

## **CITATION ON PROFESSOR S.A.O BABALOLA, M.A (Can tab) PhD (London)**

Professor Solomon Adeboye Babalola was born 56 years ago and educated at Achimota College, Ghana and the University of Cambridge. A child prodigy and polymath, his early studies were in European Classics and English Language but his eventual area of self-taught specialization in the study of Yoruba Language and Literatures. His achievements in the study of structure and content of the language, its literature whether poetry, drama or fiction as well as critical and creative writing along with its orthography spread over 25 years of intense dedication. His cumulative work is rare combination of academic and linguistic proficiency.

His 'magnum opus' "This content and form of Yoruba Ijala", Oxford University Press 1966, is universally regarded as a model breakthrough in African Literature Studies. 'Ijala' is a chant form employed by Yoruba hunters, rich in myths, but then previous unrecognized as poetry. In an inimitable manner, Professor Babalola establishes conclusively from accepted first principles why the chants are inherently and universally classifiable as poetry, in particular elaborating on the rhythm cohering in the chants including their cultural and mythological background.

From this springboard, Professor Babalola went on to pioneer the battle of recognition of Nigerian Languages and Literatures as valid and proper areas of study in Nigerian institutions of learning. By virtue of his example, the University of Lagos in particular established full-fledged courses in Edo, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Furthermore, his revolutionary and fundamentalist approach resulted in the particular Nigerian Language being adopted as its own medium of instruction and for analytic purposes for its own metalanguage. Professor Babalola's noble effort must be seen as part of the decolonization process of recognizing Nigerian Language as Language-not vernaculars.

Professor Babalola's record as educationist deserves note. He was the first Nigerian Principal of Igbobi College, one of our famous educational institutions. He has been examiner in Yoruba at every level from school certificate, through Higher School, Degree, and Doctoral to Professional level. He was consultant to FESTAC Colloquium. Formerly Dean Faculty of African and Asian studies, Dean Faculty of Arts and Public orator, University of Lagos, Professor Babalola, an eminent linguist, has been member of the Nigerian Language Arts Council, Chairman Working Party on Orthographies of Nigerian Languages and was honored by the Oxford University Press Adjudicators Panel with the Among Talbot Prize.

In recognition of his outstanding contributions to our national prestige and attainment, the Board of Trustees of the Nigerian National Merit Award Endowment Fund considers it fit and proper to confer the Nigerian National Merit Award on Professor Solomon Adeboye Oladele Babalola.

Alhaji (Dr.) A.L Ciroma, CFR,  
Chairman,  
Board of Trustees, Nigerian National Merit Award,  
1st October, 1982.