Rituals of Naming and Exposure: Meaning and Signification in a Name

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Introduction

Classic scholarship dealing with names have treated all of them identically, placing all on the same footing, as though they formed a whole, without attempting to see if there might be a hierarchical, personal or social interplay among them. In a way, the study of names often leveled a multidimensional system by privileging a single dimension, depending on the academic discipline of investigators: the signified, for analytical philosophers, and the signifier, for linguists and philologists; the ones preoccupied with the semantic aspect of the name, the others looking for its etymology.

For folklorists and literary critics, the apparent triviality of names offered an occasion for philological ingenuity and narrative expansion. Bound by different canons of interpretative fidelity, they have usually tended to consider them as incidental embellishments or curious residua of a primitive folk tradition. Under the influence of folklore theory, many scholars have argued that the etymologies were especially clear examples of the etiological legend, responses to so-called *Kinderfragen*, which arose from simple curiosity about natural and cultural phenomena. They were thus assumed to represent the most primitive stratum of oral tradition. Following this view, the etiological motive was fixed as a constitutive factor in the evolution of folk tradition. In many cases, speculation about the meaning of familiar names had given rise to explanatory legends which only appeared to be historical.

Yet other scholars, prompted by a pious impulse to "save the phenomena", attempted to dismantle this etiological argument, first on theoretical grounds and later through a painstaking analysis of individual episodes aimed at demonstrating the secondary nature of the purportedly originative formulae. The result was to relegate the names to peripheral status, mnemonic or didactic aids at best. In time the question of significance was abandoned altogether in hair-splitting

debates over the correct definition of the traditional form in question, while the peculiarly veiled potency of etymological naming continued to go unnoticed, in large part because scholars failed to appreciate the literary pressures that influenced the sophisticated selection and invention of etiological traditions.

Arguably the most serious obstacle to such an appreciation has been the belief, now condescending, now celebratory, that naming intends a direct rapport with the essential being of the object named. This is an assumption that cuts across both sides of the folklore debate, the common premise being that the etymologies are direct adoptions from primitive tradition. Reports on the magical virtue of names were a staple of the classic anthropological literature, and the same orientation was perhaps to be expected among older critics attracted by the comparatist's appeal to universals of human behavior. But even scholars at home with the skeptical stances of modern literary theory or sympathetic to the slippery continuities between "open" and polyvalent readings have tended to adopt the primitivist approach to the name traditions. From the conflation of paronomasia with "speaking names" to the statements of names that "betoken a fate" or "signify certain essential characteristics of their bearers", discussion of the etiological interpretations has posited or implied a naïve form of linguistic realism, a humbler version of the correspondence theories assumed by the precritical allegorists. In such plays on words, it is believed that the word has a different and much more primitive way of acting: on solemn occasions it can release meanings and establish mental affinities which lie at the deeper level of its magical matrix. Magical and essentialist views of naming are equally prevalent among literary critics, who tend to revert to theological rather than ethnological stereotypes for support.

Neither the speculative pretensions nor the magical entailments of preliterate divination adequately represent the motives underlying rituals and procedures of naming, which seem rather to exploit the myth of true meaning as a generic convention, subject to the most aggressive revision. For all its etiological thrust, etymology avoids the mythologizing pursuit of an extra-chronological root that would correspond to the essential character of the being named. The typical gloss marks a makeshift beginning as opposed to an absolute origin. It is arbitrary rather than inevitable, willful rather than essential, enabling, but only by virtue of the limits it imposes.

Anthropology, without abandoning questions of origin, denotation and connotation, took the opposite tack, illustrated above all in Lévi-Strauss's *Savage mind* (1962, 212–286 [161–216]). The problem for philosophers and linguists is the nature of proper names and their place in the system of the language, characteristically interested how the names manage to refer to beings in the world asserting something which is logically true. Anthropologists are concerned with this problem but also with another, for they are faced with a twofold paradox. If proper names are an integral part of the systems that Lévi-Strauss treated as codes, that is, as means of fixing significations by transposing them into terms of other significations, this would be impossible if it were true, as logicians and some linguists have maintained, that proper names are "meaningless", lacking in signification. The forms of thought that Lévi-Strauss conceived of are totalizing thoughts, which exhaust reality by means of a finite number of given classes, and have the fundamental property of being *transformable* into each other. Yet again, and this is the most important point, this quantified thought could not be both theoretically satisfying and effectively applied to the concrete if this concrete contained a residue of unintelligibility which is recalcitrant to signification and to which, in the last analysis, concreteness itself would be reducible. "The principle of all or nothing not only has heuristic value to thought founded on the operation of dichotomies, but is also an expression of a property of what exists: either everything, or nothing, makes sense" (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 228 [172–173]).

Assigned names

One of the distinctive features of Albanian anthroponymy is the distinction made by most researchers between names having a secular connotation, which originate mainly in the Albanian language, and names with a religious connotation, which have, for the Catholic rite, Latin and neo-Latin roots, for the Orthodox rite, Byzantine, Greek or Slavic roots, and for Islam, Turkish, Arabic or Persian roots. Generally speaking, all of the religious in Albania have more or less well-defined person names. We find slightly different and yet pertinent names in different regions dominated by the same religion, and names that are more mixed in the regions where no single denomination can claim ascendancy.

Furthermore, we know that these so-called religious names, as is the case throughout Southeast Europe, represent a high percentage of the entire cultural stock of personal names. Among Albanians, who have no national religion, these names have been widely used since the Middle Ages, for Christian names, and from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for Islamic names, as one of the chief means of acculturation imposed by the different foreign occupiers.

We know of the frequent situation of crypto-Christianity in several regions of Albania under the Ottoman occupation when the newborn child was given two names: a so-called family name, of a rather Christian form, for communication within the family, the kin group and the more or less restricted territorial group; and another, Islamic, name, to be used in society at large. The inter-religious situation of the inhabitants of the Shpati Highlands in Central Albania is a well-known instance (Shuteriqi, Gjergji & Panajoti 1987). Those living around the edges of the domain were regularly Christian and were given Christian names. But whenever they would go down into town, they would turn into full-fledged Muslims and use a Muslim name. Through the name, a break was produced between the official identity, inscribed in the religious state, and the identity assigned by the parents or the group. As in comparable situations studied in French culture (Zonabend 1977, 267–268), over his lifetime an individual experienced a constant dissociation between his received identity and his acquired identity. Attribution of a second name could always double the individual's possibilities of integration in the social group or the society at large, since each name could more or less define one or another aspect of his/her personalization and socialization.

As a rule, names exist before the individuals who bear them and they are assigned to them on account of the position which is objectively theirs but in which other individuals may equally find themselves, and which the group regards as charged with significance. In addition, there are issues of power and control involved in giving a name. One has control over that which one has named, a symbolic power over their life and their destiny. Among Albanians belief in the connection between the person's name and their destiny was especially strong. As protection against magical practices and because of mistrust of strangers, it was important to carefully conceal the child's true name before it was born or before the public naming ritual; he was given a temporary name, a second name or his name was even

shortened or altered in such a way that it was no longer recognizable. In so doing, it was believed, any possible influence on the person's destiny was avoided. The name is also often changed so as to escape serious illness or some other misfortune through the subterfuge of nominal rebirth. The same procedures are found among other south-eastern European groups, including the immediate neighbors of the Albanians (Stahl 1977, 290–291). To this end, among Catholic Albanians, the child is often given an Islamic name, just as, among Muslim Albanians, it is given a Christian name.

Even before the birth, as soon as the mother feels the child's presence by the movements of the fetus, or right after it is born, the child is often given a temporary name until such time as it receives its true definitive name. Even though there must be a period when the child was unnamed or not yet named in some sense, no one would ever dare to leave a living child without a name. Indeed, if one must be named in order to be human, it is understandable that, conversely, to remain without a name would be an attribute of the non-human world. For instance, in the region of Devoll, near Korça, in southeastern Albania, a child is never left along before being named, for fear it will fall victim to evil spirits (Sheshori 1944, 10). Someone without a name would thus be tantamount to something without form, non-identifiable, something that provokes vertigo, anxiety, something without a face. The name is the equivalent in the language system of the face, just as the face is the visible equivalent of the name. Even if the child is still-born, it is buried after having been given the temporary name chosen by the mother-to-be during pregnancy, when she felt it move inside her. Only the child that has given no sign of life is left without a name, and is buried at the base of a green hedge or in the shade of a tree, with the intention of prompting a new pregnancy quickly.

Names seem to have another special function, which is to protect individuals and keep them safe from evil powers, the evil eye, sickness or death. This is the case of some boys' or girls' names: *Ujk*, *Ujkan*, *Ujki*, 'Wolf', *Rushë*, 'She-bear', *Buçë*, 'She-dog', *Gjarpër*, *Bollë,* 'Snake', 'Serpent', *Dac*, *Maçorr*, 'Cat', *Gur*, 'Stone', *Shkamb*, 'Rock', *Mal*, *Bjeshkë*, 'Mountain', *Rrap*, 'Oak', *Diellë*, 'Sun', *Hanë*, 'Moon', *Vetimë*, 'Lightning', etc. Similar names, with the same function, are found in other Southeast European groups (Stahl 1977, 291).

In most cases, the newborn baby is provisionally named *Uk*, 'wolf', or *Keq*, 'bad or naughty', *Shyt*, *Shytan*, 'bald, dull, unfinished',

Cub, 'thief, bandit', etc. After the birth, a woman of the household who is "blessed" with many children takes the newborn baby up on the roof of the house, turns to face the mountains and cries out: "*Come, wolf, the she-wolf has borne a wolf child!*" And she climbs back down (Pirraku 1978, 133–134). From that moment, the child is called 'Wolf' until he is given his real, permanent name. Sometimes among Muslim Albanians, the child is raised up and receives the temporary name of one of the most famous early prophets of Islam (Suleimani 1988, 29). These names are supposed to bring the child luck, happiness, prosperity, success and other advantages.

All sorts of beliefs have been invoked to explain the very common prohibition on pronouncing the "real" name of the person. These beliefs are real and well authenticated but the question is whether they should be regarded as the origin of the custom, as one of the factors which have contributed to reinforce it or perhaps even as one of its consequences. Renouncing Frazerian explanations which would see here only magic beliefs of any kind, another way of approaching this problem may be to regard, following Lévi-Strauss (1962, 261–264 [197–199]), the prohibition on the names as a structural property of the systems of naming, which does no more than apply a discontinuous grid to the continuous flux of generation.

If newcomers, that is, the children who are born, raise the problem of their being there, the task of identification through the medium of proper names can extend even to the birth context itself. The choice of a name can thus take into account exceptional or previous events, such as the birth of a series of girls in the family, or illnesses, deaths or other misfortunes in the family, or unfortunate social circumstances, everything one would not want to occur in the destiny of the individual, the family or the kin group. In this sense, girls names in Albanian such as *Shkurtë*, 'to-be-short', *Sose*, *Mbarime*, 'to-be-finished', *Mjaftime*, 'that's-enough', *Pseardhe*, 'why-did-you-come', *Mërzi*, 'trouble', *Dëshprime*, 'despair', *Helme*, 'grief', *Gazepe*, 'alas', *Medete*, 'torment', etc. are significant.

Albanian society is commonly considered to be strongly patriarchal, where people are assumed to be obsessed with having only boys. It is often reported that the immediate need for a son in the near future to take the lead in the family and to inherit the family's household, may spur parents to announce the birth of a son, and bring up this daughter as such, expecting to make of her a future "sworn virgin"

for she could save the face of the family and be the household head on her father's death. In this role she will be permitted eventually to inherit the home and property which according to customary law was not permissible in any other circumstance for a woman. This was done by first giving the daughter a boy's name.

In this case, naming procedures would take place in highly conspiratorial conditions. The woman must even go through labor without the help of a midwife. She was attended only by a close female relative, her mother-in-law for instance, who had a strong interest in seeing a male child born. During early infancy, too, the mother was always careful to keep the child well away from outsiders on the pretext of protecting it from evil powers. The child was given a name that has both a masculine and a feminine form, but only the masculine form was announced. Thus, several of the known "sworn virgins" had their names masculinized or they had grown up with masculine names. In such situations their father would be their model and they would spend much of their time with him during childhood and adolescence. The feminine form of the name was kept in reserve, however, to be used in the event that, upon reaching adulthood, such a person could not or would not resign herself to the male status. Cases are repetitiously reported in the literature (see Young 2000), especially in connection with warring circumstances, in which the socially accepted and recognized gender for such persons have changed in the course of their lifetime, a situation which has been deliberately hidden, reflected or realized with a switch of their name, either in a masculine or feminine form accordingly.

Rituals of naming and exposure

The name-giving ceremony is a very important event. It is a response to the complementary concerns to differentiate the individual while at the same time integrating him into the community, which in turn recognizes him. Some parts of the birth celebration, in particular naming the child, attempt to define the specific components of the new arrival by stamping them with a verbal marker that has relevance for the community. On the one hand, through the name, the genealogical line of family and kin, as well as each person's territorial belonging, are defined; on the other hand, the same ambivalences found in all relations and values, which structure the social body and personal identity, are

reproduced. The name is a symbolic attribute of the person. Its alloca-
tion and transmission are governed among Albanians not by rigid rules
but by customs that are flexible enough to leave room for a degree of
personal inventiveness without actually giving the parents full freedom
of choice.

In the Kosova region of Kamenica, it is customary, when the time
of birth draws near, for the men of the household, the kin group, and
the neighborhood, to gather in the *oda*, the room used to receive
guests, next to the room where the woman is to be delivered. If she
has a boy, one of the guests, the one who probably enjoys the best
reputation among those assembled, the trust of the new baby's family,
and a good destiny in life, will have the ritual obligation of *me i dhanë
emnin*, 'giving or lending' the baby his own name (Pllana 1970). The
unmarried girls, accompanied by an older woman, announce the news
of the birth to the men with special songs. They beg the designated
guest to "give his name" to the new baby:

Ore vllazën, ore kojshi,	Oh my brothers, oh my cousins,
sonte na e kemi ni thmi,	we have a child here tonight,
e kemi ni thmi, ni hasret,	we have a little child, a new-born child,
s'po dim emnin kush t'ja ngjet.	we don't know who is going to give it his name.
Le t'ja ngjet aga Mehmet,	Let Mehmet Aga give the child his name,
ishalla bahet si aj vet!	Let's hope that it will become like him!
(Doja 1991, 93)	

Among Christians, the term *pagëzim* 'baptism' is heard more often
than among Muslims, but both groups usually say *me i ngjitë emrin,
me i vu emrin, me i dhënë emrin,* 'to stick, put, give' the name to the
child. The term *pagëzim* is generally reserved for the sacrament of
baptism, which, although widespread among Albanians in primarily
Orthodox or Catholic regions, is almost never assimilated to the naming
ceremonies. The child is often baptized in church only after having
been given its definitive name in the rituals organized for this purpose.

One formerly common custom, which is almost entirely omitted
from the ceremonies today, was the practice of using lighted candles
to determine the child's name. It has been described as it was prac-
ticed in the region of Drenica in Kosova (Pirraku 1978), but it is also
mentioned by other ethnographers as existing in both the North and

the South, for example in the region of Myzeqe, in southwestern Albania (Mitrushi 1972). The ritual was performed especially in the case of a boy, although there are accounts of the same custom being practiced for the birth of a girl, but in this case the ceremony was reduced to a minimum.

This custom, which no doubt denotes a Christian influence, is known in other European cultures as well. Because of the more coherent and conscious religious structure in these societies, however, it is used only to call upon the healing powers of certain saints when the child is seriously ill. To identify the required remedy, four candles were placed around the bed, one at each corner, and each candle was given a saint's name. The first to go out indicated the pilgrimage to be undertaken (Loux 1979, 62). The procedure is altogether different in Albanian culture, where the custom was equally widespread among Christians and Muslims.

After the delivery, the mistress of the house carried the newborn child into the men's room, where it would spend its first night, alone with the master and mistress of the house. The mistress took from the main room of the house a *shkam*, a three legged stool, a common piece of Albanian furniture, which she turned upside down. On the legs, she placed a big round loaf of bread, over which she spread a pair of *tirk*, the tight-fitting white wool trousers typical of the costume worn by the men in the North. She laid the child on top of the *tirk* and covered it with a red headscarf bearing black splotches. Near the child's head, she placed another loaf of bread on which she disposed three candles of identical size. The master of the house gave each of the three candles the name of a living elder he esteemed to be the wisest, bravest and probably richest man in his village. Sometimes it was the mistress of the house who would ask the chief of the lineage to "give" her the elders' names. In other cases, it was not directly the master and mistress of the house but the godparents who were responsible for the ceremony, which also included symbolically cutting the umbilical cord, the purifying bath, dressing the child, naming the child, laying the child in the cradle (see Doja 1997, 1999b). Sometimes the godmother was assisted by three betrothed maidens, *nër unazë*, literally 'with the ring', who were regarded as being pure, upright, and protected by the gods who govern life. They usually come from three different villages. Each brought a candle to which she had secretly given the name of the man she regarded as the most renowned elder

in her village. They also brought letters or another object belonging to their fiancé or another close relative, preferably in the army, as well as some pins and needles. Throughout the ritual, they would poke holes in the letters from their fiancé, uttering the wish that the new baby would live as many years as there were holes in the letters. The audience's attention was fixed on the candles, to see which would burn the longest. The name of the elder borne by this candle, known only to the mistress of the house, the godmother or one of the three maidens, would be the child's name. This name was kept a secret from even the mother of the new baby and the rest of the household. For the time being, all that was announced is a temporary name.

When six weeks, six months or a year had elapsed, the child's parents made lavish preparations for the public bestowal of the definitive name thus chosen. Among the guests of honor were, to be sure, the elders whose names had been given to the candles at the first naming ceremony, although they still did not know whose name had been chosen by chance. Among the guests of honor, too, are the godmother or the three maidens who had brought the candles, and who now had the honor and the obligation to bring gifts for the child and the other members of the family, notably food and items of layette and clothing. At the start of the ceremony, the master of the house, in the presence of the mistress or, in other cases, the godmother, holding the child on her lap and in the presence of the godfather, took the floor and solemnly announced the person who had been chosen by fate to "make a gift" of his own name to the new baby. The elder in question, flattered to have been chosen, stood up and congratulated the new baby with the same solemnity. In other cases, the master of the house called on the elder thus chosen to ask him:

me zemër t'ia falë emnin e vet dhe ta pranojë për probatin të zotin e shpisë së djalit të emnuem me emnin e tij.	to be good enough to give his own name and to accept to regard the master of the house as one of his best friends.

In all cases, the aleatory aspect of the ritual is no doubt often emphasized to produce the desired name. We thus have here an apparently but falsely "probabilistic" method of name-giving that reconciles the partly free play of interpersonal relations within the limits of the requirements of an objective order involving how the person is conceptually linked with his ascendants and social relations as a whole (Doja 2005). A complementary answer to this question is provided by

the notion of the double or twin spirit present in other practices. This notion is found in exposition rituals once used as a typical procedure for giving the child its name, or rather its second name, particularly when the couple's children regularly died at birth.

The cradle with the newborn baby was placed upside down at the intersection of two paths and left there until the first person to pass by saw it and hurriedly turned it over. This is a version of the familiar *Märchenmotif* of the exposed child and similar in many ways to the biblical story of the babe in the bulrushes episode of Exodus, chapter 2. The information about Albania is recorded in ethnographic accounts from at least the mid-nineteenth century (Von Hahn 1854, 149). Frazer drew copiously on these sources for his compilations of the *Golden Bough* ([1911-1915] 1990). Otto Rank ([1909] 1952) also took an interest in the same traditions, current among Albanians and in neighboring populations, when he analysed the mythic exposure of children. Among Bulgarians, too, if it so happened that three children of the same mother died immediately after being baptized, the parents concluded that the godfather had been ill chosen. Thus when a fourth child was born, the midwife would lay it down at a crossroads and conceal herself from whoever might happen upon it. The first person to come along, man, woman or child, was supposed to pick up the abandoned baby and, without a backward glance, carry it directly to the church. The child was christened then and there with the name of the person who had found it, and who thus became the new godparent (Krauss 1894, 194).

It seems that, to some extent, the symbolic effectiveness of the ritual has to do with this random element (Brouskou 1988). The stranger cannot refuse to participate; he knows his role and from that moment on becomes the child's godparent. He presides over the symbolic cutting of the umbilical cord and gives the child a name, generally his own. The child thereby seems to be endowed with a new external individual identity. Nevertheless, while Frazer (1918, 251) sees the procedure as essentially a way of tricking the spirits believed to be in relation with the baby, it is more logical to see the child as having entered into a kinship relation with an outsider, which bears more resemblance to an affinal relation. In this case, as in other comparable situations, the outsider enjoys the prestige of exoticism and, by his presence, embodies the opportunity of widening social ties (Lévi-Strauss [1983] 1971, [7] 26). The child might be picked up by someone of a different religion, but that would in no way alter the ritual. It might

even be picked up by someone who had *gjaku* relations with the household, in other words owed a "blood-price". There would then be an obligation *me pajtue gjakun*, 'to pacify the spilled blood,' in the name of friendship.

Similar re-naming methods were used in the case of children born with serious malformations, hydrocephalics, children whose psycho-motor development was highly abnormal, children who were epileptic, mentally retarded or suffering from other disabilities. These children were regarded as "smitten by the evil eye" or as changelings, having been interchanged with children of the *Xhinde* or evil spirits. In the first case, the child was exposed, preferably on the feast day of Saint George, with the avowed intention of curing them by giving them a new name. It even happened that the family did not ask the passerby to "give" the baby his name, but simply "took" his name, if it was known, and gave it to the child without telling the person. This was the preferred method in the Drenica region of Kosova because it was believed to be more effective in preserving the child from the evil eye.

In other cases, Tuesday was the day for exposing a changeling; the child was put down on the threshing floor, and someone would call out three times to "Tuesday," in order to re-exchange the sick child for the one who was not sick. Tuesday, *E-Martë* in Albanian, was probably believed through a double popular etymology to be both "Mary's Day" and a supernatural power having the vocation, from *marr-të*, to 'take and remove.' When the baby began to cry, the people exposing the child would say, "It's ours," and would call it by another name. Then the mother would pick it up and hurry away without look-ing back (Pirraku 1978). Similar rituals, actualizing representations of exchange and re-exchange, are found in other Southeast-European groups (Stahl 1977, 290).

Invented names

Assigned names, denoting gender, religion, or other group affilia-tions, differ in every respect from another category of personal names which are linguistically derived more or less from the Albanian lan-guage or usually composed of nouns drawn from the Albanian vocabulary (Kostallari 1982). Normally they are freely invented by a determinate individual for another equally determinate individual and express a transitory state of mind. These are for the most part

names of plants, birds or other animals. For instance, among plant names, there are: *Lis*, 'oak', *Rrap*, 'plane tree', *Lule*, 'flower', *Shegë*, 'pomegranate', *Trëndelinë*, 'fenugreek', *Vjollcë*, 'violet', etc. Names of birds or other animals are also very common: *Bilbil*, 'nightingale', *Dallëndyshe*, 'swallow', *Drenushe*, 'doe', *Luan*, 'lion', *Pëllumb*, 'pigeon', *Shqipe*, 'eagle', *Shpend*, 'bird', etc. These names are divided between males and females according to the grammatical gender of the noun.

Systems of appellations also have their "abstracts". Essentially, Albanian person names may also be nouns designating abstract concepts, for example: *Bashkim*, 'union', *Bessa*, *Blerim*, 'greenery', *Bukuri*, 'beauty', Liri, 'freedom', *Lumturi*, 'happiness', *Çlirim*, 'liberation', *Gazmend*, 'joy', *Fitore*, 'victory', *Pranverë*, 'spring', *Shpresa*, 'hope', etc. Names used for either men or women can also be formed from descriptive adjectives, like *Bardh*, 'white', *Besnik*, 'faithful', *Blerta*, 'verdant', *Krenar*, 'proud', *Luftar*, 'brave', *Mira*, 'kind', *Trim*, 'courageous', *Urta*, 'wise', etc. Into this category can also be put personal names derived from the names already mentioned by adding different suffixes or by combining two similar words, like *Gëzimtar* and *Gëzimtare*, 'joyful', *Besmir* and *Besmira*, 'kind, faithful, true to his word, trustworthy', *Dritan* and *Dritane*, 'luminous', *Jetlir* and *Jetlira*, 'free-living', *Gazmir* and *Gazmira*, 'full of kindness and joy', *Rrezart* and *Rrezarta*, 'gold beam', *Rrezag* and *Rrezaga*, 'gleam of dawn', etc. These names too can be used for either men or women since their suffix can be declined in both grammatical genders. Similar names can sometimes agglutinate several words and be used for either men or women, like *Emirjon*, 'our-good-man/woman', *Endrit*, 'he-shines', *Nisjeta*, 'life-begins', *Saimir*, meaning 'how kind he is' by popular etymology, etc.

Personal names are very often taken from Albanian toponymy, such as names of mountains, regions and rivers, for example, *Adriatik*, *Drini*, *Dukagjini*, *Ershel*, *Gramoz*, *Hot*, *Kelmend*, *Korab*, *Sazan*, *Shkëlzen*, *Tarabosh*, *Temal*, *Tomorr*, *Valbona*, etc. or they can be drawn from the names of famous figures of Albanian history, such as *Aranit*, *Balsha*, *Barleti*, *Kastrioti*, *Skender*, *Uran*, etc. Such names are "inherited" in their modern usage in the sense that Albanian identity claims figures who had these family names as a kind of historical heritage, much as names such as *Washington* and *Roosevelt* are used as first names by some Americans.

Upon closer examination of Albanian personal names, it becomes clear that historical, social and cultural reality, together with geography, play an important role in choosing a name, as do the agricultural and pastoral milieus and everyday objects. And so do the animal, plant and mineral kingdoms, the cosmos, or the supernatural world of the spirits and fates, the *zana* and the *ora*, who are believed to determine the newborn's fate, and whose names are often taken as personal names.

A number of scholars have already speculated on the kind of "totemic" relationship established between an individual and the plant or the animal by the way of name, not only among Albanians but also in classic studies of Illyrian heritage (Krahe 1938, 1946). One of the oldest names in the Albanian repertory seems to be, for instance, *Ujk*, *Ujkan*, 'Wolf', dating back at least to the 12th century (Daka 1970, 150). The Albanian word *ujk* 'wolf', belongs to the oldest group of Indo-European words characteristic of the Illyrian language (Çabej 1977, 242–244), and it is found in ancient place names without interruption to the present time. So the Illyrian town of *Ulcinium* is still called *Ulqini* (in present-day Montenegro). It is also still widely used as a proper name, especially in the Northern Mountains, as are its equivalents throughout Europe, especially among the southern Slavs.

Anthropologists, too, were often puzzled following Boas (1940, 490) in inquiring why "human tales are preferably attached to animals, celestial bodies, and other personified phenomena of nature". Lévi-Strauss, however, already showed that the heterogeneous beliefs and customs arbitrarily collected together under the heading of totemism do not rest on the idea of a relationship of substance between one or more social groups and one or more natural domains. They are allied to other beliefs and practices, directly or indirectly linked to classificatory schemes which allow the natural and social universe to be grasped as an organized whole.

According to Lévi-Strauss (1962, 179 [136]), "the natural 'distinctiveness' of biological species does not furnish thought with a definitive and readily apprehended model but rather with a means of access to other distinctive systems". It may be shown, therefore, that never can the animal or its species be grasped as a biological entity, but rather "as a conceptual tool with multiple possibilities for detotalizing and retotalizing any domain", synchronic or diachronic, concrete or abstract, general or particular, natural or cultural. This multidimensional

matrix constitutes the object of thought and furnishes the conceptual tool to widen its net in the direction of proper names.

Yet choosing an infant's name is not quite easy and the name is never a free creation. The naming process follows a set of rules governed by the implicit criterion that only one name would fit the individual. The problem is to discover this name. All the more as both assigned and freely invented names are equally proper names and everywhere people are so well aware of this that they consider them substitutable for each other. In fact, what we have here are two extreme types of proper name between which there are a whole series of intermediate cases.

> At one extreme, the name is an identifying mark which, by the application of a rule, establishes that the individual who *is named* is a member of a preordained class (a social group in a system of groups, a status by birth in a system of statuses). At the other extreme, the name is a free creation on the part of the individual who *gives the name* and expresses a transitory and subjective state of his own by means of the person he names… The choice seems only to be between identifying someone else by assigning him to a class or, under cover of giving him a name, identifying oneself through him. One therefore never names, one classes someone else if the name is given to him in virtue of his characteristics and one classes oneself if, in the belief that one need not follow a rule, one names someone else 'freely', that is, in virtue of characteristics of one's own. And most commonly one does both at once.
> (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 240 [181])

Albanians' use of so-called historical names in the last two centuries, marked by national revival, is highly significant in this sense. Although these names are of religious origin for the most part, the fact that they are carried by well-known figures of Albanian history and culture affirms the desire to "class" the child according to the attributes of these figures and to "class oneself" in the groove of this history and culture. The same attitude can be observed in the use of geographic names and ethnonyms.

Similarly, the use of names of Illyrian origin reflects the desire to "class" the child and oneself in the Illyrian origin of Albanian identity. It is known, especially since the works of Krahe (1929) and others (Ceka 1965; Toçi 1969), that most of the Illyrian proper names have been lost. Only a small number, belonging to the generations that

lived during the centuries of Greek colonization and Roman occupation, were ultimately transmitted through ancient Greek and Latin written sources: texts by ancient authors or Greco-Latin inscriptions discovered in the archeological excavations of necropolis found more or less throughout the Albanian-Illyrian area. Much in the same vein, the quickening of Hellenist sentiment occasioned by the independence of Greece was once expressed, among other ways, by giving ancient Greek names to newborn Greek children (Hasluck 1923). Yet, despite modern Greek scholarship, most present-day Albanian researchers still treat Illyrian names simply as though they were part of the Albanian anthroponymic heritage (Daka 1970; Krasniqi 1979 [1982], 88-128; Tirta 2004, 194-205; Selimi 1989).

The case of contemporary names taken mainly from Western history and culture is equally eloquent. There were also extremely politicized times when one could observe among Albanian groups a use of proper names taken even from the nomenclatures of science, technology, politics, and administration.

It is clear that the problem of the relation between proper names and common names is not that of the relation of naming and signifying. One always signifies, either oneself or someone else. It is only here that there is a choice, which amounts to no more than a choice between assigning a class to an identifiable object or, by putting it outside a class, making the object a means of classing oneself by expressing oneself through it. The name selected must therefore be the product of the intersection of three domains: it is a member of a class, a member of the sub-class of the names vacant within the class, and a member of the class formed by the donor's own wishes and tastes.

The systems of proper names that always signify membership of an actual or virtual class, which must be either that of the person named or of the person giving the name, have a striking characteristic which they share with all these procedures of an apparently but falsely "probabilistic" method of name-giving, which we know from the ceremonials and rituals of naming and exposure. Both the systems of proper names and the procedures of name-giving are formally of the same type (Doja 2005). They reconcile the partly free play of inter-personal relations within the limits of the requirements of an objective order. Indeed, by way of the name, the givers, whether these are the biological or the spiritual parents, class themselves in a milieu, in a period, and in a style. And the bearers are classed in

various ways, because every name has a conscious or unconscious cultural connotation which permeates the image that others form of its bearer, and may have a subtle influence in shaping his personality in a positive or negative way. To that extent, the names act as historical documents that might indicate the social processes at work in given periods. The name is an important social factor, which changes with the social and cultural conditions of society. It shows the degree of development of the group's religious, social and political awareness.

Individuation and integration

The anthropological approach thus considers personal names to be a discourse system, the nature of which must be sought, and the signification, the social not the etymological meaning, be deciphered. Anthropology was interested essentially in the way proper names were used, the situations in which they appeared, the functions they fulfilled according to the circumstances in which they were uttered, being used at once to identify, to class and to signify.

The signification of proper names as a linguistic and sociological form is thus not to be sought in their linguistic nature, but in the way each culture divides up reality by the use of names and in the variable limits it assigns, depending on the problems it raises, to the enterprise of classification actualized in the naming system it uses. The more or less "proper" nature of names is not intrinsically determinable nor can it be discovered just by comparing them with the other words in the language. It depends on the point at which a society declares its work of classifying to be complete. For Lévi-Strauss (1962, 285[215]), to say that a name is perceived as a proper name is to say that it is assigned to a level beyond which no classification is requisite, not absolutely but within a determinate cultural system.

Merely by analyzing the list of names, in spite of a large percentage of religious names and even though the data are taken essentially from onomastic studies, it can be shown that the naming ceremony marks in particular the first phase of the child's passage from the world of living beings to the world of socialized and personalized human beings. The naming ceremony in itself is often a transposition of all the festivities surrounding the birth and all the semantic and functional dimensions of the cultural traditions connected with socialization (Doja 2000). We could therefore say that, generally speaking, the name,

insofar as it denotes the person's individuality, is the birthmark *par excellence* (Belmont 1971, 181-192). As it can be shown in Albanian birth songs, its most profound meaning, and the most obvious, for that matter, is that the child has been born, that it has an origin and a destiny:

O, o, o, të bardhën ditë,	Oh, the joyful day,
lumi nana për djalë që rrit,	Happy the mother raising a son,
djali nanës ma gzosh të ritë,	little son, may you flourish and grow,
ma gzosh t'rit' me mirësi,	may you flourish and grow in goodness,
me rob t'shpisë e me kojshi!	with your family and your neighbours!
Emën t'bukur të kem' njitë,	We've given you a fine name,
ta kem jnit', të kem' urue,	given it to you, hoping,
djali nanës me ma gzue;	little son, that it will bring you luck,
me ma gzue, bir, ti iqin vjet,	bring you luck, son, hundred years may you live,
me rob të tanë e me shnet!	with your family and in good health!
Lumi nana që po t'rritë,	Blithe the mother raising him,
me i ngja babës për mirësi,	to resemble his father in goodness,
se kurr' t'keq nuk bje në shpi,	no misfortune ever befalling the house,
as në shpi, as në shoqni,	neither the house nor the community,
kurr' t'keqes emnin, bir, s'ja di!	may you, my son, never know misfortune's names!

(Doja 1991, 104)

In the individual's lifetime, the name fulfills what the individual must or wants to display. The rites, practices, ceremonies and other symbolic forms that surround the naming of the child, through their celebratory function, represent in particular the recognition of a process of integration into its social group (Doja 1991, 93-104).

Shtjerna kafe të këndojmë,	Pour us a coffee, let us sing,
babanë tënd ti ç'e gëzove;	How you've made your father happy,
ti u plaksh, u trashëgofsh	may you grow old and have many children,
dhe emrin tënd ta gëzosh,	may you take pride in your name,
ta gëzosh, u trashëgofsh,	take pride and have many children,
me nënën e babanë rrofsh,	may you grow up with your mother and father,
u martofsh e u gëzofsh,	may you get married and be happy,
ma djem e çupa u shtofsh!	and have many sons and daughters!

(Doja 1991, 103)

The name has always established a major attribute of the individual's personhood. Attribution of a name is at once a stage and an almost physical element in the construction of the person. As anthropologists working more particularly on European cultures have seen (Zonabend 1977; 1980), the name ensures a personal identity and the consciousness of belonging to a lineage as well as to a community by assigning each person the place they are to occupy in their group. Names are thus an integral part of the person as well as a factor of insertion into the social group:

A dëgjuat, moj, mëhallë?	Have you heard, people of the neighbourhood?
Nuse e vëllait lindi djalë,	My brother's wife has given birth to a son,
na e ka gazin e parë,	What joy he gives us with this first-born son,
t'i vemë emrin, t'i vejë mbare.	Let us give him a name to bring him luck.

(Doja 1991, 95)

Other determinations can be added later to this personal identity in order to further define the individual's social identity. The name thus appears as an intersubjective guarantee of the recognition of the being, that is the uniqueness, the essence and the position of each subject with respect to all others. Attribution of the name is the act of insertion and promotion into a class or group whereby the real individual is introduced into the symbolic order, whose influence is such that one is sometimes tempted to say that it is not the individual that bears the name but the name that bears the individual.

Bestowal of a name reveals the different possible ties the individual as a person has with not only the community of his family and kin, but also with the social and natural world assigned to him. With the help of the naming ceremonies, we can discover the ancient mythic conceptions concerning the anthropomorphic representation of the world and the cosmological representation of the human body. Metamorphosis myths have been found in Albanian oral tradition in which the hero is changed into a stone, a plant or an animal. In this way, not only man's relations with the surrounding world are expressed, but the very dynamics of individual names is derived from the classificatory systems, for it consists of approaches of the same type, and similarly oriented, in disclosing the world as a whole.

It is clear therefore that through the intermediary of collective appellations, one can, with the help of transformations, pass from the horizon of general categories to the instances of individuation. Every group possesses a quota of names which only its own members

can bear and, "just as an individual is part of the group, so an individual name is 'part' of the collective appellation" (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 230-231 [174]). The naming practice seems therefore to be both an instantiation of individuation and its opposite, as a process of securely and exclusively ascribing a person to a collective and exclusionary imaginary.

In addition, two parallel detotalizations are here involved, one of social life and physical world into aspects and attitudes, and another of social segments into individuals and roles. But the detotalization involved in the system of names takes place in the form of a retotalization. It is the relative indeterminacy of the system of proper names that corresponds, virtually at least, to the phase of retotalization. Proper names are formed by detotalizing the real and by deducting a partial aspect of it. But by stressing exclusively the fact of the deduction and leaving the element which is the subject of it indeterminate, for Lévi-Strauss (1962, 233 [176]), there is a suggestion that all the deductions (and so all the acts of naming) have something in common, which makes it possible that a unity divined at the heart of diversity to be claimed in advance.

In other words, if the naming procedures suggest the detotalization of the aspects of social life and the physical world, the collective representations of the person are retotalized in the conceptions of cosmogonic and biological symbolism. Sometimes among Albanian groups, the individual is essentially assimilated, through his name, to something wild, unapproachable, untouchable, awesome, etc.:

Në fshat, në mëhallë,	In the village, in the neighborhood,
na leu një djalë,	a son has been born to us,
djalë rrënjëdalë.	a poor and wretched lad.
Po emërin, thanë,	And the name? they ask,
ç'do t'ja vëmë vallë?	What are we going to call him?
Ja birbil a ja gazi,	Whether nightingale or conqueror,
kur të vejë në ushtri,	when he joins the army,
pallëxhveshur, trim i ri,	girded with a sword, a young and valiant hero,
pallë, jatagan me pika,	a sword and sparkling sabre,
siri t'i lëshojë çika,	sparks, too, from his eyes will fly,
të mos i qaset e liga.	May evil never find him.

(Doja 1991, 98)

Proper names depend on sacred and esoteric knowledge, whereas they are connected with social personality and are the occasion of customs, rites, and prohibitions. But if in the sacred language, reserved for

ritual, common nouns progressively lose their meaning, sacred words, which have lost their sense, can be used to construct proper names. The examples are frequent where the system rests on a sort of arbitrage, exercised by means of proper names, between the syntagmatic chain of ordinary language and a paradigmatic set of sacred language (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 278–280 [210–211]).

At the root of these personal names, oscillating between ordinary and sacred language, whether they are derived from the names of objects or natural phenomena, from wild or domestic animals or plants, from abstract attributes or from the names of certain seasons, days of the week or months of the year reputed to have greater symbolic effectiveness than others, remain the desires and hopes of the family and group that the child will be joyful, happy, free, in good health, that he will enjoy long life and widely acknowledged respectability. These expectations are transposed in one way or another in the symbolic forms and practices surrounding the naming ceremony:

Hajdeni, more ke daja,	Let us go and visit our mother's brother,
sot ke ne po qeshka shpaja,	tonight the whole house is full of laughter,
se emën të bukur-o,	for a fair name
po na i veka nana-o,	mother is going to give her,
cucës sonë fëllanxës-o.	to our daughter, that partridge.
Qenka cuca lule zonjë,	that girl, a lady wreathed in flowers,
emnin do t'ia vemë shqiponjë,	we are going to call her eagle,
qenka cuca lulë me erë,	that girl, fragrant flower,
emnin do t'ia vemë pranverë,	we are going to call her springtime,
qenka cuca rrush i zi,	that girl, black grapes,
emnin do t'ia vemë liri.	we are going to call her freedom.

(Doja 1991, 99)

The whole family has a stake in the naming of the child, in finding not only the finest and best-liked name, but also the most referential, for they want to express through the esthetic principle of poeticization, their common aspirations to a better future, one that is more secure and worth living:

Moj ç'ja vumë djalit-o?	What name shall we give my son?
N'emër të pashait-o.	the name of a pasha!
Moj ç'ja vumë djalit-o?	What name shall we give my son?
N'emër të vezirit-o.	the name of a vizier!

(Doja 1991, 96)

The great majority of Albanian names symbolize above all the different collective qualities and moral values. By way of its name, the new child is assimilated to beauty, to *whiteness*, which becomes the equivalent of honor and prestige, to kindness, to gentleness, to quickness, to pride, dignity, strength, to courage, generosity, nobility, intelligence, wisdom, etc.

It is thus by virtue of an extrinsic determination that a certain level of classification is obtained by the means of proper names. But this should not, however, bring us back to the Durkheimian thesis of the social origin of logical thought. Although there is undoubtedly a dialectical relation between the social structure and systems of categories, the latter are not an effect or result of the former. Each, at the cost of laborious mutual adjustments, translates certain historical and local modalities of the relations between man and the world, which form their common substratum.

The power of the name

In every system, according to Lévi-Strauss (1962, 285–286 [215]), proper names represent the "quanta of signification" below which one no longer does anything but point, whereas the act of naming belongs to a continuum in which there is a discontinuous passage from the act of signifying to that of pointing even though each culture fixes its thresholds differently. In so doing terms of different degrees of generality will be regarded each time as proper names. The same mental operation is involved when the ritual and ceremonial procedures of name-giving define the social paradigms of a new member of the group by conferring the available name on him. In so doing, these modes of classification are extended to individual members of the social group or, more precisely, to the single positions which individuals can occupy at the same time or successively.

Therefore, if the reception of a name amplifies the reception of one's being and one's life, this is precisely because there is nothing arbitrary about a name. The apparent arbitrariness of a name evaporates as soon as the hidden essence, the truth of the name, ritualized by the naming procedures and ceremonies, is disclosed. The name befits a destiny or expresses a vocation, even though the whole idea of *nomen-omen* is often placed under critical scrutiny.

It was Saussure's (1916) influential theory of signification that laid the groundwork for the objectivist view of cultural meaning.

His emphasis on the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign and his extreme objectivism, disconnecting as it does the mind and the world, failed to provide an adequate notion of the psychological motivation of signs. Jakobson (1956), Benveniste (1966), and others have noted that Saussure failed to account for the fact that what may be objectively arbitrary is experienced by the user as natural and therefore as fully rational and historically motivated. There appears to be a gap between the logical status of signs and their psychological character. Their arbitrary aspects only appear as such to us, because we can never affirm that a choice, which is arbitrary for the observer, is not motivated from the indigenous point of view.

The antinomy which some believe they have detected between the motivation of history and the arbitrariness of system would seem to be present only if we were not aware of the dynamic relation between the two aspects. Beyond synchronic and unmotivated appearances there is always room for a diachronic and non-arbitrary construction providing a transition from one to the other. Even Saussure himself had conceded that the principle of the arbitrary character of linguistic signs admits of degrees when he stressed both conventional motivation and contextual motivation in his discussion of the "relative motivation of signs".

> If the irrational principle of the arbitrariness of the sign were applied without restriction, it would lead to the worst sort of complication … But the mind contrives to introduce a principle of order and regularity into certain parts of the mass of signs, and this is the role of relative motivation … Not because 'lexical' and 'arbitrary' on the one hand and 'grammar' and 'relative motivation' on the other, are always synonymous, but because they have a common principle. The two extremes are like poles between which the whole system moves, two opposing currents which share the movement of language: the tendency to use the lexicological instrument of unmotivated signs, and the preference given to the grammatical instrument of structural rules.
> (Saussure 1916 [1972], 183 [133–134])

For Saussure, therefore, language moves from arbitrariness to motivation. On the other hand, Lévi-Strauss (1962, 210 [159]) showed that classificatory systems and naming procedures go from motivation to arbitrariness. Like languages, they may differ with respect to arbitrariness

and motivation without the latter ceasing to be operative. It is their dichotomizing character that explains how the arbitrary aspects come to be embedded on the rational aspects of natural motivation without denaturing it.

An objectivity subjectivized by another, of which the child to be named is the vehicle, is no doubt concealed by the indeterminate nature of the names which do not refer explicitly to eponyms. But it is also reinforced in two ways by the fact that one needs to refer back to the concrete social circumstances in which the name was conceived and attributed in order to understand it, and by the donor's relative freedom to follow his own inclinations in creating the name provided only that he respects the initial restriction that it must be possible to interpret the name in terms of his own group appellation (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 240[181]). This is also the position where the equivocal and invented name has to relate to beings or things attached to the group of the person named.

Systematic as the naming procedures may seem, connected with each other by relations of transformation, they nevertheless raise the problem of operating at different levels of generality. This is, however, the clearest proof one could wish for that there is no fundamental difference between the essential identity the naming procedures confer to an individual and the principle of the arbitrary and conventional character of proper names.

Let me just take my own surname, which seems to be first a very simple name, but throughout my life experiences in different European countries it has been subjected to different pronunciations as moving from French to English or even in German, Italian or Spanish speaking environments. I also have been told that the form of my surname is common in Romania and perhaps in Hungary, and though I don't know Romanian or Hungarian I suspect additional pronunciations may occur from speakers of these languages as well. Initially I remember trying to correct my interlocutors when been addressed with a different pronunciation of my name. Yet, my experience in different countries going increasing I realized that leaving the interlocutor choose how to pronounce my name was perhaps one way to adapt myself to the new cultural setting. And even now when I am asked how my name should be pronounced I always answer: "Up to you". It seems to me quite normal that other people could choose how to indicate the integration of someone into their own milieu. But when my surname

is put in writing, and sometimes mistakes are occurring, I always and energetically try to correct, as my identity would have seemed to be put in question.

Against this model of cognizing both situational and essential identity by means of naming, it can be argued that it is my awareness of certain theoretical approaches that bring me about to experience the issue in that way. Yet, during my experience working as legal expert and interpreter within Courts of Law and immigration offices in Paris, I noticed systematically that persons concerned act exactly in the same way. Often without identity documents they just tell their name to the police officer who writes it down as heard, thus, obviously wrong. I have been approached then very often by persons concerned to intervene in order to correct their name. On the other hand, when at court the judge states the name, asking systematically whether the pronunciation is correct or not, persons concerned always answer: "It doesn't matter," sometimes even bitterly adding "They can never pronounce properly a simple name."

At times of general change, when cultural politics is seeking to promote a new collective identity but without undermining previous heritage, the spelling of personal names of influential cultural activists may still turn out of utmost importance. At the heyday of Albanian national movement in 1908, what came to be known as the Congress of Monastir (present-day Bitola in Macedonia) was called to decide for a unique graphic system of Albanian writing. Torn between two different Latin alphabets, one with a number of digraphs as in English but without denoting any singular Albanian identity except a stronger will to sever ties from Ottoman Empire and side with Western culture, and another one still Latin but also with a number of Greek graphemes and Slavic diacritics denoting a clear singular identity within the Oriental sphere of influence, the Congress did in fact fail to agree on a single alphabet, endorsing both of them. While the Congress is rightly hailed today as a key moment in the creation of Albanian unity, i.e. for the simple digraph-endowed alphabet as it is today in modern Albanian writing, it was criticized at the time for failing to make a clearer choice.

Trix (1997) has provided an elegant sociolinguistic analysis of the alphabet conflict, and with an analysis of common Arabic-driven names she showed why Muslim Albanians would have found the digraphs of the current alphabet more problematic than the occasional

Christian-driven Greek letters of the other proposed alphabet. She pointed that the spelling of two of the Language Commission Muslim Members' names could be erroneously pronounced because of the presence of digraphs. She also speculated that even the leader and initiator of the Congress himself would have cared how his own name had to be pronounced, and she found confirmation of this problem in a collection of letters from Albanians in the Diasporas who couldn't attend the Congress and yet wanted their opinion to be known.

Whatever linguists tell us about the arbitrariness of proper names, any native speaker knows better that the experience of linguistic signs is transformed from one of historical arbitrariness to one of virtual psychological identity. Abundant ethnographic evidence shows, among Albanians as elsewhere, how people will take serious offence at any-one wantonly playing with names, just as if the name had become an extension of the person. However conventional they are in fact, names, like all cultural signs, are far from arbitrary in feel.

In Albanian tradition, the name is so closely linked with the character traits of the ideal person that it is as unassailable as the individual who bears it (Krasniqi 1979 [1982], 88–128). To insult or to praise the name is to insult or praise the person himself, even in his or her absence. A compelling and purely agonistic expression of this notion is illustrated when someone in a tight situation would implore a "friend" to help him, using the technical tern *ndore tande*, literally 'in your hands'. Sensing danger, he had only to clasp a tree or climb onto a big rock and at the critical moment cry out: "I am *ndore* of so-and-so". Were he to be killed, the person called upon was duty bound to avenge the victim's blood (Cozzi 1910, 666-667). This notion of agonistic duty is not only a moral value, but a legal and historical institution found in customary law, a corollary of the notion of the "given word" in the code of honor called *besa* in Albanian tradition. But while *besa* means having *given* one's word, being bound by honor to fulfill a commitment or an obligation, the notion of *ndore* differs in that it is a unilateral pact in which someone *asks* for a word, by which the other person is none the less honor-bound. *Ndore* thus appears as another legal institution of Albanian customary law. The power of this appeal necessarily bound the fate of the person called upon to that of the victim. The pact was sealed by means of the name, through a sort of solemn agreement inscribed in the person's name. In the code of customary law, it is clearly stated that:

Po të ra ndore kush, edhe tuj ta xanë vetëm emnin: "jam miku i njatij", e edhe pa të pasë kenë kurr te dera, po e ngau kush, të jet mik në derë e ftyra t'u vrugnue.

(Gjeçov 1989, 116)

A person falls under the protection of your *ndore* even by simply calling out your name: "I am so-and-so's guest." Although he may never have been to your home, if someone bothers that person, he is considered to be your guest and your honour is sullied.

This relationship is a fundamental reality of Albanian society. To fully grasp this notion, one must imagine the situation of the "guest", who has come as a visitor to a country where, as a foreigner, he has no rights, no source of protection, no means of existence. He will be taken in, fed and protected only by the person with whom he is in a relationship of *miqësi*, 'friendship', a relationship that is in this instance sanctioned by the solemn appeal. The symbolic *ndore* pact, in which the parties are bound by honor, *besa*, makes them *miq*, 'friends': they are henceforth committed to the reciprocal prestations dictated by *mikpritja*, 'hospitality', with all the ambivalence this notion carries (Doja 1999, 224-225). Indeed, in a society dominated, for all practical purposes, by relations of vengeance, as was the case in the North, friendly relations are important and so highly valued that, in an effective relationship of vengeance, it might be possible to forgive the killing of one's own father or brother, in other words someone from the same "blood tree", but impossible to pardon harm done to someone who enjoyed special protection because this person was a *mik* 'friend', in other words "fraternized in blood" with. The institutional basis of the notion of "friendship" is such that the social implications of this personal relationship may come to be realized in exceptional circumstances, and even between *an-miq*, 'enemies' involved in combat, as a solemn pact in which feelings of friendship in the common sense of the term, have no part. This is a well-defined kind of "friendship"; it is binding and involves reciprocal commitments with oaths (*besa*) and sacrifices (*ndore*).

In epic poetry, there is a topos in which the hero threatens his adversary by simply pronouncing his own name so as to inform him of his intrinsic bravery. In love songs, the name is treated as an important factor in the relationship between the young people which displays and personifies the positive feelings of the beloved.

In common expressions, too, the name often stands for the person as a whole, his character and his positive or negative attributes, in such expressions, which are quite widespread and not peculiar to Albanian only, as *i doli emri* 'his name became famous', *ia la namin emrit të vet* 'he made a name for himself', *mos iu pëmendtë emri kurrë*! 'I hope we never hear his name again', *iu nxiftë emri* 'may his name be blackened!' etc. To have one's name "blackened" drives one to commit suicide or voluntarily exclude oneself from the group. This is yet another indication that the person's identity is entirely contained in their name.

The irreducibly signifying aspect of proper names, their situation on the fringe of a general system of classification, their foundation into the sound matter of language, their metaphorical connection with common nouns through a positive phonetic resemblance, as their metonymical connection with sacred language through a negative semantic resemblance, based on the apparent absence or poverty of content, all this endow the name with a poetic dimension. The oscillation inherent in the poetic structure is condensed in exemplary fashion in the name. A signifier seems to yield a singular essence without ceasing to impose itself in its unmotivated materiality. Furthermore, when certain perceptible qualities of the voiced matter and certain allusive and emotive connotations combine with this irrepressible occurrence of the signifier in the name, language plays such as the ceremonial naming songs acquire remarkable incantatory power. The poetic dimension of names once again finds an echo in a sacred dimension. Proper names, as sacred language, for Lévi-Strauss (1962, 280 [211]), do not justify their character "because they are devoid of meaning but because, in spite of appearances, they are part of a whole system in which meaning is never entirely lost".

Students of poetics have long been intrigued with the notion, most searchingly explored by Saussure in his *Notebooks*, that hypograms, frequently proper names, have a generative role in the formation of literary texts (Starobinski 1971). In the case of the poetic adaptation of received traditions in naming procedures, the process could be said to work backwards. A strict ritual is first performed; the ceremonial songs then articulate a network of nominal echoes, so as to bring about a shift in the inherited matrix. Poetic etymology thus becomes a technique for troping the received tradition, for rescuing the ritual from prescriptive or reductive interpretation, without deforming it.

Within the oral tradition which may have provided the material for the names, etymology could have intended a static realism, if not a magical science.

Conclusion

Rituals and procedures of name-giving in Albanian and other cultures force us, with their disjunctive glosses, to enter the meaning of names, as they generate a kind of "perspective by incongruity". Rituals and procedures of name-giving establish and fix identity as something tautologically oneself. The name, by returning to the trials of language, compromises it, complicates it, renders it potentially mobile. The name from this perspective is congruent with the whole ethos of ritual iconoclasm: what the naming fixes, the name animates or exhumes. Nominal motivations, of which the etiology is the most extreme, initially serve to bind the proper name back onto the linguistic field, so that even if the etiology depends on a contingent and unique event, some kind of necessity is introduced. Doubling connotations and distinct metonymies, each in itself incongruous, are juxtaposed to create a heightened enigma, a ghostly space potent in its indeterminacy. This perspective, opened up by competing senses, is enlarged, in the multilayered rituals and procedures, by the doubling and disjunction of ceremonial singing sequences. The effect of a simple gloss is generally different. The point of the typical poetic strategy of conflicting or ironic motivations is to undo once again this usurpation of existential distinctness by a linguistic system, or by any of the other codes or determinisms of theological or historical causality which it represents.

In the end, it is the group's show of poetic and transformational power that brings on the dawn. The naming of newborn is a response to the challenge of creativity, perhaps to the fact of language itself, which, as the condition and ground of all creation, has a quasi-divine status which ceremonial singing must contest. God created things by naming them; ritual and poetic procedures recreate them by the imposing of names. Naming can thus be seen as a response, ascendant and foundational, to the priority of the medium. In its deployment of duplicities and equivocations, it figures the struggle of ritual and song against the sacralization of being. Like reality contrasts with dream, fulfillment with promise, the journey back with the journey out, this contest of pun and fixation, of phonetic coincidence and semantic entailment, reverberates across an "emptiness" any name must fill.

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Summary: Meaning and signification in a name

Every individual occupies a determined place in a chain of descent. The criteria of this determination are usually conceptions concerning physical resemblance and difference, paternal and maternal kin ties, ceremonies celebrating the birth, as well as marks and practices involving augury, prediction, divination and predestination, etc. Through these conceptions, the individual components, which give the individual his/her singularity, are conjoined with the inherited components, which mark his/her place in the chain of family and kin, the symbolic elements, which make him/her part of the cosmic world, and the attributes that the person acquires and which ensure his/her social identity by giving it its individual expression. This paper attempts to show how the name in particular, as illustrated in Albanian culture, is in fact part of a whole set of such multiple components and attributes that merges the individual within the space and the time in which they are embedded.

Résumé: Sens et signification d'un nom

Chaque individu occupe une place déterminée dans une lignée. Les critères de cette détermination sont généralement des conceptions concernant la ressemblance physique et la différence, des liens de parenté paternelle et maternelle, les cérémonies célébrant la naissance, ainsi que les marques et les pratiques impliquant l'augure, la prévision, la divination, la prédestination, etc. Grâce à ces conceptions, les composants individuels, qui confèrent à l'individu sa singularité, se confondent avec les composants hérités, qui le situent dans la chaîne familiale et parentale, les éléments symboliques qui font de lui une partie du monde cosmique, et les attributs qu'il acquiert et qui assurent son identité sociale en lui donnant son expression individuelle. Cet article tente de montrer comment le nom en particulier, dans l'exemple de la culture albanaise, est en réalité partie d'un ensemble de ces éléments

et attributs multiples qui fondent l'individu dans l'espace et le temps où il est embarqué.

Zusammenfassung: Sinngehalt und Bedeutung eines Namens

Jedes Individuum besetzt einen bestimmte Platz in der Vererbungskette. Die Kriterien dieser Bestimmung sind normalerweise Vorstellungen, die physische Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede, Beziehungen zu Vater und Mutter, Zeremonien, die die Geburt feiern, sowie Zeichen und Bräuche betreffen, die Prophezeiungen, Wahrsagerei und Vorbestimmung etc. beinhalten. Durch diese Vorstellungen werden die individuellen Bestandteile, die dem Individuum seine Einzigartigkeit geben, mit ererbten Komponenten, die dem Einzelnen seinen Platz in der Kette von Familie und Sippe anzeigen, mit symbolischen Elementen, die sie/ihn Teil einer kosmischen Welt werden lassen sowie mit den Eigenschaften, die eine Person sich aneignet und die ihre soziale Identität gewährleisten, indem sie ihr den jeweiligen individuelle Ausdruck geben, verbunden. Dieses Paper versucht zu zeigen, wie insbesondere der Name, so wie er sich in der albanischen Kultur darstellt, tatsächlich Teil einer Fülle von vielfältigen Komponenten und Eigenschaften ist, sodass das Individuum in dem Raum und der Zeit aufgeht, in das es eingebettet ist.