

## Aspects of Onomastics in Ngwa Igbo: Preliminary Notes

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### ABSTRACT

It is in this light that the researcher provides preliminary explanations on the sound, formation and meaning of Ngwa toponyms (place names) and Ngwa anthroponyms (personal names), as they occur in the Ngwa dialect of the Igbo Language. The primary means of data collection adopted in this study is the oral interviews of Key Informants (indigenous Ngwa people). Secondly, data were collected from already existing literature on the subject matter. Data gotten are analyzed linguistically, using the basic provisions of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Phonologically, the study establishes that the phonological nuances of aspiration, which is a characteristic feature of the Ngwa Igbo is also actively represented in their toponyms and anthroponyms. Other generative phonological processes such as assimilation, deletion and elision were shown to exist in the Ngwa names. Morpho-syntactically, the study shows that Ngwa toponyms and anthroponyms are associative constructions of two or more nominals which bear the semantics of the names. The study concludes that Ngwa anthroponyms and toponyms, properly analysed, bear in them the history, features and culture of the Ngwa people, and is a snippet into the past life of the Ngwa people.

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of language is a portal to understanding not only the way people communicate but also the intricate layers of culture, history, and identity that a language encapsulates. In the case of Ngwa Igbo, a dialect spoken by the Ngwa people in Nigeria, the significance of linguistic analysis extends far beyond mere communication. This exploration delves into the profound world of toponyms and anthroponyms, the place names and personal names, that are integral to Ngwa Igbo, revealing a rich tapestry of cultural heritage and historical connections.

Toponyms, as the names of places, are not just linguistic labels but are, in fact, repositories of history and meaning. Within the Ngwa Igbo community, these toponyms carry the stories of their ancestral lands, their geography, and the events that have unfolded on their soil. Each toponym, whether it is the name of a village, river, or landmark, serves as a testament to the deep-rooted connection the Ngwa people have with their land. Through linguistic analysis, we can unveil the narratives embedded in these names, offering a glimpse into the past and the cultural significance of the places they represent.

Anthroponyms, or personal names, reflect the unique cultural values and beliefs held by the Ngwa community. These names are not arbitrary but are carefully chosen to convey meaning, heritage, and symbolism. Analyzing anthroponyms provides a window into the Ngwa people's worldview, their societal norms, and their respect for individual identity. By understanding the conventions and nuances of these names, we can unlock the stories they tell about individuals and their roles within the Ngwa society.

This linguistic analysis endeavors to shed light on the intricate world of Ngwa Igbo, exploring the toponyms and anthroponyms that are vital components of this rich dialect. Through this examination, we aim to unravel the hidden layers of culture, history, and identity that these linguistic elements hold, with particular emphasis on their phonological, morpho-syntactic, and semantic features.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to provide a preliminary study into the analysis of both toponyms and anthroponyms in the Ngwa dialect of the Igbo language. Specifically, the following objectives shall guide the subsequent sections of this article. They include:

1. To identify peculiar phonological features of Ngwa toponyms and anthroponyms.
2. To examine the morphology of toponyms and anthroponyms in Ngwa dialect of Igbo.
3. To examine the relationship between the constituents and meanings of these toponyms and anthroponyms in Ngwa Igbo.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Toponyms

Toponyms are place names – the name for which a place is called. Overtime, studies have shown that the name of a place is influenced by some factors such as geographical placement, natural endowment, and oftentimes, situations that led to the creation of the place or even, it could be named after the founder of such a place. This phenomenon is not lacking in the ‘place-naming’ practices of the Igbo society in general, and the Ngwa people, specifically. Most place names today are what could be termed ‘Linguistic fossils’. Although they originated from our ancestors as descriptions of places in terms of topography, appearance, situation, use, ownership or other association, have generally lost their linguistic meaning over the course of time. This is perhaps not surprising considering the antiquity of places (Helleland, 2006).

A place acquires its name from various sources such as its physical location, environment, religion, association with deities, education, political importance, association with prominent personalities, industries, flora and fauna etc. Causes of origin and evolution of place names are both simple and complex, variegated and sometimes mysterious. Toponyms (place names) can be classified into different forms. Patrick (2021) cites Flom (1924) who classifies place names into habitation names, culture names and nature names. He noted that habitation names also known as eonym include names of habited places which include dwellings, farmsteads, hamlets, villages, cities, parishes, townships, neighbourhoods, regional names and names of countries. The culture-names include fields, parts of tilled areas, and grazing lands. It also includes roads, bridges, landing-places, fishing-places, dams, burial-places, play-grounds, etc. The nature names consist of topographical names, hills, mountains, rivers, brooks, lakes and others. In addition to this, place names can be grouped with reference to their formation which includes those of one word or element and those made up of two elements; compounds. This classification has linguistic underpinning. The type of classification crucial to this study is the one with linguistic orientation

In the context of the Ngwa, toponyms are names used to identify and refer to specific geographical places, landmarks, or regions within the Ngwa-speaking area. These names are crucial for communication, navigation, and preserving the cultural and historical identity of the Ngwa people. Toponyms in Ngwa are typically derived from the Ngwa dialect, reflecting the linguistic characteristics and cultural significance of the particular location. They can be descriptive, indicating the features of the area (e.g., rivers, hills), historical events, cultural elements, or notable individuals associated with that place. Understanding Ngwa toponyms is essential for appreciating the cultural heritage and historical roots of the Ngwa people. It offers valuable insights into their language, geography, traditions, and the significance of various places within their community.

## **Anthroponyms**

Anthroponyms are words or terms that refer to specific individuals, often in the context of naming and personal identification. They are used to denote the names of people. Anthroponyms encompass given names (first names) and surnames (last names) and play a crucial role in human communication and identification. Igbo anthroponyms are more than mere labels; they are linguistic and cultural artifacts that connect individuals to their roots, history, and community. They vary widely across cultures and languages, reflecting the diversity and complexity of naming conventions worldwide. Anthroponyms also have cultural, historical, and linguistic significance. Given names can be chosen for various reasons, including family tradition, religious or cultural significance, or personal preference, while surnames often carry information about a person's heritage, occupation, or location.

In linguistics and onomastics (the study of names), researchers study anthroponyms to understand naming patterns, naming conventions, and the cultural and social aspects of names within different societies. The study of anthroponyms can provide insights into a culture's values, history, and social structure.

This study hinges on linguistic anthropology. Linguistic anthropology is a diverse and interdisciplinary field that draws on principles from linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and other disciplines to study the multifaceted relationship between language and culture. It helps us better understand how language both reflects and shapes human societies and the ways in which people communicate and form identities in diverse cultural settings.

Linguistic anthropology mirrors how language is used as cultural resources and practices, and how language is viewed as a powerful tool used to view and understand the worldview and philosophy of a particular society. Foley (1997) while explaining the role of linguistic anthropology puts it thus:

Anthropological linguistics is that sub-field of linguistics which is concerned with the place of language in its wider social and cultural context, its role in forging and sustaining cultural practices and social structures. It views language through the prism of the core anthropological concept, culture, and as such seeks to uncover the meaning behind the use, misuse or non-use of language, its different forms, registers and styles. It is an interpretive discipline peeling away at language to find cultural understandings.

The language of the people is interwoven with their culture and thought. In linguistic anthropology, language is considered as a tool employed by the society. Language has the power to incite realities beyond the literal linguistic content of what is been talked about.

Duranti (1997) discussed three interconnected analytical notions that help to understand the function of language in culture. These are (i) performance, (ii) indexicality and (iii) participation. Of these three notions, indexicality succinctly captures the social nuances of Ngwa naming system. In indexicality, language is used as a tool through which socio-cultural world is constantly described, evaluated and reproduced. If words are indexically related to some objects and reality of the world it implies that words carry with them a power that transcends

beyond mere identification and tagging of people, objects and properties (Duranti, *ibid*). Indexes are signs that have some kind of existential relation with what they refer to spatial, temporal, social or personal (Silverstein, 1976).

### **Empirical Studies**

Onuoha (2016) examines the morphotonology of Igbo proper names (anthroponyms). The study illustrates how Igbo proper name structures use tones and other morphological devices to exhibit their morphological features. His study suggests that Igbo anthroponyms functions as call words, compass or guide, personal identity, prayers and wishes, expressions of gratitude, life stories, historical catch phrases, and, teacher of values. He analyses the phonological process of deletion, regressive assimilation, approximation, coalescence, and vowel elision as key components in the phonological derivation of Igbo proper names. The study further explains that Igbo proper names are Noun Phrase which can be further divided by their morphological features to obtain the following structure; Noun+Noun and Noun+Adjective. Apart from the Noun phrase names, the study also analyses the sentential Igbo proper names, their typology, methods, and conditions for deriving shorter names.

Onwukwe and Nwaeze (2017) adopted the Key Informant Interview method in analyzing the ethnographic study of toponyms in Ngwa. They identified sub-directional toponyms for the four-cardinal sun-based directions namely: Itu (north), Asa (south), Abayi/Ahiaba (east), and Osusu (west) in Ngwa. In their study, they were able to explain assumptions made in explaining non-directional toponyms i.e. toponyms with ancestral links:

Toponyms particularly directional toponyms occur as associative constructions i.e. made up of two nominal... but our assumptions is that if the first nominal turns out to be position (by that we mean is none of the subdirectional nominal in Ngwa and the four cardinal directions in Igbo), then the second nominal N2 establishes an ancestral link between the communities or one community and another. Onwukwe and Nwaeze (2017 pg. 85).

Establishing the ancestral linkage between Ngwa toponyms, they exemplified using Nsulu in Isialangwa South having about twenty-one communities in it. One of their major findings is that the ancestral linking nominal in Ngwa toponyms are different from the contemporary politically-demarcated entities called autonomous communities in Ngwa and that toponyms in Ngwa exhibit antonymic relationships in the aspect of position of settlement and seniority in settlement as well as ancestral linkages between them.

Onwukwe (2020) examines personal names associated with concubinage in traditional Ngwa Igbo society. He specifically analysed the practice of concubinage, and the sociocultural beliefs implied in the anthroponyms. The study shows that the Ngwa Igbo associate their experiences in concubinage to personal naming hence there are concubinage anthroponyms in Ngwa Igbo. It is further discovered in the study that the Ngwa have specific concubinage engagement terms which make up the sociocultural world of the Ngwa society and are implied or indexed in the anthroponyms as revealed through the interpretations of the anthroponyms. The study also found that concubinage

anthroponyms exhibit gender specificity and an antonymic relationship as reflected in their linguistic form/structure. The study concludes that personal names could be used as tools in an interesting and complex ways for the description and reproduction of the varied sociocultural world of societies

Patrick (2021) analyses the syntactic cum semantic relationship of toponyms in Igbo. In the study which adopted the qualitative design approach, he presents the toponyms in Igbo, stating their morpho-syntactic features. The major finding from his work underscores the derivability of the meaning of Igbo toponyms from their constituent morphological structure. He also notes that the toponyms in Igbo bear a characteristic feature of deriving most of their names from an eponymous father (ancestral link) more than exhibiting directional features, hence the predominant use of the suffix 'umu' or 'ndi'. Aside using eponymous ancestors, the predominant occupation of the natives could be used as a strategy for naming places e.g. Amaite, Amaidi, Amankwu etc. Finally, the study establishes that the toponyms of Igbo communities are syntactically made-up nominals (mostly N1 and N2) which are associative in their constructions.

### METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, the qualitative research approach was used. It adopted descriptive research design as it seeks to analyze place names (toponyms) and personal names (anthroponyms) in Ngwa dialect of Igbo. The study focuses on toponyms and anthroponyms as aspects of onomastics in Ngwa dialect of the Igbo language, selected from the different parts of the Ngwa area of Abia State. It primarily concerns itself with the linguistic features and properties of the toponyms and anthroponyms in Ngwa Onomasiology. The data used in this study were validated through semi-structured interviews conducted on 10 purposively selected participants drawn from the different parts of Ngwa. Also, internet materials, journals, and other written works related and relevant to the study were consulted and used. The researcher also analyzed the collected data descriptively.

Below is a table of the socio-demographics of the respondents in this study:

Table 1 Respondents

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Gender	Education	Local Government	Marital Status
Dee Adindu	72	Farmer	M	SSCE	Isialangwa North	Married
Mr. Ogbonna	74	Civil Servant (retired)	M	BA	Isialangwa South	Widower
Mrs. Peace	57	Teacher	F	NCE	Obioma Ngwa	Married
Chief Simeon	71	Palm wine Tapper	M	No formal education	Osisioma Ngwa	Married
Dr. Ihechiluru	64	Lecturer	M	Ph.D	Ugwunabo	Married
Igwe	66	Driver	M	SSCE	Aba North	Married
Mrs. Stella	69	Trader	F	SSCE	Aba South	Divorced

Mr. Ebube	80	Retired Driver	M	FSLC	Obioma Ngwa	Married
Dee Nkem	77	Hunter	M	No formal education	Aba North	Married
Dr. Amaechi	63	Lecturer	M	Ph.D	Isialangwa South	Married

The present-day Ngwa clan is made up of seven political enclaves called Local Government Areas in Abia State, south-eastern Nigeria. The local government areas are Aba north, Aba south, ObiNgwa, Osisioma, Ugwunagbo, Isiala Ngwa north and Isiala Ngwa south. The Ngwa covers an area of approximately 1350 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of more than 2 million (Nigerian Population Census 2006). Ngwa is bounded on the north by Umuahia division, on the west by Mbaize division and Etche clan. In the east by Cross River State, and in the south by Ukwa division, all in south-eastern Nigeria (Onwukwe, 2020 p.34)

The evolution and existence of the Ngwa clan as is known to man today is hinged on oral accounts. The first and most common of all is referred to as the Ngwam theory, documented by Uchendu (1962). Onuoha (2021) corroborates the account of Uchendu (1962) and narrates that the Ngwa, like many Igbo groups migrated to where they are presently, hundreds of years ago. As it were, migrations were usually triggered by various reasons such as wars, conflicts, land-hunger, population explosion and natural or unnatural threats. In the case of Ndi Ngwa, a combination of these factors necessitated their movement from their original place of settlement, Umunoha, a community in the Mbaitooli in Ikeduru in the present-day Imo State. It is certain that these movements away from Umunoha to the present day Ngwa land was facilitated by locally sourced implements and void of European civilizations, led by three brothers, Ukwu, Nwoha and Avosi.

One major impediment experienced during their movement was crossing the Imo River. All versions of the traditions on Ngwa migrations agree that the present name “Ngwa” was a consequence of the people’s dexterity in maneuvering the obstacle posed by the Imo River. Oral tradition has it that original beginners of the migration were equally the ones that later established settlement south of the Imo river. This narrative of Ngwa history suggests that it was the others who waited for the Imo River to recede that first called the crossers Ndi Ngwa, meaning fast (smart) people, suggesting that the name is synonymous to their fast manner of movement and dexterity. The others that did not cross the river along with ndi Ngwa, on the account of their insistence on roasting yam for food are called Ndi Ohuhu meaning roasters, by the Ngwa people.

However, Onwukwe (2020 p.34) cites (Oluikpe, 1979), who points out that aside the popular account of crossing the river, there is a second oral account, which submits that “the name of the original founder of Ngwa land, Ngwaukwu, seems to suggest the existence of the name before the crossing incident”. Onuoha (2021

p.2) notes ‘Ndi Ngwa were the largest homogenous nationality in Igbo land until the colonial administrations divided Ngwa land for administrative convenience. Before then, the Ngwa saw themselves as Onye Ngwa before claiming origin from any of their villages’. In a recent classification of the dialects of Igbo language, Nwaozuzu (2017 p.93) classifies the Ngwa dialect under the South Eastern Group of Dialects (SEGD). She notes that the dialect is spoken in 7 local government areas of the state, namely; Isiala Ngwa South, Isiala Ngwa North, Obioma Ngwa, Osisioma Ngwa, Ukwa East, and Ukwa West. However, our study focuses on the Ngwa speaking areas listed by Onwukwe (2020).

## RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Phonology of Ngwa Toponyms and Anthroponyms

Aspiration: Inferring from the data presented in Oluikpe (1979) the Ngwa dialect has forty-six consonants which are divided into 23 plosives, 18 fricatives, and 5 nasals. Nwaozuzu (2017) corroborates this figures and further states that the SEGD, and by implication, the Ngwa dialect, has eight vowels. Nwaozuzu (2017 p.94) notes the following;

Practically, all plosives can be aspirated... this is especially true for the Ngwa dialect where there are phonemic differences between /p/ and /ph/, /b/ and /bh/, /t/ and /th/, /d/ and /dh/ etc.

In Ngwa dialect, the following toponyms exhibit the phonological characteristics of aspiration

Table 2. In Ngwa Dialect, the Following Toponyms Exhibit the Phonological Characteristics of Aspiration

Toponyms	Aspiration
Amapu	Amap <sup>h</sup> u
Mbutu	Mb <sup>h</sup> ut <sup>h</sup> u
Okpu Umuobo	Okp <sup>h</sup> u ɔm <sup>h</sup> uob <sup>h</sup> o
Agburuke	Agbur <sup>h</sup> uk <sup>h</sup> e
Umuapu	U <sup>h</sup> m <sup>h</sup> uap <sup>h</sup> u
Umuogu	U <sup>h</sup> m <sup>h</sup> uog <sup>h</sup> u
Itungwa	It <sup>h</sup> ungwa

Table 3. The Following Names in Ngwa Dialect that Exhibit Phonological Aspiration

Aspirated morpheme	Aspiration	Anthroponyms
Gu	g <sup>h</sup> u	Nwoḡu,
Ko	k <sup>h</sup> o	Ikonna, Ikonne, Onwḡbiko, Nwokoḡcha
Gu	g <sup>h</sup> u	Aḡu
Du	d <sup>h</sup> u	Enweremaḡu, Erondaḡu, Adindaḡu, Chijindaḡu, Uḡkandaḡu, Ndḡbuisi
Ba	b <sup>h</sup> a	Uḡbani
Go	g <sup>h</sup> o	Uḡonna, Uḡochukwu,

In the formation of some Ngwa toponyms and anthroponyms, an analysis of their surface structure show that their underlying constituents have undergone some phonological processes to arrive at a simple, natural, and pronounceable toponym. Some of these processes are discussed below.

Assimilation: Vowel assimilation in Ngwa simplifies pronunciation and may make toponyms and anthroponyms more euphonic, as the vowels become more similar in terms of their articulatory characteristics. In the following data drawn from the study, the following toponyms and anthroponyms are found to have the phonological process of assimilation.

Table 4. Vowel Assimilation

<i>Ngwa Assimilated toponyms</i>		
<i>constituents</i>	<i>Assimilated form</i>	<i>Conventional spelling</i>
Ama+apu	Amaapu	Amaḡu
Ama+ude	Amaude	Amaḡde
Umu+uka	Umuuka	Umuḡka
Umu+ugba	Umuugba	Umuḡgba
Umu+udi	Umuudi	Umuḡdi

Table 5. Assimilation

<i>Ngwa Anthroponyms Assimilated</i>		
<i>Constituents</i>	<i>Assimilated form</i>	<i>Conventional spelling</i>
Nwoke+ocha	Nwokeocha	Nwokocha
Ama+uche	Amauche	Amuche
Nwa+ogu	Nwaogu	Nwogu

### **The Morpho-syntax of Ngwa Toponyms and Anthroponyms**

The morphology of toponyms (place names) in the Ngwa region, which is part of the Igbo-speaking area in Nigeria, follows patterns common in many African languages and other world languages. Ngwa toponyms typically have elements that convey information about the location, physical features, history, or cultural significance of the place. At the moment a name is given to an object or a person, it provides both the elements needed and the structure to join them together. The elements consists of two basic units; the semantic and syntactic units, it is further broken down into the morphemic subcategory where morphologic units combine to form a grammatical constituent (of which determines how the word should be arranged). These syntactic units now form what is referred to as semantic conglomerates (Meiring 1993).

Batoma (2006) identifies that names are given in particular languages whose morphology, syntax and semantics inform their meaning to a great extent. This implies that understanding place names (toponyms) hinges on taking a critical look at the internal structure of the word(s) and the syntactic structure that constitute the name besides sociolinguistics, sociocultural, historical and ethno-linguistic domains. Igbo toponyms according to Patrick (2021, p.91) are made up of two nominals. Also, most Ngwa toponyms are morphologically made up of two nominals, making up the toponyms as noun phrases. Breaking up the noun phrases, we observe that the first nominal (N1) is usually an affix that portend semantic values (this shall be discussed in the next section of this paper).

Table 6. Portend Semantic Values

N <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>2</sub>	Toponym
Umu	duru chima edi aga okenyi iroma ire aja okoro elendu eme atti ichi	Umuduru Umuchima Umuedi Umuaga Umukenyi Umuiroma Umuire Umuaja Umukoro Umuelendu Umume Umatti Umuchi
Ama	nkwo irinabua ngwu ede okpu uke uzo uke nkwu udara uzu chi mgborogwu iri	Amankwo Amairinabua Amangwu Amaede Amaokpu Amauke Amauzo Amauke Amankwu Amaudara Amauzu Amachi Amamgborogwu Amairi
Ekwere	azu	Ekwereazu
Ndi	akata egoro	Ndiakata Ndiegoro
Ezi	ama	Eziama

It is also germane to point out that in Ngwa toponyms, the occurrence of 'ama' determines the meaning it carries. The occurrence of the affix "ama" in the toponymic construction determines its meaning i.e. if it occurs in the initial of the toponym, then it expresses settlement but if it occurs as the second nominal, then it expresses northward direction. This is also evident in the Ngwa toponymic features. Examples of 'ama' as the first nominal in the toponym is given in the table above. The occurrence of 'ama' as second nominal that expresses settlement in Ngwa toponyms is exemplified in Obeama, Eziama, Ngwama (from Ngwa+ama), etc.

Some toponyms in Ngwa, however, have more than two constituent nominal. Onukawa (2012), cited in Patrick (2021, p.92) explains some aspects of these occurrences to be 'positional or directional'. For Onukawa, the morpheme

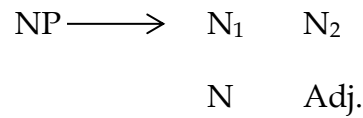
ala in Igbo toponyms is a directional morpheme that some examples in this study reveal that these complex toponyms exist in Ngwa also.

Table 8. Morpheme That Some Examples

Egbelu-mbutu	(Egbe+elu)+mbutu
Umuokereke-ngwa	(Umu+okereke)+ngwa
Umuaja-Akata	(Umu+aja)+Akata
Mgboko-umue	Mgboko+(umu+ete)

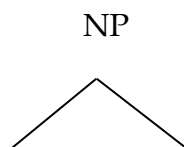
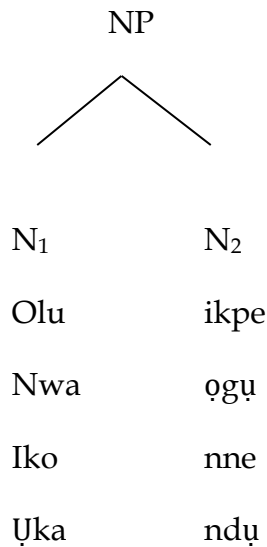
On the morphology of Ngwa anthroponyms, it is also observed that they occur as noun phrases which can be represented by the schema below, proposed by Onuoha (2016, p.17)

N



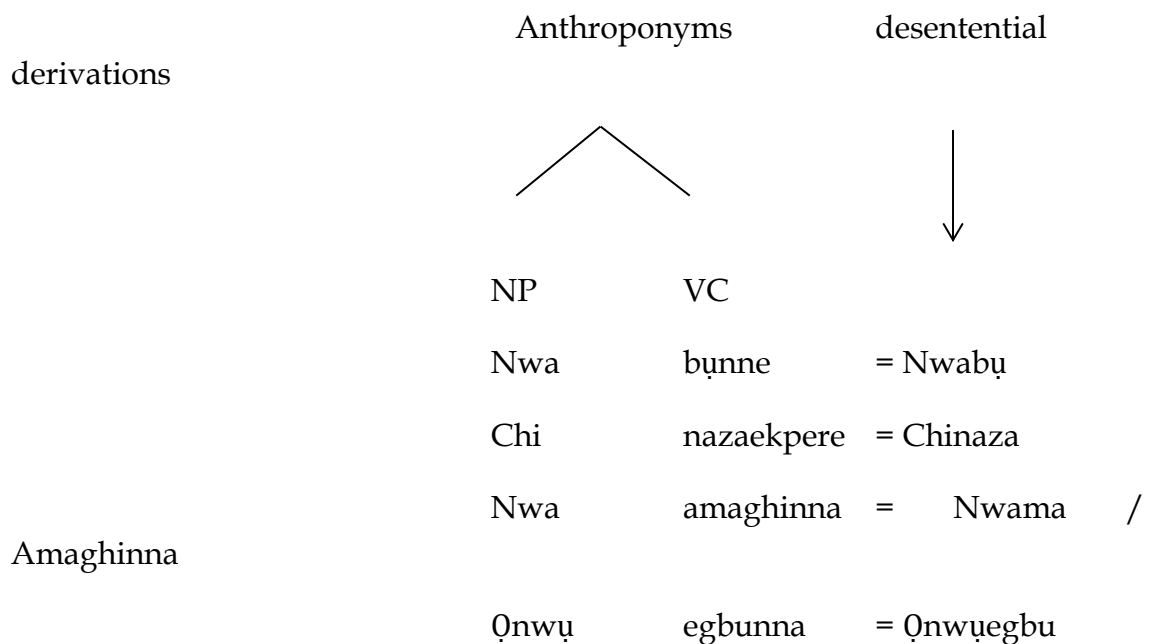
Where NP= Noun Phrase, N= Noun, and Adj.=Adjective

Using the schema above, the following Ngwa anthroponyms are realisable;



N	Adj.
Nwoke	ọcha
Uwa	oma

In Ngwa, desentential names (see Onukawa, 2000; Onwukwe 2020) exist. They are anthroponyms derived from sentential deep structures, however, they are used as desentential forms. The desentential names are morphological constructions of Noun Phrase (NP) and Verbal Complex (VC)



From the examples above, it is observable that the desentential derivations are shorter forms of the deep structures of the names, with the second component of the name being a verbal complex.

### The Semantics of Ngwa Toponyms and Anthroponyms

Meiring (1993) notes that semantics is where geography, linguistics and mapmaking meet, which leads to the question of finding the right linguistic form for the specific entity. When dealing with syntax and meaning and their interrelatedness, however, it is not so much a question of right or wrong, but rather: what makes sense and is it relevant

The meaning of every toponym or anthroponym in Ngwa is visibly tied to the morphology or syntax of these names. Therefore, understanding the meaning of the constituent nominals of the toponyms or anthroponyms creates a building block for understanding the toponyms and anthroponyms in Ngwa.

For Ngwa toponyms, most of them have the prefix 'umu', 'ndi' or 'ama' prefixed to another morpheme. Usually, they are prefixed to a root morpheme that is the name of an eponymous founder. The 'umu' therefore means 'descendants' of the eponymous founder it is prefixed to. For the prefix 'ndi', it is slightly different because it is used to refer to people who may not necessarily be descendants of the root word to which it is prefixed.

As stated earlier, Ngwa anthroponyms visibly derive their meanings from their morphemic constituents. These constituents can be noun-noun, noun-adjective, or even noun-verb phrase. Some of the anthroponyms presented in this study are reexamined below to show how the meanings for Ngwa anthroponyms are derived.

Table 9. These Constituents can be Noun-Noun, Noun-Adjective, or Even Noun-Verb Phrase

<i>Anthroponym</i>	<i>Constituents</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
Ikonna	Iko + nna Lover + father	Father's lover
Nwogu	nwa + ogu child + fight	Child of fight
Ikonne	Iko + nne Lover + mother	Mother's lover
Ọnwụbiko	Ọnwụ + biko death + please	Death please
Nwokocha	Nwoko + ocha Man + fair complexion	Fair complexioned man
Chijindu	chi + ji + ndu God + holds + life	God holds life
Ụkandụ	Ụka + ndụ words + life	Words of life or lively words
Ndubuisi	Ndu + bu + isi life + is + head	Life is paramount
Ugonna	Ugo + nna Pride + father	Father's pride
Ngwakwe	Ngwa + kwe	May Ngwa agree
Ugochukwu	Ugo + chukwu pride + God	God's pride

Ngwa anthroponyms presented above, it is deducible that the semantics of Ngwa anthroponyms are derivations of their structural make up. On the semantics of the 'iko' names, Onwukwe (2020) explains that the Ngwa social practice permit the practice of concubinage, hence the peculiar use of the morpheme 'iko' in many names that manifest in the Ngwa culture. Therefore, other than than meaning just 'a loved one', the sociocultural practices that underlie the usage of the prefix 'iko' in Ngwa Igbo, one can ascribe 'concubine' as the meaning of 'iko'. Ngwa anthroponyms also exhibit a high level of gender sensitivity in naming. The meanings of the anthroponyms signify the issues surrounding the names and the gender of the bearer. Names such as Onuoha (mouth (spokesperson) of the people), Nwokocha are typical male anthroponyms in Ngwa. Traditionally speaking, it is for a woman to be a spokesperson of the people. Nwokocha, by its constituent nominal is a name for particularly for the male, as a woman cannot be a 'fair complexioned man'.

However, in the 'iko' names, it is an opposite analysis. The nominal 'nne' and 'nna' which translate to 'mother' and 'father', when suffixed to 'iko' are not markers for naming 'female' and 'male'. In fact, reverse is the case. Ikonne which translates into 'mother's concubine' is a male anthroponym, while Ikonna which translates to 'father's concubine' is a female anthroponym. This is from the viewpoint that the Ngwa socio-cultural practice abhors same sex sexual relationships, allowing only male-female sexual relationships. Therefore, 'nne' and 'nna' can be regarded as qualifiers of the iko term and not as gender markers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This multifaceted analysis of Ngwa toponyms (place names) and anthroponyms (personal names) offers a comprehensive understanding of the intricate linguistic and cultural landscape of the Ngwa people. This analysis delves preliminarily into the phonological, morphological, and semantic aspects of these names. One fundamental aspect of this research involves a phonological analysis of Ngwa names. The study shows that the Ngwa toponyms and anthroponyms exhibit unique phonological features in sound structures, pronunciation patterns, and tonal nuances that characterize these names that are consistent with the sound pattern of the dialect.

The morphological analysis of Ngwa toponyms and anthroponyms is equally crucial. Ngwa names are often constructed by combining morphemes that bear specific meanings, conveying historical events, qualities, familial connections, or aspirations. This analysis examines the internal structure of these names, dissecting the morphemes, affixes, and roots that compose them, and unveils the morphological building blocks of meaning and provides insights into the cultural symbolism that is embedded in Ngwa names. Understanding the morphological structure aids in appreciating the deep-rooted connections between language and culture. The semantic analysis of Ngwa toponyms and anthroponyms delves into the meanings, cultural significance, and historical context of these names. Place names often provide valuable information about the geography, history, and cultural heritage of specific locations. Whether they narrate historical events, describe physical attributes of a place, or honor

ancestral connections, Ngwa toponyms are rich sources of cultural and historical knowledge. Anthroponyms, on the other hand, are personal names that can convey hopes, aspirations, or commemorate important life events, reflecting the family's lineage, beliefs, and cultural values. This analysis unveils the layers of meaning and the intricate cultural tapestry interwoven within these names.

In summary, the phonological, morphological, and semantic analysis of Ngwa toponyms and anthroponyms is a comprehensive endeavor that reveals the profound connections between language, culture, and identity. It offers a multidimensional view of the linguistic richness of the Ngwa people, while preserving and documenting the cultural and historical intricacies embedded within these names. As researchers continue to explore these multifaceted aspects, the analysis of Ngwa names, as well as Igbo names remains a valuable source of insights into the structure and significance of Igbo language and culture. I also recommend further descriptive linguistic study into the peculiarity and specificity of Ngwa personal and place names, as this work is only but a preliminary explication.

#### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

This research still has limitations so it is necessary to carry out further research related to the topic "Aspects of Onomastics in Ngwa Igbo: Preliminary Notes" to perfect this research, as well as increase insight for readers.

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