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## **A MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF AWKA PERSONAL NAMES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This investigation focuses on Awka personal names. It tries to make morphological analysis to find out rules involved in name formation. We focused on names belonging to Almighty God 'chukwu'. Despite many works in Igbo culture and language, this field of morphological study has never been looked at within the framework of Awka hence the need for this study. Findings show that generally Awka names in relation to 'Chukwu' are highly productive except in some cases. The paper also suggests a further research in other aspects of Awka anthroponyms.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Awka is the local government headquarters of Awka South Local Government Area as well as the capital city of Anambra State in South Eastern Nigeria. Its population was 28,225 according to the census figures of 1991 (cf. National Population Commission 2006), however it is speculated that its population must have risen to 50,000 and above in 2009 because of the influx of individuals, organizations, government and private establishments and businesses as a result of its new status (since 1991) as the administrative headquarters of Anambra State. Awka comprises of thirty three villages grouped into two – Ezi and Ifite sections, and each section is divided into three and four quarters respectively as shown in fig. 1 below, (adapted from Offodile 1998:8)

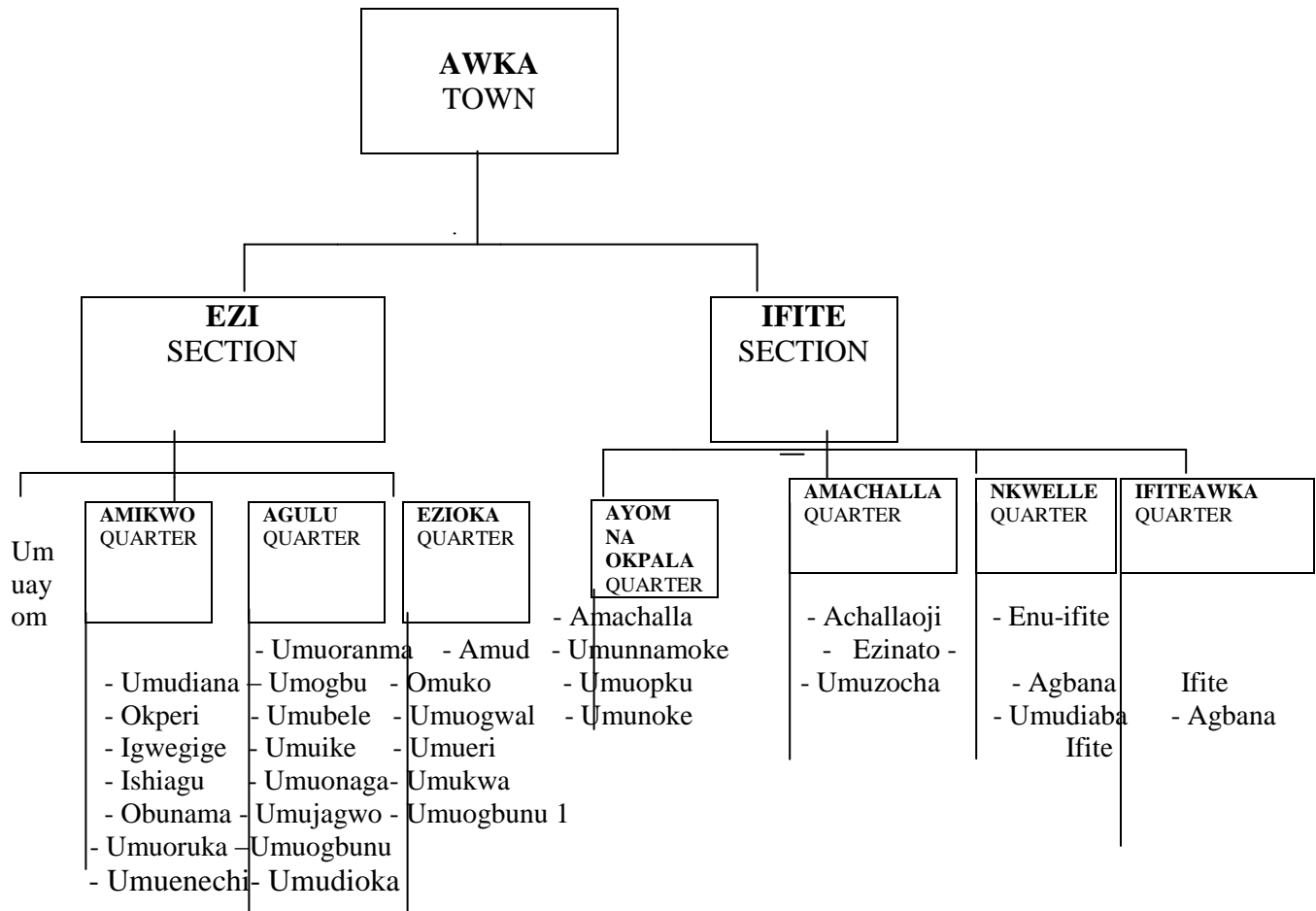


Fig. 1: The two sections of Awka, their seven quarters and 33 villages

Awka indigenes specialize in carving and according to Okafor et al (2008:19) they are skilled workers in iron and have foundries dating back several centuries. Their blacksmiths produce farming implements, hunting spears, weapons of offence and defence like guns and knives.

Okafor (1992) and Offodile (1998) documented the history, cultural activities, age- group practices and the numerous feasts in the Awka lunar calendar. It is not surprising that Okafor et al (2008:20) observed that ‘in every moon of the thirteen moons in the Igbo year, some communities somewhere are celebrating’.

**AWKA VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE**

The Awka people believe in one supreme God called Chi – ukwu (Chukwu) also addressed as ‘Olisa’, Chukwu – Okike, Eze Uwa ‘head of the universe’. After creating man, God gave him laws which must be obeyed. To ensure compliance, God created several gods who were assigned specific roles in the administration of the world. (see Okafor 1992:80-82). Talbot (1926:31) rightly points out that an understanding of Igbo traditional religion would facilitate a full appreciation of the fact that some personal names are also names of trees in Igbo land

eg. Àkpakā, Akpū, Ngwù, Ọjì and Ọjukwū are the names of trees as well as personal names. However, the main focus of this article is on God 'Chukwu'.

**THE ALMIGHTY GOD:** Our data show that a high percentage of names have God as its semantic base. Evidence from the studies mentioned above confirms this claim. In Okafor et al (2008) where five thousand Igbo personal names are listed, we observed that personal names with God as headword occur one hundred and thirty – seven times, (see Okafor et al 2008: 88 - 93), while it occurs as an element following a prefix in several places. Based on our data we have sub- categorized this large semantic group into four structural categories:

- i. God in sentence – initial position
- ii. God in nominal compound structures like Noun<sub>1</sub> and Noun<sub>2</sub> where it occurs as N<sub>2</sub>
- iii. V + N where V represents an imperative verb and N represents God.
- iv. Sentence final position, where God occurs sentence finally.

### **Chukwu in Sentence – Initial Position**

The names in this group are many and the processes forming them seem to be very productive. Consider the structure NP + VP → S. The NP which represents Chukwu is constant and co – occurs with a wide variety of verb phrase which make attributive comments on God.

Examples:

Chukwumà 'God knows everything'  
 Chukwubùezè 'God is king'  
 Chukwuezùgo 'God is sufficient'  
 Chukwudì 'God is alive'  
 Chukwunònso 'God is near us'  
 Chukwukàdibìà 'God is superior to traditional doctor'  
 Chukwunaekè 'God is the creator'  
 Chukwuèmeke 'God has done very well'  
 Chukwukèlù 'God created all'

### **Chukwu in Noun<sub>2</sub> position in a Nominal Compound**

A nominal compound is a phrase made up of at least two nouns, N<sub>1</sub> and N<sub>2</sub> which occur in genitival relationship as shown in the examples below:

Examples,

Ifeoma	chukwu	'Gods good creature'
Thing good	God	
Ike	chukwu	'Result of God's power'
Strength	God	
Okwu	chukwu	'God's word'
Ụzò	chukwu	'God's ways'
Way	God	

Clearly names in this category are quite few. The morphological rule forming them is unproductive in the Igbo language. (See Anagbogu 1990, 2000b)

### **Chukwu in Verb + Noun Structure**

The verbal category that enters into this relationship with God is the imperative verb as shown in the following examples:

Chète chukwu; Remember God,

Tòo chukwu; Praise God

This category is scantily represented in the lexicon of the Awka dialect of Igbo

### **Chukwu in Sentence – Final Position**

Ònyekāchukwu 'who is greater than God'

Ònye yìlì Chukwu 'who is like God'

Iḅeagāchukwu 'Nothing is beyond God'

Èkwùlùiràbê chukwu 'We are not meant to be equal before God'

Ikpedùbechukwu 'Judgment is in God's house'

Mmadìabūrōchukwu 'man is not God'

### **CONCLUSION**

That Chukwu can occur in as many as four positions in different morphological structures of Awka personal names is indicative not only of its productivity as an Igbo name source but strengthens other claims made in this regard in Kammelu (2008:212) Theophoric Igbo personal names refer to all such names derived from the names and attributes of the Supreme God. In fact Ubahakwe and Iwundu rate this highest in their frequency count.

### **SUMMARY**

'Chukwu' the Almighty God was identified among Awka personal names. It was discussed and further analyzed morphologically. It was observed that although Awka names are generally productive, in some cases it is not as observed in N<sub>1</sub> and N<sub>2</sub> formation of nominal compound because the rule forming them is unproductive even in Igbo language.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

As was observed earlier, this represents an initial work in the area of theocentric anthroponyms of Awka. More research is obviously required to enable us understand among other things the rule forming the non-theocentric names and other names relating to culture, syntax and sociology of Awka names. The need is urgent especially as our informants are few and very aged

### **CONCLUSION**

1. High and low tones and the downstep (which is a slightly lowered high tone) operate in Igbo tonology. Mid tone has not been established. The high tone is left unmarked throughout, while the low tone is marked with // and the downstep is marked with a macron / ¯ /. Tones in Igbo are marked on the vowel or syllabic nasal. Two groups of Igbo vowels exist: those that have [+ATR] which include **i, e, o, u** and those that have [-ATR] including **ĩ, ọ, ỳ, ả**.

Vowel harmony operates in Igbo, implying that in any given word, vowels belonging to one group must co-occur, except for /a/ which can occur with the [+ATR] group.

2. Bh as in /Òbhùbhè/ is the diagraph used to represent the bilabial fricative /β/

3. Iwundu (1994) as quoted in Oluikpe (2004:388) and reproduced in Kammelu (2009:211) classified the Igbo Personal names into the following broad categories.

i. Theophoric eg, Chukwu 'God', Ekè 'creator'

ii. Ideational eg. Amaechinà 'may hamlet continue to exist' Ndùbùisi 'life is a priority'

iii. Monumental eg. Ògbudimkpà 'the conqueror of a hero'

iv. Testimonial eg. Ùzõma 'successful adventure', Nwadì nobì 'a child in one's heart'

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