

## ÀLÓ — YORUBA STORY SONGS (Excerpts from material collected in Nigeria)

by

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The Yoruba speaking people of Western Nigeria show in most of their music forms a strong Arabic influence. With the exception of the *Ijesha* subtribe and to a certain extent of the *Ekiti* most ethnic groups sing strictly in unison, with a tendency of the soloists towards vocal melisma and the kind of wavy intonation well-known from Arabic-influenced music areas in West Africa. This was particularly obvious in the town Oshogbo, where I spent several months while collecting the songs published here.<sup>1</sup>

Well-known forms of music such as *Şakara*, *Akpala*, *Apañrañ* and others, which are all pentatonic, demonstrate the Arabic influence in Yoruba music. No multi-part techniques occur in any of the traditional forms of Yoruba music heard in the area of Oshogbo and many other towns in Western Nigeria. Only in the more recent *Juju* music a re-interpreted form of heptatonic harmony has penetrated. As a technique of singing in parallel thirds, its origin probably lies in other areas of West Africa. Its presence cannot exhaustively be explained as "European" or "Latin-American" influence.

In the background of the general *Şakara/Akpala* outlook of Yoruba music there exist, however, some less-known types of song in which the Arabic influence is characteristically absent. It is in this context that the *Àlò* story songs are of particular interest. Mainly songs of parents, grandparents and their children, they are quite different from the general trend of present-day Yoruba music and seem to suggest the existence of an older autochthonous form of Yoruba songs in the general West African context. It is also characteristic that Arabic musical influence ceases abruptly in the area of the town Ilesha, from where a region of multi-part singing begins to stretch towards Benin and the coast. Among the 15 songs published here, the last two (No. 14 and 15) are from Ilesha, No. 13 is from Ila via Ilesha, while all the others come from the area either of Oshogbo or Ogbomosho.

What is *Àlò*? — *Àlò* is a story containing a short song. The name *Àlò* refers to both: story and song. *Àlò* is still told everywhere in Yoruba country. After sunset children and older people assemble in the compound. The one who knows a story shouts: *Àlò ó . . . !* And the community answers: *Àlò* (with a low tone). Then the story teller starts narrating. Whenever the little song in the tale comes, everybody joins in singing and clapping. Usually the sole accompaniment is clapping in a steady pulse. At the end of the story the story teller explains the moral. Then he says: "I have three bells in my mouth, they will ring now". And he puts his index finger into his mouth, presses it against the inner side of his cheek, draws the lips round, and pulls it out quickly to make a sound similar to a cork pulled out of a bottle. He has to do it three times, then everybody is satisfied and happy, and he has proved, "that he did not tell a lie." (If he had told a lie, he would certainly have laughed, and this would have caused him to fail in his effort of making the "bells ring.")

<sup>1</sup> My collection of (up to now) 73 *Àlò* stories with their songs, of which 15 are published in this Journal, is one of the results of two visits to Nigeria. At first I spent three months at Oshogbo, living with the family of the playwright Mr. Duro Ladipo from July to October, 1960. I came back to Nigeria in June, 1963 and spent another four months partly at Oshogbo and partly at Iragbidij, a small town in the same area.

I am deeply indebted to Mr. Duro Ladipo and his brother Gboyega as well as several members of Ladipo's opera ensemble, who have helped me in collecting and recording *Àlò* from people at Oshogbo and other towns. Likewise I thank Prof. Ulli Beier for having encouraged this work and for considerable help in correcting our translations of the Yoruba texts.

Recordings of the songs and stories with detailed documentation of each item are preserved in the Phonographic Archive of the Austrian Academy of Science, Vienna. The transcriptions were, however, not made from these recordings, but from learning to sing *Àlò* by myself. I remember with gratitude those who have spent hours in teaching me *Àlò* songs: Gboyega Ladipo, Taiye and Kehinde Ladipo, Lamidi Gbadamosi, K. A. Falade, D. B. Awoniyi, Phebian Awoniyi, Akin Awoniyi, Oyewole Balogun and many others.

When the first story teller has finished, another starts. Some are experts, but there seems to be nothing like professional story telling. A story can be related by anyone who knows. Although older people usually have the greatest perfection and can really captivate their audience, even small children may be given a chance to show what they have learned of the art.

The educational use of Yoruba story telling is obvious. *Aló* provides an inner education. By means of symbols the stories show how one can cope with the powers of one's own soul. These powers are personified and imaged in the stories. The "moral" of the story shows what is acceptable to the society.

A good number of *Aló* are fables, particularly about the cunning and funny tortoise, others reflect the life of man in Yoruba society. Generally there is a great variety of motives and the few stories published here cannot be more than a superficial introduction into the richness of Yoruba folklore.

A peculiar motive is that of spirits borrowing parts of the body of animals or plants in the forest in order to appear as human beings in the world of men. This occurs in a number of variants in Yoruba stories. When the spirits return to the forest they have to give back the borrowed parts to their owners. (Compare No. 9).

A number of *Aló* motives have made their way into modern literature. Amos Tutuola and others have definitely been inspired by the *Aló*.

There is usually *one* song in each story. It may be repeated as such or in a text variant two or three times, as is required by the contents of the tale. The songs are generally in the call-and-response form. Some have solo passages. (Compare No. 1 and 11). The chorus phrase is basically unchanging, whereas the cantor steadily changes words and melody of his statements.

If taken literally, the text of the chorus phrase is often a mere complex of syllables without a verbal meaning; see for example "*Sembelekeṣe*" (in No. 4), "*Inanga ntere gu ntere inanga ntere*" (No. 6), and "*Sinda wa ereḡeko*" (No. 13). In some cases there may be a verbal meaning behind such phrases only unknown to contemporary story tellers. It is imaginable that some of the "meaningless" chorus phrases, which all my interpreters were unable to translate, are ancient language or come from another language area. This can, however, only be solved as the case arises.

In addition a good number of such text phrases *imply* a meaning although not a verbal one. They stimulate associations in the mind of the singers. Sometimes the meaning can hardly be pursued and defined in precise terms, and in other cases it is quite obvious.

The responding chorus often takes words out of the cantor's phrase and mingles them with "senseless" syllables to form a rhythmic pattern. For example: "*Ijumo kenke Ijumo re*" (No. 7) contains "Adejumo", the name of the hero in the story. And "*d'ebin*" (go back) in No. 8, is worked into the dance-like phrase "*D'ebin terere d'ebin.*"

A number of chorus phrases are onomatopoeic. Others characterize a person or a certain pattern of movement. "*Gbinrin*", for example, is an onomatopoeic syllable construction imitating the sound of dropping iron, in story No. 3 that of a hoop. In the chorus phrase of this song it is worked into the pattern "*Gbinrin ajalubale gbinrin.*" The chorus phrase "*Erin yéyè erin yéyè*" (No. 5) contains "*Erin*" (= elephant) and suggests the dull movements of a walking elephant.

The cantor's statement and the chorus' response often follow each other without interference. Sometimes they overlap. Extensive overlapping can be found in example No. 14 (*Eleluju*) from Ilesha. But here, as in many similar cases, the simultaneous sounds arising from overlapping of cantor and chorus should not be mistaken for the "beginning" of polyphony or harmony. The overlapping is an expression of formal and not harmonic principles. Hence any note may sound together with another, as can be seen from example No. 14.

Real harmony is found in the following example No. 15 (*Yé só mu 'rù fín mi?*). In this second song from Ilesha the chorus is split up into two parallel lines aiming at a consonant harmony in thirds.

In some *Aló* songs the chorus phrase appears at first in its basic form and then *transposed*. There is only one example in the present selection of 15 songs. (No. 8: *Ol'ókó d'èbin*). But I know many more songs in my collection where it occurs. In song No. 8 the cantor sings a series of statements ending with C or D. Among these suddenly one occurs ending with G. The chorus phrase has to follow the statement in pitch and, as a consequence, is tonally transposed a *fifth higher*.

The pattern of transposition in the *Aló* songs is this: C becomes G, D becomes A, and E becomes C. The essential thing is that transposition of the chorus phrase usually occurs when the cantor's phrase suddenly ends with a high note (a fourth or a fifth above the usual ending).

Most *Aló* songs we collected are pentatonic. Hexa- or heptatonic ones are those from Ilesha.

As to the tone system of the people living in the area of Oshogbo (*Oyo* subdivision) there is no point of support for presuming that their pentatonic scale might be tempered. As far as I can hear the intervals are intoned as pure ones.

This cannot be said of the heptatonic Ilesha. At least in those songs where part singing in parallel thirds occurs, there is a tendency of correcting the intonation in order to establish a well-sounding harmony on *all* steps of the scale. Usually minor thirds, which are not accepted as well-sounding, are corrected towards major thirds. The result is a great number of neutral sounds. Example No. 15 shows parallel harmony in a story song from Ilesha. The notes written as C and G are to be imagined as approximately a quarter tone or more higher than notated.

The *rhythm* of *Aló* songs develops along a straight series of clapping beats. The cantor starts clapping alone and the community may join when the chorus phrase is sung. Even in the few cases where there is no clapping a sort of basic pulse is thought as underlying the singing. Some singers have suggested to me further rhythms which could be laid under certain songs. I have written these patterns down, although it is up to the performer whether he would like to use them or only the clapping pulse. (See No. 4 and No. 9).

A typical pattern that may be used for the accompaniment of some *Aló* songs is referred to by the Yoruba of Oshogbo as *Omele*. It is the well-known "standard pattern"<sup>2</sup> consisting of a sequence of 5 + 7 units within a twelve-units summary meter.<sup>3</sup> It can appear in twelve different inversions according to its starting point.

Along the rhythmic basis of clapping pulse and *Omele* pattern, rounded off by a summary meter of either 12, 16 or 24 units, the melodic line runs in different "additive" phrases. The additive rhythms are vital and often excitingly off the basic beat of the clapping hands. They should, however, not be interpreted as a sort of "hemiola" technique. The singers do not imagine additive rhythms as being composed of small metric particles such as 2 and 3. This is how it may look on paper, but they think in larger entities: in melodic *phrases* which correspond to verbal phrases. There is nothing like alternative addition of 2 and 3 in the melodic rhythm of West African songs but an addition of *phrases* having different horizontal extension. This corresponds exactly to Prof. Kwabena Nketia's statement that musicians in Ghana think in patterns<sup>4</sup>.

Consequently such phrases may become shifted as a whole at certain points of the song in relation to the clapping pulse and the summary meter. Examples are the cantor's

<sup>2</sup> Anthony King: "Employments of the 'Standard Pattern' in Yoruba Music", *African Music*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> A discussion of the term "summary meter" (Summationsmetrum) can be found in my article "Musikgestaltung in Afrika", *Neues Afrika*, Heft 5, Mai 1961.

<sup>4</sup> J. H. Nketia: "Folk Songs of Ghana", London, 1963.

J. H. Nketia: "African Music in Ghana", Accra 1962.

phrases “*Olókó d’èbín, olókó d’èbín*” (No. 8) and “*Ara orun ara orun o*” (No. 6). A very instructive one is the chorus phrase “*Erin yéyé erin yéyé*” in the song No. 5. The chorus repeats the words “*Erin yeye*” twice, each time with different tones. Musically “*Erin yeye*” has a length of seven small units. The chorus phrase is built on the addition of just two such groups. In relation to the beat the second repetition of “*Erin yeye*” therefore becomes shifted as a result of its odd length of seven small units. A similar procedure is very common in the *Aló* songs.

From these examples we can see that verbal groups of uneven lengths must as a result *cross* the basic clapping beat at times, which consequently produces what has been described as “off-beat phrasing of melodic accents”.<sup>5</sup>

One more interesting example should be pointed out. Look how the words “*omo rè*” in the song “*Olúrómí*” (No. 1) are treated. Here, and in other forms of West African music, it is essential to understand the *language* background of what appears in a merely musical analysis as “off-beat phrasing” or off-beat accentuation.

There is another phenomenon I would like to consider. In many Yoruba songs we find syllables where the sounds *m* or *n* fall on a clapping beat. Compare: “*Ko-n-ko-lo-la-ko*” (song No. 2) or “*O-lu-ro-m-bi*” (song No. 1). These *m* and *n* sounds are considered musically as syllables and can bear one note. Their sound is rather mute and when falling on a clapping beat, they appear rather unaccentuated, almost like a rest. The neighbouring syllables are contrasting and consequently appear *over* accentuated. This again gives the impression of an off-beat.<sup>6</sup>

Yoruba as everybody knows is a tone language. In the song “*Mo ri kèké kan*” (No. 3) this is shown in an instructive way. The story relates about three King’s daughters, two of whom have names which are exactly alike in their consonants and vowels. Only by the speech tones can the two names and thus the two daughters be distinguished: *Opobipobi* and *Òpòbìpòbì*. In the song the speech tones have to be preserved, otherwise nobody would know which of the two daughters is spoken of. This is done in the way shown in score No. 3.

The melodic ductus has to follow the *direction* of the speech tones. The actual notes are, however, not predestined. All intervals are merely suggested roughly and the inventor of such traditional songs can well put a third instead of a second and the like. This has been extensively demonstrated by Ekundayo Phillips.<sup>7</sup>

## CONTENTS OF THE STORIES

### 1. *Olúrómí*

*Olúrómí*, the trader, had a fine little daughter called “Red-as-palm-oil”. Near the market was an *Irókò* tree<sup>8</sup> to whom all traders made an offering before they started to sell. This assured good profit. Some promised goats, others promised sheep. One day *Olúrómí* promised her daughter. That day all her goods were sold and she earned money as never before. But when all the market people went home she passed by the *Irókò* tree timidly because she did not really mean to give up her daughter.

That night the *Irókò* came to her home and sang:

*People promise goats, goats, goats.*

*People promise sheep, sheep, sheep.*

*Olúrómí promised her child, her child “Red-as-palm-oil”.*

*Olúrómí o, janjan, Irókò, janjan.*<sup>9</sup>

But *Olúrómí* hid the girl and the *Irókò* went away.

The chief was informed of this matter. He decided that *Olúrómí* should give her

<sup>5</sup> Richard A. Waterman: “African Influence on the Music in the Americas” in *Sol Tax: Acculturation in the Americas*. Chicago 1952.

<sup>6</sup> See also: Gerhard Kubik: “Beziehungen zwischen Musik und Sprache in Afrika” in *Neues Afrika*, Heft 1, January 1962.

<sup>7</sup> T. K. E. Phillips: “Yoruba Music”, published by the African Music Society, 1952.

<sup>8</sup> Domicile of the *Irókò* ghost.

<sup>9</sup> The chorus phrase “Janjan, Irókò, janjan” imitates the slow steps of the approaching *Irókò* ghost.

daughter to the Irókò tree. So you see, you should never promise that which you have no intention of fulfilling.

2. *Omọde meta nsere* (Three children are playing)

Once three children boasted to each other: one said, he could shoot the heavens, one said he could climb a coconut tree, and the third said he could swim the ocean. Tortoise happened to hear all this and told the king what they had said. The king was interested: "Can you bring them? If they cannot do what they claim I shall kill them myself, but if they can I shall let them share my wealth."

When their mothers heard of this they wept that their children had said such things to endanger their lives.

The king assembled his chiefs and prepared a feast. The children were brought and told to perform the marvels they claimed to be able to do.

The first boy stood with his bow and arrow in a circle of chiefs and townspeople who sang:

*Konkololako!*<sup>10</sup>

*Three children are playing.*

*One of them says: I will shoot the heavens.*

*One of them says: I will climb a coconut tree.*

*One of them says: I will swim the ocean.*

*Shoot the heavens, shoot the heavens, shoot the heavens.*

*Climb the coconut tree, climb the coconut tree, climb the coconut tree.*

*Swim the ocean, swim the ocean, swim the ocean.*

*Konkololako.*

While they sang he shot the heavens. Then the king began to fear for his riches and he ordered a slave to smear *okro*<sup>11</sup> on the stem of the coconut tree to make it slippery. The next day spectators assembled again, and they were surprised how easily the small boy climbed the coconut tree despite its being slippery.

The next day the king had the people assemble at a treacherous spot on the coast hoping the boy would be drowned. He jumped from a high rock and swam until he reached the end of the world and he returned safely.

The king had to divide his riches among the three children and the tortoise. The mothers who had wept were laughing now.

3. *Mo ri kèkè kan* (I saw a hoop).

Once a king had three daughters whom he never allowed to leave the palace. No one knew their names. Many suitors had come to ask for the king's daughters but they could not name one and they were killed. Many young men had already failed when tortoise appeared saying he wished to marry all three daughters. Everyone just laughed and the king warned him what would happen if he could not name them on an appointed day. But tortoise was confident.

First he discovered the spot in the palace garden where the girls played. Then he took three beautiful hoops up into a big tree near that spot. When the girls came to play he let one drop: Gbinrin . . . gbinrin . . . The first daughter who saw it called:

"Opobipobi, come and see what I have found!"

She came and just at that moment he dropped another. Then the second daughter called:

"Opóbìpòbì, a hoop has fallen from heaven!"

But the third was so far away that the first two had wandered off by the time she got to the hoop. Then tortoise let drop the last hoop and this one called:

<sup>10</sup> "Konkololako" and "Konkola" are phrases symbolizing rhythmically the playing of children.

<sup>11</sup> Yoruba vegetable.

“Oripolobi, come and see a wonder!”

Then all three came and looked at the hoops and sang:

*I saw a hoop.  
Opobipobi!  
Opobipobi!  
Oripolobi!  
I saw a hoop.*

Tortoise went to the king and announced his success. But the king assembled all his people to witness his execution. But on that day tortoise did know all the three names and the king had to give his three daughters in marriage.

4. *Aja aja o, ràn mi lèrù* (Dog, dog, help me carry my load).

In the old days, when tortoise and dog were friends, there was a great famine. One day tortoise told dog of a farmer who had yam in his house and that there was a secret entrance to the storeroom.

That evening they hid near the farmer’s house until they thought he was asleep. Then they entered the storeroom through a hole in the wall and found yam piled up to the ceiling. Tortoise ate until he was completely satisfied, dog ate a lot too. But when they had loaded some yam to carry off, tortoise was so heavy from eating he could hardly move. On the way back he stopped:

*Dog, dog, help me carry my load!  
Dog, dog, help me carry my load!  
If you don’t help me carry, I shall call the farmer.  
If the farmer hears it, he will sell you.  
Dog, dog, help me to carry my load!*

But dog paid no attention to tortoise and continued on his way.

The next morning, the farmer discovered him:

“Now tortoise, what sort of death would you prefer?”

Then tortoise explained that he was not the sole culprit; dog had helped. He added further that he could show the farmer the dog’s house. The farmer agreed and let tortoise lead him.

In the meantime dog had hidden the loot and lay on a mat as if he were seriously ill. When tortoise arrived with the farmer he sang the song he had sung the evening before. Dog did not stir, so the farmer broke down the door only to find dog lying on the mat whimpering:

“How can you come to do evil to a dying dog?”

Then the dog pointed out the impossibility of his stealing the yams since he had lain ill for seven days. But the farmer did not believe him and took him to the king’s court. The dog trembled in fear but his mother slipped a fresh egg into his mouth.

At court the questioning began. First the farmer then tortoise. It was the dog’s turn. He did not answer immediately but crushed the egg in his mouth and spat it out before the judges who all shrank in disgust to one side to avoid the mess.

“Oh” said the dog, “this is the terrible swelling that has troubled me for seven days.”

With that the judge discharged dog and imprisoned tortoise.

5. *Erin kare’le o wa j’gba* (Elephant come home and become king!).

The king wished to sacrifice an elephant but since it was so difficult to capture one he promised great reward to his people if they could bring back one alive. Many tried but they failed. Then tortoise boasted that he could easily get an elephant if he had lots of *akara*<sup>12</sup> cooked in honey. The king was doubtful but he provided the *akara* balls and tortoise disappeared into the bush.

<sup>12</sup> Yoruba food: balls made of beans and cooked in fat. Only in the story are they cooked in honey.

When an elephant passed by the tortoise greeted him:

"Tell me, would you like to become a king?"

"I have no need to become one."

"But", continued tortoise, "a throne amongst men stands empty and they have decided to choose an elephant for their king."

Then he took an *akara* ball and put it in the elephant's trunk.

"This is the sort of food you will get there."

The *akara* ball pleased the elephant and tortoise put another in his trunk. Now it was easy to make this life attractive to the elephant and he sang, leading the elephant towards the town:

*Elephant come home and become a king!*

*Elephant come home and become a king!*

*Tomorrow at this time*

*the cooking pot will be tasting sweet*

*and blood will be flowing.*

*Elephant come home and become a king!*

But in the meantime, tortoise had sent a messenger to the king advising him to let his servants dig a large pit in front of the palace covered with grass and a thin layer of mud with precious garments lain on it.

When they reached the town the elephant was received with ovation. Tortoise announced solemnly:

"Elephant you become king now. Sit on your throne, the people praise you."

Elephant was overjoyed and swung through the king's court to the place where the garments had been spread. But as soon as he put his foot on the thin layer of grass and mud he fell through. The servants of the king were commanded to hurl large stones on elephant and his blood was sacrificed to the gods.

Tortoise was richly rewarded and given a wife named Yanibo.

#### 6. *Ara grun* (Inhabitants of heaven).

Agbelugogo, the palm wine tapper, was not successful in selling his palm wine. A friend suggested he should try selling to the inhabitants of heaven. So the next day he sang at the door of heaven:

*"Inhabitants of heaven, inhabitants of heaven o!"*

*"Who calls the inhabitants of heaven?"*

*resounded from behind the door.*

*"It is I, Agbelugogo."*

*"Why did you come to this town?"*

*"I have brought palm wine."*

*"How much is your palm wine?"*

*"Each (calabash) 2000 cowries."*

*"Put down the wine and go!"*

He left the palm wine and went home. The next day he found lots of money, and he brought palm wine every day. Soon he was the richest man in the town, but he told no one to whom he had sold his palm wine.

Tortoise was curious and became friendly with the palm wine tapper. And one day he revealed his secret to tortoise. Then tortoise was so insistent about going to see, that he decided to take the tortoise along to the door of heaven. The next morning after he had been shown the door of heaven he went there secretly and sang the palm wine tapper's song. He put down the palm wine and pretended to go but he really hid in the nearby bush. Then the inhabitants of heaven began to appear to drink the palm wine. These

people were quite different from people on earth; some had two heads, some had eight eyes, or one leg. Tortoise started to laugh:

"I have never seen such creatures before."

They heard and they found him before he could run away, and killed him.

When Agbelugogo came the next day, no one opened the door and no one answered. He never saw the inhabitants again and his trade was destroyed.

#### 7. *Adejumo.*

Adejumo had seven children. They lived near a pawpaw tree where a wizard lived. One day, he went on a journey leaving them for seven days. That same evening, the children were sitting around the fire eating yam. The wizard, believing the father was there, came out of the tree and took one of the terrified children:

*Adejumo o! Ijumo.  
Please give me a child!  
I am taking one.*

The next day Adejumo was still gone, and while the children sat eating that evening, the wizard sang and took the second child.

On the third day Adejumo was still not back and the wizard took the third. Each night this happened until only one child remained. Then Adejumo came. When he found out what had been happening, the father hid in a bush and waited until the evening. When the wizard appeared, Adejumo jumped and threw a pot over the wizard's head, but the wizard made the pot break and disappeared. Adejumo went to the pawpaw tree and put the broken pot on it thinking that the wizard had disappeared there. But the wizard appeared beside him laughing:

*God did it: but I was not there.  
He took a broken pot. He put a broken pot round his neck.*

Adejumo was so frightened that he ran home. He sadly told his last child that he would never again go on a journey and leave him alone, but six of his children were lost.

#### 8. *Ol'oko d'ebin!* (Hoe seller go back!).

Ol'oko was an orphan, his parents had died when he was very young and his relatives had apprenticed him to a hoe maker. When he grew up he had his own shop at the market.

One day seven ghosts sent two of their number to this market. The ghosts changed into human beings. Everyone knew that Ol'oko's hoes were the best and the ghosts bought two from him. It was so easy to work with them that the hoes used to work themselves. So the next day the ghosts bought all of his hoes. Ol'oko was overjoyed:

"What a wonderful farm you must have to need so many hoes, I wish I could see it."

The ghosts told him he could see it but the path was difficult. Since he had no more hoes to sell, Ol'oko followed the two men along the main road, but soon they branched off onto a small path leading into the deep forest. One sang:

*Hoe seller go back! Hoe seller go back!  
Do not follow me!  
If you do not return, you will come to a river of indigo.  
If you do not return, you will come to a river of blood.  
There is a slender tree in the midst of heaven.  
There is a small palm tree in the midst of heaven.  
Hoe seller go back, hoe seller go back, do not follow me!*

Then the dead mother of Ol'oko appeared and gave him two kinds of shoes that were like those of the ghosts. She instructed him to put the first pair on at the river of Indigo and the other at the river of blood.

The ghosts did not notice Ol'oko's mother. At the river of Indigo the ghosts put on



their shoes, the river parted and they walked between the walls of it. They were surprised to see that Ol'oko was still following. At the river of blood the same thing happened.

When Ol'oko reached the dwellings of the ghosts, they were angry. A human was never to enter the world of ghosts.

The first ghost with one eye in the middle of his forehead rushed at Ol'oko. They fought hard but Ol'oko killed him. Ol'oko overcame the second who had three heads, and the third with one eye at the back of his head, and the fourth huge one with an eye on his forehead and one foot turned backwards. And the fifth who was small but cunning with one eye, and the sixth, with both legs turned backwards. Ol'oko killed them all one after the other, until the seventh, the chief of the ghosts, came. He was powerful, he looked almost like a human being but his eye was on his belly. Now Ol'oko had become very weak and he was killed.

The chief took a dead leaf from the slender tree in the middle of the clearing and ground it to powder. When he placed this powder in the eyes of the dead ghosts they rose up. Now Ol'oko's mother had changed into a bird and saw everything. When the ghosts left to seek firewood to burn Ol'oko's body, she flew to the slender tree and ground a dead leaf to powder and put it in Ol'oko's eyes. When he woke up, his mother showed him the main road and he went to his town.

9. *Méle d'èhìn* (I cannot go back).

Once there was a girl, Adeyo, who was very beautiful. Many suitors came to her but she refused them all. One day an elephant and a buffalo who had changed into men saw Adeyo. The beautiful young man into which the elephant had changed wished to marry her. She found him very attractive and asked him to visit her father.

But the father noticed that his gestures and behaviour was odd, and he forbade his daughter to marry them. But she followed the two men without her father's approval. The two men wished to leave the town. They began to sing:

*"Adeyo go back!"*

*"I cannot go back!"*

*"Adeyo go back!"*

*The elephant goes into the bush.*

*The buffalo goes into that grassland.*

*The teeth of the mouth are like the gourd.*

*The skin of the body is like a banana.*

*The staff of money is like the Iroko.*

Then they turned off into an almost impenetrable bush. But when Adeyo became afraid and could not get back they forced her to follow.

They met a banana tree and gave back their skin which they had borrowed from the banana. Then, passing a calabash, they returned their teeth. At the *Iroko* tree they returned their staff of money.

The girl was horrified but they did not allow her to leave. When they reached home, they summoned all the other animals and she was killed.

10. *Elèrè ip'gnà e kú èwọ o!* (Owner of the beans near the road, greetings!).

Tortoise's father-in-law owned a large bean plantation. Tortoise was very fond of beans but he had no plantation of his own. So he decided to steal beans from these fields. But he knew that the plantation was carefully guarded, so he sat out in the dark to investigate. He ran along the edge of the plantation but there were no beans there, they grew just in the middle of the field, where the guards were. He pondered awhile and then he went straight to the guards who were surprised to see a tortoise in the middle of the night. Instead of answering their questions he sang:

*Owner of the beans near the road. Greetings!  
I arrived on the farm and saw no beans.  
I arrived at the end of the farm and saw no beans.  
In the middle of the farm there are beans.  
Owner of the beans near the road. Greetings!*

As soon as he began to sing the guards were compelled to dance. And they danced out of the plantation singing for joy. Quickly tortoise took lots of beans and carried them home where he cooked *akara* and *mai-mai*. But still he was not satisfied, quite the opposite, he wanted more beans, that night.

The next evening the same thing happened and tortoise loaded so many beans on his back that he found it almost impossible to walk. He came the next night and the next.

By this time the father-in-law had forced his guards to tell him why his beans were disappearing, and he went to the king to complain about tortoise. That very night, the king, the father-in-law and all the guards came to the farm. But when tortoise sang they were all delighted, even the king began to shake parts of his body. And they all danced home.

The next morning both the father-in-law and the king were so angry that they called the god *Osanyin* to help. He ordered the guards to heat a piece of iron until it glowed. Then he took *akara* balls and went to the farm and disappeared into a bush. When tortoise sang, the king, the father-in-law and all the guards danced home while *Osanyin* remained in the thicket. While tortoise was collecting beans, *Osanyin* threw some *akara* balls in front of the tortoise. *Akara* was tortoise's favourite food so he could not but stop and eat. When he was lured close to *Osanyin*'s bush, *Osanyin* jumped out and thrust the glowing iron into tortoise's anus.

Tortoise was in agony but he escaped. And never again did beans disappear from the plantation of tortoise's father-in-law.

11. *Qba ni a tu'so pebe* (The king asked us to take off our clothes).

A king had fifty wives, but the youngest always ran away from him. One day one of the king's slaves happened to see her bathing and he saw why she ran away. He reported what he had seen to the senior wife who told the king early the next day. When he heard of this he was furious and swore death to the slave if what he reported was untrue. Then the senior wife advised the king to have all the wives appear naked before the king.

In seven days the fifty were assembled in court and one after the other went to the king singing:

*The king asked us to take off our clothes.  
We do not take off our clothes.  
Let us cut the Odan tree.  
I shall walk, I shall walk with a swagger,  
I swagger along,  
I shall bump into the king.  
I shall bump into the king.*

When it was the turn of the youngest her lips were shaking but she sang like the others and went to the king. Then the jealous wives burst out laughing and shouted her shame, she had no vagina.

Immediately the king ordered her killed. To the faithful slave he gave five gold pieces, five pieces of silver, five garments, five pairs of shoes, five servants, and five houses.

12. *Tani nka' lá?* (Who plucks the *okro* fruit?).

Alabi was only a boy but he owned a large garden full of *okro*. When tortoise found this out he crept into the garden and took lots of *okro* while Alabi was out. When he returned he was so annoyed that he went to the king the next day to report the theft, and the king sent an observer with him to find the culprit. When they arrived at the garden there was tortoise eating *okro*. Alabi started singing:

*"Who plucks the okro fruit?"*

*"I am plucking the okro fruit", answered tortoise.*

*"Alabi do not curse anymore.*

*Alabi do not curse anymore."*

But they caught tortoise and broke his shell on a hard stone and killed him.

13. *Adú aja mi o!* (Adú my dog!).

There was a hunter with three dogs: *Adú* (black), *Òwàrà* (steady) and *Méjeun-óni* (I take food from no one).

Often the hunter went into deep bush to hunt. Once he came to the forbidden forest and met a woman who was so beautiful that he wished to marry her at once. After a while she agreed to go with him and he took her to his home.

After a short time she wished to visit her family. He agreed to take her and he wanted to take his dogs too, but she insisted upon his leaving them in the inner-most room of the house. However, the hunter was suspicious and took a whistle with him.

When they came to the terrible area of the seven big and seven small forests the woman changed into a tree with a fat and ugly witch on top who tried to catch him, but he quickly climbed another tree. Then she struck her belly and 200 men with hoes emerged and began to cut down his tree. But the hunter had a strong potion (*Igede*), which strengthened the stem and roots of the tree and the 200 men could not cut it.

The witch was distressed and struck her belly again and 200 more men emerged with hoes and started to chop. When the hunter realized that they were succeeding he blew his whistle:

*Adú my dog, Eregeko!*

*Qwàrà my dog, Eregeko!*

*Méjeun-óni my dog, Eregeko!*

The dogs were locked in the *akodi*, the innermost room. *Adú* ran at the door, struck his head against it and died. *Qwàrà* ran against the locked door and died. *Méjeun-óni*, however, the only one who had taken no food from the new wife, ran against the door, and it gave way.

*Méjeun-óni* blew into the noses of *Adú* and *Qwàrà* and they rose up and ran to the hunter. They killed the 400 men, one by one. Then they began to bite down the witch's tree with their teeth. The tree fell and they set upon the witch. The woman killed *Adú* and *Qwàrà*. But *Méjeun-óni* said magic words:

*"The day when the king of this town died, I was not there."*

(= The death of my master cannot occur in my presence).

And he jumped on the woman and bit into her throat and she changed into a dead animal. *Méjeun-óni* then blew into the noses of the other two and they rose up.

The dogs warned him:

*"Master, tell no one that we are able to talk, if you do we shall die."*

When the hunter came home with his dogs carrying the dead animal he said nothing to satisfy the curiosity of his other wife. But during the big feast that followed, the hunter ate and drank heartily, and when his wife pressed about the strange, large animal he had brought home, he told her of the struggle and of the role of the wonderful dogs who spoke.

After hearing this, she decided that they could do work in the house. And she called to them:

*Adù my dog, Egegeko.  
Qwàrà my dog, Egegeko.  
Méjeun-oni my dog, Egegeko.*

“When your master is here you work for him, but you never work for me, you useless animals. Go and bring water!”

The dogs refused and knew that their master had revealed their secret. They set out to follow their master, but the hunter had gone far that day. Adù set out and died. Qwàrà set out, he could not find the way and died. But Méjeun-oni, who had taken no food from the wife, set out and when he saw the hunter from a distance he cried:

“You have revealed our secret. From now on no animal shall ever speak again.”  
The hunter ran to meet his dog. When he arrived the dog was dead.

#### 14. *Eleluju.*

Eleluju and his son Eluju, lived in a small hut. Eluju noticed that his father often left the house late in the evening and would not return that night.

Father went to meet the members of a secret society. He had to climb over seven hills before he arrived at the meeting place. He did not permit Eluju to follow him.

The society members secretly hated Eleluju and planned to kill him. But one day Eluju followed his father over the seven hills. He was so far behind however, that Eleluju had already gone home before he arrived, but the other members of the society were still there. Eluju listened in a bush and was horrified to discover that they planned to kill his father the next day.

The men began to dig a hole just at the spot where his father usually sat. When they had finished, they covered the hole with a red mat so the danger could not be seen. Then they made a soup of vulture meat which should not be eaten. Then they mixed pepper juice in the camwood with which the members painted their bodies. The boy saw all.

He ran over the seven hills to his home to learn from the neighbours that his father had gone to the society again. He knew he must reach his father to save his life and he began to climb again. When he was on top of the first hill he saw his father on the fifth and sang:

*Eleluju do not die!  
If we cook vulture soup — do not eat!  
If we mix pepper in the camwood — do not paint  
your body with it!  
If we spread a mat — do not sit on it!*

Eleluju did not hear, but his dog heard and stopped. Eleluju commanded his dog to go, but the dog would not move. As he started to beat the dog, he heard his son's voice and waited. Eluju told him all he had seen and then went home. Eleluju went to the assembly place.

The members invited him to eat, but he refused. When they asked him to paint his body he would not. Then they bade him sit down, whereupon he threw food on the mat for his dog. The mat gave way under the dog and the society members fled.

Eleluju called his dog and went back over the seven hills. He told Eluju how sorry he was not to have trusted his own son enough to let him follow him to the meeting place.

#### 15. *Yè só mu 'rù fín 'mi?* (Who will give me my tail?).

A poor farmer and his wife had one daughter. She was a great help to her parents but one day she fell ill and died. The parents were deeply grieved and buried her near the

house. The work in the fields was becoming too difficult for them for they were old. The daughter saw them from heaven and pitied them. At night she returned to earth to help.

The next morning, the father was so surprised at the work done, he called his wife and she was overjoyed. There was nothing to be done in the fields. The same thing happened the next day and the day after. And the old people lived content for some time.

But they were becoming very curious, and one night the old man went to the farm to see the kind of person who worked for him. Then he saw the dead coming from heaven each with a cow's tail in his hand to give him the power to fly. And he saw his daughter leading the troop. He wept to see her and wanted her back in his house.

He told his wife and by the next day they had a plan. That night the two hid and when all the dead had put down their tails to work they noted which one belonged to their daughter. When the work began, the father ran to the pile of tails and took the one belonging to his daughter.

The dead worked until dawn, when they took up their tails to fly back the daughter could not find hers:

*Who will give me my tail?  
Who will give me my tail?  
My heavenly friends are going.  
My heavenly cock is crowing.  
Who will give me my tail?*

And then she saw her parents.

"My daughter do not go back to heaven, please stay!"

"I cannot", she said. "Let me be free."

But they loved her and pressed her to follow them home.

*Who will give me my tail?  
Who will give me my tail?  
My heavenly friends are going.  
My heavenly cock is crowing.  
Who will give me my tail?*

And as she sang her body began to sink into the ground. And when only her head was visible she sang again, but her parents wanted her so much that they would not let her go. And she disappeared into the ground forever. No one ever came again to help the old people on their farm.

1. Olūrómí.

♩. = 75 M.M.

**SOLO:**



O-ni ká-lú-kú jé-jé e-wu-rẹ e-wu-rẹ e-wu-rẹ. O-ni ká-lú-kú jé-jé à-gù-  
 CLAPPING: ♩. ♩. ♩. ♩. etc.

tàn à-gù-tàn à-gù-tàn. O-lú-ró-m-bí jé-jé ọ-mọ rẹ ọ-mọ rẹ "a-pọn bi e-po."

**CHORUS:**



O-lú-ró-m-bí o, ján-ján I-ró-kò jàn-jàn.

2. Ọmọde meta nsere.

♩. = 95 M.M.

**LEADER:**



ko-n-ko-la-la-ko. ko-n-ko-la-la-ko. Ọ-mọ-de-meta-n-se-re. Ọ-kan'l'ọ'  
**CHORUS:**



ko-n-ko-la. ko-n-ko-la. ko-n-ko-la. ko-n-ko-la.  
 CLAPPING: ♩. ♩. ♩. ♩. etc.

n'ọ ta'run. Ọ-kan'l'ọ' n'ọ gá-gbon. Ọ-kan'l'ọ' n'ọ wẹ-kun. Ọ ta'run ta'run ta'run. Ọ gá-gbon  
 ko-n-ko-la. ko-n-ko-la. ko-n-ko-la. ko-n-ko-la.

gá-gbon n'ọ gá-gbon. Ọ wẹ-kun wẹ-kun wẹ-kun. ko-n-ko-la-la-ko. ko-n-ko-la.  
 ko-n-ko-la. ko-n-ko-la. ko-n-ko-la.

3. Mo ri kè-kè kan.

♩ = 126 M.M.

CANTOR: Mo ri kè-kè kan. Mo ri kè-kè kan.

CHORUS: Gbin-rin-a-ja-lu-ba-le gbin-rin. Gbin-rin-a-ja-lu-ba-le

CLAPPING: etc.

O-po-bi-po-bi! O-pó-bì-pó-bì! O-ri-po-lo-bi!

Gbin-rin. Gbin-rin-a-ja-lu-ba-le gbin-rin. Gbin-rin-a-ja-lu-ba-le gbin-rin.

Mo ri kè-kè kan.

Gbin-rin-a-ja-lu-ba-le gbin-rin. Gbin-rin-a-ja-lu-ba-le gbin-rin.

4. Aja aja o, ràn mi lèrù !

♩ = 120 M.M.

CANTOR: A-ja aja o, ràn mi lè-rù! A-ja a-

CHORUS: Şe-mbe-le-ke-şe.

STICKS: etc.

CLAPPING: etc.

ja o ràn mi lẹ-rù! Bò bá ràn mi lẹ-rù ma ké sò-lo-ko.  
 Se-mbe-le-ke-se.  
 B'o-lo-ko gba a si mu o ta. A-ja a-  
 Se-mbe-le-ke-se. Se-mbe-le-ke-se.

ja o ràn mi lẹ-rù!  
 Se-mbe-le-ke-se

5. Erin kare'le o wa j'oba!

♩. = 80 M.M.

CANTOR: E-rin ka-re'le o wa j'oba! E-rin  
 CHORUS: E-rin yé-yé e-rin yé-yé  
 CLAPPING: ♩. ♩. ♩. ♩. etc

ka-re'le o wa j'oba! I-wò-yí o-la rẹ.  
 E-rin yé-yé e-rin yé-yé E-rin



A-*gbarda* a *mā* se *yù-ngbà*.

*yé-yé e-rin yé-yé.* *E-rin yé-yé e-rin yé-yé.*

*E-jé a mā se bà-là.* *E-rin Ka-ré-leo wa j'ò-ba!*

*E-rin yé-yé e-rin yé-yé.* *E-rin yé-yé e-rin yé-yé.*

6. *Ara őrun.*

♩ = 150 M.M.

CANTOR: *A-ra őruna-ra őrun o!* *A-ra őruna-ra őrun o!*

CHORUS: *I-na-nga nte-re gu nte-re i-na-nga nte-re. I-na-nga*

CLAPPING: etc.

*Ta-ni n'pà-ra őrun o ?* *E-mi A-ğbe-lu-ğ-ga.*

*nte-re gu nte-re i-na-nga nte-re. I-na-nga nte-re gu nte-re i-na-nga nte-re. I-na-nga*

*Ki'l'ò wa se ni-lé yi o ?* *E-mu ni mo ğbè wa.*

*nte-re gu nte-re i-na-nga nte-re. I-na-nga nte-re gu nte-re i-na-nga nte-re. I-na-nga*

E-l'è-lo l'è-mu re o ? O-ko kàn e-gbè wá.

nte-re gu nte-re i-na nga nte-re. I-na nga nte-re gu nte-re i-na nga nte-re. I-na nga

Gbè-mu si l'è ki-o ma lo o! A-na órun a-tag-run o

nte-re gu nte-re i-na nga nte-re. I-na nga nte-re gu nte-re i-na nga nte-re I-na nga

nte-re gu nte-re i-na nga nte-re.

7. Adejumo .

♩. = 105 M.M.

CANTOR: De-ju-mo o, I-ju-mo-re. De-ju-mo o, I-ju-mo-re.

CHORUS: I-ju-mo ke-n-ke I-ju-mo-re, I-

CHAPPING: etc.

ò bá l'un mi lo-mo kan I-ju-mo-re. o di pl! Mo gbé kan I-ju-mo-re.

I-ju-mo ke-n-ke I-ju-mo-re. I-ju-mo ke-n-ke I-ju-mo-re. I-

SOLO: O-lo-run se n-gò si nbè, o gbè gbè ngú dú gbè ngú dú bọ lo-run.

I-ju-mo ke-n-ke I-ju-mo-re,

8. O-l'okó d'èhìn!

♩ = 75 M.M.

CANTOR:  O-l'okó d'èhìn, o-l'okó d'èhìn, l'èhìn mi! O-l'okó

CHORUS:  D'èhìn te-re-re d'èhìn.

CLAPPING:  etc.

 l'èhìn, o-l'okó d'èhìn, l'èhìn mi! B'ò bá d'èhìn o, ka-n 'dò ka-n 'ró.

 D'èhìn te-re-re d'èhìn.

 B'ò bá d'èhìn o, ka-n 'dà ka-n 'jè. I-gi

 D'èhìn te-re-re d'èhìn. D'èhìn te-re-re d'èhìn.

 t'è-ré-ré 'bè l'á-jù-lé o-run, O-pe ke-ke-re 'bè l'á-jù-lé o-run.

 D'èhìn te-re-re d'èhìn.

 O-l'okó d'èhìn, o-l'okó d'èhìn, l'èhìn mi!

 D'èhìn te-re-re d'èhìn. D'èhìn te-re-re d'èhìn.

9. M'è-le d'è-hin

♩. = 80 M.M.

CANTOR:

A-de-yo d'è-hin o! A-de-yo d'è-hin o! E-rin ni n-re gbó hun. E-pon ni n-r'ò-dàn hun. E-hún e-

CHORUS:

M'è-le d'è-hin. M'è-le d'è-hin. M'è-le d'è-hin. M'è-le d'è-hin

STICKS: etc.

CLAPPING: etc.

nu ti 'tò-rò. A-wò ara 'tò-gè-dè. O-pá-g-jé-tí-rò-kò. A-de-yo d'è-hin o!

M'è-le d'è-hin. M'è-le d'è-hin. M'è-le d'è-hin. M'è-le d'è-hin

10. Elére i'pòná

♩ = 135 M.M.

CANTOR:

E-lé-rè-i-pòná e kú-è-wò o! E-lé-rè-i-pòná e

CHORUS:

E-run wé-wé. etc.

CLAPPING: etc.

12

kú-è-wò o! Mo de hún-o-ko mé mà r'è-re. Mod'ògbun o-ki mé mà r'è-re.

E-run wé-wé. E-run wé-wé. E-run

6 12

A-rin-rin-o-ko ni e-re e wà. E-lé-rè-i-pòná e kú-è-wò o!

wé-wé. E-run wé-wé. E-run wé-wé.

11. Oba ni a tu'şo pebe

♩ = 70 M.M.

CANTOR: O-ba ni a tu'şo pe-be. Ai tu'şo gbà-bú. I-gi o-dan yi la ba ge Kemi

CHORUS: A-ya-ba. O-le-le

CLAPPING: etc.

rin, Kemi yan Kemi yan rin yan rin Kemi di gbo l'ò-ba. K'e-mi di gbo l'ò-ba. K'e-mi di gbo l'ò-ba.

CHORUS: O-re-re. O-re-re.

12. Tani nká 'lá ?

♩ = 120 M.M.

CANTOR: Ta-ni nká 'lá ? Ta-ni nká 'lá ? A-là-bi má şe-pè mọ! A-là-bi má şe-

CHORUS: E-mi nká 'lá. E-mi nká 'lá. Má şe-pè mọ!

pè mọ! Ta-ni nká 'lá ? Ta-ni nká 'lá ? A-là-bi má şe-pè mọ!

Má şe-pè mọ! E-mi nká 'lá. E-mi nká 'lá. Má şe-pè mọ!

13. Adú aja mi o!

♩ = 150 M.M.

CANTOR: A-dú a-ja mi o! E-re-ge-ko. O-wàrà a-ja

CHORUS: Si-nda wa e-re-ge-ko.

mi: E-re-ge-ko. Mè-je-un-o-ni o a-jami o!

Si-nda wa e-re-ge-ko. Si-nda

Si-nda wa e-re-ge-ko.

wa e-re-ge-ko. Si-nda-wa e-re-ge-ko.

14. Ereluju

♩ = 90 M.M.

CANTOR: E-le-lu-ju ma ma ku o! Ma ma ku

CHORUS: E-lu-ju fe-re ku nfe E-lu-ju. etc.

CLAPPING: etc.

o! A fi-gun se be ma ma je o! A fa-ta so-sun ma ma kun

E-lu-ju fe-re ku nfe E-lu-ju. E-lu-ju fe-re ku nfe E-lu-ju.

o! A te-ni pu-pa ma jo-ko te!

E-lu-ju fe-re ku nfe E-lu-ju. E-lu-ju fe-re ku nfe E-lu-ju.

15. Yè só mu 'rù fún 'mi?

♩ = 80 M.M.

CANTOR:  Yè só mu 'rù fún 'mi? Yè só mu 'rù fún 'mi?

CHORUS:  I-ba-ra-ti-e-le o-lo-ye i-ba-ra-ti-e-le. I-ba-ra-ti-

 E-le-gbe o-runlo. A-ki-ko o-run mi ko.

 le o-lo-ye i-ba-ra-ti-e-le. I-ba-ra-ti-e-le o-lo-ye i-ba-ra-ti-e-le. I-ba-ra-ti-e-

 Yè só mu 'rù fún 'mi?

 le o-lo-ye i-ba-ra-ti-e-le. I-ba-ra-ti-e-le o-lo-ye i-ba-ra-ti-e-le.