

Performance context and Aesthetics of Incantations in Nkor Traditional medicine by

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ABSTRACT: *Despite the proliferation of modern systems of health practice, traditional medicine (the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness) continue to be practice in almost all African societies, Nkor inclusive. Incantations, verses loaded with aesthetic and ideological messages are very essential in the healing process. Their performance context incantations range from during healing, when there are calamities or natural disasters, during spiritual attacks, when resolving conflict and during deliverance sessions. In spite of the active presence and practice of incantation in traditional medicine, many educated elites dismiss the effect or function of incantations in producing a cure and regard them as mere manipulation on the patient's psyche. This study intends to examine the context and value of incantations in traditional healing. The study is based on the contention that incantations in Nkor traditional medical practice enhance healing and contain aesthetic qualities that facilitate the communication of messages. Data is collected using interviews and observations and analyzed using the psychoanalytic and the functionalist approaches to literary criticism. The study reveals that the incantation, verse loaded with aesthetic and ideological messages, serve as a means of enhancing healing, communicating with the supernatural, propagating culture and inculcating moral values and the contexts in which they are performed are diverse. Recognition, harmonization and standardization of the use of incantations will provide a holistic approach to solving the numerous health and social problems affecting the Nkor society today.*

Key words: *Aesthetics, Incantation, Traditional medicine, Nkor and Performance context.*

I. Introduction

Despite the proliferation of modern systems of health practice, traditional medicine continues to be practice in almost Nkor. The people from time immemorial have depended on traditional medicine to cure diseases so the introduction of Biomedicine did not replace indigenous medicine. Modern health care co-exists with traditional medical practices with used as complementary or alternative medicine. In traditional medicine, treatment required divinations to ascertain the source of illnesses and the method of treatment, The Noni adages, *Kee temyi nu kpaw* (to be healthy is wealth), emphasized the importance of good health. Good health is an asset because it enables one to fulfill his/her responsibilities to himself or herself and the community. Considering the importance of health, the Nkor man performs incantations to invoke the intercession of the supernatural in times of poor health. The occasions during which incantations are performed range from, during healing, when there are calamities or natural disasters, during spiritual attacks, when resolving conflict and during deliverance sessions. In spite the active presence and practice of incantation in traditional medicine, Taiwo Mafimisebi and Adegboyey Ogunlade have pointed out that, 'Many educated elites dismiss the effect or function of incantations in producing a cure and regard them as mere manipulation on the patient's psyche' (11). This study debunks these views and portray that incantations, verse forms loaded with aesthetic and ideological messages besides serving many functions, empower medicine and enhance healing. Traditional medical practice consists of two complementary aspects: the physical which involves the use of physical objects such as roots, tree backs, plants and leaves in ethnos pharmacology and the non-physical which consists of the use of such oral literature genres as divination verses, incantations, esoteric prayers, supplicatory chants, and magical poetic formulas in diagnosing afflictions, prescribing and enforcing healing processes and manufacturing drugs. Alegbeleye Bamidele says African traditional medicine is a form of holistic health care system organized into three levels of specialty, namely divination, spiritualism, and herbalism (49). Our study concentrates incantations, the nonphysical aspect of traditional healing practice.

The study is based on the contention that incantations in traditional medical practice are not only tools for communicating with the supernatural but they enhance the healing process. Given that health is paramount to the welfare and development of every society and that sickness is a timeless and universal phenomenon, this study constitutes a major effort in providing understanding to the ongoing global quest for health. The study besides preserving Nkor medical practices for posterity, provides modern medical practitioners with knowledge that could enable them turn to traditional medicine as an alternative.

Terms defined in this study are aesthetics, incantation, traditional medicine and performance context. *The Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of the English Language* defines aesthetics as “pertaining to beauty, taste, or fine arts; artistic” (435). John Hosper observes that, “in aesthetics we attempt to answer questions such as: When is an object beautiful? ... Are there any criteria for distinguishing good works of art from bad ones? ... Has art anything to do with truth or with morality? (2) while Tala Kashim maintains that, ‘aesthetics hangs on the notion of the beautiful and beauty is not a physical thing or the quality of things, but our projection into them by our own aesthetic experience so a people’s aesthetics is their notion of what they consider good or bad, valuable or worthless and what they consider beautiful or ugly in artistic productions(11). Aesthetics in this study refers to that which is considered beautiful or valuable.

Incantations according to *Funk and Wagnall* are “the utterance of magical words for enchantment or exorcism” (638). Mbiti in *African Religions and Philosophy* perceives incantations as verses or formula believed to be magically effective in manipulating people or things (182). To Nol Alembong in *Cameroon’s Western Grassland Incantations: Background, Society, Cosmology* an incantation is a verse form, the words of which are believed to have a magical effect when spoken or chanted during the performance of rituals or any other occasion that calls for the intervention of the supernatural in human affairs (7-8). Walter Duru maintained that incantation suggests the use of spells or verbal charms spoken or sung, a ritual recitation of words or sounds believed to have a magical effect. (65). Incantations possess the ability to charm, or captivate audience thus taking control over their minds. In this study, we see incantation as words that possess power, words which are spoken or chanted by the traditional medical practitioners to enhance healing.

The Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, considers traditional medicine as ‘health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being. (1). To the World Health Organization, ‘traditional medicine is the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness’. (F:\WHO _ Traditional Medicine Definitions.htm). The foregoing definitions examines traditional medicine as a medical practice that involves the use of plants, plant parts, minerals and animals for metaphysical and physical diagnoses, preservation, prevention and treatment of ailments. These definitions are relevant for this study.

The *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines context as “the whole situation, background or environment relevant to some happening or personality” (394). By this definition, context refers to condition that necessitates the performance as well as the place of performance. Ruth Finnegan in *Oral Literature in Africa*, defines context as “Relating to specific social groupings in any society and to its social occasions and activities” (244). To Finnegan, context deals with environment and activities that take place within that environment. Context in this study will be used to mean the place and occasion that makes it necessary for an incantation to be performed. Context is very relevant to the appreciation of Nkor incantations because it determines the content of the incantation, the visual statues, sexual boundaries, consideration of time and space, remuneration, paraphernalia, the audience and the mood of performance.

The Study Area

Nkor is one of the fourteen villages of Noni sub division, in Bui division of the North West Region of Cameroon. Nkor shares boundaries to the north with Messaje, to the South with Oku, to the West with Bum and Kom and to the East with Nso and Mbum. Nkor occupies a surface area of 14 square miles and has a population of over 3500 people (council census, 2010), with the youth and children constituting a lion’s share of the population; 85%. (www.Nkornoni.htm). Nkor has vast rivers and plains covered with cornfields, excellent rock, road network, horse riding paths and a magnificent view. Other sites include “Kinju njang forest” found on the leeward site of Mbinon, sloping down to Nkor, a patch of the forest along the Nkor, Dom and Banten road and the numerous hills linking Nkowe and Dom. Nkor people are mostly farmers who practice subsistence agriculture and their main crops are maize, groundnuts, beans, potatoes, plantains and cola nuts. They rear animals like cows, goats, rabbits, dogs, pigs and fowls. The Nkor tradi practitioners use Nkor flora and fauna in traditional medicine. The corpus for the study was drawn from tradi practitioners with at least five years of experience.

Theoretical Framework

The psychoanalytic and functionalist theories are used in this study. Functionalism has its origins in the works of Emile Durkheim who was interested in how social order is possible, how society remains relatively stable. Bronislaw Malinowski says everything in human life must have a function. All folklore materials, to him are a function of a human need, a social and structural necessity, or a device for social cohesion. Bascom suggests four primary functions of oral literature or folklore in culture which are, 1. lets people escape from repressions imposed upon them by society. 2. Validates culture, justifying its rituals and institutions. 3. Reinforces morals and values and builds wit and 4. Exercise social control (36). The functionalism model is helpful for it enables us to know the functions or importance of incantations in the healing process.

The psychoanalytic approach is also used. Sigmund Freud in "On Dreams" Excerpts. *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, states that the human mind is structured. It consists of the conscious and the unconscious and is based on three personality structures namely; the Id, Ego and the Super ego. The conscious mind is controlled by the super ego and is responsible for judging between rights and wrongs constantly rejecting and repressing the awful demands of the Id (the primitive and irrational content of the human mind). The ego constantly mediates between the Id and super ego and reflects the individual's ability to think and act in organized manner (55). Carl Jung supports Freud's views that the unconscious is composed of two parts; the personal unconscious which contains the result of an individual's entire experience or the repressed feelings and thoughts developed during the individual's life and the collective unconscious which are those inherited feelings, thoughts and memories shared by humanity. (qtd by Robert DiYanni in 'Critical Theory: Approaches to the Analysis and Interpretation of Literature' (635-636). According to Carl Jung in *The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, psychoanalysis is a long and complex process in which the psychoanalyst and the patient meet on a one on one session to explore and discuss the origin of the patient's problem (13). The psychoanalytic approach is apt for this study as it deals with the human mind and sickness is a thing of the mind. It helps in the analysis of how the incantations reflect and affect the psyche and behavioral patterns of the practitioner and the sick.

Literature Review

Several studies have been done on traditional medicine, the concept and nature of incantation and their aesthetics in society. Some of these studies are reveal to make clear the contribution of our study.

Nixon Kahjum Takor & Gilbert Mbingek Wensakwi in 'Conflicting Perceptions of Traditional Medicine in The Oku Fondom, Bamenda (Cameroon): The Question of Ecological Context' examine the conflict of philosophies on the perception of traditional medicine in Oku Fondom. They argue that the implantation of Western institutions in Oku ushered in the atmosphere of conflicting perception of traditional medicine in the Fondom. Using qualitative and narrative approach they analyzed the conflicting views and conclude 'that the world is endowed with diversity of ecological opportunities, that traditional medicine is a long established and resilient practice in the Oku Fondom, in spite threats from western medical advocacy and that the western culture of healing pertained to an ecological context which might not always be adaptable to the African social niche (89).

Mbingek Gilbert Wensakwi, Richard Tanto Tall, PhD & Aloysius Nyuymengka Ngalim, in 'The Resilience and Survival of Traditional Medicine in the Oku Fondom of Cameroon' traces the historical development of tradi-medical practices, identifying the key historical events and social factors that have influenced their resilience and survival and assessing their effectiveness in meeting the health care needs of the local population. They use qualitative approach their findings show that traditional medicine has a long history deeply rooted in local culture and community practices. and despite the challenges posed traditional medicine continue to adapt and evolve, demonstrating its resilience and effectiveness in addressing the health needs of the local population. (1465)

John Mbiti focuses on the ritualistic importance of incantations. Emphasizing the importance of incantatory words, he says 'incantations have remained the most used form of communication with the supernatural' (129). Nol Alembong discusses the background, ontology, society and cosmology in North West grassland incantations. He argues that rituals provide the occasions for the performance of incantations and examines the various levels of reutilization and rites performed (22-412). His study is theological, cultural, ethnological and sociological with little or no emphasis on the aesthetic qualities of the incantations. Oladele Taiwo submits that; "incantations often accompany many ritual ceremonies as a means of placating gods, ancestors and soliciting help" (33). Oladele limits his study of incantations to their functions as media of worship and communication with the supernatural.

Peter Drafczyk in distinguishing between traditional medicine and scientific medicine in Cameroon asserts that 'the conservation of curative power of plants is linked to the regular sacrifices, incantations and for most of the time, also on the observation of special standing laws' (7). He concludes that incantations, sacrifices and observation of taboos render efficacy to herbs. This implies that the physical objects like herbs are

empowered by the non-physical represented by incantations for healing to take place. Our study draws a lot of inspiration from that of Drafczyk.

Heodore d'Almeida emphasizes the inseparable duality of the human personality which must be considered when using incantations in treatment. To him, herbal medicine and incantation are inseparable. He posits,

The incantations and the herbal medicine must be used together, because it is an error to attempt to treat separately the soul or the body:-the incantation must precede the administration of the drug: it is necessary first of all, to think of the spiritual or soul: without this personal contact and confidence, nothing is possible. (8)

His submission points to the fact that just like the body cannot be separated from the soul, incantation cannot be separated from herbal medicine. Thus, for effective treatment to take place, both the physical and the spiritual should be taken care of. Taiwo and Adegboyeyea in the same manner see incantations as indispensable in some traditional medical practices. To them, 'Some traditional medicine can only be effective when an incantation is recited during their preparation and administration to cure or elicit the desired response' (11). The core of their discussion is on the preparation and use of traditional medicine by farmers. Like d'Almeida, Taiwo and Adegboyeyea we wish to examine the use of incantations in herbal treatment in Nkor.

Osunwale in his paper entitled 'Healing by Incantation: the Yoruba Experience' is concerned with the style of chant and incantations. He says, for an incantation to be effective, it must conform to the chanting style (1-2). In the same light, Okanlawon Tunde in 'Aesthetics in the Oral Context: Towards a Register of Styles of Nigeria's Oral Literature' opines that invocations and incantations possess formulae of performance, incantations stick to chanting styles' (497-507). This means that the performer mastered the language and style required for specific incantations.

Discussing Noni incantations, Christy Fijong in a dissertation titled 'Enthronement Rituals in Noni: A study of some Fondoms in Noni' postulates that Noni people believe ancestors and gods influence the lives of the living so incantations are often used by the king maker to invite the ancestors and gods to come and be witnesses to the enthronement of fon (31). Fijong is concerned with incantation as a means of communicating with the supernatural. Bintum seeks to distinguish between the language of the soothsayer and that of our daily usage. Like Fijong, he identifies incantations as one of the means of communication with the gods and posits that 'Noni soothsayers use incantations in revealing information that is covert or hidden' (23).

From the review, it is clear that very little research has been carried out on Nkor incantation especially from the literary perspective. The incantations have been exploited more for, sociological, anthropological and ethnological reasons. This researcher examines the context and aesthetic qualities of the incantations in Nkor traditional medical practice because they enfold creative beauty and communicate cultural values and moral concepts that govern human behaviour in Nkor society.

Methodology

Data for this study was collected using interview and observation and analyzed using functionalism and psychoanalysis as theories. Observation method which according to Alembong in *Stand Points in Orature* and Mbunwe Patrick in 'A Practical Approach to Collection, Transcription, Translation and Production of Oral texts' permits the researcher to observe and report on everything which goes on in particular contexts. The researcher adopted both the active participant-observer method in which the researcher identifies with the performers and thus gets relevant information, as well as the inactive participant and onlooker method in which the researcher only observed and recorded information. Okoh points out that such direct face-to-face contact for the purpose of collection in their natural environment is relevant as it render authenticity to the performance (169). The interview method was also used. Specific information related to the role of incantations in traditional medical practice was solicited from the interviewees or performers. As Alembong states, the researcher is expected to ask questions on what informants know, believe in and feel, do, expect and to explain and give the reason for such responses (15). He identifies two interview methods; the non-directive and the directive methods. With the nondirective interview, data is gotten through generalized conversation between the informants and the researcher. Secondary data was collected from the libraries and internet.

Performance Context of Incantations in Nkor Traditional Medicine

Context relates according to Ruth Finnegan refers to the whole situation, background or environment relevant to some happening, the condition that necessitates the performance as well as the place of performance (244). To her, context deals with environment and activities that take place within that environment. Bronislaw Malinowski in his study of the Trobriand oral narrative posits that an oral performance is extremely important but without a social context, it remains lifeless. The success of an oral performance is determined by the performer, the audience and the social forces of the society which inspire it (1-2). Incantations are orature and as

Isidore Okpewho in *The Oral Performance in Africa* observes, 'without the context, it remains lifeless' (1). Tala Kashim in the same light maintains that:

Orature is socially conditioned. That is, it mirrors cultural values and expresses socially accepted ideas. Therefore, in order to understand and appreciate it fully, it must be seen within its cultural, historical and symbolic context. Any attempt to see it independently of the sociohistorical situation in which it is embedded or from which it has emerged will inevitably lead to distortion and other absurdities (7).

Ngeh Ernestilia Dzekem in her dissertation entitled 'The Ideological and Aesthetic Significance of Incantations: The Example of the Nso Tradition', lays emphasis on three aspects of incantations; context, creativity and performance. To her the context and the creativeness of the performer are indispensable. Each incantation depends on the occasion and the performer is a creative artist whose flexibility with the language of incantation creates the intended effect (2). Performance context is very relevant to the appreciation of Nkor incantations because it determines the content of the incantation, the visual statues, sexual boundaries, consideration of time and space, remuneration, paraphernalia, the audience and the mood of performance. Also, the aesthetic value and social implications of incantations is enhanced by the performance context and social relevance. As stipulated by Robert DiYanni in *Critical Theory: Approaches to the Analysis and Interpretation of Literature* we have examine the social context in which the incantation are produced or embedded, the social, political and cultural institutions and values represented in them, what do they reveal about the peoples' way of life and how they enhance healing.

Incantations in Nkor are performed at individual, family and communal levels. At the individual level, incantations are performed when ensuring the wellbeing of individuals, at the family level they are performed when healing and resolving conflicts or disorder in the entire family and at the communal level. The occasions during which incantations are performed in Nkor tradi medical practice are: healing, aversion of calamities or natural disasters, spiritual attacks, conflict resolution and during deliverance.

During Healing

Albert Olawale in 'The Role of Oral Literature in Yoruba Herbal Medical practice' submits that incantations, verses, chants, divinations, praise songs amongst other oral forms of literature are used in diagnosing afflictions, prescribing and enforcing healing process and manufacturing drugs (12). The health members must be guaranteed for any society to function effectively. The Nkor people rely on the Supreme Being, ancestors and other deities for their protection against any dangers to their health. As a result, they constantly commune with these supernatural through sacrifices, incantations and libation that placate, mollify and maintain a cordial relationship with them and ensure or maintain good health. Incantations are performed for the healing of physical illnesses such as animal bites, bone fracture, infertility to name but a few. The bites of animals like snakes, scorpion and dogs are deadly and so when a person is bitten by one of these animals, it is usually treated with caution and special incantations. This is because in Nkor, it is believed that witches and wizards transform into these animals to accomplish their evil intentions against their victims. Because of the delicate nature of such bites, an adult in the Nkor society is expected to know the incantations performed and herbs used in such cases. The treatment of a Snake bite is accompanied by an incantation such as incantation 5. Vigorously rubbings (Kwebele) the antidote prepared with the head of a snake and with castor oil, the herbalist calls on his ancestors "Ba Lenjo, Ba Nyamkwi, Ba Takilam and Ba Fisiy" to render the medicine efficacious and heal Nyowke who has been bitten by a poisonous snake. He commands the poison to get out from the leg. In some cases, the effectiveness of this incantation is seen in the patient's constant urination, sweating and vomiting. After this incantation, the victim is given some medicine to drink to stop the poison from spreading.

Bone fractures are common in Nkor and incantations are also performed to heal bone fractures. In an interview with Pa Kinkuw who specializes in bone healing, he stated that, when a patient comes with a bone fracture, the first thing I do is a divination to ascertain whether the fracture is caused by supernatural forces or natural forces. If the divinations reveal that supernatural forces are responsible for the fracture, I call on my ancestors and gods to empower the physical items I will use to heal the patient but if the fracture is natural, treatment takes a different course. (Interview). An example is seen in incantation 6 performed to heal a child who sustained a bone fracture. The performer uses his ancestor's bone and hits it against the fractured bone commanding the fracture to be restored to its rightful position. According to Pa Thomas Ndi the bone healer, his ancestor's bone serves as a medium through which the ancestors assist in healing (Interview).

Another context during which incantations are performed is the healing of infertility. Children are culture bearers and future custodians of their tradition. They also provide labour force for the development of the community and are the future ancestors. According Fai Fokom Bongili, in Nkor childlessness is believed to be either a reprisal from ancestors or the malevolent acts of witches and wizards. In such situations, incantations are usually performed to the gods and ancestors who are looked upon as givers of children asking them to treat such a situation (Interview). This is seen in incantation 7 that was performed to heal Kima from her infertility

believed to result from a curse from her ancestors. Another example is seen in incantation 1 performed to heal Njing from infertility.

Calamities or Natural Disasters

Incantations are also performed in Nkor during Calamities or natural disasters. Many communities suffer from natural calamities such as earthquakes, erosions, land slide, draught and locust. When this happens in Nkor, it is usually interpreted as the wrath of the gods upon the land and incantations are therefore performed to placate the gods and plead with them to heal the community. According to fai Ndifilam Peter of Takum, at such communal rituals, the incantations performed are intended to ward-off calamities or any impending threats to the community from evil spirits, witches and wizards or nature (Interview). Such incantations are usually followed by ritual sacrifices and oath taking intended to prevent or cure diseases that could be of harmful effect to the entire community. An example is incantation 4 performed by the community head during a locust (*ntemntem*) infestation. The locust fed on all green plants resulting in hunger and starvation in the land and since the people could not explain the origin of the locust, they attributed it to the wrath of the gods on the people. The performance of incantations is meant to mollify these gods and save the entire community from this strange outbreak. Nkor people believe their life is controlled by their gods and ancestors; so natural disasters and strange disease are believed to be as a result of the punishments of the gods and ancestors for the crimes committed by the people.

During Spiritual Attacks.

Incantations are also performed during spiritual attacks. Every community is made of the physical and the supernatural world. According to Nol Alembong, spirits are things that have no concrete shape and features that inhabit the supernatural universe which consist of the Supreme Being, divinities/deities, spirits (good and bad) and the ancestors (266). There exist good spirits which protects and fights for the innocent and evil spirits which sets out to destroy its victims. Incantations are performed in Nkor tradi medical practice in case of a spiritual attack from evil spirits. Besides empowering healing, Kashim Tala submits that “Incantations... are used to ward off evil...to solve the spiritual, economic and social problems that confront man in the African milieu” (48). Pa Yufonyuy Andrew a herbalist in an interview pointed out that ‘within the Nkor community, it is believe that spirits can possess or attack individuals, sometimes, these spirits are the attempts of witches and wizards to cause harm to their victims or the vengeance of the gods, ancestors and deities who have been offended (Interview). Pa Ndi Sammuell Tata added that spiritual attacks might result from a person’s refusal to respect certain established taboos, offer regular sacrifices to ancestors, deities and gods and from desecrating the land or committing a sacrilege. When such situations occur, the patient might develop strange diseases like madness, blindness and deafness. Incantations performed in such situations are to appease the spirits, ancestors and deities so that they can revert the situation of the victim. In healing spiritual attacks, the incantations are violent. This is exemplified in Incantation 8. After this incantation and ritual, the performer gives the patient medicine from a calabash after which the native doctor chews alligator pepper together with a special herb and applies on the patient’s forehead. Depending on the nature of the spiritual attack, incense (*jiin*) is burnt while uttering the incantations.

During Conflict or Disunity

In Nkor, it is believed that good health will evade people when there is conflict or disunity, so incantations are often performed to ensure that the community and each family remains united. It is believed that when there is an unresolved conflict especially in the family, family members are affected both physically and psychologically. In some cases, the children have constant fevers and nightmares health of the family negatively. It is also believed that disunity enables evil forces and enemies to accomplish their evil plants against the family. If *Kidiv* a reconciliation ritual is not performed to restore the sanity and peace of the family, the family will be at risk of constant spiritual and physical attacks. Incantation 2 was performed to resolve a family disunity. This incantation is meant to seal the bond of brotherhood in the family and make them live happy and fulfilling lives. While this incantation is performed, family members knee down and after they drink from the same pot as a sign of reunion.

During Deliverance Session.

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, deliverance is ‘The state of being rescued from danger, evil or pain’ (387). In Nkor, incantations are performed to deliver one from evil influence, demonic and spiritual attacks. In Nkor, there exist good and bad cults and members take oaths during initiation which makes them indebted to cults. The bad cults which are locally referred to as “*Kenyo*”, “*Coupe*”, “*Nyungo*” or “*Famla*” indulge in evil practices such as human sacrifices to acquire wealth. According Pa Ngala Joachim, members may be asked to offer human sacrifices usually of one who is beloved to them. As such, it is not strange to hear

in Nkor that a person has been used for money ritual. Incantation 10 was performed during the deliverance of a man who was initiated into a cult by a friend.

During child delivery

Babila Mutia contends that ‘Bakweri pregnancy rituals and their accompanying incantations are performed to avert abortions, premature deliveries, stillbirths and to ensure safe delivery’ (65). Mutia points out that incantations have the propensity to avert harm that may come to an unborn baby and ensure safe deliveries. Some women sometimes labour for a long time before delivery. When this happens in Nkor, it is believed that the child is prevented from being born by witches and wizards or that the child possesses supernatural powers. As a result, Nkor man performs incantations to lure the child out of the woman’s womb and deliver her from labour pains. It is believed that these incantations are heard by the unborn child and they affect the movements of the child which facilitate delivering. The occasions in which incantations are performed in Nkor traditional medical practice are inexhaustible, however, the occasions discussed here are; during healing of physical ailments, during calamity or natural disaster, during spiritual attacks, during conflict and during a deliverance session and during delivery.

The value or significance of incantations

Nkor incantations convey the people’s beliefs, aspirations and world views. The messages in them include the belief that the ancestors and gods are responsible for the welfare of the living, that life is full of challenges and there is need to seek the face of the supernatural to go through these challenges, that unity is strength, that the society has established norms and mores and anyone who goes against them will be punished and that disunity and disrespect for the social order leads to illnesses or calamities. The incantations besides facilitating healing are used to admonish, propagate culture, communicate with the supernatural.

Admonishment

To admonish, give advice, warn or caution somebody against an act that has disastrous effect on the community is common function of incantations. Performers of incantations in Nkor traditional medical practice admonish the audience on the necessity to avoid actions that can lead to sickness. They frown at vices and approve virtues. Incantations 1 for example warns against disrespect to the elderly because this could result in a curse. Njing becomes barren because she spoke rudely to her mother as seen in ‘I inflicted barrenness on Njing because she rejected me her mother and when I cautioned her, she spoke rudely to me in public’. In Nkor, elders are respected so any act of arrogance especially by a child to a parent is considered an abomination. In incantation 16 also, a father advises his son to be careful of the evil in the world. He tells him, his eyes should be on the ground meaning he should be cautious and tread with vigilance because, there are many thorns on the ground and the rock is slippery. (Lines 7-8), The son is advised to tread with caution because of evil and harmful forces. Thorns on the ground in line 7 is a metaphor to the danger and evil that characterizes society. The rock is a symbol of the earth and its slippery nature depicts the uncertainty that characterizes this world. The incantation intimates that the world we live in is evil so we need to be cautious. This message of caution is emphasized in proverbs like “A fowl that doesn’t take to advice, Ahaa, soon finds itself in a hot pot!” Those who pay deaf ears to advice always end up in difficult situations or in trouble. The metaphor of a fowl in a hot pot depicts the danger and uncomfortable situation that awaits defaulters of good counsel and norms of the society.

Cultural Propagation

According to Gamble and Gamble, culture is ‘A system of knowledge, beliefs, customs, behaviors and artifact that are acquired, shared and used by members during daily living’ (35). Ogunbameru and Rotimi opine that ‘Culture is conceived as a design for living and each culture constitutes a unique lifestyle, values, roles and relationships that provide guide for socially defined appropriate behavior’ (235). Culture is thus, the sum total of a people’s way of life. Nkor tradi practitioners use incantations to convey Nkor culture. In incantation 2, Nkor belief that children should continue to drink from the family pot that their ancestors left for them in order to ensure the continuity of culture is propagated. The performer says:

Performer: *O Lngam!*

O Ndiba!

Fin nu shan kfuu yi wo tonya e bese.

Boom buw nu é kfulé kee to wue é nshan yin ne.

Kee cee diewe wé bo waa bwee yaa nu diewe mvunse bo fiéwe ké.

Translation

Performer: O Lngam!

O Ndiba!

This is the family pot you left for us.
Your children have come to drink from it.
To live like brothers and not like cats and rats.

The family pot is a symbol of unity and continuity so those that have abandoned the practice of drinking from the family pot are encouraged to return to it. Incantation 11 portrays Nkor people's belief in the existence of a link between the living and the death.

Performer: *O Ndishangon!*

O Lɛɛnjo!

No bese nú é wu, bese baa dayé wo ké.

No bese nu ɛ dieken wase, bese baa daye wo ké.

Keeceycey boom ban, fô biyuy bi befe kum bô le ké.

Fô we tuw wvú é kentuwe e bəmse wvú ké.

Nsisee bô fɛn e nú bô lanlan. Ko bvuum

muw.

Ko fimbi fiuw.

Translation

Performer: *O Ndishangong!*

O Lenjo!

As we drink, we do not forget you.

As we eat, we do not forget you.

Protect these children from bad spirits.

Let no one transform to frighten them.

Their stay here will be happy, Take your palm
wine.

Take your kola nuts.

The performer reminds the ancestors who laid the foundation for the ritual being performed that they have not abandoned the practice and have not forgotten them, the pioneers of the cultural practice. The very fact that they do not forget their ancestors when they eat and drink as seen in lines 4 and 5, echoes continuity of the culture. The ancestors who initiated this tradition are still being acknowledged and remembered after they are gone. Nkor people believe that life does not end at death, death is simply a transition into another world which Mbiti refers to as the world of "the living dead". In incantation 4, we see the culture of reconciliation and being at peace with ancestors and gods. Turning to the gods in times of calamities, shows the people's reliance on the gods for their daily existence. The performer questions the god (Nyo-Mbom) about the cause of the plague and numerous deaths in the land and wishes for a return to normalcy in:

Performer: *O Nyo-Mbom!*

New wo nyaa Biye yin, mbvum man eno mvunbi mvun e wo.

Besen nu bo kenyiishem nje lon vuu nu bgwe yii yisene.

Nguú yesen yumtene e kenghaw ke kenceme yuú bese.

Besen kpwei ejow e cee njela?

E besen kpwei bocee, e ke nyaa yee bintaje?

Fisen muem mvuun (Pointing at a Goat, palm wine and cola nut)

bvu Fi besen yii lon vune.

Translation

Performer: *O Nyo Mbom!*

We present to you this Goat, palm wine and cola nuts.

We are sad because of the calamity that has befallen us.

Our crops are drying up and a strange disease killing us.

Why are we dying every day? If we all die, who will offer the regular sacrifices?

If we have offended you, may these items (Points at a Goat, palm wine and cola) calm your
wrath?

The question "If we all die, who will offer the regular sacrifices? (Line 6), portray the people's desire to continue with the practice, hence, ensuring the continuity of the culture and tradition that had been established by their ancestors. The second question 'If we have offended you, may these items calm your wrath?' (Line 7) depicts the need for reconciliation which is one of the cultural virtues of Nkor culture.

Communication with the Supernatural

According to *The Webster's New World Dictionary*, communication is defined as "the act of transmitting, giving or exchanging of information, signals or messages as by talks, gestures or writing" (282). Nkor incantations serve as a means through which the living communicates with the supernatural. Richard Gehman posits that incantation is a medium of communication with the ancestral spirits (143) while Mbiti says 'incantations remain the most used form of communication with the supernatural' (129). Incantations are used by Nkor people as media to table complaints and call on the ancestors to come to their aid in times of need. In Incantation 12 performed during a healing ritual, the performer informs the supernatural of his dependent on the ancestors and calls on them to empower his medicine. He chants:

Performer: *Me ntege bo nkfusai bem Ndimancho bo Ndimba
Le bo nya mvungai e efuwe kin. No me yefe kefuwe kin yi yo le, ke
kenbefe nuu ke kooy wo ke.*

Translation

Performer: I call on my ancestors, Ndimancho and Ndimba
To give power to this medicine.
As I rub this medicine on this child, let no evil come to him.

The above incantation communicates the messages of reliance on the supernatural in times of need. This suggests that the supernatural can be communicated with to seek their help in empowering traditional medicine. The messages communicated by the performer of this incantation are that the community is suffering and there is need for the gods to intervene and that the people have offer regular sacrifices to the gods and as such deserve their help. Another example of the use of incantations to communicate with the supernatural is seen in:

Performer: *E ben bo nkfusai! E ben bonyo! (Pours palm wine twice)
Ben tonu nya me efuwe kin,
Keseen nteje le ben to nya efuwe kin mvungai,
No bese wuu, boba, ben taa fo bese le
Ekee Fowo ge ekenbefe to fo besele ke.
E mvuun nu mvuneen (Pointing at palm wine, a Goat and Cola nuts)*

Translation

Performer: E you ancestors! E you gods!
(Pours palm wine twice) You gave me this
medicine,
Now I call on you to give it strength, as we drink,
fathers, take care of us. Let no evil come to us.
These are for you (Pointing at palm wine, a Goat and Cola nuts)

The performer acknowledges his ancestors who handed him the medicine and informs them of his reliance on their help for the medicine to be effective. The expression "Now I call on you to give it strength" illustrates the trust the performer has on his ancestor. The above incantations thus serve as media of communicating with and soliciting help from the supernatural in times of need. Similar cases can be seen in incantations 4, 7, 9, 11 and 12.

Seeking Protection

Kashim Tala submits that 'Incantations are used to ward off evil, solve spiritual, economic and social problems that confront man in the African milieu' (48). Nkor society like any other society is characterized by evil people and spirits who may be stumbling blocks to people's wellbeing. As such, traditional medical practitioners use incantations to solicit protection from the supernatural. An example is in incantation 11 below,

Performer: *O Ndishanjon!
O Lɛɛnjo!
Keeɛyɛy boom ban, fô biyuy bi befe kum bô le ke.
Fô we tuw wvú é kentuwe e bemse wvú ke.
Nsiee bô fɛn e nú bô lanlan....*
Performer: *O Nfi, Kichusey, Ndi!
No me nfeeke kefuwe kin ye wan vun e,
Gee Ê ki ley gen e kelemme kewe.
Fô fie fi befe kum wvú le ke.
Ê wvú len lo yo, Ê wvú no gene lo é yi baa ta wvú ke.
E wvú dan lo kfuúu, Kefo fiee kooy bó wvú ke.*

Translation

Performer: O
Ndishangong!
O Lenjo!
Protect these children from bad spirits.
Let no one transform to frighten them.
Their stay here will be happy ...
O Nfi, Kichusey, Ndi!
As I robe this medicine on this child,
Let it enter into his blood. Let no evil befall him.
If he steps on a snake, let him walk away without harm.
If he crosses a robe, let no harm befall him.

In the incantation above, the performer pleads with ancestors like Ndishangong, Lenjo and Nfi, Kichusey, Ndi to protect his children from bad spirits and malevolent act of witches and wizards who transform and frighten children at night. This incantation is meant to stop evil practices which usually inflict fear in children and cause ill health. In Nkor, it is believed that an evil person can transform into a Snake to cause harm to his victims or throw a magic robe on the path of his victims for them to cross and get ill. The performer pleads with the ancestors for their protection against such harm.

Empower Medicine and enhance healing

David Adesina in “Traditional Medical Care in Nigeria” declares, some herbalists may also practice therapeutic occultism which is the use of the supernatural or mysterious forces, prayers, invocations, citing and singing of incantations in the believe that some diseases which are caused by supernatural forces will be readily diagnosed and treated (4-5) while Diran Makinde in *‘Indigenous Knowledge: Research Trial’* argues that herbalist mobilize enormous powers from the use of words in various incantations and charms. Incantations uttered during the performance of herbal medicine convey power on to the herbs. (88). Opefeyitimi in *‘Metaphysics of Yoruba Incantations, Yoruba Ideologies’* in the same way observes that ‘incantation words are very intrinsic and possess vital force known in Yoruba as ‘ase’, which are symbols of command, authority and efficacy (132). To him, incantations are efficacious and are used to invoke and employ supernatural forces into herbs to treat specific ailments.

Incantations in Nkor traditional medical practices are used to empower medicine used for healing. This is because as Mbiti rightly maintains, incantatory words are powerful enough to enhance healing (23). In an interview with Fai Ndifilam Peter a traditional healer in Nkor, he maintained that when he incants the words, he summons the supernatural who empower his medicine. An example is seen in incantation 12 below.

Incantation 12

Performer: Ndifikan,
*Me ntenge bo nkfusai bem Ndimancho bo Ndimba Le bo nya
mvungai e efuwe kin.
No me yefe kefuwe kin yi’o le, ke kenbefe nuu ke kooy wo ke.
We wvú gomte ekole kuw, kew nu ke bgwe.
E bô lan lo kfuú é je yo le, e wo dang fiee saa e ge wo ke.
Wo nu ke cee, tfvúw lo boom, yi bomm e.*

Translation

Performer: Ndifikan,
I call on my ancestors,
Ndimancho and Ndimba to give power to this medicine.
As I apply this medicine on you, no evil will befall you.
Anyone who wants your head, his will fall.
You will cross any rope thrown on your way.
You will live and have children upon children, upon children.

In the above incantation, Ndimancho and Ndimba are called upon to empower the medicine just as in the incantation below, performed during the healing of a child with a bone fracture, the performer calls on his ancestors to enhance the healing.

Performer: *Ahaa! bonkfusai bem,
No me kum ekufe ke wan wvune, Ke bonen lo kanmuay.
Ki twashe lo kanmuay, Ki kase twashe lo kanmuay
Nsase wvu yi ye le ka lo (To the patient)
Leki ekale kedvu fo kuse. Bo nu e fe wase wo.*

Translation

Performer: Ahaa! My ancestors,
As I torch this child's bone, let it get healed at once.
Let it come together again. Let it be strong again.
Let the pains pass away (To the patient)
Put the leg on the ground. They have treated you.

The faith and the commanding tone of the healer is noted as he commands "...let it get healed at once." (Line 2), "Let it come together again..." (Line 3), "Let the pains pass away..." (Line 4), "Put the leg on the ground" (Line 5) and "... They have treated you." (Line 5) shows his faith in his treatment. This commanding tone and faith displayed by the tradi practitioner shows his believe in help from the supernatural and has a psychological effect on the patient as it wins his confidence in the performance, hence enhancing relief and healing.

To Punish Propagators of Evil

Nkor incantations are used to cause afflictions and illnesses on people who have done evil or wrong against the society or members of the society. Must often, these incantations take the form of curses chanted with the intention of invoking supernatural spirits to cause harm on perpetrators of evil. Occasions during which these types of incantations are performed are: when one's property is stolen, when one is tormented by a witch or wizard or when an elderly person is wronged by an arrogant young person. These types of incantation are usually performed to cause havoc to the perpetrators of such vices. In incantation 1, Njing's barrenness is the results of a cursed from her mother 'I inflicted barrenness on Njing. She rejected me her mother. When I advised her, she spoke rudely to me in public,' line 4-5. In Nkor, it is an act of disrespect to your parent and a taboo to speak rudely to them in public. Thus, our elders deserve respect and the consequences of arrogance to them are disastrous. This explains why, children in Nkor give utmost respect to their parents and elders. In yet another incantation, a child who has done wrong against the parents is punished. This incantation is a curse performed by a mother to inflict ill-luck on her son for disrespecting her, she incants:

Performer: *Bonkfusai bem yene!
Me njemyi e mvuum baa.
Me ntonu e tuu wan wvun esheem jome kee bvuuuke.
Me ntonu e yen ngew nkuuse wvo,
Eben, wvo nu e cuuy njeñ yii bvushiw bweme.
No wo nu elum kebo kee nyanyii wvo,
Ke wvo beke yen njoñe yii nce woleke.*

Translation

Performer: My ancestors bear me witness!
Let the sun bear me witness
I carried this child in my womb for nine months.
I suffered to raise him
But today, he has spat on my face.
Since he has bitten the finger that fed him, he will
never see good in his life. (Incantation13)

She carried the perpetrator in her womb for nine months, raised him, but he has disgraced and disrespected her (You have spat on my face). The metaphor of spiting on his mother's face is a symbol of disrespect; spite and scorn which is reason enough for the mother to curse a child. We learn from this incantation that our parents can curse us if we become arrogant and disrespectful to them. In incantation 7 performed during a spiritual attack, the performer evokes his deity *Nyo-La* to avenge his tormentor. He incants:

Performer: *Wo gomte enola eme?
Wo kamte kintonseke me leete njela?
Ke me yaa laake we ke. Ke me mbaa nconj we ke.
E me nu mbiay, e wo kenke me. Geenen enu keceey, Nyo-La,
Wo bo mueten, gome wvu, gen yi kfuu dyew e,
fowo cine e kebokowe ke, yu bo bocii.*

Translation

Performer: What do you want from me?
Why do you oppress me while I sleep?
I do not owe any body. I have not stolen from somebody
If I lie, you will get me.
But if it is true, Nyo-La, you and the person, search him,
go to his family, and do not let go your hand, kill them all.

The performer of this incantation is a victim of malevolent acts of witches and wizards who torments him at night by squeezing his neck while he sleeps. In one of such numerous sleepless nights, he gets up and performs this incantation. Since Nkor people believe that every crime deserves a punishment, he evokes his deity to cause havoc to his tormentor's family by killing all of them. This shows us that one can suffer for the crimes of his kinsmen. From this incantation we learn that the consequences of a crime committed by a single person may affect his entire family. From the foregoing incantations we learn that incantations are used to call on the supernatural to punish perpetrators of evil and to correct wrong doings.

II. Conclusion

Traditional medicine in Nkor is complementary or alternative medicine and, in most cases, treatment required divinations to ascertain the source of illnesses and the method of treatment to followed, Incantations, plays a vital in traditional healing. Their performance context is varied and they are used not just function as tools to communicate with the supernatural but to empower medicine and enhance healing. Data for this study was collected using interview and observation and analyzed using functionalism and psychoanalysis as theories. Our study revealed that incantations in Nkor traditional medical practice are performed during healing, when there are calamities or natural disasters, during when spiritual attacks, resolving conflict and during deliverance sessions. As far as the aesthetic value is concern, the incantations functions as media of cultural propagation, education and instilling moral values, communication with the supernatural, seeking protection against evil, admonishing, empowering traditional medicine and healing and as a means of punishing propagators of evil. The findings of this study have implications for policy and practices of traditional medicine, healthcare, and cultural preservation and prove that the strength of Nkor society lies in its traditional medicines, which is handed down by their ancestors and maintained by their strict adherence to traditional laws.

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Appendix

Incantation 1

Performer: **O Lemfe O Lemfon**

Ben to yenfyee fii koyii

È ge me le Njin, nú kase Vu to nu e ma me wuú bwe ε me dio ntefe vu,

E vu jeme diew yi cewcewe ε me edan.

Audience: Haaaa! Vu to nu e jaay!

Performer: *Geenen, no vu nu ε to ebee jai we,*

Me nu nkase tfuse jim lon wvun.

Audience: *Abaay, vu nuu bone wase!*

Translation

Performer: O Lemfe O Lemfon

Come and bear witness.

I inflicted barrenness on Njing.

She rejected me her mother and when I advised her,

She spoke rudely to me in public.

Audience: Haaaa! She was wrong!

Performer: But because she has apologized,

I now break the curse.

Audience: *Abaay, she has gutten well!*

Incantation 2

Performer: *O Langam!*

O Ndiba! Fin nu shan kfuu yi wo tonya e bese.

Boom buw nu é kfule kee to wue é nshan yin ne.

Kee cee diewε wε bo waa bwee yaa nu diew

mvunse bo fiεwe kε. Kee fo wo cine é lon bi bo le kε.

Boom bó le bó cemkene bonen, 0= é bó nkfu lætene nyεkey.

Audience: *Eheee! abaay!*

Performer: *Ke fo wo byuu cine é lon bi bo le kε.*

Audience: *Eheee! abaay!*

Performer: *Boom bo bó le bó cemkene bonen, é bó kfu lætene nyεkey.*

Audience: *Fi nu nonen!*

Translation

Performer: O Langam!

O Ndiba! This is the family pot you left for us.

Your children have come to drink from it.

To live like brothers and not like cats and rats.

Do not let evil befall them again.

Let their sick children get well.

The dead should rest in peace.

Audience: *Eheee! abaay!*

Performer: Do not let any ill befall them again.

Audience: *Eheee! abaay*

Performer: Let their sick children get well and the dead rest in peace.

Audience: *Eheee! Abaay*

Incantation 3

Performer: *Yeke, Nyo-mbom gaite le kencem ke Ngala nya kilesen.*

Kilesen: *Ke me baa kee fiee foke. Kilesen! Nyo-Mbom gaite le,*

E wo tun, Baa nsunsu ngang muan efa jo wvu diee.

Kilesen: *Bo tonu Ejo kenjinjin kem buu nfm dvu.*

Translation

Performer: Listen, Nyo-Mbom says that Ngala's illness is from Kilesen

Kilesen: I am innocent.

Performer: Kilesen! Nyo-Mbom says if you deny

Remove one alligator pepper from his head and eat.

Kilesen: They took my image and caused the harm.

Incantation 4

Performer: *O Nyo-Mbom!*

Ntew wo nyaa Biye yin, mbvum man eno mvunbi mvun e wo.

Besen nu bo kenyiishem nje lon vuu nu bgwe yii yisene.

Nguú yesen yumtene e kenhgaw ke kenceme yuú bese.

Besen kpwei ejow e cee njela?

E besen kpwei bocee, e ke nyaa yee bintaje?

Fisen muem mvuun (Pointing at a goat, palm wine and cola nuts) *bvu Fi besen yii lon vune.*

Translation

Performer: O Nyo Mbom!

We present to you this Goat, palm wine and cola nuts.

We are sad because of the calamity that has befallen us.

Our crops are drying up and a strange disease killing us.

Why are we dying every day?

If we all die, who will offer the regular sacrifices?

Receive these items (Pointing at a goat, palm wine and cola nuts) and save us from this ill luck.

Incantation 5

Performer: *Bo nkfu bem! Ba Lenjo, Ba Nyamkwi*

Ba Takilam, Ba Fisiy,

Ben yen Nyowke, waa wene, wú nu len kfoo.

Nu me yiife kwebele vun yii ekale kin e,

Edyine, Me ngaite le woo buuy lo kanmuan

E kefowo cine e dyine yidvu len yiyile ke.

E kefowo cine e wvu kwbe ke.

Ge e e wvu jai e dyine yidvu.

Translation

Performer: My ancestors, Ba Lenjo, Ba Nyamkwi

Ba Takilam, Ba Fisiy this is Nyowke your child,

who has stepped on a rope?

As I rub this "Kwebele" into this leg, Poison,

I order you to come out. O medicines get out this poison.

Do not let the poison spread Do not let this child die. Let him urinate the poison.

Incantation 6

Performer: *Ahaa! bonkfusai bem,*

No me kum ekufe ke wan wvúne, Ke bonen lo kanmuan.

Ki twashe lo kanman. Ki kase twashe lo kanman

Nsase wvú yi ye le ka lo (To the patient)

Leki ekale kedvú fó kuse. Bo nu e fe wase wo.

Translation

Performer: Ahaa! My ancestors,

As I torch this child's bone, let it get healed at once.

Let it come together again. Let it be strong again.

Let the pains pass away (To the patient)

Put the leg on the ground. They have treated you.

Incantation 7

Performer: *Nyamkwi, Yujse, e no wo Banto!*

Ben to ko shie yene, bvuum eno finbi finene Kekuu ke foo, cine bia ye
.E bia yidvu ke shii, e yi ge kfuu.
E wan nyi yie yeje, e we saa sum yey yidvu ke. E we cuuke bo joo.
(Rubbing medicine on her body) *Bvuse fiye fii diee wvú, nya wvú boom.*
Bvuse mwëem dvu, ge ε wvu bonen. E tontai wan (Rubbing her with a fowl)
E tontai wan (Rubbing her with a fowl)

Translation

Performer: Nyamkwi, Yungse and you Banto!
Come and take your chicken, palm wine and cola nuts.
When a cocoyam rots, it leaves tubers.
When the tubers remain, they make a family.
If a child excretes on one's lap, one cannot cut off the lap
but wash it with water. (Rubbing medicine on her body)
Remove what is blocking her womb and give her children.
Remove them and let her be well.
You are welcome child. (Rubbing her with a fowl)
You are welcome child. (Rubbing her with a fowl)

Incantation 8

Performer: *Gham, Kejmbwe kuw kin kyke keeka.*
Ngew wvun kyke keeka. Bicem too gene geenen, È kuw kin témyi ekole.
No me nsele nshie yin, (Cutting the neck of the fowl)
Keleme ke wvu nya wo nkew e buuyte.

Translation

Performer: Gham, *this* convulsion must stop, This torment must end.
Sicknesses come and go but yours is stubborn. As I cut this fowl, (Cutting the
neck of the fowl) let the blood of your tormentor flow.

Incantation 9

Performer: *O Nyo-wong! Wvun nu Tangiri waa wo.*
Ke vu ya cee leete ke. Bifile bi befe lamte wvú
Bighaw bi mwëem e kooyi wvu. Wvu nu to bo Shie yo
Wvu nu to bo Bvuum muw.
é wvú nú é jay fië, ε wo foose wvu. (slaughters the fowl)

Translation

Performer: O Nyo-wong!
Here is Tangiri your child, he does not sleep.
He has nightmares. Strange things are happening to him.
He has brought a fowl for you, he has brought palm wine for you
If he has offended you, forgive him. (Slaughters the fowl)

Incantation 10

Performer: *Wo to ge nee se laa kenyo? È to gen ye bow o enyo?*
Been se gëe la djo?
Patient: *E to gen nsaa yem bome djo.* **Performer:** *Wo gomte le me e ge ne?*
Patient: *Ngomte kee nbuuy.*
Performer: *To bô bie ye, Jicë kendonj ke dvú.*
(Patient slaughters the goat and starts running across the river)
Performer: *Cine vule, biwo kfuuyiooo!* (Performer shoots him with mud)
To ebeewoo geneooo! (Performer shoots him with mud)
We ke cee e kitum ki wee mvulele, Kase kfule Ekitum kew e.

Translation

Performer: How did you become a cultist? Who took you there?
What have you been doing there?
Patient: I was initiated by a friend.
Performer: What do you want me to do?
Patient: I want to be freed
Performer: Bring the goat. Hold its neck.
(Patient slaughters the goat, and starts running across the river)

Performer: Let him loose, lets go home ooo! (Performer shots him with mud)
Come lets go! (Performer shots him with mud)
When one stays in another person's country, he returns to his own country.

Incantation 11

Performer: *O Ndishangon!*

O Lɛɛnjo!

No bese nú é wu, bese baa dayé wo ké.

No bese nu ɛ dieken wase, bese baa daye wo ké.

Keeɛɛɛ boom ban, fô biyuy bi befɛ kum bô le ké.

Fô we tuw wvú é kentuwe e bɛmse wvú ké.

Nsisee bô fɛn e nú bô lanlan.

Ko bvuum muw.

ko fimbi fiuw.

Translation

Performer: O Ndishangong!

O Lenjo!

As we drink, we do not forget you.

As we eat, we do not forget you.

Protect these children from bad spirits.

Let no one transform to frighten them.

Their stay here will be happy, Take your palm wine.

Take your kola nuts.

Incantation 12

Performer: *Ndifikan, Me ntege bo nkfusai bem Ndimancho bo*

Ndimba Le bo nya mvungai e efuwe kin.

No me yefe kefuwe kin yi yo le, ke kenbefe nuu ke kooy wo ke.

We wvú gomte ekole kuw, kew nu ke bgwe.

E bô lan lo kfuú é je yo le, e wo dang fiɛ saa e ge wo ké.

Wo nu ke cee, tfvúw lo boom, yi bomm e.

Translation

Performer: Ndifikan, I call on my ancestors, Ndimancho and Ndimba

To give power to this medicine.

As I apply this medicine on you, no evil will befall you.

Anyone who wants your head, his will fall.

You will cross any rope thrown on your way.

You will live and have children upon children, upon children.

Incantation 13

Performer: *Bonkfusai bem yene!*

Me njemyi e mvuum baa.

Me ntonu e tuu wan wvun esheem jome kee bvuuke.

Me ntonu e yen ngew nkuuse wvo,

Eben, wvo nu e cuuy njeɲ yii bvushiw bweme.

No wo nu elum kebo kee nyanyi wvo,

Ke wvo beke yen njoɲe yii nce woleke.

Translation

Performer: My ancestors bear me witness!

Let the sun bear me witness.

I carried this child in my womb for nine months.

I suffered to raise him but today, he has spat on my face.

Since he has bitten the finger that fed him, he will never see good in his life.

Incantation 14

Performer: *Wo gomte enola eme?*

Wo kamte kintoɲseke me leete njela?

Ke me yaa laake we ke. Ke me mbaa ncoɲ we ke.

E me nu mbiay, e wo kenke me. Geenen enu keceey, Nyo-La,

Wo bo mueten, gome wvu, gen yi kfuú dyew e,

fowo cine e kebokowe ke, yu bo bocii.

Translation

Performer: What do you want from me?
Why do you oppress me while I sleep?
I do not owe any body. I have not stolen from somebody.
If I lie, you will get me. But if it is true,
Nyo-La, you and the person, search him,
go to his family, and do not let go your hand, kill them all.

Incantation 15

Performer: *Eh, Nyo-La,*
Leeshe kichai kewan wvune wvu tonu djai ekale.
Kee yaa nu nobese lene ke Nshie yii yaa yuuke ntefe ke, ahaa!
Nu kee yen ekole kew e nton wvu yvusele.
(Slaughters the fowl and pours palm wine)
Ko Shie yo. Ko bvuum muw, Ko finbi fiuw.

Translation

Performer: Eh, Nyo-La,
Forgive this child who missed his footstep.
This is not how we walk
A fowl that doesn't take to advice, Ahaa Soon finds itself in a hot pot!
(Slaughters the fowl and pours palm wine)
ake your chicken; take your palm wine, take your Kola nuts.

Incantation 16

Performer: *O Tangiri! O Tamfu!*
Me teje ben le been gemgeme wan wvun.
E keyoy kee befe momte wvo, ki saa yen wvoleke.
No wvo lene, tomyi bikaa, Wvo djo wee bo ejise fokuse,
Biaay nu fokuse baai.
E kinbaan lemleme

Translation

Performer: Oh Tangiri!
Oh Tamfu!
I call on you to protect this child.
Any evil spirit that attacks him, will not find you. As he moves, before
placing his footsteps, let his eyes be on the ground, there are many thorns
on the ground and the rock is slippery