

The First Name in Seereer Traditional Society: Semantic and Onomastic Approach

Daouda NGOM^{1*} and Diome FAYE¹Cheikh Anta DIOP University, Dakar, Sénégal

*Corresponding author:

Daouda NGOM

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Abstract: The deepness and seriousness of the seereer nomination system make it remain an original and fascinating research subject. The seereer first name can be considered as being a part of the seereer personal history, which defines who he is and where he lives. A real comprehension of the seereer first name requires a semantic and onomastic study which dives us in the history and etymology of the first name. This article scores up this logic. It aims to study the process of the seereer traditional nomination of the first name, to show how is the seereer first name acquired, and then to make a categorization of first names and that of some particular surnames. Therefore, this is about a deciphering of the semantic content, of the social value and of the symbolism which the first name encodes. Through the seereer first name, appear a lot of heterogeneous elements of a highly sociocultural coloration such as the religious propensity, the mystical and mythic aspect, the patronymic and geographical belonging, the physical and alimentary particularities, the simulation and conspiracy in prayers, the disinterestedness, etc. of the seereer person in question.

Keywords: first name, seereer, semantics, onomastics, tradition, baptism, new-born.

INTRODUCTION

There are some universals in the world such as first names. The first name culture is known and practiced all over the world. This culture of giving a first name to a new born baby is determined in many societies by social elements relating to the traditional beliefs and mystical practices of the concerned society. In the seereer society where the traditional beliefs and mystical practices are strongly and deeply rooted, christening a new born baby follows a very strict traditional protocol of which ignorance is prejudicial.

Among seereer people, the choice of first name is not made blindness; it is conditioned by some cultural realities according to the period of birth, the precedent of the birth, the circumstances in which the baby is born, the nature and type of the baby and so on. All these parameters or measures are taken into consideration before giving a first name to a seereer new born. Their way of perceiving the existence or the universe appears through the traditional system of baptizing new born babies.

Giving a first name in seereer traditional society is a whole family matter which needs a mature reflection based on the ancestors' recommendations, and often that of the concerned family totem. The parents of a new born are not sometimes free to choose a name for their baby as they want it. Their choice of the first name depends on several cultural factors which determine the choice. Some do not hesitate to say seereer first names are dictated to the new born baby's parents. According to seereer people, some babies deserve first names which have socially and semantically a negative meaning addressed to the new born itself, others are given first names which are socially desirable. For instance desirable first names express goodness or state of beauty such **Mocaan** (the best one), **Mosaan** (the most beautiful), **Jam** (the peace), **Jegjam** (Who is peaceful), etc.

That is to say that seereer first name contains encoded messages which are supposed to be decoded later by the baby itself when it grows up or by the community to which it belongs. So a study on first name which is the object of onomastics presents a great

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interest in linguistics if we consider that seereer first name has an informative function which can be perceived as a system of social identification of the baby about its own character. Its first name has a social dimension with an explicit meaning which allows predicting for it a good future or not. For example if that's a lucky baby, that's a baby which will get a long life, that's a baby which whose life is short, etc.

Seereer first names which are analyzed in this article are semantically full of sense. We will try to elucidate all the parameters which condition or which are taken into account for the choice of first name in seereer society from the date of birth to the outing or naming ceremony through a semantic approach to reveal informative aspect of first names and then the sociolinguistics point of view will be of great support to know or make the link between first name and social factors.

I. PROBLEMATIC AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Many studies have been done on seereer. Some of them focus on the study of seereer ethnic group civilization and oral literature such as *Coosaan* by Henry Gravrand, *La femme Seereer* by Issa Laye Thiaw, *Le thème de la mort dans la littérature seereer* by Amad Faye, some stress on the seereer language itself mainly on phonology and morphology; e.g.: *Précis grammatical seereer* by Waly Coly Faye, *La grammaire dialectale seereer* by Souleymane Faye, the dictionary *Seereer-français* by Léon Crétois, among others. These domains of seereer language have been deeply explored by linguists and the others by historians and anthropologists.

However, many linguistics themes of this language have not been studied yet. The fields of syntax, semantics, lexicology, etc. suffer from a glaring lack in scientific studies. Works on these domains of seereer language are very few to not say non-existent. In general, Senegalese languages are not sufficiently described. These domains of linguistics must be now the fields of investigation of researchers who work on the Senegalese languages.

We strongly think that today researches can be and must be necessarily orientated toward other aspects of the language other than phonology and morphology. This invitation to a new orientation of researches is in phase with the new tendencies of linguistics. At the traditional division of the linguistic reflection between phonetics, morphology, and syntax, today add semantics, lexicology, discourse analysis, pragmatics, etc. That's the main reason which justifies our choice for this topic. We have a feeling that it's there where researches must be conducted today.

Our choice on this particular aspect of the seereer traditional first names will be an important

contribution for the elaboration of a scientific knowledge, more detailed on seereer tradition and language.

As far as the seereer traditional system of christening a new born is concerned, we have mentioned a gap to fill. This is concerning to constitute a corpus on seereer traditional first names, and then analyze their morphological structure because, for us, the structure of seereer traditional first names is so relevant that it merits a particular attention on behalf of researchers. Now that this is achieved, it remains, from a corpus, to make an analysis on the origin and semantic content of first names so as to make clear all the linguistic constituents which compose seereer traditional first names.

As for the necessity that is to study the socio-cultural dimension of seereer first name in their traditional system of baptizing a baby or babies (in case of twins) through an onomastics and semantic point of view, we are persuaded that such an analysis will offer us a lot of facilities both for the understanding and deciphering of the symbolism of seereer first name, symbolism related to the nature of new born babies and also to the typology of the given first name.

The choice of a semantic and onomastics approach to study first name in seereer traditional society is based on many considerations. Firstly, because semantics is in general the study of the meaning of words, therefore a semantic point of view would be of great importance for the study of seereer first names which are very socially and linguistically meaningful in relations to many factors as mentioned in *Theories of lexical semantics* "..., the meaning of the word could be defined as the total set of meaning relations in which it participates" (*Theories of lexical semantics*, Oxford University Press, p.80.) secondly, the onomastics support in this study is the fact that the objective of onomastics is to know how names are acquired: their origin. Such a point of view we will help us analyzing first names, mostly in seereer society where most first names creation results from a history.

II. The traditional christening protocol and the "muumi muumi" session for the choice of the first name

In seereer society, the choice of first name is not only the parents' affair; it is also a concern of the relatives, almost the paternal aunt. The paternal aunt is the sister of the new born baby's father. She is inescapable as far as the naming process is concerned. The new born can't be given a first name in her absence because for the tradition, she has the right to give a first name to the new born as the father has. The d-day of the naming ceremony, two first names are given to the new born, one given by the father himself and another one by the paternal aunt. The selection of the final first

name or the first first name of the baby is known after the results of the “vote” of the first name by the children of the district or village in question during the session of what is called “muumii muumii”. The “muumii muumii” happens in the evening of the naming ceremony day.

Children of the concerned village or district are gathered in the center of the house yard, each of them is given two kinds of fritter ball called “**o fonq**”, the one which is made with wetened millet flour “**o fonq kaaf**” is put in the right hand and in the left hand a kind, the one made with wetened millet bran “**o fonq soxon**”. This is for motivating children to perform well the songs accompanying the “**muumii muumii**” session. After, they are hidden in a corner of the house.

Two other greater balls of the same kind, made with millet flour, are put over a horse-box “**ndal**” and each one is given Christian first name, one bears the name given by the father and another the name given by the aunt. The children are not put aware of the name that bears each ball. They even ignore the aim of such a thing. The horse-box is put on a calabash or gourd which is also put over mortar next to a hole. The millet flour fritter ball must be kept and eaten after and the one of millet bran must be thrown into the hole, it is not to be eaten. The aunt or her representative in case of unavailability and the representative of the father supervise the “vote”.

Children are called to touch one of the two greater balls on the horse-box, one cannot touch both of them the same time, and only touch is allowed for each child during each tour. When the children touch one by one, the representatives and the assistance count the touches on each ball for four rounds when the baby is a male and for three rounds when it's a female. A round consists of making a tour from where the horse-box is put to the house gate and from the house gate to where the horse-box is. After finishing the three or four rounds, the name borne the most touched ball is given to the new born. And this name will be the most used in and by the community. The other one will be only used by the one who has lost the competition between the father and aunt.

During the progress of the vote, children perform a song of prayers and wishes for the baby and its parents. This song is accompanied with a jovial musical tune, through a drummed rhythm. The song is composed of four refrains as:

Muumii! Muumii!

Be dump! be dump!, first refrain, repeated all together by children;

Fat a ñoow fat a ñoow!

May it (new born baby) be alive! May it be alive!, second refrain, repeated all together

dooy'aa juukaa!

Keep on giving birth without spacing pregnancies!, third refrain, repeated all together

Bas! bas!

Only! Only! fourth refrain, repeated all together

The first segment of the song **muumii muumii** (*be dump! be dump!*) is structured in the imperative mode, so it delivers an order to the mother of the new born. Children are ordering her to be submissive, not to contest her husband needs, orders, decisions to name but a few. The second refrain **fat a ñoow fat a ñoow**, (*may it be alive! May it be alive!*), contains prayers addressed to the new born for whom children wish a long and successful life; as for the third and fourth refrains which represent the conclusion of the song consist of advising the parents, mostly the mother, to keep on procreating that is to say to enlarge the family by giving birth the as near as possible. Children through the performance of the song show their disagreement on spacing birth for a woman.

The “*muumii muumii*” session is for seereer people a way of testing children intelligence. For them, all the children who throw the millet flour ball in the hole and keep the millet bran one are considered less intelligent than those who keep their millet flour ones which they can eat or bring at home as an award.

This is the reason why traditional seereer babies always have two first names for **Sombel** and **Geen** given to a male baby or **Musu** and **Diboor** when it's a female baby. This is how the christening protocol of the choice of first name functions in the seereer traditional naming system.

It is important to notice that today, with the advent of religions as the religion of Islam which main objective is the “islamisation” of people; seereer traditional first names are losing ground. As most seereer are converted in Islam, modern converted fathers prefer the Arabic names which sound more Islamic than traditional ones which denote the syncretism or the traditional religion and belief of ancestors.

To save this seereer traditional linguistic heritage, that is to say traditional first names, aunts most of the time, choose a traditional name which is in competition with an Arabic name during the name vote. As a result, seereer of today bear of two names, a traditional name and Arabic or Christian one. A kind of this study might contribute to save this linguistic and cultural patrimony which is under threat.

III. Typological analysis of first names and their social value and their semantic meaning in seereer tradition

In seereer traditional way of perceiving the world, first names vary following social factors such as the moment of birth, the circumstances of birth, the number of new born babies to name but a few. In this session, it is a question of classifying names into different categories so as to identify and analyze their semantic value according to seereer traditional beliefs and mystical practices related to their creation.

1. Ordinary First Names

Ordinary names are names which have no particular coloration. They are names as following:

Dudu, Waali, Laatir, Koli, Bubu, Joom, Semu, etc. for men and **Musu, Kumba, Maye, Daba, Ndamba, Biige, Degin, Warig** and so on for women. This kind of names is considered seereer traditional names but which no special interpretation linked to the reasons of their creation and their semantic value; that is the reason why we call them ordinary names.

2. First Names Of Twins

Traditionally, in seereer society, twins are a bit afraid. People consider them as “supernatural characters”, endowed with mystical knowledge and power. The birth of twins sometimes creates fear or frightens the family. That is the reason why the naming system or the baptism of twins is highly protocolar. There are specific names attributed to seereer twins. When they are twin brothers, **Ngoo-maak** and **Ngoo-ndeb** are the most used first names for twin brothers. **Ngoo** is the diminutive of **Ngoor**, derived from the noun **o Koor** which refers to *man* and the adjectives **maak** (big, great, senior), and **ndeb** (small, little, junior) denote an oldness relation between twins. Therefore the name **Ngoo-maak** semantically means *Ngoor Senior / Ngoor the older* and **Ngoo-ndeb** means *Ngoor Junior or Ngoor the younger/ the less old*. At first sight, according the meaning of these first names, one will say the name **Ngoo-maak** (*Ngoor the older*) is given to the first born twin and **Ngoo-ndeb** (*Ngoor the younger*) to last born twin. That’s chronologically logical to not say normal. But these names are attributed to twins in a contradictory way. **Ngoo-ndeb** (*Ngoor the younger*) is the name given to the first born twin and **Ngoo-maak** (*Ngoor the older*) to the last born twin. It is the same thing for twin sisters whose traditional most known names are **Maakaan** (the oldest) and **Ndebaan** (the youngest).

This semantic inversion of the twins’ first names is based on traditional beliefs and mystical practices. For seereer people, this inversion is a way to hide twins from their oldness relations, mostly for the last born twin who is considered as the most problematic one. It’s a way to avoid probably mystical fights between them (twins) whose repercussions might fall on the parents. When the twins are a male and a

female, **Ngoo-maak** or **Ngoo-ndeb** is the name the male twin bears and the female twin is christened **Maakaan** or **Ndebaan**.

3. First Names Of Wishes

They are first names which express some wishes and prayers. These prayers and wishes are most the time axed on the new born health state, the new born protection by God, the new born character, etc. these names are formed in the imperative and they look like orders given to the new born or The Almighty God. Among these names there are:

Wodi! Which means *Be at good health!*

Moyi which means *Be the best! or be better!*

The names **Wodi** and **Moyi** are respectively formed through a derivational process of the verbal root **wod** (to be at good health) or **moy** (to be better or the best) combined with the suffix **-i** which is the mark of the imperative of seereer second person. These names are exclusively given to female babies. For male babies we have names of prayers such as **Jam** (the peace or Peace), **Jegjam** (The peaceful), **Moyaan** (the best). **Jam** refers to *peace*, as for **Jegjam**, it is the combination of the verb **jeg** (to have, to get, to obtain) and the noun **Jam** which means peace, it’s meaning is *Who has peace* or *Who is peaceful* and the name **Moyaan** is morphologically formed with the verb **moy** (to be better) and the suffix **-aan** which indicates the attributive. In other words, **Moyaan** means someone who is so good that people attribute to him all that is related to goodness. He is considered as the owner of goodness.

There are also names of prayers for God’s protection for example **Roog wuusi!** / **Roog waasi!** (**God Let** (him)). This name for seereer people is a way of recognizing God power. As God is the One who creates everyone and who decides to kill him as He wants, when He wants and where He wants, seereer confide the new born to God who is considered the Best Supervisor.

This is a way to express their gratefulness and gratitude to the Creator of the universe to receive in return His pity, His benediction and protection mostly for the new born baby. This name is created from a composition of a common noun **Roog** and the verb **wuus / waas** (to let, to leave) to which is added the suffix **-I**, the mark of imperative of the second person. The nominal expression **Roog waasi /wuusi** implies an imploration toward God to give long life to the baby.

signifies *Rest alive! Be alive!*. This name is mostly given whose mother’s all first born babies are died. We beg the baby not to follow or imitate his or her dead brothers or sisters.

4. First Names Announcing The Death Of The Father

They are undesirable names. No community wishes its new born babies bear of them because the reality they express. They are two of them **Kuut** and **Maadaan**. The latter is given to a female baby and the former to a male baby. These names are attributed to a baby whose father died during the mother's pregnancy. Their semantic meaning in seereer society is to the orphan status they describe. A baby whose name is **Kuut** or **Maadaan** has lost his father while her mother was pregnant. These first names are a sort of paying tribute to the deceased father. All seereer people who bear names of **Kuut** or **Maadaan** don't know their father alive.

The name **kuut** comes from the verb **guut** (to miss something) and **maadaan** is derived from the verb **maad** (to attend) combined with the attributive suffix **-aan**. In this case, it means literally "who does not attend the life of her father" that is to say her father has died before her birth. In other words, these first names are "announcer" of death, the father's death, they are socially unwanted.

5. First Names Related To Longevity

Many comments have been made on these names in terms of "predecession". Their semantic value turns around longevity. The most famous longevity names are **Sobel** and **Miñaan**. **Sobel** means "who is found here", this is the gathering of the verb **sob** (to find here) and the passive marker **-el** whereas **Miñaan** comes from the verbal root **miñ** (to last) and the attributive suffix **-aan**. Semantically, **Miñaan** means someone has so lasted that people attribute him all that duration. The only problematic between these two persons is that we don't know exactly who is older than the other. **Miñaan** can be considered as the person who has spent more years on earth than anyone else. For this reason he is named like that. As for **Sobel**, he is considered "the found here", in other words everyone finds him here and that's the meaning of his name. This debate remains discussed. Both of them express duration in terms of existence.

6. Warding Off Or Despair First Names

Seereer people believe also in what we call the reincarnation and metamorphose. And the belief is the origin or the reason of the creation of some seereer names. These two phenomena are deeply rooted and anchored the seereer religious thought. For the seereer, there are some people who are capable to be reincarnated after death. These people are called "ciif". A ciif, according to seereer traditional beliefs, is a person who has the power to be re-born after he was died or his death, often through the same woman (his mother) or through another woman in the same family. Certain ciif are considered very harmful characters (a ciif a paaxeer) in the society because they disturb the family easiness when they are re-born on several times

in the family. In this case, they finish by installing a whole family psychosis about pregnancy.

The main problem about ciif is that they die most of the time very early for example when they are at "golden age", or just some week or months at the birth. And what's more socking about ciif is that the circumstances in which they prefer to die (event, ceremony, meeting, etc.) they are fearsome and undesirable in and by the community. When seereer people discover or recognize mystically a ciif, they take measures as a settling of scores with the ciif. Among the measures there is the type of names given to a ciif. For example for a new born ciif, he or she bears of this kind of names:

Gaskel (Who is "already" buried), it is formed with the verb **gas** (to dig) and the mark of the passive in seereer **-el**. semantically, the name **Gaskel** means someone who is already died and buried. This name is given to a male new born ciif.

Jegaan (who doesn't belong to any one), this is the combination of the verbal root **jeg** (to have, to get, to obtain) and the suffix **-aan** which expresses here the notion of privative. This name is to say that someone who is for no one. It's a name for males.

Xonik (who is going to die), this name is composed of the verbal root **xon** (to die) and the suffix **-ik** which indicates the movement of distance or direction. **Xonik** implies who goes to die very soon, in other words someone who is going to disappear in a near future. It's a name borne by a male ciif.

Xonaan, this name is a way to attribute death to a new born ciif. People want to deliver her / him the message that the new born has died many times and re-born many that we tell him /her "ok, now death is yours, take!". This is what the suffix **-aan** expresses here, it is the mark of the attributive.

Soxar, this is the gathering of the radical verb **sox** (to crush millet) and the suffix **-ar**. This suffix refers to the notion of privative. It's privative in the sense that the subject or agent won't do the action expressed by the primitive verb **sox**. **Soxar** means *who won't crush millet*. It implies that the baby will die before the age of being capable of crushing millet (15-year-old daughter or girl for example). It the same for the name **Unan** composed of the verb **un** (to grind) and the suffix **-an** which plays the same function as the suffix **-ar**. Their semantic value is the same.

Mbugaan, this name is the combination of the verb **bug** (to want, to desire, to love) and the suffix **-aan**, which expresses an idea non desire. **Mbugaan** is someone is not wanted, desired or loved. We simulate to show to the new born that no one wants of him or her.

Liir, this refers to rag or tatter in terms of clothes. The baby who bears of this name is assimilated to a torn Kleenex or clothes, that is to say it is not useful. People give no importance to the baby itself.

Joonfaaf, this is compound proper noun with two verbs **joon** (to pass) and **faaf** (to continue). **Joonfaaf** wants to say *pass and continue!*. This name is a manner to show the short time that the baby will spend with the community and then die. Pragmatically, **Joonfaaf** means who *is passing, who is not staying a long time*.

The semantic value of this kind of names is that they express sentiments of despair. These names drive family members to despair to see the new born staying with them for a long time but socially this type of names show a disinterestedness of the family in particular of the community in general. People hypocritically seem to be disinterested in the baby's existence but in reality it's not the case. They just want to tell the baby that they have recognized it and known what it is capable to do and what is used to doing, its habits (it always dies early). They simulate not to have any hope for the life of the baby.

The negative connotation of these names is a strategy to "implant" the ciif new born. For Becker and Faye, this is a "strategy of avoiding destined to the child so as to ward off the fate" (p.15). For seereer tradition, this is a way to push the ciif recognize himself or herself his /her detested actions. When the ciif recognizes that the community has recognized him or her, either he dies once and for all, he will never come back (re-born), either he/she stays with alive until getting or being old to correct the range. Explicitly, warding off names can be perceived as the opposite of what we wish in reality toward the child. No parents wish their child die early, but the contrary. These first names are symbolic and contain an identical aspect in seereer society.

7. Contextual First Names

This origin or the creation of this category of names is linked to a particular situation in which someone is born. This is the result of a coincidence between the birth and something like decease, arrival of guest, particularity of moment, etc.

In case of coincidence between the decease of the house chef or saltigi of the district and the birth of a child, the latter may bear of the name of the deceased even if they are not of the same sex. Such a situation creates what we call here oxymoron names as:

Waa-tew (Waly the female)
Samba-tew (Samba the female)
Maalik-o-tew (Malick the female)
Kumba-koor (Coumba the male)
Maye-koor (Mayé the male)
Njuma-Koor (Diouma the male)

Waa is the diminutive of **Waali**. **Waali** and **Samba** are names for men but this time they are attributed to women the reason why they are accompanied with adjective **tew** that determines the sex of the child. **Tew** is the woman; therefore all that is in relation or in connection with this item is feminine. **Waali, Samba and Maalick** are men's name. They sound masculine. The item **tew** is here to "dismasculinize" them and attribute them feminine sound or features. That is the same for the adjective **koor**, is related to man, so it determines the sex of **Kumba, Maye, Njuma (Diouma)** because these names are names for women, once given to men (as here) they go with the item **Koor** to precise the sex.

Coincidence can bring about what we call here season names such as **Seek** (winter), **Ndiig** (the raining season). A child who is born in a particular winter (good or bad) may be given the name **Seek** to remind of or mark the particular goodness or badness of the winter and it is the same function played through the name **Ndiig**. **Mbel o xiid** is the first name given to female child whose year of birth is fantastic and unforgettable year, a year full of goodness, joy, happiness, peace, etc because of the plenty of crops. This name is the compounding of the noun **mbel** which is derived from the verbal root **fel** (to be good, to be pleasant, agreeable or enjoyable) and the noun (**o**) **xiid** which means *a season*. The first name **Mbel o xiid**, semantically, means *whose year (of birth) is pleasant*, that is to say unforgettable year marked by an abundance of crops and successful other activities. This category of names has an appreciative value of the season during which the child is born.

There children who bear of annual festival events or ceremonies when their birth coincides with the day of the festival or ceremony. That is the case as **Miis** (the hunting annual ceremony). Children who are born the very day of the annual hunting ceremony bear of the name **Miis**. Those are born in the month preceding the annual hunting are named **Sam suuy'**.

To remember the day a child is born, seereer people give the name of the day to the child and everybody will know that this child is born in this date. That is origin of names like:

Tening (Monday)
Daba, from **ardaba** (Wednesday)
Xemes, from **arxemes** (Thursday)
Juma, from **jumaling** (Friday)
Diboor, (Sunday)

All these names are attributed to daughters. In short, **Tening** is given to a baby born on Monday, **Daba** to daughter born on Wednesday, **Xemes**, a daughter born on Thursday, **Juma**, the one born on Friday, **Diboor** is born on Sunday and so on. This follows the dates chronological order.

8. Geographical Or Region Indicator Names

These first names semantic value shows the geographical origin of the child who bear them. They are zonal localizers. They are compound first names and the adjective plays the function of localizer. We have **Ngoo-joyin** which means **Ngoo** from the village of Joyin, **San-moon** this means **Sanu** from the village of Moon.

There are names which show the father's name. They are also compound first names with the name of the child and the one of his father, example **Fat-njoogu**, which means Fatou of **Njoogu**, in other words **Faatu** is the daughter of **Njoogu**. This name shows clearly that Njoogu is the father of **Fatou**. **Laa-jokel**, we mean by this that **Laa** (diminutive of **Laatir**) is the son of **Jokel**. This type of names expresses a parental relation between them.

9. First Names Of Character Or Physical Features

In seereer traditional naming system, certain names of animals are borrowed and given some new born babies. This category of names has an assimilative value following the temper, nature or character of the concerned animal. **Jogoy** is a name assimilated to Lion called **njogoy** in seereer language. A child whose name is **Jogoy** is expected to get qualities like that of Lion; for instance courage, physical and mental force, determination and devotion in all his undertaking.

As for the name **Moon** (hyena), it's in connection to hyena particularities in terms of physical appearance, of intelligence or lack of patience related to food (greediness, cupidity, etc.). A child bearing name of **Moon** is at first ugly. He or she may be very greedy that is to say he /she likes sucking at every moment. Such a name is in general proposed by the new born's grand parents who tie with the baby a sort of cousinhood relationship. These two names (**Jogoy** and **Moon**) are only given to a male child.

For a female child, there are names as **Kumba-njuuc**, **Kod-niid**, etc. The name **Kumba-njuuc** implies a kind of physical description or picture of the concerned child. The second term or the adjective **njuuc** is related to smallness, shortness. That means **Kumba-njuuc** is physically small and thin. She is not at all big. As far as the name **Kod-niid** is concerned, it expresses the nature of **Kodu**. She is naturally nonchalant, slow in everything she does. That is what the adjective **niid** qualifies.

The name **Wodee** is given to an unhealthy child. It is the derivative from the verb **wod** (to be at good health, to be healthy) combined with the suffix **-ee**, expressing negation in seereer present simple tense.

10. First Names Of Greatness Or Richness

These are names whose semantic value refers to the status of the namesake of the child. This type of

names has a very positive social connotation. Their creation is linked to greatness or richness of the child's homonym, among them there are **Njaak**, **Njarka**, **Geej**, etc. **Njaak** is the noun derived from the verb **jaak** (to be great, to be big). Thus, a person who bears of this name is supposed to be someone who is responsible, who does great positive actions or things but mostly who never undertake something with a half measure sentiment. **Njarka** is most of the time a name of a rich seereer country man called **siide**. **Siide** is the natural seereer surname attributed to a rich man in terms of animals like cows. People whose name is **Semu** are also called **Njarka semu**. **Geej** is the name of the sea or the ocean. By this name, seereer people want to express the idea of greatness. This name has a protection value for the child. As no one can harm the ocean or the sea, for seereer, a child whose name is **Geej** is protected and nobody can curse him. The seereer traditional belief is all that is related to the ocean is protected by the ocean spirits or totems. As the ocean is wide and great, **Geej** can be perceived as a prayer to have a great man when the child grows up.

As for **Ñakar** and **Sedar**, they are first names which are not far from being first names of wishes but they contain an aspect in relations with richness or greatness. **Ñakar** is structured with the verb **ñak** (to have nothing) and the privative suffix **-ar**. This suffix describes the opposite idea expressed by the verbal root **ñak**, thus the first name **Ñakar** means *the one who will never be poor*. The same interpretation can be done for the first name **Sedar**. This name signifies *the one who will never be ashamed*; this implies someone who will get all at his disposal (who won't lack of anything that can make ashamed). It is the combination of the verbal root **sed** (to be ashamed) and the privative suffix **-ar**.

11. Some Special Surnames

In seereer society, there are particular surnames which finish by burying the first names of the concerned individuals. They are surnames whose creation is connection with responsibilities given to an individual as task. We can consider them as titles given to the individuals in question. The most known are **Kumax**, **Bure** and **Saltik**. It is important to notice, the surname **Kumax** is also a first name. When it is a surname, it is given to the hierarchical superior of the ndut community. Ndut is a polysemic term; it can be used to refer to the ceremony organized when young boys are circumcised, it can be used to refer to the seereer traditional initiation, it can be also used to refer to period of the initiation in the brush. In any case, **Kumax** is the supervisor of the ndut (in all sense). **Kumax** is the spiritual guide of the circumcised called **njuuli** and their guardians called **selbe**. He protects all the ndut against misfortune, disaster or any evil action of witches. He is endowed of supernatural power that all the community recognizes. The surname **Bure** is the name of the god of the ndut. Its origin is related to the famous history between the god of the ndut and the

circumcised. According to oral tradition, one day the god **Bure Damaan**, god of ndut, had disappeared with the circumcised under the ground because the circumcised had been left without any guardian and **Bure** was angry of that, he took them and entered a deep hole with them¹. This surname is in relation to the ndut environment.

As for the surname **Saltik** it is only attributed to spiritual guide of the village, at least to a real soothsayer. **Saltik** is a nominal title granted to someone predicts the future, all that will happen, almost that can be harm the community. **Saltik** is creation from the combination of the verb **sal** (to wish) and the adverb **tigi** (really, certainly). This means someone whose prayers are always granted and whose predictions and divinations come always true. The noun comes from the morphological evolution of the seereer expression **oxene o saasal tigi oo** (this one is a “real wisher”, or a real soothsayer). **Saltik** or **Saltigi** is the diminutive or contraction form of **Saasal tigi**.

Another surname referring to the height and weight is the person bearing it, is **ndoq**. The item **ndoq** means *bundle* in general, *bundle of firewood* in particular. A bundle of firewood is not often slight and is difficult to put on the head to carry it because of its heaviness. A man called **ndoq** is physically a short and strong man. This name is never given to a tall man. This one's surname is most of the time **njol** which signifies *the tall*.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this study on seereer first name, we have noticed the naming system of new a born child is enrolled through a highly formalized canvas and structure. The typology of names is dictated by social considerations, traditional beliefs and mystical practices. The seereer name is full of sense or meaning whose interpretation requires certain knowledge of the seereer environment and the seereer way of perceiving the world. By this article, we have managed to decipher the sociolinguistic content and semantic value encoded in names. We consider through this study that seereer names contain some unknown secrets by the world. And this study helps us being aware of the fact that the seereer naming ceremony is a social practice which contributes to the choice of first name. We have also managed, through the categories of names analyzed in this work, to discover that the first name in seereer traditional society, speaks, it delivers a message or messages, either to the child himself either to the whole community. We have meticulously covered the social dimension of first name and then identified and analyzed its particular aspects related to its creation or origin through a semantic and onomastics point of view. All is language and language is a linguistic code, to

decode and interpreted in relation to the cultural realities of the concerned society.

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