

## NAMES IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH*

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### Abstract

This paper examines the formation patterns and functions of names in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, motivated by the scanty scholarly studies on names in the text. All the personal names in the text are studied and analysed, using insights from contextual models. The paper identifies four types of names in *Anthills*: official names, first names, nicknames and institutional/titular names. It also picks out three dimensions of these names: branching, non-branching and active-mentioned, which are associated with the types. It shows that the names have structural and formation patterns such as + title prefixing, +first name, + surname, indigenous language form, coinage, *abbronymy*, clipping, qualification and full form representation. It also demonstrates that the names play contextual and ideological roles such as being interactional tools, address terms, weapons of criticisms and vision projectors. The paper concludes that names in *Anthills* are carefully chosen to serve particular thematic and stylistic purposes.

**Key words:** Chinua Achebe, *Anthills*, names, formation, context and function

### 1. Introduction and Review of Relevant Literature

Achebe, "Africa's best known and most widely read author" (Cambridge University Press 2007:1) has been read from various perspectives: biographic (e.g. Aroms Publications, 2007), literary/ critical (e.g. Adeniyi 1997, Proyect 2003) and linguistic (e.g. Odebunmi and Okunoye 2003; Odebunmi and Ogunleye 2003). But, with a possible exception of Oyeleye (1991), which does an etymological and functional study of *Things Fall Apart*, much less attention has been paid to names in Chinua Achebe's prose works, especially *Anthills of the Savannah* (henceforth *Anthills*), the text being discussed in this paper. In fact, none of the studies on the text has examined names and naming in *Anthills*, except as mere reference to events, places and characters in the text.

A study of names in *Anthills*, apart from breaking the silence on the onomastic resources on the text, will lend a better understanding of the text, as literary names usually have close associations with the thematic preoccupation and vision of an author. This work, therefore, sets out to examine how contextual considerations, including theme and ideology, influence the choice of names and the use of these names in *Anthills*. All the names in the text are selected and analysed, using insights from contextual models (Malinowski 1923; Firth 1957; Halliday 1978; Mey 2000; and Odebunmi 2006). Studying all the names and not only those of the characters in the novel is informed by the need to move beyond

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existing approaches to the study of names in Achebe's novels (e.g. Oyeleye 1997), and the fact that all names in *Anthills* are stylistically and, sometimes, ideologically motivated. Of course, this latter point necessitates the present research.

In this study, we operationally identify two major categories of names, namely, real world and literary names. We, however, observe that it is common for real-world names to be used as literary names, except in situations where the author has a special agenda or symbolic mission. But, sometimes, some non-existing names are coined by authors to suit their designs. Our classification of names into these two categories subsumes Rennick's (2005) eight classes of names: personal names, names taken from other places or features, location or descriptive names, names indicating historic events, subjective names, mistake names, names derived from several possible sources and underived names. The problem with Rennick's classification is its broad nature, putting in a single basket, types, nature, structure and functions of names.

A vast body of work exists on real world names (Morgan et. al 1979; De Klerk 1997; Ajileye and Ajileye 1997; Adejumo and Odebunmi 1999; Ajileye 2002; Beider 2004; Crozier 2004; Abel 2004; and Menk 2005). But, comparatively little work has been carried out on literary names, important as these names are. For instance, across the global spread, Charles Dicken's works have enjoyed a major onomastic attention. Studies in this respect include Allingham (1987,1990,1992), Clarke (1983), Harder (1982), Stoler (1985) and Stone (1985). These studies have explored the representativeness, relevance and functions of names in Dicken's novels.

Odebode (2005), a major reference on literary names in Nigeria, does a pragmasociolinguistic study of names and nicknames in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. The clumsiness and confusion noticed in the author's treatment of names and nicknames, together with the largely non-context-determined speech acts linked with the names notwithstanding, the paper is able to establish the significance of names in Africa in terms of their pointing to the historical, social and cultural backgrounds of individuals.

The scanty references cited here on literary names confirm that little research has yet been done on literary names in general, and extremely littler on the works of the world-acclaimed, Nigerian-born novelist, Chinua Achebe. This novelist has, up to date, written five novels, namely *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1963), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988). In *Anthills of the Savannah*, which we analyse in this study, Achebe presents a military government that carries the guise to correct the anomalies committed by a past civilian regime in Nigeria, fictitiously represented by Kangan, but this government only ends up surpassing the civilian government in corruption and abuse of power. The novel features an elitist government headed by a soldier simply described as Sam, who brings into his government his friends and school mates, Chris and Ikem, together with academics such as Professor Okon, respected members of the public and his military colleagues. The government, which begins on a progressive and optimistic note, with a democratic goal, gradually sinks into suspicion, oppression, witch-hunting

and gagging of the press. These climax in the murder of the radical journalist Ikem and the aggressive hunt for Christopher Oriko, the information commissioner, who eventually dies by the gun of a drunk soldier while on the run from the chase mounted on him by the government. The story ends with a palace coup in which Sam is overthrown and eventually killed. The principled role played by Beatrice and the activities in the final part of the text, including the naming ceremony of Elewa's baby speak Achebe's positive mind and hope for Nigeria.

In section 2 below, we present our theoretical perspectives; in section 3, we analyse names in *Anthills* and in section 4, we conclude the paper.

## 2. Theoretical Perspectives

This work benefits immensely from contextual models. This is because names and their uses, in any situation, especially in literary works, have close affiliations with context. The contextual consideration largely comes in with the discovery that a single individual may bear more than one name or variant of a name, e.g. first name, surname and nick name, each of which requires contextual sensitivity for felicity. In this regard, for good human relations, consideration needs to be given to spatial, temporal and overall circumstantial factors for the use of these names. This brings up the rapport between context and style, which often stipulates and justifies linguistic choices in interactions,

The term "context" has a wide scope of application, ranging from the environment in which words occur to the situation in which language is used. Context, in the first sense, refers to the co-text i.e. the verbal elements that surround the expression at issue. In the second sense, "context comprises not only the larger, verbal environment in which the utterance or word occurs, but also its wider surroundings, in particular the conditions under which the utterance or word was generated in the first place" (Mey 2000:7). In fact, according to Odebunmi (2006:1), "context is the spine of meaning".

The idea of context and style derives from appropriacy of communicative choices to the situation of language use. A simple example is the variation that attends the way language is used by a pastor to preach, and the way the same individual engages language to relate with his mechanic. Each use of language, in this regard, depends on the subject of communication and the impositions of the surroundings, such as specificity of reference, the persons in interaction, and the medium of interaction. What this means is that the choice of language and language variety is situation - specific.

Three types of situational variables have been identified in the literature; namely:

- (a) The immediate discourse situation
- (b) The immediate situational context
- (c) The remote environment beyond the discourse and situational contexts (Wales 1992).

The immediate discourse situation refers to a particular use of language in a particular place, and at a particular time; for example, marriage counseling by a pastor, a resolution of a conflict, etc.. The immediate situational context captures the actual location where the discourse takes place; e.g. inside the church, in an office, etc.. The remote environmental condition involves the geographical, social and cultural influences on the discourse (e.g. the weather condition, ethnic or idiosyncratic peculiarities, etc.) and other factors such as shared knowledge of situations and cultures, shared assumptions/beliefs and world views. Each of these variables constrains the choices made by participants.

The term context of situation, coined by Malinowski (1923) and carried through in expansion by Firth (1957), subsumes all the contextual variables of discourse situation, situational context and remote environmental condition. According to Wales (1992:94),

Firth stressed the importance of context for the very process of acquiring language. Also, utterances of the kind *what's that?* are entirely context-dependent; and social contexts are an important determinant of register and linguistic appropriateness. Shared knowledge means certain kinds of information can be presupposed between interlocutors, which makes for linguistic economy.

Halliday and Hassan (1991:12) have identified three features of the context of situation, namely:

- (a) The field of discourse
- (b) The tenor of discourse
- (c) The mode of discourse

These features have earlier been classified as dimensions of register (see Halliday, 1978).

Halliday (1978) deals extensively with the three dimensions of register. Field, according to him, refers to the “on-going activity and the particular purpose that the use of language is serving within the context of that activity” (Halliday 1978:62). In other words, utterances or words employed reveal the kind of activity that is going on, for example, politics, commercial interaction, religious interaction, etc. Vocabulary choices pick out these different activities.

Mode in Halliday’s (1978) classification covers Hyme’s (1964) channel, key and genre. The message being communicated may be through speech, writing, signing, smoke signal, etc. (channel). This message needs to be evaluated as good or bad, sorry or impressive (key); and its form needs to be determined, e.g. a fairy-tale, sermon, etc. (genre). Eggins (1994:52) considers mode as “the role language is playing in the interaction”. Martin (1984) recommends that mode should be considered in terms of spatial/interpersonal distance and experiential distance. In the words of Eggins (1994:53), the spatial/interpersonal distance “ranges situations according to the possibilities of immediate feedback between the interactants”. This concerns the kind of feedback illustrated in casual conversation, telephone, e-mail,

fax, radio and novel. The experiential distance “ranges situations according to the distance between language and the social process occurring”. Examples of this include playing a game, running commentaries, recounting experience and constructing experience (cf. Martin 1984).

“Tenor refers to the interrelations among participants in terms of status and role relationships” (Halliday 1978:62). It gets along well with the three continua of power, affective involvement and contact (Poyton 1985). Power relates to “whether the roles we are playing are those in which we are of equal or unequal power”, contact deals with “whether the roles we are playing are those that bring us into frequent or infrequent contact”, and affective involvement deals with “whether the roles we are playing are those in which the affective involvement between us is high or low... [whether] we are emotionally involved or committed in a situation” (Egins 1994: 64). It should be noted that there may be a formal or informal relationship between interactants. In many informal situations, power is equal, contact is frequent and affective involvement is high; but in formal ones, “unequal hierarchic power, infrequent, or on-off, contact and low affective involvement” obtain (Egins 1994:65). As would be shown presently, with respect to *Anthills*, the kind of relationship holding between interactants, formal or informal, informs the variant or type of a name that is chosen in interaction. Also, many other aspects of context discussed in this section such as situational variables and context of situation constrain the interactions among the characters and the use of names in *Anthills*.

### 3. Analysis and Findings

#### 3.1 Types and Dimensions of Names In Anthills

Five operational (and ad hoc) types of personal names are found in *Anthills*; namely, official names, nicknames, first names and institutional/titular names. Official names are conceived here as names, which, of necessity, involve surnames, and which are used in formal or formalized interactions; first names are individuals’ personal names which do not include surnames; nicknames are names evolved from traits or attributes of characters in the text. Unlike surnames and first names which extend to all the names in the text, nicknames strictly apply to only names of characters; institutional/titular names are those associated with particular religious or social organizations and those related to traditional titles. The distribution and quantification of the names are provided in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Types of Names in Anthills

	Names types	Number	Percentage
1.	First names	34	39.53
2.	Official names	32	37.21
3.	Nick names	11	12.79
4	Institutional/titular names	09	10.47
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 shows that there are 86 names in *Anthills*, with the highest percentage 39.53% (33 instances) taken by first names, followed by official names, with 37.21 (32 instances), nicknames with 12.79% (11 instances) and institutional/titular names with 10.47% (09 instances). The predominance of first names confirms the fact that the major characters in the novel are colleagues who relate largely in first name terms. It also confirms the peer-interactive relationship that marks the exchanges and connections between many of the characters in the text. That official names are also prominent simply points to the bureaucratic texture of the events especially at the level of governance. That other name types are not as prominently used shows that the level of informality in the text is strictly defined.

The current author has personally identified three dimensions of names in *Anthills* namely, branching, non-branching and active-mentioned. The branching dimension defines names that either occur across more than one category or type of names or occur in more than one form; for example:

- (1) Mr. Christopher Oriko – Chris, Mr. Oriko, Christopher Oriko.
- (2) Mr. Ikem Osodi - Ikem, Mr. Osodi, Osodi.
- (3) Major Samson Ossai – Colonel Johnson Ossai, Major Johnson Ossai, Johnson.
- (4) John Kent – MM, Mad Medico, John, Uncle John.
- (5) Miss Beatrice Okoh – B, BB, Beatrice, Miss Okoh, Goddessy Nwayibuife, Buife.

In 1, Mr Christopher Oriko branches to other official names (Mr. Oriko and Christopher Oriko) and first names (Chris). In 2, Mr. Ikem Osodi, Mr. Osodi and Osodi are official names, while Ikem is a first name. In 3, 4 and 5, Major Samson Ossai, Colonel Johnson Ossai, Major Johnson Ossai, John Kent and Miss Okon are official names; Johnson, John, Uncle John, Beatrice, Nwayibuife and Buife are first names; while MM, Mad Medico, B, BB, and Goddessy are nicknames.

In the non-branching category, single names, which do not vary, no matter the context, are involved. These names are either official or first names; for example, Agatha, Guy, Braimoh, Nkrumah, Walt Whitman and Idi-Amin. The active-mentioned category concerns the kind of appearances given the persons named in the text. The active names are those associated with the major characters and other characters whose actions have direct relevance to the plot of the story, for example Chris, Ikem, Beatrice, Braimoh, etc.. The mentioned are names that are alluded to or used to support the plot or ideology projected through the main characters. Examples of these names are Mazrui, Sembene Ousmene, Kunene, Nwakibe, Christ, etc.

All the four name types earlier mentioned will now be discussed in terms of formation patterns and functions. Reference will be made to the dimensions of names as the discussion progresses. Insights will also be drawn from contextual models to establish the contextual appropriateness of the uses of the names.

### 3.2. *Official Names*

As said in 3.1 above, the surname must be present in any combination of names for the names to be official, but as shown, all the other combining/prefixing names except the surnames are optional in this class. Official names are largely connected with formal occasions, and formalise the relations between persons. In *Anthillst*, four structural forms of official names are found; (i) + title + surname; e.g Mr. Oriko (p.1); (ii) - title, + first name + surname; e.g. John Kent (p.55); (iii) + title, + first name, + surname; e.g. Captain Abdul Medani (p.219); (iv) - title, - first name + surname, e.g. Osodi (p. 122).

These official names are largely used as formal address forms with the structural forms: + title + surname, + title + first name + surname and – title – first name + surname, but the form, +title +surname dominates this use. Despite that Sam (His Excellency) and Christopher Oriko are friends who are essentially affectively involved, the former still addresses him officially at a cabinet meeting:

*Extract 1: -*

‘You’re wasting everybody’s time, Mr. Commissioner for Information [Christopher Oriko]. I will not go to Abazon. Finish! *Kabisa*. Any other business?’

‘As Your Excellency wishes. But...

But me no buts, *Mr. Oriko*. The matter is closed, I said...’ (p.1)

The formal ‘Mr. Oriko’ is selected obviously because of the strictly formal context of the interaction, which changes the tenor between them as asymmetrical power relation is brought in. An instance of + title + first name + structure is found in the radio news report of Chris’s disappearance following the death of his friend, Ikem Osodi. The reporter reads:

*Extract 2:*

The commissioner for information, *Mr. Christopher Oriko*, who had not been seen in his office or his residence for the past one week had according to confirmed reports left the country in a foreign airline bound for London disguised as a Reverend father wearing a false beard (p. 186).

In this report, the news reporter addresses Christopher Oriko officially as the formal context of newscasts demands and to facilitate his identification and apprehension by law enforcement agents and members of the public. In these two instances, distance is created between the media (represented by the news and the reporter) and Hearer (Christopher Oriko), and affective relationship is quite low. In Extract 1, Sam’s (his Excellency’s) formal handling of the issue constrains the response of Chris and limits the extent to which he can take freedom with the former. Hence, in his reaction, he also opts for the formal style, selecting “Your Excellency” which further maintains the distance instead of the intimate ‘Sam’, the clipped first name of His Excellency, which Chris would ordinarily have selected in a non- formal context. In Extract 2, “Mr. Christopher Oriko”, selected in appositive

relation with “the commissioner for Information” clinically detaches the reporter from Chris and points to no intimate relationship between them. Other instances where official names are used as formal address forms include: “Dr. Ofe” (p.50), “President Ngongo” (p.55), “Alhaji Mahmoud” (p.106) and “Mr Osodi” (p.168). In each of these instances, as in other official forms, no intimacy is intended between interactants.

Sometimes, official names are used to particularise already known issues and to pragmatically criticize certain active or mentioned personalities (names). The reference to the case of Dr. Ofe best instantiates the former idea:

*Extract 3:*

In fairness to Chris, he did not disagree with us on *the Ofe affair* but took the legalistic line that the Doctor’s complaint about Mad Medico’s notices must be seen in isolation and entirely on its won merit (p.50).

“The Ofe affair” cited here, with the structure (+ determiner) – title – first name + surname (in a qualification capacity) (+ head noun) is found in Ikem’s account of the administrative problem Mad Medico, John Kent, has to face as a result of the unethical inscriptions he makes on hospital walls. Dr Ofe is particularly associated with this case. Since Ikem has used the name “Dr. Ofe” (p.50) earlier, he assumes that a co-textual background would have been formed with his reader. Hence, he now says “the Ofe affair”, referring to both the personality and the incident, operating within the frame of the concept of distance.

A situation where official names are engaged as a tool of criticism is found in Ikem’s account on p. 53. This function is associated with only one structural form, + title + surname.

*Extract 4:*

But the leader Sam spoke most about was *President Ngongo* – I beg your pardon – *President for-life-Ngongo*, who called Sam his dear boy and invited him over to his suite for cocktails on the second day (p.53)

In Extract 4, Ikem tries to trace the origin of Sam’s autocratic traits to the influence he gains from President Ngongo who is notorious for his dictatorial behaviours and policies. The reference he makes to the co-textual, President Ngongo, reformulated as “President-for-life Ngongo”, gives a new title to the referent. It is obvious from this use that Ikem intends to criticize the negative and unbridled ambition of the man and, by extension, His Excellency’s towing feet towards the same goal.

Many times, official names are engaged in official peer interactions, especially among cabinet members. In such interactions, the forms + title + first name + surname and + title + surname are used. Given that the relationship between these individuals is formal, their mode of addressing each other is formal, and does not show any significant level of affective involvement. The Commissioner for Information is Mr. (Christopher) Oriko, the Commissioner for Education is

Professor Reginald Okon; the Director of the State Research Council is Major Johnson Ossai, etc.. These official tags occur in both narrative and interactional contexts. When Professor Okon tries to rouse His Excellency's anger against Ikem, Professor Okon says to His Excellency using the form + title + first name + surname:

*Extract 5:*

I don't want to be seen as a tribalist but *Mr. Ikem Osodi* is causing all this trouble because he is a typical Abazorian (p.18)

The choice of "Mr. Ikem Osodi" formalises (i) the interaction between Professor Okon and His Excellency (ii) the relationship between the professor and Ikem. Across the text, *Anthills*, official names are used to mark off this sort of relationship. In his reaction to Professor Okon's gossip, His Excellency, in way that shows a very low level of affectiveness, bluntly discourages gossipy tendencies among his cabinet members and towards his friends, in particular, by his choice of the official, but denigrating name "Mr. Okon" which has the structure + title + surname. He says:

*Extract 6:*

That's fine *Mr. Okon*. I deal with facts not gossip (p.20)

This preference for "Mr. Okon" greatly disturbs Professor Okon, who knows clearly the satiric and pragmatic implications of His Excellency's choice. Hence, as he

*Extract 7*

began to move again, .... three-quarters of his mind stayed on the crushing manner of his dismissal and particularly on the fact that His Excellency had called him mister (p.20)

In most instances where allusive reference is made to names, official tags are preferred. The three common structures in this regard are (i) + title + surname (ii) – title + surname (iii) – title – first name + surname. The choice of the official tags in this context is to allow for correct assignments of referents and to avoid ambiguity. The names, which are all mentioned in *Anthills*, make allusions to politics (e.g. Nkrumah: - title, - first name + surname, p.74), religion (e.g. Graham Greene: - title + first name + surname, p.100), literature (e.g. Don Quizote: - title, + first name, + surname, p.119), music (e.g. Walt Whitman: - title, + first name + surname, p.100) and mythology (e.g. Udo - title, - first name + surname). Many of the names in this class are associated with particular thematic and ideological concerns of the text, which we shall discuss in section 3.5.

### 3.3. First Names

First names in *Anthills* appear as clipped forms, full forms, qualifying forms and prefixed forms. To a large extent, these names are used in social peer

interaction, intimate relationship, addressing self, expressing respect, boss – subordinate relationship and making illustrations.

As a mark of social equality, many of the active characters relate in first name terms, a clear mark of power symmetry and high affective involvement. Hence, first names such as Chris (clipped), Ikem (full), John (full), Sam (clipped), Beatrice (full) fly between friends. The significance of the equality associated with these first names becomes prominent when the relationship between His Excellency (Sam), Chris and Ikem grows so stilted that they relate only in official name terms. This informs Chris's comment regarding the fact that only Mad Medico (John Kent) who is a white man could still relate in first name terms with the president:

*Extract 8:*

You know MM..... you are the only person in this country – perhaps in the whole wide world who calls him *Sam* still.

That other friends could no longer address him as Sam implies a great power assumption by His Excellency, which creates a wide gap between them, bringing low the affective relation between the friends.

First names serve as an invariable index of intimate relationship between the active characters in *Anthills*. Lovers such as Christopher Oriko, Beatrice Okon, Ikem Osodi and Elewa relate in first name terms: Chris, Beatrice, Ikem and Elewa respectively. These names also index blood relationships in the text. For example, Beatrice's elder sister is simply referred to as Alice (p. 95). But first names are found in other less-intimate relationships. For example, Ikem's former girl friend is referred to as "Joy" (full) and "the Joy girl" (qualifying form). On one of the occasions, Chris asks, "How long has Ikem known that *Joy girl*?"(p.65). His tone is repugnant, with the referring expression establishing a great distance and detachment with the girl and whatever she stands for. This stance is corroborated in the exchange that follows between Chris and Beatrice:

*Extract 9:*

She seems so young. And so illiterate. What can he possibly be saying to her? [Chris]  
"Ikem doesn't think they have enough brains" [Beatrice] p.65.

Choices such as "so young", "so illiterate", "[don't] have enough brains" support the scornful implications of Chris' referring to the girl as "that Joy girl".

One prominent use of first names in *Anthills* is their engagement by self – addressing active characters in their various accounts. This use is more conspicuous in Beatrice's account:

*Extract 10:*

My name is Beatrice, but most of my friends call me either B or BB. (p.83).

It is only Beatrice who self-addresses herself this directly, other narrators namely Chris and Ikem, do so indirectly, but obviously in first name terms. The reason for this choice is simply to keep their preferred literary names intact as designed by the writer, Chinua Achebe. In addition to this, their Western orientation is betrayed in the process. As noted earlier however, this cultural orientation is destroyed by His Excellency whose dictatorial tendencies impose restraining formalities on their mode of interaction.

In a few but significant cases, first names serve to express respect for some active characters. A very good instance presents itself when John Kent recollects the rapturous experience he shared with His Excellency in their youthful days in the UK and the naivety of the latter with respect to women. John Kent

*Extract 11:*

“found him [a] girl after he [His Excellency] left the Chamberley hospital, [seeing him as] a nice young fellow [who comes all the way from the warmth of Africa to the inhospitable climate of an English hospital ..., recovering miserably from double pneumonia” (p.60).

According to Kent:

*Extract 12:*

The least I could do was fix him up with a friendly girl to cheer him up.

The matching and the sexual performance of the girl so impressed his Excellency that on the next day he called up Kent. He said:

*Extract 13*

*Uncle John*, “you wicked old soul”. And the way he laughed and seemed happy with the world after that! (P. 60).

“Uncle” prefixing John in this example is a typical Nigerian English expression, used in non-avuncular relations many times, to show respect for someone who is either older or more influential than one. Kent is apparently placed in the latter category. Sam’s “Uncle John” is therefore to express gratitude to Kent for what he does, revering him.

In a majority of instances, first names are selected in asymmetrical relationships between a boss or his/her associate and a subordinate. For example, in his account, Chris addresses his cook in first name terms,

*Extract 14:*

My cook *Sylvanus* was always upset if a guest came and he was not allowed to display the full extent of his culinary arts (P. 64)

But Beatrice, the fiancée of Chris also addresses him with no respect term. Sylvanus who always wants to please his boss's guest asks in Pidgin English:

*Extract 15:*

Make I fix madam small sometin (P. 64).

The response from Chris and Beatrice is that he should not bother about it. When he returns to the living room, he is worried that "two grown people could eat nothing but 'crayfish' for dinner" (P. 64). He now asks:

*Extract 16:*

'Or sometaim you wan go for hotel?'

At this point, Beatrice answers:

*Extract 17:*

'No *Sylvanus*... we no de go anywhere. We jus wan sidon for house. Make you take evening off. If at all oga wan anything I fit getam for am (P. 64).

Beatrice's choice of "Sylvanus" and not "Mr. Sylvanus" immediately shows a boss - subordinate relationship. This is further reinforced by the antonym "Oga" (Pidgin for boss), which doubly refers to Chris as Sylvanus's boss, and Beatrice's superior (in terms of marriage - which their relationship is meant for - and perhaps social/official placement, Chris being a commissioner, and Beatrice a secretary in one of the ministries). The choice of "oga" not "your oga" implicates this!

All through the text, this boss-subordinate relationship manifests in the way His Excellency addresses all his lieutenants and functionaries. He addresses them the way he feels fit, officially or otherwise. But because of the autocratic clout he has developed, others, including his friends could only address him formally. When he invites Beatrice to a presidential reception for Lou, a visiting American lady, he asks her:

*Extract 18:*

"How is my friend *Chris*?" (P. 75).

In the same gathering, he addresses Joe Ibe, The commissioner for works by first name:

*Extract 19:*

*Joe* is right you know, said his Excellency with a wink (P. 75).

These choices only relax formality unilaterally. It is for this reason that Chris has named John Kent as the only mortal in the world who still relates with His Excellency in first name terms.

Sometimes, first names are arbitrarily selected in *Anthills* to illustrate a view. Such names are mere mentioneds, and only have indirect relevance to the plot. A good example of this use is found at Harmony Hotel where the Master of Ceremony conducting the reception given by Abazonian leaders to Ikem Osodi, lauds Ikem for his media activities and encourages him to keep the fight for the common man going:

*Extract 20:*

I have never heard what you said about this young man, Osodi, whose doings are known everywhere and fill our hearts with pride... I have never read what they say he writes because I do not know ABC. But I have heard of all the fight he has fought for poor people in this land. I would not like to hear that he has given up fight because he wants to attend the naming ceremony of *Okeke's son* and *Mgbafo's daughter* (P.123).

Okeke and Mgbafo are real Igbo names but are not related to any individual in the immediate situational context. Rather, they are rhetorical choices made by the master of ceremony to illustrate trivialities that people might expect Ikem to get engaged in, which by the MC's judgement, would sway him from the cause he fights.

### 3.4. Nick Names

Nicknames in *Anthills* appear as clipped forms, coinages and abbronyms (Odebunmi 1996, 2006). These are exemplified respectively as follows: Regie (p. 11), Mr. So Therefore (p. 34) and MM (p. 49). 'Regie' is the only clipped form in the text. It is formed from Reginald, where 'nald' is removed, and the final 'i' is complemented by 'e' to give it a good orthographic and elegant face: "Regie". "Mr. So Therefore" derives from the expression uttered by a Desk Sergeant when a concerned neighbour calls him with respect to Ikem's notorious neighbour beating his wife. The name thenceforth becomes tagged with the notorious man. Other coined nicknames in the text include "Mad Medico" (which springs from John Kent's erratic traits as a hospital administrator), Salt (Beatrice's nickname, deriving from her fear for rain), Miss Goat, (another nickname of Beatrice's, deriving from the same source), Goddessy (a nickname given to Beatrice by Chris for her visionary endowment), and Greedy mouth (a nickname for Elewa's baby for the voracious manner in which she feeds). "MM" is a simple abbronym, formed from the initial letters of "Mad" and "Medico". "B" is also a simple one created from the initial letter of Beatrice. But "BB" is a complex abbronym, as its formation does not follow logically from the longer name, Beatrice; the second "B" is an arbitrary selection.

In Odebunmi (2006:47), abbronyms are defined as "letter representations of a group of letters, words or phrases which may or not be pronounceable". Odebunmi (1996:249), coining the term, "abbronym," and its conceptual nominal form "abbronymy", observes that:

It is difficult to tell acronyms from abbreviations, even given the seemingly helpful approach of Quirk and Greebaum. Their first type of acronyms tallies with part of Ralph De Sola's abbreviations. Their second type is in consonance with his in pronounceability. If we embrace the dichotomy that an acronym is pronounceable, and that an abbreviation is not, what would we say of C.O.D classified as an alphabetism by Quirk and Greenbaum? Even abbreviations (classified as acronyms by Quirk et al.) such as TV, much as they appear like mere letter representations, could be pronounced, just like the English word 'voodoo'.

He identifies two types of abbronyms: simple and complex. Simple abbronyms are predictably formed from initial letters of a word or a phrase, while complex ones are not predicable from the structures of the full forms.

Nicknames in *Anthills*, appearing in any of the forms earlier identified, occur in social peer interactions, intimate relationship and self-address discourse. Many times, active characters relate as social equals, with fluid power relationship and high affective relation. In this context, they freely address each other using nicknames. This is common in the interactions among Chris, Ikem, Beatrice, Elewa, John Kent, Dick and others of like minds. It is rare to encounter nicknames in His Excellency's interaction with other active characters, a situation explainable by the detachment he maintains with others for the power he wields.

In a meeting of Chris, Ikem, Beatrice Elewa, Kent and Dick (Kent's guest from England), nicknames are used freely. The exchange below reveals this:

*Extract 21:*

'I am sorry to tell you this', MM says to Beatrice, 'but you waited five years too late to meet Chris. He and Sam were much nicer people then'.

'Who wasn't? But five years ago *BB* was below the legal age and would have been of limited interest to me'

'You know *MM*, I [Chris] say you are the only person in this country – perhaps the whole wide world who calls him Sam still'

'Yes and I'll be damned if I should ever join your ridiculous Excellency charade. I would sooner be deported' [said MM]

The nicknames *BB* and *MM* as used in the exchange make the whole interaction tension-free, and place all the interactants on the same social scale. MM's last utterance explains the non-restraining discourse value of nicknames, and other non-official names. Hence, he prefers being deported to joining in the use of the constraining, stiff, official interactional tags selected between His Excellency and his friends: Chris and Ikem. This simply implicates that friendship lies in the free choice of non-official names such as nicknames and first names.

At several points in the text, nicknames are engaged to establish intimate relationships between active characters. These are not necessarily social peers. A good example of these nicknames is "Greedy mouth" given Elewa's baby "Amaechina" by Beatrice. That the name is acceptable even to the mother shows a

loving, intimate and congenial atmosphere. This atmosphere of love is displayed in the author-narrator's account:

*Extract 22:*

At least the prodigious passions of that extraordinary day seemed at an end. Silence descended as completely on the party in doors as had darkness outside. Ama whom Beatrice nicknamed Greedy mouth having drunk both from Elewa's breast, pendant like a gorgeous ripe papaya on the tree, was sleeping quietly in her cot.

"Goddessy" is another nickname used in intimate relationships. Chris uses it as a pet name to describe the worshipful love he has for Beatrice (p. 199). Nicknaming Beatrice "Salt" and "Miss Goat" (p. 95) also occurs in intimate relationships, Alice the namer and Beatrice, the bearer, being blood sisters. Miss Goat is especially offensive and could cause bad feelings in another context. It therefore becomes a politic choice (Locher and Watts, 2005) in this context.

### 3.5. Institutional and Titular Names

By institutional names we mean names that are associated with particular religious or social organizations, e.g. Christianity and traditional religion. These names are invariable and stay permanent across generations. Titular names are names of traditional titles awarded to particular personalities in a community. They are also stock and invariable. Some of these names used in *Anthills* are official or first names in their original remote environmental contexts.

The institutional names in *Anthills* are sourced from Jewish and Igbo cultures, and are linked with Christianity, Islam and the Igbo traditional religion. The titular names have connections with the Igbo traditional religion. These names which are all mentioned in the text include the following: Christ, Jesus, Jehovah, Jehovah Jireh (Christianity and Jewish), Idemili, Udo Eke-Idemili and Agwu Traditional religion; and Allah (Islam). The only titular name in the text is Nwakibe. The institutional names trifurcate into names of supreme beings in the religions (Christ, Allah, Jesus, Jehovah, Jehovah Jireh), gods (Idemili, Udo, Agwu) and messengers of gods (Eke - Idemili).

All the names here serve allusive purposes and help to project some thematic preoccupations and ideological perspectives of Chinua Achebe. During the christening programme conducted for Elewa's child, Agatha (Beatrice's house help), while serving drinks to the guests, sings:

*Extract 23:*

*Jehova* is not a person anyone can deceive  
*Jehova* is so great who is it can confuse him?  
 If *Jehova* wants to bless who will dare raise a curse?  
*Jehova* – *Jireh* let us raise his name (P.224).

In this song, Chinua Achebe seems to project Jehova/ Jehova Jireh, by implication, as the powerful agent that helps to effect the overthrow of His Excellency. He also seems to be connected with the birth of Ama, who is now a blessing to Elewa. In a way, through the use of the institutional name, Jehova, Achebe focalizes the prevail of truth over evil, such as oppression and assassinations, and confusion as the plot of *Anthills* reflects.

Also, during the naming ceremony, as Agatha (a Christian) sings, Aina (a Muslim) joins in the dance. This activates the question from Beatrice:

*Extract 24:*

Abi Aina no be Moslem (p. 224).

to which Elewa answers:

*Extract 25:*

Na proper grade one Moslem

Dem talk say make Moslem no dance when Christian de sing? (P.224)

Beatrice closes the transaction by joining in the dance, saying to herself:

*Extract 26:*

Well, if a daughter of *Allah* could join his rival's daughter in a holy dance, what is to stop the priestess of the unknown god from shaking a leg? (p. 224).

“Allah” is here selected to complete the three religions represented in the gathering. Agatha symbolises Christianity, by being associated with Jehova; Aina symbolises Islam by being connected with “Allah”, and Beatrice stands for traditional religion by her association with “the unknown god”. Achebe's vision here is a unification of all the three religions in Nigeria, a singular factor that, is envisioned, can remove undue differences and bring peace and progress into the polity.

#### **4. Conclusion**

We have, in the foregoing, demonstrated that there are four types of names in *Anthills*, namely, official names, first names, nicknames and institutional/titular names. The official names serve as formal address forms (with the structure + title + surname + title + first name + surname ) a a tool of criticism (with the structure + title + surname), operates in official peer interaction ( with the structure + title + first name + surname, and + title + surname) and provide allusive reference ( with the structures + title + surname, - title + surname and – title – first name + surname. The first names appear as clipped form, full forms, qualifying forms and prefixed forms and they are used in social peer interactions, intimate relationship, addressing self, expressing respects, boss -subordinate relationship and making illustration.

The nicknames occur as clipped forms, coinages and abronyms and are engaged in social peer interactions, intimate relationships and self-address discourse. Finally, the institutional names are sourced from Jewish and Igbo cultures, and are connected with Christianity, Islam and Igbo traditional religion, while the titular ones are associated with Igbo traditional religion. These institutional and titular names play allusive roles and project some thematic and ideological stances of Chinua Achebe. It has been shown that the choices of the names have been constrained by contexts of interaction, which, considering subjects, locations, tenor and sometimes mode, have stylistically and pragmatically impose official names, nicknames and titular names on interactants and the narration.

Names in *Anthills of the Savannah* are not arbitrary selections, rather they are meticulously chosen to serve particular thematic and stylistic purposes in the text. Further studies can examine the etymologies of these names and their contextual relevance. Such studies can also compare these names with others in other novels of Chinua Achebe's such as *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God*.

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