Iconic Celebration of Charms and Friendship in Poetry: Fálétí’s “Adébímpé Ọjédòkun”

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“Adébímpé Ọjédòkun” 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 Ọjédòkun. The latter gave his life in pursuit of the killer of his own friend, Inaolaji. The story is that of the mythical character, Adébímpé Ọjédòkun, 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 Ọjédòkun, 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 Ọjédòkun,
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 pummeling 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 Òjédòkun, 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 Fálétí’s poem. Yet, the literary merit of “Adébím pé, 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 “Adèbimpé Ọjèdòkun.” The Yorùbá belief in the power of oogun is showcased in this poem. Fálétí opens the poem with an
enigmatic paradox: \( N \kotun \ f'owó \ sòògùn \ mọ / Ní'jó \ t'éranko \ ti \ p'Ojé'dòkun \ Erelù \ òmo \ je... \) (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 Ojé'dòkun Erelú òmo). 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, Fáléítí 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 Ojé’dòkun, 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 Òde, Igbó Olọdùmarè, Irinkèrinçò and Ìrèké Oníbùdò 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 àfèèrì, 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 Ṭójédókun. 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’éjàá* (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 Ọ̀yọ. As documented in *Ọba Kọsọ*, 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 Adébímpé Òjèdòkun. The two young hunters that Adébímpé 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, Adébímpé Òjèdòkun. 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 Adébímpé’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 Ifá verse sums it all up in Odù Èjì Ogbè when it says:

*Igbò yìí ọ jọ'gbó a gbé bí mi;*
*Ọ̀dàn yìí o jọ'dàn ibi a wò mí dágbà.*
*B’áa bà bùrin- bùrin t’áa b’órèè pàdè*
*Wọn a ju èni a b’ìni bí lọ.*
*Iyá ení*
*Wọn ọ̀ f’Ifá han ’ni;*
*Baba ení*
*Wọn ọ̀ f’Ifá han ’ni;*
*Ọ̀rẹ nikan l’ó f’Ifá hàn ’mì;*
*Ohun mo bá ní*
*N ó mọ  b’órèè mì 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 Ifá 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 Ọlọrun ọ̀ sẹ̀ wón ní ọ̀rẹ̀ aara wọn* (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 ọ̀dálè (traitor-friend); ọ̀rẹ̀ èké (liar-friend); ọ̀rẹ̀ dà’bè-n-yànko (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 jé’ni mà f’okàn jé’ni (the friend
that loves with the eye but does not love with from the heart) etc. However, the Yorùbá also talk of ọrẹ̀ kọ̀-rì-kò-sùn (a friend that would not sleep without seeing his friend on any given day) and ọrẹ̀ abànìkù (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, ọrẹ̀ Ọgbẹ̀lẹ̀ta; élẹ́jì l’ọrẹ̀ 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 abànìkù 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.

References
Oladeji, O. “Stylistics Across Cultures: A Comparative Study of Foregrounding in Adébáyọ̀ Fálétí’s ‘Ojedokun’ and Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s ‘The


Appendix 1

“Adébímpé Ojedokun” ti Adébáyọ̀ 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
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.
Mo ni t’Adébímpé ba de ‘nu igbo,
Etu ko ni r’oju nu’mo re l’eso-igi;
Mo ni t’Adébímpé ba de ‘gbo,
Ekulu ko ni r’oju nu’mo re l’oka.
Mo ni ‘ku kini ip’ode ti a kii gbo n’ile.
Mo ni ‘ku kini ip’ode ti a kii gb’odede mo
Mo ni ‘ku ki l’o ip’Adébímpé Ô jé’dòkun
E wi fun mi?
Won ni looto ni, bee naa ni,
Mo wi ire.

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

2 This version of the poem culled from Ewì Ìwòyí has no diactritics or tone mark.
Bi mob a fe mo iku t'o p'ode:
Won ni kin san 'yan mo eti
Ki mm'oka di koto-uye.
Won ni nitoripe b'enia j'ori ijapa
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'oju eni ki is'ewo.
Mo ni kil'de?
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 Ìyálágbôn.
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 Ìyálágbôn.
Igbat'o buse gada, t'o buse gede
T'eranko ko je kin won o gbadun lona Afuyegege
Niwon ba ranse p'Omo Ìyálágbôn.
Adébímpé ni “Ki l'o de?”
O ni eti je t'eran fi j'oko ore oun;
O ni “Iru eran kini nj'oko ore oun l' Afuyegege?”
O ni eran t'o ba lakaka t'o ba j'oko ore oun,
Eranko naa yio sun 'nu igba igbo,
Eranko naa yio sun ninu ogoron odan,
O ni, nitoripe ako eiyele ki ir'oju gb'e'le,
Emi ki isun ‘le ana,
Igba igi l'awere if'owo ba laarin oko.
Ni won ba nsipe f'Adébímpé Ô jêdôkun,
Ni won ns'omi l'oju gbere bi ekun-eleji,
Eeke won sunki bii liili w'ako,
Won ni, “Adébímpé , Ojedokun,
“Ki se p'erank j'oko ore re ni.
“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?
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'ojọ si s'enia ti a m'ogbon osugbaawe,
Kil'awe o se f'enti'o sofo?
L'Adébímpé ba y'akisa feregeje
O nu'ju nu o dake ekun
O ni ekun koi ya, o d'ọjo oku b abo oko
O l'o d'ọjo 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'ọjo 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,
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 Afuyegege-
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'oju kan elesu lehin ode.
Won t'ogbo to'gbo,
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,
Won pada s'egan Afuyegege.
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'oju kan ekun larin okó
Edidare inu igbe omo Iyalagbon.

Adébímpé wa se’wo si gbogbo ode

Pe ki gbogbo ode o duro.

Gbogbo ode gbo t’Adébímpé, gbogbo ode duro.

Adébímpé wa f’ada b’ako, o gbé’gi-Ogun ti.

Oun nikan mura o nlo b’ekun laarinoko.

O ni, Oka t’o ba n be lona ko ma aka;

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 Òj’édòkun

Erelu Omo.

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.

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 –

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,

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

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’alaoko.

O ni, t’owo t’esel’awun i wo’gba,

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 gb nodo mi'ra.
Lahon ekun bas a wo'le,
Leekanna ekun b wa'ko
L'ehin ekun ba wo bo'ra won.
Sugbon ija n lo bee ni ko duro.
Ekun wa n ju ikuku bala
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.
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.
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
Tan'na ran'bon re o je k'a lo!
Afi karo! T'ibon dahun lowo ade 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,
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,
Ki won o maa bo wa w'emo!
O ni ki won o w'agbara eje
B'o ti n wo lo n'isha t'oun!
Ase won ko tete mo
Pe nbit'elegbon gbe n gbon riri
Edidare l'ode da'na lu l'ai s'eranko!
Gbogbo won ba ke!
Ariwo gba'gbo
Okiki gba gbogbo adugbo.
Never again would I invest my money (place my trust, my hope, my reverence) on charms
Ever since a brutish beast devoured Adébímpé Ọjędòkùn, 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!”

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 Ọjẹdọkun
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 Afuyege
A call was made to the son of the Queen Mother.
Adébímé 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 finding a place to rest.
Then, they entreated Adébímé Ojédòkun,
Shedding tears like the dripping fluid in the Ekun eleji plant,
Their cheeks collapsing like liili – the hyrax, withdrawing into its own pouch.
“Adébímé Ojedokun,” they pleaded;
“It was not your friend’s farmland that the animals devoured.
It was actually your friend himself that an animal killed.”
Adébímé 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, Adébímé 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
Adébímé 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 gunugun, 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
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.
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; 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 Ojédòkun  
Erelú Omo.  
Then it was, that Adébímpé came face-to-face with the leopard  
Spectacle unveiled:  
Be a witness to the mayhem  
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 looming 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,  
The tongue wagging between the deadly jaws of the leopard.  
The wrath of Adébímpé is provoked,  
Adébímpé Ojédòkun, 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,  
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.
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
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.
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.
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
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
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
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
It was Èdìdàré 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,
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,
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,
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.”
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.
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,
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.
With Late Justice Kayode Eso & Bolaji Ayorinde SAN, during his doctorate award at LAUTECH