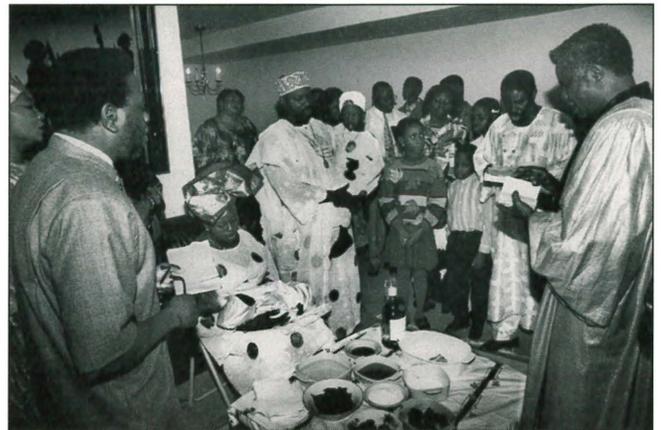


Yoruba Naming Ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Diana Baird N'Diaye with Gilbert Ogunfeditimi & Frederick Ogunfeditimi

Unless a baby is named within seven to nine days of its birth, according to Yoruba tradition, it will not outlive its parent of the same sex. This belief underscores the importance of naming and of the ceremony at which it is done. Soon after their son was born, Mr. Banyole and Mrs. Adiola Adeboyeke of Washington, D.C., telephoned friends and relatives and invited them to the house. Mr. Adeboyeke had already prepared for the occasion on his previous trip to Nigeria. There he had purchased richly embroidered white cloth and had taken it to a tailor in Lagos to have festive clothing made for the baby's father, mother, and older brother, Babatunde. Husband and wife had already thought about names, and their mothers in Nigeria had also sent their choices. When the baby would visit Nigeria for the first time, his grandmothers would call him by the names they had chosen.

On the day of the celebration at the Adeboyeke home, guests arrived from early afternoon bringing money and other baby gifts: layette sets, clothing, and blankets. After about an hour of socializing, the ceremony began. Everyone assembled around a living-room table, which displayed ritual foods and objects. The family are members of the congregation of the International House of Prayer for All People, and their pastor, Reverend Frederick Ogunfeditimi, officiated. The ceremony began with a hymn. Then the reverend introduced each of the foods and objects to the baby to taste or touch, declaring the symbolic meanings of each as he did so. He expressed prayers for the child's well-being and good character and passed each object around for those present to taste or touch. The baby's given names were announced to all: the first name, Orobola, means "riches"; the second name, Adeleke, means "We are already higher than our enemies." Rev. Ogunfeditimi pointed out that if the ceremony had been taking place in Nigeria, it would probably have been held outdoors. The baby's bare foot would have been touched



to the ground to guide his first steps in the right direction. Here in the United States this is not part of the ceremony. Singing and bearing candles, Rev.

Ogunfeditimi led the tiny newcomer Orobola and his parents and well-wishers to the baby's bed, where prayers and hymns blessed the room. Poets recited Ewi poetry composed for the occasion.

Guests returned to the living room, as festive foods began to appear from the kitchen.

Friends had cooked fried plantain and two kinds of rice dishes. The Adeboyeke family had prepared goat stew with *fufu* and *egusi*. Boiled yams and fowl completed the feast. Throughout the evening, more guests arrived for festive music and dance, which lasted until morning.

Gilbert Ogunfeditimi, African Immigrant Folklife Project community scholar and educational specialist, and Frederick Ogunfeditimi, pastor of the International House of Prayer for All People in the District of Columbia, were advisors to the Center's World Wide Web exhibition on Yoruba names and naming in metropolitan Washington, D.C.

AUTHORS' NOTE: This article is an excerpt from an on-line exhibition on the World Wide Web. To reach the entire exhibition, which includes sound and more photographs, go to <<http://www.si.edu/folklife/vfest/africa>>.

At their home in Lanham, Maryland, the Adeboyeke family and their friends greet the newborn with tastes of ritual foods in a traditional Yoruba naming ceremony.

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