CATALOGUING OF GHANAIAN NAMES: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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Studies the problems of choice and rendering of Ghanaian names for entries in Catalogues and bibliographies and suggests a few guidelines for the purpose, to be consistent with AACR.

INTRODUCTION

Ghana is a small country in western Africa with an area of 238,537 sq km and a population of about 11 million. It is bordered in the north by Upper Volta, in the south by the Atlantic Ocean, in the east by Togoland, and in the west by Ivory Coast. Prior to independence, Ghana was known as Gold Coast. After independence in 1957, the name Ghana was chosen with the belief that the people were the descenders of the early inhabitants of the empire of Ghana, which flourished in western Sudan from about 300 AD to the 12th century.

The indigenous inhabitants are of Negroid stock. Those in the northern region belong to the Moshi-Dagomba group of Voltaic people or to the Gonja. In the south and southwest, there are the Twi, Fanti and Nzima. On the Accra plains are the Ga, and on the east of the Volta river are the Ewe.

There are not less than 50 indigenous languages and dialects in Ghana. Languages follow tribal divisions and although English is the national language, there are other important languages, such as Asante-Twi, Dagbani, Ewe, Fanti and Ga. These follow the major tribes of Akan, Mole-Dagbani, Ewe and Ga. Fortunately, the diversity of tribes and languages has been kept under control, largely as a result of imaginative governmental policies over many decades, and it is possible to speak of a single national consciousness embracing all the diverse elements with their varied traditions and cultures. Even so, a distinction can be made between the southern people on the one hand, who have come most directly and longest under the influence of modern European life and the Christian religion, and the northern people on the other hand, whose traditional modes of life and religion have undergone relatively little change. Even among the southern people, there are significant disparities, the Akan group dominating all the rest in size and extent.

In the southern part of Ghana, majority of the tribes follow the “day-of-birth” naming system (this is done to some extent in the northern part also). By this system, babies adopt the name of their days of birth as one of their names. For example, a child born on Sunday may be called Kwasi (for a boy) and Akosua (for a girl). The spelling of these names, however, differs from child to child. A child born of Asante-Twi parentage on Sunday may be called Kwasi (for a boy) and Akosua (for a girl). The spelling of these names, however, differs from child to child. A child born of Asante-Twi parentage on Sunday may be called Kwasi (for a boy) and Akosua (for a girl). The spelling of these names, however, differs from child to child. A child born of Asante-Twi parentage on Sunday may be called Kwasi (for a boy) and Akosua (for a girl). The spelling of these names, however, differs from child to child. A child born of Asante-Twi parentage on Sunday may be called Kwasi (for a boy) and Akosua (for a girl).
1. Compound names

Compound names which are multiple worded names are very common among the Akan speaking people of Ghana. The high incidence of compound names in Ghana appears to arise from four main reasons.

(a) Names having parental links

The desire among some parents is to retain maternal and paternal links. For example, in a name such as Asare-Nyarko, Asare might come from the mother’s side and Nyarko from the father’s side. Both parts are surnames and are traditionally given equal importance, thereby making them inseparable. It is, therefore, recommended that such names should not be reversed and be rendered in direct order as prescribed in AACR [1].

Asare-Nyarko

(b) Names having appellations accompanying them

Such names are not hard to find in Ghana. For instance, in Osafo-Kantanka, the surname is Osafo and the appellation is Kantanka, which means ‘Fighter’. Similarly, in Antwi-Boasiako, the first part is surname and the second part is appellation. A cataloguer who is unaware of the problems of Ghanaian names, is likely to reverse the order of the name, in which case Kantanka, Osafo and Boasiako, Antwi will become meaningless. It is, therefore, suggested that such names should be entered in direct form, consisting of surname followed by a comma and appellation. Thus, the entry should be as follows:

Osafo, Kantanka
Antwi, Boasiako

However, a ‘see reference’ may be made for those who are likely to look for the works of such authors under the second part of the name.

Reference entries:
Kantanka, Osafo.
see Osafo, Kantanka.
Boasiako, Antwi.
see Antwi, Boasiako.

(c) Surname combined with a particular event or occasion

Example:
Mensah-Agyemang.

In this example, Mensah is a name for the third boy in the family and Agyemang is father’s name. Similarly, in Attah-Britwum, Attah is a name given to male twins and Britwum is the name of the father.

The general practice in Ghana seems to be to use the two names together in natural sequence. However, it is advisable to enter such name under the last part, as it is the surname. Thus, the entry should be:

Agyemang, Mensah.
Britwum, Attah.

However, ‘see reference’ may be made by first part of the name, as given below:

Mensah-Agyemang.
see Agyemang, Mensah.
Attah-Britwum.
see Britwum, Attah.

(d) Married women whose names consist of the maiden name and husband’s surname

Some Ghanaian women retain their maiden names with the husband’s surname. The last part of the maiden name consists of father’s surname, which after marriage is hyphenated with husband’s surname. For example:

Mary Adu-Poku

Here, ‘Mary’ is her own name; ‘Adu’ is the surname of her father; and ‘Poku’ is the surname of her husband.

AACR 22.5 c5 [2] as referred back to Rule 22.5 c3 prescribe as follows:

“If the elements of a compound surname are regularly or occasionally hyphenated, enter under the first element.”

If this rule is followed, the woman will be entered as under:

Adu-Poku, Mary.

i.e. under the surname of her father, which is basically wrong.

Therefore, it is recommended that in such cases, AACR 22.5 c3 should be disregarded and the entry element should be husband’s surname, as shown below:
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Poku, Mary Adu.
The following cross-references may be made:
  Mary Adu-Poku,
    see Poku, Mary Adu.
  Adu-Poku, Mary,
    see Poku, Mary Adu.

2. Compound Surnames
“The surnames consisting of two or more proper names often connected by a hyphen, conjunction or preposition” are called compound surnames. Some individuals [3] in Ghana have two-worded names, each of which is a common surname.

Examples:
  Osei Mensah.
  Baah Achamfour.

Any of the above names could be a surname. This problem becomes more pronounced when one considers the fact that some people have a tendency to write their surnames before their forenames. The cataloguer, therefore, becomes confused as to which of the names to use as the entry element.

Besides, there are quite a number of Ghanians who as a result of western influence have both first and surnames European. In most cases, both the names are used as surnames and, as such, it is difficult for a cataloguer to determine which is the surname.

Examples:
  Oliver Arthur.
  Mends Brown.

In such cases, it may be resolved that the entry element should be the last part of the name, which is generally the “preferred form known” as per AACR (1978) 22.5 c2. Thus, the entry of such names should be as follows:

  Arthur, Oliver.
  Brown, Mends.

3. Surnames with prefixes
Owing to colonial influence, many Ghanaians bear names derived from Portuguese and Dutch sources. Such names often have prefixes and are commonly found in the coastal areas where the influence of the colonial authorities led to intermarriages among them and local women.

Examples of such names are given below:
(i) Kan Kam Da-Costa (first part Ghanaian, second part Portuguese).
(ii) Van-Derpuye (first part Dutch, hypenated with Ghanaian name).

In such cases, the rules prescribed in AACR [4] cannot be applied, because such names are neither purely Dutch nor Portuguese.

In the case of a Portuguese name used as prefix to a Ghanaian surname, it is recommended to enter the name under the prefix, as it is the part by which a person is commonly called. If the order as prescribed in AACR [5] for Portuguese name is followed, the resulting name, i.e. Costa, Kan Kam Da, will become meaningless. Therefore, the suggested order is: Da-Costa, Kan Kam.

Similarly, in the second example, reversing the order will make the name meaningless. Therefore, it is recommended that such names should be entered in the natural order, as they appear on the title page, i.e. Van-Derpuye.

4. Tribal Names
Some Ghanaians also have their tribal names as their surnames. Some of the reasons given to this are:
(a) Tribal identity
(b) Security
(c) Communality
(d) In some cases, the original surnames are difficult to pronounce; hence the use of tribal names is made.

Examples:
  Kwame Asante.
  Atia Frafra.
  Salifu Dagarti.

In the above examples, Asante, Frafra and Dagarti are all major tribes in Ghana. A cataloguer with little or no knowledge of Ghanain names will enter such names in the last parts taking them as surnames, which in fact are tribal names. People bearing such names are commonly called by their first name. Therefore, it is recommended that such names should be entered as they appear on the title page and the order of elements should be according to the rule 22.4 B of AACR (1978), as given below:

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5. Place Names as Surnames

Quite a few people in Ghana have place names as their surnames. This is often common with migrants who tend to name their children according to where they are born.

Example:
Seidu Kumasi (Kumasi is the name of a city)

For such names, no treatment has been given in AACR (1978). However, it may be resolved that such persons should be entered under the name of place by which they are more commonly identified. Thus, the rendering should be

Kumasi, Seidu.

A cross-reference entry may be made as shown below:

Seidu Kumasi.
see Kumasi, Seidu.

6. Both Names Islamic

This is common in the northern part of Ghana, which has about 40% moslem population. In such instances, we find people with two identical names, the middle name being different.

Example:
Alhassan Mohammed Alhassan.

Such names do not appear to pose any problem for the cataloguer, as any one of the two identical parts of the name may be used as the entry element, but difficulty arises in the order of second remove. If the last part of the name is used as the entry element, the order of elements will be:

Alhassan, Alhassan Mohammed.

If the first part is used as the entry element, the order of elements will be:

Alhassan, Mohammed Alhassan.

If the two practices are followed, the works of the same author will be separated in a Dictionary Catalogue.

To avoid any confusion in the choice of entry element and to ensure proper filing, it is recommended that the last part of the name should be used as the entry element.

7. Names with Titles

In some Ghanaian names there are titles in vernacular attached to them. This means that unless the cataloguer is conversant with Ghanaian names, he might not know that one of the names is a title.

Examples:
Nii Ayittey.
Ohene Mensah.
Nana Agyei.

In all these cases, the first names, i.e. Nii, Ohene, and Nana, are chieftaincy titles. However, the common practice now is to have people using these titles without being enstooled as chiefs.

Such persons in Ghana are commonly known by their surnames and not by their titles. Therefore, AACR [6] dealing with ‘Entry under title of nobility’ will not be applied here.

Thus, it is recommended that entry should be made under surname followed by title of nobility, as shown below:

Mensah, Ohene.
Ayittey, Nii.
Agyei, Nana.

CONCLUSION

In the absence of any set of guidelines in AACR I&II, rendering of Ghanaian names is inconsistent, which creates difficulty both for indexers and users. A Ghanaian cataloguer may solve the problems of Ghanaian names to some extent, but a cataloguer from any other country with no knowledge of Ghanaian names will not be able to understand the problems of rendering such names. In this context, C.C. Agulu writes, “An American or European librarian or bibliographer working on an African bibliography has many serious problems to face. In the first place, he may be unfamiliar with the complexities of the local languages and differences in ethnic distribution and this is found to retard his work and even affect its...
quality. Secondly, spellings of family names are so inconsistently used in various bibliographical sources that the bibliographer is left wondering which spelling is right [7].

The present study is an attempt to cover comprehensively various problems of choice and rendering of Ghanaian names. If the recommendations made in this work are followed, consistency in cataloguing Ghanaian names will be achieved.

REFERENCES
2. op. cit. p. 360 (Rule 22.5 c5).
3. op. cit. p 565 (Appendix D).
4. op. cit. p 361-364 (Rules 22.5 D&E).
5. ibid.