

A Morpho-Semantic Study of Okun Names: Implications for Okun Linguistic Identity

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Abstract

The commonest names among the Okun people are those typically borne by all Yoruba groups (e.g. Olusola, Olorunfemi, Awoniyi, Ogungbemi, Faniyi, Adebayo, Kayode, etc.). However, names (such as Ayinmiro, Alemika, Berida, Iyekolo, Melaye, Makele, etc.) which are peculiar to the Okun groups and exclusively based on the linguistic structure of their dialects are not as common as the general Yoruba names either as first names or as surnames. Interestingly, many speakers of other Yoruba dialects in South West Nigeria are hardly aware of the Yorubanness of such names as they often erroneously associate them with other tribes in Nigeria. Furthermore, the use of Okun indigenous names is in recession as many people, natives inclusive, no longer use them nor know what they mean. This paper investigates the linguistic structures of Okun exclusive names with a view to descriptively analysing how they are morpho-syntactically and semantically constructed, and how these constructions demonstrate clear ancient affinity with other Yoruba groups. Findings show that Okun indigenous names have well-known Yoruba culture and language structures which range from frozen/lexicalized clauses (both simple and complex), noun phrases, and nominalised VPs involving morphosyntactic and morphophonemic processes such as prefixation, desententialisation, clipping, contraction, assimilation, and deletion. All these combined tend to make the names culturally unique and interesting. Given the overwhelming evidence from the morpho-syntax and semantics of the Okun indigenous names investigated, which evidently align well with what obtains in Standard Yoruba and other well studied dialects of the language, the study concludes that Okunlects are linguistically integral to the Yoruba dialect continuum.

Keywords: Okun, Yoruba, indigenous names, morpho-syntax, morpho-semantics

1. Introduction

The term *Okun* is an artificial referent to a number of Yoruba groups (i.e. the Bùnù, Ìjùmù, Owé, Òwòrò, and Yàgbà people) who live in present day Kogi State of Nigeria. It was a nickname said to have been used by a European Anthropologist, Eva Krapt Askari (Akanmidu, 2016). In reality, prior to the advent of colonialism, each group in the area was a separate Yoruba sub-group with no serious binding political association with the others. The word *Okun* was later adopted by them all because it was the most prevalent greeting/social exchange word among them. It is, however, pertinent to note that this usage of the word is not unique to Okunland, as other Yoruba groups including Ekiti and some Akoko groups use it exactly in the same manner.

Historically, the origin of the Okun groups is yet to be clearly established. The Ifẹ origin stories are increasingly being found to be quite tenuous in the face of better techniques of historical investigation. (Yusuf, 2006; Bakinde, 2014; Ogidan, 2014). In any case, scholars are unanimous in pointing out that it is not all Okun groups that have stories of an Ifẹ connection. It is important to note that in the case of the Òwòrò, there is a tradition (existing alongside the Ifẹ origin myth) called the *Ako* tradition which emphasizes the belief that the people are indigenous to Òwòròland and did not migrate from anywhere at any time in History (Orungbami 2010). It may therefore be instructive in this wise to point out that Okunland was a popular place of refuge for persons fleeing turbulence in other parts of Yorubland, even up till the time of the Yoruba civil wars (Yusuf 2006)¹.

Many still doubt if the people of Okunland in Kogi State of Nigeria are Yoruba given (partly) their geographical location which made them to be grouped as part of Nigeria's North Central Geo-political zone; and most importantly because of their linguistic (verbal) repertoire which somehow superficially suggests (at least to lay people, especially in South West Nigeria where Yoruba is natively spoken) that their speech forms do not belong to the Yoruba dialect continuum. This paper investigates the linguistic structure of Okun indigenous names especially those that are more or less peculiar and exclusive to the area: first to analyse and describe the morpho-syntax and the semantic distinctiveness that each of them signals; and second, to see the level of their relatedness in terms of structure and cultural content to other mainstream dialects of Yoruba, e.g. Standard Yoruba. From the records of early Christian missionaries, it is clear that the general

¹ The implication of the massive influx for the identity of the people is still being researched.

Yoruba names have always been common in Okunland, but the peculiarly Okun names are obviously more indigenous and exclusive to these areas, as they are not used by other Yoruba groups.

2. Okun Dialects in the Context of Yoruba Dialectology

The linguistic identity of the Okun people has, over the years, been overshadowed by non-linguistic historical factors as often is the case in dialectal matters. Principal among these factors is the fact that the Okun people were never part of the super state (Oyo Empire) that emerged in Yorubaland under the cultural hegemony of Ile-Ife civilization and the political and military might of Oyo (Lloyd 1973, Smith 1988). In this regard, Are (2002) argues that the Okun people maintained unique cultural and political structures associated with pre-empire Yoruba communities up to the late 19th century when Okunland was conquered by the Nupe Kingdom. Therefore, while Yoruba groups further to the South forged (to some extent) a loose sense of connection by being part of a wider federation, the Okun, with relatively smaller demographic size, were isolated in the North East. This situation was compounded by the extreme cultural dislocation caused by the brutal genocidal activities of the Nupe conquerors. Ijagbemi (1976) attests to the fact that the impact of the Nupe disruption was so profound that the people almost lost their cultural and historical legacies. Ethno-linguistic connection to other Yoruba groups significantly waned during the period.

The situation was further complicated at the advent of British colonial rule. The British met Okunland (and Akokoland as well) under the Nupe Kingdom, which was a Northern kingdom. They created a province (Kabba Province) encompassing these areas, under Northern Nigeria protectorate. Unlike the Akoko who were eventually subsumed under Western Nigeria, the Okun, to date, remain officially in the North-Central zone of Nigeria, along with some other Yoruba groups in Kwara State. However, those in Kwara such as the Iboḷo, the Ekiti, and the Igbomina had direct political involvement with the Oyo Empire.

The effect of this historical situation definitely rubbed off on both popular and academic perceptions of the ethnic and linguistic identity of the Okun, and determined (at least in the early days of Yoruba dialectology) the conclusion of scholars. It is noteworthy in this regard that Adetugbo (1967), which was the earliest comprehensive study of Yoruba dialect groups, did not include any group outside Western Nigeria as the title of the thesis indicates. Although the work missed many Yoruba dialects, even in the West, it is doubtful if at the point of

research, the scholar knew of the existence of the Okun. This omission has been corrected by works such as Awobuluyi (1989) and Blench (2012). Some popular perspectives, however, still often do not consider the Okun as Yoruba. In fact, Are (2002) observes that among the Okuns themselves, there are political interests that seek to discountenance any affinity with South West Yoruba, opting rather for a separate ethno-linguistic identity. In this context, further insights, such as the current study that shed more light on the correct linguistic identity of the Okun are critically relevant.

3. Perspectives on Names and Naming among the Yoruba

There is a significant volume of literature available on names and naming practices among the Yoruba. These materials have largely explored Yoruba names towards gaining insight into their linguistic forms and to espouse their value for sociocultural information, personal and societal world views, philosophies, and ideologies in contrast to names and naming traditions in European societies. For example, Akinaso (1983) provides a sociolinguistic exploration of how ritually significant information are encoded in certain categories of names among the Yoruba, such that cultural knowledge is derivable from such names. In the same connection, Akinola (2014) highlights the critical factor of culturally significant meanings inherent in Yoruba names, arguing for the retention of traditional names in the face of the trend towards preference for foreign names, and the ‘anglicisation’ of traditional names. Ikotun (2013) as well as Fakuade, Friday-Otun, and Adeosun (2019) also highlights the shift in modern preferences toward names associated with foreign religions. However, the dominant perspective in all the above emphasise the use of names in Yoruba culture as expressions of deep ideological, philosophical and cultural nuances.

In addition to exploring the meaning of names, these studies also explicate the morphology and syntax of Yoruba names as corollaries of the dissection of their signification.

Notable in this regard is Akinaso (1980) which appears to be a major foundational work. It provides what the author refers to as “a sketch of the basic syntactic patterns of Yoruba personal names” (Akinaso 1980:286). The study argues that Yoruba personal names often derive from two structural categories: nominals and sentences. The nominals are realised as simple nouns, compound nouns, and verb phrase nominalization, while the sentence-based names, which are of different levels of syntactic complexities, are analysable using phrase structure, transformation, embedding and recursive rules. These, as will be subsequently

espoused, are consistent with the patterns in Okun names as revealed in the current study.

Beyond all the above, it is important to point out the fact that names, as a factor in the study of dialects of Yoruba, did not receive the deserved attention in the works cited above as well as other previous works. We must point out, however, that names can be of immense relevance in dialect research as attested to in Scott (2016) who established a clear linkage between language varieties and the study of names. Although the study is based on a European context, it is an insight into the fact that oral corpus of names extracted from different contexts offer materials that supply critical clues into dialect geography through the analyses of sociolinguistic and pragmatic functions of such names.

In view of this, the current research offers fresh perspectives on the status of Okun dialects within the context of the Yoruba dialect continuum using the unexplored dimension of names.

4. Materials and Methods

The research was conducted using the consultant-informant technique. Ten native-speaker consultants/informants in all were recruited, two for each of the five Okun Sub-groups (Bunu, Ijumu, Owe, Oworo and Yagba). They were adjudged by the researchers to be competent native speakers of their dialects who possessed sufficient cultural and linguistic knowledge of their people, and were educated enough to understand the sway of the research enterprise into which they were recruited. Each of the informants was asked to supply a list of at least twenty indigenous names as well as English glosses on such names. Subsequently, the researcher harmonized the list thereby obtaining ten names per group. One informant each for the five sub-groups was eventually requested to supply the original pronunciation of the selected names. These were recorded and transcribed phonetically and orthographically. The selected names were subjected to morpho-syntactic and semantic analyses to espouse their 'Yorubanness'. It must be stated that some of the names cut across dialect boundaries in terms of occurrence. We determined their dialect of primary occurrence from further clarifications supplied by the informants.

5. Data Presentation

In this section, we present selected lists of Okun exclusive indigenous names based on their identifiable subgroups, namely; Bùnù, Ìjùmù, Owé, Ọwọ̀rò, and

Yàgbà. We also provide their literal and logical glossing based on Leipzig glossing rules to prepare the ground for their analyses.

5.1. Bùnù Names

The Bunu people are located in Ìlúke, Àkútúpá, Òlè, Àgbèdè, and Odòapè in Kabba/Bunu Local Government Area of Kogi State. The following are some of their exclusive indigenous names.

1. Ikúsemóro: Ikú se m óro
Death do 1SG.ACC²agony
'Death has hurt me badly.'
2. Médùbì: Mé(è)³dùbì
1SG.NOM.HTS NEGfight-over birth
'I do not fight over birthright.'
3. Oḷonílebí: o- niṣi í lebí
AGENT have person HTS has-family
'One-who-has-people has a family.'
4. Oniémàyìn: Oni é (è) màyìn (òla)
Person HTS NEG know-back (tomorrow)
'No one knows tomorrow/the future'
5. Alèémérúù Alèé mọ èrù
Ground-HTS know cheat
'The earth knows the cheat/dubious fellow.'

² Abbreviations used in this article are as follows:
HTS--High Tone Syllable; ACC—Accusative; NOM—Nominative; INFL--Inflection;
INTER—Interrogative; 1SG--1st Person Singular; 2SG--2nd Person Singular; 3SG—3rd
Person Singular; 1PL—1st Person Plural; 2PL—2nd Person Plural; 3PL—3rd Person plural;
GEN--Genitive;; NEG—Negation; FOC—Focus; FUT—Future; SPEC—Specifier;
PERF—Perfective; PROG—Progressive; T—Tense; SUBJ—Subject; LOC—Locative.

³ It is pertinent to mention that this NEG is almost perceived silent in this word and others that pattern like it (cf Oniémàyìn and Médàyédú in (4) and (8)). We however hold that it is present in the structure given the semantic negation reading in the interpretation and the fact that the derived word structurally patterns like other structurally negated names found in other dialects of Yoruba, SY inclusive, e.g. Odúúùṣòtè (often written as Oduṣòtè), Ayèèrun, Adèèsidà (Adeṣida). The negation marker in such context is usually low-toned showing up exactly in the same position, though much more phonetically visible (see Oyebade&Ilori 2006 and Ilori 2011a).

6. Àyìnmìró Àyìnmìrò ó
Back 1SG.NOM think it
'I considered THE END/OUTCOME.'
7. Àyíká à- yí(enìyàn) ká
ACTOR surround (person) all-round
'Someone who surrounds/protects one'
8. Médàyé dú Mé (è) dààyé dú
1SG.NOM-HTS NEG alone life fight-over
'I am not involved in life struggles alone.'
9. Oniétoran Oni é (è) to ọràn
Today HTS NEG worth/up issue
'The current time/event is not worth talking about.'
10. Baiyé dà (I)bi ayé dà
Place life/world become
'What life has become or turned into'

5.2. Ìjùmú Names

The traditional homelands of the Ijumu people are Ìyàrà, Ayégúnlẹ̀ Gbẹ̀de, AyétòròGbẹ̀de, Ògidí, and Ekìnrìn-àdé communities in Ijumu Local Government Area of Kogi State. The following are the selected Ijumu exclusive names.

11. Irúkerà: Irúkè⁴rà
Locust-bean-seed NEG rot
'Locust-bean seeds do not rot.'
12. Ésèmikósé: É (è) se èmikìmósé
HTS (NEG) do 1SG COMP 1SG-HTS do-3SG
'It is not my making.'
13. Himikaye: Ìhìn mi (tàn) káayé
Tiding 1SG-GEN (spread) round world
'My fame/story is all over the world.'

⁴ Cf. the clause negation marker (k)ò in well-known Yoruba names like Adé (k)ò tí→Adeòtí 'The crown is not obsolete.'

14. Mélayé (Méèlayé): Mé(è) layé
1SG-HTS NEG own-world
'I do not own life/the world.'
15. Akánmìdú: Akánmìdùú
Dignity 1SG fight-for 3SG
'Dignity is what fight for.'
16. Olónidúhì: ọ- níọni í dúhì
AGENT haveperson HTS lean LOC
'One-who-has-people to lean on'
17. Éşoníkíşomọ: É (è) se ọnikíşe ọmọ
HTS NEG be person COMP-HTS do child
'No human being creates children.'
18. Ayédeğé: Ayé di egé
Life/world become fragile
'Life / the world has become delicate.'
19. Ibiyédí: Ibiyédí
Place mother-HTS filled
'Where a mother provides cover/support'
20. Alẹmíkà: Alẹ mọ ikà
Earth know wicked-person
'The earth (posterity) knows the wicked.'

5.3. Owé Names

The Owé people are found in Kábbà/Bùnù Local Government Area of Kogi State. Their communities are Kàbà (Kabba), Okedáyò, Ohákítí, Egunbe, Kákun, and Egbédá. The selected names for this group are as follows.

21. Ìbíéjùgbà: Ìbí é jùùgbà
Birth HTS more-than season
'Lineage is more significant than the birth season.'

22. Kájọ̀tọ̀ni: Kájọ̀ tìọ̀ni ?
What-be look-like that-of person
'What can be as valuable as what belongs to one?'
23. Ìwéréjọ̀mọ̀: Iweré(è) jọ̀ ọ̀mo
Friends-HTS NEG be-like child
'Friends are not comparable to children.'
24. Oréníbi: Oréníbi
Good-HTS have evil
'Good (often) comes with some evil.'
25. Éhọ̀niyọ̀tán: É (è) họ̀ni yọ̀ tán
HTS NEG exist-person be-happy finish
'Nobody experiences unlimited joy.'
26. Aróniyọ̀: a- ríòníyọ̀
AGENT see today be-happy
'One who rejoices in the blessings of (seeing) today'
27. Ikúbanjé: Ikúba (ohu)n jé
Death spoil thing spoil
'Death has spoilt things.'
28. Baiyere (Bayénrè) (I)biayé n rè
Place life/world PROG go
'Where life / the world is heading'
29. Baiyeri(Báyérí) Bí ayé (se) rí
As life/world (PERF) look-like
'The way life / the world is'
30. Atùhòkọ̀ (y)a tùhìòkọ̀
No more see hoes
'There is no more hoe.'
(This is an Abiku name warning the child that there is no more tool for digging graves for him/her.)

5.4. Òwòrò Names

Geographically, the Òwòrò homeland is located in Lokoja Local Government Area. Their settlements/towns are Agbájà, Jàkùrà, Ọbájà, Tájímì, and Èmù. The following are their traditional personal names randomly selected for this study.

31. Èhímoní: Èhímoní
This 1SG.NOM have
'This is the one I have.'/ 'This which I have'
32. Mákèlé: Miá (à) kò èlé
1SG.NOM HTSNEG reject addition
'I do not mind an addition.'
33. Mokèlú: Mo keilú.
1SG be-surprise town
'I am a surprise to the community.'
34. Àjòrò: à- jò rò
THEME together think
'A collective decision/agreement'
35. Bọnibádé: (I)bi ọnibádé
Place person may reach
'Wherever one gets to' (indicating the need to be adaptable)
36. Ìlúkámidi: Ìlúká mi odi
town surround 1SG.ACC fence
'The community surrounds me (in support) like a fence.'
(This indicates communal support.)
37. Ọmósàyìn: Ọmó se àyìn
Child-HTS do back
'Children hold forth for dead parents.'
38. Òdímáyò: Òdímáyò
Enemy-HTS NEG rejoice
'Oh enemies, do not rejoice.'

39. *Ọmáboni*: *Ọmáboṣi*
Child-HTS cover person
'Children are a covering.'
40. *Beridá*: *(I)bierídá (mi)*
Place head create (1SG.ACC)
'Where destiny placed me'

5.5. Ìyàgbà Names

The *Yàgbà* people are found in *Yagba East* and *Yagba West* Local Government Areas of *Kogi State* in towns like *Ìsánlú*, *Ègbè*, *Mòpà*, *Pónyàn*, and *Iláí*. The following are some of their traditional personal names selected for this study.

41. *Mésìrìn*: *Mé(è) sìn*
1SG.NOM-HTS NEG wrong walk
'I have not missed my way.'
42. *Òsámèyàn*: *Òsámò èyàn*
Deity-HTS know destiny
'The deity knows destiny.'
43. *Mésòlẹ*: *Mé(è) se òlẹ*
1SG.NOM-HTS NEG be lazy
'I am not lazy.'
44. *Ojúmoró*: *Ojúmoró*
Eyes 1SG.NOM endure
'I endured.'
45. *Ibòniésedé*: *Ibòni é (è) se dé*
Place person HTS NEG do reach
'Beyond the extent of one's labour'
46. *Òsátómọni*: *Òsátómọ oni*
Deity-HTS up-to know person
'The deity is capable of knowing individuals.'

47. Mòtójesì: Mo tó jésì
1SG up-to leave-alone
'I have reached the level of being left alone'
(i.e. Nobody should torment me again).'
48. Òsànim: Òsà (nió) nim
Deity (FOC HTS) own 1SG.ACC
'The Deity own me.'/ 'I belong to the gods.'
49. Médutoni: Mé (è) du tiṇi
1SG.NOM -HTS NEG fight-over that-of person
'I am not contending for another person's things.'
50. Méjòwògbé: Mé (è) jèowó gbé
1SG.NOM-HTS NEG allow money go-in-vain
'I ensure money was not spent in vain.'/
'I did not allow money to be spent in vain.'

6. Structural Analyses

The morpho-syntactic structures of the Okun names presented in section five can be grouped into four. These are negative, prefixal, desentencialised, and other forms. We shall discuss these one after the other in the following subsections.

6.1. The Negative Type

These Okun names are of the sentential stock (Akinaso 1980). They contain a negative morpheme which often shows up immediately after the high tone syllable (HTS) which immediately follows the subject in such frozen sentences that become words. This type of personal names cuts across all the Okun subgroups.

Bùnú

Mé(è) dùibì → Médùbì
1SG-NOM -HTS NEG fight-over birth
'I do not fight over birthright.'

Onié (è) màyìn (òla) → Oniémàyìn
Person HTS NEG know-back (tomorrow)
'No one knows tomorrow/the future'

Mé (è) dààyé dú → Médàyédú
1SG-NOM -HTS NEG alone life fight-over
'I am not involved in life struggles alone.'

Onì é (è) to ọ̀ràn⁵ → Oniétọ̀ran
Today HTS NEG worth/up issue
'The current time/event is not worth talking about.'

Ìjùmú

É (è) se èmikìmósé → Ésèmikósé
HTS (NEG) do 1SG COMP 1SG-HTS do-3SG
'It is not my making.'

Mé(è) layé → Mélayé
1SG-HTS NEG own-world
'I do not own life/the world.'

É (è) se ọ̀nikí se ọ̀mọ → Ésọ̀nikísọ̀mọ
HTS NEG be person COMP-HTS do child
'No human being creates children.'

Owé

Ìwéré⁶ (è) jọ ọ̀mọ → Iweréèjọ̀mọ
Friends-HTS NEG be-like child
'Friends are not comparable to children.'

É (è) họnì yọ tán → Éhọ̀niyọ̀tán
HTS NEG exist-person be-happy finish
'Nobody experiences unlimited joy.'

Ọ̀wọ̀rọ̀

Miá (à) kọ èlé → Mákèlé
1SG.NOM HTSNEG reject addition
'I do not mind an addition.'

⁵ Cf. the ọ̀ràn in Ọ̀rànmiyàn in mainstream Yoruba culture.

⁶ Cf. oriniwérénde 'children songs' in SY and other dialects.

Òdí⁷máyò → Òdíímáyò
Enemy-HTS NEG rejoice
'Oh enemies, do not rejoice.'

Ìyàgbà

Mé(è) sìn → Mésìn
1SG.NOM-HTS NEG wrong walk
'I have not missed my way.'

Mé (è) se òlẹ → Mésòlẹ
1SG.NOM-HTS NEG be lazy
'I am not lazy.'

Ibòni é (è) se dé → Ibòniésedé
Place person HTS NEG do reach
'Beyond the extent of one's labour'

Mé (è) du tìni → Médutìni
1SG.NOM -HTS NEG fight-over that-of person
'I do not contend for another person's property.'

Mé(è) jẹ owó gbé → Méjòwògbé
1SG.NOM-HTS NEG allow money go-in-vain
'I ensure money was not spent in vain.'
'I did not allow money to be spent in vain.'

In all of these examples, with the exception of names that pattern like **Òdíímáyò** in **Òwòrò** (where **má** denotes negation), there is a phonetically-hanging/faint⁸ but semantically constant low-toned vocalic morpheme, which takes the shape of the immediately preceding Infl element (usually the HTS), denoting denial of the main proposition of the frozen/desententialised clause. The two shapes identified with it in the data are **è** and **à**. These are, however, not exhaustive since the shape is dependent on the immediately preceding element. The fact that there are also similarly structured names derived from frozen negative clauses in other dialects of Yoruba, e.g. **Àkúrẹ̀**, **Ègbá**, **Ìjẹ̀bù**, **Òndó**, etc. (see names like **Adéèboyèjé** 'the crown does not spoil the chieftaincy', **Fáàrótíkà** 'Ifá does not stand with the

⁷ Cf. **odi/olódi** in SY and other Yoruba dialectal expressions like **odiyiyànkòdára**. 'Enmity/Enstrangement is not good.' and **olódi mi** 'my enemy'. Interestingly, **odi** and **olódi** are interchangeable/synonyms in this Okun example.

⁸ This explains why we put it in parenthesis in the data.

wicked’, Adéèsidà ‘the crown does not do evil’, Aládèèjèbi ‘The custodian of the crown is not guilty’, etc.)⁹ implies that the Okun examples are not isolated but are integral part of a general traditional naming pattern among the Yoruba.

6.2. Prefixal Types

These are names derived through the use of prefixes in which the affix is attached to a complex VP to derive a name. This strategy has long been identified as a highly productive word derivation strategy in Yoruba language (Oyebade&Ilori 2006; Ilori 2010, 2011; Awobuluyi 2016; among others). We shall group this into two here for mnemonic reasons: agentive/theme type and possessive type.

6.2.1. Agentive/Theme Type

The prefix in this instance performs either an agent/actor or theme semantic role in the morphological derivation of the name. Examples are;

à- yí (enìyàn) ká → Àyíká
ACTOR surround (person) all-round
‘Someone who surrounds/protects one’

a- ríoníyò → Aróniyò
AGENT see today be-happy
‘One who rejoices in the blessings of (seeing) today’

à- jọ rò → Àjọrò
THEME together think
‘A collective decision/agreement’

The structure of such names is of the type α -[_{VP} V (Compl) VP] where the main VP is a serial verbal construction consisting of at least two verbs with or without a subcategorized complement. For instance, in **Àyíká**, the two verbs, **yí** ‘surround’ and **ká** ‘all-round’, share a single complement **enìyàn** which is ellipsed/muted in the output because it is already understood from the context. The second V, **yò** in **Aróniyò**, has no complement; while the two verbs, **jọ** and **rò** in **Àjọrò**, have no nominal complement. {à-} is well established in the literature as one of the Yoruba agent/actor/theme prefixes in the literature (Ilori 2010, 2011a; Awobuluyi 2016; among others).

⁹ See also Odù-ú ù şẹ̀tẹ̀ → Odùúşẹ̀tẹ̀ (often written as Odusẹ̀tẹ̀)
Oracle-HTS NEG do conspiracy
‘The oracle does not get involved in conspiracy.’

6.2.2. Possessive Type

This name type consists of **ḡní/ḡni** construct which is evidently a variant of the well-studied **oní/oni** ‘one who has/owns x’ form found in Standard Yoruba and other dialects of the language already reported in the literature (see Owolabi 1989; Bamgbose 1990; Awobuluyi 2008 and 2016; Taiwo 2011; and Ilḡri 2011a, 2017; among many others). Our assumption in this paper is that {ḡ-} is the agentive prefix in this construct while **ní/ni** ‘to have/own’ is the first V in the serial verb construction that functions as complement of {ḡ-} in such Okun names, as represented here.

ḡ- [nḡni í lebí] → Oḡnḡlébí
AGENT have person HTS has-family
‘One-who-has-people has a family.’

ḡ- [nḡni í dúhì] → Oḡnḡdúhì
AGENT have person HTS lean LOC
‘One-who-has-people to lean on’

6.3. Desententialised Type

These are Okun indigenous names derived from frozen or compressed full sentences. We know such constructions come from full sentences and clauses because they contain all syntactic components that make up typical clauses and sentences (both basic and non-basic, in the right order) in Yoruba language, especially when carefully decomposed into their minutest morphological components. After being compressed to derive the name, morphophonemic relics of the input sentence from which they were derived are still visible in the derived word. For example, most of the names (e.g. Médùbì, Ḣniémàyin, Onìétḡran, Médàyédu, Mélayé, Iweréèjḡmoḡ, Mákèlé, Odímáyò, etc.) under the negative type also fall under this subcategory because they are mostly desententialised sentences.

6.3.1. Basic Clauses

These are names derived through compression of already derived clauses that do not involve syntactic movement transformation. Such clauses maintain the basic Yoruba sentence structure of: IP → NP/DP INFL VP. The syntactic components of such sentences turned words, therefore, are: Nominal-subject; Inflection element (i.e. Tense/Aspect/Negation/Modal or their combinations); and Verb Phrase (simple or complex) which may optionally embed prepositional and

adverbial phrases in that order. Examples of such desententialised/compressed basic sentences and their nominal/name outputs are;

Ikú se m óro → Ikúsemóro
Death do 1SG.ACC agony
'Death has hurt me badly.'

Alẹ mọ èrù → Alẹmérú
Ground know cheats (pronounced: Alẹémérúù
'The earth knows the cheat/dubious fellow.'

Irúkèrà → Irúkerà
Locust-bean-seed NEG rot
'Locust-bean seeds do not rot.'

Ìhìn mi (tàn) káayé → Himikaye
Tiding 1SG-GEN (spread) round world
'My fame/story is all over the world.'

Ayé di egé → Ayédegé
Life/world become fragile
'Life / the world has become delicate.'

Alẹ mọ ikà → Alẹmíkà
Earth know wicked-person
'The earth (posterity) knows the wicked.'

Ìbí é jùùgbà → Ìbíjùgbà
Birth HTS more-than season
'Lineage is more significant than the birth season.'

Ikúba (ohu)njé → Ikúbanjé
Death spoil thing spoil
'Death has spoilt things.'

(y)a tùhìokó → Atùhòkó
No more see hoes
'There is no more hoe.'

Mo keilú. → Mòkèlú:
1SG be-surprise town
'I am a surprise to the community.'

Ìlúkámi odi → Ìlúkámidi
town surround 1SG.ACC fence
'The community surrounds me (in support)
like a fence.' (This indicates communal support.)

Ọmó se àyìn → Ọmósàyìn
Child-HTS doback
'Children hold forth for dead parents.'

Ọmáboṣni → Ọmáboni
Child-HTS cover person
'Children are a covering.'

Òsámọ̀yàn → Òsámeyàn
Deity-HTS know destiny
'The deity knows destiny.'

Òsátómọ ọni → Òsátómọni:
Deity-HTS up-to know person
'The deity is capable of knowing individuals.'

Mo tó jési → Mòtójesi
1SG up-to leave-alone
'I have reached the level of being left alone
(i.e. nobody should torment me again).'

6.3.2. Non-Basic Clauses

The compressed constructions in this group are focus/topic constructions, relative clauses, content questions, and conditional clauses. The syntactic components of such sentences turned words are: CP → SPEC C IP where SPEC serves as landing site for raised items from the IP to achieve ex-situ focus, topicalisation, relativization, and wh-interrogation. Examples of such names and their analyses are as follows;

Àyìnmirò ó → Àyìnmiró
Back 1SG.NOM think 3SG
'THE END/OUTCOME is what I consider.'

Akán mi dù ú → Akánmidù
Dignity 1SG fight-for 3SG (pronounced: Akánmidùú)
'Dignity is what I fight for.'

We assume that the inputs here are topic constructions in which the object nominal complements (**àyìn** 'back, end' and **akán** 'dignity') of the verbs **rò** 'think' and **dù** 'fight-over' in the embedded clauses (**Mì í ròàyìn** and **Midùakán**) were topicalised by being moved to the sentence initial position but leaving a pronominal reference trace in the extraction site.

The input of the next set of clauses are focus constructions. We assume that the functional focus head (FOC⁰) in the Okunlects is a phonetically null morpheme in that it has no visible surface phonetic realization but it is semantically present in the interpretation of such constructions. Names in this category on the data list are:

Èhí ø moní<èhí>¹⁰ → Èhímoní
This FOC 1SG.NOM have <this>
'I have THIS.'/ 'THIS I have'

Ojú ø moró <ojú> → Ojúmoró
Eyes FOC 1SG.NOM endure
'I endured.'

Òsà ø <òsà> ø ni ìṣ → Òsàniṣ
Deity FOC deity HTS own 1SG.ACC
'The Deity owns me.'/
'I belong to the gods.'

We also assume that the focused items in the constructions were raised/moved to the sentence initial position via internal merge or simply movement transformation in earlier models of transformational generative grammar.

Two additional pieces of information worthy of note on the structural make-up of the name **Òsàniṣ** (see also *Ikúsemóro* in Bùnù) is in the use of **òsà** which is evidently a cognate of **òòsà/òriṣà** 'deity' in mainstream Yoruba culture. Also, the use of the homogarnic **ìṣ** as 1SG.ACC is not in any way strange in the Yoruba

¹⁰ This is a generative grammar (minimalist syntax to be precise) convention which indicates that the item so enclosed has been moved and is no longer phonetically realized in that position.

dialect continuum. Other well-known dialects of the language (e.g. Ọkà, Ìkàré, Àkùngbá, ÌlìshànRẹmọ, etc.) use the same form in the Akókó and Ìjẹbú regions of Yorubaland. What these confirm is that the structural forms of these indigenous Okun names lend credence to the view that Okunlects are indeed part of the Yoruba dialect continuum.

The inputs that fed the derivation of the next set of names are evidently relative clause constructions. The structure is such that a phonetically null relative clause marker shows up in-between the relativized (fronted) item and the main clause from which it was extracted. We know this because of the presence of the relative clause marker in the semantic interpretation of the names.

Ibiøiyédí <ibi> → Ibiyédí
Place REL mother-HTS filled <place>
'Where a mother provides cover/support'

(I)bi ø ọnibádé<ibi> → Bọnibádé
Place REL person mayreach <place>
'Wherever one gets to'
(indicating the need to be adaptable)

Ibi ø ayé ñ rẹ<ibi> → Baiyere (Bayénrè)
Place REL life/world PROG go <place>
'Where life / the world is heading'

Ibi ø erídá (mi) (ø) <ibi> → Beridá
place REL head create (1SG.ACC) (LOC) <place>
'Where destiny placed me'

6.4. Others

Two different isolated types are grouped here. The first represents names that have content question clause input:

Kájọ tìọni ? → Kájọtìọni
What-be look-like that-of person
'What can be as valuable as what belongs to one?'

And the second stands for names in which the input looks like the first half of a Yoruba bi-conditional clause (see Awobuluyi 1978 and Bamgboṣe 1990):

Bí ayé (se) rí → Baiyeri (Báyérí)
As life/world (PERF) look-like
'The way life / the world is'

7. Conclusion

Although the Okun names investigated in this study may not sound Yoruba to lay persons from the South western part of Nigeria, the *Yorubanness* of the names is very obvious in their structural analyses carried out in this paper. In the course of this study, we found out that some of the names in question are used by all the Okun subgroups identified here while some of them are limited to specific groups within the five. The morpho-semantic derivational strategies employed to construct the names are those generally known and well-established in Standard Yoruba and other dialects of the language. The strategies are prefixation (in contrast to suffixation), desentencialisatation (which appears to be the most prominent), clipping, and other morpho-phonemic processes such as assimilation, deletion and contraction.

Since the understudied names are ancient and indigenous, the facts about their linguistic structure laid bare and established in this study indicate that regardless of what historians may eventually come up with in respect to the origin of the people, the Okun have strong cultural-linguistic ties with the rest of Yorubaland. It is, therefore, only logical to conclude that Okunlects are linguistically part and parcel of the Yoruba dialect continuum.

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