

**Libation Practices of Traditional Governance in Nigeria and  
the Challenges of Human Development: An Agenda for  
Humanistic Research**

*By*

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**Abstract**

*The development of a nation hangs on her ability to recognise her needs and to pursue it educationally African nations have come a long way educationally, especially when compared to the traditional life pattern of early Africans. This paper verifies the level that Nigerian Higher Institutions address her values in its developmental strides. The paper considers one of the oral values that African is known for Libation is recognised as an essential form of Africa's oral literature as it is expressed in her libation texts performances. poetry. It permeates all aspects of life of Africans from birth to death. This paper assesses the provisions of Nigerian University system as relates to the encouragement of this important aspect of African life pattern. This paper utilizes oral interview method of data collection in some select Nigerian Universities to ascertain the position of this paper. Interviews were also with some custodians of traditional values to ascertain their views on the need to encourage the survival of libation performances in traditional governance. This paper considers the Semiotic theory as it analysis tool while it also considers some aspects of contextual theory. It concludes that the rate of encouragement of this concept in our educational pursuit is very low, owing to low interest indication. The paper confirms that our higher educational curricula cater for other areas of development, but definitely not the "fetish" branded native religious (libation) practices which in turn translates low patronage of it in today's traditional practices.*

**Keywords:** Libation practices, Human development, Higher education, Development and Traditional governance.

**Introduction**

Libation is an aspect of religious poetry in Africa. In the African society generally and Ibibio in particular, libation expresses the people's religious dogma and spans the entirety of their existential reality from life to death. It is used as an instrument of appeasement, invitation and pacification of the gods and ancestors during social ceremonies (Usoro, 1). Within African culture, there is a profound belief in the spiritual support of the gods and ancestors who are recognised as intermediaries and intercessors between humans and the "High God", where their presence are cherished at periodic ("social") festivals and celebrations. For this reason, libation performance is considered the act of worship of or reverence for a Supreme Being. Its use permeates all facets of the African cultural life, from birth through puberty and from maturity to death. Libation represents the means of reference to the African gods and ancestors.

Libation performances as aspects of African folklore are believed to encompass the people's desires to express their relationships to the Higher Being within African cosmology. As libation performance expresses the people's religious world view, the hopes of the citizens and the confidence of its efficacy is unswerving in the traditional lives of the people, this constitute the major instruments of human development capacity.

As a primary socialisation agent, education is recognised the world over as an instrument of development. Every individual must go through this process, whether officially or unofficially, in order to be relevant in his/her society today. At the official level, there are stages and classes for one to pass through: the nursery through primary to secondary, and finally the University, where higher level of knowledge which produces techno-political developments are cultivated. For this reason, every nation pays attention at some points of planning, to the needs of educational advancement of her nation, emphasising areas of dire need to her growth in this attempt. In Nigeria, the story is not much different. Most governmental policies are garnered towards the advancement of the nation through education.

This paper assesses the extent to which the Nigerian educational system strives to encourage the performance of libation in her traditional governance with the view to enhance her human development, believing that this phenomenon has the potential of projecting the people's aspirations and worldviews. This is feasible in the educational curricula where courses that embody oral literature (where libation practices are discussed) are mandatory to undergraduates and masters' students of literature. This knowledge is meant to expose the students to the existence of these oral art forms and their efficacy as they are applicable within the society. The study examines the undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered at two Nigerian Universities selected across three generations University of Ibadan as a first generation University and University of Uyo as a third generation University. It evaluates how the endogenous knowledge derived from the performance of libation, may lead to development in the Nigerian society in particular and the global society in general.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This article takes its root of analysis in both the Peircean semiotics and contextual theories of meaning. Semiotic theory, according to Nwagbara, informs systematic use of signs. It operates within the context of performance to relay meaning. Semiotics as a literary theory interprets signs and explores their meanings, emphasizing how signs operate between the individuals in diverse socio-cultural contexts to give meaning and coherence (6). It focuses on the nature, form, structure of sign system and how this aids in the conceptualisation of meaning in language use.

The two aspects of semiotics, "semiotics" and "semiology," known in literary studies have to do with its dual origins in the Peircean and Saussurean traditions. Semiology was developed by a Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), as Semiology in his 1894 manuscript which was published posthumously as *Cours de Linguistique Generale* (Course of General Linguistics) in 1916. Semiotics derives its etymology from a Greek word "Semeion" meaning "sign". According to de Saussure in this popular work, as cited in Daniel Chandler, *Semiology (the study of signs)*, is a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life..." (5-6).

De Saussure defines the sign as a form made up of the signifier and the signified. The signifier comprising of something physical such as sounds, letters, gestures, etc. while the signified comprises the image or concept to which the signifier refers. Saussure calls the relation that between the two Significations. He explains that the conception of signs as part of social life relates meaning easily to the hearer. To de Saussure meaning has no relationship between the word and the concept; not the direct link to the object of discourse but only on the derived meaning to the utterance or text. He views this relationship as an arbitrary one since there is nothing inherent in the word to imply the name of the concept to the referent thereof.

### **Contextual Theory**

Contextual theory is a set of theories which emphasizes the importance of context in the enquiry, explanation and understanding of texts. The core of contextual theories is that meanings are derived from the relationship that exists between the languages of the event to the situations that surround the utterance. Hans-jorg Schmid opines that the contextual theory is the analysis of that "relation of language form to other features of the situation in which language operates phenomenon... ..the patterned relationship between linguistic events and non linguistic (363). This means that the understanding of utterances is made manifest in the understanding of the social relation and the physical environment of the utterance - the culture. Since oral arts are realised in a certain cultural setting, it becomes necessary to say that performance which gives the context to which oral arts operates is "...aimed at representing social man in a creative capacity within the context of a system of signs recognised by his community..." (Okpewho, 3); this aims at the development of man. The context of utterance, which is the occasion of the actual performance, makes any aspect of oral literature relevant during performance where one gets in contact with the actual face to face, down to earth interaction. Here too the cultural milieu of the society adds to give meaning to the utterance. Finnegan avers that, "... it is often impossible to grasp the point of attraction of a given proverb [any oral art at that] without some knowledge of the cultural background and of what the thing mentioned means to those who utter it... (405) (My emphasis).

This means that the knowledge of cultural linguistic items and signs within the Ibibio society helps to give meaning to the libation (any oral art) performance of the community. For instance, in a proverb like, Ayin am 'miyeme idu uwem abo eka amuuk ayop akook utigha ino (A child who does not want to live, tells its mother to bend the palm tree to become a bow for him), the context of ayop (palm tree), and the impossibility of bending it are known among the Ibibio. Similarly, the child not wanting to live (aman-akpa in Ibibio, abiku in Yoruba and ogbanje in Igbo), is a known concept to the African society in respective languages. The impossibility in the task of bending a palm tree to become a bow as a condition given by the aman-akpa child is equally significant to us. The Ibibio man believes that, this impossible condition of survival given by the unwilling child does not enhance development; the understanding of this phrase is the clear knowledge and application of the Ibibio arts and linguistic environment.

Also in a typical libation performance, there is always the opening formular: ... abasi anyon abasi ison atimme atootod abasi ndiin atuak ison (which literarily translates, "the God of the god of the earth the digging stick must first consult God before hitting the ground"). The mentioning of the God of the sky or is usually accompanied by the lifting of the eyes upward which is indexical, while the digger mentioned symbolizes the dependency of the incantator on the Supreme Being. In every society, a good knowledge of

the fauna and flora, as well as signs and symbols of the society is an invaluable asset to the understanding of the oral performance of that society. Understanding one's foundation is equally fundamental to the education of the citizenry and the development of a nation.

### **Libation Practices of Traditional Governance in Nigeria**

African society generally nurtures the belief in life after death-reincarnation. This belief is prefixed on the notion of the ancestors as the link of the living to the gods. The ancestors, Edet Udo intones "consisted chiefly of the forefathers and grandmothers... only good ones who were noted for good life, sane judgment and philanthropy" (258). Similarly, Idowu Bolaji asserts that "only good people become ancestors after they have received the well done judgment of deity or of the court of the ancestors" (187). To the Africans, therefore, one qualifies to be depended upon as an intermediary if one lived a good and upright life while in the secular world. Since the Africans understand that there is "only a very thin veil between the living and the dead"; the natural world and the spirit world, libation becomes the link through which this veil is permeated and the ancestors are accessed (Etuk, 33).

Concerning the religious importance of libation and the interest of the media, Udo Etuk opines that libation "is most commonly a drink offering made to the gods and spirits as part of an prayer calling on the gods, divinities and the ancestors by name... all the while inviting these spirits to attend, drink and bless the occasion or prosper the undertaking" (39). Ekong confirms that libation is "a ritual of pouring of drinks to the spirits of the departed ancestors and divinities of the land" (48).

The etymology of libation is from the Latin word "libare," meaning. "to pour as an offering" (DerBedrossian, par. 4). It originated from ancient Greek and has continued "to modern day America, throughout most religions and just about all parts of the world" (DerBedrossian, par. 4). Libation belongs to the tradition of toasting, a Grecian ancient tradition of antiquity. The Greek-style libation is often performed with olive oil and the Greek mythology credits Athena (Zeus daughter) with the act of planting the first olive tree as a gift to mankind. In return, the Greek performs libation using olive oil as a way to commemorate her contribution (DerBedrossian, par. 5). In West African traditions, libation is performed to "awaken" the ancestors and directly communicate with them to give thanks and makes requests. In Ghana Nigeria, schnapps (which is a borrowed name for locally distilled gins), is the preferred alcohol for libation (DerBedrossian, par 6). Other items like snuff, cola nuts, salt and water also constitute items of libation-serve as indicators for libation. In ancient Ibibio however, the locally distilled gin, ufob was and still is the preferred drink for libation. In an interview with Obafemi Jegede, he says:

that libation is the drink "poured" to the ancestors and that it is actually the African's efforts to "feed the gods". He avers that without the net of "pouring", there is no libation, and that the gods are represented in the things we find in nature. For instance, they (the gods), do not enjoy physical existence like man does; man on his own is limited in space and time and as a result, he cannot concretely have tangible experiences with divine realities.

To achieve this contact. Jegede explains, "man resorts to intercessory means by which he invokes the divine". Since the Africans believe that growth and continuity (development) are

achieved through constant maintenance of the filial relationship that is known to exist between the living and the ancestors, libation, which is the only known means to permeate the thin line that separate the two worlds, must be sustained. At this serious communal activity, libation is normally performed by the most senior member of the society or his appointee. For more serious occasions such as initiations, feast of purifications and atonement, burial of a prominent person, planting and harvesting or in the case of childlessness, libation strictly requires the attention of priests who in turn must be highly reputable (Udo, 252),

Recognising that the drinks "poured" are actual efforts to "feed the gods", this researcher believes that the wordings which accompany the "pouring" actually generate the invocation. The acceptance of "pouring" as the only reference where libation occurs negates acts whereby real traditionalist in religious matters cannot take food... without throwing out a morsel of the food to the ground", whereby he calls on his "ancestors to partake" without necessarily "pouring" (Etuk, 33). The definitions do not also take into account the sometimes inaudible utterances that precede most activities. For instance, a palm wine tapper is most often noted to say his incantations without "pouring" anything before climbing his tapping rope. Neither does it consider that at the point of circumcision too, the "surgeon" does no "pouring" but says her incantations, nonetheless.

According to Fred Akporobaro, "oral narratives constitute a realm of vision and ontology that was psychologically, artistically and morally satisfying explanations to the primitive man (57). Ekong corroborates that "any religions or system of beliefs [which libation constitutes] of a people serves the vital function of providing meaning to otherwise inexplicable phenomenon" (51). Libation serves as a veritable means of solving life's crises and finding meaning to life. Tsaaior asserts that libation is a demonstration of the concrete materiality of the triadic worlds of the African society (39). It is a creative verbal expression which thrives on honorific and awe inspiring lexical items. Akporobaro asserts that "the offering of libation to a God [sic] often involves a highly literary use of language (59).

The Ibibio society of Nigeria as a sub-sect of the African compendium of oral literature, and world literature at large, is highly religious and can best be described as monotheistic in the sense that the Ibibio believe in the existence of only one Almighty God - Abasi Ibom. In Ibibio parlance Ibom signifies largeness, wideness, endless, something limitless (Udo, 249). For this reason, Abasi Ibom denotes a "God so large and mighty that he cannot be housed" (Udo, 249). Also in Ibibio, the word Abasis a short form of Ababa keNsiNsi that is, Eternal, Infinite Being (Offiong, 15). Therefore, Abasi Ibom/Enyong simply means the Almighty Everlasting God who dwells in the sky.

Also in the Yoruba cosmology, Jegede avers that libation performance is a means to feed the gods and ancestors as well as invite them to partake of the affairs of man. He is not only the God of Ibibio by this understanding, but the God of the entire universe that He created. The awesomeness of God therefore informs the reliance on an intermediary wherefore the gods and ancestors are invited through libation performances. Jegede identifies verbal encomiums, adulations, praise singing and adoration as important elements of libation. In the Yoruba culture, he adds, "olojo eni, iba" (which means: the owner of the day. I adore you) is a liturgical means of activating the particular god that one obeisance to in his daily worship.

At the same time, the tone of libation texts is subdued to reflect respect and reverence to the gods. The moods too are usually tense and serious, working so mirror the solemnity of the occasion. The solemnity of the atmosphere reflects the religious connotation of libation performance. Referring to this, Francis Etim says that "Since, every African life is pervaded with religion, every ritual has a religious dimension/connotation and is taken seriously (150) Libation performance is clothed with rituals which all portray serious religious world view of the African society. The performer communicates with both the visible and invisible audiences as he dramatises his performance. The art of libation itself is enacted through communication.

Oluwatoyin Jegede argues that performance is "an artistic actualisation and creative representation of an action" (3). According to Ekong "it is not just anybody who may perform sacrifice, ritual to ndem or ibok... for proper prognostication, the abia idiom must maintain a good rapport with the spirits of the powers concerned, as his libation would reflect (47) He further adds that libation "may be performed at any time else by an expectant mother, the parent of a sick child or by anyone who is in any form of difficulty... it is carried out effectively for the welfare of man" (46). This opinion is corroborated in Jan Vansina's assertion that:

...some traditions may be a matter of esoteric knowledge, just as others may be known and recited by all ranks of the population the first case, they are only transmitted by certain persons attached to a particular institution, or are the property of a special group. No one else is allowed to transmit them even if he should happen to be well informed about the tradition... esoteric are in fact the property of certain special group... (34-5).

The liturgy of libation thus demands keen compliance and judicious observation of its conventions as sanctions are not divorced from its violation.

In all definitions accessed, there are suggestions of dependency on some ancestral presence and a desire for blessing which is in tandem with the African belief that the ancestors mediate between man and the unseen God. What this means is that the Africans used the libation performance as a means to concretise their governing processes. Like every other oral art form that helps strengthen the survival of the African people, libation was used to appease the ancestors and also to bring recalcitrant subjects to order. It served with the aid of other art forms such as mbiam (concoction) and ukan (ordeal), as a check which helped to maintain the bulwarks of the traditional African governance, especially as the priests normally perform some libation, prior to the administration of mbiam (concoction) and akun (ordeal). Etebom (Dr) Effiong Eberfiak (traditionalist and Clan Head of Oku, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria) asserts that libation performance must be appropriately accompanied with awe, especially the accompaniment (the items of libation objects) to rituals. In his own words, he adds that "whenever the objects of fear are removed from any religion, it becomes a dead religion" whereby chaos and insecurity become the order of the day. This means that if a form of religion does not incite terror or dread in its followers, they are likely going to emasculate its potency. The affinity to libation is premised on the belief that development as a growth process should start from and build on the perspectives of local concepts so that the people can respond effectively and realistically to their needs and realities. There are several ongoing research programmes such as "sustainable development, participatory development", etc. geared towards the development of African societies. Most of these aid programmes die before they are actually implemented. Then on-survival of these exogenously acquired

Programmes is indicative of their inadequacies in addressing the peculiarities in the African nations. Their inadequacies presuppose the dire need to revert to indigenously acquired knowledge activities if one is to achieve the much desired pace at human development within a specified time frame.

### **Education in Nigeria**

Education is recognised the world over as an instrument of development. Every nation pays attention at some points of planning to the needs of educational advancement of her nation, emphasising in that attempt areas of dire need to her growth. In Nigeria, the story is not much different.

The process of formal education came into Africa due to her contact with the Western world. Until the people of Africa came in touch with firstly, the Portuguese merchants and secondly, European administrators through trade and colonialism, Africa led a basically traditional life. In their rustic naivety, Africans had several systems with which the day to day administration of the land was effected. For instance, the values and mores of the African society were transmitted from generation to generation through the people's folklore. There was the traditional judicial system where conflicts were resolved amicably and the parties were satisfied with the decisions taken thereof. There was also the traditional method of information dissemination through the town criers where the griots served as custodians of and educators on the history of the community. The high priests and chief priests functioned as the media of spiritual consultation and perfection, among others. These institutions were very effective to the African man and within the society. The coming of formal education, albeit with colonialism, altered most of these institutions of governance in African, especially the effects of traditional institution on the general life patterns of the people.

Formal education came with the European administrators to Africa in the seventeenth century. In Nigeria for instance, the art of education came with the European who needed an avenue to penetrate the inter land. Education began with the primary stage with trade centres and minimal form of formal learning: later it progressed to the secondary school level. According to David Eka, secondary school education in Nigeria began when the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) established the CMS Grammar School, Bariga, Lagos, in 1859. This was closely followed by the likes of Saint Gregory's College, Lagos (1876), Methodist Boy's High School, Lagos (1878), Methodist Girls' High School Lagos (1879), Baptist Academy, Lagos (1885), Hope Waddel Institute, Calabar (1895), St Andrews College, Oyo, (1896), St Paul's College, Awka, 1904, Methodist Boys High School, Oron (1905), King's College Lagos (1909) and Nassarawa High School (1913). It was not until after thirty-six years of spread, that other places outside Lagos began to access the magic of secondary education; precisely, it was Calabar that got secondary school education first in the Eastern region of Nigeria. It got to the Igbo axis of Nigeria in 1904 (in Awka, nine years after Calabar) and to Northern Nigeria in 1913, about fifty-four years after it started in Lagos.

### **Endogenous Development (Ed): Implication on Libation Practices**

The establishment of these secondary schools meant exposure to the Whiteman's magic, opened doors to knowledge beyond the African frontiers. Of course the knowledge garnered then was mostly that which condemned the African indigenous practices in favour of the Europeans; this has since been the foundation upon which most of our curricula are tailored. Most parents forbid the use of indigenous languages at home in preference to the foreign

medium. This also impacted on the acquisition of oral art forms as well as other forms of endogenous knowledge.

In Nigeria, the tertiary educational system began with the University College, Ibadan, which was an affiliate of University of London, in 1948. The long gap of years that the Western Nigeria axis had access to secondary education (before the other parts of the country) gave a great advantage to their enrolment in the newly established tertiary institution. Most of the knowledge then was detrimental to endogenous knowledge, hence the loss of most valuable mores and wisdom which are derivable from the endogenous knowledge acquisition were abandoned by most African homes that were in a hurry to become Europeanized. The consequence of this kind of anxiety is the negative impact that is exerted on many indigenous practices. For instance, the writer grew up to the knowledge that libation practices are completely evil, just like many other indigenous practices were termed barbaric and fetish. Other universities sprang up as the nation progressed. For instance, the University of Uyo, a third generation University, began in 1991, after series of metamorphosis from a crafts centre to Advanced Teacher's College, College of Education, a state university in 1983 (University of Cross River State) and finally, a Federal University in 1991.

Most courses that are meant to enhance the nation's developmental status are mounted and taught from the undergraduate to the post graduate levels. Conferences and seminars are organised to further improve on these courses. Periodic reviews are carried out to assess the strength and areas that need to be improved upon. Researches are encouraged among academic circles to improve the status of these courses as well as ensure their practicability towards the growth of the nation. In the table below, it is observed that endogenous development in the area of libation text is hardly encouraged. In the areas of philosophy, linguistics and general study, the two universities where data were readily available, reveal high patronage. In the area of oral art forms, (oral literature) which invariably leads to the rigors of libation performances, indigenous ideas, notions and concepts are given less patronage by the students' population seeking admission. This may be attributed to the fact that right from the homes, most parents consciously deprive their children of the much necessary exposure to traditional concepts like oral arts such as proverbs, riddles, folktales, songs, local food, other culturally inclined life styles, dress codes, etc. Foreign ideas, food and concepts are unashamedly, whole-heartedly encouraged.

From the data gathered from three universities selected across three generations of their establishments and existence, we discovered that some Nigerian universities evolve courses that promote their localities and Africanness, but the level of patronage is not encouraged by students seeking admission.

**Table: 1-Indigenous related courses offered in selected Nigerian Higher Institutions. Undergraduate courses**

| Course codes/title in University of Ibadan  | Course codes/title in University of Uyo                       |  |
|---|---|--|
| GES 101- African Culture and civilization   | GST-112-Nigerian People and Culture                           |  |
| LIN 152-Languages of Nigeria                | LNL 121-Introduction to the History of the Efik/Ibibio People |  |
| LIN-271-The Linguistic Situation in Nigeria | LNL 125-Introduction to Efik/Ibibio Culture                   |  |
| LIN-322-Field Linguistic                    | LNL215- Syntax of Efik/Ibibio Language I                      |  |
| LIN 342-Study of an African Language        | LNL 222-Use of Efik/Ibibio                                    |  |
| LIN 351-Language Families of Africa         | LNL 223-Phonology of Efik/Ibibio I                            |  |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| LIN 352-The Classification of African Languages                 | LNL 224-Morphology of Efik/Ibibio Language                        |  |
| LIN 362- African Language Typologies                            | LNL311- Syntax of Efik/Ibibio Language II                         |  |
| LIY 242-Introduction to Yoruba Written Literature               | LNL 311-Syntax of Efik/Ibibio Language II                         |  |
| LIY 251- Introduction to Yoruba Oral Literature                 | LNL 312- Introduction to Efik and Ibibio Oral Literature          |  |
| LIY 252- Practical in Yoruba Literature                         | LNL 313- Varieties of Efik/Ibibio Poetry                          |  |
| LIY 341- Traditional Yoruba Poetry                              | LNL315- Phonology of Efik/Ibibio Language II                      |  |
| LIY 362- Yoruba Drama II  | LNL 316- Introduction to Africa Linguistic                        |  |
| LII 112- Introduction to Igbo History, life and Customs         | LNL 321- Introduction to Drama in Efik/Ibibio                     |  |
| LII 142-Introduction to Igbo Literature                         | LNL323- Introduction to Efik/Ibibio Traditional Music             |  |
| LII 242- Introduction to Igbo Written Literature                | LNL 324- Efik/Ibibio Religion and Philosophy                      |  |
| LII 251- Introduction to Igbo Oral Literature                   | LNL 327- Naminig in Efik/Ibibio Language                          |  |
| LII 252-Practical in Igbo Literature                            | LNL 411- Issues in the Phonology of Efik and Ibibio               |  |
| LII 341- Igbo Oral Poetry                                       | LNL 412- Efik and Ibibio Social Institutions and Material Culture |  |
| LII 351- Igbo Oral Prose  | LNL 413- Issues in Syntax of Efik/Ibibio                          |  |
|   | LNL 414- Contemporary Poetry in Efik/Ibibio                       |  |
|   | LNL 415- Efik/Ibibio Stylistics II                                |  |
|   | LNL 416- Dialect and Dialectology of Efik/Ibibio                  |  |
|   | LNL 417- Contrastive Studies in Efik/Ibibio Language              |  |
|   | LNL 422- Contemporary Prose Fiction in Efik/Ibibio                |  |
|   | ENG 114- Nigerian Literature                                      |  |
|   | ENG 122- Introduction to Drama                                    |  |
|   | ENG 124- Introduction to Poetry                                   |  |
|   | ENG 214- The African Novel  |  |
| ENG 326- Oral Literature in English Translation                 | ENG 218- African Drama  |  |
| ENG 328- Modern African Poetry                                  | ENG 315- Oral Literature II                                       |  |
| ENG 329- Modern African Drama                                   | ENG 325- Oral Literature I  |  |
| PHI 101- Introduction to Philosophy                             | PHL 315- African Philosophy I                                     |  |
| PHI 207- Introduction to African Philosophy                     | PHL 314- Social and Political Philosophy                          |  |
| PHI 307- African Philosophy                                     | PHL 321-African Philosophy II                                     |  |
| PHI 407- Issues in African Philosophy                           |   |  |
| RES 111- A Survey of African Traditional Religion               | RCS 115- Introduction to Traditional African Religion             |  |
| RES 113- Social Anthropology and Religion                       | RCS 116- Introduction to Religious and cultural Studies           |  |
|   | RCS 117- People and their Religion                                |  |
|   | RCS 125-Ancestorship in African Traditional Religion              |  |
| RES 211- General Introduction to the study of Religion          | RCS 126- Inter-Cultural Communications                            |  |
| RES 221- African Traditional Religion and Culture               | RCS 217- Religion and Ethnicity in Africa                         |  |
| RES 311- The SpiritWorld of the Africans                        | RCS 227- Religion, Myth and Cultural Patterns                     |  |
| RES 324- Religious Relations and Radicalism                     | RCS 228- Religion, Cultural and Human Relations in Africa         |  |
| RES 411- God and Cultic Practices in African Tradition Religion | RCS 324- Motif in African Traditional Religion                    |  |

#### Postgraduate Courses

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| LIY 710- Research Methods                                 | LNL 610- Research Methods in Linguistic |  |
| LIY 711- Development and Modernization of Yoruba Language | LNL 611- Advanced Phonotics             |  |
| LIY 714- Yoruba Diaspora Studies                          | LNL 612- Advanced Phonology             |  |
| LIY 722- Topics in Yoruba Grammer                         | LNL 613- Advanced Syntax                |  |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| LIY 731- Topics in Yoruba Phonology  | LNL 620- Phonologies Processes in Language  |  |
| LIY 741- Advanced Study of Yoruba Poetry   | LNL 621- Syntatic Processes in Language   |  |
| LIY 751- Advanced Study of Yoruba Prose  | LNL 623- Structure of an African Language   |  |
| LIY 761- Advanced Studynof Yoruba Drama  | LNL 624- The Linguistic Situation in Nigeria  |  |
| LIY 762- Yoruba Film Studies   | ENG 631- The African Novel  |  |
| LIY 771-Syles in Yoruba Literature   | ENG 633- Modern African Drama   |  |
| LIY 782- Yoruba Dialects   | ENG 634- African Poetry   |  |
| ENG 764- Oral Literature   |   |  |
| ENG 765- Studies in African Fiction  |   |  |
| ENG 766- Studies in African Dramatic Literature                                      |   |  |
| ENG 767- Studies in African Poetry   |   |  |
| PHI 703- African Philosophy  | PHL 623 (b)-African Philosophy  |  |
| PHI 803- African Traditional Thought II  | PHL 623 (c)- Philosophy and Religion  |  |
| PHI 710- African Concept of Man  | RCS 612- African Concept of Man   |  |
| RES 711- Secret Society in African Traditional Religion                              | RCS 614- Ethics of African Traditional Religion   |  |
| RES 712- Ethics of African Traditional Religion                                      | RCS 622- Symbolism in African Traditional Religion  |  |
| RES 713- Symbolism in African Traditional  | RCS 623- Principal Elements of African Traditional Religion                               |  |
| RES 714- Phenomenology of Religion   | RCS 624- Interaction Between African Traditional Religion and Other Religions and Culture |  |
| RES 715- Element of Worship in African Traditional Religion                          | RCS 625- Religious Art in African Society   |  |
| RES 716- African Traditional Religion in Diaspora                                    | RCS 626- African Religion and Society   |  |
| RES 717- Studies in African Culture  |   |  |
| RES 718- Contemporary Issues in the Study of African Traditional Religion            |   |  |
| RES 719- The Origin and Stages in the Academic Study of African Traditional Religion |   |  |

The table shows clearly that these Universities encourage the study of African cultures ranging from the philosophy, linguistics, prose, drama, poetry and other theatrical performance courses, to religion, especially at the undergraduate level where these are made compulsory for the acquisition of degrees in relevant fields. However, no singular course seems to lend weight on libation performances alone as a course of study. Courses at the postgraduate level more or less reflect popular choices that students make, based on their areas of interests. After the Masters level however, the candidates have the liberty to choose their area of specialization. This is where they tend to abandon the field of libation practices.

While discussing with Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo after her lead paper presentation at the Uyo Conference on Language and Literature (UCOLL), University of Uyo, held in March, 2011, she notes that much of the hopes of the forebears of our Independence seems to have been thrown into the mud; interests are no longer committed to the values that showcase African pride. Nigerians strive more towards foreign issues than they do to locally inclined issues. She went on to lament that this has impacted negatively on the minds of up-coming members of the society as most of our young ones go for the more internationally fashioned things than local. Educational attainment is not left out of this mad rush. According to her:

... It has become a tradition that Federal Universities cultivate, as a matter of tradition, the habit of globalising international standards on Spoken English - Queen's English - to the detriment of local dialects. This has flowered over other local concerns and issues. This emphasizes that those contents

that are more tilted to local issues are glossed over while foreign course contents are given prominence

According to Yusef Hagher, "our educational system has been and still is oriented towards the study of Byron, Wordsworth, Keats to the detriment of our traditional poetic forms (37) Similarly, Eberflak, laments that local concerns have been consciously abandoned in favour of "foreign concerns. He laments that "present day children do not like (and are sometimes not encouraged to eat) local food neither do they speak the local language. They prefer the use of English language and food such as *spaghetti and Indomie, to asaiwa and oto mboro*

Interest in traditional issues is on the decline; the constant lack of interest in the local concerns so far translates into the general feelings in the larger society. For instance, candidates seek admission into courses that will lead to flourishing Western oriented professions like medicine and surgery, pharmacy, engineering, etc. than they do to the locally oriented concerns. The effect of this trend on educational provisions of indigenous concerns like African oral arts is that very few candidates apply into these fields of specialization. An instance is the case availability of few researches in libation performance despite the fact that it has been recognised as the major link through which the ancestors and the gods are invited to join and partake of human affairs or to appease the anger of the ancestors in times of rancour. The number of graduates that are churned out in this area is of a negligible proportion when compared to the bulk that graduate as medical doctors, pharmacists, economists, lawyers, accountants and other professional fields. Even parents lose the glow to mention that their children are studying to specialise in these "local" fields that would not fetch juicy paying income afterwards.

Another inhibiting factor is that the few scholars who indicate interest in the courses of indigenous concerns find life almost suffocating. Researches into African indigenous studies are highly expensive as researchers are not always funded. These researches are thus carried out in severe pains and suffering. This hampers the progress of exploration into intrinsic valuable indigenous artefacts. The verbal output from researchers is almost constantly that of lament and tales of woe and pains. Of course, this deters the interest of prospective future researchers,

Also acting as handicap in the promotion of endogenous knowledge is the attitude of custodians of our oral arts. Collection of data quite often is interpreted as an economic venture, especially by the core illiterates who most often are the ones that still tend to indicate interest in these abandoned fields of wisdom. Data collection is most often obstructed by human factors too like the non-willingness of custodians to divulge information at their disposal for whatever selfish reasons.

In University of Ibadan, a first generation university, there are some measures of encouragement to traditional concepts. Some of the courses mounted tend to focus on indigenous studies. Undergraduate departments in the Faculty of Arts effectively offer courses that promote endogenous knowledge in the relevant departments. These departments also run some Postgraduate courses which are seldom applied for by students seeking admission into graduate programmes. In the Institute of African Studies also, the courses, "Oral Tradition and African Cultural History, African Thought, Philosophy and Language, Anthropology of

Africa", among others, reflect the desire to reconstruct and tradition within select groups. In the University of Uyo, undergraduate courses that encourage endogenous knowledge are equally mounted at the respective departments. At the postgraduate level too, courses of endogenous concerns are available for study as well. Some of the course that encourages indigenous African life is reflected in the African Novel, African Drama and African Poetry. However, in some academic years, patronage for courses that encourages the study of libation performance study sometimes appears to be low. In all the curricula assessed, there are no clear-cut courses that project the advancement of libation practices as an act to encourage traditional governance. Libation performance is an aspect of religious poetry, which is a topic taught in oral literature. It is not mounted as a course of its own in spite of the acknowledgement that it is an effective means of expressing the religious world view of the African people.

### **Conclusion**

*This research explored the religio-cultural life of the Ibibio via libation texts performance* Libation expresses the people's religious dogma and spans the entirety of their existential reality from life to death. It is used as an instrument of appeasement, invitation and pacification of the gods and ancestors. It also identifies libation performance as a useful administrative tool in the traditional African society. The sources interviewed confirm that this religious instrument of African society has been watered down due to modernization and globalisation. This new feeling towards oral arts in turn affects the responses that people allot to them. The paper also examined the educational programmes of two higher institutions in Nigeria with regards to their course contents and has discovered that the fault is not completely institution-based. Most of the courses that encourage endogenous development are made compulsorily at the first degree level in the relevant disciplines. The indigenes are supposed to show interest in the issues of endogenous development by embracing specialization in these traditionally based courses as they strive for higher studies. The contrary is however the case as many Nigerian graduates seek specialisation in courses that tilt more towards exogenous knowledge, except the very remnant few found in the relevant academic departments as tutors. It concludes that much of the blame rests on cultural imperialism. By the Endogenous Development (ED) paradigm which opines that local perspectives, people's worldviews and endogenous knowledge are the bases for initiating and negotiating development, this paper surmises that with the efforts of our universities, if locally inclined ideas and notions are encouraged in addition to exogenously-informed development processes, Nigeria would develop faster than it has so far.

It recommends that the government, individual, corporate bodies and non-governmental organisations should show more enthusiasm to endogenous knowledge by instituting scholarship schemes in the fields of endogenous knowledge acquisition. This will inspire who would have loved to undertake degrees and researches in them but are unable to do so due to lack of funds. The research findings will in turn promote the functionality of these fields as a tool for better developmental stride and posterity will benefit from the preserved data.

### **Notes**

In an interaction with Dr Obafemi Jegede, Department of Religious and Cultural studies, University of Ibadan, February-May, 2010.

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In an interaction with Dr Obafemi Jegede, Department of Religious and Cultural studies, University of Thailan, February-May, 2010

In an interaction with Dr Obafemi Jegede, Department of Religious and Cultural studies, University of Ibadan, February-May, 2010.

In an interaction with Pror Akachi Adimora-Ereigbo, during the Uyo Conference on Language and Literature (UCOLL), University of Uyo, March, 2011.

In an interaction with Chief (Dr) Effiong Ebereflak of blessed memory, then Clan Head of Oku, Uye Local Government Area, May, 2011, shortly before his demise on 29 May, 2011.

### **Glossary of Ibibio Words**

Ababa-always there, everlasting Abasi enyoya-God of the sky

Abasi Ibom-Almighty everlasting God, a God so large and mighty Abia idion -the high priest of idion society or cult

Aman-akpa- child that dies each time, then is reincarnated in the same womb. Asa iwa-grated cassava meal wrapped with tender cocoa-yam leaves

Ayop-palm tree or the palm fruits

Enyon-sky

Idion - a divination cult of the Ibibio which helps to cater for deeper religious concerns of the people.

Thom-largeness, wideness, endless, something limitless Ibok a wooden carving made to represent the different gods of Ibibio land

Mbiam - concoction, a kind of fetish smelling liquid that people are made to swear to, in order to attest to their innocence when accused.

Ndem-the spirit who sometimes hunt or possess humans. They are specially believed to have human characteristics and emotions. Nsi-nsi-Eternal, Infinite and Everlasting

Oto mboro -a mashed or grated banana meal usually eaten by babies, children, nursing mothers or a choiced delicacy for anybody. Ukan-ordeal

Utigha -a bow

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