

Edo and Yoruba Naming Traditions

Africa is a country. There is one African language, food, religion, dress, and way of doing things, plus some tribes or something. The Edo Naming Ceremony Excerpt below is from the full article entitled: This Is How Traditional Naming Ceremonies Are Performed Across the African Diaspora By: Asad Malik at panafricanalliance.com The Edo Naming Ceremony Also referred to as the Bini or Benin ethnic group, the Edo are the descendants of the people who founded the Benin Empire, which is located in South/Mid-Western Nigeria now called Edo State. The traditional ceremony is usually a female affair that is performed on the seventh day after birth.

Before 10 am, family Elders and very close friends gather to consult oracles and pray for the child and its parents. During the main program of the ceremony, everyone sits down with the males on one side and females on the other side of the living room. The mother who is dressed for the occasion in her best attire holds the child. The eldest male representative of the head of the family says the opening prayers in Edo language with Kola-nuts and drinks. He breaks the nuts and shares them. The eldest female member of the family now takes up the remaining activities of the evening. She will ask the mother of the child what she calls the child. The same question is asked seven times. On each of the first six occasions the mother will give a silly or ridiculous name to the child (like Donkey Kong) which the other women will reject. In response to the seventh question, the elders whisper the child's name to the father, who then whispers it to the mother, who then announces it publicly. In response, all the women affirm and pray that the child lives long with the parents. Additional prayers, food, and drink follow.

The names given to Edo children pay homage to their king, reflect high moral values, or pay homage to their homeland.

Examples of Edo names include:

“iEkinadoese”: One who does good deeds

“Edorisiagbon”: Edo land is the center of the world

“iEhiosu”: Protected by the Ancestors

The Yoruba Naming Ceremony Yorubaland is the home of Ifa – the ancient African religion that we wrote about here. The naming ceremony – called Akosejaye or Esen'taye – is so much more than deciding what to call a child. It is a process of determining the entire destiny of that since it is believed that a child eventually lives out the meaning of his or her names. Cassava makes up a large part of the Yoruba diet, and some believe this is why

Yorubaland has the highest rate of twins in the world at around 4.4% for all maternities. Kehinde (Short for Omokehinde) is a given name of Yoruba origin meaning “the second-born of the twins” or the one who comes after Taiwo. Though Taiwo is the firstborn, it is believed that Kehinde is the elder twin, sending Taiwo into the world first to determine if it is time to be born.

The Ceremony is presided over by a Babalawo (priest of the Ifá oracle) dressed in white begins with a small prayer and the introduction of the family and the baby and the welcoming of the guests and well wishers. Prayers and songs of praise to their ancestors and / or God welcome the new addition to the family. The presiding elder then preside over the event with 7 symbolic items that are traditionally used

to express the hope or path of a successful life. The elder then presides over the rest of the ceremony, which involves presenting the child with seven core symbolic items. Traditionally, the items are rubbed against the child's lips, but the modern approach to this practice involves the mother tasting the items on behalf of the child. The core items –water, salt, honey and /or sugar, palm oil, kola nut, bitter kola, pepper, and dried fish – and their symbolic significance are described below:

Water: Water is everlasting and has no enemies, since everything in life needs water to survive.

Symbolic Significance: The child will never be thirsty in life and that no enemies will slow its growth.

Palm oil (epo): Used to prevent rust, to lubricate and to massage and soothe the body. Symbolic Significance: Given for a smooth and easy life; and living a life in love and no friction.

Bitter Kola (Orogbo): Unlike most other kola nuts, bitter kola lasts a very long time. Symbolic Significance: Given so that the child will have a very long life.

Kola nut (obi): Kola nut is chewed and then spat out. Symbolic Significance: Given to repel the evil in life.

Honey (Oyin): Used as a sweetener in food. Symbolic Significance: Given for a sweet and happy life.

Pepper (Ata): Pepper has many seeds within its fruit. Symbolic Significance: Given for a fruitful life with lots of children.

Dried Fish (Eja): Fish lives in water, its natural environment, and uses its head to find its way in water, no matter how rough the water may be. Symbolic Significance: Given so that the child will remain in its natural environment (the love of its parents) and will find its way in life and never be overcome, even in tough times.

Salt (iyọ): Used to add flavor to and preserve food. Symbolic Significance: Given so that the child's life will not be ordinary, but filled with flavor, happiness and substance, and so that the child will preserve all that is good."

With each of the items administered the child's names are then given starting with the grandparents and parents, and afterward by the community. All the names of the child are called out, and repeated by the community.

The ceremony concludes with food, dancing and celebration to honor this new life. (Source)

According to Ile Ifa, "In addition, Esen'taye provides a family with a detailed analysis of the newborns' predestined character, moral strengths, ethical flaws, ambitions, major life transitions, and age-specific needs in an effort to avail parents of the best ways to raise the child in the midst of a volatile, hyper-capitalist, and intolerant society.

Esen'taye also gives children a much needed reservoir of self-esteem, self-respect, and dignity. The psychological and sociological effect of Esen'taye on children is very, very positive due to the positive impacts of knowing the path to prosperity and success throughout various stages of one's life. This self-knowledge is absent from the lives of the vast majority of the world's population, which lead chaotic lives of doubt, self-deprecation, and perpetual apprehension."