

## Names and Naming System of Tugen

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### Abstract

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Each ethnic group and language has a way of providing reference to its members. Reference is provided by names which are labels for people and places. From a semantic perspective, proper names have been known to have no descriptive meaning but only denotational meaning. However, we find that in some languages some of the proper names used by communities for reference have a descriptive backing. A descriptive backing consists of a number of propositions associated with a name and that have a relationship concerning the identity of the bearer of the name. Tugen which is a language within the Kalenjin macro language of the Southern Nilotic group of languages is one language whose proper names have a descriptive backing. The descriptive backing may or may not be associated with the individual bearing the name. This paper expounds on the system of naming that is used by the Tugen in assigning names. It shows the morphological processes of inflection, derivation and compounding that are used in the formation of names as well as the differences in the use of names depending on age and status and the descriptive backing associated with the names.

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**Keywords:** names, descriptive backing, derivation, true names, teknonyms.

### 1.1 Introduction

There has been a long standing debate as to whether names and the things they refer to have any relationship. Mill (1974) in Bodenhorn & Bruck (2006:2) draws the distinction between denotation (identification) and connotation (meaning). He asserts that names denote without connoting. For him a proper name is merely an unmeaning mark in which we endeavor to connect with the idea of the object in our heads. To him, names have no meaning. Colman (2008: 41) on the other hand says that names like pronouns are words which function as nominals and have no range of denotation. The use of names does not per se identify people individually, a single name can be used for different individuals. He goes on to say that the morphosyntactic behavior of names (different from that of common words) is a corollary of their lexical semantic property. The linguistic features of a name define its lexical properties. Names to him therefore refer to objects and not the characteristics of the objects. Differently, Kripke (1972: 195-196) says that what we associate a name with is a family of descriptions. This family of descriptions gives the meaning of the name and determines its reference. Searle (1958) in Bodenhorn & Bruck (2006: 6) extends this view by saying that proper names do not mean in themselves but have a descriptive backing which points to the identity of the name. This sense creating context has to do with the person and not the name itself. All cases of reference are dependent on what knowledge of the object the person referring to it possesses. This means the person naming associates a given name to a certain individual.

According to (Kearns 2000:16) the apparent descriptive content that some names have is not relevant to their denotation. Although some names may have descriptive content, the use of such names on individuals does not necessarily mean that the individuals bearing the names have some characteristics of the descriptive content. Kripke (1972) in Larson & Segal (1995:175) observes that sometimes the only description that a person associates with a proper name that is sufficiently rich to pick out a single individual is not actually true of the bearer of the proper name.

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A speaker can use a proper name to refer to its bearer even if most of the description the speaker associates with the name does not apply to the bearer. The referent of a proper name is established historically by means of an act of ostensive reference. This can be done for example by pointing. The reference of the name may also be fixed by description. The name may be passed from link to link with the descriptive backing being used to establish the causal chain among names. The descriptive backing acts as a guide in establishing the referent. Once the relation is established it does not matter if the descriptive backing initially associated with the name remains true for the object to be related with a relevant proper name. A similar name therefore may be used for different individuals at different times where in such cases the initial use of the name may have been associated with some descriptive content while the subsequent uses of the name need not have any association with the descriptive content.

Colman (2008) says that names have the capacity for definite reference. Definiteness associated with names and pronouns is not inherent. For pronouns, the definiteness is satisfied by discourse where the speaker and hearer assign pronouns to an individual. Names on the other hand are inherently non definite. Their capacity for definite reference only emerges when they function as arguments. As arguments, names are used to identify a person or a place. By having a 'fixed reference' names provide primary identification to the arguments. By an act of nomination, a name is 'fixed' to an individual.

According to Colman (2008:33), names are categorical in that they form a class distinct from common nouns. He notes that in origin, names cognate with common words in the same language and are susceptible to derivational morphology and thus they may be derived. Names also have some content relevant to their linguistic characteristics. For instance, distinctions such as gender and differences between person and place are secondary categorical distinctions which form part of the content of names.

Proper nouns and names therefore, have semantic features that extend beyond their denotation. There may be conditions under which names may be chosen for their lexical and secondary categorical information. The lexical and secondary categorical information provide the descriptive backing/description/content /senses to the names. Tugen names for example convey specific information about the gender of the individual as well as descriptive content about circumstances under which a child was born, the status, and the age of the person. Such information is used to distinguish names from other common nouns. Tugen names are also similar with common words in the sense that they are associated with derivational morphology. This paper attempts to look into the how names are derived and the naming practices in Tugen society with a view of finding out the processes involved in their derivation, the circumstances under which the names are given to the bearers and the descriptive backing/content inherent in the names. The Tugen are a community of speakers who speak Tugen language which is a linguistic group of the wider Kalenjin group of languages in the Southern Nilotic cluster of languages. The Tugen live in Baringo County of Kenya.

## 1.2 Tugen Name Derivation

Names in Tugen are drawn from the ordinary vocabulary of the language and are part of the category of nouns. Each name is derived from verbs and other word categories that provide cluster of descriptive features that are associated with the objects that bear the names. A person is given a name that has certain descriptive features that are associated with the circumstances under which the individual is associated with. The name puts the individual in a relationship with other people. Names support the identity of the individual and therefore it assigns a performative quality to the referential function of the name. Just like other kind of nouns, the formation of names in Tugen involves the morphological processes of inflection, derivation and compounding. Names are inflected with gender, aspect, negation, reflexive and genitive affixes<sup>2</sup>. In derivation, Tugen names are derived from other lexical categories such as adverbs, verbs, adjectives and other nouns. In compounding the names are derived by compounding verbs and other nouns. Names in Tugen are assigned in accordance to the naming system.

## 1.3 Tugen name derivation and naming system

Names in Tugen serve to identify a person and also serve to classify individuals into groups. The classification may be due to age, sex, status, kinship marriage etc. Names and naming practices are therefore important ways of fixing the person as an individual as well as a member of a recognized social group, Bodenhorn & Bruck (2006:4).

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<sup>2</sup> Abbreviations used: ASP-Aspect, DEF-Definite, F-feminine, M-Masculine, NEG-Negation, PASS-Passive, REF-Reflexive.

The Tugen naming system has the following kinds of names: true names, teknonyms, clan names, spiritual names and initiation/praise names.

#### 1.4 True names

True names are given at birth. In most cases the names are given according to time of the day or season and the circumstances under which one is born. They are therefore derived from nouns that refer to time of day or season. True names are used among the Tugen until the age of initiation/circumcision usually at adolescence after which other names take over. Some of the names however, may be retained and carried over into adulthood with a few adjustments. Names in Tugen therefore shift as one proceeds through life. True names are derived from adverbs, verbs, nouns and adjectives. The names derived from adverbs, verbs and adjectives are inflected for gender and aspect. The gender forms are Ki(p) for the masculine and Chee/Jee(p)/ for feminine. The (p) is omitted some of the names. Some of the names involve the process of compounding where different lexical categories are compounded.

##### 1.4.1 Names derived from adverbs

Most names derived from adverbs mainly refer to time. However, there are a few that relate to location and manner. Some of the names include:

Name	Adverb	Gloss
1 (a) Ki-beet M-beet	beet	day
(b) Jeep-kemoi F-keemoi	kemoi	night
(c) Kip-sang M-sang	sang	outside
(d) Cheep-keter F-keter	keter	behind the house
(e) Kip-lagat M-lagat	lagat	last night

These names are given to individuals depending on the time and location of birth.

##### 1.4.2 Names derived from verbs

Names derived from verbs refer to activities that are associated with the circumstances pertaining to the mother before birth. Such names therefore do not provide some descriptive backing associated with the individual being named. Some of these include:

Name	Verb	Gloss
2 (a) Chee-ruiyot F-ruiyot	ru-iy-ot sleep-ASP-HAB	one who sleeps everywhere <sup>3</sup>
(b) Ki-maru M-maru	ma-ru NEG-sleep	one who does not sleep
(c) Cheep-tonui F-tonui	tonui faint	one who faints
(d) Chee-loboti F-loboti	labat-i run-ASP	one who runs
(e) Cheep-kosgei F-kosgei	kas-gei feel proud-REF	one who is proud of his/herself.

These names are given to an individual depending on the behavior of the mother before birth.

##### 1.4.3 Names derived from other nouns

Tugen nouns are in two forms, the primary/indefinite form and the secondary/definite form, Jerono (2018). In deriving the names from nouns, Tugen makes reference only to the primary form of the noun. The primary form is non specific. For instance:

<sup>33</sup> This is a male name, despite the feminine gender marker.

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Noun</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
3 (a)	Kip-rop M-rop	rop	rain
(a)	Cheep-iwot F-iwot	iwot	rainy season
(b)	Kip-torus M-torus	torus	initiates
(c)	Cheep-tum F-tum	tum	celebration

These names are given according to the circumstances pertaining to the time of birth.

#### 1.4.4 Names derived by compounding

Names may be formed in Tugen by compounding. Names are formed by compounding verbs and nouns. The meaning of the name is associated with the meaning of both the verb and the noun. Some of the verbs may involve elision of some parts. Such names include:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Noun+Verb</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
(a)	Chee-rono F-rono	ro-no come-goat <sup>4</sup>	time for goats to return from pasture
(b)	Kip-nget-tich M-ngetich	nget-tich get up-cows	time for cattle to go for pasture

These names are given to individuals depending on the time of birth.

#### 1.5 Spiritual names

These are names that are bestowed to individuals in order to wade off or 'confuse' evil spirits. The names would be given where the misfortune of losing babies at birth was rampant. The names were basically derived from nouns denoting lesser animals, insects and things. Some of these names were inflected for gender. For example:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
5(a)	Songok	ant
(b)	Chee-leel F-hyena	hyena
(c)	Kip-ng'ok M-dog	dog

#### 1.6 Adult names

In Tugen as an individual progresses into adulthood some of the true names are used but with a few amendments. The masculine gender prefix is usually omitted so that only the derived name remains. For instance Kiprono becomes Rono, Kibet becomes Bet(t) etc. The feminine true names are usually replaced by initiation names, teknonyms or baptismal names. In modern times the English names have replaced the true names as baptismal names and where they appear they are only used as an initial or in addition to the baptismal names.

##### 1.6.1 Kinship Names

Besides the true names, kinship names are also used for identity. Kinship may be due to clanship or patronymic names which identify a next of kin. In reference to clanship, all clans in Tugen have totem names. A totem is usually an animal that is used to identify a clan. The totem names are used in general for members of the clan however each clan has a specific name that is used to identify its feminine members. The names of the feminine members are important especially in keeping the clan together, tracing kinship and avoiding inter clan marriages. The totems used in Tugen are mostly small animals and insects. The feminine names refer to the characteristics of the totem in question. Some of these names are inflected for gender:

<sup>44</sup> Ro- is clipped from rotu-(come back) while -no is the plural for goat.

Clan Name	Feminine Name	Gloss
6. (a) Segem	sya-kwei fly-collect	bee (collects flowers)
(b) Mororoch	talai	frog (gentle)
(c) Kip-kuykuy F-crocodile	ki-moi M-wound	crocodile (with wounds)
(d) Soe	ki-moi M-wound	buffalo (inflicts wounds)
(e) Kong'ony	kip-segecha M-shakers	crane (with shakers)
(f) Chee-si-bon/kip-yegen/kap-kuoi <sup>5</sup>	kaabon	baboon (who gives birth in trunks)

These clan names identify the members of the clan while the feminine version identifies the female members of the clan though they may be used as names to identify individuals as belonging to the clan.

### 1.6.2 Teknonyms

Other kinship names used are teknonyms which are used as a way of negotiating social relations. Some of the names involve the use of honorifics in order to show that one is related to another person. In Tugen the honorifics araap 'son of', kaamet-ap 'mother of', kwanda-ap 'father of' and cheep-tap 'daughter of' are used for identity. However, we find that in most cases the honorific araap is used for naming as compared to the other honorifics which are only used in discourse where the name of the referent is unknown or when describing a person. For example:

Name	Gloss
7 (a) Araap Moi	son of Moi,
(b) Araap Ng'etuny	son of Ng'etuny
(c) Kaamet-ap Kip-rono	mother of Kiprono
(d) Cheep-tap chief	daughter of the chief

Other teknonyms that are found in Tugen are names used for relatives to show relationships. Kripke (1972) in Larson & Segal (1995:191) suggests that the values of proper nouns are usually fixed by historical chains of usage that link the speaker to the bearer of the name. Most of these names are underived in Tugen. For example:

Name	Gloss
8 (a) kugo	grandfather
(b) kogo	grandmother
(c) maama	uncle
(d) senge	aunt
(e) chee-ma-ki-kat F-NEG-PASS-greet	great grandchild (one who is not supposed to be greeted)
(f) Leme	cousin

### 1.6.3 Marriage names

Marriage as an institution also brings in the use of names to show this relationship and status. For some of the names the descriptive sense is not clear. Some of the names used are underived and they include:

Name	Gloss
9 (a) kamati	sister in law
(b) bomuru/mechei	brother in law
(c) boiy-op yu-koi old-of-tie-marriage	father in law
(d) cheep-yos-op yu-koi F- old-of tie-marriage	mother in law

<sup>5</sup> This totem has the three divisions of the different kinds of baboons, white, black, grey

### 1.6.4 Initiation/Praise names

Besides the kinship names, Tugens have names which are acquired after the rite of passage of circumcision. In this sense they are equated to the baptismal names that are bestowed upon baptism. These names in Tugen usually replace the true names<sup>6</sup>. These names are used to praise the individual by looking at the unique characteristics of the person. The characteristics of a person are linked to the unique characteristics of bulls and other animals for the masculine names. These names show the central role that is played by cattle in the Tugen community. The characteristics of the bulls would be in terms of colour or behaviour. These names are derived by compounding verbs and nouns and also by inflecting for gender as in:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
10(a) Ki-mur-ei M-turn-bulls	one who turns the bulls
(b) Chee-mirmir F – go around	one who likes to surround people
(c) Samo-ei brown-bulls	one who has brown bulls
(d) Setan-ei lead-bulls	one whose bulls lead the rest
(e) Busien-ei tick-bulls	one whose bulls are infested by ticks

Other names used in this category would be derived from the circumstances that pertain in the homestead or the circumstances at the time of initiation. Some of the names are derived from other nouns and inflected for gender and/or number while others involve compounding. For example:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
11(a) Chee-buret F- wind	of the wind
(b) Chee-mooson/mooson-ik M-baboons/baboons-DEF	of baboons
(c) Sigilai	of wasps.
(d) Chee-leel-go F-white-house	of a new house
(e) Chang-kwony many-wife	of many wives
(f) Kip-sambu M-headgear	of a headgear
(g) Kan-die wait-girl	wait for a girl

Tugens just like other pastoralist communities used to practice female circumcision and therefore they also had names for the females which were conferred upon this rite. The names were used to praise as well as show the new social status of the individual. However, with the ending of the practice of female circumcision, these names are no longer being given to individuals. The names are only used for reference to a small population of old Tugen women. These names were derived from the characteristics and behavior of cattle as well as the characteristics of the person. The honorific Tap (of) was inflected before these names. Most of these names are derived by compounding verbs and nouns. For example:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
12(a) Tap-bar-tai of-kill-front	one who seeks to be at the front
(b) Tap-sub-ei of-follow-bulls	one who follows bulls

<sup>6</sup> Some of these praise names are given to young children as true names as a means of remembering those who are long departed.

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|--|------------------------------|
| (c) Tap-kutuny<br>of-kneeling          | one who kneels               |
| (d) Tap-luul-ei<br>of-bring down-bulls | one who brings down bulls    |
| (e) Tap-ran-dich<br>of-drive-cows      | one who drives away the cows |
| (f) Tap-bar-no<br>of-knock-goats       | one who kills goats          |

### 1.6.5 Nicknames

There are some names that are bestowed on individuals based on the feats and habits of bearers. The names in some cases replace other names that the individual might have. The names are derived by compounding. These names are associated with the individuals and in a sense they can be said to have a direct relationship to the reference. For example

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
13 (a)	bar-ngetuny kill-lion	killer of lion
(b)	Chee-morion F-morion	one who whistles

### 1.7 Conclusion

Names just like other nouns are used for denoting. Tugen names besides denoting bear semantic features that give information pertaining of the circumstances of birth, status and age of the individual. These features however, may or may not point to the referent of a name. The use of names in Tugen keep changing as one navigates through life in order to show age, status and relationships. The names provide descriptive features that are associated with the circumstances under which an individual is bestowed with the name and therefore serve to identify the individual. Names also show the position of an individual in social relationships. A name therefore helps in identifying the relationship under which an individual is found in as well as the status of the individual. The names also serve to identify the culture of the language in question. For example, in Tugen the central role of clanship and cattle is emphasized through names. Through the names we also identify the economic activity of the language in question as well the environmental conditions under which the language operates. Names in Tugen also reveal a rich morphological process where names are derived through inflection, derivation and compounding.

With modernization and Christianity we find that some of these names are being abandoned in favour of the English names/baptismal names. In most cases the name which is given to older individuals is still being used to identify an individual as belonging to a family. This name is usually used as a surname. The true names appear as initials. In spite of male circumcision being a rite of passage that is still practiced to date the use of initiation/praise names to signify that change of status seems also to be dying out. Changes in the modern society have impacted on the naming system of the Tugen.

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