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Addressing Gender Disparities Through Folklore: A Cultural Study of Female Child Appellation Among the *Bāsukuma* of Tanzania

By John P Madoshi¹

Abstract

Among the *Bāsukuma*, folklore plays a significant role in describing different issues pertaining to their society and culture. Gender is one of the important issues emulated through female appellation. Some of the female names describe a gender tug of war which involves not only married couples but also families of the couples. In this conflict, names particularly of female children are used by each side as a means of channeling a particular message which signifies grievances of the sufferers. Nevertheless, the appellation is done in such a metaphoric way as to call for a meticulous literary examination analysis.

Keywords: Folklore, Gender, Literature, Appellation, Metaphoric

Introduction

Folklore is a collective name applied to sayings, verbal compositions and social rituals presented by word of mouth rather than in written form. It also includes oral jokes, stories and varieties of wordplay (Abrams 2005:104). In the *Bāsukuma*, folklore² extends to different names given to people depending on certain events. Traditional dancers for instance, are given names that signify skills in dancing and how a dancer defeats his/her opponents. In most African societies, the issue of appellation is significant. Nkweto (1998:36) asserts that “names sometimes carry important meaning for an individual identity”. This observation is similar to that of Mwang’eka (2013:1) who argues that: “naming system makes people remember occasions, heroes, events, rituals, disability and problems.” Mwang’eka’s observation is also related to that of Mandende (2009) who observes that personal names in African societies show their values, traditions and their daily experiences. This is to say, names in African societies, as Okere (1996) observes in the Igbo society, are more than just tags or convenient badges of identity; they carry vital message, meaning, historical information and religious purposes. The function of names is also viewed by Wamitila (1999) who in referring to Kiswahili names, shows that they express experience and senses. It is important to note that naming involves language. Eckert and MacConnell-Ginet (2003) observe that language is the viable vehicle used in constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing gender³. They see that most of the constructions appear also in literary genres both oral and written literature. Although naming system among the Africans is used to show identity, experience,

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² Most traditional naming among the *Bāsukuma* is greatly influenced by folklore. There are names that express rituals performed during religious ceremonies. Some names are given merely for joking, especially in traditional dances. In this study the focus is on the names given to female children as it is analysed in the findings.

³ Traits that are conceived to constitute what is masculine and what is feminine in temperament and behavior.

Mostly, the traits are social constructs that were generated by the pervasive patriarchal biases in society. Explaining about gender the feminist scholar once argued “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (Abrams M.H in A Glossary of Literary Terms 2005:94).

heroism, religion etc, appellation among the Bāsukuma⁴ appears to be a more careful and conscious socio-cultural activity. This exceptionality is more prominent in the names given to female children. In this paper we have collected different tradition Bāsukuma names which appear to be metaphorical in their meaning. Their metaphorical meanings are thereby examined to see their gender implications in the Bāsukuma society.

Cultural Criticism and Feminist Approach to Literature

Literature and culture are such intertwined that it becomes difficult to make a separation of the two. Language and culture both have great influence on name giving in Basukama. Examining the patterns of interference of culture with lore, needs special theoretical lenses. For this purpose I have chosen to use cultural criticism and feminist approach to the texts.

Cultural criticism is the proper tool for carrying out the exercise smoothly because a person manages to “study the literature at work in its social context” (Templeton 1992). The literary criticism discards the notion that there exists high and low culture. He argues that literature in culture is experience just as any other experience within a particular culture. Johnson (1986) observed that the theory is intended to make transformation of any order within a society which renders exploitation to people basing on their racial affiliation, class and gender. Mills (1995) observes that there are numerous texts which are significant sources of information on the issues of gender. She sees that most writers put the emphasis of analysis on beauty of languages of a text vital information on gender issues are overlooked. In this study I have also considered the use of feminist approach in the analysis because the texts highlight the gender issues among the Basukuma society. Meehan (1995), analyzing the social theory as expressed by Harbamas, argues that most social critics do not adequately express the issue of gender in society. This implies that a careful observation on most texts that are cultural may reveal important information about gender issues in that particular society. In this paper once again names as social texts have been used to reveal gender issues among the Basukuma.

Research Sites

This research was conducted in three villages: Badugu, Busami and Mayega in Busega District of Simiyu region of Tanzania. These sites were chosen because they provide conducive environment for studies. The first reason is that the population of the three villages comprises the Bāsukuma tribe although there are minor population of other ethnic tribes. More importantly, is the fact that the site is inhabited by three major Bāsukuma clans: *Basega*, *Bakwaya*, *Babinza* and *Bakamba*. The fact that the sites provide different clans living together provided the possibility for the research to be conducted easily.

Research Methodology

In this research different methods were applied to reach the findings. The researcher visited three primary schools: Badugu, Busami and Mayega where traditional names in attendance registers were collected. The researcher also managed to interview ten people. Three people one male and two female were interviewed in Badugu village; two male and one female were interviewed in

⁴ Some writers prefer to use Wasukuma instead of Bāsukuma. In this paper we prefer to use the name Bāsukuma because it concords with Bāsukuma pronunciation. The Wa- as in the case of *Wasukuma* is a Kiswahili prefix which carries the concept of plurality. The Bāsukuma do not have the *wa* in plural they simply use *ba-*. The *a* in the prefix is also hyphenated to distinguish it from the ordinary *a-* sound.

Busami village and two female and two males were interviewed in Mayega village. A total number of eighteen traditional names which appeared to address gender disparities were selected to be used in discussion. The research excluded all other names which do not show any gender distinction and the selection has been done specifically to the names that concur with the research. The interpretation of the collected names relied on textual analysis as suggested by Bloor et al (2001). Such method helped the researcher to filter by identifying and quantifying some of ideas presented during the process of the interview. It is important, furthermore to note that qualification for the person to be interviewed was placed on two criteria: an interviewee was to be a native to the language, ie Ki-sukuma. He also was to be of middle age assuming that such age suffices for a person to have integrated more social linguistic knowledge of the Bāsukuma.

The names identified were those that carry metaphoric implication as they were identified by the informants. All names that had no gender metaphoric implication were left out. The names identified were examined to see if they have more than one meanings, it was revealed that most of the names have only one meaning and whereas names appeared to resemble in meaning we discussed them under one topic as it can be seen in the discussion.

The Bāsukuma of Tanzania

The Bāsukuma is the largest ethnic group in Tanzania. Different historical sources contradict each other as to their origin. The Bāsukuma who belong to the clan of *Babinza* probably migrated from the Basoga of Uganda. According to Itandala (1983), these migrants settled in Geita before their leader, Nkanda, settled at Sukuma few kilometers from the city of Mwanza. However, this account applies only to the Babinza. Among the Basukuma, all clans are identified by the names of female ancestors. These clans are *Bakwimba*, *Babinza*, *Basega*, *Bakwaya*, *Bakamba*, *Balima*, *Batimba*, *Bachama*, *Bashi*, *Bakundi*, *Bagolo*, *Basiya*, *Banegeji*, *Bahunda* and *Bakela*. Some traditional Bāsukuma still give the names which carry the identification of their clans to their female children as it can be shown in the following illustration:

Table 1 Female Names Representing Bāsukuma Clans

Name	Clan	Area of habitation
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<i>Nkwimba,</i>	<i>Bakwimba</i>	Kwimba in Mwanza region
<i>Minza,</i>	<i>Babinza</i>	Mwanza, and Simiyu
<i>Nsega,</i>	<i>Basega</i>	Busega and Kahama district
<i>Nkwaya,</i>	<i>Bakwaya</i>	Busega and Bariadi district
<i>Nkamba</i>	<i>Bakamba</i>	Busega, and Tabora region
<i>Ng'washi</i>	<i>Bashi</i>	in all Sukuma land
<i>Nsiya</i>	<i>Basiya</i>	Shinyanga region
<i>Ngolo</i>	<i>Bagolo</i>	Magu district
<i>Nima,</i>	<i>Balima</i>	Misungwi district
<i>Nchama</i>	<i>Bachama</i>	Bariadi and Butiama district
<i>Nkela.</i>	<i>Bakela</i>	area not identified
<i>Timba</i>	<i>Batimba</i>	Mwanza, and Bunda district
<i>Kundi</i>	<i>Bakundi</i>	Igunga Tabora
<i>Negeji</i>	<i>Banegeje</i>	Mwanza town
<i>Nyemba</i>	<i>Bayemba</i>	Area not identified
<i>Ntenga</i>	<i>Batenga</i>	Area not identified

The fact that all clan names originate from female ancestors⁵, brings disputable conclusion whether this ethnic group was patriarchal/patrilineal or matriarchal. It has been suggested that this ethnic tribe although is patriarchal, it is also semi matrilineal (Songoyi 1988) .

Linguistically, the Bāsukuma are a Bantu speaking people whose language is similar to that of their southern relatives the *Badakama* (*Banyang'weji*) and the Basumva. The Bāsukuma practice mixed farming. They cultivate maize, sorghum, sweet potatoes and rice and they cultivate cotton as their main cash crop. They also keep cattle.

Bāsukuma are rich in folklore. These include folktales in which real events and fictional are told. Among of the tales are those of historical legends such as *Ng'wanamalundi*, *Ibambangulu*, *Nkanda* and *Mbusule*⁶. They also are famous in fiction such as folktale in which they narrate heroic deeds that were done by their heroes. The famous folktales are about the narratives of the ogre commonly known as *Shing'weng'we*. They are also famous in riddles, songs, jokes and fables.

The Bāsukuma and The Process of Naming

Traditionally, when a Bāsukuma child is born, the parents of the married couples are the ones who provide the names to a baby. This process, termed as *kwinika lina*, can simply be described as

⁵ Bāsukuma oral history and folklore traces the origin from women ancestors. The *Babinza* for instance, agree that they were all begotten by Minza the daughter of Nkanda and hence the name of the clan Babinza. Such legend also is common among the *Basega* who claim to have been born by the woman called Segga. Furthermore it is common among them to salute themselves by mentioning the name of the clan from which they belong. Nevertheless, it is only female children who are given names of the clan and not male children.

⁶ *Ng'wanamalundi* is a Bāsukuma legendary traditional dancer and magician who was famous for his magical miracles. He is believed to cross the Indian Ocean from the island of Mafia to Dar es Salaam without any marine vehicle assistance. *Ibambangulu* is also a legendary figure whose body is believed to fill any house whenever he entered inside. *Mbusule* is believed to give a prophecy on the coming of whites longer before the coming of whites in Sukumaland. *Nkanda* is believed to be the founder of the Bāsukuma especially those of the clan of *Babinza*.

‘naming’ (name giving). Sometimes, a baby might be given a wrong name. When this happens, the child rejects the name and demands for a suitable one⁷. It is a common thing to find a child with several names. Usually, a son takes a name of either of his grandfathers from both sides. This can be the name of the father of his mother or the name of the father of his father. A daughter likewise, takes the name of either of her grandmothers from both sides. In case of marital conflict, a married woman or her parents (and sometimes her relatives) provide a name to a baby. Usually, the name provided reflects the nature of the conflict. What is very interesting, as we can see in this study, is about the names that are given to female children born during marriage conflicts. Such names carry metaphoric implications which show reactions intended as criticism to the husband or the in-laws.

In this article, however, the analysis is done specifically to the names that are given to female children. These names are analyzed to see their metaphoric implications and how female appellation is applied as a mechanism in addressing gender issues in this society⁸. The aim is to express how these names are used to resist the patriarchal influence in real lives. All the names are presented in their original tongue and translation into English is done before doing the analysis.

Names with Desertion Implication

When a Bāsukuma woman is married, she is counted as a property of the family of the in-laws. Nevertheless, she is also regarded as a passerby. The term which refers to the daughter in law in Kisukuma is *ng’winda*⁹. The name is derived from the stem of the verb *-inga* which means ‘get away’. This shows (or means) that a married woman will not live permanently with the family of her in-laws. She stations for a moment with them before she goes away with her husband to start their own family. Also the name indicates that there is a possibility of separation or divorce in case of tense conflicts or misunderstanding which may result into her going away. The term *ng’winda* is not applied by her husband. He does not refer to his wife as a *ng’winda*. It is a common appellation among the in-laws in the Bāsukuma society as whole.

⁷ Among the Bāsukuma, it is a common phenomenon to find people who believe that children can demand for suitable names. Usually such children disturb their parents by crying very often without proper reason. When this happens, a witch doctor (*nfumu*) or an elderly person is consulted. This is the one who suggests the suitable name. Usually it is the name of the deceased ancestor which is suggested. The traditional Bāsukuma believe that spirits of the dead people can be born in other children.

⁸ Most of the names given to male children among the Bāsukuma do not carry any metaphorical implication which indicates gender thug of war. Usually boys carry names that show particular events: *Mayala* a boy born during famine, *Makoye* (a boy born during misfortune) *Bujiku* (born at night) *Malimi* (born during day time) *Mayila* (born on the way) *Madoshi/Ndoshi* (born during plenty of food) *Mpina* (born and lost his parent(s)) *Mabula* (born during rainfall), *Maganga* (born after his mother been given medicine to correct her barrenness) *Mabala* (born in a field). Other names given to boys are animistic in nature for boys are given names after certain animal *Mabiti* (hyenas) *Mapuli* (elephants) *Mang’ombe* (cows) *Makolo* (sheep) *Manoni* (birds) *Mayiku* (bulls) etc. the list is endless for the Bāsukuma have a lot of names.

⁹ Among the Basukuma when a woman is married she is referred by her in laws as the ‘*ng’winda*’. This name is commonly accepted by all members of the society. The parents of the married woman do not call their daughter by that name and so is her husband. As we have seen the name carries a connotative meaning because it implies that the married woman will station for a moment in the family of her in-laws or the woman might separate or divorce her husband and return back to her parents.

Whenever there happens to be misunderstanding between married woman and her in-laws or between her and her husband, she decides to seek for a refugee as a way of separation. A baby girl born during this period, is named *Kūbūnga*; reminding people that she (the wife) sought for refuge. Sometimes the misunderstanding might be so complicated that she is expelled either by her in-laws or her husband. Under such circumstance, the baby girl is called *Mpejiwa* which means the 'one who is chased'. At times, it might be the husband who decides to desert his family. When this happens a baby girl is named *Mpelwa* which means the 'deserted one'. This implies that the woman was left alone by her husband who deserted his family. According to the informants there are three reasons that might be the sources of a man to desert his family: One, when he gets another woman and neglects his family, two, during severe famine when he would be unable to support his family and three whenever he suspects that his wife is involved in witchcraft and he fears that she might kill him. This implies the names here have the tendency to resist the patriarchal ideologies. It is important to note that the two names *Kūbūnga* and *Mpejiwa* are not provided by the in-laws but they are given by the relatives of the married woman as part of their reaction against the injustice done to their daughter. According to the informant these names are attached directly to the status of the married woman as she is viewed among the Bāsukuma society. Although it is common in most African societies to assign gender roles through initiation as in the case of the Bakusu as Wasike (2013:60) argues:

In *Bukusu* boys and girls are initiated to perform their duties depending on gender group. For instance, boys are initiated to male duties; manhood and fatherhood such as to care for calves, participate in clearing their farmland for cultivation, grazing and fishing in small rivers while girls are initiated to motherhood.

However, what is uncommon among the Bāsukuma unlike in the above society is the prevalence of controversy of appellation in which girls are used as shields to describe gender conflict within the society. The examples of the names above show that among the Bāsukuma a woman is not a permanent dweller to the family of her in-laws. She simply passes by, (a *ng'wina*) a notion that is well reflected in the names which female children receive. Nevertheless, she does not depart without leaving a monument behind expressing the injustice done to her. This monument is engraved in the names given to her daughters.

Names That Indicate Hatred for Married Women

Hatred for the married woman among the Bāsukuma is also shown through the names of the daughters that are born to this woman. Naming of such kind is done to show the battle of the in-laws in which a child becomes a shield. In such a battle, it is not a child who is detested but her mother. The parents and relatives of the woman unite in remonstrance by reminding the other side (husband and his relatives) that their daughter was not well treated. However, in case the opponent side reacts back, they encounter a strong stronghold defense of the female child through her name providing reminiscence of what they did. The protest against injustice done to the woman remains longer through the names which girls are given in childhood. As long as they continue living, they carry these names throughout their life to tell the story which their mothers encountered during pregnancy. Thus, names given in such situation are intended to be mnemonic as Sugawara (2016) noted that names in most African societies are used to strengthen memory of a certain event that has occurred.

Common names that are used metaphorically to show such hatred are *Bankolwa*, *Banumva*, *Manugwa* and *Nkoliwe*. The former two names can be translated as ‘they have hated her’ and ‘they are tired of her’ while the later two are literally translated as ‘the one whom people are tired with’ and ‘the one whom people hate’. A close discourse attached to these names shows that the hatred in question is not between the married couple rather it involves also the relatives of the husband. This notion is clearly embedded in the prefix *ba-* (they) which shows a noun in plurality and the verbs *kolwa* (hate) and *lumva* (be tired of) respectively.

Unlike the names that are given to female children when the woman runs away from her husband to her parents, such names as discussed here may be given even if the woman lives with her husband or her in-laws or even when she is away. Because most of Bāsukuma names involve scandals before the birth of the children it is common to find a Nsukuma woman with several names given by the two sides. Usually, other names fade away whenever one name becomes more popular than the other names. However, it is the mother who endeavors to popularize the name in order to tell the story of her calamities she encountered from her husband and his relatives.

The Backbitten Woman

Just as other names describe hatred to the woman, Bāsukuma also offer names which indicate viciousness. Such names portray the cruel criticism and backbiting done to a woman by the family of her husband. The name *Nimilwa* is common among the Bāsukuma women. It traces its origin from the Bantu stem word *-lima* which can be translated as ‘to cultivate’. This name indicates that the married woman became an object of being backbitten by the family of her husband during the time of cultivation. The name shows that the backbiters used to level harsh criticism to her absence and the action was being done whenever they attended farming. There are several names which are given to female children which show backbiting. These include: *Ntinganilwa* (encompassed); this name shows that the woman was encompassed by backbiting everywhere. *Ng’hayiwa* (one whom people speak about her), *Nsīgwa* (the backbitten), *Nshiminzilwa* (the one whom people visit each other so as to backbite her) are examples of the names that show viciousness. As it has been discussed above, for the woman to be backbitten it is probably common because she is simply the one who is in a process of passing from her in-laws to her own family where she will be living with her husband.

Woman in Her Defense

So far we have seen how a woman can express her feelings when she is faced by separation or when she is abused by her husband or his family. This expression is manifested through the names given to the female children of the woman. Among the Bāsukuma, names are a kind of literary art in which they can express a gender battle. Some women, or rather the family of the married woman, decide to repress and regress their anger against their in-laws by turning to the children that will be born to show that they did not bother with what their daughters were being treated by her in-laws. There are also common names which show this gender tug of war. Among them are *Bayega*, *Balanoga*, *Badalaha*, *Balinago*, *Bali-chene*, and *Njile*. The name *Bayega* is translated as ‘they have become happy’. It is a reference to the deeds which the family of her husband did when she was living there. The word carries a connotation that the happiness of the in-laws of the woman lays in making sure that they inflict pain through mistreatment and abuse. Nevertheless, appellation to her born daughter intervenes as the mediator to tell them that although they behaved awkwardly against her, she would continue living with her husband because he loves her. Whenever this

happens, she decides to call her daughter a pejorative name, *Balanoga*. This name may simply be translated to mean ‘they will get tired. Sometimes the married woman becomes accustomed to the mistreatments of her in-laws and represses her anxieties. Her repression is once again manifested through the name given to her daughter. This time her daughter is named *Balichene* which can be translated as ‘it is their behavior’. It happens that the woman discovers a plot of abuse upon her early before things get worse. She names her daughter *Balinago*, simply translated as ‘something is in the wind’. It is important to note that sometimes the married woman might not be so acceptable among her in-laws that they plot to get another wife for their son. That is where this name (*Balinago*) stems. The love of her husband is a strong rope that binds the woman to her husband, despite all these calamities. However, a Nsukuma woman is keen when that love withers. She instantly issues a stern warning to him or her in-laws that she is simply passing by and she would soon be going. This time her daughter is named *Njile* or *Míti*, names that can simply be translated as ‘I am going’ and I am passing by respectively.

Table 2: Morphological Glossary of Names and their Meaning

Name	morphological derivation	literal meaning
<i>Balinago</i>	-lina-	something is in the wind
<i>Balichene</i>	-chene (like that)	it is their custom
<i>Balanoga</i>	-noga (get tired)	they will get tired
<i>Njile</i>	-ja (go)	go (I will go)
<i>Míti</i>	-bita (pass by) -	passerby
<i>Bayega</i>	-yega- (be happy)	they have become happy
<i>Nshiminzilwa</i>	-shiminza- (walk)	the one whom is backbitten
<i>Ng'hayiwa</i>	-haya- (say)	one who is evil spoke of
<i>Nsĩgwa</i>	-siga- (backbite)	one whom people backbite her
<i>Ntinganilwa</i>	-tinganila-(encompassed)	encompassed by hatred people.
<i>Bankolwa,</i>	-kola- (hate)	they hate her
<i>Banumva,</i>	<i>lumva</i> (get tired)	they are tired of her
<i>Manugwa</i>	<i>nuga</i> (get tired of)	they are tired of her
<i>Nkoliwe</i>	<i>kola</i> (hate)	I am tired
<i>Kūbūnga</i>	<i>būnga</i> (hide)	one who sought for refuge
<i>Mpejiwa</i>	<i>peja</i> (chase)	the one who was chased
<i>Mpelwa</i>	<i>pela, pelwa</i> (run away)	one who is deserted
<i>ng'winga</i>	<i>inga</i> (get away)	one who will go away

Why Female Child Appellation

The issue of gender disparities among the women is common in most societies. Whereas Virginia Woolf ¹⁰ is considered the precursor of the feminism criticism in western literature, African

¹⁰ Virginia Woolf published her book, *A Room of One's Own* (1929). It is a collection of extended essays revealing the cultural, economic and educational disabilities within a patriarchal society, dominated by men. She is considered the precursor of the feminist writings.

traditional societies like the Bāsukuma, retain the same principle of addressing their problems in a remarkable way. Indeed, in the literate world, writing serves the purpose. However, it catches the attention of literate people only. Among the Bāsukuma, appellation proves to be a successful way of reaching a large audience of the literate and the illiterate.

We have seen that the gender tug of war among the Bāsukuma is directed to female children. There are few reasons as to why most of the recipients of these names are female children. First, whenever the female child is born, she is considered as the one who will not be an heir¹¹ in the family of his father. Thus, whether she takes a name which is not suitable in the family of her father, she will eventually be married and go away. The second reason however, is quite vital as far as the position of the woman in the society is concerned. Bāsukuma society, as we have discussed, is considered to be semi matrilineal. Unlike many African societies which are patrilineal in their formation, woman or rather parents of the married woman, exercise their freedom of expression. This freedom is exercised by channeling their grievances through appellation. It is also important to note that it is not only the Bāsukuma who can use literature to express their gender feelings. It is also common among the Waswahili also to express their gender feelings through the culture of Khanga.¹² However, the Bāsukuma's case remains peculiar for it employs female names to address the issue. The third reason as to why female children are used as means of revenge can simply be expressed in terms of education. When the baby girl becomes mature, she is expected to be a teacher and a learning material to other people on gender imbalance, equity, equality and stereotype in her society. Indeed, the reasons for all such metaphoric appellations are to bring gender consciousness and awareness among the Bāsukuma in order to promote gender equity and equality in their society.

Class and Gendering Among the Bāsukuma

So far, we have seen that among the Bāsukuma female names provide significant information which is metaphorical. It is also important to note that the names are provided by either the parents of the married woman or the married one. These names as we have seen are only given as part of the reaction on the injustice done to the woman. Within these names one can observe the existence of classes in the society. Women are treated as the other class which is not equal to men. The fact that female children in the family carry names that indicate family misunderstanding, proves that women belong to the lower class whereas male children who are born to such family with the same misunderstandings receive none of the names. However, the metaphorical meanings embedded in the names indicate that the Bāsukuma society especially women are sensitive and conscience on gender issues.

¹¹ Among the Bāsukuma, according to the informant, inheritance whether of cattle or a piece of land is given to a male child. In case a man does not obtain a son which is a rare case, a man adds another woman/ women so as to get an heir. Female children are considered to be the source of wealth. When they get married they bring cattle which are paid to their fathers as bride prize. Such cattle are later used by male children to pay bride prize when the time for them to get married comes. Because the woman brings cattle in the family, her marriage affects the family relationship. When she gets children they are so respected as to be given special treatment. For instance, a son born to the daughter is regarded by the children of his uncle as father and he can even inherit the wife of his uncle in case his uncle dies. It might sound strange in European culture, but it is a common thing among the Bāsukuma.

¹² Kanga is a colorful garment similar to Kitenge which is commonly worn by women. Most of Kanga and Vitenge have messages typed on them which indicate a particular meaning intended to be read by audience. Some of the words address the issues of gender among the Waswahili of East Africa.

Class reaction, as we have seen, is typically manifested through these names. Bāsukuma women show their reaction by giving names to their female children. The names given are to remind the whole society on the injustice done to the married woman. These names are not provided by men. It is the women who are responsible for the provision of the names. The fact that men remain silent on this gender thug of war is the indication that men consider themselves as a superior class. They (men) deem it unfit to involve in female matters. Nevertheless, the misunderstandings do not remain in female confinement: they affect the whole society. It is common in patriarchal society that the whole class is affected. Although the male Bāsukuma remain silent on the injustice done to their daughters, often when family misunderstandings occur their daughters return back home to nurse their grievances in presence of their male parents. However, men remain silent because it is the natural custom for the matters to be dealt with women. This is to say women are the ones that wage the gender war through metaphorical naming which is applied to female children.

Conclusion

The Bāsukuma female appellation is an endeavor of women in their society to promote gender sensitivity, equality and awareness. It is very interesting, however, to see that such society, though male dominated, manifests liberality by allowing women to exercise their freedom of expression through the system of naming. This shows that gender issues among the humankind cut boundaries to different societies. Here is an example of a society that can be considered as tradition and which address the issue in a traditional way. It is also interesting to note that among the Bāsukuma gender issues are so deeply rooted as to be amalgamated in their culture. Gender struggle in this society, as it has been discussed, involves two sides in which the female child, though not the root cause of the struggle, becomes a placard of gender struggle advertisement.

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