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. Olusọla, Ọlọrunfẹmi, Awoniyi, Ogungbemi, Faniyi, Adebayọ, Kayọde, 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 Yorubaness 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 analyse 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 Okun lects 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 Bùnú, Ìjùmú, Owé, Ọ̀wọ́rọ̀, 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 is 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 Ọ̀wọ́rọ̀, there is a tradition (existing alongside the Ifẹ origin myth) called the *Ako* tradition which emphasizes the belief that the people are indigenous to Ọwọrọland 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 Yoruba names have always

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

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-Ifẹ 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 Ibọlọ, 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 theses 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 toward 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 realized as simple nouns, compound nouns, and verb phrase nominalization, while the sentence-based names, which are of different levels of syntactic complexities, are analyzable 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.

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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 (Bùnú, Ìjùmú, Owé, Ọ̀wọ́rọ̀ and Yàgbà). 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 'Yorubaness'. 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; Bùnú, Ìjùmú, Owé, Ọ̀wọ́rọ̀, and Yàgbà. We also provide their literal and logical glossing based on Leipzig glossing rules to prepare the ground for their analyses.

5.1.   Bùnú Names

The Bunu people are located in Ìlúke, Àkútúpá, Ọ̀lẹ̀, Àgbẹ̀dẹ́, and Odò-àpẹ̀ in Kabba/Bunu Local Government Area of Kogi State. The following are some of their exclusive indigenous names.

1. Ikúsemóro: | Ikú | se | m̩ | óro |
   |---|---|---|---|
   | Death | do | 1SG.ACC[2] | agony |

   'Death has hurt me badly.'

2. Médùbì: | Mé | (è)[3] | dù | ìbì |
   |---|---|---|---|
   | 1SG.NOM.HTS | NEG | fight-over | birth |

   'I do not fight over birthright.'

3. Ọlọnílẹ̀bí: | ọ- | ni | ọni | í | lẹbí |
   |---|---|---|---|---|
   | AGENT | have | person | HTS | has-family |

   'One-who-has-people has a family.'

4. Ọniémàyìn: | Ọni | é | (è) | màyìn | (ọ̀la) |
   |---|---|---|---|---|
   | Person | HTS | NEG | know-back | (tomorrow) |

   'No one knows tomorrow/the future'

5. Alẹ̀ẹ́mérú̀ù | Alẹ̀ẹ́ | mọ | èrù |
   |---|---|---|
   | Ground-HTS | know | cheat |

   'The earth knows the cheat/dubious fellow.'

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[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. Ọniémàyìn 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. Odùúùṣọ̀tẹ̀ (often written as Oduṣọtẹ), Ayéèrun, Adéèṣidà (Adesida). The negation marker in such context is usually low-toned showing up exactly in the same position, though much more phonetically visible (see Oyebade & Ilọri, 2006; and Ilọri, 2011a).

6. Àyìnmìró   Àyìn   mì   rò   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. Médàyédú   Mé   (è)   dà   àyé dú
                     1SG.NOM-HTS NEG alone life fight-over
                     'I am not involved in life struggles alone.'

9. Onìétoran   Onì   é   (è)   to   oràn
                     Today HTS NEG worth/up issue
                     'The current time/event is not worth talking about.'

10. Baiyédà   (I)bi ayé   dà
                     Place life/world become
                     'What life has become or turned into'

5.2. Ìjùmú Names

The traditional homelands of the Ìjùmú people are Ìyàrà, Ayégúnlè Gbedè, Ayétòrò Gbedè, Ògidí, and Ekìnrìn-àdé communities in Ijumu Local Government Area of Kogi State. The following are the selected Ijumu exclusive names.

11. Irúkerà: Irú   kè[4]   rà
                              Locust-bean-seed NEG rot
                              'Locust-bean seeds do not rot.'

12. Ésèmikósé: É   (è)   se èmi kì   mó   sé
                         HTS (NEG) do 1SG COMP 1SG-HTS do-3SG
                       'It is not my making.'

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

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[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. Akànmìdú: Akán   mì   dù   ú
                          Dignity   1SG   fight-for   3SG
                          'Dignity is what I fight for.'

16. Ọlọ́nidúhì: ọ-   ní   ọni   í   dú   hì
                          AGENT   have   person   HTS   lean   LOC
                          'One-who-has-people to lean on'

17. Ésọnikísọmọ: É   (è)   se   ọni   kí   se   ọmọ
                          HTS   NEG   be   person   COMP-HTS   do   child
                          'No human being creates children.'

18. Ayédẹgẹ́:   Ayé   di   ẹgẹ́
                          Life/world   become   fragile
                          'Life / the world has become delicate.'

19. Ibiyédí: Ibi   iyé   dí
                          Place   mother-HTS   filled
                          'Where a mother provides cover/support'

20. Alèmíkà   Alè   mọ   ìkà
                          Earth   know   wicked-person
                          'The earth (posterity) knows the wicked.'

5.3. Owé Names

The Owé people are found in Kàbbà/Bùnú Local Government Area of Kogi State. Their communities are Kàbà (Kabba), Okedáyọ̀, Ohákìtí, Egunbe, Kákun, and Ẹgbẹ́dá. The selected names for this group are as follows.

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

22. Kájọtọni: Ká   jọ   ti   ọni ?
What-<u>be</u> look-like that-of person
'What can be as valuable as what belongs to one?'

23. Ìweréjọmọ: Ìweré   (è)   jọ   ọmọ
Friends-HTS NEG be-like child
'Friends are not comparable to children.'

24. Oréníbi: Oré   ní   ibi
Good-HTS have evil
'Good (often) comes with some evil.'

25. Éhọniyọ̀tán: É   (è)   họni   yọ̀   tán
HTS NEG exist-person be-happy finish
'Nobody experiences unlimited joy.'

26. Aróniyọ̀:   a-   rí   òní   yọ̀
AGENT see today be-happy
'One who rejoices in the blessings of (seeing) today'

27. Ikúbanjẹ́:   Ikú   ba   (ohu)n jẹ́
Death spoil thing   spoil
'Death has spoilt things.'

28. Baiyere (Bayéńrè)   (I)bi   ayé   ń   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. Atùhọ̀kọ́   (y)a tù   hì   ọkọ́
 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.)

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5.4. Òwọ́rọ̀ Names

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

31. Èhímoní: Èhí   mo   ní
                   This   1SG.NOM   have
                   'This is the one I have.'/ 'This which I have'

32. Mákèlé: Mi   á   (à)   kọ̀   èlé
                   1SG.NOM   HTS NEG   reject addition
                   'I do not mind an addition.'

33. Mokèlú: Mo   ke   ìlú.
                   1SG   be-surprise town
                   'I am a surprise to the community.'

34. Àjọrò: à-   jọ   rò
                   THEME   together   think
                   'A collective decision/agreement'

35. Bọnibádé: (I)bi   ọni   bá   dé
                   Place   person may   reach
                   'Wherever one gets to' (indicating the need to be adaptable)

36. Ìlúkámidi: Ìlú   ká   mi   odi
                   town surround 1SG.ACC fence
                   'The community surrounds me (in support) like a fence.' (This indicates communal support.)

37. Ọmọ́sàyìn: Ọmọ́   se   àyìn
                   Child-HTS   do   back
                   'Children hold forth for dead parents.'

38. Òdímáyọ̀:   Òdí   má   yọ̀
                   Enemy-HTS   NEG   rejoice
                   'Oh enemies, do not rejoice.'

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39. Ọmáboni: Ọmá   bo   ọni
                          Child-HTS cover person
                          'Children are a covering.'

40. Beridá: (I)bi erí dá   (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, Ẹ̀gbẹ̀, Mọ̀pà, Pọ́nyàn, and Ilái. The following are some of their traditional personal names selected for this study.

41. Mésìrìn: Mé   (è)   sì   rìn
                          1SG.NOM-HTS NEG wrong walk
                          'I have not missed my way.'

42. Òsámèyàn: Òsá   mọ̀ 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. Ojúmorọ́:   Ojú mo   rọ́
                          Eyes 1SG.NOM endure
                          'I endured.'

45. Ibọniésedé: Ibi ọni é   (è)   se dé
                          Place person HTS NEG do reach
                          'Beyond the extent of one's labour'

46. Òsátómọni: Òsá   tó   mọ ọni
                          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. Òsànim̄:   Òsà (ni   ó)   ni   m̄
                  Deity (FOC HTS) own 1SG.ACC
                  'The Deity own me.'/ 'I belong to the gods.'

49. Médutọni: Mé   (è)   du   ti   ọni
                  1SG.NOM -HTS NEG fight-over that-of person
                  'I am not contending for another person's things.'

50. Méjòwògbé: Mé   (è) jẹ́   owó 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, desententialised, 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)   dù   ìbì   → Médùbì
          1SG-NOM -HTS NEG fight-over birth
          'I do not fight over birthright.'

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

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

Onì é (è) to   ọràn[5]   → Onìétọran
Today HTS NEG worth/up issue
'The current time/event is not worth talking about.'

Ìjùmú

É   (è) se èmi kì   mó   sé → 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 ọni kí   se ọmọ → Ésọnikísọmọ
HTS NEG be person COMP-HTS do child
'No human being creates children.'

Owé

Ìweré[6]   (è) jọ   ọmọ   → Ìweréèjọmọ
Friends-HTS NEG be-like child
'Friends are not comparable to children.'

É (è) họni   yọ̀   tán → Éhọniyọ̀tán
HTS NEG exist-person be-happy finish
'Nobody experiences unlimited joy.'

Ọ̀wọ́rọ̀

Mi   á   (à) kọ̀ èlé   → Mákèlé
1SG.NOM HTS NEG reject addition
'I do not mind an addition.'

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[5]   Cf. the **ọ̀ràn** in **Ọ̀rànmíyàn** in mainstream Yoruba culture.
[6]   Cf. orin **ìwéréǹde** 'children songs' in SY and other dialects.

  Òdí[7]   má yò   → Òdímáyò
  Enemy-HTS NEG rejoice
  'Oh enemies, do not rejoice.'

Ìyàgbà

  Mé   (è) sì rìn   → Mésìrìn
  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.'

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

  Mé   (è) du ti ọni → Médutọni
  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 **Òdímáyò** in Ọ̀wọ́rọ̀ (where **má** denotes negation), there is a phonetically-hanging/faint[8] 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

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[7] Cf. **odì/olódì** in SY and other Yoruba dialectal expressions like **odì yíyàn kò dára**.
  'Enmity/Enstragement is not good.' and **olódì mi** 'my enemy'. Interestingly, **odì** and
  olódì are interchangeable/synonyms in this Okun example.

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

similarly structured names derived from frozen negative clauses in other dialects of Yoruba, e.g. Àkúrẹ́, Ẹ̀gbá, Ìjẹ̀bú, Oǹdó, etc. (see names like Adéèboyèjẹ́ 'the crown does not spoil the chieftaincy', Fáàrótìkà 'Ifá does not stand with the wicked', Adéèṣidà 'the crown does not do evil', Aládéèjẹ̀bi '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- rí òní yọ̀ → Aróniyọ̀
> 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'

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[9]   See also Odù-ú   ù   ṣe   òtẹ̀   → Odùúùṣòtẹ̀ (often written as Odusọtẹ)
       Oracle-HTS NEG do   conspiracy
       'The oracle does not get involved in conspiracy.'

and **ká** 'all-round', share a single complement **ènìyàn** which is ellipsed/muted in the output because it is already understood from the context. The second V, **yọ̀** in **Arọ́niyọ̀**, 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 (Ilọri 2010, 2011a; Awobuluyi 2016; among others).

6.2.2. Possessive Type
This name type consists of **ọní/ọni** 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 Ilọri, 2011a, 2017; among many others). Our assumption in this paper is that {ọ-} 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 {ọ-} in such Okun names, as represented here.

ọ-　　　[ni　ọni　í　lẹbí]　　　→ Ọlọnílẹbí
AGENT　have　person　HTS　has-family
'One-who-has-people has a family.'

ọ-　　　[ní　ọni　í　dú　hì]　　　→ Olọ́nidúhì
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, Ọniémàyìn, Onìétọran, Médàyédú, Mélayé, Ìweréèjọmọ, Mákèlé, Òdímáyọ̀, 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   m̩   óro   → Ikúsemóro
Death do 1SG.ACC agony
'Death has hurt me badly.'

Alè̩   mo̩   èrù   → Alè̩mérú
Ground know cheats
(pronounced: Alè̩e̩mérúù)
'The earth knows the cheat/dubious fellow.'

Irú   kè   rà   → Irúkerà
Locust-bean-seed NEG rot
'Locust-bean seeds do not rot.'

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

Ayé   di   e̩gé̩   → Ayéde̩gé̩
Life/world become fragile
'Life / the world has become delicate.'

Alè̩   mo̩   ìkà   → Alè̩míkà
Earth know wicked-person
'The earth (posterity) knows the wicked.'

Ìbí é   jù   ùgbà   → Ìbíéjùgbà
Birth HTS more-than season
'Lineage is more significant than the birth season.'

Ikú   ba   (ohu)n jẹ́   → Ikúbanjẹ́
Death spoil thing   spoil
'Death has spoilt things.'

(y)a   tù   hì   ọkọ́   → Atùhọ̀kọ́
 No more see hoes
 'There is no more hoe.'

Mo   ke   ìlú.   → Mọkèlú
1SG be-surprise town
'I am a surprise to the community.'

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

Ọmọ́   se àyìn   → Ọmọ́sàyìn
Child-HTS do back
'Children hold forth for dead parents.'

Ọmá   bo   ọni   → Ọ̀máboni
Child-HTS cover person
'Children are a covering.'

Òsá   mọ   èyàn   → Òsámeyàn
Deity-HTS know destiny
'The deity knows destiny.'

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

Mo   tó   jésì   → 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;

Àyìn	mì	rò	ó	→ Àyìnmìró
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 (**Mî í rò** *àyìn* and **Mi dù** *akán*) 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 (FOC^0) in the Okun lects 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	mo	ní	_{<èhí>}[10]	→ Èhímoní
This	FOC	1SG.NOM	have	_{<this>}	

'I have THIS.'/ 'THIS I have'

Ojú	ø	mo	rọ́	_{<ojú>}	→ Ojúmorọ́
Eyes	FOC	1SG.NOM	endure		

'I endured.'

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[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.

Òsà   ø   _{<osà>}   ø   ni   ḿ   → Òsàniḿ
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 **Òsàniḿ** (see also *Ikúseṃóro* in Bùnú) is in the use of **òsà** which is evidently a cognate of òòṣà/òrìṣà 'deity' in mainstream Yoruba culture. Also, the use of the homogarnic **ḿ** as 1SG.ACC is not in any way strange in the Yoruba dialect continuum. Other well-known dialects of the language (e.g. Òkà, Ìkàrẹ́, Àkùngbá, Ìlishàn-Rẹmọ, etc.) use the same form in the Akókó and Ìjẹ̀bú regions of Yorubaland. What these confirm is that the structural forms of these indigenous Okun names lend credence to the view that Okun lects 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.

Ibi   ø   iyé   dí   _{<ibi>}   → Ibiyédí
Place REL mother-HTS filled _{<place>}
'Where a mother provides cover/support'

(I)bi ø   ọni   bá   dé   _{<ibi>}   → Bọnibádé
Place REL person may reach _{<place>}
'Wherever one gets to' (indicating the need to be adaptable)

Ibi   ø   ayé   ń   rè   _{<ibi>}   → Baiyere (Bayéńrè)
Place REL life/world PROG go _{<place>}
'Where life / the world is heading'

Ibi   ø   erí   dá   (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:

Ká   jọ   ti   ọni ?   → Kájọtọni
What-<u>be</u> 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 *Yorubaness* 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), desententialisation (which appears to be the most prominent), clipping, and other morpho-phonemic processes like 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 Okun lects are linguistically part and parcel of the Yoruba dialect continuum.

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