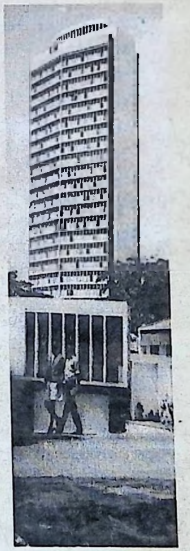
Ìbàdàn Mesìọ̀gọ̀

A Celebration of a City, Its History and People



Foreword by

BOLA IGE

ÌBÀDÀN MESÌỌGỌ̀

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Its History and People

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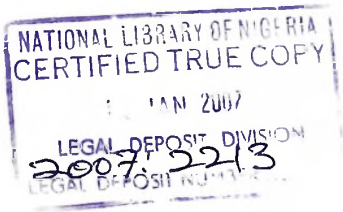

ÌBÀDÀN MESÌỌGỌ

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A Celebration of a City
Its History and People

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CONTENTS

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FOREWORD

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IT was at a meeting of the Oyo/Osun branch of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) held at my Ibadan home in April 1998 that I suggested that I would be willing to finance the publication of a collection of poetry and prose... be they fiction, faction or factual – to celebrate the city of Ibadan. A few days earlier I had enjoyed reading such a collection about Harlem in New York City. I had been fascinated by the fervour with which the writers wrote about this part of the American Big Apple which meant so much to them. The writers were not natives of Harlem, so to speak, in the sense that they were black denizens of that ghetto. Quite a few of the contributors were white and a couple or so were foreigners, black, white and whatever.

There we were that afternoon, some one hundred of us, mostly young people, who would call Ibadan home, even if, according to the Nigerian system, majority of us were probably not "sons - of - the – soil." I remember that one of the distinguished participants that afternoon was Mrs. Mabel Segun whom I have known since October 1949 when we entered University College, Ibadan. She was Miss Imokhuede. She is not only one of the trustees of the Association of Nigerian

Authors; she is one of the most outstanding Nigerian authors of children's books. There was Chief (Mrs.) Christie Ajayi, the wife of the Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Ibadan, Prof. J.F. Ade-Ajayi, who, apart from a few years when they adorned the office and home of Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos, she and her husband have lived in Ibadan since the late fifties when Professor Ade-Ajayi took up employment as a history lecturer at the University of Ibadan.

There were much younger members of the Association who would call Ibadan home too. There was Professor Dapo Adelugba who, a son of Esa-Oke, went to school and university at Ibadan, and in addition has spent all his working life teaching English and Theatre arts, and acting or directing plays, in the University of Ibadan. There was Dr. Wale Okediran, then Secretary of the branch (he has since become the General Secretary of the Association) who has lived almost all his life in Ibadan, except for the years he read Medicine at the University of Ife, Ile-Ife. There was Tade Ipadeola, a lawyer earning his living as State Counselor but who will be heard of in future as a poet and writer of note. He is probably not thirty yet, and though not a son-of-the-soil, he and his parents have made Ibadan their home.

It occurred to me that I should use that occasion to get some of our writers to put down for posterity what they felt about Ibadan. Ibadan has been good to me, and I cannot sufficiently thank my Creator for the blessings He has showered on me using Ibadan as His instrument. I have in KADUNA BOY written a little about my life as a pupil in Ibadan Grammar School. In PEOPLE, POLITICS AND POLITICIANS OF NIGERIA (1940-79) I have given a few glimpses of what I saw of politics in Ibadan in the years before I became Governor of Oyo State on 1st October 1979. Before long I will say quite a bit more in CICERO AT AGODI and THE BRIGADIER LIED.

I have lived in Ibadan since 1943, except for about four years when I was abroad or during the various periods of my detention and imprisonment. My law practice has the main chambers in Ibadan. I married an Ibadan girl, and all my children were born in Ibadan. Ibadan has been the modal point of my politics, whether of Yorubaland or of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. From Ibadan, I have led my political parties to win huge majorities in elections, Local, State and Federal. I have lived among the ordinary people of Ibadan at *Ekotedo, Oke-Ado,* and *Bodija*. I am by marriage a member of the *Oloko* family of Agodi; I have occupied the Government House at Agodi, and I have been a detention inmate in Agodi prison! And by the good and royal hand of Oba D.T. Akinbiyi that gracious Olubadan of Ibadan, I am the *Alasa* of Ibadan; and since 1981 I have sought to be what the chieftaincy named me as – the Holder of the Shield to protect this City, whose national anthem I have been singing since 1943, and which I confess to be true:

Ibadan, Ilu ori oke,
Ilu ibukun Oluwa
K'Oluwa ṣe ọ n'bukun
Fun onile at'alejo
Chorus:
Ẹ ho, ẹ yọ
K'ẹ si gberin:
Ogo f'Ọlọrun wa loni
Ibukun ti Ọbangiji
Wa pẹlu rẹ, 'wọ Ibadan

Which translated means:
Ibadan, city set on hills
City blessed by the Lord,
May the Lord make you a blessing
For indigenes and non-indigenes
Chorus:
Make a joyful noise, rejoice,
And sing the chorus loud;

Glory to our Lord God today;
And may the blessings of the Almighty
Be with you, you Ibadan.

It is my hope and prayer that this anthology, or treasury, or collection of poems, stories, reminiscences, and descriptions of experiences concerning Ibadan will be enjoyed by all –both – *onile* and *alejo* – and they will be blessed.

It remains for me to thank all who contributed to this collection, the editors and the publishers – BOOKCRAFT LTD. *Ibadan a gbe wa o.*

'Bola Ige, SAN
"Solemilia Court"
Bodija, Ibadan
13th September 2000.

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

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PERHAPS no other Nigerian city is more deserving of a commemorative publication than Ibadan – "the largest city in West Africa". With a rich history and tradition, unique physical features, and a large cosmopolitan population, Ibadan is without doubt an obvious candidate for the kind of literary documentary celebration, made famous by the Time-Life Books on major cities around the world.

And so when nearly ten years ago we first thought of a book on Ibadan, and one that would capture the grandeur of the city, what we had in mind was a large-format, lavishly illustrated coffee-table book. Having given birth, perhaps by historical accident to the Nigerian publishing industry, we thought it was somewhat a travesty that the city had not been formally honoured all these years in a fitting publication. We commissioned a photographer to go around the city, to capture 'candid' shots of the city and its people. We also went into the archives to unearth relevant historical pictures, and we contacted two of the country's best- known creative writers, to celebrate the city in their inimitable literary styles

As it happened, the Oyo state chapter of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) was working on its own celebration of the city in prose and poetry, one that harks back to the halcyon days of the creative ferment experienced in the city, in the late 50s, 60s and early 70s.

Inevitably, both ideas converged, and the result is the book you are now holding in your hands. We feel that the end product has been infinitely enriched by this convergence although the format is a somewhat scaled down version of what we originally had in mind.

We are immensely grateful to everyone who's contributed to the making of this book, and especially, for the singular contribution of Chief Bola Ige, inveterate lover and supporter of the creative arts and the city that has nurtured many a talent.

PROLOGUE

Ibadan and the Two Hundred Snails
by
Femi Osofisan

One

CITIES have always held a fascination for writers. And the reason for this may simply lie in the fact that when you have lived long and consistently in a particular city, you find yourself falling in love with her. I say 'her' advisedly: most of the arresting descriptions of these cities that we find come invariably from besotted male writers, written in tones that are deep with sensual lust. Thus Baudelaire did not just live in Pairs, he was her passionate lover, as was indisputably Balzac; Aké cuddled a Wole Soyinka, as Moscow its Mayakovsky; the island of Trinidad toasts its Derek Walcott as, once not long ago, Isla Negra seduced the incomparable Pablo Neruda. Mention a city and it mentions a poet. And if it is in any way significant, if the city is remembered at all, it is almost always because its name openly or silently summons the memory of a poet. But Ibadan, permit me to say, is the only exception I know to this lore of florid flirtations.

Ibadan, the largest traditional town in Black Africa, had quite expectedly has her poets. But not as lovers. Her streets are deep and exciting, especially under these oil lamps at the fall of night. And the voices are still mysterious that run through most of her valleys and compounds. But rarely does Ibadan wake amorous sentiments. No: Ibadan's femininity displays an assurance and a dignity far too confident, and far too sincere, to be linked with the turpitude of sexual relationships.

Other cities may be courtesans; but Ibadan, at lest as I have come to know her, is Queen Mother, genteel and genial and maternal. Lagos, for instance, is always full of prank and tinsel, and is quick-tempered. But Ibadan is all grace and calm: a woman past puberty but, because of that perhaps, wise, patient, and understanding. Lagos washes her feet daintily in the waters of the sea, and then shapes herself up fastidiously into these glass and concrete towers of eroticism, awe and distress. But Ibadan grows slowly out of the earth, and everywhere you turn, the city sprawls, at ease, on a mat of mingled russet and green. Wrapped in her ageless *adire* cloth, she reclines almost lazily, taking the hills and the mountains as her mattress, and draping them in the colours of her custodial coverlet. Ibadan is unlike other modern cities because, while they shout out their glamour and voluptuousness all day and all night long, Ibadan is content to sit back and work like one of our ancient weavers, seemingly apathetic, but assiduously gathering all of history in her weft.

Two

And yet, the city was not always like this. In many ways, Ibadan lives a present that is almost completely at variance with her past. Only turn the history books back a few pages, and you will discover that, just a number of decades ago, these same somnolent hills of nowadays were at one time noisy with the thunder of cannons and the hooves of war horses.

Indeed Ibadan had her origins in war. Her founders were military adventurers, a ragtag army of soldiers composed of mercenaries and freebooters from various Yoruba kingdoms, namely the Oyo, the Ife, and the Ijebu. These were remnants of the Allied Forces which, around 1820, has sacked the town of Owu, and then, after some nine years of general rampaging, decided to settle in this former Egba village, because of its obvious strategic location.

The sacking of Owu was itself one of the consequences of the gradual disintegration of the old Yoruba empires, and of the chaos which, for the rest of the century, would prevail in Yorubaland

and eventually lead to its colonisation by the British.

The situation was triggered off by the Fulani incursion into Yorubaland, aided by the treachery of the Are Ona Kakanfo, the Generallisimo of Oyo kingdom himself who, because of personal ambitions, turned against the Alaafin. With this invasion, the trade routes to the northern middle-belt were closed. As these were the routes through which the coastal towns were hitherto supplied with their cargo of slaves for the infamous trans-Atlantic slave trade, substitute sources had to be found. The Ijebu, who were the main middlemen in the trade, decided to turn on neighbouring Yoruba kingdoms, with the help of allies from Ife and of the fugitive Oyo soldiers. That was how Owu, whose ruler had put up a courageous resistance, became a victim.

The Oyo soldiers of fortune would play a more and more significant role from now on in the politics of Yorubaland. Runaways from Oyo Ife, the old capital of the Oyo empire which had been sacked by the Hausa-Ilorin army, these soldiers fled southwards, seeking safer havens, and as is to be expected of such desperate groups, living mainly on banditry.

Ibadan, then just a little crossroads, was one of the places these fugitives eventually chose to settle in. Situated on one of a range of hills just at the edge of the grassland, the village offered natural defences against both the Hausa cavalry, and the hostile Egba in the neighbourhood.

From myth, however, comes a far more picturesque account of this story of settlement. We are informed that at the head of the first group of settlers was the warrior Lagelu. On arriving in Ibadan, he summoned a *babalawo* for consultation about the future of the new place. The nuts were cast, and Ifa counselled first of all, the adoption of Oke Ibadan hill as the tutelary deity. Then, at the second throwing of the sacred nuts, the priest called for a sacrifice of, among other items, two hundred snails! When the snails were brought, the priest scattered them in various directions, saying, "Creep on as far as you can, and that is as far as the town will also grow!" The snails, say the legends, travelled far and wide, and that is why Ibadan has been expanding ever since, in multiple directions!

In (actual) fact, the beginnings of the town were nothing as idyllic, or peaceful. The presence of soldiers of fortune from various ethnic communities, with their competing goals, unstable allegiances, and mercuric tempers, meant that life in the town was more or less a story of continuous civil strife. As proof of this, we need search no further than that memorable *oriki* to Ibadan, composed long ago by some poet unfortunately now forgotten. At once perceptive and brilliantly ironic, here it is, in Ulli Beier's translation.

Ibadan!
The spirit of the rock protects the town.
Ibadan, don't fight!
We must ask for permission, before we enter the town.
Because this is the town in which the thief is innocent,
And the owner of property is guilty.
Here peace is lying exhausted on the ground
And belligerence dances on its back.
Ibadan, the town where the owner of the land
Does not prosper like the stranger.
Nobody is born, without some kind of disease in his body.
Riots in all the compounds is the disease of Ibadan...
You may look at this town whichever way you wish
You will see nothing but war.

The poem faithfully sums up the character of the town at its origins. Because, once settled here, the erstwhile allies began to vie with one another for overall control, and soon there ensued a fierce struggle. The Ife warriors, who were at first in the majority, soon found themselves outnumbered by the Oyo, since many of the latter continued to stream in from the northern battlefront. And it was thus a matter of time therefore before the Oyo warlords gained control, and forced the Ifes to withdraw, while the Ijebu, the smallest in number, became isolated at Isale Ijebu, and never again had more than a subsidiary role in the city's administration.

The war commanders, who lived in large compounds with their armies gathered around them. ruled the rapidly-growing town through a hierarchical system based on military prowess and the largeness of their armies. These two qualities alone decided anybody's place within the hierarchy - not birth, not inheritance, as in traditional Yoruba towns. Therefore, in theory at least, it meant that any freeborn citizen could aspire to the rulership of the town. Which means that Ibadan provided what was arguably the first "democratic" experiment in governance in Yorubaland, if not in the country.

Four

The establishment of Ibadan as a municipal, and then a regional, power began with the rule of Bashorun Oluyole from about the year 1836. This remarkably gifted warrior led several successful military campaigns, among which was the final rout of the Fulani army in Oshogbo in 1840. His rule, according to historians, was a most ruthless and arbitrary one, but in fact, he paid just as much attention to war as to agricultural innovation and municipal administration.

The Bashorun is the one credited, for instance, with establishing the list of chieftaincy titles that are still mostly in use today, as well as their order of precedence. In addition, Bashorun Oluyole was the one who founded the still flourishing main market of Oja'ba (Oja Iba), which stands now as it did then directly in front of his compound. And he deserves to be credited, therefore, with the establishment of the city of Ibadan as one of the important commercial centres in the country, whose present-day geographical identity can be best described as a vast, entangled network of markets. For it was Bashorun Oluyole's example which inspired the founding of other markets by his commanders, the most notable of them perhaps being the famous Oje market, started by Chief Dele, the Are Ago, together with Balogun Oderinlo, on the road to Iwo.

Oluyole's successes, and the 'democratic' ambience of the town, encouraged people to flock into Ibadan so that by the year

1851, the town's population was put at between 60,000 and 100,000, while its surrounding walls stretched out for up to ten miles!

This growth, as is to be expected, encouraged Ibadan leaders to embark on territorial expansion. Most of Yorubaland, as we said earlier, was in complete chaos at this time, following the sacking of the old capital at Oyo Ile. Alaafin Atiba's later attempts to reestablish the kingdom's former glory at the new Oyo was only partially successful. The new capital regained its outward pomp, but not, unfortunately, its military prowess. For its defences and other military requirements, the kingdom had to rely on the forces, first, of Ibadan, whose people were at least nominally its subjects (being Oyo descendants), and then, secondly, on the forces of Ijaye, who by now had grown strong enough to pose a serious challenge to Ibadan.

This rivalry between the two forces was, however, soon resolved — in 1862, the expansionist Ibadan army sacked Ijaye, thereby establishing Ibadan as the pre-eminent military power in Yorubaland. Nothing, it seemed, could stop Ibadan now. With the ostensible réason of pursuing the still-active Fulani, Ibadan's forces invaded Ijesha and Ekiti lands, and brought them under its rule. In each conquered town, it left an *ajele*, or military administrator, to supervise its interests and collect regular tributes.

This expanding imperialism naturally became a source of anxiety to the older Yoruba kingdoms, who could not be expected to accept the supremacy of 'a mere war camp with no Oba', no matter how large it had grown. Hence in the 1870s, a serious resistance began against Ibadan's dominance. The Ijebu and the Egba combined to block Ibadan's trade route to the sea, therefore cutting off its sources of ammunition, and Ibadan was then forced to open a major war front at Oru, the border town. However, the intervention of the British at this point saved Ibadan from its enemies. The British were forced to intervene to protect their own interests, because the war had also affected the trade in palm products which they had established with Ibadan after the ban on slave-trading and their occupation of Lagos in 1851. They

were the ones, therefore, who kept Ibadan supplied with arms by opening an alternate route from the coast.

At the same time, the Ekiti and Ijesha seized their chance to throw off Ibadan's imposed hegemony. In 1878, they too declared their independence, and thus began the war saga that is now known as the Kiriji War, the war made memorable by the death of the legendary Are Latosa who, already ageing, was finally forced to go to the battle-front in succour of his depleted forces.

And yet these were not the only fronts on which Ibadan found itself fighting. At Offa too, the Fulani launched an attack at this same period, which Ibadan had to repel. And nearer still, the Ifes attacked the Oyo settlement of Modakeke. Thus the Ibadan were to be found fighting on five different war fronts at the same time!

The consequence of these wars, in which the Ibadan army was however not defeated, was the opportunity they gave to the British to finally entrench themselves in Yorubaland. To protect their growing but now interrupted trade with the hinterland, the British finally decided, under the push of the Lagos merchants, to organise a punitive expedition into the interior. This expedition sacked Ijebu-Ode in 1892, and this defeat served as a warning lesson to all the warring factions. The following year, Ibadan capitulated, and signed an Agreement with Gilbert Carter, then acting Governor of Lagos, by which Ibadan became incorporated into the British Empire.

Thus ended Ibadan's era of glory, as well as its dreams of becoming the paramount centre of power in the whole of Yorubaland. From now on, until the year Nigeria attained its Independence from the British in 1960, Ibadan would never again enjoy the spectacular position of dominance which marked its adventurous beginnings. The British, under Captain Ross, (nicknamed 'Slap My Face', because of the manner he used to treat Ibadan people), would first administer the town, humiliatingly, as a vassal of Oyo. Then later, when it managed to regain some of its ancient autonomy, Ibadan would become embroiled in the turbulent and largely unproductive political prelude to the Independence era. This was because its sons battled one another for selfish ambitions in the municipal council,

under the aegis of various 'cultural' organisations.

Thankfully however, none of these conflicts succeeded in arresting the growth of the town, which even knew a tremendous outburst of activity in the immediate post-Independence period, when the city served as capital of the old and wealthy Western region under the progressive Action Group Government. This growth has waned somewhat nowadays, following the new dispensation brought, since 1965, by successive military governments, whose quasi-imperialist policies keep carving up the old regions into ever-smaller 'state' unit. Ibadan is still a capital city now, but of a much shrunken Oyo State, and under civil administrations which are increasingly chauvinistic in outlook.

Five

Nevertheless, and perhaps in spite of these parochial political policies, Ibadan is still today the largest truly indigenous African city south of the Sahara and, for many reasons, one of the most decent places in Nigeria to live in. It continues to draw people into its expansive bosom and has developed a paradoxical character as a truly "cosmopolitan village" - that is, a sprawling agglomeration of buildings, spread out in numerous directions much farther than the eye could see, but with no coherent order, in which several ethnic groups live and commingle, without however displaying the frenetic pressure and restless energy associated with the modern metropolis.

Two of the reasons for this paradox can be given here. One is, I believe, the lack of any major industrial project in the town. Ibadan has very few factories, and they are all located at the far outskirts of town. The second reason is that Ibadan is largely a town of petty traders, small entrepreneurs, and intellectuals, people whose style of life tends to be modest and conservative. In fact, I have said elsewhere, Ibadan is virtually just a succession of small markets, shops and schools, mosques, and churches. These places line the streets which flow, like disordered hair plaits, down the hilltops whose centre is at Mapo, and on both sides of them sit the dingied houses in which these traders and priests

eke out their humble lives, mainly one-storey cement affairs, roofed with corrugated iron or zinc or, in the more recent quarters, with tiles. Some four decades ago, a young student living in the city looked at this picturesque scene and wrote the poem known now all over the world:

"Ibadan
running splash of rust
and gold—flung and scattered
among seven hills like broken
china in the sun".

The young poet was J. P. Clark (Bekederemo), an Ijo from the Delta area, whose presence in Ibadan underlines what I consider the really important asset that has contributed to giving Ibadan its present character. This is the fact that, by colonial decision in the pre-Independence days, Ibadan became Nigeria's premier university town. Because the university college in Ibadan was the first, and for several years the only, one in the entire country, it assembled its scholars from all over, and became a truly nationalist melting pot. The importance of such a place, particularly in those days when the political struggle for Independence was at its most fervent, cannot be underrated. For here was trained the country's first indigenous intelligentsia, the men and women who would form the country's first professional, administrative and academic elites. And it is this fortuitous historical role, as a nursery of a national, rather than a purely ethnic or even regional clientele, - a role which it has happily continued to maintain - that has helped give Ibadan its distinctive and unique character among the towns in Nigeria.

Particularly prominent among the intelligentsia that Ibadan nurtured, and continues to nurture, are the creative writers. Of course there have been other men of genius and international acclaim out of Ibadan, such as medical doctors, biochemists, agriculturists, and so on. Also, as is to be expected of a city with such a large population, traditional arts of performance and ritual exist in abundance, and have continued to flourish and breed an enthusiastic audience. Still, in no field as in written literature in

English has Ibadan become so completely dominant, both in the scale of its achievement, and the splendour of its products.

By no doubt a happy accident, vitually all the writers who created the genre that is now referred to as 'Modern Nigerian/ African Literature' were graduates of Ibadan. Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa, Mabel Segun, John Munonye, Nkem Nwankwo, Elechi Amadi, Chukwuemeka Ike, the novelists; John Pepper-Clark, Christopher Okigbo, Gabriel Okara, Frank Aig-Imoukhouede, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, Michael Echeruo, the poets; Wole Soyinka, John Pepper-Clark, the dramatists; Ben Obumselu, Obiajunwa Wali, Abiola Irele, the critics: name them, in whatever genre, they all studied and lived in Ibadan, and experienced their first flowering there. And this lustrous tradition had remained undimmed, even nowadays when universities have become more numerous and widespread across the land. Ibadan is still where most of our treasured writers and artists begin their career; it is where they are to be found in the highest concentration.

It is indeed in Ibadan, undoubtedly owing to the influence of the university, that artistic creativity in this country seems to attain both its richest inspiration and its steadiest support. The development of this propitious environment for the arts has been traced to the early sixties, when the young university attracted to its staff a crop of visionary art patrons, among whom was in particular Ulli Beier. Under the encouragement of Beier and his friends came to be founded the Mbari (Mbayo) Club, whose promotion of the arts laid seminal seeds. Then there were theatre pioneers like Geoffrey Axworthy, Ken Post, and Martin Banham, English teachers like Paul Chistopherson, Miss Green (now Mrs Joyce Garnier), Molly Mahood, Una Maclean; photographer and film maker Frank Speed; and others, like Lalage Bown, the South African Ezekiel (Es'kia) Mphahlele, and the West Indian, Arthur Drayton; and others. Through their various activities, both the literary and the plastic arts blossomed in Ibadan in those years.

Owing to various unfortunate circumstances however, that rich and extended work of sponsorship and promotion in no longer available nowadays in Ibadan, but the spirit has survived.

Literary journals are still being born (and dying as rapidly), and the community of established and aspiring writers still find the time to meet and share their creations as at the time of Mbari; and above all, not only are the old publishing houses which the town attracted still flourishing, but even against the present economic travails and the ravages of SAP, new publishers keep springing up.

It is with this image then of the city that I will end this quick survey, as a wellspring of creativity of all kinds, but especially mother to the nation's writers. It is obvious, from the work of our literary men and women that indeed, Lagelu's two hundred snails have not stopped their crawling yet, that at each place they pause to rest, a centre of inspiration develops at once, like a full and fecund fruit, from which the seeds of fiction, or of poetry, or of drama, begin to flower. Let's join Okinba Launko, as he celebrates it:

IBADAN
Tonight - see!
my woman has put jewels in her hair:
It is the hour when, they say,
cities love to show off:

From this hill
that is one of her nipples
(one of the many teats she strings along
the rim of her horizon in opalescent cones)
I see her lean against the long, seductive sash
of night, and spangle her bosom with pearls -

and I know there are troubadours down there
we cannot hear;
priests & lovers descanting into the lone and lovely
ears of night; songs
and strings in disco halls long lost to dope
and to hope; whorehouses
with poets in them, as desolate as me ...

Oh my woman, my city ! Silk
of a painter's brush, what ecstasies
we've known in Lagelu's loins...

But yet I remember you
from other seasons. I remember
how, in the candid glass of day,
the roofs of your valleys betray their rust
and wrinkles, like broken ovens, seething,
- rows on rows of roasted crust!

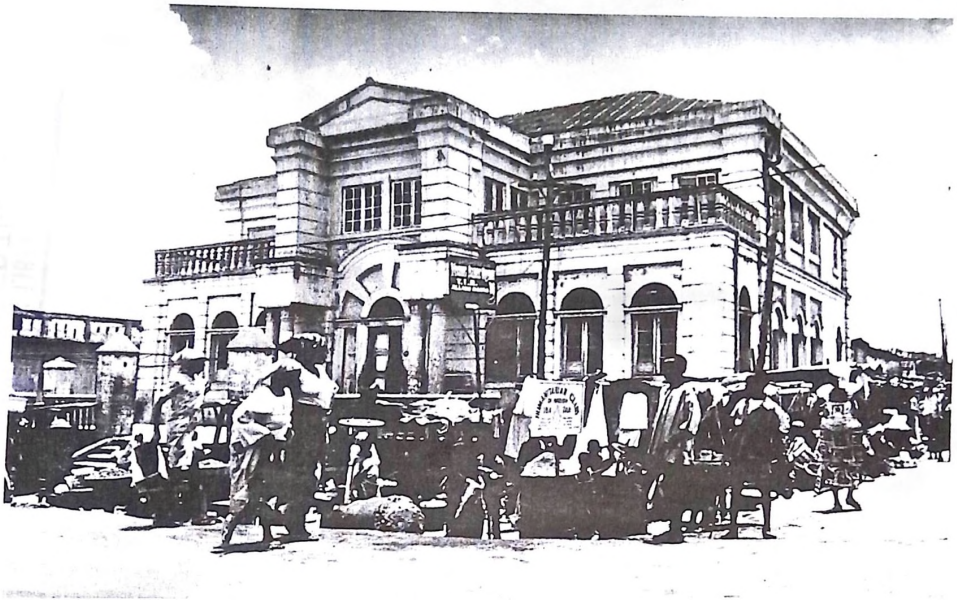
I remember, I remember also
the rage of your flood seasons, when
your lizard streams - and your placid populations -
erupt into murmuring serpents, fangs of fury
tearing into households, into corrupt parliaments
seeking a terrible tribute of corpses....

Oh my city, my woman! I have known
your terrors and your tremors:
I shall go as a canto grows, in the ballad of your singers

I shall go, fusing disaster and disease, scars and laurels,
the violence & the valour of your wounds.

for I know, dancer among dancers, that here
one plants love down and it sprouts, kisses kindle to faith —
we give our pain and our longings, and we reap poems.

- Okinba Launko



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PART ONE

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MEMOIRS/REMINISCENCES

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My First Trip to Ibadan - January 1971

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Alain Ricard

IBADAN is an ancient city. The roads are winding, the mud houses with thatched roofs are sprawled out like English cottages. This city is a whole universe. It has over several centuries, beaten back the forest. It takes two hours by the by-pass to go round the city and another two hours to cross it.

The confusion that prevails at the centre is baffling. The ancient alleys were not constructed for vehicles; they snake along the hill sides. Ibadan is built on seven hills, like Rome, say well-read Nigerians. Only Petrone's pen could possibly describe the Ibadan market. The Fulani herdsmen's cattle roamed freely among the piles of chinese tinware, surrounded by made- in-Nigeria plastics, marvellous petroleum by-products which have enriched the country. The stalls were grouped according to the kinds of products: this was the realm of women. Seated on their stools, they were attired in dyed indigo cloth; beneath their braided hair, were heavily lined eyes which brightened up the centre of their sweaty faces, often scarred with tribal marks. They had almond-shaped eyes and flared nostrils; some appeared to have been carved by a sculptor's chisel with their bulging eyes and high cheek bones; when they got up, their wrappers tied around their waist gave them the carriage of rounded statues which characterises certain dance postures. These women called out to clients in their surprisingly deep

and powerful voices, in a language with undulating inflections, with vibrant resonance. I loved this avalanche of open vowels from which I overheard phrases, every now and then, encouraging their young white husband to make some purchases.

To eat, have a meal out, was the big event: bean cakes, smooth, a bit spicy, crisp plantain slices, antelope stew with pumpkin pottage, vegetable soup, all washed down with a bottle of beer, which strangely enough always appeared cold, taken out of who-knows-what fridge concealed in the sheds around, just when the stew was burning the palate. The cooks dipped their spoons in large cooking pots resting on coalpots. It was possible to eat at any time of the night.

Everywhere there are signboards displaying bizarre signs. Here, everyone writes, everyone counts.

Friday afternoon. Ibadan.

The ancient colonial city which was built like a big African village has been swallowed up by the modern metropolis. A lone skyscrapper overlooks the market scene: it is Cocoa House built by the framers' cooperative. All the roads lead to this tiny town-centre; all the taxis, all the buses converge there and provide a dazzling fleet which goes round the old decrepit-looking roundabout, in the middle of which, sometimes, subsist some plants of the bygone colonial days. Here, there had been an attempt at gardening. Mini-buses wheel around disgorging from them bus conductors who scream the names of areas. Nothing is written down. I look for the university. It's in the direction of 'you-aye', U.I., that I should go. I should have noticed that these mini-buses were swarming with students. One standard fare, whatever the distance. Throughout the journey, traders were getting on and off; carrying enormous bundles which had to be accommodated.

We go up the big avenue, which I will discover much later leads to the North. We come across big lorries taking sheep into town. How do these cattle rearers succeed in squeezing so many animals onto the trailer. The herds had long since stopped moving on foot from the Sahelian pastures to the abbatoirs of the South. The cattle rearers perched on top of the Mercedez lorry; all the cattle are wandering around the alleys in the vicinity. What a carry-on! I would never have believed that sheep could run so fast!

This country has an obsession for roundabouts. Opposite the tower-clock of the university, which gives this tropical park a Mediterranean look, the fleet of yellow minibuses discharges students coming from the town and swallows up those keen on going into town. The tower is the symbol of the campus. The administrative block is there; the square gives on to the theatre, bookshop, and the halls of residence. Everything is surprisingly well adapted to the climate. Ornamental brickword allows a little breeze into the buildings; wide balconies open on to the living rooms, enclosed in thin netting meant to prevent insects from penetrating. Some bougainvilleas grow in front of the theatre. Transplanted in the equator, the medieval college has lost its austere look. This luxuriant Oxford tempts one to take a stroll around. At the porters' lodge, I ask for the address of an Indian colleague whom Arthur has spoken of. He has a two-bedroom apartment and Arthur assures me that he will able to house me. He lives in the block reserved for single lecturers behind the hall of residence which overlooks the quadrangle. Some flamboyant trees beautify the facade. After the hustle and bustle of the town, the crowd at the market, the fury of the bus, it does not immediately occur to me that I am, actually, at peace. As soon as I move away from the round about, the twittering weaver birds, the footsteps on the pavement and some piano tunes — odd in this place — are the only sounds which keep me company.

It's colder here at night than in Lome. The mugginess of the ocean has disappeared. Air-conditioning is no use. All the sounds of the

campus can be heard on the balcony where I am, shielded by the netting. How come African crickets make so much noise? They drown the lion's roaring which, a few hundred meters away, rattles its cage at the-university zoo. First night in Nigeria, lulled to sleep by lions; deliciously exotic.

The students, quiet during the day, are much more audible at night, Kanti's apartment adjoins a hall of residence. Luckily this evening, there's electricity, music flows from the brightly lit rooms. That night, I hear Fela for the first time.

The racket does not stop at night. In the morning the campus wears an odd look. Most of the students were going for classes, nothing appeared to be different in their behaviours. However, some groups were gathering together and heading towards the tower-clock. There was no meeting point in the movement in both directions; the two were independent.

"They are angry, at last." Kanti said to me. "They've had enough of the rubbish given to them to eat in the cafeteria". He then explains that for some months there had been sporadic protests. Leaflets had been circulated. The cafeteria management had been carried out and other leaflets attributed this indifference to the fact that the woman in charge of the canteen was the mistress of the university registrar. "Always, hard yams, an inedible pottage. They had reason to be angry. But they ought to be careful: The army does not like unrest."

The thrust of conversation, the movement of people was now in the direction of the administrative block in front of which the isolated groups of the morning had become a dense crowd. The quadrangle was jammed. Shouts rose from those who were closest to the administrative block. The shouts had not triggered off anything. The crowd has not been roused into action, it was there, placid. Nothing compared with our own kind of demonstrators in France. The crowd waited and I waited with the crowd.

Suddenly, over there, against the door of the building shouts burst forth; some students tried to get inside. A violent fight started but didn't spread. Small groups rushed towards the security office of the campus guards, brandishing flamed torches, others were rolling old tyres in front of them. A giant flame flares up: the security office at the entrance burns. The crowd does not seem to be moved by anything. The few elated ones, the ring leaders, spread tyres across the road and sprinkle them with petrol. An acrid black smoke rises at that moment from the road, spiralling upwards. The crowd moves towards the barrier without hesitating. We cannot see the road, clouded by the thick smoke rising from the smoke barricade. We are advancing without seeing.

It's at that moment that a dry crack resounded, then another and another... The crowd stopped. as if poised to listen. Then suddenly there were screams. "Run for your lives! They are shooting!"

In a few seconds the students, paralyzed with fear, scattered. The civil war had just ended and many of them knew what it meant to hear dry cracks in the morning air.

The campus sloped gently towards the halls of residence. The walk I took calmly the evening before, I did again running: I, too, suddenly frightened to death: The cracks continued, seemed to get closer and I had only one thought, to return to Kanti's place, find refuge in his apartment. Leaving the students rushing through the porch of their halls, I went round the building, climbed up the steps four at a time. The door was open, the apartment empty. I shut the door and was lying on the floor when Kanti burst in: he had gone out as soon as he heard the first shot to see if the doors to the students halls were still open. He had already experienced this sort of thing. "Leave the windows open", he said to me. "If they shoot across in our direction, the bullets will go through but we will not be injured by pieces of glass."

The bullets, however, killed Kunle Adepeju: it was the 1st of February, 1971. The war had just ended and it was my first time in Nigeria. I have since gone back there on several occasions and it is on this campus that I first met Niyi Osundare, that I heard him read his works, much later, in 1988; I would like him to know how much they echo in me.

Translated from the French by Omowunmi Segun

Where I Grew Up

•••

Wale Ogunyemi

HEY! Mother! Mother! Come and see my toy in this boy's hand!", exclaimed a little boy about my own age. Without waiting for his mother to show up, I quickly dropped the toy my father had bought me and took flight.

I was a tiny timid boy with a heavy Igbajo accent from the rural area and only six months old in Opopo Yeosa area of Ibadan.

Igbajo, where I came from is about 160 kilometres from Ibadan, the city of Oluyole. My Igbajo accent made me vulnerable to the constant taunting of neighbourhood boys and girls.

I went home and reported to my mother how I lost my toy. When asked who the boy or his mother was, I couldn't tell because I didn't know his or his mother's identity. I was, however, bought another toy which I lost in the same manner to other bullies in the area.

Within a year and a half, I had shed my timidity and started bullying boys, even those older than me. The environment had changed me drastically.

Our house was on a steep hill overlooking the Shepherd's Hill in Oke Aare where the missionaries lived. A stone-throw from here, there was this rubbish heap on which we loved to play every evening. One day a boy stepped on a broken bottle and it badly tore his foot. We tried to

stop the bleeding but to no avail. We then advised him to quickly go to his parents. That was our last day on the rubbish heap.

Not long after I got home, a woman, with anger written all over her, came to our house, the injured boy in tow; his rag-bandaged foot was still soaked in blood. The woman began to pour abuse on my family saying that I slashed her son's foot with a razor blade.

"I don't go about with razor blades. Where then would I have got one?" I countered.

"You picked it up from the rubbish heap!" the boy said emphatically. He lied to escape being caned by his parents who had warned him on several occasions not to play on the rubbish heap.

I had by now become the neighbourhood bully, my father believed I was capable of any mischief. So, he disregarded my plea of innocence.

After my father took the boy to hospital, he came back home and asked me to strip naked. I did, expecting to be caned. Instead, he asked me to pick up an empty bucket and go to the public tap to fetch water!

I begged to be beaten instead, but my father insisted I should go to the tap, which was about half a kilometre from our home.

I covered my manhood with one palm and held the bucket with the other on my way to the tap. The problem ahead was how to draw water with one hand and also lift the bucket on to my head with one hand. Even if I had some help in lifting the bucket to my head, I still had to balance it with both hands, thereby exposing the secret part of my body.

I prayed that none of the neighbourhood girls would come along. But suddenly, I came face to face with them. They stared at me and started giggling mischievously to my embarrassment. The attention of their mates who were indoors was attracted and they came out to join in mocking me. I was so ashamed of myself that I wished, at that moment, that I could disappear into thin air.

I wept all the way back home.

No matter how severely my father beat me for any misdemeanour, not a wink, not a groan and no tears from my eyes. So, he thought that the best punishment was to expose me to ridicule.

In the fifties, Opopo Yeosa was one of the toughest places in Ibadan. It was a notorious haven for tough people, so much so that any crime committed there usually attracted the maximum punishment in the hands of the Police and the Courts. There I stayed with my family for ten years.

Very close to Ayeye, Yeosa afforded me the opportunity of admiring the beautiful ancient architecture of Balogun Ibikunle's (an Ibadan war lord) palace. Little wonder I wrote a play on the war between Ibadan and Ijaye in which Balogun Ibikunle participated and survived.

Ibadan's landmark, the Bower's Tower, situated in the Forest Reserve on Oke Are was also a stone throw from Opopo Yeosa. Meandering through its spiral steps to the balcony, one could see the sprawling city of Ibadan from all sides. It is as J. P. Clark Bekederemo described it — "like broken China in the Sun".

Ibadan exposed me, among other things, to the cinema culture. It was my frequency at the first Cinematograph House — Rex Cinema — at Oke Bola , that encouraged my resolve to become an actor; the ambition I nursed until 1959 when I had my first opportunity with the establishment of the first Television Station in Africa, WNTV.

It was also an Indian film I watched at the Odeon Cinema in Oke Ado whose story-line I subsequently turned into prose even without sub-titles, that aided my formative years as a writer.

One would wonder where I was getting money to watch films at that tender age. Was I a victim of child abuse or child labour? No, I only engaged in childhood antics, seeing that I did not have my parent's approval.

Even when in 1958, the famous Adegoke Adelabu, the powerful Ibadan politician and leader of the Opposition in the Western Region Government was killed in a ghastly automobile accident on the Lagos/Shagamu road which Ibadan people attributed to sorcery and a terrible riot broke out, I was always where the action was — Beere area and Mapo Hill. To me, the riot was fun at that time. Ibadan people were angered for losing such an eloquent, illustrious son and a dynamic politician through the evil machinations of some people.

To Ibadan people, Adegoke Adelabu was infallible. Even when his political adversaries accused him of mismanagement of public funds, Ibadan people picked up their talking drums and retorted thus:

"Igunnu lo ni Tapa
Tapa lo ni Igunnu
E je Adelabu o kowo o wa na»

Igunnu masquerade belongs to the Nupes
The Nupes own Igunnu mask
Let Adelabu continue spending our money.

Such was, and still is, their love for their kindred. They are no fools. They believed that Ibadan, being the largest city with the largest concentration of people in the West, must have the lion's share of Government funds since they pay their taxes.

"Ibadan City does not give succour to its indigenes as much as it does to non indigenes" Ibadan gave me succour and helped to be part of my development. I learnt the smooth diplomacy of Ibadan people with flawless Ibadan dialect. Egungun, Oke Ibadan and all other festivals which promote our culture drew me closer to the people of Ibadan and gave me the impetus to further highlight our rich cultural heritage in all my writings.

Environment plays a vital role in character moulding and determines one's outlook to life. A clean environment makes a clean and humane society.

Titi Oke-Ado

♦♦♦

Femi Fatoba

STANDING at Oke-bola facing the Molete end, one can see as far as Oke-Ado market and a little beyond to the Catholic church which shares the same grounds with St. Teresa's College. Standing in front of St. Teresa's College still looking in the same direction one can see as far as the United Missionary College popularly known as UMC. Standing in front of UMC one looks downhill towards Molete and the end of Titi Oke Ado. That was how we used to take it in those days, in three chuncks which we always referred to as three laps.

Nobody thought about names. It was simply Titi Oke-Ado. There were landmarks to tell how far one had gone on Titi Oke Ado, depending on whether one was going or coming. There was Chief Obafemi Awolowo's house at Oke-Bola, the Palm Tree Club almost opposite Odeon Cinema just after M & K, the Volkswagen salesplace. There is the Oworu family house on the right and a few yards later the Oruwariye Hospital on the left not too far away from Oni and Sons. Native Ibadan people called the name 'Oni-and-Shuns', which become 'Oniosunwon', and being a famous contracting firm which employed a lot of people and by which people were eager to be employed, the name became a full saying: "Oni o shu won owo owo e la nwa" (Oni is not good, it is his money we are after). Streets branched

off from Titi Oke Ado taking you to the famous Liberty Stadium.

Directly opposite the house of Oni & Sons is St. Teresa's College. A brisk walk from this point is the famous Lodge House which looked both imposing and frightening with its quaint emblem in front. Then we come to the compound of the famous UMC., after which there was no landmark of great importance until you came to Molete where the town authorities moved the Lagos-bound section of buses and taxis from the old Ogunpa Oyo. Molete is a shortened form of 'Omoletege' which was the description given to a mad woman who used to inhabit a spot around the now famous round-about over which a fly-over now runs. The woman in question had mental problems and she chose that spot as her residence. What was however noticeable about her was her neatness. Her rags were neat and she kept her surroundings spotlessly clean. She washed daily and sat radiantly in her chosen spot. Hence the name 'Omoletege' which later gave that area the name Molete.

Let us go back to where we started at Oke-Bola in front of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's house and look towards the other end. The road becomes a series of dips and curves and a small but steep hill rising towards the railway station. There was a two-storey building, a brothel housing a pool of women on whose thighs a lot of us boys used to go and drown. The other few spots of notice were the usually well-stocked Baptist Bookshop behind which was the famous Paradise Hotel where, the late Eddy Okonta, the ace trumpeter, was both our Joshua and St. Peter.

After the Baptist Bookshop were a few, old pseudo-Brazilian-style houses said to be occupied by Syrians. Some French firms had their store houses just before the houses of the Syrians.

The section from Oke-Bola towards Molete was more famous. It was the Titi Oke-Ado proper. And there was no controversy about the name until it was changed to Ijebu Bye-Pass. When the change in name came about, some grumbling came from people in the more traditional areas

of Ibadan. Like Oke-Foko. They said the Ijebus should remove their houses to Ijebuland and not name their street after Ijebu. They said Isale-Jebu was enough for Ibadan. Later the name Titi Oke-Ado, was changed to Obafemi Awolowo Way. The Foko-minded people were scandalised. But when confronted with the idea that if Ijebus had to remove their houses from Ok'Ado the government secretariat at Bodija could also be moved to Ijebu, the grumblings petered out.

Titi Oke-Ado is not what it used to be in the late fifties and early sixties. The Palm Tree Club was burnt down. Now we have a famous bookshop to compete with the Baptist Bookshop but there is no money to buy books. Those show-rooms which displayed the opulence of oil-boom have diverted to the sale of other and lesser things. There are many side-street car dealers selling second-hand cars called 'Tokunbo'.

The twice-monthly environmental sanition exercises were not able to sanitise the place. The street was lent a famous name and then left to show our rot, our degradation and pauperisation, with the many petrol stations which symbolise how much petroleum we have underground and how we can not get enough to run our old and decrepit motor vehicles. Titi Oke Ado, nay Obafemi Awolowo Way.

Quacks and Quasi-quacks

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Wole Soyinka

IBADAN University was still only a college, affiliated to London University, whose degrees it awarded. With the approach of national Independence, the College which had now moved into its new elegant campus on Oyo Road, was also well on its way to the attainment of its own independence or - Autonomy. That was the magic word, and that was the hallowed prism of a general 'university' idea through which the university community—staff, students, alumni — and the literate public viewed the elegant structures, the precision lawns and seductive landscaping of an institution that appeared not only to have attained maturity after several metamorphoses, but remained an only child of the long-gestating giantess that was called Nigeria.

The old campus, where he had begun, still sentimentally preferred by those who, like Komi, had passed a year or more among its ramshackle structures, was a former military cantonment. Its huts were partitioned into small rooms by fibre-mat walls, sometimes two, three or four students to a room, allowing little privacy or, indeed, quiet. All too often, he would himself undergo moods when he longed for its air of impermanence, for its vanished disdain of the fresh paint and cloying symmetry of structures that came with Independence, despite its primitive actuality. The dormitories, common rooms, reading rooms and even the library were eternally permeable

to the depredations of raised voices, radios, record players and the sports fields.

Yes, there was about Eleiyele an arcaneness, a collective eccentricity, a magnetic field for the bizarre married to its impermanence, a daily improvisation, of openness to a real world, a sense of integration into physical surroundings and humanity, all of which appeared to vanish when the campus moved to its new home that was scrupulously geometric and consciously collegiate. The old campus was stamped into the environment of Eleiyele, part wildlife, part civic centre, part college, market place, nightclub and village assemblage of elders and age-grades, arguing noisily, flitting silently through covered passageways and across overgrown lawns to raucous meeting places or solemn, attentive caucuses of mysterious wisdoms.

Five years later, however, back in Ibadan as a Research Fellow in Drama, he found that the new campus to which he now returned had consolidated its own character. It could boast a good measure of the rehabilitation of a genuine sense of community, somewhat more precious, elitist and privileged than Eleiyele, but a community nonetheless, and one that was rapidly coming of age. It already boasted its own Nigerian Principal, the historian Kenneth Dike, and now, a year after National Independence, a new chairman of the Governing Council was to be appointed. That authority belonged to the University Visitor, an office that came with the fiefdom of the Governor-General. It was normal that speculations, bets and plain rumours should begin to scale the turrets of the University ivory towers; there was one name that should not even have aspired to the dubious distinction of rumour, yet this candidate was proving the most persistent in the list of front-runners within academia. And the line of transmission had begun from the political hub that was Lagos.

Anieke had trained in Canada, where he qualified as a medical doctor. He had returned to Nigeria, and taken up a position in the University College medical department some years previously. His diploma and

certificates distinguished him among his colleagues, European and non-European alike. He was already viewed as the likely first African to head the University teaching hospital, then, like the University itself, still in its infancy.

Then it all came crashing down. From Toronto University to Ibadan came Nemesis in the person of a professor of that university's medical department, come to assess how impressively the new jewel of the Commonwealth's university crown was gleaming, in view of its impending severance from London University. Dr. Mellanby, a Britisher, who was then principal of the University College, showed his guest round the college, reeling off names of the brilliant scholars that had been recruited to mould the academic future of the soon-to-be-independent nation...

'And, of course, we have one of your own products, Dr. Anieke. Brilliant fellow. The first Nigerian to obtain a DSc, in medicine you know'

The man from Toronto frowned. 'From Toronto? Are you sure?'

'Of course. I made the appointment myself'.

'A Nigerian?'

'Sure, a Nigerian. He is the only DSc in the Faculty'.

The visitor remained thoughtful through the rest of his stay. Once back in Toronto, however, he called for the records, convinced that he was not yet senile. The event of a Nigerian obtaining a Doctor of Science in his own department at that time could not possibly have been erased from his memory a mere three to four years after the acquisition of such a prestigious degree. The records vindicated his concern: there was no Dr. Anieke, DSc, on the roll of honour.

An exchange of letters flew between Ibadan and Toronto. The certificate proved to be the authentic material, that is, it was a science doctorate parchment duly embossed with seal of the University of Toronto, only it was never issued to one Dr Anieke, and the signatures it bore did not belong to those by whom such certificates were signed. Further enquiries revealed that a Dr Anieke had indeed qualified as a normal medical physician,

taken the Hippocratic oath and been duly presented with the corresponding certificate; beyond that, the University of Toronto did not know him.

An engaging personality, Anieke had had little problem in overwhelming the tender heart of a secretary in the office of the Vice Chancellor of Toronto. The form that certified Dr Anieke a doctor of science could only have come from that office, and it did not take too long to prise the truth out of the secretary. She confessed to everything and quietly accepted her dismissal. On the Nigerian front, the newspaper screamed out the scandal. Anieke tried to brazen it out but proved no match for public outrage. He had no choice but to resign to avoid dismissal. He did, however, score one curious victory.

A journal, carried away by the excitation of the unprecedented exposure, had referred to him as a 'quack doctor'. Anieke sued, and won. It was an instructive illustration of the perils of 'Nigerian English', to which legal English, at least at the time, was definitely impervious. To that newspaper, and to most Nigerians, 'quack' simply meant phony, false, forged, etc, and would be applied to any object, concept or act that smelt fishy, sounded pretentious or was not totally satisfying. 'Go away, you quack man', would not, for instance, mean that the man in question was a transvestite, or was impotent, simply that he was putting on airs, or was being boastful, exaggerating his capabilities in one field or another. The judge held, however, that 'quack doctor' had only one specific meaning, legally speaking - a fake doctor of medicine, untrained, and therefore unfit to practice, a menace to public health if he attempted his trade on humanity. Anieke, thus described, had been damaged professionally and was entitled to damages. It certainly had many of Anieke's countrymen baffled - why, they pondered, should a man not be called 'quack doctor of science', which of course is 'quack doctor' - of whatever - for short? It remained a public conundrum, the general feeling being that the judge required a street-English course if he truly meant to administer justice in the new nation called Nigeria.

For Dr Anieke, however, and his supporters, the judgement meant total vindication. He had already set up a private clinic in Lagos and was up and about in social and political circles without an apparent stain on his character. And then, to complete his rehabilitation, Dr Azikiwe, the Governor-General of Nigeria, appointed him his personal physician. Those who had continued to trouble their heads with the niceties of English legalese were silenced. The entire episode had been clearly one of misunderstanding, probably a deliberate scheme to subvert the progress of a fledgling university. Oh yes, who did not know the unscrupulous schemes of those other Commonwealth universities? They knew that the giant was awakening, their glamour was about to be dimmed. None of this would have happened if Ibadan had been content to remain under the tutelage of the University of London. It was the demand for independence, for autonomy, that triggered it all. The white establishment wanted to prove that the black man lacked integrity, that he had no regard for strict academic standards, it was all a cooked-up plot to discredit any degree that the University, shorn of the supervision of London, would later award. What was a DSc, anyway? Who cared? The man was already a qualified medical doctor, that much had been asserted in open court. What more could anyone demand?

The University's first real scandal died down and was voided from memory. Now, two years later, to the astonishment of many, this can of worms was prised open, and with the apparent consent, even aggressive participation, of the housefly that laid the maggots. The University woke up to the prospect that its strayed sheep might not only actually return to the fold, but in a position that could influence its policies, oversee its curriculum, intervene in appointments, control its budget and generally minister to its intellectual health. The Governing Council was the broker of the new political order, as yet untested and capricious, its function to be custodian of the jealous order conceived simply as - University Autonomy. For the majority of the community, the proposed return of Anieke as Chairman of the Council

was one of those notions that had the inbuilt defect of non-necessity; there was simply no need to create a condition that required its consideration or debate. It was a false proposition, one that became unravelled by the very act of naming it. No arguments were involved; the notion simply unthought itself into non-existence.

Or so decided the University, dismissing the rumour as unworthy of speculation. At the staff club, discussions shifted to more likely candidates, prominent and uncontroversial scholars and public figures, more than qualified to a position then considered sensitive... until the ivory walls came crashing down and the University Visitor's nominee was announced - Dr Sylvester Anieke!

The itinerant Research Fellow had returned late at night from Black Morocco's, the nightclub at Oke Bola, when he encountered a group of lecturers in the quadrangle in front of Trenchard Hall, a favourite place for informal gatherings both day and night. The debate was so animated, the gesticulations so violent, that he stopped his Land Rover out of curiosity. When he was told the news, he remained for sometime with them, simply listening without really absorbing much. It was such a pointless thing to happen. Then he found the shouting and violence of denunciations rather unsettling for the quantity of beer still coursing through his veins, so he left them, entered his truck and drove back to Black Morocco's.

Morocco's raucous voice sometimes made him think of an unsuccessful blend of Louis Armstrong and Leadbelly, but his permanently untuned guitar somehow suited the rough-and-ready, marijuana-coated combination; no matter, it was a return to that sound that he wanted at that moment, not even the silence of his apartment. In any case, he knew that sleep would elude him that night. The shanty club was just as he had left it. Yetunde, the owner of the club, jet black and bosomy, with the largest, whitest eyes in all of Yorubaland, was still ministering to her clientèle, which included a number of expatriates who competed for her attention and provided comic

relief in their attempts to dance to the juju music of Black Morocco's. Buffalo Kid, the seven-foot-three thug with a heart of gold who appeared to have adopted him for a bookish brother, was still wound round his table in a corner of the tiny room. He shouted 'Brother is back!' and shooed off the men at his table to make room for him. A few peppered snails soon cleared his head of cobwebs and he resumed drinking at a steady, controlled pace. Then he returned to the campus and slept till early afternoon.

When he woke up, he showered, dressed and strolled out to catch up with the latest news, he was relieved to find that the Principal had held meetings with some senior staff, taken decisions and issued a public statement. The University could not accept Dr Anieke as Chairman of the Governing Council. Well that was that. It had not been the collapse of his university idea after all, just a scare.

His head still felt a little dulled from the previous night's activities; even so, the University's stance definitely called for celebration, so he climbed into his Land Rover and drove into town, picking up a member of his theatre group on the way. Dapo Adelugba was a willowy schoolteacher at Ibadan Grammar School, so thin that he had no shadow, making one wonder where he stored the torrent of beer that he downed so effortlessly. His school was conveniently near Risikatu's, yet another night roost of the Morocco brand, except that it had no resident band, and had never been discovered by the expatriates. Sometimes, however, an *agidigbo* group would stop by late at night, perhaps on the way from an engagement. They needed little urging to pick up their simple box-guitar, and the odd talking drum, and commence their pithy, often lugubrious songs that reeked of cobweb-hung soot that clung to dank rafters, the dyes of the *adire** cloth makers and deep clods of earth at its most fertile. Mostly the *agidigbo* players were wandering minstrels, performing through the streets, then stopping, uninvited, at a wedding or

* Dyed cloth both of tie-and-die method, and the waxed style.

funeral, or child-naming. They played outside the main space of the event, serenading the guests as they arrived or departed, and on the open street they remained, moving from car to entrance and back unless they were invited in. The more confident would seize the moment of a general melee to enter and insinuate themselves into a corner where they pounced on the rest moments of the official band to commence their often mischievous, but humorous tunes. But the *agidigbo* group at night, playing for themselves and fellow wanderers of the night was a different, timeless sound. Risikatu's den, even to the smoky acoustics, was so suited to their tunes and sparse accompaniment that is seemed it was their constant patronage of the den that moulded the space and made it uniquely theirs.

In daytime, Risikatu's became an eating place, the huge woman who did the cooking rolled off from her mat in a curtained-off recess in the early dawn and began to pluck her *'ewedu'* and other vegetables, grind the melon seeds, light the hearths just outside, protected by a lean-to, and gather up her pots and pans. As the last notes of the box-guitar were plucked, steam began to rise from the huge pots, and the stirring stick began to turn the *'eba'*+ or *'amala'*+. A pungent smell wafted back into the darkened hut, and this was the announcement of breaking dawn; it was time to begin the drift homewards, or wait for the breakfast that was intended from ancient times to cater for a different stamina - the farmer setting off for a long walk to his farm, and an arduous day. Now of course the urban labourer had taken his place.

They would end up at Risikatu's but that would be much later into the night, when the darkened den would have become its lambent, other self, racked and caressed by the mournful strains of the *agidigbo*. For now, they took their patronage to Tunde Nightingale's club in Mokola. Tunde had

+ A doughy meal made from cassava grains.
+ Doughy meal from yam or cassava flour.

a high-pitched voice that pierced and purred all at once; it suited the much larger space into which one descended from street level, even though it was still open to the skies. His guitar playing was more melodious than Black Morocco's, more controlled but short on variety. A physical contrast to Black, who was short and stocky, Tunde was the original *Opelenge* of whom the song went:

Opelenge fell on a plate
The plate did not break
Opelenge fell on the river
The river was ripped apart

A willowy being like Adelugba, but taller, his gentle face belied the toughness that appeared to be standard armoury of the *juju* and high-life nightclub bandmen. The clientele at his club was also far more varied than Black Morocco's. Black's was strictly for *aficionados*, an acquired taste to which one, however, easily became hooked. You went to Tunde Nightingale's, the poor relation of Paradise Club, only if you felt sociable; the young man's mood after Dr Dike's defiant statement was more than sociable it was expansive.

Tunde Nightingale was mild only in appearance; his voice and guitar could turn aggressive weapons, as they lashed society's enemies or slack morals, and sometimes, those who had given him some personal offence - but then he was not the only troubadour of personal vendettas. The history of musical rivalry among *juju*, *sakara* and *apala* bandleaders had a most lively chapter inscribed in the lyrics of the social music of the sixties, even as the bands also contended for the patronage of the *nouveaux riches* that arrived with Independence, churning out fulsome compositions that placed their subjects on the pedestal of ancient heroes, sages and demi-gods. The politicians were generous with their rewards, egging their praise-singers on to scale the heights of absurdity in inventing virtues that were bestowed

without discrimination - it was possible to listen to the same virtue-studded lyrics from the same singer on different nights, but with a change of name from socialite to politician or millionnaire. Then one looked round and sure enough, there was the beaming theme of the evening's adoration, indifferent to the fact that the garment in which the band now dressed him was a cast-off from the wearer of the previous night.

Tunde Nightingale was in a bitter and vengeful mood that evening, though that did not show on the affable face with which he acknowledged his favourite patrons as they drifted in and out. But the song betrayed a recent, resented loss:

Ah, Apinke, ibadi aran
Teletele, aya wa lo je
K'ibadi re to bere si ju firijiri
*To wa di aya gbogbo ilu**

Sour grapes, And poor Apinke! It needed no inside-informant to guess that Tunde had just been jilted by Apinke: not that she had become a prostitute. He soon abandoned that theme and moved to less personal, better-known tunes. The club filled up gradually; so did their table as the University crowd drifted in and some joined their table to discuss the latest turn of events. Komi had just returned from Lagos. He had good contacts within the NCNC, the junior partner in the Federal Government, and had tried to find out why their former leader would try to humiliate the University in this way. He came away with no rational explanation. Only that Azikiwe appeared determined to go through with it.

* Ah, Apinke, buttocks of velvet.
We had thought you were proudly ours
Before your rear began to toss without control
And became the property of all.

'I have written an open letter to the Visitor', Maren announced. 'That's all I can think of doing for now. I'm sending copies to all the newspapers tomorrow. He has to retrace his steps before he defaces his image. This is not what I expect of Zik of Africa, and that's what I try to tell him in my letter. As respectfully as I can, of course. I hope it does have the desired effect'.

'Hm-hm-hm, be careful there, Komi cautioned. 'This might turn out to be a family matter, to be settled the family way. Like a quarrel between husband and wife. If you get in the middle, the wife turns the pestle on you and the husband attacks you with a machete'.

The tribal angle sobered them up at the table. What Komi was saying was plain enough, and it created instant discomfort. Moreover, he had just returned from Lagos where he must have picked up subtleties of the affair that were not felt in Ibadan. The inevitable argument erupted but, in the end, the illogicality of the situation failed to yield any conviction. The Principal, Kenneth Dike, was Igbo, so were Anieke and, indeed, the Visitor himself, so what did that add up to? If Dike had been a foreigner, a colonial imposition or something of that nature, and the Visitor simply wanted to Nigerianise the position by annoying him out of office, Anieke's appointment would have been guaranteed to achieve that end - but at what cost to the university? Such tactics would be unbelievably crude; and, anyway, Dike was not an expatriate, so that ended that line of thinking.

Tunde Nighingale's shrill voice and guitar competed with the table filled with young, rowdy academics; it soothed no one, however, even though it grew mellow as the night wore on and the beer settled in its accustomed pockets.

Risi, the vivacious one of the bar girls, had been biding her time, her instinct had been perfected from practice and she knew just the right moment to come and drag Maren off to dance, gauging his mood precisely. There was no energy in his protestations; in any case, his table, led by Komi, was aiding and abetting her, prising him off the chair. They knew all about the

desultory flirtation that went on between them; it had led to his visiting the nightclub less and less as she began to treat him as her very personal property, ignoring him pointedly if he came to the club with a female companion, or, in a different mood, seizing any chance to pass close from behind and either step on his feet or scrape his head or shoulder with an empty tray. Somehow she stopped short of 'accidentially' emptying a loaded tray on him. In any case, she would have had to come from the front to do that, since the bar was just to one side of the entrance, and he never sat with his back to the door. So now, she dragged him off, tossing all inhibition to the wind as she hugged him and loaded him with recriminations - why had he abandoned the joint? He explained that he had been on the road.

'Liar,' she said, 'you were at Black Morocco's last night and in Lagos last weekend, at Bobby Benson's'.

His jaw dropped. 'What is this? Who have you got following me about?

She giggled. 'Do you think I have no friends in all those other places? They know I am fond of you, so they always pass on news of you: "We saw your husband in Ife the other day; your 'husband' gave us a lift in his Land Rover at Mokola." 'So, is it true, did you give those witches a lift?'

He admitted that he did - he had recognised them from Paradise Club, despite the absence of their horrendous wigs, make-up and mini-skirts, transformed by a housewifely ankara skirt-and-blouse as they came out of the market with their shopping.

'You will get yourself a bad reputation', she said.

'You are giving me one already', he retorted, 'the way you are rubbing your breasts against me'.

She turned round and dug her buttocks in his crotch in the sudden *ajoloole** that the change in rhythm could be held to justify, flicked her face backwards and up at him: 'Is that better?'

* Digging-in to the ground.

'You are incorrigible', he laughed, stepping slightly back,

'What was that word you used?'

'Incorrigible.'

'What does it mean, that big word?'

'That you are lovely, of course'.

She shrieked with delight, plunged into another *'joloole*, this time facing him. When she rose, she had become tearful, put her hands on his shoulders and leant into him: 'I know I want to look after you, I want to cook you the big *obokun* fish-head you like so much.'

He stopped abruptly in the middle of the floor. 'Who told you that?'

'Why are you so surprised?' she said, 'I know where you and your friends go to eat sometimes - the sharp-corner opposite the turning into Premier Hotel. The mama gives me news of you all the time.

I know she saves you the biggest fish-head. But I tell you, you just haven't eaten fish-head until this lady cooks one for you, in her own house. Just tell me when. You can bring your friends if you like. You don't have to sleep with me, I just want to cook for you, that's all, I want to look after you from time to time. Why should the University girls monopolise you?'

'All right,' he promised. 'I have to get on the road again tomorrow, so I'll stop by for a fish-head brunch - you know what that is, don't you?'

She shook her head.

'Neither breakfast nor lunch, but in-between'.

She screeched with delight and only then agreed to return to serving the thirsty tables.

It was the right mood to set off again on the road, heading for some villages around Ihiala in the East, where he had learnt of a ritual of the planting season. The several events would last over a week, and he planned to stay the entire length of time. Then to Okene: altogether, he might be away three weeks. On an impulse, he stopped at the office of the Principal,

conscious perhaps of the long absence ahead, during which much might happen. He had woken up in the morning, wishing that Dike could have been present at their table the previous night. He had only to imbibe the mood of those present then and he would feel bolstered by their resolve, which was without question the mood also of the University community. So he decided to do the next best thing - speak to him.

He was admitted to the office of the man who had once briefly been his lecturer in African History. This was in the early days at Ibadan, before his transfer to Leeds. He came straight to the point, once he had offered an apology for failing to make an appointment.

'I just wanted you to know, sir, over the Anieke affair, the University is solidly behind you'.

Dike looked very touched, speaking with his accustomed stutter, quite slight. 'Thank you, thank you. It is very thoughful of you to come and tell me this.'

'Well, I just thought you should know. Both expatriates and our own people. I have spoken to several lecturers and even non-academic staff. They all believe it would be a disgrace if the Visitor is allowed to get away with it. As an institution, we would never recover from it.'

'My opinion exactly, I could not agree with you more'.

'You realise of course, sir, there will be lots of pressure. It is not just a question of loss of face, it has become a political thing.'

'I know'.

'If it is allowed to happen sir, anything else can happen, any kind of interference. It's the end of University Autonomy'.

He smiled. 'I have thought about it, I assure you. I thought about it before I made my statement'. His smile grew boyishly confidential.

'Look, these are the Council files right here, I have all the papers with me and I have no intention of surrendering them. I have locked up the Chairman's Lodge and given instructions. And if it comes to resignation...' his

eyes lit up: '... ask my secretary as you go out if you wish: I have begun to pack my papers and prepare my handing-over notes'.

The caller nodded in pure happiness. 'You won't be alone, I assure you, sir. Even I, I am not strictly of the University, only attached, but I shall transfer my attachment elsewhere, to the College of Education or whatever. But several of the staff will also resign, they have said so, and I know them'.

The Principal nodded, very solemnly. 'It will be a hard thing', he said, but it is one of those times one has to take a stand. I have decided that I cannot preside over a university if the present circumstances prevail'.

'Thank you, sir. I feel more than light-hearted. I'm going to enjoy my drive to the East'.

'Oh, you're going East?

'My research project, sir. It's taking me to Ihiala'.

'Oh, good, I hope that is going well'.

'So - so. The trouble is having to share the time with my theatre company. Both are really full-time occupations. Still, I am enjoying it all.'

'Very good, very good. I enjoyed *A Dance of the Forests* very much, though I must confess I didn't understand it all'.

'Well, maybe that was partly the fault of the production, sir. It is a difficult piece to state - I found that out - and we had a number of problems. We might resurrect it after a decent interval'.

'Good. You must let me know when that is. Maybe the University can help out here and there the next time...' He laughed: '...if we are still here'.

'Let's hope so, sir. Anyway, good luck. And congratulations again on that statement, and your stand. Please, sir, don't let them wear you down'.

'I won't, I promise. There is always the honourable way out'.

'Goodbye, sir'.

'Have a safe journey. And thanks again for thinking of coming to see me. You have boosted my morale, you know'.

They shook hands, and he left, treading air, his skin tingling in anticipation of a fight whose conclusion, whatever it was, would not be one of dishonour to the University. Risi had described her house in the warren up on Mokola Hill, and there he headed. She was not at home but had left a message with her little sister that she had gone to the fish market and he was to wait. He decided to seek out Doig, the Welsh illustrator in the Medical Department, and share with him his conversation with the Principal. He could trust him to pass the word to his colleagues in the department - if they all stood firm, there would be no actual resignations. The public outcry would be intolerable if the young University was in danger of losing such a large percentage of its staff. But first to head for the offices of the *Nigerian Tribune* and personally deliver his open letter, addressed to the Visitor...

And then he hesitated, a belated recollection creeping in to slow down his heedless charge into involvement. The visitor, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe! The same Zik whose inaugural concert he had been charged with marring, thanks to the faded operatic star, Madame Evanti? Now, only a few months later, he was about to attack - not attack, the letter was quite respectful, though pained - but attack was how it would be read and then, would these same faceless Praetorian guards not begin to read plain persecution into his position? No, even with the most generous will, this new 'assault' on the person of the nation's Head of State would be regarded as one too many. He had retired from politics, yes, he was now the 'father of the nation', had publicly renounced all political partisanship, but he was until recently the leader of a political party, and his loyalists remained fiercely protective of his person in every respect. It would only take one fanatic to accuse the letter-writer and failed Master of Ceremonies as an agent of some other political party, certainly of the Action Group which was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Zik's former party, especially in the West.

A superstitious strain, despite himself, even crept into his thinking ... was it some invisible force propelling him towards direct confrontation

with this giant nationalist figure and pan-Africanist? Something appeared to be out of control, dragging him along, and he did not like it one little bit. No, he had to find some other line of action, not make it a one-to-one open confrontation on the pages of the newspapers. None of that, no thank you. He turned the Land Rover round to seek out Dapo Adelugba, whose instincts, once he had slept off a Risikatu night, could usually be trusted.

Adelugba was out to the world; obviously he had stopped at the dark den after he was dropped off, Maren having left Nightingale's earlier than usual so as to get an early night before his drive to Ihiala. On yet another impulse, he decided to let matters be for a week, so he left the letter by Dapo's bedside with a note which read: 'Distribute to press if Anieke's matter is not resolved positively in a week'. If he changed his mind in the meantime, he would get a message to him. He hesitated again, thinking he should wake him up to act as chaperon to Risi's place, but decided to leave him in peace. The worst that could happen was that he would get seduced, which was a less alarming prospect than the gang rape to which the University might yet be subjected by the politicians.

He was in Enugu when news came of the University's capitulation; it had taken just over a week for the final sentence to be written on the episode. Every day, he listened eagerly to the radio, stopped to pick up the journals whose editions were sometimes one or two days behind the Lagos version. There had been to-ings and fro-ings, interventions by patriots and other 'well-meaning' voices. Dike appeared to have visited the Governor-General's mansion more than once, had opened and re-bolted the Chairman's Lodge a few times, surrendered and retrieved the Council papers over a dozen times. Cracks within the University body were rumoured; the Visitor's office was reported to be already inundated with the Curricula Vitae of those who could not wait to step into the Principal's shoes the moment he played out the role expected of his high sense of honour. Reporters were summoned for press briefings at the Principal's office only to have the briefings cancelled

at the last moment, or postponed.

Penkelemes! Anieke, bold as sin, had taken up residence on campus and only waited that the files be brought to him. He was determined to get to work at once, especially on all matters that dealt with University contracts. There was also the imminent Convocation Ceremony, one that was especially significant, since it would mark the full autonomy of the University, and the commencement of the awards of her own degrees. Dr Sylvester Anieke, Chairman of the University Council, made it known that he intended not only to officiate at the Ceremony, but to deliver the Convocation Address. Heads nodded confidently... good, the man was heading for the humiliation of his life. Whatever happened, the Ceremony would be boycotted by the bulk of the University. No, better still, they would probably process, take their seats, then walk out as he began to address the assembly. That sounded a more befitting rebuff for a small-minded man whose sole motivation in returning to the University that had expelled him was to take public revenge by making that institution bow to him, humble itself before his authority. The Principal would never acknowledge that authority; many swore that they had actually seen his resignation letter, others that he had begun to pack his property from the Principal's Lodge.

But the Visitor and his medical sidekick clearly knew their nationals better than most, and those included the roving dramatist. Anieke's arrival on campus signalled the commencement of defections; perhaps they had begun even long before, for the Chairman of the Governing Council had much to offer. He began to receive, first clandestine visits, usually at night, and then, confident visits in broad daylight. As Convocation Day approached, congratulatory telegrams began to arrive at his Lodge, to appear on the pages of newspapers. Petitions on preferments, promotions, pleas for appointments even to political offices - for his presence there, against the University will, was the clearest demonstration of political clout, and it was best to get on the right side of such a powerful influence in national affairs. The media had

split into two distinct camps: the *West African Pilot*, the voice of Azikiwe's former party, the NCNC, batted furiously for Anieke's appointment; the *Tribune* was equally strident and unyielding in its opposition; others lined up in varying degrees of political allegiance and objectivity. The University itself had no voice of its own. On Convocation Day, however, there was hardly any face missing from the roll of dons.

Maren was grateful that the Ihiala festival was over, and he dragged his truck back to Ibadan, arriving after dark. The mood called unquestionably for Black Morocco's and there he headed after scrubbing off the accumulated dust of the untarred stretches of the road from eastern parts. Try as he would, he could not persuade himself that this was not his fight, that he was not strictly a member of the University staff, only attached to the institution. It was a purely administrative link, one that did not even provide the satisfaction of a protest resignation. He had nothing to resign from; all he could do, and had decided to do, was to shift the supervision of his research from the University, as well as the administration of the pittance left of the grant, then quit the University premises altogether. He felt tainted, even corrupted, by any continuing association. But first, he had a question for the Principal. It was not a question of rebuking him, of challenging his decision. All he desired was some kind of explanation, something that would make sense of all that had happened, some clue that would clarify why he was feeling this infliction more than it seemed apparent in others.

It was, after all, a new nation, and he acknowledged that he was new to it, compared to others, conscientiously though he had studied, debated, and plotted its desirable direction from afar. He had travelled down to London from Leeds any number of times to make direct contact with those who claimed to be her immediate leaders, just to assess them and their thinking. Because of them, because of the dangers that he knew they posed, he had consciously made the University his base; it was the obvious space, just manageable in dimension and with a mission that imposed a

different code of conduct from whatever might be the norm in the larger society. He had long accepted the need for a kind of reference point, a reservoir for whatever virtues society chose to jettison in its heedless competition for power and material acquisitions. Without consciously phrasing it, he had seen the University as a kind of monastery, but one where wine and other fulfilments of the flesh were not forbidden; a monastery of the mind, however, and of the kind whose inmates took their discoveries into the outer world to seminate its grounds where barren, and to be recharged in turn by such immersions in the real world. To fulfil such a role, the monastery must fashion its own rules and live by them, define its virtues and be loyal to them. It seemed now that such an ideal had been repudiated, and for all time, for such a precedent was one that could not but inform and affect all future policies and their operations. The barbarians had tasted blood. Where next would they plant their feeding trough?

This time, he did not bother to apologise for failing to make an appointment. Dike asked him to enter as soon as the secretary took his name into his office. His eyes looked bloodshot as if he had not slept for days, and his stutter was more pronounced.

'Sit down, please, take a seat. I can guess why you have come'. The Research Fellow sat down and demanded simply: 'Why, sir?' 'I know, I know. It was a most difficult decision. But, you have to understand - these people, they do not care, they don't care if they ruin the University. The visitor was determined to go through with it - it had become a party thing, and the party just went along, blindly, not thinking of anything but taking control of the University'.

'But how can you stay? How will you be able to exercise any independent control once you have ... you have...'

'Capitulated?' He smiled ruefully, 'I know that is how it seems to you but, it is the very reasons I have stated that convince me that I have a duty to stay. One must prepare to make sacrifices for issues which are larger

than the individual. This University must be saved. It is young and it is vulnerable. Only by remaining here - that is what I realised - it is by remaining that I can salvage the institution, that I can rescue its autonomy...'

Sacrifices, he thought? Sacrifice the one thing by which a university must sink or swim - principles? Oh no, this is the Evanti syndrome all over again, failing to accept the right moment to quit the stage. But said nothing, simply feeling sorry for the man, and anxious to be gone.

'I cannot stay, of course', he said aloud. 'I shall conclude my research somewhere else. Fortunately, my two years are up, I mean, the grant ends this year.'

His voice was filled with sincere concern. 'But where will you go? I wish you wouldn't, you know, I really wish you wouldn't. You see, we need you here more than ever. I was counting on your staying, joining the Department as soon as you've completed your research. In fact, I can't see why you haven't come in fully by now. You can take your time with the research. Professor Mahood informed me that she planned to...'

'She has, I turned it down. It had nothing to do with this, in fact, it was before this happened. I did not like the condition.'

'Oh, but surely we can do something about that. We can discuss...'

'No, sir, I have already begun to make arrangements'.

'But where will you go?'

'Well, sir, I have turned down Ife earlier ...'

'No, don't go to Ife'. He waved his hand in dismissal of the newly proposed university, still on the drawing boards. 'Ife will take years to catch up with Ibadan, they can't match our standards. They are rushing things there, and that's not healthy'.

Health! Standards! The man was oblivous of the irony of his words. But Maren only said, 'I haven't taken a decision one way or the other. I'll probably just go on another tour while I think things over. It is obviously a time for me to rethink many things I've been taking for granted...'

'Oh yes, I do that myself sometimes. It's a very good habit to cultivate.'

'Yes, I had actually allowed myself to think that my homecoming - my induction home I should say - was complete. That was wrong. I am beginning to believe it will never end.'

'Oh come on, you are too young to sound so pessimistic. You are home. This is home. Even what has happened - yes, even that, it's all part of home.'

'Yes, I believe you're right, sir. When one is able to accept that, then one is really home'.

He nodded slowly, muttering, 'Yes ... yes...,' as if suspicious of a hidden meaning in what his caller had just said.

There was little left to say, and the young man rose. 'Well, I'll leave you to catch up with your normal routine. I know the past week must have disrupted that quite a bit'.

The Principal saw him to the door, held out his hand. 'Good luck. And you know where the Principal's Lodge is. The door is open to you any time'.

'Thank you, sir'.

It was as he gathered up his papers that he realised that there was, indeed, one gesture that he could make. It was not much, but the very thought of it lifted his depression somewhat, even if his spirits did not actually soar. Until then, he had forgotten that the University had accepted his plays for publication, that he had even corrected the galleys and that the volume was in its final stages for printing. He dropped everything and dashed to the press to ascertain just how far work had gone. Not much further than a second set of galleys, he was told. The staff watched him with no particular amazement - they had long classed him among the university loonies - as he did a victory dance among the machines, then dashed into the office of the manager. He was out, so he shouted to the staff not to touch the galleys until

the manager had given them new instructions. He drove all over the campus trying to track down the manager, failed, so he left a message for him everywhere, then raced back to his apartment and dragged out the portable typewriter. There and then he typed out the most satisfying, self-relieving letter, till then, of his existence, almost panting with the non-existent physical effort, but of course, it was the excitement and the relief:

5th December, 1961

To the Publications Committee
University College
Ibadan.

Sirs,

A writer should feel honoured when the country's first university offers to publish something of his work. I believe I was, when you offered to issue a selection of my shorter plays. In fact, I had always looked forward to doing most of my work in some kind of association with this University.

However, since work began on this volume of plays, the status of the University has altered immeasurably. The University has been deliberately dishonoured and the occasion has passed without some comment, without even a weak protest or a futile gesture from inside the University itself. For even those who have the most tenuous connection with the College, there is no word for this but cowardice. I have no wish to further, in any way however indirect, this conspiracy of shameless acquiescence.

I am well aware that the University is 'running smoothly', that things will 'eventually work out', and that quixotic gestures are just that. Just the same, I must ask you to withdraw from being my publishers. As the work is gone pretty far already, I understand it may be necessary to retain the University Press as printers and offer the plays to other publishers. Anyway, some sort of compromise

will, I am certain, be reached - the University is rather good at that just now.

I must thank you for offering to publish my plays. I can only wish you better luck when you come to publish Anieke's Foundation Day speech to this University which, as I learnt later, was not delivered to an empty hall - contrary to the naive expectation of a few.

Yours sincerely,

As he scrolled the letter out of the portable, and added his signature at the end, a huge weight lifted from his shoulders and he regretted that it was still daytime, since all he wished to do at that moment was to go straight to the Seven Sisters' whose band spot was being temporarily occupied by I. K. Dairo, then making a detour through Agoji Mayor's lone jazz club on Ijebu Bypass, and ending up, of course, at Risikatu's.

It was all over, and he was glad. He had no constituency home to go but one could be found, could be built up from nothing, or built around, only this time with no expectations, no baggage of ideals to attempt to impose on such a waystop - which was what it would ever be, no matter how much of a destination it gave the illusion of being. He felt consoled that it had happened so early, before he put down roots in an arbitrary choice of home.

* *This is excerpted from IBADAN, the third volume of Wole Soyinka's memoirs, published by Methuen in 1994*

A Funny Thing Happened in Ibadan. . .

(Anecdotes about Ibadan (1946-1962)

♦♦♦

Mabel Segun

WE all know the saying about putting the cart before the horse. I have never seen this phenomenon since we do not use horse-drawn carts in this part of the world. We do have carts, of course, those wooden contraptions with two handles for pushing them. From my schooldays I had learnt that horses PULL carts and people PUSH carts. Ibadan is the only place where I ever saw a cart pulling a man. This was in 1946 during my school holidays which I was spending in the hilly town with my mother.

We had gone to Bere, or Oritamerin as it is popularly known by the natives, to buy some yam flour in one of the little stores situated off the double-carriageway leading to Mapo Hall, an imposing edifice dominating the top of Mapo Hill. One approached them via a maze of alleys through which gutters ran so that you sometimes walked with your feet astride them. As we emerged from one of these alleys with our purchase, I heard a shout: "Ago O!Ago O!" The owner of the voice, a porter, was striving to keep his cart in check rather like a man trying to control a dog straining at the leash. Cart and man were moving towards the main road leading to Oje market. "Ago O! Ago O!" The man's voice was now becoming frantic as he warned people to keep out of the way of his rapidly accelerating cart which was

overloaded with bulging round woven reed bags of gari tied at the top tourniquet-fashion. What with the overload and steep gradient of the road, the four-wheeled cart had gathered momentum and was now pulling its owner inexorably towards the junction. "Ago O! Ago O! Ago O!" People who had been walking in a leisurely manner along the road took one look at the careering vehicle and scuttled out of the way. The cart rocked from side to side. It was built like a raft with no sides and soon a bag flew off it onto the road and burst open, flinging its contents on the tarmac. As the duo proceeded with breakneck speed, sweat running down the face of the porter, more bags fell. The women who were selling foodstuff along the sides of the road rushed forward with bowls and basins and began to scoop up the spilt gari. The porter gamely hung unto the handles of the cart, even though he knew it was hopeless. He was the captain of his cart and he was not going to abandon it!

There was a shed near the T-junction where some women were selling oil in kerosene tins some of which had had their tops cut open so that oil could be measured from them with tiny bowls. It took the women some time to know what was happening and by then the cart was almost on top of them. Panic-stricken, they scrambled from the shed, upsetting the oil. Not a moment too soon. The porter let go of the handles and the cart careened into the side of the filmsy shed which promptly collapsed. Everybody came and either congratulated the porter on his lucky escape or commiserated with him on his unlucky adventure. One question came to my mind: how do you sort out gari from palm-oil?

It was easy to laugh at this incident with the callousness of youth and, in any case, I was not really involved. But I later had an encounter with one of the Ibadan hills which I find funny only in retrospect. I should explain that Ibadan, according to legend, is built on seven hills, like Rome. The one I had trouble with was Oke Ofa. I don't know if it is one of the original seven for it seems that more hills have 'grown' since those ancient days. I might

never have gone to Oke Ofa if my brother had not decided to take a wife from that area of Ibadan, well beyond Mapo and looking at that time like a village far removed from town life. Our family had hired a spokeswoman for the traditional engagement ceremony and, wasn't she enormous! In those days I had a small secondhand Renault car with its engine where the boot should have been. I crammed this gargatuan personage into the back seat and she more or less sat on top of the engine. The tyres went down. My mother and I sat in the front seats. We were climbing the hill leading to our destination when I noticed that though the car was labouring and grunting protestingly, it was hardly moving. Apparently the combined load of the engine and the obese woman at the back was straining the accelerator cable. I looked back and the gradient was forbidding. Fear struck my heart, suppose the car started rolling backwards or, worse still, suppose the accelerator cable broke as I had experienced before, luckily on flat ground? I decided to switch the passengers. Holding the car stationary with both the foot brake and the hand brake, I asked our spokeswoman to move to the front and change position with my slightly built mother. The car rocked as she got out with a tremendous effort. The change was effective. I drove to the home of our future in-laws where, to my horror it was discovered that we had left behind one of the stipulated pieces of cloth that we had to present. In vain I pleaded to be allowed to bring it later. The other side insisted we had to go back and fetch it. I thought of another trip with the woman mountain in the car and my heart sank. Fortunately, I was permitted to leave her behind. That was my first and last visit to Oke Ofa.

Mind you, I love hilly country - if I don't have to drive up steep slopes in unreliable cars. One of the highlights of any trip back from Lagos on the expressway is my first sight of the Ibadan hills, adorned with the freshness of greenery, picturesquely straddling the sky and broodingly protective. There is a point I always look forward to. It is that point where, after passing endless houses on both sides of the expressway, all the houses in front suddenly

disappear and all that one can see is the sky and nothing but the sky. Then just as suddenly, the houses reappear as if they had been houses on a slide switched off and on by a whimsical projectionist. For me this magic moment is reenacted over and over again during each journey without ever losing its rapture.

Apart from its hills, Ibadan has the distinction of being the home of the first university in the country, the University of Ibadan, at first an affiliate of the University of London with the undergraduates of the then University College, Ibadan, popularly known as UCI., taking London degrees.

I was admitted into the College in 1949, a year after it was founded. I was still Mabel Imoukhuede then. In my first two years there were ten female undergraduates to about five hundred male students. My classmates in the humanities, both male and female, included Chinua Achebe, Bola Ige (nicknamed Cicero), Grace Alele (now Alele - Williams), Akin Mabogunje, Christian Momah, Christiana Amachere (now Graham Douglas), Victoria Olaitan (now Adebekun) and Tamunobere Oforiokuma. By the time I graduated in 1953, the female population had increased but there were still only fourteen women. The ratio of women to men always posed a problem at dances and many a young woman was "bugged" (*The Bug* was the college rag) simply because she refused a dance. Achebe was chairman of the editorial board of the magazine club which published the *University Herald*, the very first student magazine, and I was the advertisement manager, functioning also as deputy editor. Our close working relationship led to our being cartooned in *The Bug* under the nicknames Lemba and Nuachi (work that out!)

In those days we lived on the old site with its collection of wooden buildings originally occupied by an army field unit. The huge dormitory blocks had been partitioned with mats. Since the mat partition was only a little over two metres high and was porous into the bargain, there was little privacy and conversations were held by occupants of four adjacent rooms without

the speakers stirring from their beds or chairs. There is the story of a medical student who took a girl from town into his room one afternoon and locked the door. At the end of the non-clinical session with the girl, a vigorous round of applause assailed his ears. He looked up and saw a row of grinning faces lining the top of the partition! That must have been the only time anyone ever resented applause.

Student politics in those days was often fiery with debates in the Students Representative Council lasting from ten in the evening till four the next morning. One of its most famous resolutions centred on the Railway Crossing Gate at Dugbe. The resolution was tabled by a student who from that night on became known as "First Citizen". It was to the effect that the railway crossing gate leading to the Jericho area of Ibadan should be removed forthwith in view of the fact that the country's first citizens had their academic institution in that area! In those days university students fancied themselves. Theirs was the only university college in the entire country and the townspeople thought they were demi-gods. They sat in the best seats in the cinema, wore woolen suits even in very hot weather and were fed two-course meals by the college authorities with five students sharing one large chicken. The railway corssing gate resolution was unanimously carried. But today the gate is still there, stopping motor and pedestrian traffic at intervals. It was the college that moved!

I left Ibadan at the end of 1953 to work in other parts of the country but came back in 1956. The whiff of Independence was already in the air. Those were heady days when expectations were high and one felt that a new dawn was breaking that would herald great achievements. The colonial chains were being removed and we would be free to explore our potentials and revitalise our cultural traditions which had been suppressed by cultural imperialism. Ibadan became the cultural centre of Nigeria with the founding of Mbari Club for writers and artists and the formation of two drama groups - Wole Soyinka's 1960 Masks and Players-of-the-Dawn (1962).

I used to feel proud as the originator of the highly optimistic nomenclature of the later until the country became benighted as presaged in Wole Soyinka's *Before the Blackout*.

I was a founding member of all three. The founding members of Mbari Club whom I recollect were Ulli Beier (the moving spirit), Wole Soyinka, Amos Tutuola, Frances Ademola, D. O. Fagunwa, Yetunde Esan (later Omisade, now late) and Mabel Imoukhuede (now Segun). Later they were joined by J.P. Clark (Bekederemo), Christopher Okigbo, Demas Nwoko, and the South African writer Ezekiel (Es'kia) Mphahlele. Beier, a German, also set up Mbari Publications which published Wole's first three plays: *The Strong Breed, The Swamp Dwellers* and *The Trials of Brother Jero*. Mbari Club provided a very relaxed and pleasant atmosphere for writers and artists to discuss the arts over a few drinks. Quite often the discussions continued in the homes of members and many a time I hosted writers till midnight or even beyond in my home at Oke Ado.

The founding members of the 1960 Masks in Ibadan as I remember were Francesca Pereira (now Emmanuel), Femi Johnson (now late), Frances Ademola, Mabel Imoukhuede (now Segun), Christopher Kolade and Segun Olusola. At various times, the membership, both in Lagos and Ibadan, also included Tony Adegbola, Olga Adeniyi-Jones, Yemi Lijadu, Bayo Akinola, Ralph Opara, Ikpehare Aig-Imoukhuede, Sola Rhodes, Ibidun Allison, Lola Onifade, Segun Sofowote, Femi Euba, Taiye Ayorinde, Nat Okoro and Tunji Oyelana - who was a salaried member. Kolade, Olusola, Adegbola and I later formed Players-of-the-Dawn. We were joined by Wale Ogunyemi, Sola Ogunbanjo (later Ibukun, now late), Mrs. Adubi, Miss Green and others. We met at the British Council Hall at Dugbe rehearsing till the early hours of the morning. We had no fear of armed robbers in those days; my only worry being, what my landlord must think of a woman who stayed out till three in the morning!

In Ibadan members of the 1960 Masks met every weekend in a hall which I cannot now identify and held all-day workshops with a short break for lunch. Wole would sketch a scene then ask volunteers to act it out. I suspect he used the 1960 Masks to try out some of the scenes in his Independence Commemorative Play, *A Dance of the Forests* for some of the sketches we tried out look suspiciously to me like what later appeared in the published play.

Looking back now, I see how much talent has been wasted in Nigeria. The 1960 Masks abounded in talent but few of the potentially good actors ever became professionals because in those pioneering days only the Hurbert Ogunde Theatre and one or two other Yoruba language theatre companies had professional actors. Femi Johnson became one of the luminaries of the insurance world but given another age and time, he could have become a star in the world of theatre. I shall never forget the day he played the part of a dead-man-come-to-life with such verisimilitude that we believed he was really and truly what he was portraying. Wole had said to us, 'I want someone to lie on this bench and imagine he is dead. He has been dead for some time. Then he wakes up and sees he is alone in the cemetery. Everywhere is dark, quiet and desolate. He is frightened by the solitude and the eerie surroundings. He looks at himself and sees maggots crawling all over him.' He paused, then asked, 'Who'd like to do it?'

Femi volunteered. He lay still on the bench for some time with his eyes closed while we watched expectantly. Then he opened his eyes, sat up and looked around. When he turned to face us, terrible fear was mirrored in his large eyeballs. He looked down at his body, twisted round and looked over his shoulder. Apparently he saw maggots crawling all over him. Giving a blood-curdling yell, he got up from the bench and started coming towards us very, very slowly, wailing in an unearthly manner and frantically brushing off invisible maggots with his hands. His acting was so convincing that when he got close to where we were sitting, one and all, we leapt out of our seats.

turned tail and jumped through the windows, knocking down the tubular iron chairs and creating a mighty clatter in our precipitate flight. Once safely outside and no longer in fear of maggots being shaken all over us, we stooped and looked back into the hall. Femi was standing like a frozen statue, a look of amazement on his face as if wondering what the matter was with us. As for Wole, he stood with his right hand supporting his left under his chin and wore a sardonic smile. I asked myself as must have the others, 'Why did we flee? After all it was only Femi Johnson.' Shamefaced, we all slunked back into the hall, this time through the legitimate opening - the door.

What else do I recall about Ibadan? Ah yes, Ibadan, capital of the Wild, Wild West, more formally known as the Western Region of Nigeria. I believe it was the former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, who first created states, who gave it this title. In 1962 there were four regions: the West, the East, the North and the Midwest, this last excised from the West. From 1959 to 1961, I had worked as Hansard Editor to the Western Legislature comprising the House of Assembly and the House of Chiefs. I practically lived in my workplace since I had to cover both Houses which met in relays everyday when the Legislature was in session. Some of the sessions of the House of Assembly lasted till 2 or 4 in the morning and the Hansard, a printed verbatim record of the debates, had to be in each member's pigeonhole by 8 a.m.

It is the toughest job I have ever had but it had the advantage of placing me in the centre of politics. I was there when the Western Region crisis was brewing, a crisis that was to have tremendous repercussions on the entire country. Chief Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the Action Group Party, had opted to leave the region where he had been premier and contest the eve-of-independence federal elections in 1959. He lost and that event sparked off trouble in the West, with his successor, Chief Ladoke Akintola, maintaining the autonomy of his government while the leader of the party insisted on the supremacy of the party. The party became polarised and the

Governor of the Region attempted to resolve the schism by dismissing Akintola as premier on the ground that it appeared to him that Akintola had lost the confidence of the House of Assembly. The Action Group Party replaced him with Alhaji Adegbenro. By then I had transferred to the ministry of information but I was still in touch with politics since part of my duties was to cover proceedings in the Legislature for overseas publicity purposes. So I was in the House on that fateful day, Friday, 25th May, 1962 when hell was let loose.

Akintola was contesting his removal in court on the ground that since no vote had been taken in the House the Governor could not possibly have had evidence that he no longer enjoyed the confidence of the House. A session of the House of Assembly was convened. On the eve of the meeting my direct boss in the ministry, who was much given to eye service, herded the entire staff of the ministry to the Legislature there to paste 10 x 2 inch photographhs of Adegbenro in various poses and regalia on the walls and doors, including the door of the Gents. Because the posters got in each others way and it took the boss several minutes to decide which photograph should go where, they did not finish until 1 a.m. I say "they" because I had left the largely idle group at 7 p.m. to go and attend to my four-month old baby and so was not witness to what happened afterwards. I was told, however, by one of my colleagues that as soon as our boss completed his self-imposed assignment, he went over to Akintola's house where cooking and eating was going on all night, to lament about the way the other party had compelled him to paste up photographs of Adegbenro. When Awolowo was in prison, this selfsame boss instituted a so-called public service television programme in which he vilified Awolowo. When Awolowo came out of prison, members of staff who detested him looked forward to his getting the sack and were flabbergasted when he turned round to vilify Akintola. He kept his job.

To go back to the House of Assembly meeting, the following morning I was sitting in the press gallery when I heard one of the legislators

shout in Yoruba, 'There is fire on the mountain.' That was a signal for mayhem to break loose. A backbencher vaulted over the members in front of him and landed on the floor facing the speaker. He rushed to the podium on which the mace, symbol of authority, was resting and grabbed it. Sitting directly above the Speaker, I could not see what was happening, but an account says that as the member tried to hit the Speaker with the mace, the latter keeping calm and, discreetly retreating, kept saying "no" ..."no..." The member lowered the mace and broke it over the podium instead. Knowing Prince Adeleke Adedoyin, I am inclined to believe this account, but what is without dispute is the fact that the mace was broken and with that the peace of the House. Pandemonium ensued with chairs being used as missiles. The Speaker fled. So did many other members who squeezed between the concrete slats of the louvre-like structure which ventilated the building. Some were too fat and got stuck until their adrenalin finally pushed them through but not before some smart photographer had taken their pictures in that undignified posture. Then the police arrived with a promptness which gave the impression that they had previously been alerted that there would be trouble in the House. Soon teargas filled the chamber. At this point, those of us who had been watching from our safe elevated position in the press gallery, decided it was time to leave.

But, unfortunately for me, my overall boss (not the photograph-pasting boss), had been sitting beside me. He had a lame leg and was not only walking slowly but he also insisted on talking to me as if nothing unusual was happening. I had the urge to rush past him but was restrained by protocol. And that was how the teargas got me. But I was lucky; smarting eyes was all I suffered. Outside I saw the member for Egbado West lying prostrate on the lawn. He had fainted. The police were having a field day flailing at any moving object. I saw Soyege my successor as Hansard Editor, being "disciplined" by no less an officer than an assistant superintendent of police who should have known better. I shouted to the officer to let him know that his victim was not

a legislator but an employee who was on the premises in pursuit of his legitimate duties. Two policemen started towards me determinedly and a voice shouted from the abandoned census office nearby, 'Run, Madam, run, or they will beat you too.' I abandoned Soyege to his fate and ran towards the small bungalow. The door opened and I rushed inside. There I found many refugees, and we stayed there until the storm was over. Three days later, the Federal Government declared a state of emergency in the Western Region. The Legislature was suspended and Dr. Moses Majekodunmi was appointed administrator for six months with Murtala Muhammed as his aide-de-camp.

'What happened to the photographs we pasted?' I asked a colleague a few days later. He answered in Yoruba, 'Aafaa jona, o nbere irugbon', which translated means, 'The imam got burnt to death and you are wondering what happened to his beard.'

'A funny thing happened in Ibadan...' This last incident turned out not to be so funny, after all as we can all testify.

A King and His Wit

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Adelani Ogunrinade

CAST in the aura of majesty, few can understand the African King. The appellation 'traditional ruler' depersonalises the king so that he is cast in the past, as a kind of curator of the traditional museum, a relic of an antique past to be handed a traditional staff of office, a stool instead of a full chair like a professor. Bedecked in beads and in flowing robes, we do not understand the personality behind the throne. Perhaps rightly so, the African king was not just a mere mortal, he was 'ekeji orisa' (Deputy God), 'alase' (authority) 'Oluaye' (ruler of the universe). The trials and tribulations of modern royalty show that they are all too human — they sleep, they breed, they bleed. There are philosopher kings like King Solomon, academic-kings, religious-kings and in Nigeria, doctor-kings, one of whom even took a sabbatical from the throne to go to Saudi-Arabia!

Ten years ago, when the late Olubadan, Oba Asanike ascended the throne as King of Ibadanland, few would have predicted that he would live so long. He looked so frail and walked with difficulty. In the gerontocracy of Ibadan ascendancy, the late Oba had advanced in age before he ascended the throne. But if he was old in calendar years, he was full of wit and wisdom, some of which trickled down to Ibadan residents. Although the veracity of stories emanating from the palace cannot be authenticated, especially when

they were told in beer parlours, stories of late Oba Asanike.

Take for instance, the incident when some thieves were said to have removed some tyres or spare parts from the king's parked fleet of cars. Apprehended by palace guards, the thieves were brought with trepidation before the Olubadan. The guards were surprised when the Olubadan set the thieves free and instead remonstrated the guards for arresting the theives saying in Yoruba 'emi o ran yin ke so moto, iyawo mi mo ni e so' (I didn't send you to guard my vehicles, you should be guarding my wives). One couldn't help but laugh, but if one thinks deeply, the Oba had elevated the dignity of women above the mere material possession of a vehicle!

The late Oba displayed wit and native intelligence. Take the incident when the late Oba was said to have been invited to a cocktail party at which scotch-egg was served. As his deputy picked on scotch-eggs, the late Oba was said to have turned to him remarking *'Adeyemo, akara l'onje. O duro de eko ni?'* (meaning why are you eating akara beans cake alone, why not wait for the accompanying corn pap?) Many will interpret his wit for signs of senility or advanced age but those who knew the late Oba can testify that he was mentally alert up till the very end.

In his time, the late Oba received many eminent visitors to Ibadan. On those occasions, the Olubadan always wore a vacant look when meeting the visitors. It was as if he saw these visitors as necessary intrusion and applied the conventional wisdom that noisemakers are to be ignored. His then deputy, Chief Adeyemo was always on hand to receive visitors. On one such occasion, the then head of state, General Sani Abacha, who was at one time the GOC of the 2nd Mechanised Division, Nigeria Army based in Ibadan, visited the palace. Thinking that the General was one of those fierce-looking and lanky military men the Oba could not hide his surprise at his stature remarking *'Abacha, ase e o jubayi lo, to nda Eko ru!'* (so here you are Gen. Abacha, the mover and shaker of Lagos!) He was never afraid of military men, one of whom dared question the wisdom behind the spate of honorary chieftaincy

titles given by the late King. Said the King in anger "tell him to shut up; he (the governor) is King in his domain, I am also King in my domain!" Chief M. K. O. Abiola was one of the beneficiaries of the King's chieftaincy largesse. He was conferred with the Basorun of Ibadanland title by the late Olubadan.

This was a time when the tide of politics of the time did not favour the Basorun. Many questioned why a non-indigene would be conferred with such a high title. Replied the King, 'Aidalola ni' (We honoured him with the title). But then in an afterthought he seemed to contradict himself when be began to trace the Basorun's ancestry to Ibadan.

If the late Olubadan was revered by non-indigenes it was because he was an authentic hero, a welcome relief from the stern-looking political governors whose deeds in office belied their mien. The Olubadan was natural and believable, whereas most of the political rulers were not. The late Olubadan was also a political activist, especially on the issue of the rotational chairmanship of the then Oyo State Traditional Council of Obas. Along with the Alafin and the Soun, the trio gave the Ooni a fight over the chairmanship. But, I was not too clear whether the aged Oba was used as a political pawn as he sometimes sent conflicting signals, sometimes failing to join his colleagues in court.

Just like King David, the late Oba was also a die-hard romantic. On many palace festive days, it was said that the Oba usually cast his roving eye at the gorgeous ladies and made the occasional feeble pass at ladies. He was no Henry the VIII. He did it more for fun. However, matters went to a head when a group of African-Americans visited the palace. As usual, the late Oba made a pass at one of the beautiful ladies. The lady thinking that the Oba was dead serious, and she not desirous of joining the harem, thought that the Oba's peremptory *'O le lo'* (you won't go) was a detention order, raised an alarm. The joke had gone too far and the Oba realised it. He apologised saying *'mo fi ba o sie ni'* (I am only teasing you!) Oba Asanike could tease, but with 13 wives, he also could teach a few lessons in romance!

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ESSAYS/ARTICLES

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A HILLY AFFAIR

Remi Raji

ONCE upon a popular colonial story about how a notable area in the south-eastern part of Ibadan came to be named by native default. It goes that a new District Officer — Her Majesty's shadow — who had just been posted to the former Western Region decided to go on a familiarisation tour of the capital seat of government. When the white man got to this area, he was particularly shocked by the undulating mounds of dirt on the banks of that riverine surrounding. The D.O. couldn't master or hide his fouled reaction to that despicable eye-sore. He said absent-mindedly in nasal Queen's English: "Gosh, this place is rather too dirty!" And with ignorance playing on his lips, a semi-literate, self appointed interpreter stepped in and blurted out: "*Kere o! Oyinbo so pe lati oni lo, a o ma ibi yi ni Ku-de-ti* (Attention, the white man says that from now on, this place shall be called Kudeti).

Well, in the sense of a colonial naming, Kudeti remains a joke, a fable, some comic imagination of a mischeivous environmentalist. For before the D. O.'s tour Kudeti has always been Kudeti its true original meaning tied to the miraculous power of the river in that area of Ibadan which was acclaimed to cure all diseases from malaria to smallpox some legendary years ago. With such herbal waters around, it was virtually unthinkable for the inhabitants to succumb to the fatal embrace of Death. To them therefore, Kudeti, Death is impossible! Place names, as you see, are irruptions of history, mementoes of memory, the logos of topograhic events, and concrete markers of mythical actions and personae.

If you wonder then about the truth or untruth of either of these toponymic tales you're sure to wonder till tomorrow if I begin to open the chest of the naming and unnaming of Ibadan landmarks. But let me weave a brief yarn about the wondrous hills of the ancient city, and I will be done.

J. P. Clark it was who poetised Ibadan as "running splash of rust" and ... (oh, forget the gold) "flung and scattered among seven hills". Of course, those seven hills are symbolic of the legendary fortress that Ibadan once was during the dozen internecine wars of expansion. The seven hills (Oke) magical in their use as shields and observatories were named after memorable king-warriors, local administrators and events in the land. *Oke Foko, Oke Are, Oke Bola, Oke Ado, Oke Adu, Oke Dada and Oke Mapo* upon which the District Administrator sat imperial ruling the Harlem of Africa. But the colonial presence was also left on the granite earth of these hills for there are other hills, or other edges of the same hill named after the white man.

And it came to pass to that on the crest of one of those hills lived the first groups of missionaires to ever set foot on this ancient city. The valley on the southern lip of this hill was called *Beere* for it really swarmed with people; it was the centre of the land, and it was the biggest hive of the central market beginning right from the tradeyard, around the Bashorun's square, known as *Oja-Iba* (*Oja'ba*). The white missionary seldom visited the valleys except on days sanctified to wrest more souls from Satan's grips, for the Lord. He was the Angel among the heathen, and the heathen revered him for his puzzling knowledge but feared him for his masterful diplomacy of the gun.

In every sense, the missionary was the shepherd, and the hill-crest where he dwelt was officially known as "Shepherds' Hill," or "the Hill of the Shepherds". Again the native interpreter took a sunny look at Saints David and Anne, Saints Louis and Luke, and Saints Peter and Paul on the mount; the white lords threw him a collective smile accepting his supplication to translate the newfound place-name, in the people's interest. So "Shepherds' Hill" became "Oke Shepert" on the interpreter's tongue but practically the people called it "Oke Sepaati"; and transcriptive moments apart, Shepherds' Hill stabilised into what is now known as "Oke Sapati."

Verily, verily the story's boat rolled on. The other christian mission which settled on the western valley across the glancing shoulders of "Shepherds' Hill" soon discovered that the ubiquitous interpreter was waiting with a name wagging in its honour. This particular mission, serene metres away from the banks of the legendary Ogunpa River, was not really a hilly settlement; and probably for that reason the ordinary member of the congregation had the rare advantage of visiting the parish and meeting the padre in person. In the Colonial Authority gazette, the residential site of the mission was known as "the Padre's Quarters" but in the people's imagination, this too must be a holy mount, the fortress of the white god, therefore "the Padre's Hill". Soon, the transliterative tenor wafted across the valleys and that settlement became known as "Oke Padre" or "Oke Paadi", as it is popularly received today.

Now, decades after the white man had completed his civilising operation and retreated, the hills of Ibadan have multiplied beyond finite counting. The Africanist church priest loved the aura of hills, like his departed white angel, and the moslem chaplain, his rival, also desired the magic of playing God's messenger, on constructed mountains. So, holy mounts began to sprout from every savannah space to remind or reassure believers that indeed on this land they could receive such miracles as happened on Mount Sinai or Mount Arafat. Yes, these "celestial" hills are actually built or contrived beside still waters of numerous valleys: *Oke Ife, Oke Anu, Oke Iyanu, Oke Ayo, Oke Iye, Oke Idaunde, Oke Ireti*. Yes, these metaphoric mounts defy numerical ordering. The next hill in Ibadan grows where the native shepherd directs his flock, where the potential charlatan could promise instant healing and milk the flock..

Natural hills, celestial hills; then "makeshift" hills, not-so-holy ghommid-mountains of dirt, gone-yesterday-here-today-and tomorrow craters of environmental neglect, these are the most recent columns of vegetation which have made my land a hilly affair. These are what Niyi

Osundare off-handedly called "Chinyere Hills", an obvious reference to the swampy cones of filth which spotted strategic places at the peak of Col. C. I. Nwosu's government in Oyo state (1993-mid 1996). It goes back a long way, this story of disappearing and resurrecting hills. And that is why you would believe the yarn about the colonial naming of Kudeti more than the mythical story of the riverine wonder in that area of Ibadan.

IBADAN RITUAL PERFORMANCE

Esilokun Kinni-Olusanyin

INDIGENOUS ritual performance in Ibadan is quite a dramatic affair, with vastly contrasting dynamics and nuances of its artistic execution. These two brief excerpts, however, are an example of the Yemoja* river goddess festival and a portion of the Egungun masquerading of ancestral spirits (which combine into the encompassing deity) ceremony. Herein are the aesthetics, the integration of music, dance, visual art. Audience interaction, or appreciation also are reviewed.

Yemoja

Two style-forms of music and dance-art to the same function are exemplified by the annual Yemoja festivals, one in Ibadan and the other in Abeokuta. In Ibadan, a particular lone carving is danced, led by bata drummers and flanked by chanting priests of several deities. In Abeokuta, however, twenty five to thirty five women dance a number of differently posed sculptures, Ere Yemoja (only one of them departing to depict a king).

The sculptures, moreover, absorb all of the music and dance which is transferred in metaphoric relationship to them. Therefore, the carvings are impacted with effect from both the ordinary and the artistic rituals. But what concerns us most is that all the distinct parts become one simultaneously and are 'zoomed in' upon alternately. The sculptures, being danced to music by humans, no longer are static. (People also claim to hear the carvings singing, chanting and see them change facial expression themselves). Above all, everything being joined becomes a perfectly knit, often interchangable whole, even though the ceremonies are presented slightly differently each year.

Egungun

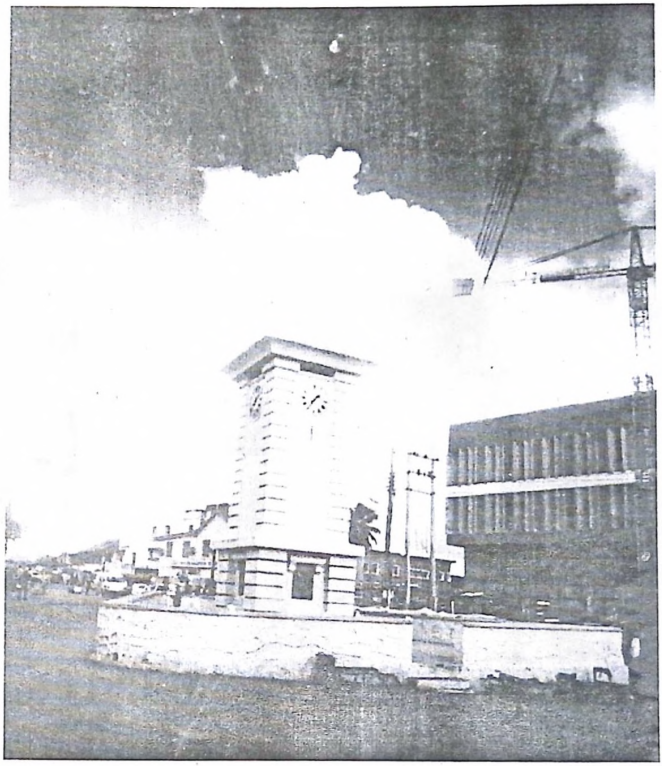
To compare the expression or to juxtapose the form, the Egungun festival features a vigorous, combative type of display exclusive to the area of Ibadan, entitled *Alapansonpa*, which may be exhibted as the ultimate event on the final day of the public rite. Although the masquerader is the featured character, his large entourage of fighting 'supporters', the police who also fight the masking ensemble, drummers and audience also participate in what the writer would describe as an organised riot.

The imminent arrival of *Alapansonpa* is announced on a talking gong long before he appears at the site of climax. The audience advisedly moves to a position where it safely will be excluded from the dynamic action. Suddenly, drummers dash in to the arena, followed by a single masquerader (of the shroud type which covers the face) which stops at the entrances to greet officials. Immediately behind the masquerader charge a large band of shouting men, who brandish whips and sticks, spiritedly accompanied by the police. The puissant *Alapansonpa* is able to restrain his crowd merely by spreading out its arms-until some members flare out beyond the armspan. The conflict is amply sustained by the active resistance of the troupe to everything that the masquerader attempts to do. This enables the three combative parties to interact thoroughly in that there are at least two bodies contending at any given moment, until and after the realisation of a virile ritual dance. Therein, the drummers form themselves into a circle facing outwards, and somewhat distant from the entourage who now passionately flog one another to music. The masquerader, who had retired briefly to execute formalities in private, reappears, whereupon the band then struggles to prevent him from discharging. *Alapansonpa* tussles his way through until he ultimately reaches his exit-the act which then is performed in a characteristic ceremoniously exuberant and competitive manner.

The *Alapansonpa* presents a striking example of both physical and cultural interaction by ritual challenge through combat, executed through

dance, music, non-choreographed skirmish, and costuming (masquerader, policemen, entourage). The audience is packed together around the fringes and mostly on top of walls and second stories, not to mention the officials who, originally seated comfortably, are often forced to veer back to escape the danger of flying missiles and misdirected weapons. The writer can hardly conceive of a more lusty interplay between performers, or of a more interested and excited audience than at the event so described. As the *Alapansonpa* rushes out of the arena, the escort and officials follow him back to the shrine to complete formalities. Everyone along the way is compelled either to completely avoid the diaply, or preferably to join in the fray.

As Ibadan was founded as a war town, the *Alapansonpa* representation is reflective of its history (it was captured and brought to Ibadan). The masquarade apparently is an expiratory ritual. It obviously is the most provocative of the Egungun exhibits, and therefore a befitting climax to the elaborate festival (the climax being dramatically timed throughout the days' presentations, as well as the course of the selected ceremony: the long pause before entry, the entry itself, show and exit).




OKE BADAN

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PROSE

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The Eighth Hill

OMOWUNMI SEGUN

A thin veil of mist moved stealthily into the wilderness of rusty roof tops around Oja'ba, Beere and Oje, lingering there for a while before spreading its white fluff towards the city centre where it cast a cloak around Cocoa House. The haze enshrouded this eighth hill and then descended to the streams, which in the rains rose with rage and swept into the streets, flushing out the rubbish, the shacks, the stalls...

But the harmattan was not as harsh. True, it was chilly and it blurred the cityscape, but not my memories. Even after ten years of absence, I had a feeling of nostalgia for the life I had left behind and wishful longing for my family, but that was not why I had returned. The truth was that I had come back to make a complete break with the past. I would have done so before now, but the manner in which I departed made things a little awkward.

Years before, I had met a young woman whose name I did not even know. She weighed on my mind to the extent that I had a feeling we would meet again. Today. I had a hunch she was close by and if I did not want to miss her, I should stop wandering about the city and join the human traffic hurrying along dust-filled roads-coated in thin layers of bitumen — and head back to my present abode.

I had no doubt that she would locate me, but I wondered if she could recognise me. Probably not. Still, I had taken the precaution of disguising myself a little. While I waited patiently for her in the wet grass, under a cashew tree, I shut my eyes and began to visualise her descending the steep slope from Mokola, dressed in a yellow ochre *iro* and *buba* which blended with the dusty surroundings. She walked with a slight limp in her left leg and trod

carefully along the treacherous rubble-part in her flat brown sandals. She had soft black skin which reminded me of the smooth shiny surface of amala. Her oval face had faint scars and when she smiled, she displayed her dimples, and a set of unblemished teeth that contrasted sharply with her deep red gums. She was a woman of about thirty-two.

I became terribly restive waiting for her and kept staring in the direction of the gate. Was I mistaken? I decided to take a walk around. There was a trail of termites, moving across my path. They were a menace, eating up all the wood in the area. The pest-control department, it appeared, did not seem to mind them as much as I did. I was distracted for a moment and stumbled over a slab as I tried to avoid the termites. It was precisely at that point that she appeared, exactly as I had imagined her in yellow ochre *aso oke*. She hesitated, looking round for someone to ask for directions. The gateman, I realised, had wandered off and so had the others who were supposed to be keeping an eye on things. I didn't blame them; life could be deadly dull around here. Her eyes roved about until they came to rest on me. Instinctively, she started walking towards me.

"Good morning, sir," She said to me in a soft voice. I replied her greeting, starring into her eyes. I watched her lips move as she spoke. She was looking for me, she said. I could not help but smile inwardly.

"Are you in any way related to this man?" I asked.

My question seemed to embarrass her for she turned her face away.

"No", she replied, a little hesitant, "but there was... is a relationship..." Her voice failed as tears took over.

"You must be tired. Would you like to sit down on that bench over there?" I asked her. She nodded and I led her to the bench, under the eaves of an abandoned tool shed. I sat with her keeping a respectabale distance between us. We sat deep in thought, both of us still tortured by memories of the past.

Her head was slightly bowed and I noticed she had a little book clasped between her palms. I watched her through the corner of my eyes, only shifting my gaze whenever she lifted her head and looked my way.

"I don't mean to be rude", She said, "but there's something about you that reminds me of..."

"Oh!" I said, praying that she would not stumble onto the truth.

"It's a long story", she said, mistaking my consternation for surprise. "It's something that happened ten years ago, but it is still so vivid in my mind", she said as her eyes grew distant as if reliving the experience.

"Tell me", I urged her, but she needed no prompting.

"It all started one beautiful morning," she said with a sigh, as she looked up into the woolly sky. "It had rained at night and everywhere was fresh with the scent of new leaves. The sun was up and the sky was a clear blue that made you want to reach up to it. I was radiant with happiness because I had just got a letter of admission into the University of Ibadan to study Economics. My father had already left for work and my mother was away on a business trip when the letter arrived. I had no one to share the news with, so I decided, on the spur of the moment, to go and meet my father in his office to tell him the good news. I wore a green up-and-down with a large floral design and put on the matching green beads I inherited from my grandmother. It was the only thing she left me.. It got lost..." she said, feeling around her neck for the missing beads. "Anyway", She continued, "I remember feeling elated as I walked along Lebanon Street, forcing my way through the confusion of cars, blaring horns, shoppers, traders, wares, until I reached the imposing entrance of Cocoa House. It was with a feeling of pride that I rode up in the lift to the insurance office on one of the top floors where my father worked. He was not in when I got there. I was told he had just gone down to the fourth floor to transact some official business and would be back soon. While I waited in the reception room for his return, I began a survey of the city from one of the windows. I was struck by how

everything had grown small in size, the cars looked like toy cars, the teeming crowds on the streets had lost their individuality and seemed to crawl about like tiny ants. The sounds below had become muffled. It was almost like being ensconced in space, shielded from mundane activities. I felt like a giant up there, with the entire city of Ibadan at my feet", she said, and paused.

"So", she continued, "there I was trying hard to locate landmarks between the undulating terrain and corrugated iron roofs when I heard a loud noise like something had rammed into the building. In a split second, there was pandemonium. It was like a hurricane had swept through the room overturning the tables, chairs and cabinets. The only entrance to the office was jammed with people. My father had not returned. I panicked and joined in the stampede, not really knowing what was happening. In the rush I was knocked down and when I tried to lift myself, I found that I was in a lot of pain. I could only crawl along the corridor. The echoes of voices and rushing feet receded. There was no one to help me. I kept shouting for help until I was exhausted. I lay down to rest for a while, but the smell of burning wires drove home the truth.

The building was on fire!

At first I refused to believe it. I was all alone up, up there. What had seemed so thrilling now frightened me. I had visions of the building collapsing, crushing me to death. I still held onto my admission letter. Why couldn't I have waited for my father to return from work? Why had I been so impulsive? I blamed myself. I became so distraught that I started screaming and crying, afraid that I was going to die. Why whould I die so young? I kept asking God. I think I wanted my future so badly that I defied the pain in my legs and went on crawling until I reached the staircase. My legs were swollen and each time I attempted to stand up, I fell back. In the end, I used my hands as leverage and lowered myself from step to step. It was slow, but I kept telling myself that I would make it. I don't know what floor I got to when I encountered the smoke-filled corridors. There were sparks flying in all

directions and the building seemed to heave. The heat had intensified, making me sweat profusely. It became so unbearable. I had to leave the corridors and seek refuge in one of the offices, but the fire was spreading fast with thick smoke emerging from the lower floors. My eyes were smarting and I started coughing. I tried to move towards a window to get some air into my lungs, but by then I was very weak and was gasping for breath. I don't know if it was the wheezing and coughing that saved me, but I saw someone emerge through the smoke. I have only a vague recollection of the man's face. By then I was slipping in and out of consciousness, but I knew I was being carried. That was just before I finally blacked out. When I came round I was in hospital where I spent the next six months recovering from the burns and injuries I had sustained. "Look," she said, showing me some scars on her left arm, concealed under the sleeve of her *buba*.

"Ah", I interjected, "you were certainly lucky to have been rescued. Did you ever get a chance to meet the man who saved you from the fire?"

"No", she said, getting up abruptly leaving behind her little book which I discovered was a prayer book. I picked it up and opened the first page. Her name was inscribed on it. Ifepade. I looked up to see her bent over my grave, caressing the tombstone. She knelt down and began to remove the weeds that had grown wild across the slab. As I watched her, I knew then she had been worth the sacrifice. I was happy she had survived the fire. I wasn't so lucky, the fire had ravaged the better part of my body. If I had lived I would have had no future. I was free at last, knowing that through her I was alive. The mist in my mind lifted and was replaced with a feeling of warmth. There was no reason for me to linger. When she came back for her little prayer book she would find that I had returned the green beads.

(This story is dedicated to the memory of Segun Ogunjimi's father — one of the firefighters who died in the Cocoa House fire in January 1985. The characters portrayed in this story are fictitious.)

At the Bottom of Premier Hill

ROSALIE-ANN MODDER

At the bottom of Premier Hill, at the junction with Parliament road, is a lake. Or was a lake. Once, you could see its waters. Shimmering with the sun's reflections. Now it is rich and green. Shrouded completely in water plants. A thick green carpet, verdant and lush in so much water. There is every shade of green. Ice greens and yellow greens surrounded by the dark greens and blue green of the forest.

They let some of the water flow under the road into a small brown stream. The mud churned up by the children bathing and splashing and fishing in it. Their glistening naked bodies blending with the coffee brown of the water and the cemented embankment which stops the hill from sliding into the stream.

Further along the road is a fish shop selling fresh fish and frozen fish and scaly fish and smooth shiny fish and on Wednesday, shrimps from Lagos. Under the bamboo tree are children selling oranges. Peeled to the white pith. Five or six tied up in plastic bags. Their knives sharpened, to slice open the oranges juicily. Sweet oranges to suck out the tremendous heat.

At the top of Premier Hill is the hotel. The archway at the entrance says: Welcome from the Hospitality King. King! Why king! A hotel is the embodiment of womanhood. The healing, creating, nurturing blessings of a woman. There is a stupendous view from up here. Thousands of brown houses jostling for space and a breeze soothing away the sun. There are trees on this part of the hill. Dark green trees where the bats live. Green trees unprotected from machetes and cutlasses when the town runs out of firewood and cooking gas.

Halfway up Premier Hill is another road. Another tarred grey road winding up the red rock of this face. Hot tar and pebbles in the heat of the afternoon sun. The potholes have red earth in their bellies, like the raw reds of the rock cliff on the side of the road. Hot red rock with grass burnt silvery brown in the dry season. A few stubborn trees with sparse green, rebellious against the burning sun. At the edge of this road where the hot tar crumbles into the livid rock, is a small dead baby.

A baby boy in track-suit bottoms and a snug T-shirt with sleeves down to the tiny wrists. A baby boy lying face down at the edge of the road, his baby head cradled in the crook of his little arm. One small leg drawn up as a child asleep in its crib. A baby boy on the hot tar, small and dead.

When he was freshly dead, his little clothes were brightly coloured. A small boy impatient with sleeves and necks of adult things. How recently had he left the safety of his mother's back? Was he just learning to take a few steps away from his mother, rushing back quickly, smiling and dimpled at his triumph of discovery of his own independence. Did his proud mother dress him so lovingly that morning; or was it his big brother, eager to show off his baby brother to his playmates? Did his big sister bathe him from a bucket of fetched water? A baby boy scrubbed clean with love and soap on a rough sponge.

Children in purple and white uniforms on their way to school trudge past him. Men and women toiling up the hill ignore him. Hungry dogs scavenging in the hot sun see no nourishment in him. Cars after a sidelong glance speed by. People stifling their grief and their horror. Afraid to speak. Afraid of blame. A small boy in baby clothes. A ritual. A murder. A sacrifice. Whose sacrifice is it? Is his mother afraid to wail for her baby? Has his sister thrown away the rough sponge? Does his brother avoid the eyes of his playmates?

He is decaying now. It is months since his death was so fresh and his clothes were so brightly coloured. Rot and putrefaction replaced by dust

and ash and old rags. Where the hot tar crumbles into the red earth.

They say his eyes were gouged out. How can they tell? Did those trusting, bewildered baby eyes allow someone else to see? Did his sacrifice appease the gods and shower good on those who killed him? Has his mother's grief brought her joy? Has his brother's shame brought him pride?

At night the bottom of Premier Hill is cold and eerie dark. The air made cold by the water hidden under the grey green and black green, and silvery green if there is a moon. At night it is alive with whispers and rustlings and scurryings in the eerie dark. The black rock wide awake and watchful. The awesome dark allowing a narrow beam from the nervous headlights of a car. The chrome and steel and gadgets no protection against the power of the night.

At the top of Premier Hill the Hospitality King is lit up like a carousel. Glittering baubles against the black velvet of the night. Its archway firmly shuttered against the whispers and rustlings and scurryings. Warm and safe and nurturing. The embodiment of motherhood.

Halfway up Premier Hill, on a night such as this, a small bewildered baby, discarded where the cold tar crumbles into the watching rock, lay his head on his little hand and sobbed himself to death.

What Ibadan Said

TAIWO OLORUNTOBA-OJU

Towards noon, Ibadan approached their speeding wagon. Nothing in the horizon appeared to presage what the ancient city might have in store. Ilorin was dead when they left its aegis about two chimes ago, dead quiet, that is. Nor was there occasion during the tar run to hint at any revelation beyond workaday expectation. Branches and leaves bore the tortured buffeting of the wind with calm equanimity, swaying submissively in directions dictated by the tyrannous motions, waving stately compliments to the fatalist. It had been ordained; it had been ordained... Was the sodden sap in their veins any different from the red stream in many other veins that one knew. He just wondered, he that is just he.

The transaction at the police toll-collection points, otherwise check-points, took place without a word. Commercial drivers had long since submitted to the criminal routine, slackening speed at these points only long enough to allow the short illicit exchange. A note glides into the cupped, crooked palm of the gun-totting soldier on self-aggrandising shift, sometimes self-appointed. Once upon a time, some two dictatorships ago, he was more circumspect; before cupping his palm, his scanning orbits would quickly ransack the inside of the vehicle for signs of counter officialdom. Not anymore. They are past caring now, or curing.

In the wagon itself, the cast was somewhat incongruous. All perfect strangers, and none hazarding the additional burden of a new friendship. What were they all about on this 11th day of a fateful month, on this eve of history. From the corner of the pupil you spied the knitted brow of a huge brew-bellied man cuddling a suitcase he had dragged through many

an inclement climate. It was difficult from his countenance whether his contemplation was of profit or loss. What mathematical jugglery figured under those brow furrows, only himself could tell. The coast to coast driver himself was *omolangidi* but for the occasional jerk of his oblongish dome, this motion too, somewhat robotic. An ancient crisscross on both cheeks proclaims 'Langidi shon of the ancient city's shoil', but that was all. Nothing else to reveal what dubious thoughts might at the moment colonise his oblongish dome. Dead pan and perhaps deadly. Alligator friendly, you could almost wager. Who knows what grouse he might habour against his lot, and against those passengers of his, he might perceive as having contrived better lots for themselves. Only a kola debris betrayed aspects of his scant humanity sometime earlier on. Langidi had chewed the kola silently, privately relishing its semi-bitterness; or perhaps it was a mere cohre, a wedge to keep his pupils apart and the wagon on tar - His concern for the latter was certainly elephantine, visibly superfluous. Two wrapped amulets hung from the rear reflector, complementing, in unabashed syncretism you might notice, a passionate prayer in Arabic script inscribed on the side panels and also framed in small cards hung around the glove compartment. This 'shon' would stay perpetually on the 'shoil' if he could contrive it. The kola episode was perhaps a matter of chewy indulgence then; too late Langidi discovered kola debris was not quite welcome in the trachea. Even your windpipe would tolerate that much assault and not more.

Kwargh Kwargh Kwargh ... Hia. Hua.

Followed by sympathetic mumbles, empathic extracts from an aged lady sitting directly at Landigi's scruffy rear. Whatever transit compulsion dragged her on to the roughness of the roads in this her twilight. Her silence hitherto may well be of her siblings when they were siblings and she invested a lifetime of youth, love and care. And now... another squandered generation? A long deep sigh confessed decades of pathos. Not another 'Orukorere' and silent curses, hopefully.

Kwargh Kwargh Kwargh ... Hia. Hua.

Sympathetic mumbles followed from the aged lady still, an inbuilt mechanism surely, incongruous but laborious to erase, and unnecessary now, for her this is late twilight.

Hija, hija ... hua, and out, just to be sure Langidi followed it up with a scrapping hu hu huua tua.

Shit!

The wind had reversed the intended direction of Langidi's expectoration. Shi-it!

Skin-cut, the new afro bombo. Probably going back to school. Perhaps Langidi's spittle all over his face is an initial instalment of lady nemesis's; an earlier glow on his face in these dark times did bespeak a successful swindle of hapless parents.

Shi-iit!

A moment of apprehension, lest skin-cut expands his brawling vocabulary enough to impress Langidi into a brawl. But he withdraws shortly into a long scowl, end of aluta even before Langidi had noticed it begun.

Hija, hiya, hia ....hua... hu hu hu hia!

Debris finally dislodged. It does take a struggle.

Soon they were at Ojoo in Ibadan and gliding on the last track of tar en route to the old capital through Ibadan. Throughout Ibadan, the ancient city's fabled mass streamed endlessly, aim and direction perennially suspect. Was Ibadan not going to say anything then. Where were we all heading for then. What was the augury...Ibadan paid no attention to the enquiry.

It ruptured history. Time was when Ibadan knew answers enough to distinguish folly from wisdom, *Ibadan mesiogo*. And was not lacking in valour; the scions of Oluyole were begotten of the warrior stock, sinews of iron smelting at the forge of *Ogun* sometime after *Obatala's* claymanship. The sacred duty of their forebears. Ibadan's *raison d'etre*, was to defend and expand the frontiers of the race. A founded fortress near where originally only the

savannah stood, *eba odan*, Ibadan germinated from a race's instinct for survival and self determination, its proximal seven hills correspondingly wrapped industry and bravado into their descents.

And Ibadan lived up to it, answered its primordial calling up to the end of ancient time. Did Osun not run crimson. Did the river not turn waterloo to the invading *Fulbe* when Ibadan forces halted their advance at Osogbo. And the Quran remained dry when remnants of this aggression returned it to the turban, falling far short of a boasted dip into the huge sea after they might have overrun the race of, to them, infidels. That was Ibadan.

Today, these invaders being back on this eve of history, their progeny re-enacting the centuries, what would Ibadan say. Are these wobbly roofings that now dot the landscape worthy of the city's fierce, proud antecedents. He just wondered, and wondered if the other occupants of the wagon were also wondering.

Now it was Lunacy itself suddenly descended, darted unwarning across the tar, unheeding. The wagon reared, screeched its sudden rage, skidded... but it was not the day of the bloodstream. Behind them, the lunatic heap flopped on the kerb, watching the disappearing rear of the near agent of his dispatch, weeping gratitude, not quite a moron, to his deity.

A few somnolent nods sped them to the precincts of the old capital. Did he miss anything during the snooze. Did the tar spring surprises. What would he report to anxious comrades of this *Lethean* stretch of the quest. I told you to keep watch, I told you to keep watch; the luring claims of the soporificist would only miss you the greater call. On this eve of the wedding you need your lamp oiled and burning, foolish unvirgin. He shook his head violently, to expel the somnolence.

Langidi pulled up sharply at Berger stop on the outskirts of Lagos. Perhaps the aged lady had attained disembarkation, or the man with the weather case ... but neither stirred. Langidi reviewed his silence. Na here we stop.

It fell in place; the voice gravel shredded through the corn grater, was worth any effort at concealment. But the here-we-stop illogic overshadowed this revelation, begged intelligibility. The final toll point and the voyagers' respective destinations were still a distant attaiment. Who wanted to stop at...

Shiit!

They all looked in the direction of the skin-cut's new apprehension. Langidi's madness appeared to have spread and acquired respectability. Other vehicles were stopping and passengers disembarking. Langidi must be granted the faculty of sound logic after all. But didn't he know all this while that Lagos had barred its gate literally to the invaders. Langidi knew; only that his frail morality, submerged under the stream of lucre consciousness, did not permit a warning to the unsuspecting wayfarer trapped in his wagon. Supplanting this latter charge however was the vindication that all citizens had been implored by agents of the popular will to remember this day of June to keep it sanctified, a day to shed the yoke of many decades. They had also warned, these agents of democracy had, that those who ventured against the stay-at-home order were investing in risk itself.

All doubts clear, Langidi set to return to Ibadan, his familial *'shoil'*. Weather Case contemplated the profit or loss of a similar retreat. Langidi revved his impatience.

How come Ibadan had said nothing.

They disembarked, or would the driver venture a little further. Langidi's scowl was volumes of primordial cant, and presently his grating articulation of the lily-livered polemic consumed the air.

Emi ko!

The one who does not venture into the arena of war does not sustain arrow wounds...

I can't come and die, *so gbo*...

He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day...

Mo n lo ntemi niyen...

The weakling it is who eventually stands on the rubble of the valiant's house to narrate the demise of the valiant...

What's my own with aluta...

The valiant whose head is used to crack the coconut pod will not partake of the bounty...

What has been ordained, it has been ordained...

Langidi revs his somber retreat, content, like his brother rogues and collaborators, to blame evil and their own moral debility on the machination of powers purportedly beyond interrogation. Weather Case had not disembarked. Forever both then. *Gbere.*

Was Langidi's cant also Ibadan's loud silence then. Was that what Ibadan was also saying so jeeringly when their wagon glided with impunity along its hushed tar a while ago. Or was it the ram rearing... He just wondered. He would meet Fatoti tomorrow.

Ahead, the great trek stared them full in the foot. The toll gate was not within the reach of unaccustomed soles. That direction was, in any case, foreclosed by a great furnace of the people's rage, fuelled by giant rubber tyres and barring automobile progression. Fierce looking youths fanned the flames of aluta right on the expressway. Even on foot you could be mistaken for a foe and chucked into the inferno. You had to make a detour through Ikeja on the right to get anywhere. Destination for him was Festac Town in Lagos, by foot several cripplometers away.

He mingled with the great mass, regretful for this huge non-channelisation, this potential for total liberation untapped. What a great aimless motion! Ransacking models of the great trek from Moses to Mao, he found only impure analogy. Men sported sinews then, and the gourd still frothed forth the rage of the palm, the sublime passion of the god. Direction was not wanting, nor purpose, thinking ideology, nor cudgels to protect their dignity – rebuffing an ignominous living. But here...

Molten mass metamorphorsed
Congealed ... Rooted
Sitting ... Still
Senseless!

Where did he get that from...

Perhaps this milling mass is not still right now, but it appears aimless and senseless still...

His host tended his sore feet. No, not all the way down, he assuaged his host's incredulity, but enough of the way to ravish our scandalous tenderness. Some of the way he had actually ridden with the rats and the lizards darting into haven holes in between blazing aluta watches on the streets, and inching by the bit towards destination. By evening some of the youths tending the fires were also tending to perpetually flattened paunches and would allow passage for a morsel of porridge. You do need the heap on the inside to haul the heap on the outside. This anomaly, this leaky passage, of course bespeaks a grievous asbsence of concrete, pervasive organisation, of enduring direction amongst the agents of democracy. This fiery civil observance is only sporadic skirmish, really, but a virtuous commencement, at least.

At sunrise the following day he set out again, against his host's entreaties. They said three days for the sit-at-home observance, his host was insisting. That was long enough to die and rise or vice-versa, he mused. Loudly: I know.

His innermost contemplation was of the comrades back home. He must immediately report Ibadan and Lagos to the anxious comrades at Ilorin. He could ride back to Berger on the back of yesterday's encounter. Langidi or his numerous cousins would be on hand there for the retreat towards the mute hinterland. Nothing could be easier. He bid his host adieu.

Abortion threatened twice within a short distance. The streets were still burning with aluta. After some two chimes they arrived at Surulere, but a little beyond the stadium, still within the bowels of Lagos, the new wagon finally capitulated, disgorged its multiple fetuses prematurely, turned a smoky rear and fled. He pursued advance, riding with one or two other desperadoes on the flaming, deserted streets up again to Berger, investing just another couple of chimes or so. Chauffeur agents of the retreat were truly on the shuttle at Berger. Within minutes of arriving there he was in yet another wagon and they were speeding back towards Ibadan and the hinterland.

The toll gate at Ibadan confirmed the casual observation as they commuted down, that traffic from thence was sparse, thinning out completely after Shagamu junction, the last automobile feeder point of the Lagos-Ibadan track. The toll gate area was ghostly, upturned market stalls and smashed toll windows proclaiming a hasty absence. In a moment the wagon and its commuters stood before a huge fire and a company of cudgel-wielding youths.

Get down!

They obeyed their impertinence.

How did you get here. Did they not say Lagos was burning.

So Ibadan had now found its voice, prompted no doubt by drum telegraph bearing messages of the Lagos version of the civil aluta. And fierce with the guilt of yesterday's dereliction. How long this new found resistance would go on for, only the years could tell.

You have to go back! You can't go through Ibadan, not even if we allowed you to go past this point.

So, Ibadan was yesterday's flash of pithy consciousness, the ran rearing... rearing...only the garner momentum.

Entreaties yielded no dividend. Would he be able to get back to the comrades at Ilorin today afterall. A vintage point some distance away revealed a fairly organised command. Three youths round a smaller fire, roasting, from the distance, a couple of tubers. No flattened paunches to taunt with a

morsel of porridge here. The voyagers retreated, resigned themselves to keeping this aluta watch company. The driver knocked off the weary workhorse...He that is just he just mused.

And the word was one, and then it grew, then it spread, then it metamorphorsed. At last it was a chameleon and bore the colour of fire, same as the colour of blood, and the speaker knew not the word anymore. This now is Ibadan, bearing the plume its ancient glory.

A chime later the petering flames held out a promising glow. The command near the small fire, unmoved hitherto, now beckoned to one of the youths manning the big fires. Shortly the youth was before the voyagers. The transaction was brief, catapulated them within minutes into freedom, headed them swiftly into the city. But not far, alas. At Olorunsogo even this new coast to coast man had to admit defeat. The youths they just left were indeed virtuous honest. Ahead a thronging mass has blotted out a vast patch of the tar, completely consuming the passage; you just can't get through Ibadan. The driver pulled up on to a side path, following the lead of a few other coast to coast desperadoes. The voyagers patted his bravery, disembarked.

What next, he wondered. The university, for him the nearest possible oasis, was within distance walking. Will these frail feet survive any such renewed assault. He thought of Adelu, the man at the university he called History. For a good chunk of the century Adelu had been a venerable member of the monumental house of aesthetics within the citadel, witness to the goings and comings of its dead and living legends, himself now of the latter stock. He thought of other folks in the citadel, and of the petering flame of idealism and excellence. Was there any word from the walled citadel on the wailing issues of the moment; any concerted intervention; any noises beyond mundane gnawings of the gullet. He just wondered.

Just then Fatoti's voice floated the air waves.

N' maa d'Oyo se!

Fatoti's interlocutor was dark and frail by astounding contrast. Fatoti stood fair, tall, broad, thickset, sinews rippling through white translucent *buba* and *sooro*. But would even a bull not acknowledge limitation within a concrete enclosure. Fatoti's white car sat trapped in a row of several others apparently now resigned to a long period of siege on the passage. The sea of humanity drowning either approach of the expressway for as far as you could see looked well braced for a perpetual blockade. What then was the source of Fatoti's boast. Presently it clicked, the equivocation of the fiend. Fatoti did not set a time to his boasted accomplishment. He moved close to Fatoti's car.

I heard what you said; you think you can really make it to Oyo today.

Fatoti caught the stressed sneer.

Yes, today. You want a bet?

A moment of contemplation.

I'll opt for a ride, please, if you don't mind.

Fatoti scrutinised the appellant long and thorough.

Well, I don't know you, but...why not.

He understood the sub-text, hidden but enhanced by a shoulder shudder, Fatoti's cynical kinesis.

Yes why not indeed; we could then sink together, or swim. It does help to share the pain, does it not.

Fatoti smiled concedingly at this depth and rapidity of understanding.

Half a chime on the same spot had him that is just him wondering perhaps the bet was better afterall, but option had terminated just as long. He had gotten out of the car shortly after securing the seat, after establishing passing dominion over a corner of the cruiser for the duration of the ...potential ... trip. Interlocutor was thoroughly taciturn, just the sort to service a Fatoti's loud loquaciousness. Fatoti's ludicrous boast had had the benefit of a thousand reiterations within that short spat of time. Surely, optimism and courage are first friends in any striving, pessimism and timidity

the last ... but where did foolhardiness stand in the equation.

He surveyed the location. Two urchins stood a short distance away, randomly dotting the throng watching the entire spectacle of the blocked expressway from safety margins. Without a word he walked in their direction.

Where are you going Mr. Man. I will leave you behind, you know.

He glanced back, then looked at the motionless queue and the unmoved, unmoving, stream of humanity occupying their path. Smiled. Fatoti was just as incorrigible as his threat, a lingering juvenilia embellishing an otherwise sullen middleagehood, perhaps.

Koseese, the urchins replied. *Koda, koseese.*

This is the realm of the insurmountable, the infeasible, just impossible and nothing more, the arena of futility. No wayfarer had made it past that throng blocking the expressway since daylight.

He went back into the car. *Will he ever get there...will he ever make it... will he ever hear the sound...*

Fatoti was still reiterating his groundless boast, rephrased in emphatic lexis: *Ani ma a d'Oyo*, he reassured his trapped interlocutor for the umpteenth time.

Well, let Fatoti revel in nothingness.

He sunk into a not so cushioned despair in his domain on the rear seat of the wag. Moving momentarily beyond the siege now, receding into solitary contemplation of the moment, and interrogating denouement. How would all this end. Surely it's about time the harrased citizenry seized this initiative, albeit primed by a ragtag, loosely coordinated, nevertheless concerned, enthusiastic and profoundly patriotic vanguard bearing the burden of centuries of wastage, and now approaching some reckoning in the nation's grope towards political emancipation. They worked a miracle, these campaigners for democracy, moving the rock-still masses into some motion against the nation's dealers, against the revocation of their toil and dignity by a gun-totting happy-go-lucky soldiery, icon of the buffoonery that has characterised

politics and statesmanship since shortly past "independence". But whither from here, beyond this sporadic expression of bitterness.

You know these boys...? Fatoti was tapping his shoulder.

The urchins were at the window, beckoning. He stepped out and played audience to their proposition.

Soon they were uncoupling bumper chains, left a hole in the long-stationed wagon queue. The other drivers sneered at the folly of their presumptions, plugged the hole in malevolent contemplation of their moment of repentance (which should be soon enough), savoured their rejected re-entry into the queue at that moment. The drivers laughed again at their folly, then lapsed back into the endless watch.

The adventure of Fatoti and co lasted several chimes in the ancient city's interior. How those labyrinthine pathways stuck in the memory of the urchins remains mysterious. The urchins schooled the desperadoes in vain as they went, continually scolding their growing skepticism; *E mo worry* se; their interlarded idiom only inspiring greater apprehension. After a chime and half of seemingly directionless itinerary through unsketched pathways, the car climbed on to the first patch of tar since leaving the blocked expressway. Interlocutor suppressed a sigh, but Fatoti's was the eagle mind's.

We'll now start encounting the fires again.

They pulled on to a kerb under the tutelage of the urchins, plucked fronds from low-lying palms, icon of solidarity with the struggle. Next their shirts were aluta scarfs. As they neared a group of fiery youths the kids stuck precocious heads out of the car windows on either side, Lilliputian fists punching holes in the horizon, complement to a hoarsely sing song, a chorused denunciation of the dictatorship against which the civil observance was being held, a simultaneous call for the enthronement of the deprived and incarcerated civil leader. The voyagers followed with their own fists and croaks. The youths at the fires acknowledged solidarity. The fires parted. Dusk approached as the voyagers flew this hurdle.

The next aluta watch was unmoved by their antics; the fires blazed, unyielding. The command rebuked the urchins, but they had their story ready, utilising the flaw in a hazy line of command. The voyagers were men of the vanguard from Lagos on supervisory mission, the urchins insisted. Countering was equally swift: was there anything about supervision. All we heard was: no passage to anybody. And in any case, how do we know you people are genuine.

What! You want to say you have not seen before on television. We even sent videos to our people in Ibadan.

Fatoti!

The commander's read-write head creaked as it scanned the images sector; his followers waited on his judgement; dare he admit ignorance. For his localised control drew authority from a hoax affiliation to central aluta command in Lagos. Again the fires parted. Fatoti guffawed in celebration of the victory. Savour this, Fatoti, savour this one.

They are still within earshot, Interlocutor pleaded.

Fatoti's visage stuck to the rear-looker as they fled the narrow passage. Interlocutor smiled a coy knowingness and Fatoti perceived his comprehension.

Did you see that piece of carving, then.

Interlocutor chuckled.

I caught you looking at her. I saw you corner her with those eyes, and I thought I saw a glint of licentiousness in them. Can you imagine – this to the general audience in the car – managing to admire a girl in this heat.

The next chuckle was Fatoti's.

Don't mind me; you know, I take after my son... But, in an aluta train, goodness!

Interlocutor looked momentarily lost; Fatoti led him by the hand:

A carving like that has only one destiny, I tell you. I took one look at that figure among that pack and said, Waow, what a waste; such sumptuous

succulence ... But perhaps those stone-visaged guys she's with balance up the deficit later.

Interlocutor concurred. The pedal bore the brunt of Fatoti's spiteful contemplation of this possibility; the wagon surged forward as he consigned the lustful flash into the pan of regrets. Soon they got to Ojoo. Yes they got to Ojoo.

Of all periods Ojoo the gateway to the hinterland was the fullest stop. He that is he remembered their untroubled entry at this point yesterday, with Langidi, Weather Case, Skin-Cut, Lady Twilight and the rest. But between yesterday, and now, a giant blockade had sprouted from the latent energy of the mass and occupied the previous day's emptiness. This was the frontier; this the last blockade, Oyo in the hinterland was within the distance, some thirty to forty minutes of untroubled throttling. So near, yet Fatoti's boast was looking now more sullen than when they were chained several chimes ago in an unmoving automobile trail. Instinctively they wound up the car's windows, turned the wag into a fortress. Ojoo blockade was not manned by youths but by the entire people, a multitude, the heftiest of their men being quite visible in the mob.

Amazement sketched patterns on simultaneously reproachful visages. The mob surged round the miracle wagon. How did it get here, past all the fires between the toll gate and this frontier. Soon, amazement gave way to anger. No more were these voyages the miracle survivors of a holocaust but symbol of the people's thwarted resolve. Where have these dogs cut loose and where are chains round their necks. A huge fist impressed its fury on the panel; Fatoti would keep the dent as souvenir of this close encounter, if ...

As the mob closed in on them they all squirmed, holed up, rat in the wag, the fortress now a prison. He that is just he saw the noose; a flash, but quite definite.

Bring the remaining petrol!

His immediate thought was of the innocent kids as the mob looked for the lubricant to ease the voyagers' passage into hell.

Let's get the kids out at least.

But a huge rogue yelled his bloodthirstiness.

Don't let them get out!

They pushed hard against the car doors firmly pushed to by the mob. The urchins showed presence of mind.

E roolu gilass kale.

They wound down and a little more struggle got the kids tumbling on to the mob. The urchins got away with a few curses. But, for the other voyagers, obvious saboteurs of the struggle ...

Take petrol from their car if that one has finished!

Fatoti and himself looked at each other. They meant it! As for Interlocutor you could rub him all over your body if you needed jelly on your scales. Is today Ogun's day of blindness, then.

Gentlemen, please, we are not saboteurs.

O ma n soyinbo

E langi lori !

Ah, where was Langidi now, to hear this counter discourse laugh his escapist polemic to scorn. Where was Langidi to witness this eloquence of the people's revolutionary will; taunted to the limits, erupting now in this threatening fury; even savagery.

Fatoti heaved with the energy of the possessed, hurled his frame against the door and came crashing on to the ground outside the car; simultaneously, three huge men hurled themselves at his prostrate frame, brandishing cudgels.

E joo, omo mi ni, omo mi ni o, e joo, omo mi ni o.

Fatoti's muscular vibrators breaking into such tremulous pathos shook one to the roots of incredulity, and apprehension. But the men stopped in their tracks. The mob gawked in momentary puzzlement, for none could fathom the child named in Fatoti's frenzied plea.

Omo ke; Bawo 'n tomo tije.

Fatoti clutched the straws in trembling palms, blurted out the tale of his affection. His jewel was away from home the very first time answering the quest, chasing the fleece at Oyo in a federal academy. Their day of holiday coincides fatefully with this great day of the civil observance. Fatoti was mother hen braving the elements before her beloved chick would adventure into the turf of the raging hawk. He had set out before dawn, but *Laaroye* played him false; his automobile stalled for hours on end.

Se pe Yoruba lawon eleyi.

Oodua ni o ...

Perhaps inwardly recoiling at this evocation of primordial affinity in this period of purported refashioning of modern nationhood. But Miracle, as the garrison slackened its clutch-hold on the passage and on their necks. A rugged looking boy emerged from underneath the wagon, his Dracula eyeballs blazing with bloodthirsty regret. He had ripped open an automobile vein and sucked a couple of litres from its bloodstream. The petrol turned now a cheaper ransom, much cheaper than at the fiery toll gate when the youths needed petrol to refuel their petering fires, and the earlier voyagers bought passage with a much larger quantity, but with no attendant threat then to their jugular ... before he met Fatoti.

They sped. The automobile's steady hum suffered no competing articulation. Their way to Oyo was voiceless, virtually. Interlocutor was silenced forever; he had voiced his last – seasoned ago, when the frying pan flashed a dubious promise of succulence and excited a latent stream of banalities from Fatoti and himself. Interlocutor now squirmed only, wordlessly. Fatoti's grip on the wheel bespoke internal turmoil. Now his face would contort, now a violent shake of the head as flashes of the last, perilously close encounter smeared his big grey matter. He that is he of the three stretched a comforting hand, patting Fatoti's big shoulder.

It was close, yes, but now it's all over.

He did not realise this was just the cue for the release of suppressed expressions, a long, sonorous soliloquy, Fatoti's.

But why. WHY! Just why did they annul the election ...

I mean, these things normally don't bother me. You may say I am apolitical.

You may even say I am aboriginal, primordial or whatever ... I am more a father, or a husband, or a businessman, I admit, than a patriot. Yes, I admit I would rather pay more for petrol than pine over scarcity, injustice or impurity. What bugs me if the educational system is all rotten ... I simply send my children to the best available places. I can afford it! So ... I mean, why should I be bothered ... It's a life of shameful comporomise I know, but ...

My God, they wanted to kill me! Me! WHY. What did I do to them.

And then I can't be father to my daughter anymore ... I mean, with these buffoons in control I can't ... can't just be anything! ...

They bore the cacophony of his catharsis with equanimity, contributing nothing to the progression of his somewhat discordant self-interrogation, only a huge quota of silence.

Oyo was now with them at last. Fatoti won the unmade bet after all, albeit they all together aided the victory somewhat, and appropriated it justifiably. It was dusk. A feeble glow on the tar proclaimed remnants of the word in the small Oyo metropolis. The amount of debris exposed only a timid showing in this seat of the ancient kingdom of the Yorubas, although none could tell what other hidden manifestations a later reportage would reveal.

Abruptly, Fatoti spun onto a side road and pulled up in front of a small shack, the interior dark with dubious promises.

Are you in a rush, Fatoti counter-inquired before he that is he could formulate his own query.

I still have to get to Ilorin.

Fatoti looked sharply in his direction, a sudden scrutiny furrowing up his brow.

Ilorin ... is that where you are going.

He nodded.

That's where it all started isn't it.

He that is he knew what "it" meant, but he also knew the clock.

That was where I started out yesterday.

Don't be evasive, Fatoti insisted; I mean all that Afonja stuff ...

Weighty stuff indeed. Afonja, one time Aare-Ona-Kakanfo, war commander of ancient Oyo (Yoruba) kingdom, founding Ilorin under the aegis of the kingdom, stationed there to ward off threatened perils to the kingdom. Afonja later bent, history asserts, from this allegiance, beckoned to the Fulbe in the north to help secure secession from the kingdom. The Fulbe secured, in addition, his head, establishing a turbaned dynasty in the expansive pasture, banishing (to date) Afonja's own descendants from the coveted throne, also attempting further inroads from this vantage base into the Yoruba hinterland. Many have sworn, to wit Fatoti's stuffy innuendo, that Afonja's was prototype of contemporary grand betrayals ravaging Yoruba history and fortune up to the present time. Others, not least Afonja descendants, defend his exercise of a natural inclination for independence ... and for dominion perhaps.

By the time they staggered out, this stuff and the shack stuff had consumed two full chimes.

Bye, and thanks.

It helps to share the pain, wasn't that what you said.

Yes.

Well, it helps to share the pleasure too.

That brought back Fatoti's guffaw. He would miss Fatoti tomorrow.

Welcome was cosy, and quizzy.

O ma pe e gan!

He smiled, calculating which part of the tale to tell and which to twist. The fires of the rain forest did spread to this part of the savannah, he gathered, begging only sustenance as the overlords threw out red herrings to douse the flames. Not surprisingly. Entwined in the web of complex antecedents and buffeted by rival claims to its history and pedigree, the drums of liberation always sounded feebly in this city of the great divide. Ilorin also spoke, but relatively mutely.

The night sped turbulently back through the route. The dream tarried at Berger, subverted Langidi's cant ...

I can't come and die can never come into his rightful inheritance ...

He who fights and runs away lives to run another day ...

The valiant whose head is used to crack the coconut pod is a valiant ... dead or alive ...

Better to die on your feet than live on your knees ... Back at Ibadan, the succulence at the fire before Ojoo was dousing his brow with a wet napkin.

You started the fire in the first place, didn't you.

A sudden angry, betraying a latent truculence; she held the napkin tightly over his nose, blocking passage of air. He shook in vigour and in vain; at the last shooting out a desperate fist, connecting a hapless jaw. He opened his eyes. Cosy and quizzy was holding the napkin, and the jaw. He vaulted to her side.

Goodness! I hope it's not bad.

It's my fault, really, I ought to have woken you up. I was trying to bring your temperature down. So hot, and you were mumbling things ...

I'm sorry. Must be the fires of the rain forest. We encountered several in Ibadan.

The Dog-Catcher of Alakia

WALE OKEDIRAN

He sat on the verandah watching the evening invade the pot-hole riddled street, his head resting on the ballisters. In his nostrils was the odour of dust, dog-faeces, chloroform and antiseptics. In his car, the distant echoes of the noise and bedlam of the day's activities still resounded.

After a busy day at the government-owned animal clinic, 40-year old Yekini Alanu was relaxing in his house at Alakia, an Ibadan suburb. Apart from being far removed from the hassles of his family house in Oke-Are, central Ibadan, Yekini found the rapidly growing neighbourhead of Alakia very conducive for his business and life style.

Although his job at the animal clinic was mainly as a veterinarian assistant whereby he administered injections and minor treatment to animals, especially dogs, Yekini was known by the residents of Alakia as *Maja-maja* (Dog-catcher) - a sobriquet that came from his occasional duty of catching stray dogs especially during periods of rabies epidemic. Despite his limited elementary level education, Yekini had improved his level of diction and information gathering through self-education: Unfortunately like some self-taught people, he had allowed this to get to his head. He never failed to remind his less educated relatives and acquaintances that they were nothing but illiterates. He was also in the habit of profixing most of his statements with the refrain "we educated people".

While his duty of treating sick dogs and animals earned him some degree of respectability, the same could not be said for his job of catching stray dogs. Because of an increase in the spate of armed robbery incidents in the neighbourhood, there had been a sudden increase in the demands for

security dogs. In addition, as increase in the demand for dogmeat by a certain ethnic group whose population had been increasing in Alakia for sometime now had led to the high incidence of lost or stolen dogs. In many of such occasions, catching healthy dogs and selling them to prospective buyers either for food or protection. Thus everywhere he went, Yekini was usually faced with the same question "Mr *maja-maja* have you seen my dog?" Sometimes, though, it was the request for a private consultation that usually came his way.

That evening was no exception. As Yekini relaxed in the cool comfort of the verandah, two teenage boys approched him. On leash was a moderately big but very sick dog. It was a flea-bitten black dog with a white tail from whose mouth a steady string of saliva dropped. Even in spite of its terrible state, Yekini could still see that the dog was a pure alsatian - a highly favoured dog in that part used for hunting and security purposes. He was therefore a bit suspicious.

"Uncle *maja-maja*, can you please treat this dog for us?" the boys requested.

Yekini was furious, he despised being called a dog-catcher. "How dare you call me *maja-maja*. For your information, I am a veterinarian and not a dog-catcher. There is a world of difference between the two, if you must know".

The boys quickly apologised and asked "Uncle vegetarian" to treat the dog for them. "I said veterinarian, not vegetarian, you comprehensive illiterate boys" he shouted. The boys finally got the title right and Yekini thereafter agreed to treat the dog. He took another look at the dog and said; "where did you find the dog?".

"It's ours" the boys replied.

"If it is yours, why didn't you take good care of him?. He looks terrible - very dehydrated, emaciated and in the grip of terminal collapse. Looks like something you picked up from a dump".

"It's ours. It got lost about two weeks ago. It only came back home today. Please take good care of it for us". Yekini again shook his head. "No, take it away. It is in a terrible shape. It needs to be dewormed, rehydrated and given a tick wash. Then I will have to keep it overnight for observation. I don't think you can afford the treatment".

However, the boys remained adamant, insisting they could afford the five hundred naira bill.

Yekini finally accepted to treat the dog. Since he lived alone in his own wing of the old bungalow, he had coverted the store to a treatment room. He had also built a wooden dog kennel where he kept the dog after treatment. He used a small piece of bamboo stick to hook the kennel door instead of a padlock. "I hope that stick is strong enough to keep the dog. He could be very aggressive when healthy" one of the boys remarked.

"There is no problem" Yekini replied. "I've kept bigger and more vicious dogs in the past" he added.

The following day, a Saturday, Yekini had just woken up, was listening to the BBC morning news when an angry-looking fat man knocked on his door and asked him if he had seen his dog.

"What kind of question is that, if I may ask?" Yekini retorted angrily. "Did you give me your dog to keep or how do you expect me to know where your dog is? For your information, I'm a well educated man who is also very busy.

I see lots of dogs every day so how do you ever think I will know what happened to your funny dog?"

Seeing the fury on the dog-cather's eyes, the fat man calmed down and said "I'm sorry if I appeared a bit rude. I just want to know if anybody has brought a black or white dog with a white or black tail here either for sale or for treatment in the last few days".

"Black dog with a white tail or white dog with black tail-which is which?" asked Yekini.

"Yes", replied the fat man.

"Yes? What is the meaning of yes? You have to know what you mean even if you can't say what you mean. A black dog with a white tail or a white dog with black tail?"

"Em...em It's...Its a black dog, not a white dog...Oh God. I've forgotten the colour please forgive me", the fat man stuttered.

"Okay what breed is it?"

"Breed?"

"I mean what type - is it a Labrador, Spaniel, Alsatian or Ridgeback?"

The fat man was now more confused as he grabbled for what to say. Yekini was happy at having succeeded in confusing the man. He decided to help him though. "Okay is it a local or foreign dog?"

"It's a police dog".

"Police dog? There is nothing like police dog in the vocabulary of we veterinarians. You see, the problems with you illiterates is that you don't read. If you read wide enough and listen to the BBC everyday just like I do, you will know that there is nothing called police dog in our dictionary. What you mean is Alsatian, or German Shepherd or...

"Yes - yes.. It's horsasian" the fat-man spluttered. "Its...its two years old and the name is Bobo".

Because of the man's desperate looks, Yekini briefly debated within himself whether or not to tell the truth. It was obvious from the man's description that the dog in the kennel behind his house was probably the same one being described by the man. he didn't want to take any chances. Those boys could very well have stolen the dog and he didn't want anything to do with the police.

"No, I haven't seen that kind of dog here" he finally replied.

"How about in the clinic. Has anyone brought a dog of that nature there in the last few days?"

"I wouldn't know" Yekini replied. "Five of us work in the clinic. Dr. Samuel is the vetenary surgeon, I am his assistant and with my position, I should have seen the dog if it was ever brought there since I see all new dogs before the doctor sees them. At any rate, you may check on Monday in case any of my boys has seen it".

After the man left, Yekini entered his sparsely furnished sitting room. Apart from the drab paint, the ageing walls of his uncarpeted room were free from pictures. Yekini had moved away from the cramped family house in Oke Are where he had been born so that he would be far away from the multitude of relatives and friends who were always at his throat for one obligation or the other.

In one corner of the sitting room was a radio and cassette player from which he regularly listened to both local and foreign news and also played his favourite music. In a wall cabinet were several old and fading newspapers, journals and magazines which he regularly perused not so much for the information, but to pick up new complex and jaw-breaking words with which to further confuse his audience. Perched on top of the cabinet was his 'Bible' a well worn copy of Cambridge dictionary - a book he consulted on a daily basis.

At an age when his friends and age mates had already taken a second wife, Yekini was still single, a situation which his relatives considered a bit odd. It was even more odd to them that he lived alone. "In spite of all admonitions for him to allow one of his younger brothers or sisters to live with him, Yekini refused. I can't live with illiterates, and I'm tired of all these family problems" he had once confessed to an elderly relative. "If it is not a funeral ceremony, it would be a wedding or birthday anniversary. Each occasion, of course, demands that I contribute a lot of money. I, therefore, don't need them and I also hope that they don't need me".

Yekini had very few friends and companions. He neither attended church nor mosque. He lived his spiritual life without any communion with

others, visiting his relatives only at year's end and escorting them to the cemetry when they died. A short thick-set man with the traditional Ibadan face marks, Yekini's face which carried the entire tale of his years was of brown tint of Alakia's numerous dusty roads. On his long and rather large head grew thick black hair and a thin mustache over a small amiable mouth. Although his cheekbones gave his face a harsh character, there was no harshness in the eyes which, looking at the world from behind a thick pair of glasses, gave the impression of a man ever ready to fight for what he thought was right. He never hesitated to let those he considered less educated than him get the benefit of his limited but self-adulated knowledge. He used the little scientific jargons he had picked up from his superiors generously to confound and confuse his professional peers and friends.

He was in the bathroom prior to going to check the dog in the kennel when two policemen - a corporal and a sergeant - demanded to see him urgently. With the policemen were the two boys who had brought him the dog the previous day, as well as the fat man who had called on him earlier in the day.

"Are you the dog-catcher?" the sergeant asked.

"I am a veterinarian by training. It is illiterates who call me dog-catcher".

"Are you now saying that I am an illiterate?" the sergeant asked, furious.

"I'm sorry if you don't understand my simple English" Yekini replied "What I said was that it is illiterates who call me dog-catcher, but I am a veterinarian by profession".

"Whatever you are, a vegetable or a dog-catcher, I have come to see the dog brought by these boys yesterday".

"A veterinarian you mean?"

"Okay, okay - just show me the dog or didn't the boys bring a dog to you?"

"May be they did, many people brought dogs yesterday including a dehydrated, emaciated and anaemic alsatian dog which needed a comprehensive medical restoration and rescuscitation, apart from two labradors and...".

"Enough of your grammar my friend," the sergeant snapped.

"These boys brought a dog here yestereday, Yes or No?"

"They must have if they said they did," Yekini replied regarding the policeman with contempt.

"Pardon me?"

"I said they must have brought a dog if they said they did, I saw many dogs yesterday, you know, we educated people are very busy".

"And where is the dog?"

"Which dog, sergeant?"

"The dog brought here yesterday by these boys of course" the policeman said with impatience.

Yekini now turned to the boys. "I'm a very busy man. I attend to several dogs everyday. Can you please tell me about your dog?"

"It is a black dog with a white tail. It's name is Smart"

"What breed?"

"Police dog"

Yekini let out another anguished cry. "Oh come on you block head. I've told you that there is nothing like a police dog. It's either an Alsatian or German Shepherd. Which do you mean?".

"Okay, its an Alsatian," the boy replied.

Yekini now turned to the fat man. "Sir, what colour is your own dog?"

"A black dog with a white tail".

"Are you sure? Black dog with a white tail or white dog with a black tail?"

"Em...em it's a white dog with a black tail," the man replied.

The policeman turned to the man in anger. "But you reported the loss of a black dog with a white tail, not a white dog with a black tail".

"Em...yes yes, it is a black dog with a white tail" the man replied.

Yekini shook his head. "Which one are we to believe?. A black dog with a white tail or a white dog with a black tail, or is it a matter of deficient occular appreciation of coloration and observation?".

The sergeant winced "Mr. *Maja-maja* or Mr. Vegetation, whether it is a black or white dog is not your business. Leave that to us. Just show us the dog with you. You are not the only busy educated man in town."

Yekini led the way to the back of the house. He found the kennel open and the dog missing. He let out a sharp cry "Oh my, it is gone, it is gone". He then broke into hearty laughter. "The end of the riddle, my good friends, the end of the riddle.

A very fortunate jauxtapostion of attitudinal effect has just taken place. "The dog has gone home" he added.

"Gone home? Which home?" the fat man shouted. "I told you sergeant that this fellow has sold my dogs to make money".

One of the boys also shouted. "Yes what do you mean by 'it's gone home'. I warned you yesterday that bamboo stick was too weak to hold the dog. Now the dog is missing and you now say it has gone home. You're not serious. You must get my dog for me".

"What do you mean it's your dog -you thieving rascal. You stole my dog and now call it yours" the fat man screamed.

The boy burst into laughter... "Look at who is calling me a thief. You are the father of thieves... You who doesn't even know the colour of your dog. You better go and look for your dog elsewhere"

"Don't talk to me that way - I'm your father's age. I know Bobo's colour. It is white with a back tail...em...sorry black with a white tail or..."

"Enough of your racket" the sergeant shouted. He turned to Yekini. "Mister dog-catcher or Mr vegetation or whatever your name is..."

"Veterinarian please..."

"Just keep quiet! you hear. Enough of your grammar. Just get me the dog. Whether it's a black, white or red dog, just get it for me right now or else I will not only arrest you for stealing, I will also charge you for receiving stolen property".

"Which dog are you referring to, officer?. In our profession, we work on precision and fact. Is it a black dog you want from me or a white dog?".

"Don't *lawyer* me my friend you hear, ...don't *lawyer* me at all. Don't you know the colour of the dog you received from these boy's?" the sergeant screamed. "If you don't behave yourself, I will have you locked up". The sergeant then brought out a piar of handcuffs which he showed the dog-catcher.

Meanwhile, the commotion had attracted a sizeable crowd to Yekini's backyard, eager to see what was going on.

"Yes officer, the man is too proud" the fat man now interjected. "People have warned me about him. I just hope he hasn't sold the dog. He always does", he added.

Yekini was obviously enjoying the whole drama particularly the crowd that had then gathered. It was another opportunity to show off his 'polished grammar' and show the pack of 'illiterates' how very brilliant he was. He now regarded the crowd just like a school teacher regards a very dull student. He cleared his throat and said, "cool down officer, cool down everybody. This man here has just made a libellious statement by suggesting that I have sold the dog in question. For ever suggesting that I could descend so low to commit that kind of immoral commercial translocation and somersaulting on this terra firma is to say the least, an unfortunate abbreviation of my intelligence. I forgive him though. I shall not press charges. All I'm saying, officer, is that the dog has gone back to its rightful owner. All I need now is for the rightful owner to settle the treatment bill and if I may say, sir,

a little extra for all my troubles then I shall solve the whole mystery for you with supersonic and military dispatch".

"What do you mean you will solve the mystery" the sergeant said, his eyes hardening with anger. "If you try any tricks, I will have you locked up".

"Relax my dear sergeant. There is no tricks here. We educated people know our stuff. Not only did I learn the scientific rudimentary of veterinary medicine, I also studied an amplified dog psychology. This man here says the dog in question is his. These boys say the same. They've both given us different descriptions of a dog with different names. To unravel the puzzle, you policemen will have to do what is called *investigative exploration*. You will take their statements, ask for proof of ownership, date and source of purchase and so on. All these will take time, money and effort. But with my vertical and horizontal knowledge of animal psychology and philosophy, I can tell you the rightful owner of the dog in thirty minutes".

There was a moment's silence in the crowd as Yekini finished his submission. Everyone seemed impressed by the high sounding words he had used. They stared at him with a new found respect and admiration. Even the young corporal seemed impressed.

"And how will you do that?" he now asked.

"Very simple corporal. It is my training. Once a previously ill dog becomes healthy, it usually finds its way to its original home. All we need do is to follow these people to their respective homes. Whoever has the dog in his house is the right owner. That is what we call a 'fortunate juxtaposition of attitudinal effect' in dog philosophy".

Once again, the whole crowd was silent. Looking around the group, Yekini was glad to notice the puzzled and respectful looks all around him. The dog-catcher was to have made such an important impression on the 'comprehensive illiterates'. He smiled and stuck out his chin and chest. The policemen now withdrew to a corner of the compound for a brief

consultation while a murmur of respect and approval once again swept round the crowd. All the while, Yekini removed and polished his pair of glasses for the umpteenth time as he strutted and walked around in circles.

Moments later, the policemen came back to the crowd. The sergeant now said "okay let's go". He asked the boys and the fat man where they lived. "They all live nearby - but we shall first check the boys house before going to the man's", he added.

"One more thing, sergeant", Yekini said. "before we go, my bill must be settled".

"But who will settle it since we don't know the true owner yet?". The policemen asked.

"My contract for treating the dog was with these boys. They brought the dog here so they will pay".

"But it is my dog. How can they pay for treating my dog?", the fat man screamed.

"No it's our dog. We brought it here and we shall pay", the boys equally said as they passed an envelope to Yekini.

"No I'm paying. It is my dog. You stole it and you know" the fat man also said as he quickly counted out another five hundred naira which Yekini also received in addition to the envelope.

"It's okay serge" Yekini said when he noticed that the policeman wanted to protest. "No need to worry. One fee is for treatment the other is for locating the dog. I'm perfectly entitled to both fess. That is what we call comprehensive professional emolument in business management".

Once again, impressed by the high sounding grammar, a murmur of approval and respect went through the crowd while a few people clapped. And as Yekini led the group down the dusty, pot-hole riddled streets of Alakia in search of the lost dog, more people joined the crowd which chatted happily. While some poeple considered Yekini a honest man, others called him an eccentric and a crook. "*Maja-maja* must have sold the dog to that pepper-

soup joint. He's only trying to fool the policemen" one old man said.

"No, the man is very brilliant. Didn't you hear all those big words he was using? Even the policemen respect him" another young boy interjected.

The crowd continued its journey as it wound its way past the fire-brigade station on to the postal agency and across the premises of St. Saviours Primary School where some boys playing football left their game to join the enthusiastic crowd. By the time the crowd reached the boys house, it had spilled into adjoining streets and houses. Only the policemen, the dog-catcher, the fat man and a few people could enter the boys backyard where there was no sign of any dog.

"The dog is not there, the dog is not there..." the message filtered back to the crowd many of whom did not even know the reason for the spectacle.

"Now we shall go to the man's house" the sergeant said. Once again, the crowd spilled back to the major street on its way to the fat man's house. While approaching his house, the man's children saw their father and ran into the street to meet him. "Daddy, daddy" they cried "Bobo has come back, Bobo has come back". As the crowd meandered to the back of the house, a black dog with a white tail was found eating from a bowl in his kennel.

Three Women

BUNMI OYINSAN

My first few days in Ibadan, we spent entirely on our own. Kole decided before my arrival to take the Friday following our return off school. We sent that Friday ferreting our city. Dugbe, which was within walking distance of my Queen Elizabeth Road apartment was the largest and busiest market I'd ever encountered. That morning, we shopped for the few essentials that Kole did not buy when he equipped my room. I would never have believed that shopping for a stove, pots, pans and even a chamber pot could be so romantic. He then took me to the monumental Mapo Hall where we filled in our statutory marriage licence application forms.

I could have died quite peacefully and contentedly when I first set my eyes on the University campus. Kole gave me a grand tour of, first his room at Kuti Hall, then the lecture halls, book shop, and (most importantly for me) the library where I eventually got employed as a clerical assistant. There has to be a God somewhere I conceded.

That night I also saw my first silver screen movie, an aptly named Indian film, *An Evening in Paris*. It was the rave of the period and one of the attractions of my new residence was that the house was almost opposite Queen's Cinema.

Ibadan, with its brown earth and dusty, fly-infested roads (Ibadan at the time had the reputation of being the filthiest city in the country) and black hearse-like cabs was for me the most exciting place on earth.

When I woke up the morning after my arrival, I left Kole contentedly sleeping in our bed and gave in to an urge to rush outside and breathe in as much of the unique dusty air that was so much a part of this

rustic city that was the birth place of my independence.

I felt renewed, invigorated with life. I got up and went out first, through the communal passage with rooms standing face to face on either side of the house (the house was really two long parallel buildings joined as an after-thought to the two opposite walls of the main building which housed the landlord-Baba Tailor and his family). I turned left at the side of that open passage and found myself in another. This time a narrower clearing that was a no man's land as it only served to demarcate our own bungalow from the storey building next to it. I sat down on the stretch of concrete that must have been constructed as a prop to support the story building. The prop was wide enough to sit or lie one-sided on. I left completely at peace with my world. Something was happening, my life was beginning, and the ancient city of Ibadan was my Paris. I sat facing the busy road on that Friday morning. The roundabout with a lone ageless tree in its centre housed a mad woman. To the right of her haven was a petrol station and the streets that seemed to spread from the roundabout to all the corners of the world were littered with carelessly discarded *moinmoin* leaves, but even that had a romantic tinge to it.

This was a city that was lived in. A city vibrant with life; unstinting in providing sustenance. There was a woman frying *akara* in front of our house. She was surrounded by children with their pennies impatiently awaiting her wares to cook. Just as a woman hawking *muke* gracefully shuffled her way toward the circle of children, melodiously advertising her wares. *"Era muke o! Muke gbona de oo!"* The *akara* seller did not even bat an eyelid when some of the waiting children propelled by hunger deserted her circle and rushed to buy *muke*.

The *akara* seller was no doubt unwavering in the knowledge that her wares would be disposed of and I saw, in her contentment, affirmation of the limitless opportunities waiting to be tapped in this huge city.

Just as I had left my old life in Port Harcourt along with my clothes and every single thing I possessed, I had come into a new and vigorous life in this town populated by cicatrix-faced people. I had come into my own. As I sat there that morning, I made a covenant with the city, no matter where else life took me, Ibadan would always remain for me my Sherwood and I pledged myself her Maid Marian.

And soon, almost too soon, my Robin, having woken up and found my place on the palette empty, came looking to fetch me to embark on our expedition into our enchanted forest.

The Sign of the Crab

KOLAPO OYEFESO

July 15 1988

Today is my twenty-first birthday. I am an adult now and I wish everybody would realise this. Auntie Sade gave me this five-year diary. It's a nice diary, blue and gold, but not what I expected. Auntie Sade is very rich and I expected something more. I think she saw I was disappointed because she told me that she has been keeping diaries for fifteen years. She says it's like having a best friend you can tell all your secrets to. I like the idea. At least the diary won't laugh at me, or tell my secrets to anyone else.

People are always saying I am stupid when I tell them things, and that I don't know what I am talking about. I think it is they who don't know what they are talking about.

I have to think of a place to hide my diary; to keep it from preying eyes.

I had a small party. Mummy insisted. I wore my new dress with the gold buttons. It has small brown and white squares, and a slit skirt. Everybody said it looked very nice. My cousins came and some friends from school. Mummy made *moin-moin* and *jollof* rice with *dodo* and fried chicken. Uncle Segun brought some beer and some of the boys got a bit rowdy and made a lot of noise. The nasty woman in the flat downstairs complained and cursed loud enough so we could hear. I hate this place. I hate Yemetu, I wish we could move to another part of Ibadan.

Mike did not come. I didn't tell him because it's like he is more my boyfriend than I am his girlfriend. He did not remember my birthday. And

we talked about birthdays a few weeks ago. He wants one thing from me, and he is not going to get it. He never takes me out and I haven't met any of his friends. If he thinks I am not good enough, that is his problem.

I like Auntie Sade. She is my best friend. She says I can stay with her anytime I want, in her house in Bodija. She is alone most of the time now, since armed robbers killed Uncle Tom and Titi went to England. She has many friends though, and they wear nice clothes and go to lots of parties. She buys dresses for me and gives me money. And, secret! secret! She has promised me a ticket to England when I graduate. Mummy doesn't know yet and she won't know till it's too late for her to say things like, 'Sade, don't you think...'

Things I need
- a new boyfriend
- new clothes and shoes
- books for my literature project
- someone to tell Mummy that I am old enough to live on campus.

September 28 1988

I have been busy and I keep forgetting to write. I want to be a writer and writers should keep diaries; I read that somewhere. I will write, I promise.

Daddy came to see me today. He likes it that I am in the hostel. He prefers it to visiting the house. I hope I'll see more of him now. That will be good after the begging and arguing and the promises I made to Mummy before she allowed me to move to the hostel. Mummy can be so difficult. But a deal is a deal. As long as my grades are good, I'll stay on campus. That shouldn't be too difficult.

I like my father. He is tall and handsome and can make people laugh but...? He came with his new wife in a new second-hand car. He must be making money now. He never had any before. Can't forget those bad

times. Mummy wasn't working, and Daddy didn't give her money. Shouting and fighting every day. Tunde and I hiding in a corner like statues, afraid, too scared to do anything, watching and listening to them. I hated it, hated it so much. Tunde was always crying. I was happy when Mummy told Daddy to move out. Enough, she said first, then: lawyer, divorce.

And going back and forth to the high court. I think the divorce was a relief to Daddy. He was happy in court. The things they said! Lazy, irresponsible, other men, other women, marital rights, sex! So embarrassing. I used to hide my face. Sometimes I wanted to talk, to shout even, but in court you speak only when they call you. And nobody called me. Besides, the lawyers had so much to say, there was no time for anyone else. It seems like such a long time ago, not like three years at all. If I didn't want to write so much, I think I would have liked to be a lawyer; then people will always listen to me.

And Daddy forgot about us after the divorce. He moved to Lagos to live with the woman who had a son for him. Now he is married to another woman - a girl really, only a bit older than me. When I saw her today (the first time) I wanted to kick her. I hate her. Her skin is bleached and has dark patches and she looks like a prostitute.

Daddy is not the best husband in the world but he knows how to make me feel good when I am sad. He can be very funny and we laugh, and everything is all right. I like him a lot but he doesn't know anything about women.

School was boring today and I am feeling sad.

I need someone to love me. I need a friend.

January 17 1989

Mama died yesterday. At eighty-five. I cried and cried. I am going to miss her, and Tunde will too. So good to be with, and we loved her. Living with her was nice. She was funny and wise. That sounds like a rhyme, maybe

I should write poetry too; especially now that I am half-sad and half -I- don't-know- what (don't really like poetry though. It doesn't feel like serious writing).

Mama. All your jokes and lessons and stories of Ibadan, and trading with your mother, and travelling, and missionaries and schools and holding us by the hand: walk briskly, don't drag your feet, look where you are going, are you felling better, drink your *ogi*, eat your *eko*, have more *akara*. And that old, old man you took us to, who spoke like an oyinbo and taught us English and made us read and write over and over. The man who said that knowledge was power and the problem with Nigeria was that too many poeple were comfortable with ignorance. It is because of you and him that I want to be a writer. When you fell ill and lost so much weight - I used to think you were so big, and then suddenly I was bigger than you - and Mummy took you to UCH but the workers went on strike, and then she took you to all those private clinics and spent so much money (they prescribed so many drugs, we could have opened a pharmacy shop with the drugs Mummy bought) then you told her to stop buying medicines and paying doctors because you were going home to meet your Lord; I knew you were going to die but I hoped and prayed.

School has been 'close till further notice' and I am back at home.

The non-academic staff are on strike and we were told to go home. It's strike, strike, strike everywhere these days and school is a long holiday with short breaks for work.

Mummy is very upset. Now that her mother is dead, she must be feeling like an orphan. I didn't know how to console her, and so many people kept coming, so I went out and spent the day with my friends.

Things I do not need

- a lot of people sitting around pretending to be sad.
- relatives who think they can order me around.

March 6 1989

I went to a new nightclub yesterday with Lara and her boyfriend. I don't have a boyfriend now (poor me!) so I tag along. Mike and I broke up when he said there must be something wrong with me because I wouldn't have sex with him.

Good idea: All boys should be lined up and shot - except my brother and, maybe, Yinka.

Secret: Yinka is a fine - very fine - boy in my department, and he has been looking at me a lot.

The club is called Larry's bar. I wonder who Larry is. Someone should talk to him. It is somewhere in New Bodija. It was full of boys. It is always full of boys, I hear - the kind who should be shot-drinking, smoking and making a lot of noise. There was only one other girl and Lara and I did not want to stay but her boyfriend insisted. The boys argued about politics, religion and sex. Boys talk about sex a lot. They laugh about it. Maybe they don't like it very much, or they like it too much and are embarrassed to say so. Or maybe it's women they don't like. They went on and on. One ego-trip after another. Someone used that word on me recently. Checked it up. It fits boys and men. Ego-trip: 'e' goes tripping. They trip a lot. About town, in their heads, over their tongues. Sometimes I think shooting would be too good for them. They should be made to clear drains and rubbish dumps, and build roads for the rest of their lives. Maybe then they will learn something. Lara says it isn't their fault. She says they are not grown up yet. I don't think so. They have had enough time to learn a few things. Mummy once complained about an old man misbehaving, and Uncle Segun told her that because a man has grey hair does not mean he is wise or mature. It only means he has grey hair.

School started three weeks ago and we have had exams the last week. I did not read much. We were not taught much - on time - but I could have read more than I did. The way school keeps going on and off makes it

difficult to study. Even lecturers find it disturbing. I hope I pass.

March 12 1989

Mama was buried today. I stood at the edge of her grave watching the earth fall in. I did not cry. Mummy and Auntie Sade cried and I thought I should but I was not feeling sad anymore. I know that Mama is happy wherever she is.

June 2 1989

A boy told us a story today about an accident at Iyaganku, between a truck full of mobile policemen and the escort of a senior military office, a GOC. The mobile policemen - MOPOL, he called them - were coming from the press centre in their usual wild fashion; they sing loudly, hang to the sides of the truck and wave machine guns about like poor children with new toys.

The GOC was on the major road. No siren because there was no traffic. As his convoy came round the bend just before the press centre junction, the police truck shot onto the road, swerving wildly. The motorcyclist leading the convoy was swept into a ditch, and the car following the motorcycle ran into the side of the truck. The boy who told the story is one of those people who make a story funny by acting it out while telling it. He was all over our room, waving his arms and playing both sides of the accident. "When godo-godo don jam GOC, all of dem com' scatter for road, com' begin hala", we laughed and laughed. He said the GOC ordered that the MOPOL be arrested, which was good for them. Everybody hates them. If it had been a normal, average Nigerian; someone who 'suffer don dabaru'im sense' as Fela says, the mobile police, after running into the car, would have destroyed it, beaten him or her and carried the unlucky person away to some cell.

Our exams start next week if nothing serious happens before then. I have been doing a lot of work and they shouldn't be a problem. Mummy

came last week with provisions and money. Business is good and I'm glad for her. She is happier now. She said, 'all thanks be given to God'. Which reminds me, I went to Church last Sunday with Ada. A new church. One of these Pentecostal or 'born-again' churches. The service was entertaining. At one point, I wasn't sure if I was in church or at the Arts Theatre. The pastor was loud and intense but I couldn't feel any real message. He said "Praise the Lord" and 'Aayymen' many times. I enjoyed the show. People weeping and wailing boisterously. I don't think they gnashed their teeth - if they did, they must have done it quietly. They spoke in tongues though, starting and stopping as the pastor dictated.

Demons were cast out with a lot of noise, and money collected several times. To be born again, you have to dance to the altar, give your life, and then the pastor saves you. The band plays soft music and you float back to your seat, newly born. The pastor and his second-in-command spoke in funny American accents, one, high-pitched, the other drawling - 'y' all gonna seeee da work of Gawd. Gawd bless y'all.

Someone told me later that everyday, more of these churches appear. Like a rash.

I must remind Auntie Sade that it is my birthday next month.

August 1 1989

My birthday came and went. Auntie Sade gave me cloth for two dresses and I am going to try that new tailor in Mokola. He made a beautiful Shaba skirt for Lara. Mummy invited a few people to the house. It was very quiet and nothing much happened.

Everybody is talking politics nowadays. Politicians are making a lot of noise and spending money. Some of Auntie Sade's friends are also friends with politicians and she hears all sorts of stories and rumours.

A man and a woman tried to '419' Mummy. She said these well dressed people walked into her shop and offered to supply Bournvita at a

low price. They told her they bought it from a director of Cadbury, from his special allocation. The deal was she had to buy a truckload to get the special price. She said they spoke nicely and smiled a lot and she didn't even feel there was anything wrong. She calcuated the profit and then spoke to some other traders about it. They agreed to buy the Bournvita and it was delivered a few days later. While the *kaya** were offloading the truck, and the traders were carrying off their supplies, one of them opened a tin to mix a drink for her child. She cut the aluminium foil and found that the tin was full of sand and wood shavings. She screamed and the tricksters who were busy stuffing money into a bag heard her. They dropped the bag and ran. Agbeni is a busy market and ole! ole! was all it took for a crowd to chase them. They were caught, beaten severely, stripped naked and paraded through the market to the police station.

Mummy said that some people wanted to burn them, and it would have been cheaper to do so because the traders had to pay the police to let go of the money. They were going to hold it as evidence.

Daddy came to see Tunde and me. He stayed outside the house and would not come in. His second-hand car now looks its age. Bits and pieces of it are ready to drop off. He looked old too and his clothes were not up to their usual standard. His shoes had scuffmarks, and he has lost weight. He talked and laughed a lot and gave us twenty naira each. He promised to see us every month and drove off in a cloud of smoke. Mummy watched from a window. She said that he did not look very well. I hope there isn't anything wrong with him. I wish he would take better care of himself. I miss him a lot, yet sometimes, I get so angry when I remember all he did - or didn't do - that I feel I hate him.

I need my father, and my family, laughing and happy around me.

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* *Kaya* (n) freightsmen, load-carriers

September 8 1989

I am now going out with Yinka. He took me out a few times and comes to see me almost every day. That can only mean we are going out. He hasn't tried or even said anything about sex so, maybe I am assuming too much. But I don't think so. He's really nice and I like him.

October 6 1989

School started today. My final year. I can't wait to be out. No more school and no more hassling me. Auntie Sade said again that she would pay for a holiday in England when I graduate. I can't wait.

Yinka's sister, who works in Lagos, bought a second-hand car. A 'Tokunbo' Toyota. She now travels up and down the expressway at all times. Yinka said his mother warned her about travelling alone after dark and she replied that her car was covered by the blood of Jesus. His father, who was listening, looked up and said, "Oh, is that what it is? I thought it was rust!" I laughed till it hurt.

I think Yinka likes me a lot. I like him and, secret! I have been thinking of having sex with him. I have to start sometime. I am almost twenty-three. I feel odd - not just odd, foolishly behind - when other girls talk about sex, some of them younger than me. I feel left out. Am I afraid? I don't think so. I have been close to it. I have feelings, then there is a voice.

Is that voice mine, or Mummy's?

Yinka is not insisting but I think I should get it over and done with. It's becoming an embarrassment - my virginity.

November 17 1989

We have a new literature lecturer. He is the most uninspiring teacher I have ever had. He teaches us African Literature and his criticisms and interpretations are always confusing. We all ignore everything he says. Titi came home from England a week ago. I spent the last weekend with her

and Auntie Sade. I had an exciting and exhausting time. We talked for hours. She told me all about her school, boyfriends, parties, the shops in London.

Titi smokes, and drinks alcohol. I tried both - my first time. Made me dizzy at first but after a while it didn't feel so bad. We had a good laugh over it and she said I must come to stay with her in London.

Titi's language is shocking. My ears were hot and If I were lighter, it would have shown on my face. She used words that I would never have used. She used them for emphasis, freely. Like fuck, fucking or fucked, and shit (plain, or as bullshit, horseshit or jackshit). The funny thing is that after a few hours I found myself using these words. After twenty-four hours with her, I was liberated; swearing like my tongue was heat-resistant and choking on cigarettes and alcohol.

Thinking about it, I'm glad that she wasn't into worse things. I'm sure I would have tried anything, as awed by her as I was. I found it impossible to say no to her. I was sick for two days. She is going back to England next week and I'll be glad to see her go. Her lessons in modern style are a bit too tough for me.

January 8 1990

The new decade started with a grating sound. We went to church on New Year's eve and the car had an accident on the way back. It was a depressing thing to happen but we soon got over it.

I am not sure what really happened, but one of Auntie Saide's friends said that IBB played a trick on the politicians and they are all upset. But all they can do is grumble. Quietly.

Is this a secret? Maybe. Anyway, I had sex - or fucked, as Titi would say. Two nights ago. I felt so low afterwards. I went back to my room and covered myself up on my bed. I felt used, bruised, robbed, and dirty. But I also felt, yeah! I have done it! I wonder why people make so much noise about sex. I don't think I will do it again soon. I don't like anyone being that

close to me, the intrusion into my privacy, into me.

Yinka is coming here today and I don't know how I am going to look him in the face. I feel less than I was three days ago. Maybe this is what everybody feels and they get over it. Maybe one day I'll be like Titi it will not mean anything at all. Right now I feel that if I never see another man in my life, it will be too soon.

I need another hymen, preferably intact. Or a shoulder to cry on. Or, if all fails, a strong drink.

Tears Are Not Enough

BIELOSE KONWE

It was a dark, quiet and sombre night in June. The rain had just stopped after two hours of torrential downpour. The streets of Ibadan were desolate but for a few stalls where people had scampered in for shelter as soon as the rain began, and a church that was holding an all-night vigil.

Amaka looked at her wrist watch for the umpteenth time. It was eight o'clock, and well past Nkem's dinner: Nkem was her six year old son. And she never liked to leave him to his vices.

She looked round her, the church's activity was yet to start. She presumed that the downpour must have kept the worshippers at home. There were just five women and a score of children already lost in prayers, in the first two front row pews. They were the same people she encountered two hours ago when she scurried into the church for shelter, and, dressed the way she was in a conservative outfit of *iro* and *buba*, it was easy to mistake her for one of the church's faithfuls.

Amaka looked at her watch again and got to her feet. It was time to go. She could no longer hear the pelting sound of the rain against the church's roof. She heaved a sigh of relief as she made her way to the church's exit.

'Oh, I'm sorry', she quickly apologised. 'I wasn't looking! She had bumped into a man in a white robe at the door steps of the church.

'It's okay sister', the man offered 'It happens now and again to people, particularly when their minds are elsewhere'.

'I'm sorry sir', Amaka was visibly flustered. 'It's just that I'm in a hurry. Please pardon me'. She made to squeeze past the man who was

practically blocking her way out.

'I'm the spiritual leader of this church' the man introduced with an ecclesiastical air, ignoring her pleas. 'My pastor would like to see you before you go'.

'I'm sorry, I can't stay any longer. Maybe next time',

'Don't be in a hurry sister. Your blessing awaits you'. He smiled at her as he gently pushed her back into the church.

'The pastor just wants to thank you for coming to our vigil'

'But I didn't come to worship' she protested 'I only ...'

'It's okay. You're all the same blessed' he interrupted as he walked her to an inner chamber at the end of the church.

'Sorry to bother you, Amaka. I wasn't quite sure it was you when you first came into the church'.

Amaka was still speechless. She couldn't believe that the man sitting on the other side of the table, in front of her was the pastor of Noah's Tabernacle Incorporated. He had changed little from the last time she saw him.

'Deji, what are you doing here?' her voice was barely audible, she was slowly recovering from the rude shock of walking into the pastors office and finding a familiar face. Deji Ladeinde was the last person she ever imagined to find here.

'I see you're really surprised. Well, we thank God for His wisdom' Pastor Ladeinde smiled. 'The good Lord has found a place for us to win souls'.

'I never knew you're now a pastor'.

'Well, we thank God for His mercies. God has been wonderful', Deji said, waving his hands expansively. 'So what have you been up to? How have you been all these years?'

Amaka's expression changed all of a sudden from that of utter surprise to contempt. She rose to her feet. 'Thank you for inviting me in, but

I have to go'.

'I'm sorry if I've wronged you in anyway with my questions. I thought I should ...".

'Wronged me in anyway?' She cut in. 'Deji, would you say you didn't wrong me in any way after all these years?'.

'I see. It seems you're still cross with me. I thought you would have forgiven me by now'. He said, trying to preserve a semblance of remorse. 'Please, sit down. Let's forget the hurt and pain once and for all'.

'It's easy for you to say that. I'm sure you don't know how much I'd had to go through'. She remained on her feet.

'I'm sorry, Amaka, But do sit down'.

'I shouldn't be talking to you. Not after all you made me go through'. Her temper was beginning to come to the surface.

'Amaka, please sit down. If the good Lord can forgive us our sins...'.

'Don't sermonise me, save that for your congregation'. She spat out, and slowly lowered herself into the chair.

'Sorry for all the pains I caused you. Please, forgive me. I never meant to hurt you'.

'Talk about hurt! You got me pregnant and denounced me, and you turn around to say you didn't mean to hurt me?'

'I was too young and inexperienced to handle the pressure then. I was really scared then, but today I beg for forgiveness, and ask you to forget the past'.

'Do you know what you're talking about? I should forget the past when I live with a daily reminder of the treacherous past'.

'But it's over six years now. You can start by forgiving me today and I know with time you'll also forget...'

'Deji, it is not possible!. Not even in a lifetime'

'Why?' Why can't you find it in your heart to forgive me?

'Because I have a six year old son. A six year old son whose father denounced as soon as he was conceived. A six year old...'

Her voice trailed off as she gave into an overwhelming wave of emotion, and she started sobbing.

The pastor had surprise written all over his face. 'I didn't know you kept the pregnancy. I thought...'

He thought better of what he was about to say and quickly added 'I'm sorry, Amaka. I never knew'. It happened about seven years ago. They were then students at the University of Ibadan. They were the closest two people on campus then. It was difficult to see them apart. They had both found love in each other and pledged undying love for one another, but time and fate had other plans for them.

It was the last day of the month, and Amaka's period was already a week late. She had hoped and prayed, but she was beginning to feel heavy in the breast and occasionally she found herself succumbing to waves of nausea. She had read somewhere that all she was feeling had to do with pregnancy. She was afraid to discuss it with Deji, but after the last wave of nausea that day, she decided to tell him. Afterall, they both loved each other and they could get married in school since they were adults.

'Deji. I'm preg.... I'm pregnant'. She had stammered that night as she broke the news to him in his room.

Deji didn't look up from the novel he was reading, on his bed.

'Deji, can't you hear me?' She queried, pulling the novel away from him. 'I'm going to have a baby.'

'What baby?' he frowned, 'If it's joke, you had better stop it'.

Now let me have that novel'.

She threw the novel across the room and stood up from the bed, where she was sitting beside him. 'I'm sure you heard me. I'm pregnant'.

'Look, you had better stop that nonsense. I thought you could take care of yourself'.

'Deji. I can't believe you're saying this to me' she started sobbing. 'I thought you love me'.

'What has love got to do with it? I thought you were a big girl'.

You better go and take care of yourself'. With that he jumped off the bed and stormed out of the room. He never came back to his room that night.

The next three days were difficult ones for Amaka. Deji had suddenly found a way of disappearing from his room, and avoiding all the places they used to visit together.

On the fourth day, Amaka left the school for her village where she stayed with her grandmother for two years, because her parents would not stomach this abominable piece of news.

Amaka returned to Ibadan two years after with her son and found a job as a store assistant. She couldn't return to school for want of financial support, her parents had more or less disowned her. Besides, she had a son to cater for.

That same year, Deji graduated from the University. But their paths had never crossed until this night in June. Seven years after the treachery of a love turned sour.

For Amaka the past seven years had been difficult and trying. She never imagined motherhood to be so demanding, you had to work eight days a week to meet the needs of a growing child, she often told herself. Financially, she wasn't doing badly. She had been somewhat lucky.

She had inherited the stores where she started out as a shop assistant , when the owner went bankrupt. She had inherited a virtually empty shop and a huge debt in rents, but the landlord had written off the debt and had given her a loan to run the place. It took her three years of hardwork to raise the stores from the ruins of the former owner. She had worked hand over fist to make the stores what it was today.

She had tried to lose herself in her work, so as to forget the pains of the years gone by. It was easy to do this in her store, but the moment she got home everything changed. Nkem had a way of reminding her of the pains of the past, even though she loved him dearly. He had grown to look so much like his father, and sometimes he would ask the innocent questions of a six year old who had never seen his father.

'Mummy, when is Daddy coming back?' She lied to him that Daddy was away on a business trip.

Sometimes she wondered how long she could keep up the lie.

Occasionally, she found herself overwhelmed by emotions often sparked off by Nkem's innocent quips about daddy and sh'd break down and sob quietly, often to Nkem's surprise.

It has been seven years of fending for herself. Six out of which she had to raise a son without his father. And today ....

'How is he? I mean the child?' Deji finally found his voice after a long awkward silence.

'He's fine. He will be six in August' Amaka replied sternly.

'When can I visit him?'.

'Visit who? My son? No. I don't think that would be wise'.

'But he's my son, too. Don't you think...'

'No, No, making him doesn't make him your son. Afterall, you walked out on us right from the day I told you about his existence'.

'I'm sorry about my behavior then. I was young and inexperienced'.

'And so was I. But you didn't have to go through the pains of carrying a pregnancy for nine agonising months, you didn't have to drop out of school. You didn't have to run away from home, neither did you have to slave day and night to survive.

No way! You can't visit us'.

'Please, Amaka don't be so unforgiving. I want to meet him'.

'No, Deji. You don't have to. Where were you when he cut his first tooth? Where were you when I almost lost him to measles when he was barely nine months old? Where were you when he uttered his first few words? No, you don't have a right to see him'.

'Don't do this to me. Forgive me. Think of your son-our son. Should you deny him the chance of knowing his father?'.

The pastor was now pacing up and down the room.

'Forget it Deji'. She got to her feet. 'I'll be on my way. It's already late, and Nkem is with my neighbours. I'm sure he'll be getting worried by now'.

'Please, don't go yet' his voice rang out as he walked up to her. 'Please let me see my child. I'll make up for all the lost years'.

'How do you intend to do that? It's too late in the day, Deji'.

'I'll do for him like a father should his son'. Deji allowed a sigh to escape him. 'However, there's a concession I must make,... and that is, my relationship with him would be somewhat clandestine for obvious reasons'.

'Obviously. Of course you're married and the children from your marriage are the legitimate ones, Isn't it?' Amaka asked sarcastically.

'No, no Amaka. Yes, I'm married but my marriage has not produced any child after four years. The doctors said my wife's tubes are blocked, but as a pastor it would be scandalous if it's known that I have an illegitimate son'.

'Well, the choice is simple. It's either you acknowledge him as your son or you don't. There is no two-way to it'.

'Please try and underestand. How do I explain to my church members'. Deji pleaded. 'It would wreck my church if it ever got out that I have a child outside wedlock'.

After so much pleading, Amaka acceded to Deji's demand to meet Nkem. Amaka had agreed to bring Nkem to the botanical garden at the University of Ibadan by four o'clock in the evening of the following Friday.

Later that night, Pastor Ladeinde lay wide awake, beside his snoring wife. His mind was in a whirlpool. He could not wait to see his son, after so many years of not knowing about him. How was he to know he had a child when he had given up on ever having one.

He allowed his gaze to settle on the snoring figure beside him. He wondered if he should tell Atinuke, his wife about his son. He had told her everything about his past during their courtship save the Amaka saga. How would she react to the fact that another woman had a child for him - an area where she had failed him. That hadn't changed his love for her though, but the dream of any man is to have a son. Now he had one. A six year old! He wondered what he looked like. He was happy that Amaka had not married at all, because this would have made persuading her more difficult.

All too soon, he found himself looking forward to Friday. He tried to picture his face; a face he had never seen, yet a face he now longed so much to see.

In a less exclusive area of Ibadan, Amaka was tossing and turning. Sleep had eluded her completely. She kept wondering if it was right for Nkem to see a father that denounced him even before he was born. She tried to reassure herself that she was doing the right thing. How could she live with the guilt of denying her son the chance of meeting his father? She wondered whether Nkem would take to him or not. You can never predict a six year old. It was even a good thing she wasn't married, or how do you explain to a six year old that he had a different father from the one he had always known.

She wondered what Deji's wife was like, she felt a little piqued that she couldn't bear him children. She felt sorry for him, and remembered the look on his face as he pleaded with her. Suddenly, realising that inspite of herself, a part of her still loved smooth talking Deji. He had hurt her so badly seven years ago, but seeing him today had simmered down some of the embers of hate that time had fanned all these years. Not that she had forgiven him entirely, but she couldn't deny completely the bond they once shared.

Neither could she deny that he was the father of her son.

She looked across the room to where Nkem lay on his bed, sleeping peacefully. 'Thank you for my child', she muttered quietly, as she dozed off.

Pastor Ladeinde was pacing up and down the botanical garden of the University of Ibadan worried. He was beginning to get impatient. He had been in the garden for close to forty minutes, yet there was no sign of Amaka, or any six year old boy. What was she up to? Did she think she could stop him from seeing his son now that he knew about him? No way! She can't stop him from seeing his son. She had mentioned that she stayed somewhere in Bodija, and she had that outfit at Yemetu. Yes it won't be difficult to trace her.

He was still wondering what steps to take if Amaka failed to show up, when he heard his name over the public address system: 'Mr. Deji Ladeinde, please come over to the gate. You have a phone call'.

He was startled. He didn't tell anyone he was coming here. Who could it be? The announcement was repeated again.

'Mr. Ladeinde if you're there, phone call for you'. With his heart pounding, he hurried to the porter's lodge to take his call.

'Yes, Pastor Ladeinde on the line. To whom am I speaking?.

'What?...Amaka Nwosu?...Yes I know her...what's the matter with her?' His knuckles ached as he gripped the receiver firmly..."Okay, I'll be there soon'. He replaced the receiver, thanked the porter and hurried out of the lodge with a worried frown.

He wondered what could have happened to Amaka, or could it be the boy-his son? The caller had introduced himself as Dr. Joe Akams. He hadn't said much. He just told him that Amaka needed his help urgently, could he be at St Gabriel Hospital soon? He hadn't mentioned his son. Could something have happened to Nkem or was it Amaka? He wondered why doctors always play God. They are always close-lipped.

A few minutes later, he was sitting in front of Dr. Akams in his consulting room. Dr. Joe Akams was a middle aged man with an avuncular air around him. He wore horn rimmed glasses, and a moustache that reminded one of an over-fed caterpillar. He started searchingly at Pastor Ladeinde. 'You're Pastor Ladeinde?'.

'Yes?' Deji nodded. He was still wondering what was coming. He tried to search the Doctor's face, but found no clue.

'How're you related to Miss Amaka Nwosu?'

'Doctor, what's the problem with her? Is she okay? What about her son?' He tried to keep a straight face.

'Don't worry, we'd get to that soon. I just want to get the history straightened out'.

'Doctor, what has happened to her? 'There was panic in his voice.

'Please tell me. What about her son?'

'Take it easy. I'll take you to see her soon. But I want to clear a few things'. The doctor adjusted his glasses. 'Now back to my question. How're you related to her?'.

Pastor Ladeinde paused a bit, 'well I'd say we're friends'.

'Just friends?'

'We were once lovers, But.....'

'But what?' Dr. Akams peered straight at him.

Pastor Ladeinde felt uneasy under his gaze. 'We were lovers back in school but we fell out in our second year. As you know I'm now a man of God'.

Dr. Akams flipped through a thick case note in front of him. He had all that in his notes, but he wanted to hear the pastor's story. 'Yes, go on'.

Pastor Ladeinde recounted his relationship with Amaka as succinctly as he could. The doctor interrupted him a few times, and made short notes beside the old notes.

The pastor ended his story by saying; 'I was waiting in the garden to see my son when you called. Doctor, are they okay?

'Let's go and see her', the doctor said, rising to his feet.

'I'll explain to you as we go. By the way, I'm a consultant psychiatrist . Amaka has been my patient for the past five years'.

Pastor Ladeinde's heart lurched. A psychiatrist? He thought psychiatrists were for mad people. Was Amaka mad? What about her son- their child?

The doctor put his hand round his shoulder as they walked towards the wards. I've been treating Amaka for the past few years for some form of psychiatric illness. She had lived a near perfect life until today, when she was brought in catatonic stupor by her neighbours'.

'What would that mean, Doctor?'

'Like I was saying, she had lived a near normal life until today!' the doctor said, ignoring his question. 'I guess her encounter with you two nights ago has contributed immensely to her present morbid state'.

Pastor Ladeinde failed to miss the reproach in those words. The doctor's voice continued. 'Amaka has had loads of traumatic experiences in her short life. She suffered two rejections from the people she loved most. As you know, her parents disowned her after that traumatic experience with you, way back in school'. The doctor paused for effect, his hand was still on the pastor's shoulder. 'She dropped out of school to become a teenage mother. Not too long ago, she lost something very special to her, and all these have culminated into the morbid status of my patient.

'What about her son? I mean my son'. Pastor Ladeinde ventured.

'My dear pastor, there is no son'.

The pastor's mouth opened and closed. He couldn't form the words his brain registered. He could still hear the doctor's voice. 'Your son died when he was only two years old. This also has further compounded Amaka's clinical state'.

'But she told me Nkem is alive. She said he would be six in August'.

'Yes, it's all part of her illness. She cared so much for the boy that she has not been able to overcome his death'.

In the five years I've known her, she has had three major breakdowns and all coincided with her dead son's birthday. She still acts as though he were still alive. But for her encounter with you two days ago, she would have been near normal until her dead son's next birthday. The birthday is symbolic to her, of something she had once cherished dearly, but I guess encountering you was too much for her to handle. The pastor was quiet, lost in his thoughts.

By this time they were approaching the wards. The doctor went on. 'She was rushed in here today, and all she could utter was, "Deji Ladeinde ...Botanical garden...Nkem...Deji...garden". My previous interviews with her had always revealed your place as a possible precipitating factor in her morbidity. For this reason, I've invited you as a form of psychotherapy for her. I believe your presence in her treatment regime could help her overcome her illness. At the moment, she's under the influence of tranquilisers, I want you to be around when she comes round'.

Pastor Ladeinde shook his head vigorously and gave in to an overwhelming wave of emotion and started sobbing. He couldn't believe it. To have his hopes raised and dashed on the whims of a mentally ill patient was too much for him. He felt sorry fo Amaka though, but he could not reconcile the deep sense of loss he felt for a child that had died two years after he was born. A child he never got the chance to know. His sobs were now getting louder and more heart wrenching.

Doctor Akams could understand this unabashed show of emotion. He knew what was going on in the pastor's mind. He patted the pastor on the shoulder, as they walked on.

'Weep not pastor, for tears are not enough'.

The Masquerade

VERONICA UZOIGWE

It was pitch dark and she still had so many things to do before going to Agbeni market to sell her cosmetics. She had made a savings of ₦2,500 and still needed ₦1,000 more to start her apprenticeship at the "Home of Fashion School". Lagos.

Suddenly there was a strong jerk on her right arm and she strained to hear Nike's mother say: "Use the ewedu' at the bottom of the sack, leave the ones on top". First irritation of the day; why do people have to push me so hard before they talk to me? Just a tap on the shoulder would have gotten my attention and besides, she thought, people speak in such low tones. She went towards the kitchen, Nike and Foluke were still battling with sleep. She got the vegetables and settled down to prepare them and as she pounded the `ewedu' in the pot with the special little broom, she could not but remember all she had heard about the masquerades.

Nike had told her quite a lot.

The masquerades, she had told her are the spirits of the ancestors that make up the Egungun cult. They watch over us on earth, blessing, protecting, warning and punishing depending on whether we neglect or remember them. Sometimes, these *Ara Orun* (dwellers of heaven) are even invited to visit earth physically and they do so in masks and masquerades. They in the past, led their communities in wars: *Lagbookun* in Oyo; *Kamoloolu* in Ipetumodu; *Oloolu* and *Atipako* in Ibadan, and they help to rid the different communities of social ills. Ndidi hoped the ancestors would help catch those that stole her first savings as she cut off a *stalk that insolently joined that select 'ewedu' leaves*. In actual fact, Nike had continued, the Egungun (just like the *Oro* and *Agemo*), is a secret cult. Mysteries of the cult are jealously guarded and only

very few people know these secrets. Amongst them are a few privileged women who under no circumstances dare divulge the secrets of the cult. These are *Iyemode*, *Yeyesorun* and *Ato*, in different localities. They adhere strongly to the saying:

"B'obinrin mawo, ko gbodo wi"
(If a woman knows cult secrets, she must never tell).

She was specially fascinated by the *Oloolu*, who, Nike had told her was the most powerful in Ibadan and must not be seen by women. She wondered if men's eyes had something special about them that those of women lacked. Anyway...laws of the land; how could one question "the land?" Even more fascinating was what Nike recounted about the famous "ago garment" and the "human Skull" the *Oloolu* carries along on his outings. Tradition has it that after the *Ibariba* war which was fought before the *Kiriji* war, the "ago garment" was brought back from the war front to *Ode-Aje*. It is no ordinary garment as superhuman powers are attributed to it. A show of power was demonstrated when it left the scene of a fire disaster (on its own) without getting burnt nor anyone touching it! Tradition!.

Before any outing, the *Olootu* wears the "ago garment", carries the human skull believed also to have been brought back from the *Ibariba* war and a femur shaped stick like that used by those who clean out `ofi' clothes by beating them again and again with the stick, thus the name "Oloolu" i.e. "those who beat". It is taboo for any woman to see the Oloolu so attired. Ndidi had wondered how Nike knew all this if no woman dared see the *Oloolu*: Nike's answer was even more shocking: "My grandmother told me and besides, I have seen the *Oloolu*! Once a shortwhile after the Egungun festival started, a friend and I happened to be in *Beere*, in a house near where the *Oloolu* was resting. We peeped, well hidden from view. To eat the food set down before him, he had to unmask and so I saw him and nothing happened. I only hope nothing happens in future". she had sadly concluded

as she remembered that one of the curses attached to a woman seeing the *Oloolu* was that she would become barren.

Ndidi pounded the new mashed 'ewedu' leaves harder and faster as she made up her mind to get to the market early. She eagerly looked forward to her journey back to Lagos in two days' time, "and imagine", she dreamed, "in a matter of a year or so, I will be called a fashion designer!" she was happy she had left Asaba for Lagos to stay with her older sister and was determined to make the best of it. It was there in Lagos that she had met Nike, the daughter of her sister's best friend. She had known Nike for barely three months but it seemed they were life long friends. With the hope of making some money for her dream career, she had decided to spend a few weeks in Ibadan with Nike's family, buying and re-selling cosmetics. The house was quite small for a family of seven but Nike's parents gladly took her in and considered her one of the family. The only thing she found quite exasperating was her own stutter and people preferring to speak too low.

In a short while, the vegetables were ready and so were Rotimi and Segun, Nike's elder brothers, who soon left for work. Foluke and Tunde were at it again hollering over who would get to wash the pot that would be used to cook the stew. Their first meal for the day would be in school, the usual 'moin-moin' and 'eko'. But the soup pots were usually booked long before the soup was made. Nike's mum reached for the broom and as if the parts had been rehearsed, the two quarelling kids grabbed their black plastic bags full of three books each and dashed for the only door to freedom. Both laughed as their mother pretended to have swept them out of the house and off they went to school. Nike was, by now, already through with sweeping the three rooms and outside, dawn had dispelled the dark as many more people left their homes for their various working places. Both of them soon joined the others in the relatively short trek to work: she to Agbeni market and Nike for her typing classes.

Things went quite smoothly for her in the market and she was glad that, by the end of the day, she had made up to ₦530. She got her things together and dexterously balanced the basin full of cosmetics on her head. Very tired, she walked towards Nike's house, deep in thought and oblivious of things happening around her.

A short while later, just a couple of streets away from where she now was, the violent beating of the *dundun* and *gangan* drums and singing, reverberated from the Oke Padre end of the Salvation Army Road in Ibadan, causing some confusion in the relatively tranquil neighbourhood. The street hawkers along the road grabbed their wares in record time and those not fast enough had to abandon theirs and dive for cover. In the confusion, a curious teenager was unceremoniously pushed off the road, into a building nearby. The determined and concerned mother yelled as she pushed her in: "Make you no look, no look my daughter!" In a matter of seconds the streets were deserted by women, leaving only men in sight. The *Oloolu*, Ibadan's most dreaded masquerade and his entourage were on the prowl.

Now three streets away Ndidi, heavily laden with the goods she had not been able to sell, hopes to have more luck on her side the next day before leaving for Lagos. Not so far from Nike's house, she wondered why people seemed to be making frantic signs to her. She wondered why the streets were no longer teaming with people either coming from work or buying and selling. She also wished she could hear the music that was so faint, a bit clearer; the drums here sound so different from those back home, she thought.

She continued wondering and this time, why she was hard of hearing and then she sensed it! She held on to steady the basin and instinctively took some quick steps forward as she turned to see why she shivered so, under the scorching heat. But before she could turn, she screamed at the burning whip that lashed at her neck. The well balanced basin full of cosmetics bent towards the contracted angle she now had her head tilted to, trying to regain

its balance but came crashing down in compelled obedience to the law of gravity, the law of the land! She turned to confront the aggressor and to her horror, saw the skull and garment a few yards away and a pack of its sweat smelling followers now had her hemmed in. She staggered at the hottest slap she had ever received, given by the most zealous of the group. She screamed again, as she cuped her now bleeding nose and sped towards the only open space in between two shabily dressed boys in the entourage. All breaks on her legs now released, she tried to run as fast as she could, screaming, and with the entourage in hot pursuit. Lots of women were peeping, safe behind windows with burglary proof bars while the young boys seemed to derive pleasure from Ndidi's screams. The *Oloolu* seemed ready to move on in the opposite direction but his excited followers still had a score to settle as they pursued the lone athlete. They soon caught up with her and as her cries for mercy fell on deaf ears, she fell; the bright sun suddenly became dark. The drums beat even louder.

When next she opened her eyes, she wondered if she had been dreaming. She saw Nike's mum at the corner of the room and Nike just next to the bed. She felt sore all over and could not stop the tears that welled up in her eyes as she saw the basin in the corner of the room full of the smarshed jars of pomade and hair cream all mixed up with sand and dirt. She also saw her dreams shattered. Shattered by the fearsome scourge of a masquerade whose trademark is next to death for the hopeless, unsuspecting woman.

Light and shade alternating from delightful patterns
Kaleidoscopic presentation in shades of indigo.
Tell me, woman gloved in dye.

◆◆◆

POETRY

◆◆◆

Ìbàdándùn

Mabel Segun

Light and shade alternating from delightful patterns
Kaleidoscopic presentation in shades of indigo.
Tell me, woman gloved in dye,

What random ladle scooped up
From the passing stream of your thoughts
Objects so disparate-

The creeping and the flighty,
The graceful and the clumsy,
Implements and pillars,
In orderly confinement.

He of the changing hues acting as your spokesman,
Decodes in cryptic words. "I am one and I am many".
Puzzled still I ask chameleon
Wearing the federated cloth:
Does that mean unity in diversity
Or diversified conformity?

Ìbàdándùn, the most complex of all Yoruba batik cloths dyed in indigo, is appropriately named after the home of high quality adire eleko, the Yoruba name for batik. Ibadandun literally means Ibadan is sweet or pleasant. The cloth is divided into twenty-eight squares or rectangles; that is, four rows of seven squares or rectangles. The squares/rectangles contain various objects; the one which gives it its name contains the pillars of Mapo Hall in Ibadan alternating with spoons. Other objects featured in the squares/rectangles include birds, reptiles and small animals. Some of the birds are ducks, ostriches, turkeys, guinea fowls, hens and crested cranes. The animals include lizards,snakes, hedgehogs, chameleons and scorpions. There is also a third group comprising everyday objects in domestic use such as matches, wire, combs pails, smooking pipes and scissors.

Ibadan

Bunmi Adamolekun

*I*badan,
Sprawling city
With two faces
On the hills and plains
Of mother nature
Nodding its head
Like lizards
Accepting
Different blessings
With visible traces
From the hands
Of time

Ibadan: A Tease of the Totem

Adebayo Olabisi

A palpable genesis of the unweildy homestead
Could be the burst of hysteria which wedded the euphoria
Of being the conquerors in every count of their epic exploits..

The warlords didn't bargain for the flood of motley guests,
But it dawned that incongruous option of envisioned mission
fuelled in the infectious human influx from across the world.
Whenever those that came raw, crude and with blunt wits
crossed the urban breed who have guile in their grains,
They got threshed and winnowed like cereals for grains.

And that's the price for initiation into OLUYOLE homestead.
Most natives of the sprawling homestead pass for modest whips:
They would rather wink at tricksters on the loose
While the miserable victims of their antics get whitewashed
With a ready "If only you had guarded your wares better..."
Beyond this, their tolerance for all comers could hit infinity ...
When their priest invokes OKEBADAN god, all tongues tickled in ecstasy
But given a tongue-tied lot, he would freely pop obscene jokes any day!
Of truth, the thickets which bred those jumbo-sized snails
And the ubiquitous stands of African apples have thinned out,

The totem still paints memories green with treats on steaks of snails
And ripe apples on which the founding fathers heartily supped
If today, any human-snails cross their descendants ways,
They would, as old, roast steak of such snails
And serve hot corn paste with the extra large snail shells
As for traffic within the city, it is either uphill or downhill..

A top any of such countless hills and in penthouses of skycrappers.
One would be compelled to think and act as though in a swivel.
The acenic scenes within every degree it sweeps as it swirls.
Slyly tell all eyes that the frontiers have rippled to the horizon.

Though street fighting was said to be hallmark of the totem,
The rather infrequent outburst of civil squabbles uptown
And the deadly clash between human and vehicular traffic downtown,
Baffle those who contend that the tag "street fighters" is a misnomer.
Illegal structure, hills of filth and vehicles driven on the horns
Are the fiery street brawlers who seeming defy decrees and riot acts.
Eyes and nostrils have brooked the stenchy mounds of filth for years
Ears have snubbled at the noise while lips stayed sealed:
But every right mind plaints that tidiness marks many a city
"Too dirty" isn't just an apparent rhyme with KUDETI streams;

It is also a perfect fit (as GEGE stream aptly connotes)
For the habits of settlers on the banks of Ogunpa and other streams
If the usually euphoric and emphatic boasts hold sway
To gratify the often said "Hah, here on this our father's land...
And thus, the shoulders of sundry stream aren't set free,
It's certain that heavy rains would portend ravenous floods.
Somehow, it's consoling that there's order where it matters...
Though it seems to be the sole preserve of the elders,
Dynastic tussles for kingship are as rare as the horse's horn ...
Once the blood is varitably pure ...
he may be old, haply worn

After scaling the rungs of the hierarchical ladder for year ...
He would be sworn-in under showers of "he's our son, let him do it..."
That's the patriot's trump card ...
and varnish for sundry open bids.

My Husband, I saw a Big One Today

Bode Sowande

*O*risa' sets you free. True my husband
Her mind, the screen of the noon spectacle;
'I saw. I danced. My husband , I saw a big one today'.

Up Mapo hill two mammoth rainbow wings,
Flapping it seemed,
Until the orisa songs arrived.
Women voices preceded the sight.
Down, below, like dancing wings they flapped.

The Market is a woman today,
Dancing behind a man you may mistake
For the one mounted by Sango,
And who plaits his hair like a woman's.
This one is not Sango's devotee
This man-woman priest is for different Orisa
'My husband, I saw a big penis today.

And the husband was now suspended
Like the tension wire that Sango rides
To penetrate the earth, wet or flint.

The husband's eyes were dirt-red,
Like the wasted seed of his wife's unripened month,
Like the month before the last one, before the moon before.
The husband waited for her to tell.

'Dance your heart out
And Orisa will ride and set you free.
And my husband how I danced.

Mapo thronged with just female folk,
Daring, dazzling; everyone's darling
As they led Orisa in a delightful vulgarity.

Little children, all female sang merrily;
'The penis of the policeman
Is big like his truncheon'.

The earth lost her tensions, as the priest with
the woman's hair-do led Orisa prayers inside the
market shrine.

Outside, little girls played with the phallus
Of the effigy, with virgin giggles,
While mothers prayed.
Then it rained showers of laughter
as the clouds made a ready earth wet.

At that moment all barren women prayed that
the man-woman Orisa of Ibadan would clear the
path to a fertile womb.

'My husband, their songs, their dance lifted
me and I prayed to have a child,
in a moment
when I was the drum skin,
a moment when I was
the song in the voice,
in a moment when I was
the feet of the dance.

'And at that only hour the little girls
carried the police-effigy past and how
his wooden penis was big, and in our prayer;
right in its choric heart, we laughed;
supplicants and priest!

The husband relaxed and said with love
in his eyes, 'That is what Oke'badan does to you,
Oke'badan is Orisa that sets the phallus free
And makes wombs ripe

'My husband I saw...
'Shhh...keep quiet wife,
Time for our own fertility rite.

Ibadan Dun (Sweet Ibadan)

Esin Knni-Olusanyi

(dedicated to Lamidi Ayandare of Ile Gangan Labiran, Ibadan)

Ibadan Oo, Eeee ore o, Okebadan,
Ibadan, Ibadan
Short, but mostly tall
A lanky look, like the Gangan dru-m-m-m-m-m
A musical version of a masquerade,
Capture inside of a flourish of
Lyrical percussion.
'Talk' to Ibadan,
The talk of a drummer
Who sports a household of
Dramatic sonority

Ibadan oooooo
Enshrined in Ose Meji, an Odu of Luck!
Ose meji, imprinted in earth .. of its destiny.
Two palm nuts for one, one ikin for two
Fine strokes.. by the divining priest.
Impacted, enthroned, enacted year by year.
Drummed into the soul of an ancient swagger,
The heights of Okebadan (hill)
You would have preferred to dream
But you left Ibadan
In a bewailing, chanting Lament
Omitutu Ibadan dun Ooooo
Ogunpa stream a-overflowing

Sing a song, spring a jump: invigorate-incantation
For water...
So fresh, so thirsty, so demanding.
Of recognisation of presence; of resolution
Water of appeasement,
Spirited water like a song,
A pacifiying dance on water.

Ibadan dun Ooooo
The big breasted goddess all wrapped of white,
Aboke 'badan, high priestly coiffure to play
A barefoot-like dance of
Dundun, dundun, dundun
Oloolu, who carries the mystery
Of life, of death, of dance
Of ritual percussion
Purify Ibadan, ring dance Ibadan,
Round about Beere,
Round about Oluyole-Ose Meji,
Round about Efunsetan, earth-line-se-tan
Power woman-se-tan
Woman of Ibadan.
Ibadan dun Ooooo
E ku igbadun ooo.

Ibadan's Thirst

Tony Marinho

*P*ounded hard by myriad
amulet encrusted frenzied feet.
A disordered design to confound forgotten foes.
A tribute to war-winning, mouldy military maestros.
Roadlets, woven threads of metamorphosed forest footpaths
Crisscrossing the sometimes noxious city in anxious haste.
Ibadan with the ubiquitous uncleared waste
Bane of today's environmental planner;
Critical of yesterday's solution secreting today's troubles.

Ibadan, democratic through memory's oral cobwebs.
Ruled in-Council by cyclic octogenarians.
A history of trouble or the trouble with history.
Creator of Penkelemes.
Regional capital of the wild wild west.
Governor and Head of State both paid terminal toll at your gate

The cradle of the fecund, farcical fraction $12^{2}/_{3}$
Ibadan who can stop you? Who?
June 12 did for five moribund months.
Curfew, dawn to dusk, a la Dimka, barricades burning.
Days deserted, nights became morning.
But thy tyres burned out, as Hope did in '93.

Ibadan, anthill to history's termites.
Peaked hills once oppressed by the colonial spypiece Bower's Tower.
Now dwarded by new spires of freedom's march.
The square Ivory Tower tells four-faced timing tales.
Cocoa House, Awolowo's legacy, resurrected from the inferno.
Nwoko's dream dramatised, New Culture Studio.
Relective in Johnson's memorial wax, Broking House.
Cubiod Premier Hotel, perched on a pyramid of purity?
All distancing the sky from swallowing the city.

Ibadan, what war and politics failed at,
A liquid's lack has wrestled onto its back.
From Beere to Bodija, Taffy Highway to Tedder Hall.
From Secretariat to Sango, Polytechnic to Public Transport.
The silence of the engines, the rape of the road.
Ibadan lies paralysed, thirsty for fluid long fossilised.
Strangled by the noose of the undulating python, the empty horse.
Resilient to the end, Ibadan cruises in neutral round the bend.

Fuel conservation, the name ot survival
Down hill in free, gets a revival.

Ibadan, the motor queues sniff out the rumour trail
And flit like harmattan mist from station to station.
Thousands of cars, three, four abreast, block the roads, East to West.
There is a murderous cost, precious lives are sometimes fierily lost.
The road is silent, even the potholes begin to snore.
But the roadside stirs, groans and gives painful birth.
A necessary mutant, a slithery snake of hopeless humanity,

Shuffling, sweating, suffering, the massed milllions on the misery march.
Kilometers gone, miles to go, 1897 to 1997, oil rich or without a stitch?

Ibadan, the lazy lizard litters the sun-steamed tarmac,
Nodding intoxicated from sniffing bitumen fumes, barbeq ancestors,
It defies the dead danfos to a duel, but they have no fuel.
Quixotic dinosaur-30, diesel-love, match point.
O Ibadan, how fossile of yesterday hold life today at bay.

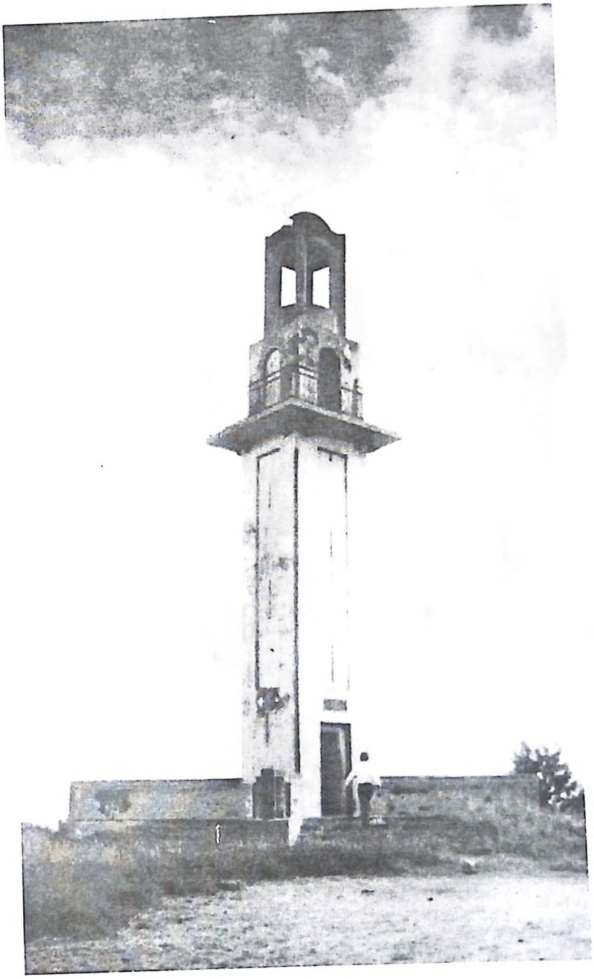
That Ancient Wayside Heath

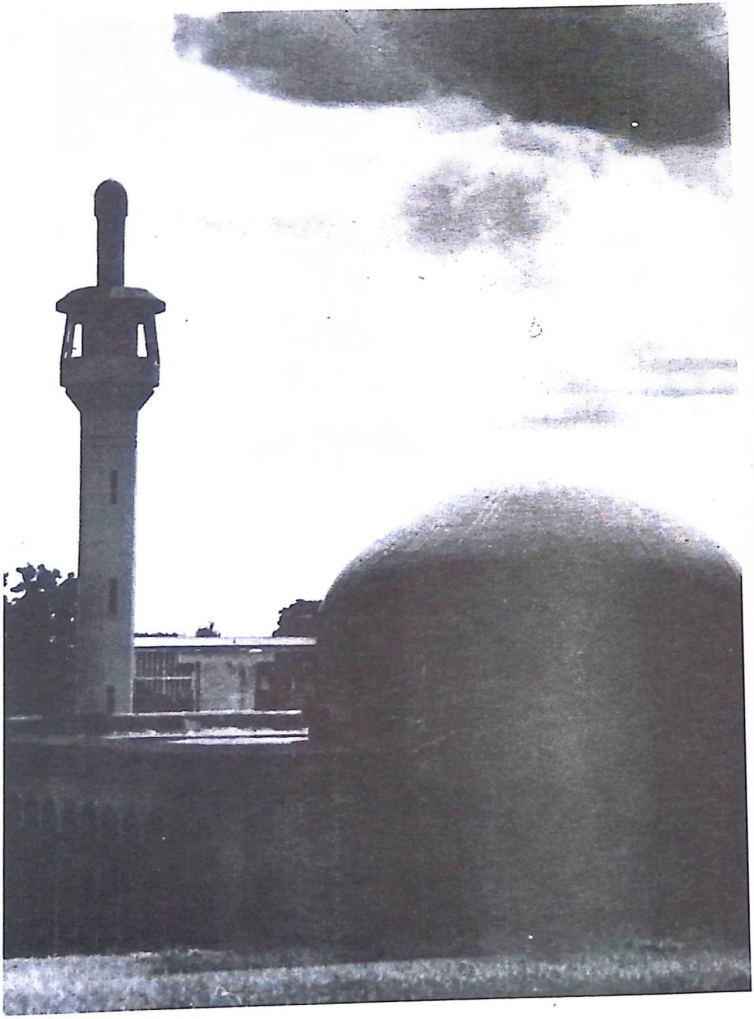
Matthew Umukoro

*I*badan:
that intriguing wayside heath of yore,
now a Broad and beautiful bastion of black art
and culture:
Antecedence spot of repose for the weary wayfarer
enthralled by
Dynamic scenes of undulating hills sheltering pockets of
Agrarian settlements, transforming into a modern conurbation,
Nurtured symbiotically by rustic nature and urban art...

Proverbial cradle of black creativity!
Your rich Pierian milk flowing from pristine tertiary gland
Suckled the first acolytes of artistic creativity,
Inspired that redoubtable scion of Ogun to clinch the Award,
Coveted trophy for global excellence in literary creativity,
To the maiden glory of Africa and the Black World.

A historic city tended by an elastic dynasty!
You valiant heroes adorn the annals of history
For feats fit for songs and serenades,
Far beyond the booming cannon of the imperial crusades...
But, pray, when would those ugly midden mountains
vanish,
And cease to be an embarrasing source of stench
and tarnish?





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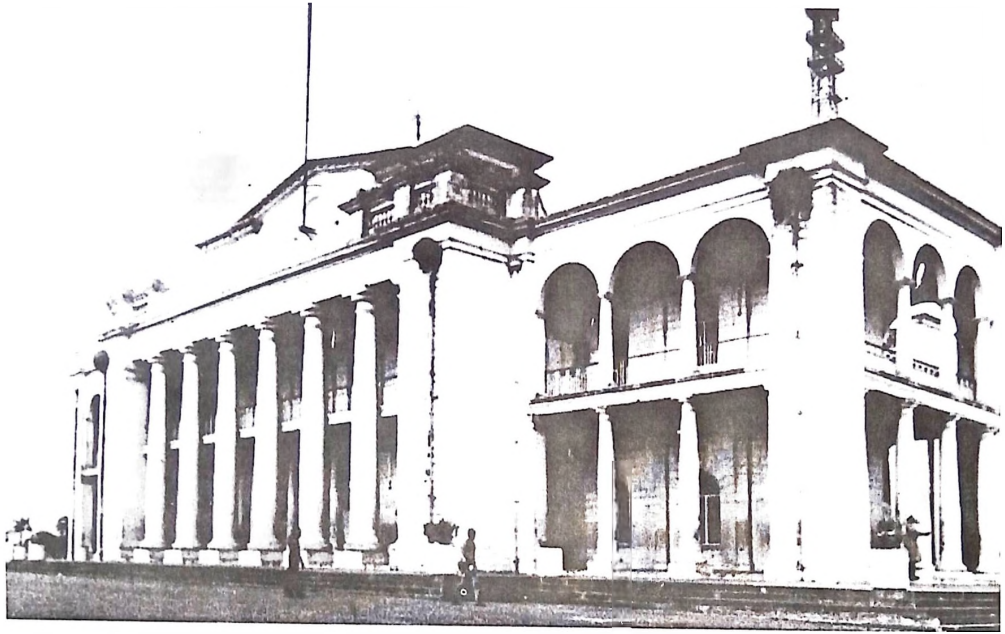
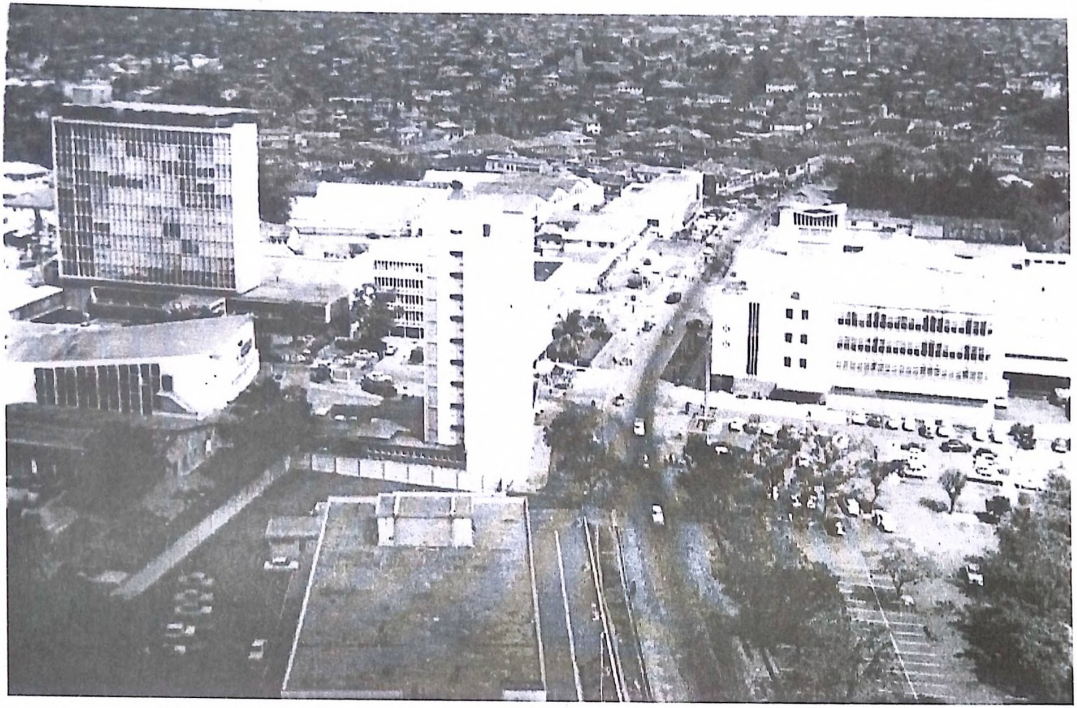


IMAGES IN RUST AND GOLD

Niyi Osundare

TAKE a walk round Mapo Hall, allowing your eyes to soak up every hint, every detail of this titanic building. Fancy the astounding solidity of its Romanesque arches and columns, its tall masculine pillars, its teasingly baroque ambiance. Fancy the countless storms and winds weathered yearly by the pale-yellow courage of the walls. Move closer to those walls: dare them: scratch one of them. What bursts through your ears is a laughter concrete with history: memories of the robust spirit which forded through the forests of the beginning, memories of those whose virgin steps unclothed the hills, vibrations of their panting breaths; memories of the khaki-trousered, helmet-headed colonial administrator insisting like a stern headmaster on "labour" and "service", memories of the confounding plan in his pocket, memories of the "native" who laid the stones slab by slab till a historic structure erupted from their hands, standing so imposingly, so strangely on Mapo's hill of hills. Memories, above all, of dreams dreamt on sweltering nights finding eloquent delivery on the bed of intriguing dawns. Memories, still, of the resonances of those dreams.



Continue your journey. Past that gate which leads to the octagonal awe of Olubadan's new palace, past the Mapo police station and its running cauldron of charges and bails; past the FM station of the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) where air waves are laden with polyglot vibrations. Stand on the many-stepped terrace in the frontal apron of the Mapo edifice, give your eyes the generous sweep of the zoom lenses of a voracious camera. Then think of what you see.

Facing you directly is the famous *Orita Merin* and beyond; to your right is *Beere*, to your left is that road which hurries through countless districts to join the "Lagos Bye-Pass" at Molete; behind you, beyond Mapo Hall, is another intermesh of districts and neighbourhoods whose names belong to a memory beyond recall. Or take a ride in a low-flying plane. Drop your eyes through its oval windows. Ponder the hundreds, thousands, millions of houses resting eaves-to-eaves interspersed by tortuous, unsure roads looking like black serpents from your humble height. Increase your attitude widen your angle of vision and what catches the eyes is a canvas of colours, principally brown, edged round by a ring of green in urban outskirts where trees and flowers in centrifugal flight eke out a (brief) respite. From whatever angle you look at Ibadan, from whatever perspective, on whatever day of the year, what invariably meets your gaze is a city thronged, complex, and relentlessly plural.

Part of this complexity is the city's handling of the giant phenomena of tradition and modernity. These two giants are themselves very difficult to manage: at times they manifest in harmonious fusion; at times they tolerate each other in uneasy juxtaposition; while at other times they stand, daggers drawn, on either side of an infuriating divide. Complementing this gulf, and at times complicating it, is the town-country continuum. Many times, one is at pains to fathom whether Ibadan is a village which became a city, or a city in the process of becoming a village. Squat, windowless houses rub shoulders with futuristic skyscrapers (more on this later); big-domed mosques cast a careful eye on high-spired churches, while both share adherents with resilent

shrines where people still bow to native deities whose names the worshippers *really* know; jazz and punk rock share air waves with *sakara* and *tatalo*; while the breakfast tray may have *eko agidi* and *akara* sitting next to bread, bacon and egg. Not long ago, I spotted the ancient *Oloolu* in plastic shoes; one of his acolytes ran, whip in hand, in a three-piece European suit.

This is why in 1962 when I saw Mapo Hall for the first time as a member of an excursion group from Amoye Grammar School, Ikere-Ekiti what tickled my *araoke* (country boy's) imagination was what that Roman structure could be doing on the revered hill of a great African city. (Before then my only encounter with such structures had been in Roman films, I thought Mapo Hall would welcome us with a Latin phrase. It didn't. On the contrary it flowered out in that slow paced, lay-back, highly picturesque dialect of the City-of-Seven-Hills. Mapo Hall is the meeting of two cultures, one Classical, the other African, both ancient, but trying to find a fertile accommodation with restless modernity. Any wonder then that this brief celebration of Ibadan should start from Mapo Hill, a place...

Places. Places make people, people places. Places have their own names in the register of human memory; in the diary of human experience. A road with a peculiar bend, a street with a file of queer alleys, a river whose singular feature is its leisurely lilt, forests with a memorable fragrance, hills like breasts of pubescent maidens, markets, parks, schools, spots where heroes were buried, scene where a notorious tyrant was hanged. Places and their names, names and their places.

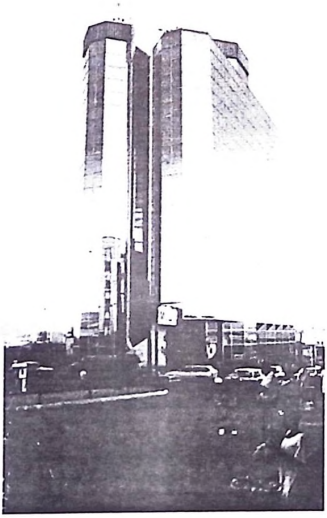
A place is not the sum total of footprints left in its streets, not just roads, tracks, alleyways made familiar by frequent treading. A place is not just a battery of doors winging on calibrated hinges, nor a fair of windows which let in the season's breaths. A place is all this-and more: the tree which remembers its root, the arrow which knows its quiver, the drum which discerns the sound on the skin of a fleeting game; eyes which smell; noses which see the trail of familiar districts. What is a city if not a fusion of these

fragments? What is a city if not itself a place?

Ibadan is a place made up of other places. Hence its intriguing plurality, hence its protean complexion . Take *Yemetu, Popo Yeosa, Elekuro, Ayeye, Beere* etc with their rusty roofs and low mud walls crowded, jostling for space like crabs at the bottom of a bucket, yet so indigenous, so vibrant. Compared with those other places: *Oke Bola, Oke Ado, Odo Ona, Apataganga, Orogun* which used to be urban outskirts but have quickly become part of the urban core. Match these two groups of places with *Iyaganku, Jericho, Bodija, Orita Bashorun, Owode* where the upper class and upwardly mobile class plant their homes, far from the city's madding crowd. Her streets are paved and wide; water supply hardly fails, population density is low, and there is a car in every driveway. So when you talk about Ibadan, which place do you really mean? Is it the busy skyline of *Dugbe*, the commercial heart of Ibadan where Cocoa House, still trying to recover from almost brutal fire, stands, the 25 stories of it, a shining monument to those bygone days when the farmer was king and

cocoa was truly the tree of money? I remember the story my father brought back to Ikere the first time he saw this *ile awosifila* (the house you look till the cap falls off your head). His tale about it all looked so tall to us that it instantly became part of our oral lore. I also still remember my old man saying in a typically humorous, ironic way that everyone he saw at that "Ile Awon Agbe" (Farmers' House) was either in coat and tie or in a silk dress and highheeled shoes. The first day I encountered Cocoa House myself, the old myths evaporated, and the contradictions deftly pointed out earlier by my father stared me straight in the face.

For long, then, Cocoa House was the supreme commander of Ibadan heights, visible, from virtually every corner of the city's undualting terrain. It was an excursion site, a towering Mecca for all pilgrims lured hence by their faiths in the potency of the white man's magic.



Cocoa House monopolised the sky until the dramatic entry of Broking House, brainchild and property of Femi Johnson, visionary businessman and versatile artist who planted his own structure a scant hundred yards from the domain of its older rival. Broking House is not only newer, it is more modern, more futuristic with its lavishly

golden glass walls which mirror the grace and grass in its uneven surroundings; with its illuminated letters which spell its owner's name with distinctively yellow eloquence especially on dark nights. Johnson's tall poetry of glass and steel has bequeathed an array of like structures. In an era of banking boom, banks and financial houses are joining in the race for skyward extension of a predominantly sprawling city.

In other areas modernity seems to be gaining the upper hand. The throbbing markets of *Dugbe* and *Gbagi* have been relocated to the outskirts of the city, several miles from their former sites. The change of place is accompanied by a significant change of mode. The open market system of the former venues is yielding place to the "lock-up stall" transactions of the new. Government may boost its revenues from this new arrangement, but the open poetry of the indigenous market may well be the regrettable victim. For, tell me, who can chant hawking ditties in lock-up stalls?

Place. More places. Another port of call the University of Ibadan, the oldest university in Nigeria, and, no doubt, the most prestigious. Alma Mater of Soyinka, Africa's first Nobel Laureate in Literature, of Achebe, Ade Ajayi, Doyin Abiola, Omolayole, Higo, Bello, Aminu, Ifeajuna, Ciroma and thousands of other men and women in various fields and trades who passed through the university when its population was a few hundreds, and must be delightfully surprised to see the nearly 25,000 students who throng in their footsteps today. Many still talk nostalgically of those UCI (University College, Ibadan) days when they spoke real Queen's English, sat at dinner table in academic gown and mortar board, and relished the best meals that any country could offer the delicate appetite of a burgeoning elite. At this time, Ibadan University was a gown virtually far from its adjoining town: boarding a UCI- bound vehicle from Dugbe was like preparing for an elaborate out-of-town journey. Undergraduates then were rare, next to gods on earth. Alumni coming back now must wonder what town and gown have done to the distance between them: the university has not only merged with the tempo of the city; at the

moment an uneasy high-density village, Agbowo, sprawls only a stone throw from the university gates. But the UAC-built Trenchard Hall is still there, noted more for festive parties, now than for nervous examinations; U.I Tower Clock is still visible around the campus, though its hands are frequently like Maradona's "hand of God", either too fast or too slow for human comprehension.

Places, more places. Another set of gowns, a related set of dreams. A few kilometers from Ibadan University, on the same side of Oyo Road lies the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), a centre which true to its name, ministers to the interests of scholars and researchers from countless parts of the world. The first experience of the visitor is the imaginative topography of IITA. Some natural denizens of this landscape are left in their useful wildness, the tamed ones are handled in a manner which retains a little bit of their original flavour. Thus in the main, what we have here is a certain tampering with nature without completely upsetting its equilibrium.

But the IITA is not designed to be just an exercise in landscape and horticulture; its primary objective is the propagation of a science, which puts hunger to flight through the production of food crops that yield better and faster. Its experimental farms attest eloquently to this crusade. Here, all kinds of grafting and crossbreeding command attention, and some yields are so big, so unusual that they look veritably magical to the visiting eye.

The IITA is also a place unlike other places in Ibadan. Look right as you enter through its main drive, and you instantly think that you are in Florida in the United States, stand on the bridge at the foot of the lake and cast your gaze across the water, and you will be right to swear that you are in a European countryside. There is order here, there is harmony, there is a certain tranquility, which gives IITA the image of a place apart, where discipline is strict (some say severe), and lethargy is not condoned. Each time I visit the IITA, I come away with mixed feelings: happy that at least this kind of place is

possible in Nigeria, sad that it is possible at the moment largely, because the institute is mainly under foreign control. The IITA, then, is both an indictment and a possibility. It is not just a place; it is a parable.

And talking about places and parables, can there be a more suitable junction to reminisce about those spots, which once functioned as Ibadan City's house of dreams? The old British Council centre, for example, where, in addition to coming in contact with the best in English literature and language, I also had the opportunity of seeing many art exhibitions and listening to various talks and readings. Or the legendary Mbari centre where the ingenious Ulli Beier midwifed some of the most profound artistic talents in Africa. Here it was that I met (no, 'saw' will be a better word!) the prodigious Wole Soyinka for the first time in the sixties. A bearded, ample-maned, tempestuous, relentlessly creative young man, Soyinka was a sight to behold, an inspiration to ponder: his voice was so rich and vibrant that even if he could not carry me along with his metaphors, he did so with their sounding. So iconoclastic, so creatively different was this man in his Okene cloth *danshiki* that he just couldn't help becoming a role model for many people of my age who experienced his aura.

There was also Christopher Okigbo, patron-saint of modern Nigerian poetry, who enjoyed writing poetry and the softness of life. I was more overwhelmed by the music of his poetry than its meaning. J.P Clark came closest to writing the kind of poetry fairly within our comprehension. His images were rich and homely, imbued with an Achebe-like simplicity. But Clark's poetry was accessible in a way the poet himself was not. He was distant most of the time. There was also Demas Nwoko a profound artist whose verbal eloquence was no match for that of his paint brush. He was closest to Soyinka in mode of dressing and quite a sight too. Wale Ogunyemi, Tunji Oyelana were then flowers about to bloom. I remember in particular Ogunyemi's supple versatility and Oyelana's dark-speckled virtuosity.

This was a time to dream, a time to grow. Unfortunately, about a decade later, the British Council left, and artistic activities ceased at Mbari. The Nigerian civil war claimed Okigbo's life, and General Gowon put Soyinka behind bars. Soon after, these centres of artistic excellence became nests without their birds. Ibadan city has not regained this tempo ever since, despite brave efforts being made now by Odu Themes Meridian run by playwright Bode Sowande and Kave Klub founded and administered by the versatile architect, Kunle Bolarinwa.

In the past three decades or so, Ibadan city has passed through a series of transformations and metamorphoses. Like the rest of Nigeria the city too went from the plenitude of the oil boom to the bewildering austerity of the years after. One of the most obvious signs of the boom was the vivacity of Ibadan markets, in particular, the astounding variety of commercial goods at Dugbe, Gbagi, and Lebanon Street. Roadside markets sprang up everywhere, spotting textiles and electronic gadgets from virtually every corner of the globe.

Nightlife was vigorous, rich, and joyously noisy. New nightclubs sprang up on every street (there was a time I could count three of them in the stretch between the Sango junction and there Polytechnic, a distance of about one quarter kilometre. While old chestnuts like The Seven Sisters (near Liberty Stadium) could not resurrect with the booming seventies, veterans like grandstand (Oremeji) witnessed an increase of activity, while others spruced up themselves, purchased "heavy" instruments in consonance with *gbi-gbi-gban-gban* dictates of the disco tradition. A disco "joint" called Harmony erupted on the top floor of a three-storey building on Polytechnic Road; another one, Yesmina, conquered Lebanon Street with its sonic vibrations. But without doubt, the commanding heights of the disco epic in the mid seventies were at Chrisbo Gardens, Odo Ona where a refurbished mansion attracted night birds, and an enlarged, dark-lit dancing floor kept

enthusiastic crowds gyrating from dusk to dawn.

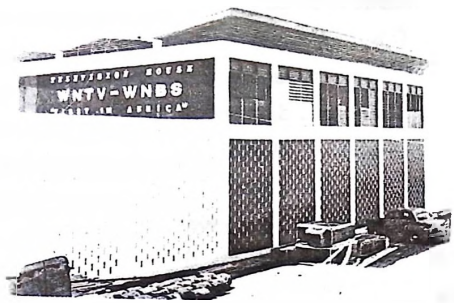
This, to many people, was Nigeria's finest hour: an oil-fueled economy bubbled like a water balloon; the naira was strong and proud. Money flowed, and so did beer and oblivious orgies. Ibadan city had her own share of Nigeria's festive seasons. Nightlife was relatively safe and free: Ibadan University students used to walk back to the campus from Dugbe or Mokola at 3 o'clock in the morning at a time when, except for the aerodrome, the entire stretch from Sango to UI was a thick and awesome forest! There were strident alarms about armed robbery in many parts of the country, but Ibadan remained ostensibly immune, intriguingly quiet. That is, until its own bubble burst, and the season's musketeers entered the city with bullets in their handshake.

Places. People(s). Transformations. Walking through haunts and joints in Ibadan city so friendly, so familiar in the seventies, I am forcibly drawn to things that have been. Some places have taken on new places. In some instances both name and "place" are gone, only their memory remains. Take, once again, the British Council Building at Dugbe, an erstwhile artistic centre now hemmed in by giant banks. Or the famed Mbari squatting anonymously now in a row of SAP*-afflicted shacks. Does Soyinka still cast a look as he drives by his former Adamasingba roost? What could Okigbo say if he should suddenly rise from the grave today? How many times would Ulli Beier shake his head?

Still other transformations. Who could have believed two decades ago that where the earthy Paradise Hotel used to stand would now be the proud host to Femi Johnson's futuristic Broking House? Hotels and nightlife generally seem to be vulnerable pawns in the entire chess of historical change. Metro Hotel, first to the left as one turns from Lagos Bypass to Ososami Road, has now become something of a flower depot. And nightriders of the seventies Idowu Animashaun, Prince Adekunle, Captain Jide Ojo, etc.

* Structural Adjustment Policy — an economic policy with severe activity measures

Ekotedo, a famous red-light district dotted with brothels, which insisted on being called hotels, has also shaped up to the compulsive puritanism of recent times. The building housing one of its most frequented hotels in those days was recently converted into a hospital.



Further transformations. WNBS/TV*, which prided itself on being "First in Africa," proceeded from its status as the exclusive property of the Western State to being one of the stations in a national network. Its state owned, UHF stable mate, TSOS* arrived in 1993, becoming BCOS* after integrating its radio and television services a couple of years later. Even Radio Nigeria, Structuraal Adjustment Policy - an economic policy with severe austerity measures for the most curious reason, changed from the handier, neater NBC* to FRCN*. Whatever new names they decide to bear, whatever areas of operation they elect to pursue, one fact is certain: these broadcasting stations have enriched social and cultural life in an immeasurable way through their ingenuity in pressing a largely foreign mass media technology into the service of a mainly indigenous audience within their limits as government-owned organisations. With five different broadcasting channels in its expansive domain, Ibadan occupies a status that many African cities would envy today.

Ibadan, that crowded collage of streets without shoulders, roads with a thousand *orita*, the town-planners' nightmare, but also a roomy haven with

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* WNBS/TV — Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service/Television
* TSOS — Television Service of Oyo State
* BCOS — Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State
* NBC — Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation
* FRCN — Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria

a seat for every comer, an accommodating story in a lore of contending tongues. What metaphor can adequately capture the city's many-toned complexion, the nuanced cadence of its accent? From the robust ribaldry of Okebadan festivals to the pious pontifications of mosques and churches, from the lofty majesty of the hills to the watery wrath of Ogunpa, from the exquisite layout of Bodija to the boisterous labyrinth of *Popo Yeosa*, Ibadan lives every day in bewildering contradictions.

Which is why Ibadan is a city, which writes its own history. In that history, every house is a griot; the streets are delicate footprints of passing seasons. J.P. Clark's inimitable eye sees Ibadan as "running splash of rust and gold." As I plan this large city from the shadow of Mapo Hall, I ponder the touching accuracy of Clark's canvas, just as I envision a time when that running gold will have no place for any rust.

BACKGROUND OF SUCCESSION TO THE EXALTED OLUBADAN THRONE

Jare Ajayi

FROM its establishment about the 17th century, few, if any, were Ibadan leaders who died from 'natural' causes. Their deaths were either in battle or at the hand(s) of assassin(s). This is hardly surprising given the fact the town growing out of the internecine wars that ravaged Yorubaland between the 16th and 19th centuries, was initially populated and administered by restless, combative military men who, even at peace times always ventured out in search of martial adventures.

To prevent the restless energy of his people from being directed at him, therefore, a clever *baale* (as the Ibadan head was then known) often encouraged his army to unleash wars on other towns. Invariably, however these military adventures only created more instability. The natural consequence of these frequent struggles is reflected partly in the fact that the longest serving king in the city's history spent 16 years on the throne. Many died within the year of their ascending the throne whilst a tenure of two to three years was often the norm.

This was the situation until the first half of the 20th century when the advent of British colonialsm put a stop to the internecine wars and the attendant instability in Yorubaland.

History indicates that what is now Ibadan was a fairly thick forest which was owned, by no one in particular. The place was called *Igbo Ipara* (Ipara Forest) after Ipara trees which grew there in large numbers. It was seen as a dreadful jungle to which criminals were usually sent.

In time, this no man's land came to be settled by people who were dissatisfied with their lives in their native abode, from places such as the northern, eastern and southern Yoruba towns of Ijebu, Oke Ona/Gbagura, Ikire, Apomu and Ife. By and by the settlement began to develop its own character. And being a junction, *Orita* i.e. crossroads to major towns, it was not long before its potential as a market town was noticed and exploited.

As the settlement grew and its inhabitants became more comfortable, their normally aggressive and war-like nature gave way to a more accommodating disposition. Since Egba communities of *Oke Ona* and *Gbagura* were the immediate neighbours of *Igbo Ipara*, they initially formed the greater majority of the population of the settlement.

It was not long before the importance of this budding town spread. Oral tradition has it that around this time, a quarrel arose in Ile-Ife, cradle of the Yoruba race, between Lagelu, a minor war chief and Jagun, possibly the then Ooni or King.

Whilst the cause of the quarrel is still shrouded in myth, its aftermath, about which certainty was expressed, was that the minor chief, his family and supporters had to leave the town. This was not strange, since the practice at that time was for princes and aristocrats who lost in a struggle to leave the town and find domicile elsewhere. From Ile-Ife, Lagelu first took refuge at Ejigbo and when he learnt about the burgeoning settlement of *Igbo Ipara* right at the crossroads of some major trade routes, he decided to relocate there.Given his royal background it was not surprising that the former Ife

war chief became the head of the settlement.

Gradually, a formal system of administration, enactment and observance of byelaws to regulate the affairs of the inhabitants began to take shape. Towns in the neighbouring areas did not fail to notice this with the result that the nomenclature, *Igbo Ipara* soon gave way to Orita, and later, a descriptive one. *Ilu Eba Odan*, (the town by the savannah). It was this name that was in time contracted to Eba-dan and then Ibadan.

Shortly after he arrived, Lagelu consulted *Ifa* to determine whether to stay and what the future of the settlement would be. *Ose Meji* was the name of *Ifa* that emerged that day – hence the claim that *'Ifa Ose Meji lo te Ibadan'* (It's Ifa Ose Meji that appeared on the divination tray when Ibadan was to be founded).

It is necessary to mention here that *Oja'ba* which is today regarded as the nucleus or source of Ibadan metropolis was actually the second spot to be domiciled by Ibadan people. The first one was around the present day Awotan on Akufo road not too far from Eleyele hill in the northwestern axis of Ibadan of today. Eleyele hill was to provide the people a refuge when wars were waged against them. It was on this hill they turned the fruit *oro* into food, hence the saying, *'Ibadan omo ajoro sun.'*

After the death of Lagelu and his burial by Eleyele hill, the town moved to what was called Ori-iyangi or Ojaaba, as the area is now called. As the new town grew, it attracted strangers and war-mongers from neighbouring towns and villages, who attacked it, just as it attacked other towns and communities. One of such invasions was carried out by combined troops of Owu, Oyo and Ife; after the people fled, the invading armies simply moved into the deserted town, ultimately settled there.

Among the warlords of this era were Maye, Labosinde, Oluyole, Lakanle Oluyedun, Alesinloye, Sinngusin, Ayejenku, Lamodi, Ege, Okansa, Abitiko Babalola, Ope-Agbe, Oluwaye Gbogboade, Adelakun, Osun, Tubosun, Olufayo Ogundiwin, Lajubu, Akinluyi, Oderinlo, Bankole, Tooki, Onibudo,

Ayeye, Keji. There were, among several others but these became prominent. Some of them even became *baales*.

Little, is known about the leadership situation of the growing town after Lagelu. Record has it, however, that the following led the town in its early days. They are Lagelu, Maye, Oluyedun, and Lakanle.

As peace was restored, it was realized that contribution to societal upliftment was feasible in other areas, thus allowance was made for non-military individuals who had distinguished themselves to have the chance of becoming Olubadan. Two lines of heirs-to-the-throne were thus created; the Balogun line from which Baale or Olubadan had traditionally emerged and the Olubadan line, the new creation. The two lines alternate the right of choosing a candidate for the stool. Since its institution, the order has been religiously respected.

As mentioned earlier, it was during the latter days of colonialism in 1946 that the 'Lines of Succession' became formally institutionalized. This was in the form of a byelaw called 'Ibadan Native Authority Declaration' of 19th August 1946, and passed by the city's colonial authority.

The byelaw reads:

1. The chiefs shall be graded into three divisions
   a. The Head Chief – Olubadan
   b. The Senior Chiefs who shall be divided into two lines: -
   Olubadan Line, Balogun Line
   c. The Junior Chiefs – All others

2. The Otun Olubadan and the Balogun shall be of equal status and shall in future, receive equal salaries.

3. The senior chiefs shown in 2 and the councillors who are members of the Native Authority shall form the body responsible for the selection of the

new Olubadan and shall be authorized so to select. Any member of this body who may be put forward as a candidate for the post of Olubadan shall not attend its meeting nor have a voice in the final decision.

4. The holder of any title in either the Olubadan line or the Balogun Line in the rank of senior chiefs shall be eligible for the post of Olubadan but the two lines shall not be eligible.

5. Succession shall be determined and pronounced not later than one week after the vacancy occurs.

6. During the interregnum, the Senior Chiefs of the Line whose turn it is to provide a successor shall preside at meetings of the 'Native Authority and perform other functions normally performed by the Olubadan. He shall also deputise for the Olubadan whenever the latter is absent.

Realising that the law was silent on the question of succession to other traditional offices in the city, the Native Authority passed a resolution on the 16th of January 1950. The new resolution also reinforced the stand of the earlier Declaration on the appointment of Olubadan as well as the office being superior to any other traditional title in the city. It reads: -

(a) Appointment of Chiefs other than the Olubadan shall be effected by automatic promotion of the Chief next in seniority in either the Olubadan or Balogun line of Chiefs.

(b) The Olubadan shall be chosen from the line whose turn it is to present the next Olubadan. The Olubadan may be chosen from any of the first four Senior Chiefs on the Balogun line when it is the turn of that line to present an Olubadan. When the Chief presented as Olubadan by either line is not

accepted by the Council the line shall be asked to present another candidate to replace the one first presented."

In 1955 and 1983 attempts were made to subvert the order, especially in regard to the seniority aspect. The attempt in 1955 was made by politicians of the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC) who regarded the then Balogun Akinyele – the heir apparent going by the rotational and seniority arrangement – as a sympathizer of the Action Group, a rival political party in the West. Elements within the NCNC nominated the then Osi Balogun, a more junior person for the post. Because it subverted the laid down procedure, the nomination was rebuffed. Thus, the then new experiment of rotation and seniority was saved.

In 1983, it was the issue of the then candidate and therefore considered by some not qualified, Chief Oloyede Asanike not being literate that almost robbed him of the exalted office. But again, the laid down order eventually prevailed.

IBADAN CHIEFTAINCY SYSTEM

Akogun Lekan Alabi

Every recognized family in Ibadan is expected to be headed by a male member called Mogaji. Anyone so elected to be the Mogaji of his family must have the majority support of the family, but a unanimous support is the ideal.

The Mogaji-elect must be a person of proven ability and character. His nomination by his family is thereafter communicated to the Olubadan-in-Council for confirmation. The Olubadan will conduct an investigation and if the Mogaji-elect is found to be of good character, ability, and is popular, a letter of "invitation for interview at the Olubadan's palace" will be forwarded to the aspirant. On the appointed date, the Mogaji-elect accompanied by his relations and well wishers will appear before the Olubadan-in-Council. If there is no written petition or opposition to his nomination, the secretary to the Olubadan will then read the formal application for Olubadan's recognition by the family of Mogaji-elect. When the consent is given by the Olubadan-in-Council, the Mogaji-elect will then prostrate for the Olubadan and his Senior Chiefs present.

The royal Code of Conduct will be read, customary dues in form of cash, drinks and materials will be presented by the new Mogaji to the Olubadan, senior chiefs, and palace staff.

Traditional rites and prayers will be offered by the Baba Kekere (a sort of ADC to the Olubadan) in the palace after which the new Mogaji, his relations and well-wishers will depart the palace for his family house to conclude the traditional rites and entertainment of guests.

If he performs his customary duties well, a Mogaji will be promoted to the Ibadan traditional council whenever a vacancy/vacancies occur, by the Olubadan in consultation with his senior chiefs. The first of the twenty-two steps to Olubadanship, for a Mogaji is promotion to Jagun Olubadan.

Rules on honorary chieftaincy titles are less strict and the Olubadan is free to consider indigenes and non-indigenes for honorary chieftaincy titles.

THE PROMOTIONAL STRUCTURE OF OLUBADAN CHIEFTAINCY LINEAGE IS AS FOLLOWS:

	Egbe Agba	***Egbe Balogun***
	Civil Line	***Military Line***
1.	Otun Olubadan	Balogun
2.	Osi Olubadan	Otun Balogun
3.	Asipa	Osi Balogun
4.	Ekerin Olubadan	Asipa Balogun
5.	Ekarun Olubadan	Ekerin Balogun
6.	Abese	Ekarun Balogun
7.	Maye	Abese
8.	Ekefa Olubadan	Maye
9.	Agbaakin	Ekefa
10.	Aare Alasa	Agbaakin
11.	Ikolaba	Aare Alaasa
12.	Asaaju	Ikolaba
13.	Ayingun	Asaaju
14.	Aare ago	Aare ago
15.	Langunna	Langunna
16.	Oota	Oota
17.	Aare Egbe Omo	Aare Egbe Omo
18.	Gbonnka	Gbonnka
19.	Aare Onibon	Aare Onibon
20.	Bada	Bada
21.	Ajia	Ajia
22.	Jagun	Jagun

PAST TRADITIONAL HEADS OF IBADAN SINCE THE THIRD SETTLEMENT

1.	Lagelu, the Jagun of Yoruba land	
2.	Baale Maye	
3.	Baale Oluyedun	
4.	Baale Lakanle	
5.	Bashorun Oluyole (The first Bashorun)	1850
6.	Baale Oderinlo	1850
7.	Baale Opeagbe	1850-1851
8.	Baale Oyeshile Olugbede	1851-1864
9.	Baale Ibikunle	1864
10.	Bashorun Ogunmola	1865-1867
11.	Baale Akere I	1867-1870
12.	Baale Orowusi	1870-1871
13.	Aare Latosa	1871-1885
14.	Baale Ajai Oshungbekun	1885-1893
15.	Baale Fijabi I	1893-1895
16.	Baale Oshuntoki	1895-1897
17.	Baale Fajinmi	1897-1902
18.	Baale Mosaderin	1902-1904
19.	Baale Dada Opadare	1904-1907
20.	Baale Sunmonu Apanpa	1907-1910
21.	Baale Akintayo Awanibaku Elenpe	1910-1912
22.	Baale Irefin	1912-1914
23.	Baale Shitu (Omo Aare Latosa)	1914-1925
24.	Baale Oyewole Foko	1925-1929

Olubadan Okunola Abasi
(The first Olubadan) 1930-1946

Olubadan Fijabi II 1948-1952

Oba Isaac Babalola
Akinyele 1955-1964

Oba Yesufu Kobiowu
July 1964 - Dec. 1964

Oba Salawu Akanni
Aminu 1965-1971

Oba Shittu Akintola
Oyetunde II 1971-1976

Oba Gbadamosi Akanbi
Adebimpe 1976-1977

Oba Daniel Tayo Akinbiyi
1977-1982

Oba Yesufu Asanike I
1983-1993

Oba Emmanuel Adegboyega
Adeyemo Operinde 1994-1999

25.	Olubadan Okunola Abasi (The first Olubadan)	1930-1946
26.	Olubadan Akere I	1946
27.	Olubadan Oyetunde I	1946
28.	Olubadan Akintunde Bioku	1947-1948
29.	Olubadan Fijabi II	1948-1952
30.	Olubadan Alli Iwo	1952
31.	Olubadan Apete	1952-1955
32.	Oba Isaac Babalola Akinyele	1955-1964
33.	Oba Yesufu Kobiowu	July 1964 - Dec. 1964
34.	Oba Salawu Akanni Aminu	1965-1971
35.	Oba Shittu Akintola Oyetunde II	1971-1976
36.	Oba Gbadamosi Akanbi Adebimpe	1976-1977
37.	Oba Daniel Tayo Akinbiyi	1977-1982
38.	Oba Yesufu Asanike I	1983-1993
39.	Oba Emmanuel Adegboyega Adeyemo Operinde	1994-1999
40.	Oba Yinusa Ogundipe Arapasowu I	1999 -

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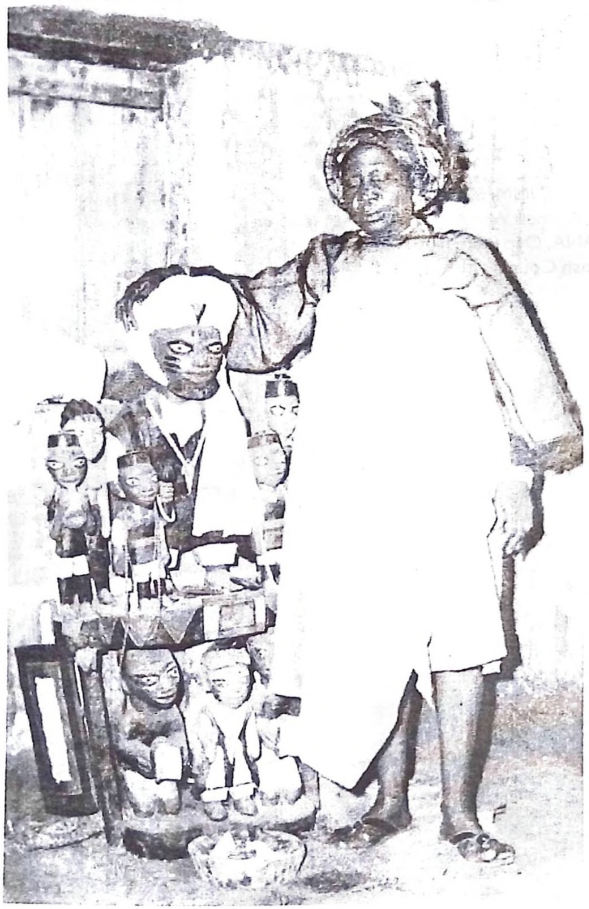

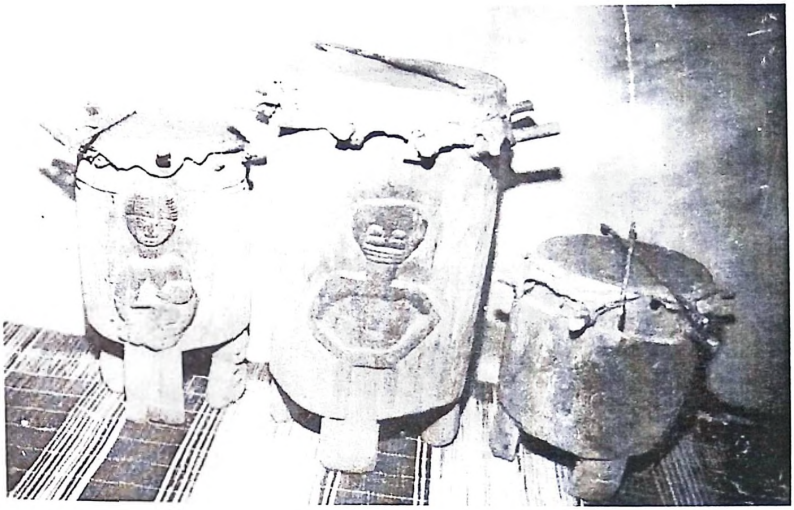

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