

Iconic Celebration of Charms and Friendship in Poetry: Fálétí's "Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun"

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"Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun" is a heroic poetry with the resemblance of a tragic history. It is a hunter's dirge, where the griot happens to be a friend to a friend of the fallen hunter. In essence, it is a chant that laments a deep loss of an idol and celebrates the sacred cult of friendship. Here, a friend whose name is unknown, narrates the demise of his friend, Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun. The latter gave his life in pursuit of the killer of his own friend, Inaolaji. The story is that of the mythical character, Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun, eulogized as a great hunter with cult following. His death takes on the appearance of a slap in the face of medicinal charm, charisma, and talismanic efficacy, almost tantamount to "the death of the mythical Yorùbá medicine man's child in broad day light." The tragic event calls for lamentations across the land. Even the most callous, capable of "eating the head of the tortoise, and drinking cold-heartedly with the empty shell of the diminutive snail" would hear the tragic narrative and snivel. It's that bad! Here is the unfolding of the event:

Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun, the man of the people would do anything to alleviate the pain and suffering of his people. Any animal attack, a stampede in the farm, an elephant on the rampage or the buffalo with untoward assaults on the people in the distant wood would invoke the wrath of Adébímpé, and his instant intervention was natural. And so came the day when the wild beast would not let peace reign in the neighboring forest, and the person to call to the rescue was no other person than Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun,

fondly known as “the deadly spirit that roams the wild, son of the Queen Mother.” With deep inquiry, he found it was actually the farmland of his friend that was attacked. He swore by the sacred incantation that there would be no peace for an animal that made waste the farm of his friend, just as “the male pigeon is never at ease to live inside the house; Èmì – the migrant rat, never sleeps in the same nest two nights in a row; and as the case is for the pataguenon monkey to jump from tree to tree restlessly without finding a place to rest . . .” so would it be for the animal that violated the farm of his friend.

Friends and neighbors consoled Adébímpé who was hell bent on going after the wild beast that had the audacity to destroy his friend’s farm. Adébímpé must vindicate his friend’s loss. His zeal for the vindication of this friend’s loss brought tears to the eyes of Adébímpé’s neighbors who had the prior knowledge of the worse that had actually occurred: it was not the farm of Adébímpé’s friend that was destroyed; it was actually Adébímpé’s friend, Inaolaji himself, that was killed by the wild beast! As could be expected, Adébímpé was devastated on hearing the bad news. Then and there, he swore not to weep or mourn the loss of his friend, neither would the hunter’s funeral rites be performed for Inaolaji until two things happened: the body of his friend was retrieved and the culprit, the wild beast, was brought to justice by being totally and vindictively annihilated. Anything less, would fail miserably for the hero to mourn the parting of his friend with honor.

And so Adébímpé embarked on the journey of honorable vindication. He bade two other hunters to tag along and they headed straight to the deep woods; after all, a hunter-prince never went on a hunting expedition solo. Soon, they found the remains of Inaolaji and secured the body, but Adébímpé swore he would not retreat until the animal that had the audacity to take his friend’s life had its own life taken as well. The journey continued. The search was strenuous. The distance was far afield. Jungles were crossed. Hilly terrains were toiled. Then, the hero apprehended the perpetrator. The battle ensued; and it was fierce. This would be a one-on-one encounter between Adébímpé and the erring beast, a leopard. Adébímpé gave his partners a break, ordered them to stand aloof and watch him and the leopard in an epic fight for life. He anchored the weapon by the trunk of a tree, tucked the sword in the sheath. He was confident he would wrestle the beast with his bare fist to a total submission and round it up with an eventual kill. He resorted to the spell of incantation, binding all spirits of the adder, the pythons, and the minor serpents. The chanting triggered

the wrath of the wild beast, which charged at the hero hunter. It was an all-out war, a mortal skirmish with no end in sight! It was a battle of two hunters – a human hunter facing the animal hunter, each pommeling the other with the killer instinct. Exasperated, Adébímpé resorted back to the power of the word as he emitted precarious incantations that forced the fingernails of the leopard to sink back into their sockets; the tongue glue-jammed into the roof of the mouth; the teeth withdrawing and hiding inside the gums of the clenched jaws.

It was at this point that the great hunter, Adébímpé, choke-holding the leopard, called on the younger hunters and ordered them to come near and shoot the beast at close range. The nervous hunter was the first to attempt the shoot, emptying the loaded barrel into the leopard, himself falling headlong at the sound of his own gun. Adébímpé hissed and mocked the nervous hunter, informing him of a big miss on so-close a target! He then beckoned on an alternative hunter, swearing he would not let go of the grip of the leopard. The second hunter finished off the animal with the shot right on target with a sniper's propensity. The leopard lost the battle; fell down and died. Adébímpé then summoned all the hunters to come near and see a bewilderment. It was there he disclosed to them that the earlier nervous hunter did a fatal damage to him because when the hunter shot the leopard nervously, he missed the target but hit Adébímpé. He let them see the flow of blood coming from his torso. They all shouted and cried in despair. The echo of their cries swept through the length and breadth of the jungle. Adébímpé consoled them, tying the fatal shot to fate, against which no one could possibly prevail. He bade his comrades farewell, then slumped and gave up the ghost. Three bodies were brought back from the wood – that of Inaolaji, the one of the leopard, and finally, that of Adébímpé Ọ̀-*jédòkun*, the altruistic hero.

This Fálétí's work is a rare combination of poetry, creative writing, storytelling and an exploration of the sociology of friendship, as the Yorùbá believe it to be as well as the power (and powerlessness) of indigenous medicine. As a poetic form, the 215-line poem is beautifully written and stylistically appealing. The suspense entailed in the development of the plots keeps the reader spellbound and expectant from the beginning to the end of the saga. This is a poem with the appearance of an epic. After all, an epic is a long poem. It contains stories of a legendary figure, often a hero who has influenced the history of a people. Despite the lengthy debate on the absence of meeting the parameters of an epic tradition in all of poetry in Africa (Finnegan 1970) and the debunking of such stereotype (Okpewho 1983; 1992), one could not but ascribe

the status of an epic to Fáléti's poem. Yet, the literary merit of "Adébímpé, Ojedokun" is not the focus of this write-up and will be left for future analysis. Oladeji (1980) has done, to a large degree, justice to the stylistic merit of the work. According to Oladeji, this is one poem that is comparable to great historical poems and epic traditions of all times. In what follows, however, I take a look at three important traditional themes contained in the poem that have cultural ramifications revolving around the belief system of the people. They are:

- 1) Indigenous medicine and its power
- 2) The sociological explanation to the occasional inefficacy of Indigenous medicine
- 3) The ultimate sacrifice of friendship

I post-script the article with a translation of the poem into the English language. It would not snugly fit the model of a traditional translation in the stylistic sense, but a combination of translation, interpretation and paraphrasing.

Indigenous Medicine

Indigenous medicine is an ancient practice of the Yorùbá. In a way, this is a credit to the people's serious adherence to the spiritual essence and sacrosanctity of nature as well as a functional utilization of the power of the word through incantations. Much has focused on this profession in academic and popular writings. The works of Pierre Fatumbi Verger (1995; 1976, etc), Àjàyí Fabunmi (1972), or even relatively more recent writings, for example those of Segun Soetan (2017) and the encyclopedia entry of Martin A. Tsang (2016), to mention but a few, accentuate the seriousness of the practice of traditional medicine among the people. Indigenous medicinal practitioners are taken seriously in the society. For example, Joseph Odumosu's (1895) work on *Iwosan* (Healing) remains one of the most sought-after documents on Yorùbá medicine and currently undergoes translation into the English language.¹ In his introduction to the work, Odumosu recognized the skills and professionalism that accompany the work of indigenous medical practitioners, encouraging his colleagues to investigate their prescriptions and ingredients. He appraised

¹ The current translation is being undertaken by both my research partner, Dr. Elen Tilley, and myself on a grant provided by the Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA and has been contracted to the University of Wisconsin Press for onward publication at the conclusion of the work. The book, written between 1895 and 1910, is a compendium of various strictly prescribed medicine by the author, and the prescriptions, often an array of herbs, fauna or other natural ingredients, are occasionally accompanied by incantations.

the indigenous medicine as superior to its counterpart of Western extraction and boasted of the efficacy of such herbal remedies if and when the prescriptions are strictly followed. According to him, the cost and side-effects of Western medicine when pitched side-by-side indigenous medicine would make the choice of the latter logical and efficient. In his justification for the documentation of the indigenous medicine, he wrote:

The book is necessary because of so many who can ill afford the cost of consultations and treatments by physicians trained in Western medicinal practices and orientation, and to alleviate the pain and suffering of women, thereby reducing the pressure on their husbands. Because when individuals keep a copy of this book of healing in his or her own custody, they will have knowledge of which herbal preparation is appropriate for their exact illnesses. Also, I have come to realize that my colleagues – fellow native doctors and herbalists, don't seem to care much about investigating the right herbal remedies for appropriate sicknesses. I have also realized that we are guilty of not doing enough of expressing our appreciation to the Divine God who made provision for these herbs to be readily available for our use. We will rather express appreciation to those things that have no knowledge of where the herbs come from. . . It is for all these reasons that I decided that it is necessary to document all these in this book form.

Unfortunately, as Soetan noted, “In this age and time, scholarship of African indigenous science and medicine is very scanty. . . Both literate and nonliterate Africans, on daily basis, reject the rich ancient wisdoms of the continent and desecrate the once venerated practices that birthed the recorded innovations of the continent while aping western modernism” (227). It is for this reason that much of indigenous medicine is neither studied nor even investigated and, sadly is not a part of the curricula at various levels of education among the Yorùbá. Even in various fields of studies that could benefit maximally from the practice, like, for example, medicine, pharmacy, zoology, botany, biology, and related fields, instructors as well as learners are abysmally ignorant of such knowledge. This is an epistemological challenge, which often puts our practitioners' sources of knowledge in suspect. The tendency to gravitate towards the western definition of knowledge is a systemic problem ingrained into our colonial and colonized psyche and has consequently truncated the possibility of major breakthroughs in fields such as medicines and pharmaceutical sciences.

It seems that a reversal of this trend is a significant part of the impetuses that prompted the story in “Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun.” The Yorùbá belief in the power of *oogun* is showcased in this poem. Fálétí opens the poem with an

enigmatic paradox: *N kò tún f'owó sòdògùn mó / Ní' jò t'éranko ti p'Ò jẹ̀dòkun Erelú omo je...* (Never again would I waste my money; rely on the efficacy of, or invest my emotion on the efficacy of medicine ever since (an ordinary) animal mauled Òjẹ̀dòkun Erelú omo). The natural question is whether or not the narrator is dismissing the power of medicine because of its ability to stay the life of a man known for being a practitioner of indigenous medicine. The answer is “no”; the narrator does not dismiss the power of medicine; he only expresses his exasperation and disappointment in the circumstances that precipitated a seeming failure of the indigenous medicine. Indeed, the purpose of these first two lines is to set the reader up for suspense, an eager anticipation for the revelation of an antithesis of a cultural reality. The question of the poet is, “How could there ever come a situation that defies the rule of conventional wisdom?” How could a medicine man himself become a victim of his trade? In essence, Fálétí here questions the truisms inherent in the aphorisms of the “death killing a Babalawo like one who is novice to the art of divination; death killing the medicine man like one who is oblivious of charms; death killing the man of religion like one who does not know God the King . . .” In spite of what seems like an apparent apprehensiveness, the poem showcases the power of indigenous medicine. There are three instances in the poem that underscore this point:

First and foremost, on lines 11 and 12 of the poem, the main character, Adébímpé Òjẹ̀dòkun, is described as a terror, a man of war, and a quick vengeance to nuisance animals that threatened the lives and properties of the people. The duikers and other vegetable-devouring animals hid their faces on knowing the presence of Adébímpé in the vast forest. And so, as it is with his magnanimous character, on hearing of the infiltration and assault of certain animals on the farmland of his friend, Inaolaji, Adébímpé took up arms and was up and ready to go for the attack on such animals. This is the case with men endowed with the strength of traditional medicine; while others may cringe, and cower in their skins, the men of valor are not afraid to come face-to-face with dangerous situations, including animals. D. O. Fágúnwà portrays such characters in likewise manner. They, usually men, are ready at moment's notice to go after weird elements in remote jungles just to ensure the good of citizens around them, sometimes to retrieve hidden power, knowledge and treasure often not for the good of themselves but for that of the community. Documented in *Ògbójú Ode*, *Igbó Olódumarè*, *Ìrinkèrindò* and *Ìrèkè Oníbùdó* are examples of situations in which such powerful men embarked on journeys when the most powerful tool in their arsenal has always been traditional medicines, which usually help them disappear through *àfẹ̀ẹ̀rí*, trans-mutate from one place to another in split seconds through the charm of *egbé* or even turn themselves into inanimate objects to bamboozle their adversaries into

believing they were dead or not around to challenge them. This is what we see in the action of Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun. Exasperating the situation was the revelation that the victim was his friend and that the latter had lost his life to such unfriendly beasts. Adébímpé did not flinch as he mounted a search party trio for Inaolaji and became an avenger of the blood of his friend.

Secondly, the use of powerful incantations to subdue situations and rally the powers-that-be to the hero's favor is evidence of the recognition of the indigenous medicine. In all situations, they worked for Adébímpé. He was able to pass through the dense forests, shorten the distance for the jungle trek, energize himself, de-energize and enervate his adversaries, and engage in protracted physical engagements with animals in the wild. Adébímpé re-arranged the course of nature through the power of the word - calling on "the giant snail to halt the process of shielding itself for the season; the okra to cease fruiting; and the cotton plant to terminate its budding processes." Of course, with those invocations, actions took place to his favor: the leopard could not hurt the hero hunter and he was able to subdue the giant panther with ease. All these are tributes to the power of indigenous medicine and they accentuate the poet's intent.

The sociological explanation to the occasional inefficacy of Indigenous medicine

The Yorùbá believe that there are days or times when "the herbs choose to stay in the bushes." At such time they say, *ewé sun'ko*. The cliché implies that herbal charms do not respond to the wish of the practitioners sometimes; they simply choose not to perform. There are many explanations when such occasional failure to mobilize spiritual forces to one's advantage happens. They are all based on the principle of cause and effect:

The first one is when the practitioner or user of the indigenous medicine breaks a taboo, violating the norms and values of the society. It is believed the individual's action would trigger even nature to be in total defiance of his or her wish. That is when it is said, *lágbájá d'ẹ̀jàá* (X broke a taboo). There are consequences to such betrayal of culture and one of them is for the medicine not to be efficacious.

Secondly, there are times when there is a counteraction from a more superior practitioner. When there is competition between two utilizers of herbal medicine, whoever wields more influence in the spirit world would neutralize the power of the rival. Such was the case in the epic battle between Timi Agbale, the first monarch in the ancient City of Ede, known for his charm-laden bows and arrows that never missed their targets; and Gbonka, the warlord from the ancient Kingdom of Ọ̀yọ́. As documented in *Ọ̀ba Kòso*, a stage play

popularized by the late Duro Ladipo's traveling theater, and documented as a genuine historical event, the two warriors challenged each other to a marketplace display of medicinal prowess and charisma. The fight was mortal. In spite of the power of Timi Agbale, who had subjugated the entire city state to do obeisance to him and make him their ruler, he forgot to pay adequate homage to the spirit world. Gbonka, on the other hand, did the opposite. He submitted himself to the higher powers by entering the sacred woods and called on the witches from their covens. He pleaded his case before them and asked for their permission to go and do the battle that laid ahead of him. With this, Gbonka was able to subjugate the powerful Timi Agbale in the public square and kill him.

The third situation, which is often more lethal, is when there is a breach from right inside the household. This is a common motif in Yorùbá folklore and folk life. It could come as a palace coup, where the secret of the hero is revealed to a trusted member of the family, usually a wife, and the latter chooses to reveal to enemy combatants who, in return, use such revelation against the protagonist. Most often, when a household member is compromised or succumbs to a curse, he or she could bring such calamitous event upon the hero. The former was actually the case with Adé́bímpé Ọ́jẹ̀dòkun. The two young hunters that Adé́bímpé asked to tag along on his search crew could and should be considered as family; after all, they were close enough to go with him on this sacred pursuit of honor of retrieving Inaolaji's remains and bring retribution upon the perpetrator of this evil on his friend. However, even after everything went perfectly, almost hitch-free, the mistake came from within the house. The medicine contained and curtailed the panther, literally becoming a captive in the hands of the hero, Adé́bímpé Ọ́jẹ̀dòkun. All that was left was for an associate to put an end to the saga and easily put down the troublesome beast. But, he was nervous! Nervousness is the peak of illnesses. It could easily do damage of unexpected magnitude. The Yorùbá often say that if the death within the house does not put an end to one's life, it's most likely that the one from without should not be able to do the job. However, in this case, there is a bearer of death within the house looming as the nervous hunter inadvertently shot the protagonist rather than the antagonist, putting an end to the life of the courageous hunter, who was able to subdue the leopard but incapable of saving his own life. Did the indigenous medicine work? Yes, it did but it could not countermand the power of the home because behind the sociology of the home are people, humans, blood, which, unlike charms, transcend the superficial, transient power. In essence, it was not the inefficacy of indigenous medicine that became the bane of Adé́bímpé's exploit, it was a family member.

The Ultimate Sacrifice of Friendship

The Yorùbá belief in the power and sacredness of friendship cannot be over-stated. The Ifa verse sums it all up in Odù Èjì Ogbè when it says:

*Igbó yìí ò jò'gbó a gbé bí mi;
 Ọ̀dàn yìí o jò'dàn ibi a wò mí dàgbà.
 B'áa bá búrìn- búrìn t'áa b'òrẹ̀ẹ̀ pàdẹ̀
 Wọ̀n a ju ẹ̀ni a bí'ni bí lọ.
 Ìyá ẹ̀ni
 Wọ̀n ń f'Ifá han 'ni;
 Baba ẹ̀ni
 Wọ̀n ń f'Ifá han 'ni;
 Ọ̀rẹ̀ nikan l'ó f'Ifá hàn 'mí;
 Ohun mo bá ní
 N ó mọ̀ọ̀ b'òrẹ̀ẹ̀ mi jẹ.*

This forest does not look like the forest of which I was born;
 This wilderness does not look like the wilderness of which I was raised.
 If by stroke of luck, we meet a true friend
 They prove greater than a blood relative.
 One's mother
 Never reveals the secret of divination to one;
 One's father
 Never reveals the secret of divination to one;
 Only a friend revealed the secret of divination to me;
 Therefore, whatever I have, I must share with my friend.

The above loose translation of this Ifa verse is a testimony to one of the most sacred institutions highly revered in the Yorùbá culture, friendship. The Yorùbá people have many allusions to ọ̀rẹ̀ (friend) or *olùkù* (the one a person is left with). In fact, *olùkù l'ọ̀rẹ̀* (a friend is one that stays with someone to the very end) is a common axiom. When praying for the newly wed, the Yorùbá would say *Ki Ọ̀lórún ẹ̀ wọ̀n ní ọ̀rẹ̀ araa wọ̀n* (May God make them (the couple) friends to each other). The Yorùbá tend to classify friendship, including, but not limited to ọ̀rẹ̀ ojú (eye-service friend); ọ̀rẹ̀ ọ̀dàlẹ̀ (traitor-friend); ọ̀rẹ̀ èké (liar-friend); ọ̀rẹ̀ da'bẹ-n-yànkọ (literally, a friend of you-purchase-the-stew-and-I-will-purchase-the-thickened-cornmeal; meaning a friend that could not sacrifice material possession) – a friend that can't sacrifice for his friend without equal contributions); ọ̀rẹ̀ ayé (earthly friend) – not spiritually connected, not a friend from the soul; ọ̀rẹ̀ afojú fẹ'ni má f'ọ̀kàn fẹ'ni (the friend

that loves with the eye but does not love with from the heart) etc. However, the Yorùbá also talk of *òrẹ̀ kò-rí-kò-sùn* (a friend that would not sleep without seeing his friend on any given day) and *òrẹ̀ abáníkú* (a friend that would take his friend's death or die along with one's friend). Apparently, these last two are the true friends that the Yorùbá celebrate and institutionalize and they are what Fálétí portrays in "Adébímpé, Ojedokun."

The Yorùbá believe that friendship is a duo commitment; it does not give room for a third party. They say, *òrẹ̀ ò gbèlẹ̀ta; èlẹ̀ji l'òrẹ̀ gbà* (friendship does not accommodate a third person; it is too crowded when it's more than two). On one hand, by inference, the hero hunter would have been okay if he were to be with one other hunter in his search party. The third party spoiled the game, killing the hero. In "Adébímpé Ojedokun" the poet ties the theme of the heroic poem to an unusually sacrificial effort of a friend on the mission to vindicate the unfair wasting of a friend. This is quintessentially within the paradigm of the Yorùbá worldview. In fact, the poet uses the built-up saga to define the notion of true friendship as the Yorùbá see it. For the Yorùbá, if it is not *abáníkú* in all ramifications, it is no friendship at all. A friend takes on the fight of his friend with or without the presence of the friend. Distance does not debar friendship; physical presence does not determine it, neither does death terminate it. It comes from the soul, and the two are knit in life or death. Altruism is a divine attribute of true friendship.

As earlier noted, "Adébímpé, Ojedokun" is a poetic tragedy that addresses pertinent cultural themes: indigenous medicine, friendship, and the limit of the efficacy of indigenous medicine on the medicine man. This chapter has prosecuted these themes from the cultural rather than the stylistic dimension. The hope is that more could be gleaned from the poem in future studies in light of the poem's classicalness and the depth of its literary merit.

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Appendix 1

"Adébímpé Ojedokun" ti Adébáyò Fálétí ko.²

N ko tun f'owo soogun mó

Ni'jo t'eranko ti p'Ojedokun Erelú omo je.

Adébímpé, Ojedokun, Erelú omo

Edidàrè inu igbe, omo Ìyálágbòn.

Ni'jo t'ode ti 'nu igbo de

5

Ti won so p'eran p'Ojedokun je-

Mo ni 'ro ni.

Ni'jo t'ode bo egan

Tin won l'eranko p'Ojedokun je,

Mo ni 'ro ni.

10

Mo ni t'Adébímpé ba de 'nu igbo,

Etu ko ni r'aju nu'mo re l'eso-igi;

Mo ni t'Adébímpé ba de 'gbo,

Ekulu ko ni r'aju nu'mo re l'oka.

Mo ni 'ku kini ip'ode ti a kii gbo n'ile.

15

Mo ni 'ku kini ip'ode ti a kii gb'odede mo

Mo ni 'ku ki l'o ip'Adébímpé Ò jẹ̀dòkun

E wi fun mí?

Won ni looto ni, bee naa ni,

Mo wi ire.

20

Won ni bi mo ba fe mo 'ku t'o p'Ojedokun,

2 This version of the poem culled from *Ewi Ìwòyí* has no diacritics or tone mark.

Bi mob a fe mo iku t'o p'ode:
Won ni kin san 'yan mo eti
Ki nm'oka di koto-iyé.
Won ni nitoripe b'enia j'ori ijapa 25
B'enia fi 'gba ilako mu mi
B'enia ba mo 'ku t'o p'Ojedokun
Omi a maa bo loju eni-
K'omi o bo l'aju eni ki is'ewo.
Mo ni kil' de? 30
Mo ni kil' o se 'ku p'Ojedokun,
Erelú omo?
Won ni b'erin ba je n'Igbo Ilawo,
B'erin ko ba je ki won o gbadun l'ala-oko,
Won a ni k'e ranse p'Omo Ìyálágbòn. 35
Won ni b'Efon ba ja 'ko lona Alegun
B'efon ko ba je kin won o gbadun l'ala-oko,
Won a ni k'e ranse p'Omo Ìyálágbòn.
Igbat'o buse gada, t'o buse gede
T'eranko ko je kin won o gbadun lona Afuyeyege 40
Niwon ba ranse p'Omo Ìyálágbòn.
Adébímpé ni "Ki l'o de?"
O ni eeti je t'eran fi j'oko ore oun;
O ni "Iru eran kini nj'oko ore oun l'Afuyeyege?"
O ni eran t'o ba lakaka t'o ba j'oko ore oun, 45
Eranko naa yio sun 'nu igba igbo,
Eranko naa yio sun ninu ogorun odan,
O ni, nitoripe ako eiyéle ki ir'aju gbe'le,
Emi ki isun 'le ana,
Igba igi l'awere if'owo ba l'aarin oko. 50
Ni won ba nsipe f'Adébímpé Ọjédòkùn,
Ni won ns'omi l'aju gberé bi ekun-eleji,
Eeke won sunki bii liili w'ako,
Won ni, "Adébímpé, Ojedokun,
"K ise p'erank j'oko ore re ni. 55
"Ore re gan l'eranko paje".
Adébímpé sunkun-gbogbo oju wu
O ni, "Inaolaji, Ore mi, 'un l'eranko paje?"
"Inaolaji, Ogun ajobo,
"Enia ti 'o dun mo k'o bo ti 'e l'oto?" 60
Won ni, "Inaolaji, Ore re, 'un l'eranko paje".
Adébímpé ba gbiyanju, o s'okan okunrin

- O ni, "Ko buru, ko baje"
 "E je k'a nu'ju nu k'a daro ode."
 O ni b'eni eni ba ku, ti a m'ogun odun sunkun, 65
 O ni ki l'ekun le da l'ofo eni?
 O ni b'ofu si s'enia ti a m'ogbon osu gbaawe,
 Kil'awe o se f'eni'to sofo?
 L'Adébímpé ba y'akisa feregeje
 O nu'ju nu o dake ekun 70
 O ni ekun koi ya, o d'oyo oku b abo oko
 O l'o d'oyo t'ode ba t'oko bo lai rin 'na.
 Igbat'o d'ireni?
 Won ni kin won o lo i s'ipa ode. 75
 Adébímpé ni ki won o mama sipa ode
 Adébímpé ni ki won o to le sipa ode
 O d'oyo t'oun b abo eluju
 T'oun ba p'eran t' o p'ore oun.
 O ni nitoripe ode kii pa ode jaiye:
 O ni eni ti o pa'gun kii ka 'dun, 80
 Eniti o p'akala kii ka 'su mefa,
 Eniti o pa'katakata kii ka 'dun meta.
 L'Adébímpé ba m'ode bi meji lehin.
 Won mura o d'oko Afuyeyege-
 O l'omo-oba kii nikan r'ajo. 85
 Won de'nu igbo won wa 'Naolaji
 Won wa 'Naolaji won ri 'Naolaji –
 Adébímpé ni ija 'o tii tan,
 O l'o d'igba ti a ba f'uju kan elesu lehin ode.
 Won t'ogbo to'gbo, 90
 Won dé'gbo Iláwo
 Adébímpé ko r'eranko t'o p'ore 'e je.
 Won to'gbe t'ala, won de'ju Alegun,
 Won 'o releemo t'o pa 'Naolaji, Ogun Ajobo.
 Asehinwa, asehinbo, 95
 Won pada s'egan Afuyeyege.
 Won wo'gbo lekinni
 Won 'o r'eran ninu igbo;
 Won wo'gbo lekeji ewe
 Bee ni won o ri 'jasa. 100
 Igba t'o d'igba eketa ti won nla'nu ijuu bo
 Won koi tii la'gbe jinna
 T'Adébímpé fi f'uju kan ekun larin oko

- Edidare inu igbe omo Iyalagbon.*
Adébímpé wa se'wo si gbogbo ode 105
Pe ki gbogbo ode o duro.
Gbogbo ode gbo t'Adébímpé , gbogbo ode duro.
Adébímpé wa f'ada b'ako, o gbe'gi-Ogun ti.
Oun nikan mura o nlo b'ekun laarin oko.
O ni, Oka t'o ba n be lona ko ma aka; 110
Ere t'o ba nbe lona k'o tete re;
Ejo kekeke t'o ba n be lona k'o ma le ya'nu.
Ekun r'ode lookan, ekun gbija
O naro ija, o n bo wa pade Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun
Erelu Omo. 115
Igba t'Adébímpé pade ekun lona
Gongo so:
E wa w'emo
Nibi Edidare inu igbe omo Iyalagbon.
T'omo-ode gbe nb'omo ekun I wo'ja!
E wa w'emo. 120
Ni'jo t'aladi fon'na ru l'ona Afuyegege!
Won ni k'alaja 'o duro
K'o wo'ku loju;
K'onitakule k'o ro'se k'o w'emo:
K'ode kekeke, ki won o yaw a woran – 125
Ki won o wa w'emo
Nibi t'ode gbe n b'omo ekun wo'ja.
Adébímpé yo'binu, ekun yo'ja.
Oju ekun nko'na
Iru ekun n tu yeri, 130
Ahon ekun n ju bele l'enu.
Inu wa bi Adébímpé ,
Adébímpé , Ojedokun, Erelu Omo
Edidare inu igbe omo Iyalagbon:
O ni kini k'a ti gbo 135
P'eranko nju'ru nisoju Ojedokun?
O ni ki igbin k'o maa sare sare se'bo,
K'irula o maa yara ma I tii la,
K'owu t'o di'nu k'o ma la l'ala oko.
O ni, t'owo t'esel'awun i wo'gba, 140
O ni akiriboto kii l'oju awe,
Ela ileke kii l'oju atokunbo,
Aleri-fohun ni t'adarikoko,

- Asun-i-parada ni ti'gi aja.*
O ni oku t'o ti ku ko gbnodo mi'ra. 145
L'ahon ekun bas a wo'le,
Leekanna ekun b wa'ko
L'ehin ekun ba wa bo'ra won.
Sugbon ija n lo bee ni ko duro.
Ekun wa n ju ikuku bala 150
Bi adete gbe'ja ara won -
Ikuuku lasan l'ekun n ju!
Adébímpé wa awon ode kòró,
O ni ki won o tete,
Ki won maa gbe'bon bo lodo oun. 155
Ode n beru jeje
Ode seb'ekun o ja ni.
Adébímpé l'oun o ni je'kun o bo,
O ni kin won o gbe ilasa wa
Ki won o sunmo 'tosi oun. 160
Ki won o gbe 'lasa wa -
Ki won o fi bo ekun ni'ha.
Ode 'o tete mo p'ekun 'o le ja,
Ode n gbon riri bi arugbo da'mi nu l'oju ode.
Nje, ode ma gbon mo 165
Tan'na ran'bon re o je k'a lo!
Afi karo! T'ibon dahun lowo ode a-gbon-bi-oga!
Adébímpé wa ke to! O pose sara!
Ode t'o yin 'lasa ti subu lule l'okeere!
Adébímpé ni ki won je k'ode mii o sure wa, 170
K'o tete wa, k'o wa yin ekun n'ibon;
O ni oun Adébímpé ko ni ju ekun sile.
Ode keji t'o de 'un lo wa yin ekun n'ibon.
Igba t'ekun wa wo lule l'oto
L'Adébímpé ba ni ki gbogbo ode o sure wa, 175
Ki won o maa bo wa w'emo!
O ni ki won o w'agbara eje
B'o ti n wo lo n'iha t'oun!
Ase won ko tete mo
Pe nbit'elegbon gbe n gbon riri 180
Edidare l'ode da'na lu l'ai s'eranko!
Gbogbo won ba ke!
Ariwo gba'gbo
Okiki gba gbogbo adugbo.

<i>Adébímpé ni e ma ke mo,</i>	185
<i>O ni, aimasiko l'o n ba wa ja ojare.</i>	
<i>O ni bi a ba m'oyo a a ku,</i>	
<i>Bi a ba m'oyo a a r'orun –</i>	
<i>Kil'ode n wa ninu igbo</i>	
<i>T'ode gbe'gi l'ori,</i>	190
<i>T'ode gb'egi l'ori t'o n pe'gi re n'ibon?</i>	
<i>O ni iku ode n be ninu apo,</i>	
<i>Iku agbe n be l'orun ebe,</i>	
<i>Owo ada mo nii k'ada lehin,</i>	
<i>B'omuwe ti le mo i we to,</i>	195
<i>Bi o ba tete ku, odo ni yio gbe e lo.</i>	
<i>O ni, "Iku oro</i>	
<i>Ni ko je k'owo ode o wu nii se;</i>	
<i>Ailoogun emo</i>	
<i>Ni ko je ki n fe d'emu ta ni kutukutu.</i>	200
<i>B'ode ba ro'se, b'ode ba ro'ya</i>	
<i>B'ode ba p'eran ko ni f'enikan je."</i>	
<i>O ni bi e ba de'nu igbo e so f'Olu-igbo</i>	
<i>Bi e d'esekele e ro fun gbongbo ona</i>	
<i>Bi e ba wolu e ro f'Arema Oba.</i>	205
<i>Bee l'Adébímpé ba mi kanle.</i>	
<i>O re orun alakeji</i>	
<i>Oku wa di pupo ni'ju.</i>	
<i>Ode ku nibi t'ode gbe n w'ode kiri!</i>	
<i>Won ru Inaolaji, Ogun ajobo,</i>	210
<i>Werepe Ogun, omo a-ku-ka-ju.</i>	
<i>Bee ni won o gbagbe Edidare inu igbe omo Iyalagbon.</i>	
<i>Riru l'a ru jakumo.</i>	
<i>Gbigbe l'a gb'Ojedokun, Erelu omo,</i>	
<i>Edidare inu igbe, omo Iyalagbon.</i>	215

Never again would I invest my money (place my trust, my hope, my reverence) on charms

Ever since a brutish beast devoured Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun, Erelú omo, Adébímpé Ojedokun, Erelú omo

The melancholic spirit of the jungle, son of the Queen Mother.

Recall the fateful day the emissary hunter arrived from the woods with bad tidings

To herald that the beast had devoured Ojedokun –
I said, "impossible!"

The day the hunter arrived from the deep forest
 And declared the beast had devoured Ojedokun,
 I said, "impossible!" 10
 The day the hunter arrived from the wilderness
 And declared the beast had devoured Ojedokun,
 I said, "impossible!"
 I said whenever the Adébímpé (I knew) entered the jungle,
 Even the duikers would forget the filial duty of fruit-feeding their young
 ones;
 I said whenever the Adébímpé (I knew) entered the jungle,
 Ekule would forget to feed their young ones with grains.
 I asked, what kind of unheard mortality befalls the hunter,
 I asked, what kind of unheard mortality befalls the hunter unbeknownst
 to the household?
 I asked, what kind of death exterminated Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun
 Pray, may I know?
 They said true and very true
 I said just the right thing.
 They said if indeed I want to know the death that claimed the life of
 Ojedokun
 If I want to know the death that befell the brave hunter:
 They urged that I refrain to attentively
 They cautioned that I pretend to hear not what I was about to hear.
 They quipped that even if heartlessness spurs one to snack on the head of
 the tortoise
 And callousness goads one into having a drink with the empty shell of the
 diminutive snail
 Once one has a grasp of the cause of the mortal fall of Ojedokun
 Tears would roll down one's cheeks
 Oh, nothing's wrong shedding tears to mourn the demise of a fallen hero!
 I asked, what went wrong?
 I asked what dared to bring about the death of Ojedoku
 Erelú omo?
 Then, they told if there was ever a rampage of elephants in the grove of
 Ilawò
 If the elephants infused mayhem on the people's farmland,
 The one to call to the rescue was the son of the Queen Mother.
 They told of if ever the buffalos were set on a stampede on the road to
 Alegun
 Of when the buffalos refused to give humans a break on their farmstead
 The one first call was made to the one and only son of the Queen Mother.

Then came the day that would rock the boat of history
That unruly animals would not give a break of peace to the dwellers of
Afuyegege

A call was made to the son of the Queen Mother.

Adébímpé asked in exasperation what the case might be,

He asked why animals would devour the farmland of his friend;

He inquired” What caliber of the beast dare to devour my friend’s farm
in Afuyegege?

He swore, whatever the animal that strained to devour his friend’s
farmland

Such animal shall find itself sleeping in a million forests

Such animal shall find itself sleeping in myriads of wildernesses,

He invoked the word, that the male pigeon is never at ease to live inside
the house

Èmì – the migrant rat, never sleeps in the same nest two nights in a row,

The pataguenon monkey jumps restlessly from tree to tree without find-
ing a place to rest.

Then, they entreated Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun,

Shedding tears like the dripping fluid in the Ekun eleji plant,

Their cheeks collapsing like liili – the hyrax, withdrawing into its own
pouch.

“Adébímpé Ojedokun,” they pleaded;

“It was not your friend’s farmland that the animals devoured.

It was actually your friend himself that an animal killed.”

Adébímpé wailed his eyes out

“Inaolaji, my friend is the victim of animal’s fatal attack?” he asked in
anguish

“Inaolaji, whose Ogun is venerated in communal fashion

And for those jealous, let them venerate theirs solo.”

They repeated, “Yes, it was Inaolaji, your friend, that was killed by the
animal.

Then, Adébímpé encouraged himself, manning up like the true man he was

“It’s all well and good,” he said

“Let us wipe our tears and mourn the valiant hunter.”

He said if we mourn a loss for a score years,

Of what use would the tears be?

If a relative dies and we mourn for years on end

What benefit would the morning yield?

With a large tear of the cloak

Adébímpé wiped away his tears and comforted himself

He said it's no time to mourn yet, we can wait until the body is brought home.

He said morning is stayed until the hunter returns home without walking on his feet.

Then came the day of ireni,

They called to commence the hunter's funeral rites.

Adébímpé forbade the rites taking place;

Adébímpé said before the funeral rites would hold

It would only be after he returned from the deep forest

And he had decimated the beast that killed his friend.

He swore that no predator kills another predator and lives:

He said no killer of gunnugun, the vulture lives through the year,

No killer of Akala, the ground hornbill lives past the sixth month,

Whoever kills Kátákátá will not survive through the third year.

Then, Adébímpé mounted a search crew with two more hunters.

They quipped themselves for the journey to the forest of Afuyegege –

Saying, a prince never embarks on a journey void of a caravan of guards.

They arrived in the forest and searched for 'Naolaji

They searched for 'Naolaji and found the body of 'Naolaji –

Adébímpé announced the battle is yet to be over,

He said it won't be until the devil behind the demise of the hunter is located.

And so, the journey continues in the deep forest,

They got to the forest of Ilawo

Adébímpé did not find the killer beast that killed his friend.

They roamed the woods, length and breadth, arriving at the Wilderness of Alegun,

They had no sighting of the mean-spirited beast that mauled 'Naolaji Ogun Ajobo.

At long last

95

The hunters backtracked to the woods of Afuyegege.

They entered the forest at first

They did not find the evil animal;

They entered the second time

And had no sighting of the erring beast on its track.

100

On entering the third time on a desperate forest quest

A short dash it was

And Adébímpé spotted the leopard in the middle of the testy field

(Hail) The melancholic spirit of the jungle, son of the Queen Mother.

There and then, Adébímpé beckoned to the associate hunters

Ordering them to halt all actions.

Hunters heard Adébímpé's command, all hunters obeyed.
 Adébímpé then anchored the weapon by the trunk of the tree, tucking the
 blade in the sheath.
 He launched straight at the leopard in the middle of the turbulent wood.
 He invoked for the Gabon vipers to scroll into passivity; 110
 That the pythons zoom off the pathways;
 And all the lesser crawling creatures to have their mouths gagged with the
 enchanting seal.
 The leopard sighted the warrior hunter, the leopard is hyped up
 The beast is up in arms, striding straight at the hunter, Adébímpé
 Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun
 Erelú Omo.
 Then it was, that Adébímpé came face-to-face with the leopard
 Spectacle unveiled:
 Be a witness to the mayhem 120
 On the day the ant nest is set on fire along the pathways of the forest of
 Afuyegege!
 The caution posed to the dog hunter
 To be on the watch, death is looming;
 For the trap hunter to hold his craft and be on the lookout for the loom-
 ing peril;
 And the novice hunters to stop by and watch the spectacles unfolding
 To be witnesses to mayhem unleashed
 As the brave hunter engages in the macabre wrestling with the deadly
 panther
 The leopard's eyes emit fire
 The tail of the leopard wiggles in a bloody rage, 130
 The tongue wagging between the deadly jaws of the leopard.
 The wrath of Adébímpé is provoked,
 Adébímpé Ojedokun, Erelú omo
 The melancholic spirit of the jungle, son of the Queen Mother:
 He queried the logic
 How dare a mere beast wiggles its tail in degradation of Ojedokun?
 Let the giant snail halt the process of shielding itself for the season, he
 enchanted;
 The okra to cease fruiting;
 And the cotton plant to terminate its budding processes.
 The tortoise enters its shell arms and legs, he invoked, 140
 The ill-formed kolanut is never with splits,
 A broken bead never accommodates the thread,
 The nodding of the agama lizard is not accompanied by a single word,

And the plank on the ceiling lies there with no motion of its own.
 After all, human cadavers never move from their lying state. 145
 Instantaneously, the leopard's tongue cleft to its rooftop,
 The claws of the leopard withdrew into their sockets
 And the teeth withdrew, hiding inside the gums of the clenched jaws
 But the charge continues with ferocious intensity.
 The leopard never stops throwing violent jabs and killer punches 150
 Like a group of lepers engaged in camaraderie defense –
 But all that the leopard could do is throw empty prods!
 Then Adébímpé hollered at the other hunters
 He bade them to come to him in a flash
 And bring along the hunter's gun. 155
 The hunters stood in trepidation
 Dreading the pouncing of the leopard.
 Adébímpé assured the wimps he got the leopard in chokehold,
 Bade them to bring in the gigantic gun
 To come within a close range. 160
 To bring forth the gigantic gun –
 And empty the barrel of the same in the bare belly of the beast, close range.
 Unbeknownst to the hunter of the leopard's defenselessness,
 The hunter shook like quicksilver, like the aged fellow spilling water in the
 public square.
 Listen, hunter, stop quivering 165
 Fire-snipe up your cannon and let's move on!
 "Bang!" goes the gun in the hand of the spineless wimp!
 Adébímpé then howled and hissed!
 The wimpy hunter lay scared on the distant ground, petrified and terrified!
 Adébímpé requested for an alternate sniper 170
 To come in a dash and finish off the leopard in a rapid fashion.
 He swore by his name that he would not let go of the agitated beast.
 The second hunter it was that successfully shot the leopard.
 There, the leopard fell for real
 And then Adébímpé summoned the hunters to come nigh 175
 To come and be witnesses to the worst spectacle!
 He invited them to see the flow of blood
 Gushing swiftly from his own side!
 Little did they know
 As the shivering hunter shook in trepidation 180
 It was Èdidàré that he mistakenly fired at, not the erring beast!
 They all stood still, mouth agape!
 The echo of their wailing shook the neighboring woods.

Adébímpé implored them to refrain from crying, 185
 He said the pinch of fate is what humans are oblivious of.
 He said were human knowledgeable of the day of their deaths
 If they know their day of going from mortality to immortality –
 What would be the need for the hunter to roam the woods
 Why would the hunter carry the stick upon himself, 190
 Carrying ordinary stick upon himself, which he erroneously calls the gun?
 He chanted that the death of the hunter is inside the sheath,
 The death of the farmer is right on the heap of the soil,
 The well-known trade of the machete is what breaks its blade,
 Regardless of the prowess of the swimmer, 195
 If he lives long enough, he would be swept to mortality on one fateful day.
 He chanted, “Painful death
 Is what wearies the potential hunter in engaging himself in the trade of
 hunting;
 A lack of the anti- tumbling charm
 Is what prevents me from the trade of an early morning
 palm-wine tapping.” 200
 Were the hunter to consider the pain and suffering of roaming the woods,
 He would choose never to share his kills with anybody.”
 He said, then, let the lead denizen of the jungle be informed
 If you walk by the roadside, do inform the roots along the paths
 If you enter the township, let the prince be aware. 205
 With that said, Adébímpé took the last breath.
 Passed on to the world unknown.
 Multiple bodies now lie in the woods.
 The hunter died hunting for another hunter!
 And so they carried Inaolaji, whose Ogun is venerated in
 communal fashion, 210
 The Cow-itch mucuna of Ogun, which pollinates across the vast forest.
 And of course, they never forgot the melancholic spirit of the jungle, son
 of the Queen Mother.
 The leopard itself was hauled in hammock
 But Ojedokun was held shoulder-high in triumph, Erelú omo,
 The melancholic spirit of the jungle, son of the Queen Mother. 215



With Late Justice Kayode Eso & Bolaji Ayorinde SAN,
during his doctorate award at LAUTECH