Morphological and Semantic analysis of Dogon Patronyms in Ningari, Bandiagara Region

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Abstract:

This study investigates the onomastic system of the Dogon communities in Ningari, Mali, with a focus on the morphological structure and semantic roles of patronyms. In this cultural context, names function not only as identity markers but also as carriers of collective memory, social organization, and indigenous knowledge. Despite extensive research on Dogon ethnography, naming practices remain largely underexplored. Grounded in an ethnolinguistic framework, the research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining ethnographic interviews with multistage systematic sampling. The analysis revealed that patronyms are central to kinship structures and social hierarchies, and they embody ancestral memory and cultural values. These findings highlight the deeper social and symbolic functions of names in Dogon society. The study recommends incorporating patronymic knowledge into bilingual education programs using national languages. Such integration would enhance linguistic competence, promote local knowledge systems, and support culturally responsive pedagogy in Dogon-speaking environments.
Keywords: *morphological composition; municipality of Ningari; onomastics; patronym; symbolic value.*

Résumé :

Cette étude examine le système onomastique des communautés Dogon de Ningari, au Mali, en s'intéressant particulièrement à la formation morphologique et aux fonctions sémantiques des patronymes. Dans ce contexte culturel, les noms ne se réduisent pas à de simples identifiants ;

ils constituent des vecteurs de mémoire collective, d'organisation sociale et de transmission du savoir endogène. Alors que l'ethnographie Dogon a fait l'objet de nombreuses recherches, l'onomastique demeure largement sous-étudiée. S'inscrivant dans une approche ethnolinguistique, cette recherche mobilise un dispositif méthodologique mixte, combinant des entretiens ethnographiques à un échantillonnage systématique à plusieurs niveaux. Les résultats révèlent que les patronymes sont des marqueurs identitaires essentiels et jouent un rôle central dans l'organisation de la parenté et des hiérarchies sociales. Ils incarnent également la mémoire ancestrale et les valeurs culturelles. L'étude recommande l'intégration des savoirs onomastiques dans les programmes d'éducation bilingue via les langues nationales. Une telle intégration permettrait de renforcer les compétences linguistiques, de promouvoir les savoirs endogènes et de soutenir une pédagogie culturellement adaptée en milieu Dogon.

Mots-clés : *Cercle de Ningari, onomastique, patronymes, structure morphologique, valeur symbolique.*

Introduction

In African societies, a name is never simply a label of identity; it constitutes a social sign, a marker of history, and a vector of collective memory. Among the Dogon of the Municipality of Ningari in the Bandiagara Region, patronyms play a crucial role in social and cultural organization. They reflect not only membership of a lineage, clan or locality, but also convey information on values, historical events, social roles, and sometimes the character traits attributed to their bearers. As a branch of linguistics devoted to the study of proper names (patronyms, toponyms, anthroponyms, etc.), onomastics provides a rich analytical framework for exploring the cultural, social, and historical dynamics of a people. Among the Dogon, the study of names, and in particular patronyms, discloses symbolic, identity and social meanings. In this respect, Dianka et al. (2024, p. 35) assert,

"The stories of families and names are passed down mainly through oral tradition." By this assertion, the authors emphasize the oral nature of cultural transmission of names in many African societies. This mode of transmission preserves genealogical knowledge while strengthening collective memory, with names serving as shared histories and values. In a broad perspective, onomastics is defined by Jean Camproux as "the science of the proper name, whether it is the name of an airplane, an electric battery, a razor, a robot [...] or whether it is a locality or a person" (Camproux, 1982, p. 5). This broad definition allows us to consider the proper name as a sole identification marker, whatever its referent, and above all as a carrier of contextual significance.

In the Dogonland, especially among the Dogon of the Ningari area, this perspective allows an onomastic investigation that includes family names (patronyms), personal names (anthroponyms), place names (toponyms), and names linked to social and symbolic entities. Dogon onomastics is embedded within a structured cultural system where naming serves as a means of classification, memory, and belonging.

Several ethnographic, linguistic and anthropological studies have highlighted the importance of names in the construction of identity among the Dogon. The existing literature on the Dogon is mainly centered on their social organization, their complex cosmology, their agrarian and religious rituals, as well as their kinship system (Griaule, 1948). From a linguistic perspective, studies have focused on the structure of Dogon languages (Heath, 2008), their food lexicon (Calame-Griaule, 1965) or even anthroponyms

(Somboro, 2018; Kodio et al. 2021). Conversely, patronyms, and more specifically those of the Municipality of Ningari, remain understudied, even though they constitute a particularly rich field of analysis for exploring the links between language, culture and identity. Indeed, names are rarely arbitrary: they refer to a collective memory, lineage alliances, social statuses or even significant historical events.

Moreover, Dogon onomastics is also marked by notable linguistic and dialectal diversity. As Blench (2005) points out, the Dogon do not form a homogeneous linguistic group: their territory includes several dialectal variants influencing onomastic forms. This diversity is reflected in patronyms, the morphology of which can vary according to localities and associated ethnic groups. In this sense, Van Beek (1991) observed that the name, in Dogon society, is not limited to designating the individual. Instead, it is also a social marker indicating membership in a clan, group or hierarchy.

From a linguistic perspective, research on the morphological structure of Dogon names remains limited, although recent studies have started to explore this area. The work of Hochstetler et al. (2004) on the phonology of Dogon languages provides a useful framework for analyzing formal regularities in the construction of patronyms (affixes, derivation, lexical roots, etc.). Besides, contemporary processes such as schooling, and civil administration have led to transformations in the transmission and formalization of names. Another study conducted by Togola (2010) notes a growing standardization

of patronyms in administrative records, a process that often diverges from traditional and oral naming practices.

Furthermore, the literature on Dogon onomastics points to a rich linguistic, cultural, and social landscape, where names serve not just as labels but as carriers of memory, status, and identity. However, the field remains only partially explored from a linguistic perspective and calls for more systematic ethnolinguistic research, especially in the Bandiagara Region, to get a better insight into the structure and meaning of Dogon patronyms.

In this vein, patronyms are not merely markers of individual identity; they also reflect lineage affiliations and social ties. Yet, despite their cultural significance, their linguistic structure and symbolic value remain poorly documented. In a context marked by multilingualism, interethnic contact, and ongoing social change, important questions emerge regarding the formation, evolution, and meaning of these patronyms within the Dogon society. Thus, To what extent does the morphological structure of Dogon patronyms in Ningari reflect specific semantic meanings, and how do these patronym forms reflect the cultural, social, and historical dynamics specific to this community?

The morphological and semantic analysis of Dogon patronyms in Ningari (Bandiagara region) seeks to uncover the underlying linguistic structures as well as the cultural and historical meanings embedded in these names. Beyond its purely linguistic scope, this study holds significant social relevance: it deepens our understanding of identity dynamics, lineage affiliations, and symbolic systems of transmission within Dogon society. On a utilitarian level, it contributes to the preservation of local intangible heritage,

the promotion of indigenous knowledge systems, and the strengthening of collective memory practices, particularly in a context where local languages and oral traditions are increasingly under threat. In this sense, the research embodies both a scientific and civic engagement, serving the interests of the local communities while fostering broader intercultural understanding. By jointly analyzing the morphological and semantic dimensions of these patronyms, the study also advances the documentation and valorization of African languages and onomastic systems, many of which remain insufficiently explored in academic literature.

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in an ethnolinguistic perspective, drawing from descriptive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and social anthropology to explore the morphological and semantic structures of Dogon patronyms in Ningari. Rather than considering personal names as mere identifiers, this approach treats anthroponyms as culturally embedded linguistic signs that reflect and sustain systems of social organization, memory, and identity. Influenced by the works of Bourdieu (1991) on language and symbolic power and by the interpretive tradition in linguistic anthropology (Duranti, 1997), the study views naming practices as performative acts that encode social relationships, group affiliations, and cultural values. In this context, patronyms are examined as both linguistic forms, composed of roots, affixes, and phonological patterns, and as carriers of meaning shaped by oral tradition, local cosmology, and kinship systems. The theoretical model adopted here thus integrates two analytical levels: a formal linguistic analysis that investigates the internal morphological structure of Dogon

anthroponyms, and a semantic-contextual interpretation informed by field data, including oral narratives and interviews. This dual approach makes it possible to understand how names function not only within language systems but also within the symbolic universe of Dogon society, where they play a crucial role in transmitting collective memory, affirming lineage continuity, and articulating social roles. In doing so, the study contributes to a broader understanding of the interplay between language, identity, and culture in West African naming systems.

By analyzing the Dogon patronyms of Ningari, this study contributes to enriching onomastic literature by adopting both a morphological and semantic approach. It highlights the role of patronyms as indicators of lineage, identity markers and vectors of historical memory, while also demonstrating their adaptability to evolving social contexts and transformations. Thus, this study is part of a field of research that conceives patronyms not only as linguistic subjects, but also as instruments of social anchoring and cultural resilience.

Additionally, the study of language use in context (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992), provides a frame for analyzing how Dogon patronyms acquire meaning in specific social interactions. Similarly, theories of linguistic change in multilingual settings (Weinreich, Labov & Herzog, 1968; Auer & Hinskens, 2005) indicate valuable lens for analyzing shifts in Dogon onomastics. Due to contact between local languages, names undergo morphological, functional, and symbolic transformations that reflect broader processes of adaptation.

While some anthropological and linguistic studies have explored the symbolic universe of the Dogon, including their legendary accounts, cosmic beliefs and farming practices, few studies have focused specifically on patronyms as meaningful onomastic data. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the patronyms of the Dogon in the Municipality of Ningari, the choice of which, in particular, was motivated by the fact that it represents an area most familiar to the researcher and one that he knows well and is closely connected to. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to shed light on the Dogon onomastics by analyzing how patronyms in this municipality are formed, with particular focus on their morphological and semantic structure (etymology). Specific objectives include to:

- list the existing patronyms in the Municipality of Ningari;
- carry out the morphological and semantic analysis of these patronyms;
- highlight the circumstances and actions that contributed to the formation of patronyms.

I. Methodology

1.1. Area of Investigation

The Region of Bandiagara is the 19th administrative Region of Mali. It is located in the center of Mali and has nine Municipalities: Bandiagara, Koro, Bankass, Kendie, Ningari, Diallassagou, Sangha, Kani and Sokoura. Because it was impossible to survey all the Municipalities in the Region, that of Ningari, an area with a high proportion of Dogon

population, was selected as the area of investigation. The rationale underlying this geographical selection is rooted in the richness and diversity of onomastic practices that prevail in this cultural area.

1.2. Research design

This research adopted a mixed method approach combining qualitative ethnolinguistic research and systematic multi-stage random sampling. The objective is to document, analyze, and interpret Dogon anthroponyms in the Municipality of Ningari in both their linguistic and cultural forms, which is essential for understanding the mechanisms of the formation of Dogon anthroponyms. In this regard, the methodology adopted aims to collect, classify, and interpret a representative corpus of patronyms while taking into account their formation, meaning, and sociocultural context.

1.3. Data collection techniques

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants (elderly people, bearers of oral tradition, griots, heads of families, village elders). These semi-structured interviews allowed us to explore the morphological composition and symbolic meaning of patronyms, as well as the stories associated with their origins. Participants' observation of ceremonies and social interactions, as well as consultation of local documents, provided valuable insight into the practical uses of names within the local context.

1.4. Sampling

In order to select the villages, the researcher combined the empirical (qualitative) method and the systematic multi-

stage random method. In the empirical method, the researcher chose a Municipality composed of four Communes, two with the largest number of villages, one with the smallest number of villages, and one because of its early contact with school and its having hosted the first civic camp in the area. The number of villages selected is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Number of villages per Commune

No.	Municipalities	Number of villages
1	Moué-Toumon	22
2	Ondogou	10
3	Diamnati	11
4	Segue – Iré	16
Total		59

Therefore, a total of 59 villages constitutes the sampling frame of this study. In order to have a representative sample, the systematic multi-stage random method was adopted. To that end, we proceeded:

- First-stage random selection of $\frac{1}{4}$ of the 59 villages that make up the four selected communes. Thus, 59 x 1/4 = 15, so the number of villages selected is 15; thus, the family names in these villages were all identified. With the help of our informants, we then sought to explore the circumstances of formation and the different meanings of patronyms.

Participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. Participants' informed consent was obtained before

conducting interviews with them. They were selected based on their in-depth knowledge of the Dogon language and traditions. A balance was sought in terms of age, gender, and social status to ensure diversity of viewpoints.

1.5. Data processing and analysis

The analysis was conducted in two complementary parts. Morphological analysis was used to break down the patronyms into morphemes (roots, derivational affixes) to understand their internal structure on the one hand, and semantic analysis aimed to identify the meaning of the patronyms based on their etymology, their reference to historical facts, physical or moral attributes or significant events. Particular attention was paid to lexical elements revealing social and geographical circumstances that influenced the formation of the names.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. Results

This section provides a morphological and semantic analysis of patronyms in order to highlight their meaning and linguistic origin. This will involve determining the mode of formation, and the components of patronyms (affixes) as well as their interpretation. A summary table composed of five lines and two columns containing the patronyms, the morphosyntactic structures, the number of morphemes, and the literal and contextual meanings serve as the basis for the analysis. The history of the Dogon community and the diversity of dialects used in this part of central Mali have a direct impact on the formation of patronyms. The table

below provides some Dogon patronyms from the Municipality of Ningari.

Table 2: Dogon patronyms from the Municipality of Ningari.

Patronym	Ouologuem
Morphological structures	Ouolo-guem
Number of morphemes	2
Literal meaning	Black thorny tree
Contextual meaning	The name Ouologuem means "black thorny tree" and became a patronym further to the history of settlement. In their efforts to create a habitable environment, early settlers had to clear the land, which was densely covered by this thorny tree. Those who carried out the task of clearing the Ouologuem to create livable space were eventually identified by this act, and the surname Ouologuem was adopted as their patronym, symbolizing their labor and connection to the land.
Patronym	Timbine
Morphological structures	Timbi-ne
Number of morphemes	2
Literal meaning	The agentive form indicating the one who discovered.
Contextual meaning	The patronym Tembine is an agentive marker meaning "the one who discovered." It is related to the Dogon who ascended the plateau and found a place to

	settle. Upon discovering this place, they exclaimed that they had found habitable land.
Patronym	Dolo
Morphological structures	Dolo
Number of morphemes	1
Literal meaning	Muddy, wet place
Contextual meaning	The patronym Dolo, denoting "muddy place," is carried by a Dogon group whose name recalls a key moment in their settlement history. Upon arriving in search of a place to settle, a dog emerged from the area, its body covered in mud. This revealed the presence of a muddy spot, which in turn indicated a nearby water source, an essential condition for living.
Patronym	Napare (distorted phonetically)
Morphological structures	Nam- pare
Number of morphemes	2
Literal meaning	Sun – detach, eliminate
Contextual meaning	This patronym was given to the local group that eliminated the 9 suns because of their ardor.
Patronym	Kanambaye (distorted phonetically)
Morphological structures	Kanu – bay
Number of morphemes	2
Literal meaning	Satisfied
Contextual meaning	A patronym emerged from a woman's expression of satisfaction with her parents' hunting skills, grounded in the fact that they always provided enough to meet the family's needs.
Patronym	Yanoga (distorted phonetically)

Morphological structures	Yana-ɔgɔ
Number of morphemes	2
Literal meaning	Power of yesteryear
Contextual meaning	A patronym borne by men involved in the craft of forging and ironworking.
Patronym	Yalcouye (distorted phonetically)
Morphological structures	Yalu-kuwe
Number of morphemes	2
Literal meaning	Discover the new land
Contextual meaning	Yalcouye is the most common patronym in the Ningari and Amala areas. Historically, members of this group are believed to have originally borne the patronym Niangaly and inhabited the region corresponding to what is now the Municipality of Koro. According to tradition, they are said to have carried out a territorial conquest between the plain and the Dogon plateau, establishing their presence through migration and settlement.
Patronym	Guindo (distorted phonetically)
Morphological structures	Guinu-dɔ
Number of morphemes	2
Literal meaning	Welcome to the family.
Contextual meaning	This patronym expresses a sense of welcome into the family. Among the Dogon, it symbolizes the values of cordiality, respect, hospitality, and communal harmony that are central to their social identity.
Patronym	Djepkile
Morphological structures	Djep-kile

Number of morphemes	2
Literal meaning	A mystical species of bird that never goes far when it flies.
Contextual meaning	This patronym is predominantly borne by the inhabitants of Mori Dimbou, located in the Mori sector of the Ningari Municipality. It originates from a local tale recounting the journey of a man who set out to capture a bird known for its limited flight range. Ironically, in his obsessive pursuit, he ventured far from home, losing himself in the distance, yet never managing to catch the bird. The name thus reflects both the irony of the quest and the unintended consequences of distraction.
Patronym	Napo
Morphological structures	Na-po
Number of morphemes	2
Literal meaning	Big cow
Contextual meaning	The patronym Napo is borne by men of caste, exclusively shoemakers. It is very common in the Ondougou area. According to resource persons, bearers of the patronym Napo enjoyed great wealth in the Dogon society, particularly through the possession of a great number of cattle. The founding patriarch, as a sign of wealth, used to order the immolation of big oxen on the occasion of events. It is from this practice that the patronym Napo, symbolically meaning "big ox", is said to have originated.

Patronym	Ombotimbe
Morphological structures	Ombo-timbe
Number of morphemes	2
Literal meaning	Boost the chances
Contextual meaning	This patronym is borne by some inhabitants of the Mori sector (Torada, Mori Damada). The term 'Ombotimbe' reflects their recognition of the land's fertility, which they were granted upon resettlement.
Patronym	Kouriba (distorted phonetically)
Morphological structures	Kuruba
Number of morphemes	1
Literal meaning	Shelter, residential accommodation
Contextual meaning	Kuruba refers to a dense, bushy forest considered a refuge and an enigmatic residential habitat, whose inhabitants, called "men of Kuruba", are perceived as mysterious figures linked to this place. Through phonetic distortion, Kuruba evolved into Kouriba.

Source: Fieldwork

Comment: Morphologically, Dogon patronyms are distributed between free morphemes, such as Kuruba and Dolo, and bound morphemes, as seen in Ouologuem and Guindo (Guinudo). All identified morphemes are derivational in nature. They derive from a variety of linguistic forms, including verbs (e.g., Yalcouye, meaning "to discover"), nouns (e.g., Kuruba, meaning "dense forest"), agentive markers

(e.g., Tembine), and past participles (e.g., Kanu-bay). Some patronyms exhibit phonetic distortions, a result of mispronunciations introduced during the colonial period by administrators (Togola, 2010; Hochstetler et al. 2004).

In terms of syllabic structure, Dogon patronyms are typically disyllabic—such as Dolo and Napo—though polysyllabic forms like Ombotimbe and Yana-Ogo are also present. These structural and morphological features reflect both linguistic complexity and the historical layers embedded within the Dogon onomastic system.

The patronym Ouologuem, referring to a black thorny tree that is difficult to clear, illustrates how names can emerge from acts of resilience tied to settlement. According to local accounts, this tree was cut down through courage and perseverance to make the land habitable. Today, the name is borne by inhabitants of Sol, Saredina, and Sategue within the Municipality, symbolizing both a shared history of land ownership and the symbolic meaning ascribed to human transformation of the land. Similarly, the patronym Tembine expresses the joy of having found a suitable land for living. If oral tradition is to be believed, this group is said to have migrated from the plain to settle on the plateau. To date, the patronym is found in the villages of Ondogou Da, Guine Kanda, and Ondogou Sombo.

In addition, the patronym Dolo is also present in the Municipality of Ningari, which does not fall within the original settlement area of this Dogon group. In this context, the name is primarily carried by women who

entered the community through marriage, highlighting the role of matrimonial alliances in the diffusion of patronyms beyond their traditional geographic origins.

Furthermore, the patronym *Kanambaye* is said to have originated from a woman who, returning from her husband's household, discovered that her parents had become highly skilled hunters. They had killed so many *jubus* that they consumed the fresh meat and dried the surplus on the roof. Upon arriving, the woman saw fat dripping from the gutters and, astonished by what she perceived as their arrogance, exclaimed *Kanu-bay*, which eventually distorted to *Kanambaye*. This patronym is currently borne in the villages of Dianou, Outolo, and Gagnaga.

According to legend, the patronym *Naparé*—originally *Namparé from phonetic distorsion*—derives from a myth about the creation of the world. It is said that God created the Earth with ten suns, which scorched the land with unbearable heat. Humanity, overwhelmed, sought to eliminate the suns, but most groups admitted their inability to do so. One group, however, through the wisdom and power of an elder, succeeded in eliminating nine suns in a single day. The tenth sun had already set. The following day, people waited to see how much heat the remaining sun would produce. When it rose and reached its zenith, it emitted less heat than expected and was ultimately spared. The group that accomplished this feat was given the patronym *Nampare*, meaning "sun eliminated." Today, the *Napare* are found in the village of Dimbili, in the commune of Ondogou.

The patronym *Yanoga* is associated with members of the artisan caste, specifically blacksmiths who work with iron. Their craft is as ancient and essential as agriculture itself, as it provides the tools necessary for cultivation, hunting, and protection such as hoes, axes, pickaxes, rifles, spears, knives, and arrows. Beyond their technical expertise, the *Yanoga* are considered guardians of indigenous knowledge and often serve as mediators in times of conflict. They are widespread across the villages of the Municipality.

Therefore, the morphological and semantic analysis of Dogon patronyms from the Ningari Municipality in the Bandiagara region highlights a deeply codified linguistic and cultural structure. These names, often monosyllabic or disyllabic, present morphological patterns based on verbal or nominal roots, enriched with affixes expressing clan affiliation, social status, or ritual functions. Beyond their identity function, patronyms act as vectors of collective memory, carrying mythical narratives, historical events, or symbolic representations specific to the Dogon worldview. Their meaning can imply social responsibilities, particularly in relation to castes, lineages, or ceremonial roles. The onomastic variation observed between villages testifies to a living dynamic, where administrative standardization and the persistence of ancient forms coexist, highlighting the challenge of their preservation in the face of contemporary sociolinguistic transformations.

2.2. Discussion

This study confirms that Dogon patronyms in the Municipality of Ningari serve far beyond administrative or familial identification. Addressing the first objective, it

identifies and catalogs a diverse corpus of patronyms currently in use within the municipality, including widely cited examples such as *Amba-pilu*, *Walu-banu*, *Pama-tagu*, *Kɛlɛ-pilu*, *Kassɔ-ɔgɔ*, *Sɛmɛ-gɛmu*, and *Girii*. Their frequency and distribution attest to deep historical continuity and sociocultural embedding.

In line with the second objective, the study undertakes a morphological and semantic analysis of these names. While many patronyms reveal internal compositional patterns, a subset remains semantically opaque despite their prevalence. These include the aforementioned examples, whose meanings cannot yet be clarified through linguistic methods alone. This semantic opacity underscores the necessity of ethnographic engagement with oral traditions, myths, and local legends, revealing the limits of structural linguistic analysis and reinforcing the value of contextual interpretation.

The third objective, examining the socio-historical conditions underpinning the emergence of patronyms, is addressed through an exploration of their origins and functions. Patronyms among the Dogon are not randomly assigned but are inherited patrilineally and predetermined prior to birth. They often index clan affiliation, ancestral narratives, and social roles emerging from a nexus of ritual practices, ecological adaptations, and collective memory. These findings align with prior research, including Calame-Griaule (1965) and Leguy (2010), which emphasize the interweaving of onomastic practice with cosmology, geography, and identity. Similarly, Chastanet's (2013)

investigation of Soninke naming traditions reveals parallel functions of names in encoding historical trauma, resilience, and environmental crisis.

The analysis also benefits from broader comparative insights. Van Beek's (1991) study of ritual naming among the Kapsiki of northern Cameroon provides a useful West African parallel, reinforcing the performative, non-identificatory value of names. Likewise, Bourdieu's (1991) theory of language as symbolic power and Duranti's (1997) interpretive linguistic anthropology frame patronyms as relational signs embedded within systems of social reproduction. These names function as acts of symbolic positioning (encoding kinship ties, territorial affiliations, and social hierarchy) while simultaneously serving as vessels for cultural knowledge and communal memory.

However, the study also documents contemporary pressures that threaten the persistence of this onomastic system: formal education, civil registration, migration, and religious conversion. These forces increasingly displace traditional naming practices, leading to erosion or transformation. Nevertheless, the endurance of patronyms in Ningari, even those with obscured meanings, reflects ongoing cultural resilience.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that integrating onomastic knowledge into bilingual curricula may strengthen students' cognitive anchoring, cultural literacy, and identity formation. Patronyms, as orally transmitted epistemic tools, can thus contribute to educational models rooted in local knowledge systems and responsive to sociolinguistic realities. Ultimately, this study affirms the dual role of Dogon patronyms: as custodians of

ancestral heritage and as adaptive mechanisms within evolving cultural contexts.

Conclusion

In sum, it should be emphasized that the field of onomastics, particularly that of anthroponymy, remains significantly underexplored in Mali. This study, focused on patronyms among the Dogon of the Municipality of Ningari, constitutes a contribution to the understanding of the origins, modes of formation and social and cultural meanings of family names in this specific context. Although it is geographically limited in scope, it provides valuable insight into the Dogon anthroponymic system, which has so far received little comprehensive scholarly attention. The study made it possible to distinguish individual names (first names) from collective names (patronyms), the latter being transmitted by filiation and marking belonging to a lineage, which makes it an essential vector of social and family identity.

Morphological and semantic analysis have revealed that Dogon patronyms are not simple nominative labels, but powerful identity markers, bearers of collective memory, social hierarchy and endogenous knowledge. They reflect logics of lineage transmission, precise social functions and cosmological representations anchored in the Dogon worldview. Morphologically, they present derived and sometimes archaic compound forms, testifying to a remarkable linguistic richness. However, this richness is weakened by contemporary dynamics: schooling in French

and administrative standardization, which contribute to the progressive erasure of these traditional onomastic forms.

In this respect, this study contributes to the preservation of an intangible heritage threatened by contemporary sociolinguistic changes. On a social level, it sheds light on the logic of endogenous knowledge transmission, the reproduction of community values, and the mechanisms of social organization among the Dogon. On a practical level, it offers relevant tools for policies promoting national languages, intercultural education programs, and local development initiatives based on cultural resources. By understanding the internal logic of names and their symbolic significance, this research opens up perspectives for better integration of cultural realities into governance, education, and social mediation mechanisms at the local level.

Finally, the results of the study can usefully inform the pedagogical content of bilingual schools, particularly in subjects such as civic education and local history. Using patronyms as a teaching tool would not only anchor learning in students' sociocultural experiences, but also strengthen their sense of identity and community belonging. Patronyms, which convey family histories, values, and stories, can thus become effective vehicles for transmitting traditional knowledge within formal education. Thus, this study is part of an interdisciplinary, culturally rooted and education-oriented approach, aiming to promote the integration of Dogon identity knowledge within bilingual curricula. It contributes to the institutional recognition and educational promotion of local heritage, while being part of the broader

dynamics of inclusive education and sustainable development based on endogenous cultural resources.

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