Again, there are some places/towns that got their names from the features of the place of which the community is located. It is often named after a natural feature, either the characteristic features of the land, river or forest found in the area. Based on these characteristics, a name is given to these places. This thus, creates a relationship between the thought (names given) and the physical features of these places. The naming of these place can thus not be done in isolation with the culture (external features).

Zovaandiguyili (Nassamba)

Zovaandiguyili is another appellative name considered for this study. It is the second

community along the Bimbilla-Wulensi Road from Bimbilla. The name is a noun-adjective-noun compound name made up of *zoya* ‘mountains’, *vaandigu* ‘shallower’ and *yili* ‘town/settlement/house’. Literally, it the name means ‘the settlement of mountains’ swallower’ but the name actually resurrected from the location of the community. Strategically, the community is located in between two mountains. So, anybody standing on either side of the mountains would not see the community, thus, the mountains from either side of the community would actually swallow the town, hence the name. Therefore, a permanent quality of the place has been used to name the same place and thus conforms to Stewart (1954) descriptive category of the place names. This preserves the quality of the place appreciated by the sense of sight.

Mɔyunyɔna (Jimam)

In addition, *Mɔyunyɔna* is one of the communities studied. It is located at about 4-5km away from Wulensi at the Eastern part of Wulensi. Again, this name is a compound name made up of *mɔya* ‘rivers’ and *nyɔna* ‘forests.’ The community derives its name from where the community is situated. The features of the surroundings are used to name the place. The community is surrounded by a river that also is surrounded by tick forests which is mostly a feature of rivers.

4.5 Earth-Spirit/Existing Object

Further, there are places/towns that got their names from the existing earth-spirit/shrine known to be very powerful and thus have influence over the lives of the community members. Sometimes, people who ascends to the throne of this particular places will have to even walk to the earth-spirit to perform certain libation. These places include;

Chuchuli (Tuu)

The road leading to *Chuchuli* is located at Binda along the Bimbilla-Accra Road. It is about 5km ride from Binda. It is named after the name of the earth-spirit found in the community. The earth-spirit have different representations. It can be seen as a symbolic canoe on the river or sometimes as a life python. So, python is a totem and thus, a taboo for all the people who have lineage to the community to kill a python whether in the community or outside that community. This intimate relationship between one self and the metal relationship that exist between the person and the place name is what Helleland (2012) described as identity. Krogseth (1992: 100–103) identifies continuity, coherence and individuality are the essential elements of names and identity. The people thus continue to identify themselves with the community anywhere they are. Hagström (2006: 19-21) however noted that, the concept of identity may not be generationally transferred since people may decide along the line to cut ties with their origin. This community was first founded at *Lawransa*, a place where they sacrifice to the god and bury the earth sprits, have been moved to resettle close to the road. The earth-spirit believed to be powerful, serves as the guardian spirit to all the community members both the residents and those at the diaspora. For non-natives, it grants whatever is asked for from it. When a child is born after this earth-spirit, they name the child as *Mboo*.

Varibieyuyili (Nakpa)

Further, along the Bimbilla-Yendi road, *Varibieyuyili* road is at Makayili, the fourth community from Bimbilla along the Bimbilla-Tamale Road. It is about 5km away from Makayili township. The appellative name of this community is also noun-adjective compound word made up of *varili* ‘a name of a shrine/smaller god’, *bieyu* ‘bad/wicked/ugly’ and *yili* ‘town/house’. This is a name of a god of this community noted to be powerful. The appellative of the town therefore has its roots from the name of the community’s powerful god. This town is noted to be the highest under the *Gbuyimayili* gate as far as Bimbilla Kingship is concerned. So, whoever ascends to this throne will also be eyeing the highest throne in Nanuŋ Kingdom, that is, Bimbilla. Notably, anyone who ascends to this throne must ride a donkey to climb to this shrine for some pacifications and sacrifices in order to be totally recognized as the chief of this particular town but failure to do so makes the title null and void, perhaps, the reason behind its name. The principle behind the name of this town is ownership and what occurs or happens at this place. This place name uses an inductive naming or annexe since the place name is in reference to a complete name of a nearby shrine/gods called *Varili*.

On the other hand, the name though derived from the name of the god/shrine, it is also a contracted proverb *Varibieyu din tim dibili ku tim nuu* ‘dangerous leaves require only the dip of a stick and not the finger/hand’. For the reason that one does not know what is in the leaves, they do not require dipping the finger/hand into the leaves since they could be harmed by whatever is in the leaves. By implication, the name is cautioning strangers to actually be extra careful in dealing with the residents as the stranger may not know who a dangerous person is in the community. Residents of this community are spiritually strong and dangerous due to the powerful nature of the god *Varili*.

4.6 *Obscure/Opaque*

Places/towns that might have gotten their names from a word that existed in the past which meaning cannot be traced in this era.

Faambilee (Sakpe)

The way to *Faambilee* can be located at Nakpayili, a village located 1km away from the main road to Accra at Binda. Nakpayili is also on the main road of Bimbilla-Wulensi road. Fambilee is around 2km away from Nakpayili towards the western part of Nakpayili. This name is contextually obscure and opaque probably because we do not understand the content of this which might be due to the fact that this name is old or it has been given through culture that we do not have enough information on. It could also be changed linguistically over the period of time. Helleland (2012) sees this type of names to function as a textual representation in an obsolete language of the historic landscape.

5. Conclusion

From the foregone discussion, Nanuŋ appellative town names are mostly formed through compounding as one of the word formation processes employed in Dagbani and Nanuni

dialect for that matter. It is established that, the processes of coming up with a new appellative place name in Nanun are varied and reflects the culture and traditions of the *Nanuna* especially the role of the community in chieftaincy structure of the kingdom. In some cases, the new appellative name (such as *Zovaandiguyili* ‘the settlement of mountains’ swallower’) can fairly be a direct description of an existing place or artifact within the society. Thus, the thought of a *Nanuna* is not in isolation with his culture. It reflects in the relationship the appellative names given to these towns have with the existing social activity or artifact of the people. These names are given on the bases of these individuals’ participation in sociocultural activities. The naming process involve a rich interplay between the onymic reference and the semantic content of the signs or their parts, in a way much more complex than the usually postulated process of an appellative expression becoming a proper name through semantic bleaching. It is evident that, the appellative Nanun town names are purely metaphoric and thus are not clearly understood in a plain language.

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