

# Wrong Forms of some Yorùbá Personal Names: Some Phonological and Sociolinguistic Implications

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## Abstract

In this study, we examine the wrong forms of some Yorùbá sentences that have become personal names through compounding. The data were extracted from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) lists of candidates that were considered for admission into three Nigerian Universities between the 2005 and 2010 academic sessions. The names extracted from that source were compared with names written in the staff lists of the three Universities in Nigeria. The wrongly written names were recorded on tapes and some native speakers were asked to listen to them to determine their correctness. We argue that wrong forms of some Yorùbá sentential/personal names are common occurrences and establish that they are traceable to the freedom granted by Yorùbá orthography developers. We also argue that, the confusion that results from the different spelling forms of some Yorùbá personal names is seriously observable in social interactions, labour market, schools or Colleges of Education/Universities, Embassies and Nigerian civil service both Federal and State and that court affidavits become imperative to authenticate or reconcile both the wrong and the correct forms for the purposes of admissions, appointments and overseas travelling documents. Similarly, we show that the position of the Yorùbá orthography developers has resulted in a loss of the actual pronunciation of some Yorùbá personal names which has severe implications for the semantic contents of the names as well as implications for the rich religious, cultural and philosophical heritage of the Yorùbá people.

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## 1 Introduction

Research studies conducted by Samuel Èkúndayò (1977: 55–77), Funṣò Akinnásò (1980: 275–304), Solomon Oyètádé (1995: 532f.) and Reuben Ìkòtún (2010a: 170–172, 2013: 70–73) claim that a Yorùbá personal name can be a sentence which is a combination of a noun phrase and a verb phrase (NP+VP) or a noun phrase and a noun phrase (NP+NP) or a verb phrase (VP). Examples of a noun phrase and a verb phrase ( NP + VP) are as follows.

	NP	VP		
a(i)	Baba	tún dé	=	Babatúndé
	Father	again come		The father has reincarnated.

(ii)	Ọmọ	rí	adé	yò	=	Ọmọradéyò
	Child	see	crown	rejoice		A child is happy because she has seen a crown.

Some examples of a noun phrase and a noun phrase (NP + NP) also are indicated below.

(iii)	Adé +	ọlá	=	Adéọlá
	Crown	honour		a crown of honour
(iv)	Ọlá +	Olúwa	=	Ọláolúwa
	Honour	Lord		the Lord's honour

In addition, verb phrase (VP) examples which are imperative sentences include the following

(v)	Jókòó	ti	ọlá	=	Jókòóọlá	
	sit	beside	honour		sit beside (by the side of) honour	
(vi)	Ja	ogun	mú	olú	=	Jagunmólú
	fight	war	take	honour		fight and conquer

Writing on the social use of Yorùbá personal names, Solomon Oyètádé (1995: 532) reports that any Yorùbá sentential/personal name may appear in a full form, a shortened form or an initial form (cf. Lewis 2004: 311; Ìkòtún 2010a: 170). For example, the name *Jádesọlá* can be realized as follows:

b(i)	Jáde	sí	ọlá	=	Jádesọlá
	go out to	wealth			go in search of wealth
(ii)	Jáde			=	Jáde
	go out				go out
(iii)	Sí	ọlá		=	Sọlá
	to	wealth			to wealth
(iv)	Ọlá			=	Ọlá
	wealth				wealth
(v)	Jáde	sí	ọlá	=	j
	go out to	wealth			initial form

In support of the social use of Yorùbá personal names, Reuben Ìkòtún (2010a: 175) advances four rules that can guide the shortening of Yorùbá sentential/personal names in social interactions and the rules are as follows:

- Rule 1** Any Yorùbá personal name that has two syllables and which has not been reduced to initials should be retained as a name.
- Rule 2** Any Yorùbá personal name that has three syllables and which has not been reduced to initials can be retained or reduced to the first two syllables or the last two syllables.
- Rule 3** Any Yorùbá personal name that has four syllables and which has not been

reduced to initials can be retained or reduced to either the first two syllables, the last three syllables or to the last two syllables.

**Rule 4** Any Yorùbá personal name that has more than four syllables and which has not been reduced to initials can be retained or reduced to either the last two syllables, the last three syllables, two syllables that have semantic/cultural meaning(s) or have the first syllable deleted.

Reuben Ìkòtún (2010a: 171) also reports that some Yorùbá personal names are wrongly written in terms of present day orthography. For instance, where two syllables that have identical vowels occur together, only one syllable is written. Some examples are provided under groups A and B below.

**Group A: Correctly written**

Ọládípúpò/Ọládíípò

Ládípúpò/Ládiípò/Díípò

Adéşééké

Àánú

Adéníkèè

**Group B: Wrongly written**

Ọládípò

Ládípò/Dípò

Adéşeké

Ànú

Adéníkè

The correctly written names are derived as follows:

- by the deletion of {p}; by assimilation between {i} and {u} and contraction:  
Ọlá di púpò → Ọlá di úpò → Ọládíípò
- by the deletion of {o}:  
Ọládíípò → Ládiípò
- by reducing the name to the last three syllables:  
Ládiípò → Díípò
- by the deletion of {k}; by assimilation between {e} and {i} and contraction:  
Adé şe kíkè → Adé şe íkè > Adéşééké
- by the deletion of {n}; by assimilation between {a} and {i}:  
Ànínú → Àínú → Àánú
- by the deletion of {i} and the assimilation of the low tone and contraction:  
Adé ní ikè → Adéníkèè

According to Reuben Ìkòtún (2010a: 171), the forms under group **B** are used by many Yorùbá language writers whereas the forms under group **A** should be used. This is because the forms and the pronunciation of the names under group **A** agree with the current Yorùbá orthography. But it should be understood that the Yorùbá orthography has evolved over time and it has undergone reforms at different times. Our argument that **A** is the right form is based on the current orthography of Yorùbá language and the names under **B** that are not in conformity with the current Yorùbá orthography are well understood by Yorùbá speakers especially those that are conversant with the old and current Yorùbá orthographic representations. However, the questions which seemed not to have been addressed in any research work are: (1) why are some Yorùbá personal names wrongly written? (2) are there

consequences for the use of some Yorùbá personal names that allow odds between spelling and the Yorùbá sound system or that have inconsistent or contradictory spelling forms in social interactions? These questions will be addressed in this research work.

## 2 Yorùbá Orthography

Several attempts have been made by governments, organizations and scholars to design and bring Yorùbá orthography in line with actual speech (cf. Crowther 1852; Bowen 1858; Bámbóṣé 1967, 1990; Afọlayan 1969; Oyèlárán 1971; Awóbùlúyì 1978; Akinlabí 1985; Owólabí 198; Ajíbóyè 2005, 2007). For example, in 1844, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) played a significant role through Bishop Ajayi Crowther to develop an orthography for the Yorùbá language (cf. Okediji et al. 197; Aróhunmólàṣe 1987). In 1963 also, a seminar was organised at Ìbàdàn to address the problems that faced languages in Africa. Participants at the conference included some UNESCO members and they agreed that authors should use the spellings of the words written below in their writings (cf. A Report on Yorùbá Orthography 1969).

nwọn	they
aiyé	world
ẹnyin	you
ọkùnrin	male
obìnrin	female
òn	he, she, it
àyà	wife
fún u	give him, her, it
rán a	send him, her, it
pín i	share it
wọn	them
eni ti	the person that
nigbagbogbo	every time
nitoripe	because
jẹki	let
wi pe	say that
wipe	that
ng	tense

We can raise two questions from the 1963 committee's work.

- How could ‘*ayé*’ (world) which has Mid-High tone contour with two syllables of equal strength, duration and amplitude become ‘*aiyé*’ (world) a word, which has Mid-Mid-High tone contour with three syllables?
- How could vowels [u], [a], and [i], which are not nasal vowels replace nasal vowels in *fún* (give), *rán* (send) and *pín* (share) as pronouns in the object position?

However, it must be pointed out that, in order to distinguish *ayé* 'world' from 'àyè' 'space' the committee recommended *ayié* for 'world'. But, they forgot that tones can do that. They also endorsed *àiyà* for 'chest' and *aya* for 'wife' for the same reason.

In January 1966, a committee was set up by the Western State of Nigeria to look into the possibility of recommending a Yorùbá orthography that would be standard for the whole region. In its recommendations, the committee resolved the linguistic ambiguity raised in question (b) and left the question (a) unanswered. They recommended the following (cf A Report on Yorùbá Orthography 1969: 50):

fún un	give him, her, it
pín in	share it
rán an	send him, her, it

The enlarged committee on Yorùbá orthography of 1969 (by the Western State Government of Nigeria) introduced the use of hyphen into words that have nasal vowels (cf. A Report on Yorùbá Orthography 1969: 1f.). For example,

òfònòn > òfòn-òn 'a house rat'  
 tiníntín > 'tin-ín-tin-ín 'robin'

However, neither the 1963 committee nor the Western State of Nigeria committee discussed spelling and pronunciation norms of Yorùbá personal names.

The committee that succeeded in removing redundant letters which did not have any grammatical or lexical function in Yorùbá spellings was the committee set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria. This was in 1974 (cf. Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCC) 1974/75: 1–18). For example, the use of vowel [i] which does not have any grammatical or lexical function in words like *aiyé* 'world', *èiyè* 'bird', *aiya* 'wife' and a few others is discouraged. The committee also discussed spelling and pronunciation norms of Yorùbá personal names and argued in section 25 of the general clause of the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCC) (1974/75: 8) that:

The above recommendations should not necessarily apply to the spellings of personal names, not to poetry, dialectal transcriptions, dictionaries, grammars, and other technical writings, where authors should have the freedom to depart from the generally accepted orthography if the nature of their material or presentation compels them to do so. (JCC 1974/75: 8)

But, we can say that adherence to this clause in relation to personal names has resulted in a loss of the actual pronunciation of some Yorùbá personal names. Writing represents a permanent feature and whatever is written would remain for generations just as we now see wrongly written names in relation to modern Yorùbá orthography in books and official documents that have been written either in the past or now. It must be emphasized that the clause is totally at variance with accuracy; one of the principles of a good orthography. According to Kay Williamson (1984: 7), accuracy means that "an orthography must agree with the sound system of the language for which it is intended". Although, there are languages like English and French in which the spelling and pronunciation norms are at odds with this principle, this is not the case with Yorùbá. The Yorùbá spelling and the sound system must

agree. For example, the Yorùbá spelling and the sound system endorse *Oládipúpò*, *Oládiípò*, *Ládipúpò*, *Ládiípò* and *Díípò* (Riches have become many) as already discussed in the introductory section of this paper and not *Oládipò*, *Ládipò*, and *Dipò* which are commonly written and commonly used. The commonly written forms are not in agreement with the actual speech of the speakers of the language and therefore do not have lexical meaning.

Similarly, we are of the view that we should not trade freedom for accuracy and, even if the clause has not been revised or abrogated, the onus is on scholars to point out the negative effects of the freedom on the history of the Yorùbá language and Yorùbá culture. It would amount to a serious dereliction of duty if we just close our eyes to the confusion that results from the freedom granted by the JCC 1974/75. The confusion is seriously observable in social interactions, labour market, schools or Polytechnics/Colleges of Education/Universities, Embassies and Nigerian civil service both Federal and State. For example; there are instances of those who make serious attempts at correcting their names when wrongly pronounced by others, especially by Yorùbá youths whose competence in Yorùbá is not profound enough, based on the wrong forms in social interactions or in offices. Sometimes, the accusers (when older than the accused) may want to intimidate the accused by saying "Ìwọ̀ ọ̀ kì í ẹ̀ Yorùbá ni?" 'Are you not a Yorùbá person?'. Other people who may be around during the time of address will also show their disagreement. Some will laugh at the addressee. Some will pronounce the name correctly and expect the addressee to learn from such pronunciation and follow suit. Some will hiss and shake their heads and look at the addressee with disappointment. Some will even start to condemn the school system that *kò sí iwé mó* (there is no learning any more) while some will say: *a ọ̀ tiẹ̀ mọ̀ ohun tí wọ̀n ñ kọ̀ ní school mó* 'we do not know what they are learning in the school any more'.

In addition, during registration exercise in the university, some newly admitted students are denied registration because of the inconsistencies in the spelling forms of their names or when the spelling forms of their names in their certificates do not tally with the spelling forms of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) lists. For example, if an applicant's name on his certificate reads *Adékàmbí* and that of the JAMB list reads *Adékàńbí* as they have been approved by Yorùbá orthography developers (though the correct spelling form is {*Adékàńbí*} from *Adé kàn mí bí?* ('Am I also entitled to the throne/crown?'), after the deletion of vowel [i] and contraction), the registration officer will insist that *Adékàmbí* is not *Adékàńbí* because of the difference in the two consonants [m] and [n]. Questions such as: *báwo ni orúkọ ẹ ẹ̀ yàtò séyìí tó wà lóri certificate ẹ?* ('why is it that your name is different from the one that appears on your certificate?') are normally asked. The usual reply would be *Ọ̀gá tó register wa fún WAEC ló kọ̀ bẹ̀ẹ̀* ('The master/teacher that registered us for WAEC wrote it like that'). There have been occasions where such candidates have been asked to either go to their former schools to get a letter correcting their names or to swear to an affidavit in a court that *Adékàmbí* is also *Adékàńbí*.

Similarly, Yorùbá candidates seeking admissions to higher institutions are not the only ones that face the problem of spelling errors. Yorùbá civil servants and Yorùbá travelers at Embassies too face the problem of spelling errors. For example, in the Nigerian Civil Service, verification exercise is done periodically by the Federal and State Ministries to determine ghost workers and ghost pensioners. Therefore, workers and pensioners who have the wrong

forms of their names on their certificates tend to be complacent with the wrong forms for fear of being accused of falsification of certificates. There are also some who say *Yorùbá òde òní kò tiè yé àwọn* ('The Yorùbá that is taught today is not clear to them'). Some of the people who claim ignorance of contemporary Yorùbá studies insist that the incorrect forms of their names should be used even when attempts to write the correct forms are put in place. Yorùbá travelers at Embassies also insist on the wrong forms that appear on their certificates and applications for visa otherwise the Embassies may turn down their applications or they may be asked to produce a court affidavit to support the differences in the spelling forms of their names.

Furthermore, it can be observed from the above review that the odds between the spelling and sound system of some Yorùbá personal names are caused by different Yorùbá orthographic representations that are not in agreement with the actual speech. In fact, wrong forms of some Yorùbá personal or sentential names occur right from the primary school level where the Yorùbá orthography that was in use then was not in conformity, in some cases, with actual speech. At the primary school, registration officers or teachers were, in the past, especially before independence, either Standard Six, Modern Three, Grade III or Grade II certificate holders, or in recent times, are either Grade II or NCE holders. These teachers learned the old Yorùbá orthography which was later revised. In the secondary school also, especially between the 60s and early 80s, secondary school principals would always deploy graduates of History and Geography to teach Yorùbá. The principals used to say "Şe bí Yorùbá ni" ('Afterall, it is just Yorùbá'), meaning that the teaching of Yorùbá does not require special training. So, the teachers' knowledge of Yorùbá phonological processes is very limited and this is as a result of the shortcomings identified in the Yorùbá orthography that was in use then. Some of those whose names have been wrongly written at the primary school level, based on the old orthography, later frowned at such spellings or forms after they have acquired sufficient training in Yorùbá at the University level especially after the 1974 revision of the Yorùbá orthography. Those who feel particularly worried about the wrong spellings or forms are the few ones who took their degrees in Yorùbá language at the University. The 1974/75 committee which had the opportunity of removing the odds between the spelling and sound system did not do so. Instead, the committee encouraged it. In the course of this paper, we will show also that the use of the wrong forms of Yorùbá personal names has severe implications for the semantic contents of the Yorùbá personal names as well as for the religious belief and philosophy of the Yorùbá people.

### 3 Findings

The data that were extracted from our findings are presented below. They are just some examples of the wrongly written names and they are sufficiently representative of the wrongly written Yorùbá personal names.

- |    |            |                          |
|----|------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Ajéìgbé    | Money act of lifting     |
| 2. | Ọlàítán    | Wealth act of exhausting |
| 3. | Aládéìbínú | The owner of crown anger |
| 4. | Fádójútímí | Ifá put me to shame      |

5.	Fábùlújé	Ifá destroyed the town
6.	Fáṣòrànti	Ifá found it difficult to solve problems
7.	Fáyìnminù	Ifá abandoned me
8.	Fágbámígbé	Ifá forgot me
9.	Ọláṣebikan	Wealth dwells/stays in one place
10.	Olówókéré	A rich person is not important
11.	Akínmòrìn	A valiant knows walk
12.	Taní mòwò	Who knows upbringing
13.	Yemitàn	Do me not deceive
14.	Awóseyìn	Cult do praise
15.	Awóseké	Cult do pamper
16.	Ọláníkẹ	Riches have decay
17.	Adéníkẹ	Crown has decay

However, as this discussion progresses we will show that the names listed above are sentences and that, at word boundary, they are wrongly derived and therefore, their semantic contents are not in consonance with Yorùbá cultural worldview.

#### 4 Analysis

Deletion is a process in which a segment is lost, it is a robust phonological process in the Yorùbá language and Yorùbá language scholars that include Ayò Bámgbóṣé (1967: 6, 1990: 43), Ọládélé Awóbùlúyì (1978:149) and Francis Oyèbádé (1998: 63) among others have documented the process. In normal speech a vowel, a consonant or a lexical item may be deleted, e.g.

- 18(i) Olú kò lọ → Olú ò lọ ('Olú did not go')
- 18(ii) Adé wá sí ilé → Adé wálé ('Adé came home')

The example in (18i) shows that the consonant [k] of the negative marker [kò] is deleted. The example in (18ii) indicates that the preposition [sí] is deleted and the vowel [i] of [ilé] (house) is also deleted. Despite the deletion of the items mentioned above, the surface forms in (i) and (ii) are grammatical and acceptable to native speakers. With regard to Yorùbá Personal Names (YPNs) also, one can observe deletion in both written and speech forms. Consider in this regard the following data. However, in the analysis that will follow we will show that the names that are grouped into five sections below are not correctly derived.

##### Group one

- |     |            |                          |
|-----|------------|--------------------------|
| 19. | Ajéìgbé    | Money act of lifting     |
| 20. | Ọláítán    | Wealth act of exhausting |
| 21. | Aládéìbínú | The owner of crown anger |

**Group two**

- |     |            |  |
|-----|------------|--|
| 22. | Fádójútímí | Ifá put me to shame                      |
| 23. | Fábùlújé   | Ifá destroyed the town                   |
| 24. | Fásòràntì  | Ifá found it difficult to solve problems |
| 25. | Fáyìnminù  | Ifá abandoned me                         |
| 26. | Fágbàmígbé | Ifá forgot me                            |
| 27. | Ọláṣebikan | Wealth dwells/stays in one place         |

**Group three**

- |     |           |                                |
|-----|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 28. | Olówókéré | A rich person is not important |
|-----|-----------|--------------------------------|

**Group four**

- |     |           |                      |
|-----|-----------|----------------------|
| 29. | Akínmòrìn | A valiant knows walk |
| 30. | Tanímòwò  | Who knows upbringing |
| 31. | Yemitàn   | Do me not deceive    |
| 32. | Awóseyìn  | Cult do praise       |
| 33. | Awóṣeké   | Cult do pamper       |

**Group five**

- |     |         |                   |
|-----|---------|-------------------|
| 34. | Ọláníkè | Riches have decay |
| 35. | Adéníkè | Crown has decay   |

In sentences 19, 20 and 21 below, the wrongly derived and used forms show that a segment [kí] of the habitual negative marker [kì í] is deleted, whereas it is only the consonant [k] that should be deleted. For example;

	<b>Underlying Form</b>	<b>Correct Surface Form</b>	<b>Wrong Surface and used Form</b>
19.	Ajé kí gbé 'Money is not spent in vain'	Ajéígbé	Ajéígbé 'Money act of lifting'
20.	Ọlá kí tán 'Honour does not perish'	Ọláítán	Ọláítán 'Wealth act of exhausting'
21.	Aládé kí bínú 'A king (a crown owner) should not be angry'	Aládéíbínú	Aládéíbínú 'The owner of crown anger'

Even where the bearers of the names and others write the names as wrongly derived above, the fact of the spoken form of the language clearly demonstrates that the wrongly derived forms do not accurately represent the spoken forms.

There is a deletion of the negative marker [kò] thereby giving wrong written and used forms as compared with the spoken forms in sentences 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27 below.

	<b>Underlying Form</b>	<b>Correct Surface Form</b>	<b>Wrong Surface and used Form</b>
22.	Fá kò dójú tí mí 'Ifá did not put me to shame'	Fáòdójútímí/Fáàdójútímí	Fádójútímí 'Ifá put me to shame'
23.	Fá kò bàlú jẹ́ 'Ifá did not destroy the town'	Fáòbàlújẹ́/ Fáàbàlújẹ́	Fábùlújẹ́ 'Ifá destroyed the town'
24.	Fá kò ẹ̀ ọ̀ràn tí 'Ifá can solve any problem'	Fáòşòràntì/Fáàşòràntì	Fáşòràntì 'Ifá found it difficult to solve problems'
25.	Fá kò yìn mí nù 'Ifá does not leave me alone'	Fáòyìn mínù/Fáàyìn mínù	Fáyìn mínù 'Ifá abandoned me'
26.	Fá kò gbà mí gbé 'Ifá does not forget me'	Fáògbàmígbé/Fáàgbàmígbé	Fágbàmígbé 'Ifá forgot me'
27.	Olá kò şebì kan 'Wealth does not do evil'	Oláòşebìkan/Oláàşebìkan	Oláşebìkan 'Wealth dwells/stays in one place'

However, each of the correctly derived forms above has two options. The consonant [k] of the negative maker [kò] can be deleted in the first option. In the second option also, assimilation can occur between the vowels [a] and [o] after the deletion of the consonant [k] of the negative maker [kò].

In the sentence 28 below there is a deletion of the negative marker [kò] thereby giving wrong written and used form as compared with the spoken form which shows only the deletion of the consonant [k].

	<b>Underlying Form</b>	<b>Correct Surface Form</b>	<b>Wrong Surface and used Form</b>
28.	Olówó kò kéré 'The rich men are important'	Olówóòkéré	Olówókéré 'A rich man is not important'

One notes below the wrong deletion of segments like [rí] [wí] [tí] [yín] and [kí] in the wrongly derived and used forms in sentences 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33. Whereas what should be deleted are consonants [r], [w], [t], [y] and [k]. For example,

	<b>Underlying Form</b>	<b>Correct Surface Form</b>	<b>Wrong Surface and used Form</b>
29.	Akín mò rírìn 'A valiant person has come at the right time'	Akínmòṛnìn	Akínmòrìn 'A valiant knows walk'
30.	Ta ní mò wíwò 'Who knows how to take care of?'	Tanímòṛnwò	Tanímòwò 'Who knows upbringing'
31.	Ye mi títàn 'Do not continue to deceive me'	Yemiítàn	Yemitàn 'Do me not deceive'
32.	Awó ɣe yínyìn 'Cult can be praised'	Awóseéyìn	Awóseyìn 'Cult do praise'
33.	Awó ɣe kíké 'Cult can be cherished'	Awóseéké	Awóseké 'Cult do pamper'

However, the correctly derived forms in sentences 29 and 30 show the use of nasal vowel [õ] after the deletion of consonants [r] and [w] and assimilation between [ɔ] and [i]. The reason is that the consonant that occurs before the oral vowel [ɔ] is a nasal consonant. In sentence 31, it is only contraction that occurs after the deletion of the consonant [t] while it is the case of assimilation between the vowels [e] and [in] in sentence 32 and [e] and [i] in sentence 33 and contraction after the deletion of consonants [y] and [k].

The sentences below show a deletion of the vowel of [ní]. There is also a relinking of the high tone of the deleted vowel to the initial vowel of the noun that occurs after the preposition [ní]. However, Ayò Bámgbóṣé (1990: 46) reports that there is an assimilated low tone in Yorùbá which occurs where there is a deletion of one of two vowels at word boundary where the vowels bear H and L tones respectfully. The assimilated low tone is often disregarded in the written form, even when the spoken form reveals it; e.g.

	<b>Underlying Form</b>	<b>Correct Surface Form</b>	<b>Wrong Surface and used Form</b>
34.	Ọlá ní ikẹ 'Honour has care'	Ọláníkẹẹ	Ọláníkẹ 'Riches have decay'
35.	Adé ní ikẹ 'Crown has care'	Adéníkẹẹ	Adéníkẹ 'Crown has decay'

## 5 General Overview

This paper has acknowledged the view of the 1974 committee on Yorùbá orthography in the area of freedom to write names as bearers deem fit. The concern of the present paper is the difference between the pronounced forms of Yorùbá personal names and the written forms. No doubt, this paper has demonstrated that linguistic items that are articulated in the spoken forms are omitted in the written forms. The question is: does the omission have any

significant implication for the language? The answer is yes. The wrong forms have severe implications for the semantic contents of the names which in turn have implications for the religious belief and philosophy of the Yorùbá people. Talking about the religious implications, the rendering of the names in 23 where the good deeds of Ifá (the Yorùbá god of wisdom) are misrepresented calls for serious concern. For example, we are told that *Fáòbàlújé* or *Fáàbàlújé* 'Ifá did not destroy the town' but the Yorùbá orthography developers endorse *Fábùlújé* 'Ifá destroyed the town'. The Yorùbá people see their gods as good intermediaries between them and their God. So, the Yorùbá people see the gods as reliable, responsible, efficient and always ready to assist in times of need. But, the freedom granted by the Yorùbá orthography developers presents the gods as unreliable and irresponsible. In fact, there may be a greater justification, apart from Christianity, for some Yorùbá people who change the noun phrases (NPs) of their names because of the bad image endorsed by the Yorùbá orthography developers.

Similarly, the underlying representations of names in 29 and 35 confirm previous findings that Yorùbá personal names, like other African names, are known to have elaborate linguistic structure and semantic contents (cf. Èkúndayò 1977: 55–77; Akínnásò 1980: 275–304, Adéníyì 2004: 149–157; Ìkòtún 2010a: 169–186, 2013: 68–73). For example, names like *Akínmòṣnrìn* 'A valiant person has come at the right time' and *Adéníkèjé* 'Crown has care' have linguistic structure and semantic contents. However, the surface representations or the wrongly derived forms of the data endorsed by the Yorùbá orthography developers are not in harmony with what African or Yorùbá personal names are known for and this position which shows odds between the spelling and sound system is not the best for understanding the linguistic structure and the rich cultural values contained in Yorùbá personal names.

## 6 Conclusion

We have examined the wrong forms of some Yorùbá sentences that have become personal names through compounding. We have argued that the wrong forms of some Yorùbá personal names are common occurrences and we have established that the wrong forms are traceable to the freedom granted by Yorùbá orthography developers. It has been argued also that the spelling and sound system of Yorùbá personal names are not at odds as it is the case in some other languages of the world and that the endorsement of the odds between the spelling and sound system of the wrong forms by Yorùbá orthography developers has resulted in a loss of the actual pronunciation of some Yorùbá personal names. This position whereby there are odds between the spelling and sound system of some Yorùbá personal names is not in harmony with what African or Yorùbá personal names are known for and it is not the best for understanding the linguistic structure and the rich cultural values contained in Yorùbá personal names.

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