

## Negation as a Peculiar Grammatical Feature of Yorùbá Incantations

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### Abstract

The use of incantation (*ofò*) is very popular in Yorùbá culture. It is considered to be an essential ingredient in the practice of Yorùbá traditional medicine as its use is believed to have magical powers that can be employed to solve human problems. Grammatically, Yorùbá incantations are transformationally derived sentences. This paper examines the grammatical transformations used in the derivation of Yoruba incantations. It sourced data from three selected Yorùbá incantation books - *Àyájó Ìjìnlẹ̀ Ohùn Ifẹ̀* (Fabunmi, 1972), *Ìjìnlẹ̀ Ofò, Ògèdè àti Àásán* (Rájí, 1991), and *Ewì Àwíṣẹ̀ Atóyèbí* (2012) – and employs the Principles and Parameters approach Government-Binding theory to analyse them. Findings show that negation is the most prominent grammatical feature used in the derivation of Yorùbá incantations. The negation marker *kì í* has the most frequent occurrence while *kọ* rarely occurs in the incantations.

**Keywords:** Yorùbá, incantations (*ofò*), negative markers, frequency of occurrence, traditional medicine.

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### **1. Introduction**

The concept of *ofò* (*incantation*) represents the verbal aspect of African traditional medicine. It exhibits the efficacy of African science. *Ofò* is a kind of speech that has a peculiar structural pattern with an associated magical power. Some *ofò* are used as complement to herbal preparations, while many others operate independently by sheer power of being spoken. As believed in Yorùbá culture, spoken words could be much more powerful than the herbal medicine. Àjàyí (2014:1) explains that the morphemic composition of the term *ofò* is from the prefix *o-* and verb *fò* (utter, say, talk) ‘to say’ *o-fò* = incantation/discourse: (that which is uttered). With the believe of Yorùbá, *ofò*, otherwise termed *òrò*, ‘word’, connotes what is uttered by a person for the realization of his intentions.

Among the Yorùbá scholars that worked on the compilation of Yorùbá incantations is Rájí (1991: vii). According to him, “*Agbára òrò tó ní ètò ní ofò, ohun tí a fò jáde lenu láti mú kí ohun tí a fẹ́ ó sẹ... Ofò ni àkójopò òrò alágbára tí n mú kí nńkan tí à n fẹ́ sẹ ní kíá mósá.*” ‘*Ofò* is the compilation of powerful words arranged in a set pattern, voiced out in order to achieve one’s objective or goal instantly.’

*Ofò* is one of the most powerful forms of oral poetry in Yorùbáland passed down from generation to generation and is thus regarded as the most potent force inherited from their forefathers. It may be used for both evil and good intentions. *Ofò* is used in almost every sphere of human life. It may be used for social, economic, political, religious, and medical benefits. For example, *ofò* may be recited to combat evil forces, aid women in labour for easy delivery, cure various diseases, gain favour of people, and secure total well-being, it may also be uttered to make a person become invisible at the approach of imminent danger and destroy an enemy or a wild animal. The above functions of incantations are what Rájí (1991:vii) categorized as *ofò rere* (good incantations i.e, used for fortunes), and the evil part of *ofò* is what Rájí (1991:ix) called *Ògèdè* and *Àsán* which can be recited to make a sane person insane, make good people misbehave, and can even be used to kill a person. Furthermore, Olátúnjí (1984:140) has this to say about *ofò*:

*Ọfò* is the verbal aspect of the magical act among the Yoruba, the other being the rites, and charms or medicine. The verbal aspect is at times called “spell” but we prefer the less colored term “Incantation”. Through magic, man attempts to control both the natural and supernatural world and subject them to his will. *Ọfò* involves the uttering of words according to a formula and in set orders.

It is clear that recitation or invocation of *ọfò* has to follow a pattern formula or set order as stated by Ọlátúnjí (1984:140). It has to be recited correctly because the language of *ọfò* is often loaded with cryptic and figurative expressions. Sometimes an *ọfò* is incomprehensible to the listener or reader and, at times, to the herbalist himself. Àjàyí (2014:2) remarks that, “Whether comprehensible or incomprehensible whether intelligible or unintelligible... the *ọfò* gains its efficacy by its mode of recitation.” In other words, for an incantation to be effective, it must be recited correctly. The person reciting an incantation should make sure that he or she utters the right words and sentences, a minor error in a rendition may make an *ọfò* to be ineffective.

Ọlateju (1998:34) believes that the application of linguistic models to literary analysis is becoming fashionable in Yorùbá studies, we believe that works of scholars that follow this pattern are still few. Among them are; Owolabi (1992) *Analysis of Yorùbá Written Poetry: A Transformational Generative Grammar Approach*. Akanji (2012) analysed the *Morphological and Syntactic Aspects of Some Selected Tittles of Işola Written Text* using the X-bar model as a theoretical framework. Àjàyí (2014) *Ọfò: The Yorùbá incantation (A Text linguistics exploration analysis)*. Ojo (2015) *Distinctive Patterns of Proverb Usage in Selected Yoruba Written Literature* used Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as a theoretical framework. It is very important to widen the scope of research in literature by analyzing literary text with linguistic model, because language used in literary text is rule governed.

The works of these scholars have contributed a lot to the development of Yoruba literature and grammar. To the best of our knowledge, little has been done on the syntactic aspect of *ofò*, especially analysing negation as a peculiar transformational process in the derivation of Yorùbá incantation. Therefore, this paper discusses different types of grammatical transformational processes in *ofò*, it was discovered that negation is the most frequently used transformation in the derivation of Yorùbá incantations (*ofò*).

## **2. Types of *ofò***

There are different types of *ofò* which Aminu (2017:28) categorized into three groups, depending on the purpose for which it is intended. *Ofò* is either used for evil or good, while some *ofò* can be used for both evil and good purposes. Examples of *ofò* that are used for good purposes include:

- a. *Ofò ibà* (incantation for paying homage),
- b. *Ofò àwùre* (incantation for attracting good luck or fortune),
- c. *Ofò itojú ara*; (incantation for health care)
- d. *Ofò orí fifò*, (incantation for headache)
- e. *Ofò inú rírùn*, (incantation for stomachache)
- f. *Ofò igbèbí*, (incantation for aiding child delivery)
- g. *Ofò isòyè*, (incantation for activating retentive memory)
- h. *Ofò aporó* (incantation for poison antidotes).

Examples of incantations that are used for evil purposes include: *ògèdè* (offensive incantation), *àásán* (destructive incantation), and *èpè* (curse incantation).

Examples of incantations used simultaneously for both fortune and misfortune are; *ofò áfòşe*, (incantation for making what is said to happen instantly) and *apè* (command incantation).

Rájí (1991: vii) also categorizes *ofò* into two groups, which are *ofò rere* (good incantation) and *ofò burúkú* (evil incantation). Àjàyí (2014:14) classified *ofò* into ten functional categories, which are:

- i) *Ọfọ̀ Ìbà̀*: Incantation for paying homage.
- ii) *Ọfọ̀ Àfọ̀ṣẹ̀*: Incantation for making what is said to happen.
- iii) *Ọfọ̀ Afòràn*: Incantation for escaping from calamity or misfortune
- iv) *Ọfọ̀ Afèrò*: Incantation for attracting clients, customers or large population.
- v) *Ọfọ̀ Aporó*: Incantation for poison antidotes.
- vi) *Ọfọ̀ Aròbì*: Incantation to ward-off calamities and evils.
- vii) *Ọfọ̀ Àwùrè*: Incantation for good luck and fortune.
- viii) *Ọfọ̀ Ìsòyè̀*: Incantation to activate retentive memory
- ix) *Ọfọ̀ Mádàáríkàn*: Incantation for self-defense.
- x) *Ọgèdè* and *Àásán*: Offensive/destructive incantation.

### **3. General grammatical features and patterns of ọfọ̀**

*Ọfọ̀* as a type of sentence structure in Yorùbá can be derived through the application of many grammatical transformations like focus construction, relativization, and negation. However, it is observed in this paper that more than in any types of transformation, many empirical data on *ọfọ̀* are derived through the syntactic process of negation in Yorùbá.

For the purpose of illustration, few examples of *ọfọ̀* that are derived through focus construction and relativization are presented in this paper. However, a great attention is paid to *ọfọ̀* that are derived through the process of negation in the language.

#### **3.1. Derivation of ọfọ̀ through focus construction**

Focus construction is one of the transformational processes attested among natural languages of the world. As a grammatical transformation, it is realized through different processes in different languages. Arókoyò (2013:1) defines focus constructions as a way of rendering a constituent of a sentence emphatically. Any part of a sentence can be focused in Yoruba; it could be subject-NP, object-NP, nominalized verb, or a prepositional phrase (PP).

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The following examples in (1b-3b) show the grammatical patterns of focus constructions in *ofò*, as derived from their corresponding basic forms in (1a-3a):

**Subject-NP focusing**

Agídípáálí ló n̄ s̄awo w̄on lóde Ègbá  
Gìrimòlè ló n̄ s̄awo w̄on lóde Ìjèsà  
Agúnyán lóbè ló n̄ s̄awo w̄on lóde oko;  
Òun ló sagídí fún w̄on nílè Ifè,  
W̄on ní tí w̄on bá s̄isè fún w̄on,  
W̄on kí sanwó... (Atóyèbí, 2012:24)

- (1) a. agídípáálí n̄ se awo w̄on ni òde ègbá.  
stubbornness Prog Aux cult 3PL in Ègbáland  
'Excessive stubbornness is a trait of Ègbá people.'
- b. [<sub>FP</sub>[<sub>NP</sub> agídípáálí]<sub>i</sub> ló<sub>i</sub> n̄ se awo w̄on ní òde ègbá.]  
stubbornness FOC Prog Aux cult 3PL in outside Ègbá  
'It is excessive stubbornness that is a trait of Ègbá people.'

**Object-NP focusing**

Ajígboré ni t'ààtàn  
Ojúmò kíi mò k'áàtàn má gb'orè tirè...  
Gbogbo omi ní í f'orí f'Ólókun  
Gbogbo àbàtà ní í f'orí f'Ólódò  
Ìsè gbogbo àgbàrá bá se Olódò ní í f'íi sìn  
Òsin ló ní kí w̄on wá sìn mí  
Aşo aláşo l'ògà n̄ gbà ... (Fábùnmi 1972:14)

- (2) a. ògà n̄ gba aşo aláşo.  
chameleon Prog collect cloth cloth owner  
'Chameleon is collecting someone else cloth.'
- b. [<sub>FP</sub>[<sub>NP</sub> aşo aláşo]<sub>i</sub> ni ògà n̄ gbà [t<sub>i</sub>]  
cloth cloth owner FOC chameleon Prog collect  
'It is someone's else cloth that chameleon used to attract.'

**Object of preposition NP focusing**

Kánkánkán ni tókán  
Wàràwàrà ni tógán  
Kàràkàrà ní í şewé akátá  
Bókò ròkun ròsà  
Èbúté lókò ní sùn  
Ajé!  
Òdò mi ni o wá sùn lóní yí o... (Rájí, 1991:38)

- (3) a. ọkò ní sùn ní èbúté.  
canoe Prog sleep at river-bank  
'Canoe is being docked at the river bank.'
- b. [FP[NP èbúté]<sub>i</sub> ni ọkò ní sùn [t<sub>i</sub>]  
river-bank FOC canoe Prog sleep  
'It is at the river bank that a canoe is being docked.'

**Nominalized verb focusing**

Ìyakúya ni iwo ya  
Bí kànnàkànnà balè a dọya  
Bí gbéngbé bá balè a dọya  
Èya pèrèrè bá yí ni ti àkísà  
Yíya ni ewé kókò ya  
Kí aşọ rẹ ó máa ya ... (Rájí, 1991:61)

- (4) a. ewé kókò ya.  
leave cocoyam tear  
'Cocoyam leave torn.'
- b. [FP[VP yíya]<sub>i</sub> ni ewé kókò ya<sub>i</sub>]  
tearing FOC leave cocoyam tear  
'It is tearing that cocoyam leave torn.'

For the purpose of emphasis, the focused constituent, in each of the examples above, is fronted in the sentence and it is followed immediately by the focus particle *ni*, as used in Standard Yorùbá. This

pattern shows that focus marker *ni* and its variant *ló* always occur at the sentence medial position in a focused sentence.

### 3.2. Derivation of *ofò* through relativization

A relative clause is a subordinate clause that modifies the noun phrase functioning as the head noun in the main clause. According to Sanusi (2013:4) relative clause can be defined as follows:

A sentence embedded (in surface structure) as modifier of an NP, the embedded sentence having within it a WH-pronominal replacement for a deep structure NP which is in some sense identical with the head NP.

Relativization is another transformation through which incantations are derived in Yoruba. Consider the following examples:

Ááṣe, kóní ṣàìṣe; nítorí àwíṣe ni t'Ifá  
Àfòṣe ni t'Òrúmilà  
Àṣe ègùn mò ní ṣe l'áwùjò èfò  
Àṣe ijímèrè ní ṣe l'áwùjò ẹranko...  
T'ẹrẹkẹṣe náà ní ṣe l'áwùjò òwú  
Gbogbo igi tí elégbèdè bá fi ọwọ̀ bà ní dún ... (Fábùnmi, 1972:31)

(5) [<sub>ip</sub> Gbogbo igi [<sub>cp</sub> tí [<sub>ip</sub> elégbèdè bá fi ọwọ̀ bà]] ní í dún].  
all tree REL gorilla Asp use hand touch Asp sound  
'All the trees that a gorilla touches sound like a drum.'

“Ìbà alukósó tí wọn kójú sí'ra wọn  
Ìbà alubẹ̀mbẹ̀ ab'ojú lókè lokè  
Ìbà pètẹ̀ ọwọ̀, ìbà pètẹ̀ ẹ̀sẹ̀  
Ìbà àtẹ̀lẹ̀sẹ̀ tí ò gbọ̀dò hu irun  
Ìbà iyámòpó tí ó dorí kodò tí ò gbọ̀dò s'omi...” (Fábùnmi 1972:2)



- (6) [<sub>ip</sub>Ìbà àtéléṣè [<sub>cp</sub> tí [<sub>NegP</sub> ò gbòḍò hu irun]]]  
 homage foot REL Neg must grow hair  
 ‘I pay homage to the foot that must not grow hair.’ (Fábùnmi 1972:2)
- (7) [<sub>ip</sub>Ìbà iyámòpò; [<sub>cp</sub>tí [<sub>NP</sub>ó; d’orí kodò] ] [tí [<sub>NegP</sub> ò gbòḍò ṣomi]]]  
 homage vagina REL 3SG turn head upside down REL Neg must drip water  
 ‘I pay homage to the vagina that faces down but does not drip water.’
- “Òràn àyàn kì í ní láárí  
 Òrò eèrà kì í lákòójò  
 A kì í fì alágẹmọ rúbọ  
 Gbogbo ejọ tí adarípon bá tò aráyé kii gbó...” (Rájí 1991:63)
- (8) [<sub>ip</sub>Gbogbo ejọ [<sub>cp</sub>tí adarípon bá tò] aráyé kii gbó].  
 all talk REL Agama lizard Asp talk people Neg hear  
 ‘All what Agama lizard said, no one hears.’  
 (Rájí 1991:63)

The relative marker used in Standard Yorùbá is *tí*. As a complimentizer, it introduces the relative clause in each of the examples given above.

#### 4. Negation as a peculiar grammatical transformation in the derivation of *ofò* in Yorùbá

Crystal (2006:310) defines negation as a process or construction in grammatical or semantic analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence’s meaning.

Negation is one of the transformational processes attested among natural languages of the world. Every natural language has a way of negating sentences. According to Dahl (1993:914) one of the few linguistic phenomena which seems to be universal in a very straight forward sense is negation. He further observed that, all human languages have a means to overtly “deny the truth of a proposition”.

Adénúgà (2017:132) makes the assertion that, “negative utterances are a core feature of every system of human communication and of no system of animal communication”.

All these definitions make it clear that the primary function of negation is to negate the affirmative clause or sentence in a language, and its importance in language use cannot be over-emphasized. In other words, there is always a need to deny proposition in the course of language use. Yorùbá expresses negation syntactically through the use of an overt negative marker.

#### **4.1. The negative markers in Standard Yorùbá**

There are two types of negation in Yorùbá; the constituent negation and sentential negation. This work deals with sentential negation in Yorùbá incantation (*ofò*). Many scholars have worked on negation in Yorùbá and there are different views about the number of sentential negative markers we have in the language. Scholars like Bámgbósé (1967, 1990), Ògúnbòwálé (1970), Bánjò (1974), Òkè (1982), Awólùbúyì (1978, 2008) and Adéwólé (1999) expressed the view that we have six negative markers in Standard Yorùbá. They are *kò/ò*, *kì í*, *kó*, *má/màà*, *mó* and *yé*. However, Adébáyò (2016:3) presents a contrary opinion. According to him, *mó* is a variant of *má* used in Òyó-Ibàdàn Yorùbá dialect while *yé* is a verb. He explained further that we have only four sentential negative markers in Standard Yorùbá. He categorized them into two: (i) the *má-morpheme* negative markers and (ii) the *K-morpheme* negative markers. The *K-morpheme* type has *kò*, *kì í*, and *kó* as allomorphs. In this analysis, we share the view expressed by Adebayo (2016) that Standard Yorùbá has four main negative markers which are: *kò*, *kó*, *kì í*, and *má*.

#### **5. Sentential negative markers in *ofò***

The rules of transformation of the Principles and Parameters approach will be adopted in this section. The theory has two levels of syntactic representation, the deep structure and the surface structure. These two levels of representation are mapped onto each other through the movement transformation. Làmídì (2008:28-29) explained that transformation perform four major functions on a linguistic structure;

they can delete formatives which had earlier occurred at the deep structure of a sentence (gapping). Transformation can involve substitution, In this case, a constituent replaces another in the context of occurrence.

In this section, we shall focus on sentential negation in *ofò*. Three out of the four sentential negative markers mentioned above are frequently used in *ofò* with the exception of *kó*, which is rarely used in *ofò*. The three frequently used are: *má*, *kò* and *kì í*.

### 5.1. The use of *má*

*Má* is used to negate an imperative sentence in *ofò*. It can occur at the beginning or at the middle of a sentence. It normally occurs directly in front of a verb or verb phrase. In Yorùbá incantation, when an imperative sentence with no subject-NP is negated, it occurs at the beginning of such sentence. But when the imperative sentence has second person plural pronoun as its subject-NP, *má* occurs after the subject-NP as evident in the (b) examples below:

“Abéré m̀erindínlógún ẹnu ẹ nkó?  
 Sèbí abéré òún lo fibu ẹniyàn ẹ yí  
 Ohun tóróró la fí ǹ ẹ ohun tóróró  
 Ohun tòròrò la fí ǹ ẹ ohun tòròrò  
 Mo fí ewuro ẹ ọ, mo fí ataare ẹ ọ  
 Má ẹ kó ta á  
 Má ẹ kó ro ọ  
 Èrò pèsè là á bálé ìgbín.” (Rájí 1991:3)

- (9) a.     jẹ       kó       ro       ó.  
           let     it       pain    him/her  
           ‘Let it pain him/her.’
- b.     má     jẹ       kó       ro       ó.  
           Neg   let     it       pain    him/her  
           ‘Do not let it pain him/her.’ (Rájí, 1991:3)

“Orógbó ló ní kí n gbó mọ̀ èjẹ̀ mi lára  
È là á kò lówé  
È jẹ̀ é, ó korò  
Lẹ̀ bá kò ọ̀ sílé ayé  
Ilé ayé ni ẹ̀ kò mí sí  
È má kò mí sóde ọ̀run...” (Rájí 1991:7)

- (10) a.        ẹ̀        kò        mí        sí        ọ̀de        ọ̀run  
                 2PL    reject 1SG    to        outside heaven  
                 ‘Leave me rejected in heaven.’
- b.        ẹ̀        má        kò        mí        sí ọ̀de ọ̀run.  
                 2PL    Neg    reject 1SG    to outside heaven  
                 ‘Do not leave me rejected in heaven.’

“Oró t’Ólúufẹ̀ fún yin  
Tó ní kí ẹ̀ máa fi jó igba erùwà,  
Oró nàà, ọ̀mọ̀ Olúufẹ̀ lẹ̀ fi jó yìi o  
Nítorí nàà ẹ̀ má jẹ̀ kó só  
È má jẹ̀ kó bó...” (Atóyèbí 2012:32)

- (11) a.        ẹ̀        jẹ̀        kó        bó.  
                 2PL    let     it        peel  
                 ‘Let it peel.’
- b.        ẹ̀        má        jẹ̀        kó        bó.  
                 2PL    Neg    let     it        peel  
                 ‘Do not let it peel.’ (Atóyèbí 2012:32)

The occurrence of the negative marker *má* in each of the sentences in (9b-11b) changed the meanings of the sentences from affirmative to negative.

## **5.2. The use of *kò***

*Kò* is used to negate declarative and interrogative sentences in *ọ̀fọ̀*. The negative marker *kò* which has *ò* as variant can occur either at the

beginning or middle of a sentence, but the variant *ò* can only occur at the medial position. It cannot occur at the sentence-initial position as evident in examples (12) and (13) below.

“Àdán ò lóri adé  
 Ìgbín ò lórùn èjìgbà-ilèkè  
 O dá ko Adéborí tí í ɕe yèyé àdán,  
 Tó b’árọ́ l’ómọ s’órí igi  
 Òun l’áfòmọ! Àfòmọ ò l’égbò  
 Orí igi ní í gbé ...” (Fábùnmi, 1972:48)

- (12) a. àdán ní orí adé.  
 bat has head crown  
 ‘A bat has a crowned head.’
- b. àdán ò ní orí adé.  
 bat Neg have head crown  
 ‘A bat doesn’t have a crowned head.’ (Fábùnmi, 1972:48)

“Ojú àṣá kì í ríbi  
 Tàwòdì kì í róràn  
 Òránkóràn kì í bágún nílè  
 Èyin kété nibi n’ ɕè  
 Kò bá wọ́n wá  
 Kíí bá wọ́n lọ...” (Rájí, 1991:17)

- (13) a. ó bá wọ́n wá.  
 3SG meet 3PL come  
 ‘He/she came with them.’
- b. kò bá wọ́n wá. (Rájí, 1991:17)  
 Neg meet 3PL come  
 ‘He/she did not come with them.’

“Wọ́n ní yòò hun ún  
 Òrúnmilà ní kò ní hun òun  
 Igbá ahun kò gbọ́dọ́ hun ahun

Ìkarahun ìgbín kò gbọdò hun ìgbín  
Mo ti jorí ahun lóníí  
Gbogbo ohun tí mo bá ẹ̀ ẹ̀ ẹ̀ ẹ̀ ẹ̀ ni...” (Rájí, 1991:45)

- (14) a. igbá ahun gbọdò hun ahun.  
shell tortoise must cause misfortune tortoise  
‘Tortoise shell must cause tortoise’s misfortune.’  
b. igbá ahun kò gbọdò hun ahun.  
shell tortoise Neg must cause-misfortune tortoise  
‘Tortoise shell must not cause tortoise’s misfortune.’

Examples (12b-14b) were derived from (12a-14a) respectively, through a negation process with **kò** as a negative marker.

### 5.3. The use of *kì í*

From the empirical evidence revealed in this study, *kì í* is the most commonly used sentential negative marker in *ọfọ*. The reason being that some negative sentences are used in expressing law of nature or indisputable statement of fact, and these sentences mostly contain *kì í* as their negative marker. Consider the following examples:

- (15) a. Itó *kì í* padà senu ‘Spittle does not return to the mouth’.  
b. Odò *kì í* ẹ̀n kó bojú wẹ̀yìn ‘Flowing river does not look back’.  
c. A *kì í* fi ọ̀rọ̀ pápá lọ ẹ̀ja ‘We do not invite a fish to a matter concerning the bush’.  
d. Ìkoríta méta *kì í* fojú ríra wọ̀n. ‘Three junctions do not see one another’.

*Kì í* is used to negate a sentence that contains habitual aspect and a noun phrase in a focused sentence. It also has a variant *ì í* which is mainly used in fast speech. This variant is derived by deleting the initial consonant *k-* of *kì í*. *Kì í* can occur at the initial position if the subject NP is covert and medial position of a negative sentence, but its variant *ì í* can only occur at the middle of a negative sentence. The negative versions of the examples in (16a-18a) are illustrated in (16b-18b) below.

“Òrò okété bá'lẹ sọ ni ilẹ́ n gbọ  
Àbá alágẹmọ bá dá l'Òrìṣà n gbà  
Arọ òun abuké kì í p'ohùn Òrìṣà dà  
Ṣàngó kì í kọ ohùn orógbó  
Òrìṣà kì í kọ ohùn obi...” (Fábùnmi, 1972:31)

- (16) a. Ṣàngó máa n kọ ohùn orógbó.  
Ṣàngó Asp Prog refuse voice bitter cola  
'Ṣàngó used to refuse bitter cola's voice.'
- b. Ṣàngó kì í kọ ohùn orógbó.  
Ṣàngó Neg refuse voice bitter cola  
'Ṣàngó does not use to refuse bitter cola's voice.'

“A kì í gbókú odó  
A kì í gbókú ọlọ  
A kì í gbọ yakata Ọlójùn-n-béré  
A kì í gbọ gbì eèrà...” (Rájí, 1991:19)

- (17) a. a máa n gbọ ikú odó.  
1PL Asp Prog hear death mortal  
'We used to hear the death of a mortal.'
- b. a kì í gbọ iku odó.  
1PL Neg hear death mortal  
'We did not used to hear the death of a mortal.'

“Akú-tipópó lorúkọ tí à n pekú  
A kì í morúkọ ikú kó tún panijẹ mọ  
Ìwọ ni wọn rán sí Alára, Ìwọ ni wọn rán sí Ajerò  
Ìwọ ni wọn rán sí Ọràngún ilé ilá  
Padà lọ bá ẹni tí ó rán ọ  
Kì í ẹ ẹmi ni wọn rán ọ sí ...” (Rájí, 1991:15)

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- (18) a.      èmi    ni      wón    rán    ọ      sí.  
                  1SG   FOC   3PL   send   2SG   to  
                  ‘It is me that they sent you to.’
- b.      kì í      ẹ      èmi    ni      wón rán ọ      sí  
                  Neg   Aux   1SG   FOC   3PL send 2SG   to  
                  ‘It is not me that they sent you to.’

When *kì í* is used to negate a focused sentence, it occurs at the beginning of the sentence, followed by the copula verb *ẹ* before the focused phrase, as shown in example (18b).

**5.4. The use of *kó***

*Kó* is used to negate a noun phrase in a focused sentence. The difference between *kó* and *kì í* is in their syntactic locations within the sentence; *kì í* can occur at the sentence initial and medial positions; while *kó* can only occur at the medial position, immediately after the focused noun phrase it is negating. The two negative markers can be used interchangeably in a negated focused sentence. Based on the available data, we discovered that *kó* rarely occurs in *ọfọ*. This may be as a result of its being substituted for by an alternative negative marker –*kì í*. Example (19) shows how the substitution can occur in Yorùbá incantation (*ọfọ*).

- (19) a.      wón    rán    ọ      sí mi.  
                  3PL   send   2SG to me  
                  ‘They sent you to me.’
- b.      [<sub>FP</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> èmi]<sub>i</sub>]    ni      wón    rán    ọ      sí [<sub>i</sub>]  
    1SG   FOC   3PL   send   2SG   to  
                  ‘They sent you to me.’
- c.      èmi<sub>i</sub>    kó      ni      wón    rán    ọ      sí [<sub>i</sub>]  
                  1SG   Neg   FOC   3PL   send   2SG   to  
                  ‘It is not me that they sent you to.’



- d. kii    se    èmi    ni    wón rán o    sí  
 Neg    aux    1SG    FOC    3PL send 2SG    to  
 ‘It is not me that they sent you to.’

Example (19b) can be negated in two ways: (i) with *kó* occurring in between the subject-NP and the focus marker, (ii) with *kì í* co-occurring with the copula verb *şe*. Also, the use of these two negative markers in *ofò* conforms with the normal way in which they are used in Standard Yorùbá.

We discovered that there are some incantations that contain two negative markers, and because of this the negative sentence automatically becomes affirmative, and therefore change its meaning. So, the occurrence of two negative markers in a sentence mostly changes the negative sentence to a positive one. Consider the following examples:

- (20)a. ojú    kì í rí    arẹ̀wà    kí    ó    má    kí    i  
 eyes    Neg see    beauty lady    Asp 3SG Neg greet REFL  
 ‘A beautiful lady will surely be greeted when sighted.’
- b. èniyàn    kì í pò    ní ojà    kí    a    má    mọ    àfin  
 person    Neg plenty in market    Asp 1PL Neg know Albino  
 ‘No matter how plenty people are in the market we will surely recognized an albino.’ (Fábùnmi 1972:7)
- (21) kì í rẹ    agbe    kí    ó    má    lẹ    dá aró  
 Neg tire agbe bird    Asp 3SG Neg make dye  
 ‘No matter how tired a blue woodcock is, it will surely appear in blue color.’ (Atóyèbí 2012:8)

This phenomenon occurs mostly when negative marker *kì í* and *má* co-occur in a sentence. We believe this rule follows the propositional logic of negation: Negative + Negative = Positive.

### 6. The peculiarity of negation in Yorùbá incantations

Negation is one of the most common grammatical transformations that normally occur in Yorùbá incantations, the others being focus constructions and relativization. The purpose of this paper is to prove that negation is the most commonly used grammatical transformation for deriving incantations in Yorùbá. In order to ascertain the peculiarity of negation in *ofò*, a stratified sampling technique was adopted to determine the frequency of each negative marker, focus marker, and relative marker in the three incantation books used for data collection for this study. The books are; Fábùnmi (1972) *Àyájó Ìjìnlẹ̀ Ohùn Ifẹ̀*, Ráji (1991) *Ìjìnlẹ̀ Ofò, Ògèdè àti Àásán* and Atóyèbí (2012) *Ewì Àwíṣẹ*.

Table 1

Books on Incantation	Types of Negative Markers					Total Number of occurrences
	Kì í	á	ò		ó	
Ìjìnlẹ̀ Ofò, Ògèdè àti Àásán	85	26	7	2	IL	470
Àyájó Ìjìnlẹ̀ Ohùn Ifẹ̀	03	6	7	4	IL	310
Ewì Àwíṣẹ	4	1	5	6	IL	236
	82	63	9	2	IL	<b>1016</b>

Table 2

Books on Incantation	Focus construction (ní)	Relativization (tí)
Ìjìnlẹ̀ Ofò, Ògèdè àti Àásán	156	49
Àyájó Ìjìnlẹ̀	103	55

Ohùn Ifẹ̀		
Èwì Àwíṣẹ	56	50
	<b>315</b>	<b>154</b>

The above tables show the peculiarity of negation in *ọfọ* compare to focus constructions and relativization. It is evident that *kì í* is the most commonly used sentential negative marker in *ọfọ*, while *kọ* is rarely used because it did not occur for once in all the three incantation books. This shows that negation has a specific function it renders in Yorùbá incantations.

### 7. Findings and Conclusion

This study has argued that Yorùbá incantations are derived sentences achieved via transformational processes like focusing, relativization, and negation. It submitted that negation has the most frequent occurrence out of all the transformations employed in the derivation of Yorùbá incantations. It showed that Negation is syntactically marked in the incantations through the use of overt negative markers such as *má*, *kò/ò*, *kì í*, and *kọ*. From the statistical analysis of the occurrence of negative markers in the incantations investigated, *kì í* has the most frequent occurrence, while *kọ* does not occur at all.

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<sup>1</sup> **List of Abbreviations**

Asp	-	Aspectual marker
Aux	-	Auxiliary verb
FOC	-	Focus marker
NP	-	Noun phrase
PP	-	Prepositional phrase
Prog	-	Progressive marker
REFL	-	Reflexive pronoun
REL	-	Relative marker
1SG	-	First person singular pronoun
1PL	-	First person plural pronoun
2SG	-	Second person singular pronoun
2PL	-	Second person plural pronoun
3SG	-	Third person singular pronoun
3PL	-	Third person plural pronoun