

## Naming Ceremonies

### English translation:

Interviewer: *Ìyá Àgbà*<sup>1</sup>, as we look at you, we see that you are a mother of many children. Can you explain to us how people name babies? What they do, things like that.

Woman: There are different ways to name babies. The Muslims name babies in a certain way, the Christians name babies in a certain way, the traditional religion followers name babies a certain way.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about the Yoruba way? How Yoruba people do it [name babies]?

Woman: Yoruba?

Interviewer: I know that now, they would have mixed up with the Christian or Muslim religious traditions.

Woman: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: So what religion are you?

Woman: I am a Christian.

Interviewer: Can you explain how Yoruba Christians name babies? Do you understand?

Woman: Hmm, you see the Yoruba way, if they are to name babies, they use kola nut, bitter kola, *aadùn*<sup>2</sup>, honey, salt...

Interviewer: What is *aadùn*?

Woman: That *aadùn*? Ahh, what a pity [that I don't know what it is]. Emm, corn that they grind, they will put a bit of pepper, some palm oil, and they will mix it together. That is *aadùn*.

Interviewer: What do they use that *aadùn* for? Do they eat it?

Woman: They eat it.

Interviewer: What do they eat it with?

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<sup>1</sup> Elderly woman. Title used to show respect with regard to a woman's age.

<sup>2</sup> Savory dish that literally translates as "sweetness."

Woman: You can eat it alone, or you can eat it with beans. If you eat it with beans, you will enjoy it so much! Ahh, if you eat it with beans, you'll eat so much of it! That is *aadùn*. What did I say before? [trying to remember the listed items]

Interviewer: Mention them again.

Woman: Bitter kola, kola nut, *aadùn*, honey, salt. Those five things are some of the things required during a naming ceremony. Sometimes there will even be rats.

Interviewer: Rats?

Woman: Yes, rats eaten by Yoruba people

Interviewer: House rats?

Woman: Ha ha. No, not house rats. You know there are wild rats that live in the bush.

Interviewer: Oh, I understand. The rats that are big that people eat and put in soups. I thought you meant house rats.

Woman: Oh, no! House rats cannot be eaten!

Interviewer: I understand.

Woman: Christians, water is what they use when naming children.

Interviewer: So your grandchildren, how were they named? Did they use kola nut and all the things you mentioned earlier?

Woman: No, there's nothing like that, oh [we didn't do that]!

Interviewer: Why?

Woman: Because we are Christians. All we used was water.

Interviewer: But we are also Yoruba.

Woman: No, we just used water.

Interviewer: So you used only water?

Woman: Yes, water, water, water!

Interviewer: So can you explain to us what they [Yoruba people] use kola nut and *aadùn* for when naming children? What are their uses and advantages?

Woman: What they use the kola nut for...

Interviewer: Please explain the uses of all the items.

Woman: I will explain everything. Kola nut they will say will drive away death and disease from the child. Whoever is saying these things will bite out of the kola nut... or is it the mother? Whoever is praying these things will tell the mother of the child to bite out of the kola nut. Bitter kola, they use it to pray, they use it to pray for the child. They will say that the child will grow up to be old and big. Then they will tell the mother to bite out of it. The same thing with the honey. They will tell the mother to lick the honey, and they will say the child's life will be as sweet as honey. The *aadùn* too, they will use it to pray for the child and say that the child's life will be sweeter than honey. What else did I mention?

Interviewer: Salt.

Woman: Salt too, they will take a bit of it and put it on the tongue. And say, if there is no salt in a soup, the soup won't be flavorful; [the salt is used so] that the child's life will be flavorful.

**About CultureTalk:** CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use every day. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

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