

## 6 *“The Spirit Names the Child”: Pentecostal Futurity in the Name of Jesus*

My research took me to a church in Ibadan, where I was to interview a pastor on prayer. To start such sessions, I typically engage in small talk with interviewees before turning on the tape recorder so both of us can be at ease with each other. On this day, the pastor told me that he had just returned from a child naming ceremony. To keep the conversation going rather than out of serious curiosity, I asked him the child's name. “Jesutunde. We named the child Jesutunde,” he responded. Jesutunde? At that time, I was taken aback by what seemed like a strange configuration of names. A name like Tunde catalogs the Yoruba and general African belief in reincarnation, and it should be incompatible with Christianity. The “Tunde” name (meaning: has returned/has reincarnated) name is typically prefixed by Baba (father) or 'Ye (short for Yeye, or mother), and it means that one's dead father or mother has returned (to this world from the dead or the ancestors). So, how does a name like Jesutunde (Jesus has returned/reincarnated) square with the Christian understanding of the afterlife that has no accommodation human souls continuously circling between the worlds of the living and the dead? Inserting the name and persona of Jesus into Yoruba indigenous myths to generate a name like “Jesutunde,” seemed like an awkward consequence of replacing or trying to transcend the ethical structures that uphold cultural belief in the supernatural.

Belief in reincarnation is a potent myth in the African cultural repertoire and this is reflected in ritual enactments of ancestral deification and masquerade performances. Unlike Christian mythology, African traditional religions believe “the posthumous survival of individuality is not for the purposes of a future resurrection of the righteous, a reanimation in the materialistic hereafter, but re-incarnation in a new body.”<sup>1</sup> The “new body” here is that of a child and, following

<sup>1</sup> Olomola, “Contradictions in Yoruba Folk Beliefs Concerning Post-Life Existence.”

Wole Soyinka's delineation of the African cosmological imagination into the worlds of the living, the dead and the unborn, it shows the mutual correspondence between these three cosmological spaces.<sup>2</sup> This belief in reincarnation is also articulated through naming practices, and that is why the names that echo some of those beliefs are considered "demonic" by Christian converts. They see it as opening up one's life to affliction by satanic forces. In the past, when a child was born, the parents typically consulted the diviner to know which ancestor might have "tun de," that is, which one might be making a return trip back into this world. It is partly due to this belief in the permeability of worlds where the dead can access the space of the living that traditional religious practices are easily demonized by Christians. Also, the ways names are used to mark these epistemological practices carries over into Christianity, where converts from indigenous African religions instinctively understand the roles naming practices play in negotiating the natural and supernatural worlds.

However, this is also the point where the thought behind "Jesutunde" gets clunky: to construe Jesus as an ancestor in a similar manner to those who depart the world of the dead to reenter a child's body is somewhat heretical. The foundation of Christianity is laid on the myth of the resurrection of Jesus and the eternal life he was imbued with as a result of his triumph over death. Taking Jesus as one of the multiple ancestors making the rounds from one cosmos to another reduces his elevated status as an iconized member of the Trinity/Godhead. So, I asked the pastor, "By giving a child that name, is it not a theological contradiction to suggest that an already resurrected Jesus could enter into a woman to be reborn again like our Yoruba ancestors believed?" The pastor shook his head and replied, "Not at all. That name was what the Holy Spirit chose for the child. We do not name our children by ourselves; we do it by the inspiration of God. *Emi ni o maa n so omo loruko.*" That is, it is the spirit that names the child. That last sentence, rendered in the Yoruba language, made me wonder the spirit's underlying political agenda in inspiring a superficially ideologically incoherent name like "Jesutunde." The pastor's justification for the name prompted me to investigate the notion of the *spirit* beyond the obvious allusion he makes to the Holy Spirit as the inspirational source of child naming.

<sup>2</sup> Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*.

For a people who perform power and embody it in their everyday expressions of faith, seemingly mundane acts such as naming a child are part of how power is performed. Those that convert to Pentecostalism as adults face identity crisis of their new status and which they sometimes resolve through names.<sup>3</sup> Names that include Jesus are therefore handcrafted to display of status of power found in the name of Jesus. Names are expressions of thoughts, feelings, and wishes, and over time, as they are repeatedly called, are means of cementing status. For the spirit to prompt them toward taking ancestors, deities, and supernatural beings from the mythic spaces of African belief and superimposing Jesus in their stead, shows more than forging of an identity by people leaving an old life behind and embracing a new one as Pentecostals. They are also establishing their power identity as Pentecostal Christians; people who have transcended and triumphed over demonic forces and the historical circumstances that produced them.<sup>4</sup>

As the example of Paul Esupofu in *Agbara Nla* in Chapter 1 showed, personal naming typically accompanies conversion to signify new identity. The names are deeply thought-out to reflect this journey of conversion and the space the convert now occupies in the new faith they have chosen. For instance, the Isawuru character did not merely select names, he chose "Paul" – the name of a character in the New Testament who, as Saul, persecuted Christians – to link his conversion narrative to a Bible character with a similar history. Saul had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and ended up as a Christian after a dramatic conversion. Paul would eventually become one of the biggest propagators of the faith and he wrote several of the New Testament epistles. Also, Isawuru's choice of Esupofu – Esu (the Yoruba Christian label for the Biblical devil) has come to nothing – is also quite significant. Such artful selections of names shows how the Isawuru character is portrayed as the quintessential Christian convert, especially a Yoruba one.<sup>5</sup> They combine names that align histories written in the Bible with the ones of their indigenous cultures, which

<sup>3</sup> <https://forums.ssrc.org/ndsp/2013/08/29/the-new-name-its-a-prayer/>

<sup>4</sup> Scholars like J. K. Ayantayo and S. Olanisebe have expressed dismay with the way Pentecostals are giving up aspects of their culture and the colorful histories that underwrite them to take up names borne by biblical characters that are not necessarily superior to indigenous names.

<sup>5</sup> I have limited this analysis to Yoruba largely because trying to pull off a study like this across many ethnic groups in Nigeria would have been too unwieldy.

they have termed "demonic," and forge a new living history that will unfold through their performances of their everyday life as people of power. This performance of power identity crafts a personal sense of oneself as an individual who embodies the traits of Jesus as a victor. Having overridden beliefs (such as the idea of heaven and the afterlife) and substituted the gods (pantheon, ancestors, and their histories) with the symbolism of Jesus' name, these converts define the spirit that influences the culture of the collective.

In scholarly studies, "spirit" has been variously defined. In Hegelian terms, spirit means the principle or the underlying ethic that animates social consciousness and the actions that ensue. In religious studies, spirit could mean both the Holy Spirit – the pneumatic force that inspires people and prompts them to take creative action – and the immaterial beings who participate in activities on this material plane.<sup>6</sup> Spirit relates to spiritism, the study of the phenomena that link the spiritual world to the immediate physical one humans inhabit.<sup>7</sup> "Spirit" has a universal resonance as an incorporeal being, one not necessarily anchored to Judeo-Christian religious mythology, but as a transcendental energy or superhuman agent that can impinge upon or activate human agency. The pastor in my example, of course, construed the spirit as the stimulating force of the outpouring of the divine into the ethical life of African Pentecostals. Throughout this chapter, I have settled for an approach that takes *spirit* as an approximation of social ethics, order of living, obscure instincts, sounded drives, and the culmination of a certain sensibility from which a dominant collective derive their power and influence, and through which people are ultimately impelled to express beliefs and act upon certain expectations. Humans can create the spirit of a society through their gathering together in a place and carrying out concerted action.<sup>8</sup> Doing things with language is one of the ways they create and express the defining spirit of the times. When the spirit names the child, especially with "Jesu" names, the spirit uses each individual to build a network of influential power to ultimately transform the world into its image. In a world the spirit is already reshaping, those children's lives further create a multiplier effect. For the spirit to name the child, the spirit not

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World*; Yong, "On Binding, and Loosing, the Spirits."

<sup>7</sup> Vasconcelos, "Homeless Spirits," 14.

<sup>8</sup> Wariboko, *Nigerian Pentecostalism*, 116.

only relates to the significance of child naming, especially in African cultures; the spirit is also hyper-aware of the need to implant its power and influence into the still-blank slates of the lives that are just beginning.

By choosing to name the child, the spirit chose a significant cultural site to demonstrate its politics.<sup>9</sup> Africans consider names an important determiner in how one lives one's life "authentically."<sup>10</sup> They are also important to a community because they are an "open diary" where people both store the information about the social order as it was at the time of a child's birth, and by which they also reinforce such data.<sup>11</sup> The political economy of names is so crucial that they say that only a "mad person" does not care what (s)he is called.<sup>12</sup> This spirit is invisible and immaterial, yet omniscient and omnipotent enough to galvanize even personal decisions such as child naming. The spirit is also dynamic enough to mesh into social configurations, demonstrating that Africans' conception of the "spirit" as a revelation of the Christ personality is distinct from the Jesus in Bible history.<sup>13</sup> The spirit connected to African cosmological imagination, the earth from where the deities, gods, and ancestors spring, and turned these sites into a palimpsest where it could write a new African genealogy with the name of Jesus Christ.

Names are given to be called and for the bearer to respond, and that format of call and response recalls theologian Clifton Clarke's methodological proposal for the study of African Pentecostalism.<sup>14</sup> According to Clarke, the dialogical and dynamic nature of "call and response" aptly describes African Pentecostalism. The "call," he notes, is the authoritative prompting of African Pentecostalism through the Bible as the received Word of God for theological practices; the history of the church delineated into epochs, the practices and legacies that have framed contemporary Christianity, and the religio-cultural context that gives African Pentecostalism its distinct flavor. The

<sup>9</sup> "The act of naming is an act of power. Parents naming children, conquerors naming new lands, and organizations naming themselves all involve the assertion of authority and control. Names allow us to communicate through the development of shared meanings." Guenther, "The Politics of Names," 412.

<sup>10</sup> Sarajlic, "The Ethics and Politics of Child Naming."

<sup>11</sup> Akinnaso, "The Sociolinguistic Basis of Yoruba Personal Names."

<sup>12</sup> Osundare, *African Literature and the Crisis of Post-Structuralist Theorising*.

<sup>13</sup> Ngong, "African Pentecostal Pneumatology."

<sup>14</sup> Clarke, "Call and Response."

"response" is Africans' reaction to these stimuli through their various performative and corporeal activities that form the lived theology of their Pentecostalism. Call-and-response, as a form of interaction, thus expresses the many facets of African histories and culture: the past and present; the contact of human and supernatural worlds; indigenous belief systems and their manifestations in contemporary Pentecostalism.

One area where "call and response" remain unexplored, however, is where its antiphonal nature is virtually literal: names. In the relatively dynamic and straightforward exchange of giving someone a name and calling out the name while expecting some kind of response (and giving a response as a call in itself), there are dense historical cadences, cultural impulses, and the ethical agenda of the name giver. The name bearer (who might also be the name-giver, as seen in instances of self-renaming after conversion) considers the outstretching of his or her social existence as a series of unfolding performances that respond to the name called at one's natural birth (or spiritual rebirth). Thus, "call and response" is an apt analysis of naming practices and the ways they are performed through the meanings they evoke when sounded.

Like many Africans, Pentecostals do not treat names as an objectified label that floats above a person but as a codification of history and belief imposed on a person at birth to be recycled in demotic enactments. They take names seriously both as Africans with a distinct worldview and as Christians steeped in Judeo-Christian traditions, and who understand the mythic significance of names from both perspectives. As Africans, they understand that names are powerful because they reflect the socio-ecological structures that hold up the terms of social relations, familial tensions, and even human-divine relationships. Yoruba people express the interactive nature of names with a proverb that translates thus: Because of people's propensity to run into trouble, everyone is given a name to individuate them. There is also another proverb that says that a person's name haunts their life and its events. The different ways onomastics are discursively treated in proverbs and folk tales index names as a predictive force or symbolic charm that has power beyond the physical to activate singular life experiences.<sup>15</sup> To them, names also measure historical changes, register ethical progressions, and reflect apprehensions of situations and the

<sup>15</sup> Fakuade & Adeosun, "Yoruba Personal Naming System."

subsequent systematization of knowledge accrued from those experiences.

The name given at either natural or spiritual birth represents a social condition activated to further speak to those condition, demands a response, and creates a sequential interaction between bearer, society, and those circumstances.<sup>16</sup> The power of a name lies in its ability to touch the "psychic substrates associated with superstition, ritual, irrational belief, and primitive behavior."<sup>17</sup> Names, by their nature too, are forms of praise, rewards, highlights, or allusions to certain symbolic references that are either mutually shared or which the name-giver hopes to impress on the social system. The Jesu naming traditions can also be described as "mythic onomastics," a process that stimulates in the imagination, "the primordial functions of names as descriptors of human reality."<sup>18</sup> Thus, names are a creative site for people to express ethics. For Yoruba people, the malleability of their language means new categories of meaning are easily introduced from existing ones through the use of "prefix to roots, stems, or a given syntactic categories."<sup>19</sup> The rites of naming itself form part of the social processes that reflect the realities and the values of the society. By "reflect," these names are not merely a mirror that reflects parallel social events but a constitutive element of the fabric that shapes the society.<sup>20</sup> This reality is also expressed in the Yoruba proverb that urges one to consider the condition of one's household before one names a child.

As Christians too, they understand that names are a force of power. One of the parts of the Bible they refer to on the importance of naming is the creation story. In the Bible, one of the clearest demonstrations that God had given the first man He created, Adam, total dominion over His creation was the authority he gave him to name everything, including Eve, the first woman. According to the Bible, the name Adam gave all living creatures is what they are called, an added detail that shows that the significance of a name goes beyond its invocative or the illocutionary force embedded to the registration of the circumstances

<sup>16</sup> Agyekum, "The Sociolinguistic of Akan Personal Names."

<sup>17</sup> Kaplan, Bernays & Kaplan Educational Centers, *Language of Names*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Compagnone & Danesi, "Mythic and Occultist Naming Strategies in Harry Potter."

<sup>19</sup> Orie, "Yoruba Names and Gender Marking."

<sup>20</sup> Latour, "When Things Strike Back."

that determined its choice.<sup>21</sup> Putting the name of Jesus in names such as “Jesutunde” is thus an objectification of faith and a desire to expressively live out Jesus’s mythic power, glory, and history. The name is the “call” and the unfolding outcome of the person’s life is the “response.” To ensure they get the right call they would be responding to all through their lives, the Christian imagination condemned the invocation of deities and ancestors compressed into some of those names. They described these names “demonic” and banished them. Like the example of “Jesutunde” shows, some started to inscribe Jesus into those spaces.

After my conversation with the pastor at the child naming ceremony, I began to gather Pentecostal Christian names among Yoruba people that were prefixed with “Jesu” or other similarly iconic Christian symbols. Just like “Jesutunde,” an appreciable number of them, on the surface, appeared like contradictory worldviews of Africa and Pentecostalism. Names like Jesurinde (where the *-rinde* means “to walk back home after a journey into the afterlife”) reads as a rather tenuous reconciliation of differing worldviews. Such contradictions are, however, instructive because their semantic and linguistic outcome also marks an ongoing formation of the interconnections of previously disparate pieces of theological thought into an essentialized African Pentecostal identity. As the example of Jesutunde (or a female variant, Jesuwande, as a substitute for Yewande) shows, the *Jesu* part that prefaces those names that symbolize African beliefs about life after death itself becomes a new creation, the meeting of different religious and cultural myths to shape a new frame of references. Pentecostalism, like other similar waves of Christian religious movements, is absorbing existing forms to create new meanings that respond to questions evolved by time.

African Christian naming practices have been through several epochs. At first, the earliest converts chose Western and “Christian” names such as “John,” and “Matthew” to separate themselves from their “heathen” and “pagan” family that still practiced indigenous religion. In another phase, cultural nationalism and anti-colonial sentiments drove a number of Africans who were being socialized into Western/Christian culture to change their attitude toward names. They chose names in their local language to sound more “native” and

<sup>21</sup> For a study of names and speech acts, see Yost, “The Speech Act of Naming in Context.”



names like "David Brown Vincent, J. H. Samuel, and Joseph Pythagoras Haastrup . . . became Mojola Agbebi, Adegboyega Edun, and Ademuyiwa Haastrup, respectively."<sup>22</sup> In the current phase, Pentecostals fashion names that reflect their Christian identity, their power over the demonic forces that haunt them through familial and historical affiliation, and at the same time, they retain their Africanness.<sup>23</sup> The Jesu- names that they are opting for are not merely about Africanizing Jesus. These names resonate within local cultural contexts in a way that "Christian" names like John and James might never do, and that is why they are an important tool of registering their cultural power and triumphs into the public consciousness. That is, apart from the current Pentecostal practice of giving their children allegorical names such as Vision, Wealth, Testimony, Hallelujah, Miracle, Faith, Glory, Dominion, Power, Blossom, Flourish, Bible, Anointing, and Winner, the "Jesu" names rendered in local language to meet the exigent demands of a new identity that bespeaks power; power in the name of Jesus. The same Africanness that earlier converts once tried to delink themselves from, now provides means for contemporary Pentecostals to ground their identity as the people of power.

### Names and the Spirit

In this section, I will first establish the notion of the *spirit* as it pertains to Pentecostal practices to assert that contemporary naming practices of Jesu- among Pentecostals are a performative act of response to the call being made by history, the times they live in, and the shaping of their desired society through what Lee Edelman describes as "reproductive futurism" (that is, the belief that all our political actions are motivated by the conviction that we are fighting on behalf of our children's future).<sup>24</sup> This section will therefore engage the notion of a society's ethical order as a spirit and reflect on how the dynamics might play out in the context of an African social life. Here, I also establish how the orthodoxies of a social order that has been reshaped by the dominance of a cultural movement like Pentecostalism can express its new spirit through naming practices. For the Pentecostal power identity to resonate, the society has to be made conducive

<sup>22</sup> <https://forums.ssrc.org/ndsp/2013/08/29/the-new-name-its-a-prayer/>

<sup>23</sup> Olanisebe, "Elimination by Substitution." <sup>24</sup> Edelman, *No Future*.

through changes to language and social thought. This makes Pentecostal naming practices a rich site to explore how names signal the call-and-response of history and culture: the ideological imperatives that undergird the shift in reformulating language, the circumstances that enable Pentecostal self-making and remaking, the Pentecostal absorption of foreign encounters and subsequent creative inclinations, shifting class values, and the conditions of altering or producing new orthographies for local languages.<sup>25</sup>

Through names, they call upon the spirit to wage wars to expel the occult and demonic forces they deem as underlying subsisting names, transcend the founding ethics of their African society, and inaugurate a Pentecostal world order. In Wariboko's conceptualization of the spirit as "the culmination to which all social practices are heading . . . a kind of *principle* that inheres in organized human activities,"<sup>26</sup> he also argues that while the spirit is contingent on social performances and structures, its emergence within a place also relies on corporeality since bodies are what connect the physical and spiritual realms. The unique placement of the body as the anchor point between the spiritual or the social can become "spirit" when a web of human agents assemble within a site of a clearing to initiate actions that not only dictate a new collective ethic but, by the substance and consistency of their practices, also normalize the ethos. As he conceives it, there is always an antecedent to the generation of the spirit where "bodies and minds, and the interconnections between them . . . are responsible for the site emerging."<sup>27</sup> Consequently, the "spirit that arises in relation and in response to the dynamics of focused concentration and attunement of humans in the common."<sup>28</sup>

For my purposes in this section, I will illustrate the antecedent to the "spirit" now manifesting through a mesh of Jesu- names and the cultural sites where they have emerged through the African classic by Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*. Then I will demonstrate how Pentecostalism as a contemporary culture also offers people the means of standing apart and above the values circulated within the social clearing through their own Pentecostal naming practices too. According to Achebe, one can measure how good life has been to an

<sup>25</sup> Komori, "Trends in Japanese First Names in the Twentieth Century"; Makoni, Makoni & Mashiri, "Naming Practices and Language Planning in Zimbabwe."

<sup>26</sup> Wariboko, *Nigerian Pentecostalism*, 128 and 140. <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 125. <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Igbo man through the names he gives to his children.<sup>29</sup> That was apparent in *Things Fall Apart*, where, prior to Christianity coming into the society to impose a new call of history that ruptured the ethical foundations of her community, the existing social spirit gave resonance to the call-and-response in the names a character, Ekwefi, gave her children. In that homogenous society of Umuofia, there were congruences between individual moral characters and the communal values that gave the community its identity.<sup>30</sup> For Ekwefi, who suffered the losses of her children as they died in infancy, the names for each successive child she had afterward became a rhetorical strategy to pass a commentary to the community in both obvious and sublime ways.<sup>31</sup> A child's name also condenses the parent's history, and is therefore a repository of memory, prayers, beliefs, anxieties, desires and autobiographies; an expression of individual and collective values, prayers and kinship ties; and a description of the world as it is or as it should be.<sup>32</sup> As a rendering of speech that conveys more than only personal emotions, names also describe how the name-giver contributes to the society's ethos and the structures of their symbolic universe through the performative quality of names. They call out to society, the society responds, and the response becomes another call, thus forming a cycle of dialogical engagement. Names are about the only thing we are given or which we acquire that are meant to be used by others. The economy of that use is expressed in the ways they are chosen for the politics they announce, the values they propagate, and the ethics – social and collective – that they collate. Names are a fiction, a product of imagination expressed in language, and like all fictions, they forth-tell, perform, and control.

A subplot in *Things Fall Apart*, Ekwefi's story is of a woman who cannot fulfill her expected role of motherhood within the social structures of her village. She is plagued with what is known as Ogbanje

<sup>29</sup> Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*.

<sup>30</sup> Wariboko, *Ethics and Society*, 74.

<sup>31</sup> Ogbaa, "Names and Naming in Chinua Achebe's Novels"; Wamitila, "What's in a Name."

<sup>32</sup> Agyekum, "The Sociolinguistic of Akan Personal Names"; Ogie, "Edo Personal Names and Worldview; Omoloso, "A Speech Act Analysis of Selected Yoruba Anthroponyms"; Oseni, "A Guide to Muslim Name, with Special Reference to Nigeria"; Oyèwùmí, *What Gender Is Motherhood?*; Smith, "Child-Naming Practices, Kinship Ties, and Change in Family Attitudes in Hingham, Massachusetts, 1641 to 1880."

children – a malevolent set of supernatural beings who are “born to die.” Called Abiku in Yoruba mythology too, these children’s transversal journey from the chthonian realm to the world of the living is made through near-endless rotations of life and death through the same woman.<sup>33</sup> In the case of Ekwefi, she had borne ten children and nine of them had died in infancy.

As she buried one child after another her sorrow gave way to despair and grim resignation. The birth of her children, *which should be a woman’s crowning glory*, became for Ekwefi mere physical agony devoid of promise. The naming ceremony after seven market weeks became an empty ritual. Her deepening despair found expression in the names she gave her children. One of them was a pathetic cry, Onwumbiko – “Death, I implore you.” But death took no notice; Onwumbiko died in his fifteenth month. The next child was a girl, Ozoemena – “May it not happen again.” She died in her eleventh month, and two others after her. Ekwefi then became defiant and called her next child Onwuma – “Death may please himself.” And he did.<sup>34</sup> (*italics mine*)

There are two points to note from the world of Umuofia that Achebe describes. The first is that the societal ethos is adjusted on a clear definition of roles. The men occupy and dominate the public sphere, and this is illustrated by their use of the village square for associations and public gatherings on political and social issues. When women are present, it is mostly during festive periods or spectacular parades where their participation is relegated to the margins as audience and side commentators. Men are at the top of the social hierarchy, especially if they are rich, physically brave, older, or all three.<sup>35</sup> The women’s

<sup>33</sup> The Abiku–Ogbanje phenomenon in southern Nigeria has been a subject in critical exploration of the interface of folk beliefs and modern science and has also been applied as a metaphor for disjunctures in the rites of weaving cultural memories. Achebe, “Literary Insights into the ‘Ogbanje’ Phenomenon”; Falola, *A Mouth Sweeter than Salt*; Ilechukwu, “Ogbanje/abiku and Cultural Conceptualizations of Psychopathology in Nigeria”; Ilechukwu, “Ogbanje/Abiku”; Maduka, “African Religious Beliefs in Literary Imagination”; McCabe, “Histories of Errancy”; Ogunyemi, “An Abiku-Ogbanje Atlas.”

<sup>34</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*.

<sup>35</sup> Achebe, reflecting on *Things Fall Apart* at its fiftieth anniversary in 2008, mentioned that Igbo culture premises masculinity and makes a show of all of its trappings – power, strength, and success – without giving its feminine side as much of a chance. This feminine side, however, is there but sublimated into the culture. It speaks with a gentle voice, with vocal cords so soft and so gentle that one has to “make a special effort to listen to hear it.” From Achebe’s

participation in Umuofia is mostly dependent on the varying dynamics of their domestic and nurturing roles.<sup>36</sup> A woman's crowning glory is the birth of children, and Ekwefi's failure to successfully sustain the lives of the children she produces has significant consequences for her and her relationship with society.

This first assertion leads to the second one: In this context, the barren woman is relegated to the margins since her worth in the overall social construct is based on fulfilling her biological destiny. The space where she exercises her power is mostly the domestic sphere. Consequently, her agency against the ruling power of the community over her and which she can deploy is through naming her Ogbanje children. The names she chooses are a self-reflexive call to the metaphysical being responsible for her misery – death, that is – and to the ethical ears of the community. In African cultures, it is not unusual to use a child's name to speak to the members of the community to challenge them to live up to collective interests, a trait that J. A. Sofola describes as a form of "moralistic activism."<sup>37</sup> A similar trend was observed by Susan Suzman in her study of changes to Zulu personal naming practices, although she also noted that the trend is being altered by changes to the family unit such as urban culture and evolving family patterns.<sup>38</sup> Equally, it is noteworthy that Ekwefi's story is similar to that of another character in the Bible (Genesis 29), Leah, who also named her children to make a commentary on her existential condition.<sup>39</sup>

Since the community's values rest on the seeds of family relationships and the larger interconnections of the individual to the society, a childless woman like Ekwefi is disadvantaged for failing to spawn

reflection, one concludes that one of the fears that haunted the Umuofia community, and which was viscerally expressed through the actions of the protagonist, Okonkwo, was feminization. Achebe, cited in *Listening to the Gentle Voice*, 311–312.

<sup>36</sup> Whereas Umuofia would manage the cataclysmic changes that challenged its idea of masculinity with relative prudence and strategic redefinition of its traditional ideals through a reevaluation of the concept of bravery, Okonkwo's strong-headed wedding to the old ideals proved his tragic flaw – a point Joseph Slaughter makes in his allegorized rereading of the "simple" tales women weave in their retracted spaces. Slaughter, "A Mouth with Which to Tell the Story."

<sup>37</sup> Sofola, *African Culture and the African Personality*.

<sup>38</sup> Suzman, "Names as Pointers." See also Chitando, "Signs and Portents?" 145; Kadenge et al., "Anthroponyms of Albinos among the Shona People of Zimbabwe."

<sup>39</sup> Genesis 29.

offspring that would carry forward either the dynamics of the domestic sphere or the political power of the public sphere. Her means of appealing to the community and the unseen forces that mediate affairs between various worlds was through a vocalization of her desperation, trauma, pain, and supplications through her children's names. It was an individual calling on the spirit, the values on which the community was founded, and beseeching it to understand her situation. Her children's names become an oral performance, an entreaty to the conscience of the community who sees her suffering and also understands that her displacement in the order of things is beyond her control. Those names were also a response to the standards – the call – which the community had imposed on everyone. As Achebe said in his reflections, in the society that Umuofia represents, material achievements are lauded (or “loud-ed”) to the detriment of subterranean voices from the margins that women occupy. Ekwefi's means of speaking up and cutting through the din of the celebration of material achievement is child naming, a rhetorical strategy implicitly understood by all. As Chima Anyadike said of the politics of the rhetoric deployed through this gentle voice, “The sense of the rhetorical in use here is not so much that of the elaborate and fanciful as that of the effect and persuasive use of language.”<sup>40</sup>

For Ekwefi, this instrumentalization of names is a means of sublimating her failures into the social order. She is not a threat to the survival of that order because the marriage and family structure is polygamous. However, the order is a threat to her well-being as an individual because where she fails in her duty, her husband's co-wife succeeds. With the co-wife's celebration of multiple sons, Ekwefi's case drives her further down to the level of an unfortunate outlier. By using the oral function of the names to speak to the metaphysical forces that had taken her children and the physical human ears in the community, she was also inviting them as engaged spectators to the drama and vicissitudes of her life. Through these names, she expresses her cycles of emotions to them – a mode of communal communication that uses the intangible and subconsciously understood semiotics to narrate the dynamics and cruelty of fate. Such embodied oral gesture is a moral plea, a call, for them to understand her plight and respond by bearing with her, giving her fate a chance, and letting her live without the jeers

<sup>40</sup> Anyadike, *Listening to the Gentle Voice*, 313.

and shame that attend women who cannot fulfill their biological roles. The names represent Ekwefi's astute awareness of what is required of her, her failure to live up to it, and her self-conscious appeal to the custodians of the social order not to condemn her as the cause of her own predicament or disregard her basic human dignity. While Ekwefi's dialogical use of names reflected the society in which she lived, her place within the community, and her trauma, there was no rupture to the ethical structure of the society. She sequenced her experience through her children's names, but it was also a cyclical conversation with the society as she tried to negotiate wider social issues. The call-and-response within such homogenous and traditional societies was a dialogue between an individual and the community, until missionary Christianity interrupted them. The new faith ruptured the social context in which this communication was meaningful. By the time they re-fused, the myths and symbols of Christianity had become a part of its ethos.

When colonial missionaries began to propagate Christianity, existing African names was one of their targets because they understood the power to irrupt the social configurations of a place. For example, colonial modernity used the inscriptive processes of identifying, labeling, and differentiation to rename people, either by giving them new "pronounceable" names to facilitate interaction with European missionaries or because they thought those African names stemmed from their pagan heritage that had to be scrubbed off to make the conversion project complete.<sup>41</sup> Their mode of urging those converts to a name change was not always subtle. It was administered through the demonization of their ways and/or by recreating the African social site so that admittance to social services such as education, health, and class benefits were tied to religious conversion and conformity.<sup>42</sup> Those who were renamed or chose to rename themselves after their Christian conversion could access "new possibilities, new attributes, new values, reshaping ideologies and creating new concepts of the self as well as redefining the groups from which the self operates" through the "... complex nature of onomastic erasure and de-erasure and the resuscitation of dormant identities."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing*, 33.

<sup>42</sup> Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841–1891*; Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914*; Taiwo, *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa*.

<sup>43</sup> Pfukwa & Barnes. "Negotiating Identities in Guerrilla War Names in the Zimbabwean War of Liberation."

As personal names serve a psychic function to the African conception of the self, the self in relation to others, self-esteem, and self-autonomy,<sup>44</sup> the name-changing process amounted to more than a switch in label. The sonant practices of calling the converts by their “Christian” names and their bearers’ responses had far-reaching effects of varying the ethos of their social cultures. The names became part of the politics of class inclusion and exclusion, structuring the systems of relations in the social marketplace, and helped construct the category of the “enlightened Christian” against the “African heathen.” The cultural process triggered by the missionary preceded the changes to the society’s ethical structures and made continually possible, the generation of a new religious spirit within the polity. The site that would emerge from the interconnected bodies and minds of those earlier Christians would become the norm, the spirit against which several social and religious relations interchanges and conflicts would serially occur through history, and which contemporary Pentecostals are once again redefining through Jesu- names.

With incursions of new religions came a gradual rupture of the spirit of the society that changed even their naming practices. Gradually, “the pathway between moral principles of a people and their ensuing concrete mode of existence or way of being” was gradually forgotten as it yielded to a new order.<sup>45</sup> “Christian” names became customary for Yoruba Christians (and Muslims who converted while accessing social services such as education) from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century to signify their severance of ties with their paganistic origins and embrace of modern culture.<sup>46</sup> In *The History of the Yorubas*, first published in 1921, Samuel Johnson spoke extensively from a nativist’s perspective about this trend in local culture. He complained that modern naming practices were erasing the creativity and the epistemic content embedded into the culture. He worried that modernity’s preoccupation with arranging things into alien categories was violently disruptive of how Yoruba people understood naming and lineage tracing. As people adopted the arrangement of having first names, middle names, and surnames,<sup>47</sup> they were forcing their own

<sup>44</sup> Gilmore, “Some Notes on Community Nicknaming in Spain.”

<sup>45</sup> Wariboko, *Ethics and Society*, 74.

<sup>46</sup> Oyěwùmí, *What Gender Is Motherhood?*, 198.

<sup>47</sup> Surnames, according to Yonge, are also a relatively modern invention even in western cultures.



culture into the constricting box of Western modernity's structure of names to ridiculous results. For example, a married woman becomes Mrs. Taiwo (a name given to the twin child who comes out of the womb first) although she has no twin in her family and her husband is not a twin either. Or, a name like Babarimisa, typically given to a child that was born after the death of his patriarch, becomes a surname and is transmitted across his generations even while the patriarch was yet alive! Johnson ended his disgust of the corruption of Yoruba naming practices with the hope that, with education and further enlightenment, people would see that names like "Phillip Jones or Geoffrey Williams" were not more Christian than names such as "Adewale or Ibiyemi."<sup>48</sup>

If Samuel Johnson could see into contemporary times, he would likely be amused about the different levels of change that Yoruba names have undergone since then and how education has not purged the inclination to change names to reflect social and religious identity. The epochs of African Christianity, like the nationalism waves referenced earlier, produced different attitudes to names. For example, African nationalism once triggered pride in African names,<sup>49</sup> whereas Pentecostalism resulted in both symbolic and inventive indigenous names. In the late '80s to the '90s, born-again Pentecostals changed their surnames that connected them to their ancestral roots to ones that reflected their new heritage in Christ. Through the years, a generation of people whose surnames mark this point in history have not only grown up, they have raised their children with first names that are now more directly connected to their Pentecostal identity; children who will, they hope, raise their own children to do the same. These developments have shown the integration of different social and ethical strands, how much they have plumbed the depths of civic organizational structures, the internal divergences of the faith movement, social impulses, and the "underside" of their oral and embodied theology.<sup>50</sup>

Social and modern infrastructural politics have adapted to accommodate these various changes such that anyone who takes Samuel Johnson's concerns seriously enough to revert to the "old" ways as far as nomenclature is concerned would be an outlier who runs against the grain of societal spirit. The precedence of colonialism that triggered

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 86–89.

<sup>49</sup> Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914*.

<sup>50</sup> Chitando, "Theology from the Underside," 23.

both the antecedent and consequent of spirit-making gave us a new “call.” The “response,” through name changing practices, continues to reproduce the social encounters and the ethical changes as seen in Pentecostal naming practices. In the next section, I will provide a list of names, first and last, given in contemporary times and which are specific to Pentecostal practices to consider how they are part of the project of the formation of a power identity that shows how these Pentecostals monumentalize their recreation of the cultural site and its values.

### **The Spirit of the Spirit**

For this work, my assistant and I collected over 200 Jesu- names borne by people who identify as Pentecostals. We sieved through them for trends and new directions in naming practices. Our efforts resulted in the collation of other names such as Gospel, Kingdom, Victor, Victory, Hallelujah, Success, Power, Miracle, Testimony, Dominion, Anointing, Anointed, Divine Heritage, Divine, Winner, Overcomer, Abundance, Prosperity, Billionaire, Faith, and Light, but these do not feature into this analysis for two reasons. One, while those names are mostly borne by Pentecostals, they are not exclusive to them. I found an agnostic who had named his children Vision and Power, and he insisted that his choice of names had nothing to do with the Pentecostal movement. The second reason was that a section of Nigeria, specifically the Niger Delta area, uses names such as Government, Goodluck, Godspower, Chief, Godswill, and Godschild that are quite similar to those of Pentecostals, but their choice of names does not always have a direct correlation to the contemporary Pentecostal movement in Nigeria.

Consequently, we focused on Christological names: the names that have *Jesu* attached to as either prefix, suffix, or part of the stem. Although many of the names collected for our study were first names, a substantial number of them are also surnames that have been altered by the bearers. Among those who had first names were many people who were named at their physical birth by their parents, while some others renamed themselves after conversion. Also, those with “Jesu” surnames are mostly those who altered their family names after their conversion. There were also those that grew up with Jesu- names given to them by their parents, but who had also altered their surnames to

reflect their Pentecostal identity. Thus, such name bearers carry names that demonstrate the power of Jesus such as Mosimilejesu Jesusanjo (the first name: I rest on Jesus; second name: Jesus has redeemed the lost time).<sup>51</sup> Such names not only demonstrate where the parents' of the name bearer stand in their conception of their Pentecostal selves, they do so in an ostentatious manner such that when the names are read out either in public or even in a classroom as the child grows up and relates in social settings with their peers, the names ring out to the listeners and tag back to the politics of identity the parents were playing when they made those selections.

We broke our name list down into four categories, although the four groups are not hermetic. Their meanings, origins, and what they attempt to subvert overlap. (Please see Appendix for translation of Jesu- names.) In the first category are names traditionally associated with deities and lineage gods such as the "Ifa" oracle (and prefixed with *Fa-*), Ogun, Osun, Sango, Oya, Esu, Ore, Orisaoko (prefixed as *So-* as in Soyinka), Obaluaye (prefixed as *Oba-* as in Obasanjo), Obatala, Orisha (prefixed as *Osha/Orisha-*) but whose monikers have all been substituted with Jesu. These are names like Jesurinde, Jesujimi, Jesugbemi, Jesumoroti, Jesugbohun(mi), Jesudele, Jesuranti, Jesugbamila Jesutoyinbo, Abajesude, Jesubunmi, Jesuwale, Jesugbero, Jesutola, Jesuwole, Jesukeyede, Jesusina, Jesudele, Jesukoya, Jesukorede, Jesudiran, Jesudipe, Jesugboye, Jesufunke, Jesulabi, Abajesude, Jesuloni(mi), Jesudunmomi, Jesugbamila, Jesuniyi, Jesulana, Jesulola, Jesulere, Jesulokun, Jesulade, Jesudairo, and so on. The names in this category are both first names and surnames, but mostly the latter. Some of their bearers confirm their names have undergone the process of renaming after their born-again conversion or some other life-altering experiences. They claim various reasons for the change, such as divine instructions received directly from God or their spiritual leaders encouraging them to disengage from their "satanic" lineage deities, extricate themselves from negative connections to histories of ancestral and "demon" worship in their families, and make a performative disconnection from ancestors whose incarnation they are supposed to be.

Some of the respondents, born to born-again parents, were named with Jesu right from their births. Some say they consider the name

<sup>51</sup> This name has been altered to protect the identity of the bearer.

prophetic and it forefronts their identity as Christians, while others merely shrugged and said, “it is just a name.” Ironically, while some of the bearers of these names have Jesu appended to their first names, their surnames still bear evidence of their familial links to Orishas. This Jesu–first name and Orisha–surname configuration happens mostly in cases of parents or grown-up converts who have had to keep their surnames intact for various reasons: not wanting to sever nomenclatural links with family members who will read other meanings into such a move; being unable to go through the hassle of name-changing and issuance of new documents; wanting to maintain the social capital the family name has accrued in the society; and simply ambivalence toward the actual impact of one’s surnames in one’s destiny. However, such people, both parents and the converts to Pentecostalism, still chose Jesu–first names because the power that is summoned through the call-and-response of names is believed to be far more reflected in first names than surnames. If they would be identified by power, it is not in the surname shared with other family members but their first names. Besides, as one person mentioned, maintaining both a first name that shows Jesu and a surname that links to an ancestor shows how far they have come in their personal histories. An example of such a combo is a name like Jesugbemi Fajemirokun (Jesus has blessed me, Ifa has allowed me to see the oceans).

In the second category are names that have been traditionally attached to concepts such as Ola (wealth), Olu (the chief, or the Lord), Ayo (Joy), Akin (the valiant one), Omo (child), Ibi (birth), and so on. The examples of the names are Jesutunmise, (or Jesutunwase), Olajesu, Oorejesu, Similejesu, Mosadijesu, Jesujimi, Jesufela, Jesujuwon, Jesutosin, Jesuwumi, Jesujomiloju, Jesusegun, Jesulowo, Jesubukunmi, Jesubukola, Akinjesu, Wurajesu, Jesuwole, Jesukemi, Jesusina, Jesudiran, Jokotijesu, Mojokotijesu, Mojokotolajesu, Jesusogo Jesuwale Jesugbolahan, Olajesu, Ifejesu, Jesufunke, Jesulabi, Jesuniyi, Diekololajesu, Jesulana, Jesuseun. This category is rather expansive because some of the names modified or implanted with Jesu here are similar in construction to the names in the first category. For instance, as there is Falola, there is also Omolola. For those in this category who renamed themselves or gave their children Jesu- names, much of their reasoning stemmed from the jadedness of the traditional prefixes listed here. Traditionally, Yoruba Christians have always been inventive with the language to create “Christian” names, unlike

Muslims who consider their (indigenized) Arabic names Muslim names. Names such as Oluwasegun (God – the Christian one, that is – triumphs) and Oluwatobiloba (God is a great king) are traditionally Yoruba Christian names; they are peculiar to Christian converts who carved such names as indigenous expressions of their faith ethic.

However, the Jesu angle is a more recent development and a culture that will be self-reproducing for many years. That is because even Oluwatobiloba has gradually evolved into Jesutobiloba, and a name like Iyanujesu (the miracle of Jesus) is preferred over Iyanuoluwa (God's miracle). These choices index how people who want to demonstrate their identity as Pentecostals relate it closely to Jesus, the one whose name is the power of self-expression is drawn to define the spirit of the culture. Also, some of the bearers are the Christian Pentecostals of the '80s generations who have grown up and now give their children names with Jesu because, according to some of our respondents, prefixes like Olu/wa, Ola-, Omo-, are jaded and "ambiguous," and no longer distinguish them from Muslims or even nominal or fellow Christians who belong to orthodox denominations. A Jesu- name, they say, has far more edginess to proclamation of their faith.

In the third category are names that are newly created by Pentecostals and do not seem to have any traditional precedent. These Jesu- names seem showier and overtly partisan in appearance, and are also proclamatory of Jesus and the gospel. Such names include Jesuloba, Jesulayoayemi or Jesulayomi, AgbaraJesu, Ayanfejesu, Okiki Jesu, Jesutisomiji, Jesuloluwa, Abajesurin, Obajesu, Obanijesu, Jesugboromiro, Jesudolapofunmi, Jesudolamu, Tijesu or Tijesunimi, Teminijesu, Ogojesu, Ooreofejesu, Ifejesu, Jesupamilerin, Jesunipinmi, Jesunitemi, Jesunifemi, Jesuniye, Jesunbo, Jesunbowale, Jesudunsin, Jesulolami, Jesudowolemi, Jesunimofe, and Jesufemi. As one of our respondents said, his father gave him the name Jesutobi purely by a divine instruction, which came at a time they were celebrating the birth of what his father thought would be his second and last child. These names, like biblical names, are thought to be both definitive and distinguishing.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, there are names such as Jesutunde, Jesuwande, Jesujide, Jesujimade, Jesudurotimi, Jesujide, Jesugbeye, Jesudola, Jesuwole,

<sup>52</sup> Botterweck, Ringgren & Heinz-Josef Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*.

Jesulaja, Jesugboye, and Jesujaguntolu. In this category are names that were previously abiku names or which depicted a situation around when a child was born but whose meaning has now been usurped by “Jesu,” thus giving a different meaning to the names. For instance, a name like “Durotimi” (Stay with me) is a mother’s plea to an abiku/ogbanje child not to die. Another example is Dairo (Make this one stay), which is sometimes rendered as Fadairo or Ogundairo. A name like Jesutunde, in a sense, also belongs to this category. When Jesu is transposed into these names, the names take on an entirely new meaning that overshadows their etymological origins as a plea to supernatural power to intercede in repeated cycles of child deaths. A name like Jesudurotimi now becomes “Jesus stays with me” while Jesudairo becomes “Jesus made this one stay.” Also, in this category are names like Otegbeye (Conspiracy/strife becomes a thing of honour) and Omolaja (This child has come to reconcile warring factions) that become Jesugbeye and Jesulaja respectively. Some of the respondents in this category claimed that the names had no link to how they were traditionally expressed, and they just coined it because it suited them or their circumstances.

Overall, there are several conclusions to be drawn from the pattern of Jesu- names. One is their tendency toward monotheism, a development that erases the diversity of Orishas and lineage deities in Yoruba land. From the examples of names in our first category, where there were a number of references to Orishas such as Ogun, Oya, Osun, Oba, Sango, and Esu, we see a replacement of these deities or a transvaluation of their ethical systems recalibrated. Their diversity has been stylistically subsumed under the name of Jesus, a singular deity. The contemporary Christians who choose these Jesu- names are going into the imagined place of African origin to rearrange their history. By removing the “devil” and his pagan essences from their names, they can comfortably respond to the call of history made by Pentecostalism by inserting Jesus into their life to retroactively rewrite their origins. Their name construction invokes the idea or the belief that a supernatural force inheres in them, and the capability of that force is being drawn out in their daily lives. Those who bear such names also engage in a public act of self-deification. They apotheosize themselves, not merely to be a miniaturized version of Jesus or the Christian God, but to conjure – and share with others – the myth that they share in the divinization of Jesus, the transforming capabilities of His power and

the glory, and overall, derive the social and supernatural blessings that accrue from being named with the name of Jesus.

The irony is that in trying to erase the demonic history in their names, they resound its presence and make it resonate even more. As someone remarked tongue in cheek, "How do you address a woman who named her child Esupofu when you abbreviate the name? Do you call her Mama Esu (mother of Esu)? Or Mama Ofo (mother of losses/failure or nothing)?" What seemed like a silly joke about the new names has a point worth pondering. Esu is the Yoruba god of mischief, among other roles, but has been cast in modern Christianity as the equivalent translation of the devil and demons. A name like Esupofu is therefore both a prayer and a declaration of the Christian victory not only over the devil, but also over a pagan past. In actually using the name, they encounter some snafu. Since most people who use other people's names typically abbreviate them for usability, a name like Esupofu, when abridged to either Esu or Pofu, undermines the purpose of identity affirmation and supplications the giver of the name intended. The name is only meaningful when used in full, and others around who use the name toy with the bearer of the name by shortening it. That way, they keep the new convert who changed his/her name down to earth, a form of discontinuity that enforces continuity, a disconnection that ironically also reconnects. Those who bear names like Esupofu *still* bear Esu's name even though their stance antagonizes the deity. In trying to cover up the African demons, they put them in an echo chamber. Each time someone who has replaced his "pagan" name with Jesu mentions the name, those familiar with the culture hear the silence of a family deity that the name bearers have commuted into a demon and strove hard to wash out from their culture and history. There is therefore no permanent erasure in this instance.

While some scholars that I have consulted in the course of this work consider the Jesu pattern an erasure of indigenous culture, particularly the ones that substitute the local gods with Jesus, there is also an expansion. In the world of the Yoruba people where different gods coexist, Jesu- names widen the pantheon to accommodate Jesus as one of their deities. Pentecostal Christians might disagree that Jesus is merely another god in a pantheon and instead argue that he is *the* God. However, because he takes the place that the gods have traditionally occupied in Yoruba names, Jesus too becomes another mythic figure. In the same vein, names that depict family professions and

similar characteristics found in names such as Ayan- (for a family of drummers) or Ode- (for a family of hunters) or Oje- (for a family entrusted with egungun masquerade traditions) no longer feature in these patterns. The same development is true for the names that are called *amutorunwa* (literally translated as names given from heaven but means names that have self-selected prior to birth such as the ones given to twins). In fact, as one of the respondents told me, her Jesu name is an amotorunwa name because the inspiration for the name came directly from “heaven above.” In her conception, heaven has shifted from the Yoruba idea of where immaterial beings reside to the Christian one occupied by the Trinity – God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and other celestial beings.

Another observation is that the collection does not feature names registering negativity, despair, rebellion, criticism, or even expressing disappointment using proverbial language. The Jesu- names register victory and power, or at least prayer for them. For instance, it was not uncommon for Yorubas to have names like Fatanmi (Ifa deceived me), Matanmi (Do not deceive me.), Ebisemiju (The family offended me too much), and Bekolari (Things did not go as expected). Jesu- names are either determinedly contrived as prayer or describe the joys of being a follower of Jesus. None of the names we came across were critical of the Christian God for whatever reason, unlike what can be found in traditional indigenous names. The curious one, however, was the Fatoyinbo surname that was changed to Jesutoyinbo. While some arguments do arise on the meaning of Yoruba names and their recon-dite meanings lost to time, development of writing, and the tonality of language, *Fatoyinbo* is translatable to “Ifa is equal to – or up to – the level of the white man,” a line of thinking that has been attributed to the kind of relationship “natives” had with the colonial officers. By implication, *Jesutoyinbo* means that Jesus is being equated to the white man where whiteness denotes (colonial) domination and power. However, one defense of such choice by the name bearer is that the translation is less important than the banner of Jesus they bear alongside the name. Thus, the semantic content of the name is not so much in the meaning but in the reason behind the selection.

In naming children with Jesu- names, Pentecostals also express the Christological spirit of the times. In the name of Jesus, they have found power; they perform the power through a series of actions that strengthen their essence as people of power. Names are an important



site for this performance because they are given to an individual for others to use, to share, to connect. The name is how they share their self-definition, and also relate the prayers and promises of establishing that identity through life. In naming, they order their being as people of power and do so in relation to others. By saying it is the spirit that names the child, and they do not come by their names as personal effort, they also indicate their belonging to a higher power from whom they draw their identity as people of power. In giving Jesu-names, the spirit facilitates a congruence between individual identity and the values of a society it is reshaping in its own image. Because modern society is heterogeneous and cannot have the ethic coherence of traditional societies like Umuofia, names still plot the graph of the ground that Pentecostal Christianity has won and which will continue to multiply across generations.

### *Appendix*

- Abajesude – the one who arrives with Jesus
- Abajesude – the one who arrives with Jesus
- Abajesurin – the one who walks with Jesus
- AgbaraJesu – power of Jesus
- Akinjesu – Jesus’ warrior/champion
- Ayanfejesu – the beloved of Jesus
- Ifejesu – the love of Jesus
- Ifejesu – the love of Jesus
- Jesubukola – Jesus adds to my wealth
- Jesubukunmi – Jesus adds to me
- Jesubunmi – Jesus has given me this
- Jesudairo – Jesus holds this one down
- Jesudele – Jesus has arrived home
- Jesudele – Jesus has come home
- Jesudipe – Jesus supplicated (on my behalf)
- Jesudiran – Jesus is multiplied across generations
- Jesudola – Jesus has become wealth
- Jesudolami – Jesus has become my wealth
- Jesudolami – Jesus has become my wealth
- Jesudolapofunmi – Jesus condenses different forms of wealth together in this one

Jesudowole – Jesus laid hands on (this one)  
Jesudunmomi – Jesus is sweet to me  
Jesudunsin – Jesus is sweet/pleasant to serve  
Jesudurotimi (abiku name) – Jesus stayed with me  
Jesufela – Jesus spreads wealth  
Jesufemi – Jesus loves me  
Jesufunke – Jesus gave me this one (child) to care for  
Jesugbamila – Jesus has delivered/saved me  
Jesugbemi – Jesus has benefitted me  
Jesugbemi Fajemirokun – Ifa allowed me to sight the ocean  
Jesugbemiro – Jesus upholds me  
Jesugbohunmi – Jesus heard my voice  
Jesugbolahan – Jesus exposes/showcases wealth  
Jesugboromiro – Jesus interceded on my behalf  
Jesugboye – Jesus has received honor  
Jesujaguntolu – Jesus fought the battle like the chief one  
Jesujide – Jesus has arisen and arrived  
Jesujide – Jesus has arisen/awoken to come (here)  
Jesujimade – Jesus arises to nobility  
Jesujimi – Jesus entrusts (this) to me  
Jesujomiloju – Jesus has surprised me  
Jesujuwon – Jesus is bigger than/beyond them  
Jesukemi – Jesus has blessed me  
Jesukekede – Jesus brings honor (through this one)  
Jesukorede – Jesus has brought goodness  
Jesukoya – Jesus has rejected suffering (on my behalf)  
Jesulabi – we gave birth to Jesus  
Jesulade – Jesus is nobility  
Jesulaja – Jesus has settled the strife  
Jesulana – Jesus paves the way  
Jesulayoayemi – Jesus is the joy of my life  
Jesulayomi – Jesus is my joy  
Jesulere – there is gain in Jesus  
Jesuloba – Jesus is king  
Jesulokun – Jesus is the link  
Jesulola – Jesus is wealth  
Jesulolami – Jesus is my joy  
Jesuloluwa – Jesus is Lord  
Jesulonimi – Jesus is the one that owns me

Jesulowo – Jesus has honor/is honorable  
 Jesumoroti – Jesus is the one I stand with  
 Jesunbo – Jesus is coming back  
 Jesunbowale – Jesus is coming home  
 Jesunifemi – Jesus is my love  
 Jesunimofe – it is Jesus that I want  
 Jesunipinmi – Jesus is my portion  
 Jesunitemi – Jesus is mine  
 Jesuniye – Jesus is life  
 Jesuniyi – Jesus has honor  
 Jesupamilerin – Jesus made me laugh  
 Jesuranti – Jesus remembers  
 Jesurinde – Jesus has walked back (on foot) (to this world)  
 Jesusegun – Jesus is victorious  
 Jesuseun – thanks to Jesus  
 Jesusina – Jesus opens the way  
 Jesusogo – Jesus has made (this) glorious  
 Jesutisomiji – Jesus has quickened me (or animated me)  
 Jesutola – Jesus is enough as wealth  
 Jesutosin – Jesus is worthy to be worshipped  
 Jesutoyinbo – Jesus is equivalent to the white man  
 Jesutunde – Jesus has arrived again  
 Jesutunmise – Jesus has refurbished my lot  
 Jesutunwase – Jesus has refurbished our lot  
 Jesuwale – Jesus has come home  
 Jesuwande – Jesus has sought me out  
 Jesuwole – Jesus has entered the house  
 Jesuwumi – I desire Jesus  
 Jesuyemi – Jesus befits me  
 Jokotijesu – sit with Jesus  
 Mojokotijesu – I sit with Jesus  
 Mojokotolajesu – I sit with the wealth of Jesus  
 Mosadijesu – I hide in Jesus  
 Mosimilejesu – I rest/rely on Jesus  
 Obajesu – King Jesus  
 Obanijesu – Jesus is king  
 Okiki jesu – the fame of Jesus  
 Olajesu – the wealth of Jesus  
 Oogojesu – the glory of Jesus

Oorejesu – gift of Jesus  
Oreofejesu – the grace of Jesus  
Similejesu – rest/rely on Jesus  
Teminijesu – Jesus is mine  
Tijesu(ni) – (this child) belongs to Jesus  
Wurajesu – Jesus’ gold