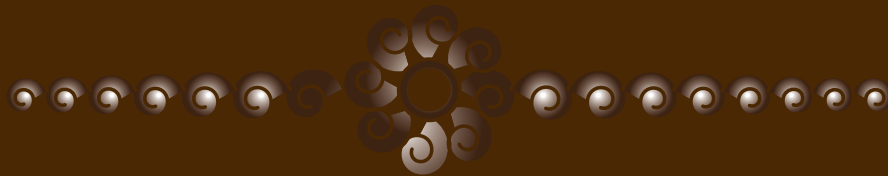
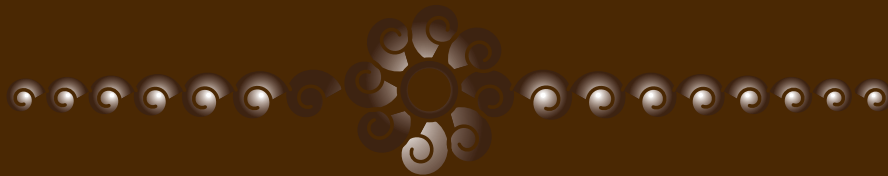


# Bibeli



## Bible Of Yoruba People

*Children of the Good Morning*



The University of African Art Press

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## THE CRADLE

1 1. Before time was born, even before the beginning of life, there was Eledumare who presided over fellow divinities, the Orisas. Also known as Olu Orun, Olodumare, Olorun, Olofin, Aseda, Eleda, Atererekariaye, Akin Orun, and a host of other four hundred and one names and aliases remembered or forgotten, Eledumare and the Orisas are immortal. Time and space did not exist. Neither darkness nor light existed. Only Oro, or the Voice, who was the child of Eledumare, existed. Nothingness existed before Eledumare and the Orisas created the heaven (orun) and the universe (aye). On the glorious dawn of creation, the boundless realms of heaven became the seat of Eledumare and the divinities. They were all equal. There was no leader. Therein they lived and thence they ruled the whole of pre-creation, using the power of Oro, the Voice. But it was a land without light or darkness, or knowledge of time, of boundaries, or of space.

2. Eledumare and the orisa took the initiative. Eledumare and the orisa, using Oro, or the Voice, commanded “Let there be time.” And the heart of life began to beat, and the clock of time began to tick. Thereafter, they commanded, “Let there be darkness.” And darkness descended. The darkness was rich and intense, overwhelming in its depth and resonance. Eledumare and the Orisas saw the beauty of its ebon fullness and declared the darkness excellent.

3. They commanded “Out of the darkness must come the light.” Lo and behold, countless mega-zillion rays of dazzling light flashed forth from the heart of darkness. Its beauty was irresistible, incomprehensible, amazing, compelling and penetrating; and it transformed the appearance of whatever it fell upon with its graceful and beautiful radiance.

4. And Eledumare and the Orisas acknowledged its exceeding beauty. Then they said, “You are the morning light, whose name shall be Dawn or Peregede, the mother of Dusk. Out of darkness are you born, and to your womb must you cyclically return to be daily reborn.”

5. Whenever Dawn returns to Dusk, night prevails and darkness is upon the face of all life. 6. And whenever Dawn leaves Dusk, day prevails, and light is upon the face of all life.

7. And they painted the skies with the colors of Osumare (Rainbow), the orisa of colors; thus sometimes the color of the the sky is white, and sometimes

blue, sometimes orange with tints of purple, sometimes golden and sometimes black, sometimes red with lightening hues.

8. And using the mist of their breath, they created rainfall, and the rain fell. 9. The rainfall descended in torrents and it soon covered the face of the world, becoming the ocean. 10. Olokun, the orisa of the sea, opted to depart orun to rule over the waters of the sea, and all other waters of the earth, be they brooks or rivers, streams or lake, pond or puddle. 11. The entire earth was full of oceans and seas, there was no land, and water was found everywhere. 12. Eledumare and the orisa drank of the water, and the taste was pure, invigorating and healthy. 13. They said “This is the fluid of life. The antidote to all evil.” 14. And water became the most important liquid in heaven and on earth.

15. And Eledumare and the Orisas were happy with the way things were, exactly the way they had created them .

16. Then they decided to distribute powers among all of the Orisas, so that Eledumare could retire, once and for all, only to interfere when exceedingly necessary.

17. And Eledumare called the first orisa, Esu, and Esu came forward. He prostrated flat on his/her stomach, right in front of Eledumare. 18. Then Esu got up and genuflected to the left, then to right, before returning to the flat prostration position, before the throne of Eledumare. 19. Esu said “May you wear your royal crown for ever. May you step inside your royal boots for ever.”

20. Eledumare acknowledged Esu’s presence by waving a flawlessly black, beaded flywhisk. 21. Eledumare then said to Esu,

“Esu, the dark and mysterious fellow.

Supreme are you among the divinities.

All other Orisas will look up to you.

Because today I give to you the ultimate power of ase  
with which you will rule the affairs of all sunder.

22. With ase you will manifest my might.

With ase I will multiply your strength.

With ase your voice shall echo  
the timbers of my thoughts.

23. Whatever you tell the listening ear

It must hear.

Whatever you wish to do

Is already done.

Your mere wish

Is absolute command.

24. Wherever you direct the wind  
It will blow.

Where you wish  
Will flow the rivers

25. Anything is, and will be  
Only because you want it so.  
And so it is  
And so shall it be  
because I say so.

26. Now, get up and go freely about. Use your talent for the benefit of all, and to the glory of my power.”

27. Eledumare then gave Esu the capsule of ase, which Esu swallowed eagerly. In addition he gave Esu a staff (ogo), constructed from sculpted wood figuring, cowry shells, beads, bones and precious stones; a thick blouse, appliqued with cowry shells; several freestanding wood sculptures; and dominion over anything placed at the crossroads.

26. Then Esu said, “Thank you, my Lord. It is worse than burglary, for one to be so richly endowed, and for one not to be eternally grateful.” Then s/he got up happily, and went about his/her business.

2.1. The second day, Eledumare called Orunmila, and Orunmila came forward. He prostrated flat on his stomach, right in front of Eledumare. 2. Then he got up and genuflected to the left, then to the right, before returning to the flat prostration position, before the throne of Eledumare. 3. Orunmila said, “May you wear your royal crown for ever. May you step inside your royal boots for ever.”

4. Eledumare acknowledged Orunmila’s presence by waving a flawlessly black, beaded flywhisk. Then Eledumare said to Orunmila,

5. “Orunmila, the boneless fellow.  
Privileged are you among all divinities.

Because today you are endowed  
With the gift of vision and fiction.

6. With the use of fiction  
you will project your visions  
and they will reflect perfectly the missions  
of all things living and dead.

7. You have been the sole witness  
to all events present and past.

Your eyes will continue to see

and your ears will continue to hear  
the tides of time in the future.

8. And only in your mind,  
and only in your vision  
will the past meet the present  
and both embrace the future  
in one composite picture.

9. Let that vision  
arranged in ese poetic verses  
painted like the odu fiction  
become the stories  
upon which to build  
the factual fabrics  
of daily life  
and it is so  
because I say so.

10. Now get up and go freely about, to become the divine oracle to all and sundry. Tell them their past, tell of their present and reveal to all their future. Use your talent for the benefit of all and to the glory of my power.” Eledumare then gave Orunmila the capsule of divination, which he swallows eagerly. In addition Eledumare gave Orunmila the circular, the rectangular and the triangular Ifa trays (Opon Ifa); the strings of opele with eight ikin; the iroke intricately fashioned of divine ivory; a shoulder bag fabricated from colorful beads (apo ifa); an agere ifa, sculpted out of hard iroko wood, and

11. Then Orunmila said, “Thank you, my Lord. It is worse than burglary, for one to be so richly endowed, and for one not to be eternally grateful.” Then he got up happily, and went about his business.

3. 1. The third day, Eledumare called Osun, and Osun came forward. She threw herself flat on her stomach, right in front of Eledumare. Then she got up and genuflected to the left, then to the right, before assuming a kneeling position, right before the throne of Eledumare. Osun said, “May you wear royal crown for ever. May you step inside your royal boots for ever.”

2. And Eledumare acknowledged Osun’s presence by waiving his/her flawlessly black, beaded flywhisk. Eledumare said to Osun

3. “Osun, elegant and beautiful one,  
so graceful that only rivers and swift streams  
can capture the grace of your flow.

Yu will be the embodiment of all rivers.

4. You will represent rejuvenation, reproduction, renovation and repair.

You, as I speak, embody restoration, cycles and recycles, successions

Continuations. 42. You will find

the fingers with the touch of cool

and the softest words as feathers

to stop wars in their noisome courses.

5. Your soothing flow, in the hottest summers,

will calm taut and snapping nerve.

With the assurance of therapy

they will invoke your name

And those who make poetry

may not find words fine enough

or phrases sweet or sonorous enough

to sing your name.

6. Those who seek your favors

they will inherit plenty.

Those who clean and keep your temple

Clean and fertile are their wombs.

7. Whosoever drink of your water

Has partaken of the fluid of life itself.

If you give the gift

of plenty, it is so

8. when you say so, because

I say so

and so it is.

9. Now, get up and go freely about. Heal to who are barren, care for the needs of the next generation, be kind to those who are beautiful, be gentle with the graceful, encourage the stylish, bless the sophisticated, promote the outlandish, stimulate rejuvenation. Use your talent for the benefit of all, and to the glory of my power.

Because I so.

10. Eldumare then gave Osun the capsule of yoyo, or plenty, which Osun swallows immediately. In addition Osun received a dazzling mirror, set in an exquisite brass casting; some bronze fans with delicate beaten decoration; some wooden sculptures and lots of expensive beads and shells.

11. Then Osun said, "Thank you, my Lord. It is worse, by far more painful than burglary, for one to be so endowed, and for one not to be eternally grateful."

The she got up cheerfully, and went about her business.

4.1. On the fourth day, Eledumare called Ogun, and Ogun came forward. He prostrated flat on his stomach, right in front of Eledumare. 2. Then he got up and genuflected to the left, then to the right, before returning to the flat prostration position, before the throne of Eledumare. 3. Ogun said, “May you wear your royal crown for ever. May you step inside your royal boots for ever.”

4 Eledumare acknowledged Ogun’s presence by waving a flawless black, beaded flywhisk. 5. Eledumare then said to Ogun,

Ogun, oh sharp and tempetuous fellow!

Peerless are you among all divinities

fearless and courageous spirit,

Audacious and dauntless soul, gallantly galloping

Into the heart of the raging battle.

6. I pronounce you the spirit of all of all warriors.

You have become the soul of soldiers,

the fire inside the bullet, the point

of the flying javelin, pregnant with poison.

7. You, deaf to the cries of the fainthearted,

are the patron of all warmongers,

the champion of those who profit

only when battles level cities.

8. Fighters who don’t hark your warnings

perish like flies at the battle.

Those only who obey your commands

live to tell war stories.

9. If you so desire

You may save the life

of the stranded soldier.

But, as you say, to what profit is war,

if no blood is shed, if no soul is lost?

10. Those who don’t know you

they will be full of dread for you

But those who know you

they will not rest, they will not sleep

because they know

how unpredictable your temper is.

11. You will command all metals known and uninvented



just as the tongue controls the words.

Just as you lead to war,

You must yield abundant harvest.

12. Because you, the god of slaughters,  
art also the divinity of farmlands.

You will protect the plantation,  
the plows and the spades.

13. And as you balance affairs gingerly  
between the arms of war and peace  
your life shall be a drunken spree  
incoherent and unstable like a stammered stanza  
unruly, staggering and volatile,

as the growl of an angry beast.

14. Those whom you wish  
spare at war, others devour,  
after all you must drink frothing alcohol,  
or when the day is hot, you prefer blood,  
since you don't touch water.

15. When you turn some farmlands  
into raging battle fronts  
the pounding heart of weaklings and fools  
totally will fail to beat, petrified..

16. Battles will never be the same again  
because you say so  
and it is so  
because I say so.

17. Now, get up and go freely about. Judiciously rule the battlefields. Calm down the fighters. Inspire the strategists. Protect the infantry. Guide the calvary. Use your talent for the benefit of all, and to the glory of my power.”

18. Eledumare then gave Ogun the capsule of war and peace, which Ogun eagerly swallowed. In addition, he gave Ogun, scores of housepost opo sculptures, all complete with images of equestrian and pedestrian fighters.

19. Then Ogun said, “Thank you my Lord. It is worse than burglary, for one to be so richly endowed, and for one not to be eternally grateful.” Then he got up happily, and went about his daily business.

5. 1.. On the fifth day, Eledumare called Yemoja, and Yemoja stepped for-

ward. She prostrated flat on her belly, right in front of Eledumare. 2. Then she got up and genuflected to the left, then to the right, before assuming a kneeling position, before the throne of Eledumare. 3. Yemoja said “May you wear your royal crown for ever. May you step inside your royal boots for ever.”

4. Eledumare acknowledged Yemoja’s presence by waving a flawless black, beaded flywhisk.5. Eledumare then said to Yemoja,

“Yemoja, fish-like fellow,  
calm as a waiting sea,  
resting before two tempests

6. Where the lagoons meet the seas  
where the streams turn to deltas,  
there you must lay your stake;

7. where the seas embrace the oceans  
in those in between corridors of transformations  
There you must lay your stake;

8. between being and becoming,  
marshes between water and land  
there you must lay your stake.

9. You now become the spirit of strange waters  
you are the unknown point at sea  
where merchants meet with luck or loss

10. You become the key to misery or merriment  
transforming currents that carry travelers  
from rags to riches  
when you smile on strangers.

11. Pick your own benefactors  
because many will worship you  
some sincerely, others lie blatantly

12. The canoes of the liars will sink  
the nets of the sincere  
will ferry home wealth from the bottom of the deepest seas.

13. Wherever you direct the sail of their ships,  
there will the winds blow.

There will all the small fishes swim  
to welcome the arrival  
of the biggest fish.

14. None will contradict your wishes

when you want it so.

Because it is so

when you say so.

Because I say so.

15. Now get up and go freely about your business. The open expanse of the seas lies at your mercy. The ships will travel to and fro, and the winds will blow and the tempests will rise. The fate of the children of the fishes remains in your charge. Use your talent for the benefit of all, and to the glory of my power.”

16. Eledumare then gave Yemoja the capsule of the wharfs, which she swallowed eagerly. In addition Yemoja received some sculpted female caryatids, a few brass fans and myridas of beads, cowries and precious stones.

17. Then Yemoja said, “Thank you, my Lord. It is worse than burglary, for one to be so richly endowed, and for one not to be eternally grateful.” Then she got up happily and went about her daily business.

6.1. On the sixth day, Eledumare called Obaluaye, and Obaluaye came forth. He prostrated flat on his stomach, right in front of Eledumare. 2. Then he got up and genuflected to the left, then to the right, before returning to the flat prostration position, before the throne of Eledumare. 3. Obaluaye said “May you wear your royal crown for ever. May you step inside your royal boots for ever.”

4. Eledumare acknowledged Obaluaye’s presence by waving a flawlessly black, beaded flywhisk. 5. Eledumare then said to Obaluaye,

“Obaluaye, most dreaded harbinger  
of good or bad,  
messenger of death or life.

6. You spread from afar to near  
like the fires of a funny rumor.

You are the healer.

But you are also the pestilence.

7. You wear two faces,  
so there are three of you.

Those who know the third face  
say that is the real you.

8. When you move rapidly like a savannah  
fly like a horse in the harmattan delirium.

Because today, I bestow especially upon you

9. the power to cure, to curse,  
to heal and damn,

to poison or nurse, mend or end lives.

10. You now, as I speak  
become the divinity of medicine.

Health and wealth will occupy the days of many.

11. Most would rather be healthy than wealthy.

Most who are now wealthy seek health.

To whomsoever you bestow health  
to them goes health

12.. because it is your call

because I say so.

13. Now get up and go freely about. Halt all horrors of epidemics. Remove pestilence. Combat contagious diseases. Quench the fires of wanton death. Use your talent for the benefit of all, and to the glory of my power.”

14. S/he then gave Obaluaye the capsule of health and death, which Obaluaye promptly swallowed. In addition, he gave Obaluaye a broom, as a symbol of his cleansing power, and a pot containing therapeutic herbs.

15. Then Obaluaye said, “Thank you, my Lord. It is worse than burglary, for one to be so richly endowed, and for one not to be eternally grateful.” Then s/he briskly got up, and went about his/her business.

7.1. On the seventh day, Eledumare called Obatala, and Obatala came forth. He prostrated flat on his stomach, right in front of Eledumare. 2. Then he got up and genuflected to the left, then to the right, before returning to the flat prostration position, right before the throne of Eledumare. 3. Obatala said “May you wear your royal crown for ever. May you step inside your royal boots for ever.”

4. Eledumare acknowledged Obatala’s presence by waving a flawlessly black, beaded flywhisk. 5. Eledumare then said to Obatala,

“Obatala, spotless god of white  
today, your untarnished reputation receives recognition.

Only someone with the most spotless reputation  
may be charged with the office  
to which you are now charged.

6. Oh, blameless one, for you especially  
have I reserved the office of  
fashioning the human body  
from the raw, from clay

7. Perfect must be the eyes  
of whomsoever is charged with making human bodies;

steady likewise must be the fingers,  
happy the mind, and strong the muscles.

8. Because only s/he with a healthy mind  
could make people with healthy dispositions.

And only s/he with strong muscles  
could make enough people to populate the earth.

9. Your muscles are strong  
your mind is healthy  
your fingers are steady  
your eyes are perfect.

10. None is better trusted with the delicate task  
of making from the fresh  
the human figure from clay.

11. Today, even as I speak,  
I grant you the dexterity of fingers  
so that you can make the most complex human forms;

12. I grant you the art of proportions and balance  
of textures and light, and of lines and planes,  
the art of colors and tones, and hues and values  
that you may perfectly hone the skins  
to cover the human flesh.

13. You become the sculptor of the heavens.  
Perfect is the touch  
of whatever you touch.

14. All humans created in your studio  
will reflect and embody your own perfection.

On whatever you deliberate  
will you bring the blemishless purity  
of your stainless whiteness

15. Because just as you wish for perfection  
so do I  
and if you wish anything to be so, say so  
and so it is

Because I say so.

16. Now get up and go free about your errands. Make strong, hardworking,  
happy, men. Make beautiful, graceful and talented women. Make people as perfect  
as possible. Make them as healthy as possible. Above all, make them as merry as

possible. Use your talent for the benefit of all, and to the glory of my power.”

17. Eledumare gave Obatala the capsule of artistry (ona) which Obatala immediately swallowed. In addition, he gave Obatala control over all chalk mines. Then he gave him a few wooden and stone sculptures, all painted in white.

18. Then Obatala said, “thank you my Lord. It is by far worse than burglary, for one to be so richly endowed, and for one one not to be eternally grateful.” Then Obatala got up happily, and went about his business.

19. He wasted no time. He immediately set up his studio, and began to make people aout of clay. He show them to Eledumare and Eledumare, in approving of them, said that they were good.

20. Thus begun the construction of heaven and the universe by Eledumare and the Orisas, out of sheer nothingness. Four hundred and one divinities received various offices, before Eledumare completed the .

8.1. But at that time, there were no trees in heaven or on earth that remained covered with water. Eledumare and the other orisa wanted trees to grow in heaven, so Eledumare caused Eji, the god of rainfall to wet the entire landscape of heaven.

2. After the ground soaked in the moisture and became soft, Eledumare caused Iju, the god of forests to make trees grow. Iju said “Let all forms of plants grow from the soil.”

3. Gradually, myriads of plants began to emerge from the soft bare soil. All types of plants, including the sweet and the bitter, the smooth and the thorny, the poisons and the therapeutic herbs, germinated and grew.

4. Some plants had fruits, others only bore flowers; many stood upon huge roots, others had no roots at all. Eledumare inspected the plants and approved of every one of them, because each one had a different purpose and constitution

5. Now Obatala asked Eledumare: “When shall we establish the humans settlement on earth? That way we can separate human beings from the orisas. When we know who is who, the orisas will better be able to protect people.” Eledumare said, “We will move them as soon as we prepare earth for human habitation.”

6. Lo and behold, the face of the earth was flooded, and within the flood was the grand palace wherein lived the goddess of the deep seas, Olokun.

7. She heard of the plan to establish the human population earth but did not like that plan. 8. Since she began to live in the depths of the sea, Olokun had begun to separate her life and existence from others. At some point, she lost direct contact with Eledumare, and lived a totally independent life.

10. She exceedingly enjoyed her life under the sea. At some point, however, she became too absorbed in her solitude, because she was shielded by the huge body of sea from the others.

11. She became engrossed in herself, in her sense of importance and in her power and dominion over the entire earth, which was under the sea.

12. She was not there when the plan to establish people on earth was made. The plan therefore caught her by total surprise. She was angry and many questions quickly crossed her mind:

13. Why did they not consult her before making a decision that affected her own domain? Was it because they thought she was powerless, therefore they could just do anything they wanted without involving her? Her mind was agitated.

14. She therefore decided to prevent Eledumare and the other divinities from establishing human life on earth. She decided that she was going to flood heaven with her waters, to demonstrate her powers to the others, who seemed to have forgotten that she the goddess of large salt waters.

15. She decided that after flooding Eledumare and the other orisas from heaven, she would later allow them back, if and only if they promised to abandon the project to establish human beings on earth. Olokun personally did not like the few human beings that she had seen. 16. Obatala had said that he would make them perfect, but from Olokun's perspective, they were no more perfect than Obatala himself.

17. And Olokun knew that, just as the other orisas, Obatala was far from perfect. The human beings that he created therefore had all the flaws of the gods. 18. In addition, they had other profound physical and emotional weaknesses and illnesses, and totally relied on the orisas for everything.

19. Their ranks included liars, thieves, murderers, adulterers, debtors and layabouts. The few honest ones are not enough to redeem the warped ones.

20. Yet the orisas insisted on populating the earth with people. 21. Eledumare had said "The earth will only be their market place. Heaven will still remain their home." That is why till today people say that "The world is a market place. Heaven is our home."

22. Olokun grew even more furious when she learnt that people would turn the earth into a market place. 23. But Olokun also needed the earth for her studio, for Olokun was an amazing bead maker. 24. She spent her time in solitude, making beads, combining dyes and pigments to make amazing beads of dazzling hues.

25. She knew that she would lose her entire bead business once humans came to live on earth with her. 26. She knew that some will steal her beads. Some will

break her bead pots. Some will vandalize her studio.

27. Some might even begin to steal her bead making idea, and start to make beads themselves. 28. Because she had no faith in humans, and because she was not consulted before the decision was made, Olokun refused to accommodate humans on earth.

9. 1. Now Eledumare could sense that Olokun was not happy about the plan to establish the human settlement on earth. S/he therefore called a meeting of all the orisas to discuss Olokun's position.

2. All the orisas decided that a special messenger should be sent to Olokun to convey the decision to establish the human abode on earth to Olokun.

3. Eledumare then called forth Orunmila, the orisa of divination. Eledumare said "You Orunmila know the past, the present and the future. Tell us what will happen after we send an emissary to Olokun.

4. Will she agree to our plan, or will she remain adamantly against it? And who should we send to convey the message to Olokun. Because the message is as good as the messenger."

5. Orunmila asked them to allow him to consult his Ifa divination system. He then brought out the entire Ifa paraphernalia, including the opele, iroke, opon and agere ifa.

6. He placed his divination tray on the floor and cast his opele string on it. The Ifa divination signature that the opele forms is oyeku meji. Orunmila recited the attached odu verse as follows:

7. Iwo yeku, emi yeku (I dodge death, you dodged death)  
oyeku di meji, o diji (Two oyeku verse loom so formidably)  
A difa fun Kowa (Ifa divination was performed for Kowa)  
A bu fun Tamedu (And also for Tamedu)
- 8 Nijo ti Lakasegbe (On the day that Lakasegbe)  
N fi omi oju sogbere omo. (Was crying due to barrenness)  
Won ni ki i se ti igbin (It is unlike the sanil)  
Ko dubule lai ni ikarahun (To sleep outside of its shell)  
Won ni ki i se ti oka (It is unlike the viper)
- 9 Ko dubule lai loro inu (To sleep without its poison)  
Won ni ki i se ti ire (It is unlike the cricket)  
Ko dubule lai han gaaraga. (To sleep without making grating noises)  
Won ni iran oga (Not a single chameleon)  
Ki i rin lai ni igba aso. (Moves without a suitcase loaded with a thousand



suits)

- 10 Won ni ko rubo (They asked him to offer a sacrifice)  
Ko ru eku meji oluwere (Two swift-running rodents)  
Won ni ko ru eja meji abiwe gbada (Two giant fishes with huge laps)  
Won ni ko ru obidie meji abedo lule luke (Two massive hens)  
Ewure meji abamu rederede (Two pregnant goats)

- 11 Einla meji to fi iwo sosuka (Two deers with curled horns)  
O gbo riru ebo o ru. (He listened to call to offer sacrifices and offered

sacrifices)

- O gbo titu atukesu, o tu (He paid attention to the needs of Esu)  
O gbo ikarara (He heard ikarara, the sound of good fortune)  
Ebo ha fun un. (His sacrifices worked for him)

- 12 Bi iyawo ti n ti owo ala bo osun (As his younger wife bathes her newly born baby)

- Ni iyale n bi were (So does the senior wife deliver her own baby)  
Ijo ni n jo (He began to dance)  
Ayo ni n yo (He began to celebrate)  
Ese to na (He stretched a leg)

- 13 Ijo fa a. (Dance tugged at it)  
O ni be ni awon awo oun (He says that that is exactly how his diviners)  
Ti n fi enu rere pe ifa. (Give thanks and praise to Ifa divination)  
Iwo yeku, emi yeku (I dodged death, you dodged death)

- 14 Oyeku di meji (Two oyeku verses combine)  
Gbogbo aye lo tu ni lara. (And the entire world is happy)

15. Orunmila said everything will be fine. The outcome of the message, Orunmila said, will depend on the presentation of the messenger.

16. Eledumare asked “So who will this important messenger be?” Orunmila looked around.

17. Directly in front of him was Ega, the chameleon. Orunmila pointed at the chameleon, who was surprised by the choice. Everybody was also surprised.

18. Obatata expressed disappointment by the choice of Chameleon. Obatala asked “What power has the chameleon, where Olokun is concerned? Olokun will simply drown the poor fellow. It stands no chance.”

19. Osun said, “Everybody knows that the chameleon is so ugly. At least send someone who is a little more handsome to do the job. She might fall for the looks and charm.”

20. Sonponna said “Don’t send the chameleon. It does not look particularly

healthy. It walks slowly like a tired and senile fellow. You should find someone who looks more healthy than the chameleon, who walks more smartly and thinks more quickly. Not a slovenly fellow like the chameleon.”

21. But Eledumare insisted that they must listen to the voice of Orunmila. Eledumare said “Whatever the Ifa divination says, after Orunmila has consulted it, is final.”

22. So they all agreed to send the chameleon to Olokun to convey the news to her.

10 1. When the oracle chose the chameleon to go to Olokun’s abode to convey the news to her that the earth was going to be converted to human abode, everybody was totally surprised because it was such an unexpected choice.

2. Most surprised was the chameleon itself. Slowly, in its ponderous manner, the chameleon crawled forward, one foot at a time.

3. It flickered its tongues seven times as a sign of greeting to Eledumare and the dinities and said:

4.” If it will please you, my Lord, let me speak here: why not listen to the voice of the others apart from the oracle? 5. After all, the oracle is simply the voice of one divinity, and only one divinity, that is Orunmila.

6. How can the wisdom of just one divinity be more important than the wisdom of the entire group?

7. Everybody here is saying that you need to choose someone much stronger, faster, quicker and more appealing than my poor self, for this most important assignment.

8. Yet you insist on listening to the voice of only one divinity.

9. Is the Ifa divinity infallible?

10. Why must the voice of one divinity take precedence over the voice of the others?

11. After all, you often say in proverbs that ‘Only several hands will lift a heavy load. Two heads are better than one.’

12. And when you listen carefully to what everybody is saying, you will understand that nobody is being malicious towards me. 13. I am kind of slow of movement. It takes me a long time to get from one point to another. 14. The distance between heaven and earth is enormous.

15. Even for the fastest of fellows, it will take some time to get from here to earth. Now imagine someone like me. It would take for ever.

16. I would never get there in decent time, whereas a fast fellow would go

quickly and return quickly. 17. Secondly, it is no lie that I am not handsome. I don't need anybody to tell me that, because I have seen my own reflection in the mirror for too many times.

18. I just don't look too good.

19. There are many fair gents here. 20. There is Ogun, most ruggedly handsome, whose look has never failed to charmed female divinities. Olokun would not be able to resist his masculine charm.

20. I strongly feel myself that you must not send someone as ugly as myself to a vain character such as Olokun. 22. She would be utterly disappointed by my looks and would not grant me any serious audience.

23. Finally, is the issue of my slow thinking. It simply takes some time before things sink into my head. 24. It is not my fault. This is simply my nature.

25. Some people think fast on their feet. I don't. 26. It simply takes a moment and a while before the profundity or meaning of things before apparent to me, even though others understand immediately.

27. To think of it, I didn't even know what you were all discussing at first, but it was not until Eledumare explained it to me that I began to understand.

28. Now everyone knows that Olokun is a sophisticated divinity. It would be a disaster for the entire human project if Olokun were to ask me an intellectual or philosophical question.

29. I would not even know where to begin to answer her question about anything.

30. Please, Eledumare, this choice of me is not reasonable. 31. Choose someone else who could get the job done, and stop listening to the voice of one divinity, and denying the opinion of the others."

11. 1 Eledumare then answered the chameleon by saying "I have listened carefully to your plea.

2. You have presented a convincing and moving argument. I am inclined to simply accept your argument to appoint someone else to replace you.

3. But I will not do so for one reason. 4. You asked whether the Ifa oracle is infallible?

5. The answer is simple. Yes the Ifa oracle is infallible.

6. You cannot hear a lie uttered from the mouth of Ifa divination.

7. Whatever the divination says is the truth and entirely the truth.

8. The divination knows no lie, cannot lie and will not lie, because it is founded upon veracity

9. The oracle is the epitome of the truth.

10. No one must call the oracle a liar.

11. To call the oracle a liar, is to be spreading lies and to have no care for the truth.

12. The Ifa divination is therefore not the voice of one fellow, but the fact of all life.

13. To deny the truth of Ifa is to deny the essence of life itself.

Because only the Ifa divination has the record of the very beginning, and has kept the record intact since then.

14. Ifa divination knows the present most clearly because it is the embodiment of all knowledge.

15. Ifa divination tells the future without fail because the divination exists in the future, even though it caters to the past and the present.

16. Because it exists in the future, it will always live, and doubtlessly continue to bring the future and the past to the present. 17. That is why the voice of the Ifa divination must be heard and obeyed beyond and above the voice of any other, or any group, large or small.

18. What the future holds is plain to no one except the divination.

19. If we ask the oracle for guidance in whatever we do, it will surely guide us, based on what will be to our benefit in the future.

20. Because whatever we do or fail to do now will affect what will happen or fail to happen in the future.

21. That is why we need to ask the oracle before we do anything, because we must not do regrettable things.

22. Now that the oracle has chosen you to go on this journey, you have to go, because you are the choice of the oracle. 23. Ordinary wisdom says you are the wrong choice. But the wisdom of the oracle is not ordinary, but based on a vision of the present, past and future.

24. How can you compare the ordinary vision, however numerous the eyes, with just one eye of the oracle's vision?

25. It is the difference between sleep and death.

26. We must be careful not to doubt the wisdom of the oracle. 27. But in the wisdom of the oracle is the key to the future."

28. Yemoja then asked Eledumare, "But what is the sense in choosing someone who appears most ill-suited for the assignment to do the assignment?"

29. It is like asking the snail to do a one-hundred meter sprint."

30. Eledumare then said., "Yemoja, be trusty of your divination oracle.

31. If the oracle says that the snail will win a one-hundred meter sprint, then

surely the snail will win the race. 32. Now that the oracle has chosen the chameleon to go on this important assignment, it is best for us to respect the wish of the oracle.

33. Not respecting the wish of the oracle is deadly.

34. What we need to do, rather than doubt the oracle, is begin to prepare the chameleon for this most important journey. 35. Whatever we find to be the chameleon's weakness, we must fortify, to enable the poor creature to carry out that onerous task."

36. Ogun said "One serious problem with the chameleon is speed. It will take the chameleon forever to move from heaven to earth.."

37. Eledumare said "Once we identify the problem, the solution is round the corner.

38. To solve the problem of speed, we will endow the chameleon with the power of Egbe, the divinity of speed. 35. What do you say Egbe?"

36. Egbe replied, saying, "Be it as you wish. Egbe will deliver the chameleon to and fro heaven, a zillion-trillion times faster than the speed light."

37. Eledumare then said, "There, the chameleon's problem of speed is over,"

38. Worried, Sango the god of lightening and thunder, then stepped forward and said, "But the chameleon is still sluggish. 39. Even though Egbe does solve the problem of speed, it cannot solve the chameleon's problem of sluggishness. 40. I don't think a sluggish fellow such as the chameleon could interact with Olokun, if I know her well."

41. Eledumare replied "Once we identify the problem, the solution is right around the corner.

42. To solve the problem of sluggishness, we will endow the chameleon with the spirit of brother and sister divinities, Gaga and Sasa. 43. Gaga the brother will provide an agility of body befitting of a professional wrestler. 44. And Sasa, the sister, will provide a grace to the chameleon's body that will shame a trained dancer. 45. What do you two say, Gaga and Sasa?"

46. Gaga and Sasa said in unison "Be it as you wish. 47. We will lend to the chameleon's body the agility of a leopard and the grace of a serpent."

48. Eledumare said, "There, the problem of agility is over."

49. Osun, the gorgeous river goddess then said "But we must all agree that the chameleon is not the most attractive person.

50. Olokun, on the other hand is a beautiful woman, even though she is the vain type. 51. But it all makes it the more difficult to send someone as ugly as the chameleon to Olokun.

52. I believe that she will refuse to welcome the chameleon, saying that the

chameleon was too ugly to for her to see..”

53. Eledumare said “Once the problem is identified, the solution is just around the corner. 54. To solve the problem of ugliness, we will endow the chameleon with the beauty of Egbin, the embodiment of beauty itself. 55. Here, tell me, Egbin, what do you think?”

56. Egbin stepped forward and said, “Be it as you wish. 57. I will endow the chameleon’s body with beauty in preparation for the great human project.”

57. “Eledumare said, “The problem of attractiveness is over. 58. Now, you need a companion on this journey. 59. You may choose anyone you like as your companion, so you may not feel lonely.”

60. To the utter surprise of everybody, the chameleon pointed to the snail. 61. They all remarked that the snail was even slower than the chameleon, more timid, perhaps even a lot less intelligent. 62. But they were relieved because of the special endowment that the chameleon now had, thanks to the divinities.

63. These endowments, naturally, would reflect upon the snail too, and the mission might be saved. 64.. The chameleon, accompanied by the snail, thus became the messenger to convey Eledumare’s request to Olokun. 64.. But it was a totally transformed chameleon that set out on the journey 65. Its entire body was transformed by the powers of the various divinities who endowed the chameleon with their special attributes.

12 1. Olokun, the goddess of the sea, the owner of all the riches under the oceans, the greatest bead maker, the most powerful orisa whose mantles are the rolling waves of sea water, is a most beautiful divinity to behold. 2. Her long, braided hair flows with the waves of the undulating waters, her ebony dark skin glistening like priceless pearls under the motion of ceaseless seas. 3. Olokun heard about the plan to establish human abodes on earth, and became angry.

4. She pretended that she did not hear anything while she waited for the news to be formally brought to her. 5. She was fully prepared to turn down the request to use earth for the human project mainly because she was already using the space for her bead-making studio.

6. She made beads of all colors and shapes, but her favorite bead was the indigo colored, tubular shaped segi bead, so luminously dark that it seems to capture light within its luxurious entrails. 7. It was her love for bead making that caused her to move her seat to the depth of the ocean, which nobody wanted at that time.

8. But after she succeeded in taming and ruling the vast ocean, after she salted it and stocked it with priceless jewels, after she had transformed the vast and empty space into a home for herself, they began to plot behind her back to take her space

from her and turn it into a general home to lodge humans.

9. She found the human project totally unacceptable if it would be at the expense of her own studio work of bead making. 10 Because without the limitless spatial facilities, she would be unable to continue making beads as she was doing at that moment. 11. It was totally unacceptable for the divinities to take her sanctuary away from her, and populate it with strangers.

11. She sat down in a reflective mood in the midst of her vast collection of beads. She calmly picked up some of the most colorful and exquisite beads ever made, and slowly rubs the warm gems against her dark brown skin. 12. She would not give up her craft, she resolved. 13. She would fight for every cup of water in the vast ocean of the earth.

14. Why did the divinities not pick any other spot in the universe?

15. They could have picked Mercury, or Mars, or Jupiter, or any other planet or star to locate their project on?

16. It was clear to Olokun that they chose earth because she had developed it so artistically that nobody could take their eyes away from it. 17. But they also thought that she had no fighting power. 17. It was only if the power of the others overwhelmed her that she was going to surrender. 18. But she was certain that only a few of them could come from the other world to earth, because of journey hazards in those days. 19. She could take on any small number that came at any one time, and she was determined to do so.

20. Her secret contact in heaven informed her that they were sending the chameleon to her. 21. She considered that to be a sign of their contempt for her, because they could not be sending a more inferior fellow as an emissary. 22. She knew that every act is a sign of another thing. 23. They were telling her that she was ugly, slow and contemptible, and the chameleon would be a clear deliverer of the message. 24. They were telling her that she was beholding her own reflection in the mirror when she saw the chameleon. 25. That message totally made her even more angry, and she resolved to teach them a lesson, emissary by emissary. 26. She prepared for a war. 27. She was not going to be fooled.

28. They were using the chameleon as a metaphor for a real army of warriors and diplomats that would arrive with the chameleon. 29. It was clearly going to be an invasion, and she was ready for it.

29. But to her utter bewilderment, just as she was speaking, she saw the chameleon right in front of her. She was startled. Was she dreaming? What was going on? 30. To make things even more bewildering, the chameleon was riding the snail as a horse. 31. Right before her eyes, she saw the chameleon climb down from the

back of the snail. 32. To her astonishment, the skin of the chameleon glistened with a lustrous light that radiated around it. 33. Olokun, to her surprise, wanted to touch it, but she quickly checked her impulsive spirit.

34. The chameleon falls flat on its face in prostration before her.

35. "Greetings in the name of Eledumare and the four trillion and one irun-moles who inhabit Orun," said Orunmila.

36. "What do you want from me, and how did you get in here among my treasures?" Olokun quickly said, regaining her wit. "I simply bring you salutations," the chameleon says. "Concerning how I got in here, that is nothing. I simply wish it and it happens. It is now the way of Orun."

37. Olokun became even more puzzled. "And your horse is the snail?" she asked? 38. "Yes," replied the chameleon. "It is the swift flying snail that dashes through walls and gates."

38. Overcome by her vanity, Olokun decided to retire into her chambers. "Excuse me, but I must go into my room to put on something more decent than this," she says. "Both of you look so marvelous, and I look so unpresentable."

39. She went into her chambers and began to attire herself in her gorgeous garments, woven in multicolored patterns, using different yarns and textures. 40. She then looked for various combinations of beads, both brilliant and dull beads, large and slim, round and angular shaped gems, and she wore them. 41. She then reappeared before the chameleon, to show off herself, and display how beautiful she looked.

40. "As usual, you are the most elegant and attractive being alive," the chameleon said to her, when she came out looking exceedingly beautiful in her attires. 41. But even as the chameleon spoke, it began to transform, and its skin began to reflect the splendor of the color of Olokun's attires. 42. 43. The only exception is that the mirror even looked more splendid than the original, which puzzled Olokun, who excused herself and went back into her chambers to re-attire herself. 44. But she became even more amazed, as the skin of the chameleon changed again, and mirrored the colors of her new dress, with the mirror image looking even more beautiful than the original. 45. So she returned inside to re-dress. 46. But when she came out, the same thing happened, as the chameleon's attires transformed again to mirror her new dressing.

47. "You, the chameleon," Olokun finally said, "simply cover yourself with other people's garments." But the chameleon replied that "Not so. These are my own robes. I brought a large wardrobe, before I reckoned that I might be staying long. 48. Because what has brought me is a serious matter, and it might take some



time to explain.”

49. Olokun thought about these things and decided that they were too bizarre for her to deal with. Certainly, things have changed in Orun, and they were no longer as they used to be, if the ugly chameleon could look so beautiful, and the snail could be as swift as a horse.. 50. She decided that she had underestimated the power of the forces of Orun.

51. “I want no trouble from you.” she told the chameleon. “I want no trouble from those who sent you here. 52. But you cannot take all of my space. 53. Tell those who sent you that you can have some of the planet, which you may turn into solid ground for human habitation. 54. But I will still continue to reign over the larger portion covered by the waters.”

55. “So it will be,” replied the chameleon. “I will take your concession back to the divinities. 56. I believe they will be pleased. Bye- bye now and remain well.” 57. The chameleon mounted the snail’s back once again, and in a split second, they both disappeared from sight. 58. They left Olokun wondering whether everything was just a mere dream , or whether it actually happened.. 59. Olokun however remembered her word, because one’s word is what is most important. And her word remained that she consented to the establishment a human colony here on earth. 60. So she has to honor and keep her word, for that is the nature of her own graceful iwa, or character.

13. That same day, Eledumare gathered the entourage of orisa to move to aye or earth, to colonize and domesticate it for human habitation. 2. Eledumare called each one of them one by one, and each one stepped forward, as he or she is called. 3. Eledumare first called Obatala forth, from the magnificence of his throne.

4. “White is the soul of black, black the soul of white. 5. White and black threads do not argue with each other. They collaborate. 6. Do you hear the sound of my voice, Obatala, you always clad in your creative garbs of white, upon your dark-blue ebon skin?”

7. “I hear you well,” replied Obatala.

8. “You will lead the orisa to earth. 9. You will all descend down the metal chain of wisdom. 10. You will take charge of earth, control it, create it to your own specifications and beautify it. 11. Then create human beings to inhabit it and control it before returning here to orun.”

12. “If we start early enough today, we will be back before sundown,” replied Obatala.

13. “It will not be as easy as Obatala is saying,” said Orunmila, the divina-

tion divinity, who was listening earnestly to the conversation. 14. "It is going to be a long and adventurous stay, the like of which no one has ever seen before, and no one ever will see again. 15. It will contain its own beginning within its end, therefore it will become a dose of eternity, whose capsule is contained in a perfect gourd."

16. "Orunmila, you all-knowing one, you are always right," replied Eledumare. 17. "You had better come with them to guide them along in this enterprise. 18. They will need you far more than we do need you here now."

19. Orunmila agreed. "So be it," he said. 20. "I will go with Obatala and the other divinities to the earth, to witness, predict and advice."

20. "A double-headed matchet is the sibling of a sword, as the viper is the cousin of the adder," said Eledumare. 21. "In the jungle of the world, who will clear the way as clear as the one wielding the double-edged matchet? 22. Ogun, do you hear the sound of my calling voice?"

23. "Clearly do I hear you, father of all fathers," Ogun replied.

24. "Then you will be the path clearer, the guard, the guide, the spirit and the vigor of the entourage to earth," said Eledumare, 25. "Do you feel up to that kind of vigorous work today?"

26. "What else is my spirit woven with, if not vigor itself?" asked Ogun. "I will go with the entourage, and woe betides anyone who steps across our path!"

27. "Dotted with decorations of pocks and marks, your face is a dreadful awe wakening in the mid-ay sun," cries Eledumare. 28. "Only you, Obaluaye, can protect the entourage from the scourge of pestilence and diseases. 29. Are you able to make this journey?"

30. Obaluaye said "I will be more than happy to be their physician and pharmacist."

31. "Oduduwa, the very essence of being," says Eledumare, "the story that gave birth to reality, the dream before the waking. 32. Will you go with the divinities to establish the earth?"

33. "Specifically what will be my role?" asked Oduduwa.

34. "You will oversee the details of each office," Eledumare explained, "as an administrator, 35. You will let the right hand know what the left is doing, so that they are not duplicating or counteracting each other."

36. "I will ensure that everything is done systematically and accordingly," Oduduwa promised.

37. Eledumare called out the names of four hundred and one divinities, and gave them the charge of moving from orun to aye. 38. Four hundred and one divini-

ties answered their call. 39. The last to be called was Esu.

40. “Are you male or female, tall or short, fat or flat, dark or light, you Esu, whose abode is at the crossroads of the planets?” 41. Eledumare hailed Esu. “You are all of the above-mentioned and much more than meet the eye.

42. For you nothing is sacred, nothing profane, nothing is dangerous, nothing safe.

43. You are the embodiment of power itself, from whom all others must generate energy.

44. You are the heart of the fire, forever warm.

45. You shall keep the others ignited.

46. You are the bearer of ase, the supreme veto.

47. Whatever you wish done must be done.

48. Whatever you ignore must stay shunned.

49. To you must come anyone who desires or aspires, for without your consent is nothing done. 50. You, the center, are also the margin. The light, you are also the shadow.

51. The master, you are also servant of all and sundry who beseech you for favors and quests. 52. From gods and goddesses to mere paupers will seek you out on a constant basis, and you will attend to each according to the goodness of his or her person.

53. The wicked you will treat without mercy, and the good person will receive your favor. 54. To each you will cast his or her lot, without fear, without favor or fervor.”

55. Esu answers immediately, saying, “I will keep and use the ase veto judiciously.”

56. Eledumare then asked Ogun, the smith, to forge a chain long and strong enough to support the four hundred and one divinities, who would swing down to the earth from orun. 57. Ogun called Sokoti, the most skilled blacksmith in the whole of orun, and both of them retired into the forge to cast a steel chain without a beginning or an end. 58. Between the two of them, the work did not take long, and soon, the chain was ready to support the divinities.

59. Eledumare himself took hold of the chain and let it down until it touched the surface of the water in aye. 60. Then one by one, the divinities descended down the chain, with Eledumare holding it.

14. The first to climb unto the chain was Obatala, the leader of the delegation, followed by Oduduwa, the chief administrator. 2. Obatala took with him a snail shell containing some sand from orun, with which Obatala would build solid ground from the salty body of the ocean, for divinities and people to walk on and dwell in.

3. Obatala wore his famous robe of white, with matching hat, shoes and staff, all

lavishly embellished with choice white beads. 4. As gracefully as a snake climbing down a tree trunk, Obatala slid down the metal chain wrought by Ogun, with Sokoti's able assistance, and Obatala arrived on earth. 5. He called the spot on which he landed Ile Ife, meaning the house from which we will spread to rest of the world. 6. As he landed, he fell down on his buttocks, crawled to his knees, rolled left, and then rolled right, before gathering himself to rise to his feet, even as Olokun watched with fascination from the splendor of her palace at bottom of the sea in Ile Ife.

7. As he or she slid down the chain, each divinity thus fell on his or her buttocks and goes through the motion of crawling on the knees, rolling to the left and then to the right, before Obatala helped him or her up. 8. That has now become a custom of greeting the orisa, the king, the chief, the head of household, the father, the mother, the elderly person, or anyone in a position of authority in Yorubaland till today.

9. It happened that long before they landed at Ile Ife, an event of particular importance took place, in which the administrative skills of Oduduwa was put to task. 10. It was also an event that was to define the character of Obatala as the leader of the immigrants to the earth from orun, heaven..11. As everyone knew, Obatala liked to drink. It was his way of relaxing after doing his creative work. 12. A few divinities even suggested that he sometimes drank into excess, which was nobody's business, because it did not bother Obatala himself, who was an extremely nice and gifted divinity.

13. The day before starting out on the journey to aye, Obatala went to see Orunmila, the divination god, to seek guidance, in anticipation of the precarious trip ahead. 14. Orunmila brought out his divination implements and spread them all out on the floor. 15. The journey was going to be smooth and successful. 16. But there might be temptations along the way. 17. Orunmila therefore asked Obatala to offer his favorite keg of wine as a sacrifice. 18. It was a small keg with dark gourd patina, which Obatala carried with him wherever he went. In the keg, he always carried palm wine, which he shared with his friend. 19. He was given the keg by Eledumare himself, and he held the keg very dear indeed.20. He was therefore unwilling to give it up as a sacrifice, when Orunmila requested it as a sacrifice. 21. "It is a sacrifice to Esu," said Orunmila. "To preempt horrible eventualities."

22. But Obatala said that Orunmila was a liar, who was in collusion with Esu to scam everybody gullible. 23. Obatala therefore called Esu a thief, an extortionist and a gangster on the loose. 24. Obatala therefore did not make a sacrifice as advised by Orunmila, and kept his precious keg to himself. 25. On the day of the

journey, it was the first thing that he looked for. 26. He washed it and sanded it down, both in and out. 27. Then he poured the fresh palm wine that he tapped from his favorite plant into the polished keg. 28. He slung the keg across his back with a specially constructed belt. 29. He was going to allow the wine to ferment, and share it with the other divinities, in a ritual celebration, as soon as they got to Ile Ife.

30. But well after the journey started, and he was beginning to feel thirsty, Esu came up to him and asked for a drink. 31. Obatala explained that he was reserving the wine for a celebration. Obatala wanted to celebrate the safe passage, as soon as they arrived on aye. 32. Esu said that it was stupid of Obatala to store wine all that way and not at least take a drink himself, to slake his thirst. 33. Yet Obatala refused saying that the wine was still too fresh and young. Esu shrugged his shoulders, concurred, and departed.

34. Not long after Esu departed, the wine began to froth and bubble in the keg, as it fermented, and rekindled Obatala's thirst. 35. He therefore decided to take just a sip from the wine. 36. The sip proved the wine to be really fruity and sweet, so Obatala took a full swig from the keg, before returning it to his belt. He felt rejuvenated again, with his thirst gone. 37. Then he took another swig after a few more moments. Soon he could not keep his hands off the keg of palm wine and kept taking swigs, until the keg became empty. 38. He was also by this time stupendously drunk.

39. Oduduwa watched Obatala's behavior from some distance, and soon noticed that Obatala was staggering and hardly able to stay upright on his feet, from the effect of the palm wine. 40. At first Oduduwa ignore everything completely, saying that it was really nobody's business who did and did not get drunk. 41. But soon after, Oduduwa noticed that Obatala was beginning to spill the sacred sand that Eledumare gave them to build the earth from. 42. The more of the sand that Obatala spilled, the less sand there would be left to over the ocean and build solid ground. 43. It got to the point that Oduduwa was afraid that Obatala was going to drop the entire snail shell containing the sand, and that all would be lost, because there would be no sand to build solid ground, and people would have to swim about like fishes.

44. Oduduwa therefore intervened and rescued the snail shell from Obatala, who was too drunk to care.

45. With the help of Ogun who cleared the path for the entire group, Oduduwa led the entourage to the earth.

46. Obatala got so drunk at some point that he fell asleep. He had to be carried along by his friends including Egungun, Obaluaye, and Oro. 47. It was not until

earth was quite in sight, and only a few steps away before Obatala woke up again and resumed leadership. 48. But by time, it was already too late. 49. The divinities were already loyal to Oduduwa, who they regarded as saving the world and providing leadership when they needed one, and Obatala was intoxicated. in a drunken stupor.

50. When Obatala woke up and realized that he had drunk the entire content of the keg all by himself, he blamed it on the prettiness of the gourd, and smashed it to pieces. 51 He then proceeded to conduct the affairs of the travelers for the rest of the journey, advised by his closet friends. 52. Thus completes is the story of how people came into being in Ile Ife.

### The Birth of Divination

One day Orunmila consulted his oracle  
And he was asked to make a sacrifice.

He decided to throw a feast  
To celebrate the achievements of his oracles.

5. He therefore decided to send for all his children  
Who were rulers and princes  
In various cities and domains.

All his children immediately responded  
They were on their way to join Orunmila  
10 .To celebrate his festivity, in Ile Ife.

When the day of the festival arrived  
Orunmila had prepared all assortments of drinks

And all assortments of food  
For the enjoyment of his visitors  
15. And to welcome his children.

The first to arrive was Owa Obokun  
Who is the undisputed ruler of the Ijesa and surrounding region.

Owa Obokun went before the throne of Orunmila  
Owa Obokun removed his crown

20. Prostrated himself flat before Orunmila

And said “May this festival be happy and fruitful.”

Owarangun Ila came before Orunmila.

He is the undisputed ruler of Ila and its environs

Owarangun Ila removed his crown

25. Prostrated himself flat before Orunmila

And said "May this festival be happy and fruitful."

Ogoga came before Orunmila.

He is the undisputed ruler of Ikerre and its environs

Ogoga removed his crown

30. Prostrated himself flat before Orunmila

And said "May this festival be happy and fruitful."

Alara came before Orunmila.

He is the undisputed ruler of Ilaramokin and its environs

Alara removed his crown

35. Prostrated himself flat before Orunmila

And said "May this festival be happy and fruitful."

Ajero came before Orunmila.

He is the undisputed ruler of Ijero and its environs

Ajero removed his crown

40. Prostrated himself flat before Orunmila

And said "May this festival be happy and fruitful."

Alaketu came before Orunmila.

He is the undisputed ruler of Ketu and its environs

Alaketu removed his crown

45. Prostrated himself flat before Orunmila

And said "May this festival be happy and fruitful."

Olowo came before Orunmila

He is the undisputed ruler of the Owo people

And Olowo stood straight and unbending before Orunmila.

Orunmila wore a large garment of linen

50. Olowo also wore a large garment of linen

2.1. Orunmila wore a pair of silver shoes

Olowo also wore a pair of silver shoes

Orunmila carried a flywhisk with an intricately beaded handle

Olowo also carried a flywhisk with an intricately beaded handle

5. Orunmila wore a crown of precious beads

Olowo also wore a crown of precious beads.

Orunmila said, “You too, Olowo,  
You have to say, ‘May this festival be happy and fruitful’.”

Olowo said he could not say

10. “May this festival be happy and fruitful.”

Olowo said, “You, Orunmila, wear a large garment of linen

I, Olowo, also wear a large garment of linen;

You, Orunmila, wear a pair of silver shoes

I, Olowo, also wear a pair of silver shoes

15. You, Orunmila, carry a flywhisk with an intricately beaded handle

I, Olowo, also carried a flywhisk with an intricately beaded handle

You, Orunmila, wear a crown of precious beads

I, Olowo, also wear a crown of precious beads.

And it is said that no one wearing a royal crown

20. Bows down to another.

Orunmila was mad because of this disrespect.

He went to a palm tree

With sixteen fronds

And instantly disappeared into orun.

25. As soon as he disappeared

Orunmila’s great counsel was missed.

There was nobody to advise people

Or caution them about their lives.

When things began to go bad

30. There was no one to consult

The world began to turn upside down

And there was no one to save the world.

Women no longer menstruated

Men no longer produced semen

35. Plants did not flower or fruit

Leaves lost their green

The sky lost its blue

The rain no longer fell

And the sun did not rise in the morning

40. Children were dying

And the elderly were sick.

Medicines did not work

Poisons had no antidotes.



Rivers that had been flowing for thousands of years  
45. Suddenly ran no longer and dried up.  
Mountains that had stood proudly for thousands of years  
Suddenly fell down and became valleys.  
Spiders could no longer weave threads  
Fishes knew not how to swim  
50. Even big birds started falling down from the sky

3.1. Because they had forgotten how to fly.  
Butterflies with beautiful colors  
Suddenly appeared with gray wings  
Cocks forgot to crow in the morning  
5. And the fowls would not lay eggs.  
Because crops were not growing  
There was no food to eat  
Even the tall palm tree  
Failed to produce any palm wine  
10. To quench the thirst of young men  
Busy burying old folks who were too weak and tired  
To bear the heavy stress  
Of a world without Orunmila.  
If anything could go wrong  
15. It promptly went wrong.  
People therefore came together  
And went to the palm tree with sixteen fronds  
And begged Orunmila to return home.  
“Please come home, Ifa,” they begged him.  
20. “You the supreme chief in Ira,  
Honored Citizen of Ijero  
Prince of all and sundry  
Please come home.  
Life without you is impossible  
25. You are the magical spirit in the mammoth  
That makes the elephant move  
Please come home.  
Orunmila said it was too late.  
There was no turning back or return

30. After you have climbed the sixteen-frond palm.

You are all free now

And whomsoever you please

You may now call your father.

All their pleadings fell on his deaf ear.

35. Finally he took pity on them.

He gave them eight palm kernels

And told them,

“This is who to ask

When you reach home

40. When you want to be rich

This is who to ask.

When you reach home

When you want children

This is who to ask.

45. When you reach home

When you want wealth

This is who to ask.

When you reach home

When you want power

50. This is who to ask.

4.1. When you reach home

When you want knowledge

This is who to ask.

When you reach home

5. When you want anything

This is who to ask.”

Orunmila climbed the sixteen-frond palm

On the tall mountain of Igeti

And refuses to return home.

10. He says whomsoever you please

You may regard as your father.

## The Portfolio Accordion to Obatala

1. I was there when it began, and my eyes saw it happen. It all happened right there, in my very presence. 2 It was Eledumare who created darkness, before he later created light. 3. He was the one who separated darkness from light, and named them night and day. 4. We had no time. We had no space. All that existed were we.

5. Nothing was before us. 6. We had no knowledge or wisdom, because knowledge and wisdom exist only within time and space. 7. We had no time to think. 8 Then Eledumare introduced thoughts into us, so that we might communicate and think amongst ourselves.

9. That was when we all began to know each other and one another, each different, each related, each descended from the same root of divinity. 10 We immediately saw that we were the divinities, and with us were the keys to creation and obliteration.

11. Eledumare became the lord of the divinities. 12. I, the god of whiteness, am his able deputy. When we saw ourselves within the vast expanse of space, we counted our numbers in trillion upon trillions. 13. Several trillions of us were male. 14. Many trillions were female. 15. Uncountable were the trillions of us who remained androgynous. 16. Each one had his or her colors and insignias. 17. My color is simple and plain white, because of the simplicity of my mind.

18. I am not complex, even though the gifts that I bear and embody are quite complex and rare. 19. My mind is not limited in its capacity to think and create. My brain moves in limit-less leaps and bounds.

20. Even time is no barrier to my mind, as it roams from past to present and future. 21. My only flaw is my own shadow, which falls over a tiny ground through which I am unable to see within the perspective of time. 22. Therein lies the tragic margin of my error.

2.1. I was the one to whom Eledumare turned when time was born.

2. Time went ticking along in its busy fashion, and it flew like a tireless bird from night to day.

3. "Time is for life," Eledumare said. 4. "The morning is for working. It is not to be wasted. You will regret every second that you waste, because it will be duly credited to you and promptly deducted from the balance of your time. 5. Every second is precious, for your time shall be measured in moments. 6. Those who fail to use this moment think that they will make use of the next. 7. Will the same monster that prevents them from using this moment not also deter them from using the next?"

8. "I cannot agree more," I said.

9. "Let us therefore seize this moment to make people," Eledumare said." 10. We will make them look like us, think like us, eat like us, and do everything else like us. 11. The only difference between us and people will be death. 12. They will not see death as long as they can keep the omi iye ( water of life) from spilling. 13. But being human, they will not be able to keep the water of life from spilling, and death will visit humankind. 14. Their lives will therefore look like a tragedy, because try as hard as they could, they will finally die. 15. But for them, death will not be the end of life. 15. Death will only transform them to a higher plane of existence, where they will be reborn and recycled into life."

16. Eledumare charged me with the task of making people. 17. To make my task easy, I chose Ajala, the one who knows the secrets of clay work, and does wonderful life-size portraiture, and named him my assistant. 18. Ajala is an extremely talented and observant portrait sculptor. 19. He could make or copy any head in clay, with which we modeled the entire human body. 20. I make the rest of the body. 20. The process starts with me. 21. I make the rest of the body and then the rest of the body will walk to the house of Ajala, where it will choose a head, before proceeding to aye, through a woman's womb, to begin life. 22. That was our procedure, and it worked well for us and everybody else for several generations after we arrived at Ile Ife and began the task of populating the land with people.

3.1. I had decided to focus on creative work, and handed all administrative and political duties over to Oduduwa, who was reigning as the first Oba or king of Ile Ife. 2. He seemed quite happy doing the administrative work, and I am quite happy doing my creative work. 3. We are both doing what we are best at doing.

4. Because I work so fast, I am able to make hundreds of bodies every day. 5. Thus I place a lot of pressure on Ajala, who also has to make hundreds to heads to keep up with me.

6. His work is therefore often of uneven quality. 7. Most heads are perfect, that is they are finely molded and well fired in the kiln to the precise temperature for firing heads. 8. But many are heads that are under-fired, that is they were fired at a temperature lower than the recommended degree for firing human heads.

9. Other heads are totally unfired. 10. Some heads were over-fired, that is they either stayed too long in the kiln, or they were fired at a temperature higher than the recommended degree for firing human heads. 11. I have noticed that Ajala tries to make enough perfect heads to go around all the perfect bodies that I make, but the bodies themselves sometimes chose the wrong heads.

12. Since the time I became intoxicated from drinking the entire content of my

favorite keg, during the journey from orun (heaven) to aye (earth), I stopped drinking. 13. And everything went well, I discharged my duties excellently well, and produced perfect people with perfect bodies. 14. One day, I decided to drink again, just to enjoy the warm feeling of alcohol down my throat. 15. I asked my tapper to supply me with a particularly large keg of palm wine that day.

16. He arrived early with a fat keg whose content was frothing with fermentation. 17. He assured me that he had tasted it, and that it was excellent wine. 18. I took a swig, and confirmed his word: the wine was full in spirit and delicious to savor. 19. I soon dragged the entire keg into my studio, and began to drink from the palm wine as I worked. 20 It made work so very easy and enjoyable, because I was able to combine business with pleasure.

21. The wine was not only delicious but highly intoxicating. 22. Before long, I was drunk. 23. That was when it occurred to me that I could began to experiment with the human bodies that I was making.

24. Nothing stopped me from making asymmetrical figures, I decided. 25. Why couldn't I make an arm longer than the other, or the left leg bigger than the right? 26. Why couldn't I make people with one or no eyes? 27. I could just as easily make people with two noses, and so on and so forth. 28. It would only make these people a lot more interesting to see.

4.1. I began to fashion people with all sorts of experimental body parts. 2. But I was too drunk to realize the implications of what I was doing at that time. 3. Some were cripples, others hunchbacks, deaf and dumb, blind or even albinos. 4. There was a little child with two heads growing out of a space meant for only one neck. 5. But when I was making these characters, it seemed like tremendous fun, because I was too drunk to realize the enormity of my action. 6. It was not until the following day, when the wine had cleared from my mind that I could really understand what had happened.

7. At first, I did not remember anything about my drunkenness. 8. It was not until I saw a little girl with four legs and only an arm that I became suspicious. 9. I was truly puzzled, and asked Orunmila what had happened

.10. "Don't you remember making her like that?"

11. Did you not argue that people looked too ordinary when they resembled divinities like you and me, and that you would like to make people look more interesting? 12. Have you forgotten, when you were making that little girl, that I asked you why you were giving her only one hand, and you argued that you would compensate her with four legs, instead of two?

13. Why have you now lost all sense of recollection? Why can you not recall any-

thing? Could it be because you were drunk?”

14. Is it not clear enough to you that you cannot handle alcohol? Until now, your alcoholism affected you only. 15. But at this point, your alcoholism is seriously affecting the lives of other. 16. You have ruined the lives of many of the unfortunate people whom you managed to create with physical and emotional handicaps when you were drunk. 18. You cannot take back their lives.

19. They are already alive. 20. You cannot unmake what you have already made. 22. The tragedy of their lives will also live for ever after them, for many of them will marry and have children.

23. Their strange genes will mix into the general gene, and alter the blood of all and sundry. 24 Who knows in whose family and in what generation the blood of your ill-fated ones will manifest itself?

25. Should you not really be ashamed of yourself?

Should you not hang your head in shame and weep?

Should you not fast, and beg for forgiveness?

Should you not abstain from sex for a long period of time?

Should you not offer as sacrifice the biggest of your she goats, the one pregnant with heavy foetus? Should you not hide your face in shame?

And should you, most important of all, not consider abstaining from alcohol for the rest of eternity, seeing that the liquor drinks you, and you do not drink the liquor?”

5.1. I tore my robes into shreds and cried like a baby when Orunmila said these things to me. 2. I had no excuse for my irresponsible actions. 3. There was no reason for me to fall so low as to do what apparently I did. 4. The result of my character slip was right there before me for all to see. 5. And even more tragic is the fact that more and more people were going to be born in the future with deformities as a result of the slip that I made in only one afternoon of drunkenness.

6. “Some people handle their drinks better than the others,” Orunmila continued. 7. “What will get Taye drunk silly may not at all intoxicate Kehinde, his twin brother. 8. It all depends on the density of your brain mass, and the flow of your blood. Obatala you must give it up. 9. Your brain is too light. Alcohol is not for the likes of you.”

10. There was no more need for him to appeal to me. 11. It is all too clear by now. Alcohol is the shadow in my life that falls upon some of the most important matters in my life. 12. Perhaps the most important task that I have ever tackled in my entire life was the movement of the orisa to aye from orun. 13. But I almost botched it, thanks to alcohol. 14. My thanks to Oduduwa, who took command of the expedition when I was drunk. 15. My thanks to my close friends who moved my

drunk body when I fell asleep. 30. They saved all of us. There was no doubt about it: mine is not the type of head that mixes with liquor. 31. My high is natural. It comes from life itself.”

6.1. So I called together all my family, friends and acquaintances, and they all came to my house. 2. I then took the biggest of my pregnant goats, and offered it as sacrifice to Orunmila. 3. I then slaughtered two tall he-goats with long red beards, and cooked the meat as a feast for everybody, in celebration of my ori. 4. “Your head is hard,” everybody kept saying. ”You must take life a lot more gently.” 5. I therefore took the opportunity to announce that I was giving up drinking. It was making my life so miserable. 6. They all cheered and congratulated me. 7. They therefore understood why I did not serve alcohol during the entire feast. 8. There was much eating and only water was drunk throughout the period of feasting, which lasted several days. 9. “Nobody should expect me to serve alcohol anymore. 10. And never will I accept any alcoholic beverage from anyone anymore. 11. Nobody in my household will henceforth touch alcohol. 12. I forbid any of my followers to drink. 13. It is not part of our ori. 14. We shall leave the drinking to those whose heads allow for drinking, and whose stomachs easily carry drinks.”

15. Since that moment, I have never touched alcohol. 16. The very thought of palm wine turns my stomach. 17. I no longer remember what I found so attractive in drinking, because my entire life has changed for the better since I stopped drinking wine.

18. The people who I make have become even more beautiful. 19. Ajala the portrait artist who assists me continues to make heads for the bodies that I make. 20. He also continues to produce under pressure, in order to match my rate of productivity. 21. His products therefore remain uneven. 22. He still makes incredibly amazing heads that are perfect in all respects. 23. But he also continues to produce pieces that are not fired at all, under-fired, or over-fired. 24. All these defective heads appear perfect to the ordinary, untrained eye, even though Ajala who makes the head, and is the supreme master of the art of portraiture, knows exactly where the faults are. 26. The unfired and under-fired heads are really porous, even though they appear otherwise. 27. The over-fired clay heads also have hidden cracks that are impossible to detect with the ordinary eye. 28. But Ajala and I know where the cracks are, while the bodies choosing the heads usually have no clue.

7.1. I have instructed Ajala to always stay around in his studio to direct those who arrive looking to choose their heads. 2. If these individuals get excited about mere physical attraction and chose the defective heads, the repercussions are enormous. 3. They will suffer on the way to aye.

4. Because on the road to aye it is always pouring heavily with rain, to wash and clean the bodies of the travelers. 5. They must have a clean start on earth, so it is important to thoroughly wash them. 6. The rain falls on all, without discrimination or care. 7. Just as the rain falls on people who choose defective or bad heads. It falls on people with good heads.

8. Those who choose the fresh unfired clay are those at most risk. 9. As the rain falls it will gradually dissolve the heads. 10. Those who choose under-fired heads face a similar problem, even though the rate at which their heads deteriorate is less.

11. Those who chose over-fired heads with cracks in them are also vulnerable because the cracks allow rain water to soak into the heads, and dissolve the porous clay heads. 12. When these individuals reach the world, they will spend a considerable amount of their energies to replenish and repair the parts of their heads that have dissolved in the rain.

13. Therefore whatever profession or occupation they engage in, their progress and rewards will be slow, in comparison with those who choose perfect heads.

14. Ajala knows the situation, and understands that he should be there to assist people looking to choose their heads, to prevent them from choosing the wrong ones. 15. But Ajala is never there. 16. He is a debtor and an incurable drunk.

17. As soon as he detects footsteps approaching his house, he quickly runs to hide.

18. He is always thinking that one of his creditors is trying to collect a debt.

19. If it is a creditor, he or she will curse and depart.

20. Most of the time, however, they are headless bodies seeking heads. 21. Without Ajala's help, these individuals would simply proceed into the studio to choose a head for themselves. 22. At that point they are at the mercy of their ori inu or inner head, which will guide them in picking the outer head.

23. Sometimes I am around, in which case I help them. 24. I direct the travelers to choose a perfect head and ignore the defective heads, however attractive these defective heads might look to these clueless beings.

25. But in most cases I am not around, and Ajala is in hiding. 26. The traveler along the road to earth is totally at the mercy of his or her fate. 27. Life itself is a journey, and only our head is our map. 28. Wherever our heads direct us, may our legs join us on these journeys.

8.1. When we arrived on earth, and we began to live on the planet, there was peace on earth among all peoples and their divinities.

2. Life was good, and there was no sickness. 3. Nobody died and people and divinities lived for ever.

4. This arrangement pleased everybody except Iku, the divinity of death, whose of-



fice it is to kill people. 5. Iku complained that his life was utterly meaningless because he lived to kill.

6. It was not being wicked or being nice. It was simply his nature and duty to kill.

7. Without killing, he had no reason to exist. 8. It was therefore totally understandable that he should be sad that nobody was dying.

9. But everybody also knew that it was the fault of Iku that nobody was dying.

10. Iku simply refused to leave the realms of heaven (orun) for the earth (aye).

11. When they asked Iku why he would not venture here to harvest people, he swore that he was afraid of the Calabash of Being (Igba Iwa) that was kept in the palace of Oduduwa, the reigning king of Ile Ife. 12. But how could a half-empty calabash be so intimidating to a veteran like Iku? 13. Iku said that it was a totally mysterious phobia, because he was unsettled by the perfectly settled level of the water in the Calabash of Being. 14. The level neither rises nor decreases. Yet nobody ever added to the water in the calabash that is kept safely behind Oduduwa's throne. That was what scared him, Iku said.

15. That same afternoon, there was a major altercation at the palace between two of Oduduwa's wives over a minor issue. 16. The women were loud, screaming and cursing at the top of their lungs. Oduduwa, heeding their noise, called them into his presence to hear what their quarrel was all about.

17. The first woman, Olokun, claimed to be the most important wife, because she was not only a divinity, she ruled all the vast reaches of the earth, which was flooded, before people were created. 18. The second wife, Oshara, claimed supremacy. 12. Because even though she was merely human, she was the mother of two-dozen children. 13. These children include males, females, and twins, whom Oshara bore for Oduduwa. 14. And everyone knew that the children of the hill always remain inside the hill's womb. 15. Olokun was childless.

16. Oduduwa found himself in the midst of this slight discussion that developed into an argument. 17. He had to decide who was the most senior wife in the palace of Ile Ife.

18. Olokun was sure that Oduduwa was going to be decided in her favor. 19. After all they were fellow divinities. 18. Moreover, history was on her side. She was senior to everyone here on earth. 19. Oduduwa also knew the history of the creation of the earth, being one of those who led the delegation of divinities to Ile Ile.

20. At the same time, Osara was certain that Oduduwa was going to decide in her favor. 21. She knew how very highly Oduduwa held the place of children in the palace. 22. And everyone knew that she was the most prolific mother and maker of babies in the entire palace. 23. It was therefore clear in her sight that Oduduwa

would not hesitate to name her the most important wife.

24. Oduduwa, in the midst of this dilemma, decided that both women were equally important. 25. Each one was indispensable in her own way, he said. 26. Each woman was therefore most important in this way. 27. But Olokun, not happy at that decision, decided to slap Oduduwa in the face. 28. Oduduwa, who was expecting the blow, ducked in time. 30. Now Olokun was a wealthy woman who wore many rows of precious beads around her neck, wrists, and ankle. 31. The string of the beads around Olokun's wrist snapped, and the beads went flying in the air, and landed on the Calabash of Being at the back of the throne.

9.1 There was pandemonium in the palace. 2. The Calabash of Being fell, hit the floor and shattered, spilling its divine water. 3. That same afternoon, Iku heard about the fate of the Calabash of Being and came sailing into human life. 4. Iku was happy at the news. 5. Finally he could move to the earth and start slaughtering anybody he liked.

6. Iku killed on the left, and killed on the right; then he moved into the middle and ravaged it mercilessly. 7. Everybody was dying like flies, as Iku, now afraid of nothing, boldly marched into the abodes of ordinary people. 7. Iku had no shame. 10. He did not discriminate. Whomsoever Iku saw, he killed. 11. Iku had no mercy. 13. He killed even infant babies, at the hour of delivery, in addition to slaughtering the mothers. 14. It was as if Iku was trying to make up for all those years when the Omi Iye was intact, and he was afraid to enter the earth to kill people.

15. People became afraid for their lives. 16. Nobody knew whose turn it was next to die. 17. They did not know from where Iku was going to spring, or how it was going to catch them. 18. Everybody knew that Iku could come at any time, yet nobody was ever prepared to die. 19. The fear of death gripped people, who were not accustomed to such a thing as death. 20. They were convinced that death was going to take all of them away, one by one.

21. The people therefore came together and sent a representation to Orunmila, to teach them what to do to release them from their problem. 22. Orunmila consulted his oracle and the Odu that came out was Oyeku meji. 23. He asked the people to prepare lots of food, and get ready for a feast. 24. They should also make a costume of many colors whenever anybody died. 25. If they made that costume, whomsoever died would return wearing that costume.

26. It was Egungun, however, who returned in the garments, attracted by the colors. 27. Egungun could never resist bright colors, and he donned the garment, happy, and began to move from house to house, showing off his garment of many colors, and thanking people for making it for him. 28. 29. That was how Egungun returned.

from the other world into this world. 30. That was how people were able to lure Egungun from the other world, into this world, to help them put an end to the mass slaughtering taking place whenever Iku visited the earth.

10.1 Now, following Orunmila's advice, the people had prepared huge quantities of food. 2. They cooked all the dishes that people really enjoyed, such as pounded yam with melon soup and bushmeat. 3. Others prepared countless basketfuls of corn balls, eko, and beans balls, olele. 4. Some people had made porridge, hot and steaming, its aroma wafting through the entire neighborhood.. 5. There were bowls full of fried chicken and roasted beef. 6. Pots of wine were also brewed and placed next to the bowl of food. 7. Nobody knew what to do with the meal. Everybody waited.

8. Suddenly, they began to hear the saworo sound of the jingling bangles worn by iku. 9. Pandemonium broke out as the entire crowd scattered, everyone running for dear life, abandoning the feast that they had prepared so lavishly earlier on. 10. Iku ran after them, hungry, looking for a delicious and succulent infant .to snack on. 11. Then, suddenly, he caught the combined aroma of all the delicious dishes that the people abandoned when they fled. 12. Iku stopped and tasted the fried chicken. 13. It was crunchy on the outside and succulent and juicy on the inside. 14. Iku loved the food that humans ate. 15. It was much better than raw human meat. 16. He tasted more of the food, and liked all of them. 17. Soon, he totally forgot all about the people he was chasing, and simply sat down to feast on the delicious dishes that they left behind. 18. He really loved the porridge. 19. Just as he was about to declare it his favorite, he tried some pounded yam with melon soup and bush meat. 20. He like this dish even more. 21. He ate bowls upon bowls of black eye beans. 22. Then he settled on tuwo dishes, made from corn. 23. He feasted for days without taking a break. 24. Before he knew it, he had become rotund, hardly able to shift from where he sat. 25. Yet he continued to eat because the food was so sweet.

11.1 From that moment onwards, death no longer killed people so easily. 2. Because he had grown so fat and slow after feasting for so long on all the food meant for a festival, Iku could only catch the old and sick, or anybody he could sneak up upon. 3. He preferred to eat human food anyway. 4. When he got desperate, he waited until everybody went to bed, and then stole into their kitchen to scavenge on their leftovers. 5. He quickly left before daybreak. 6. That is why the babalawo always ask people to leave their dishes unwashed till the morning, so that Iku could find something to snack on if he sneaked in, hungry, during the long nights. 7. Iku has been known to grow angry and kill members of the

household, simply because he found no food in the entire home, during the night, when he called, famished. 8. That, in brief, was how Iku came into the world. 9. He was domesticated into a food-eating creature.

12. 1. Now the rivalry between two of the most prominent wives of Oduduwa, namely Osaara and Olokun, did not end with the shattering of the Igba Iwa, or the Calabash of Being. 2. It happened that despite all the wealth that Olokun accumulated, she was infertile. 3. Try as hard as she did, she was not able to bear any child. 4. She went to the Ifa priest, who told her that she had to choose between her enormous wealth and fertility.

5. She did not hesitate before saying that she would rather remain rich, than turn poor but blessed with many children.

6. Her infertility, she decided, was totally by choice. 7. But it was also a final choice, one that she could not reverse. 8. She sometimes wished that the choice was reversible. 9. But she was told definitely that it was final when she made her choice. 10. I told her that we all make choices. 11. I have my own regrets with alcohol. 12. She had to live with what she chose.

13. I live with the regret that I brought handicapped people into the world. 14. But my joy is that each one of them is specially blessed like no other person in the world is. 15. Each person simply has to find where his or her special ability lies. The person so called handicapped is now a person of special ability, and not a person with disability.

Olunrete, Ajanrete

Olunrete, Ajanrete

Ile the Earth and Olorun from above

They went to the deep forest to hunt.

They hunted for many hours

5. And killed nothing.

Finally they killed a small rat

And wanted to share it.

According to the respected tradition

The elder one takes the head section

10. The younger one takes the tail section.

Ile claimed to be the elder.

Olorun also claimed to be the elder.

As they continued to argue

Ile the Earth opened up and swallowed the rat.

15. Olorun became angry and withdrew from all.

Rain would not fall from the heavens

Only the scorching sun shone on a daily basis

All the crops died

And there was nothing for people to eat.

20. They went to the babalawo diviner

He consulted the oracle.

The Odu that appeared was Olunrete.

It is now clear that Olorun is the elder one

Ajanrente

25. Olunrete, Ajanrete.

## The Lore of Ogun.

1.1.I am at home.

2.I am at the farmland.

3.I am also at the border post, snacking on a roasted canine.

4.Even if you do not know me,  
Can't you hear the rumble of my vocal chord?

5.Even if you have never been to the lagoon,  
Have you never before tasted salt in a soup dish?

6 I am here, and farmers may no longer go to their farms.

7. I am here, and fishermen may no longer be able to go the rivers.

8.I am here, and may newly weds be unable to get intimate.

9.Those who say their wives are thieves,  
Adulterers, witches, back-stabbers, slovenly,  
Liars, loafers, untrustworthy and mean should bring them to me.

8.It is these same type of women that I am collecting.

9.Has it not been said that only a herbalist can marry a sicker?

10. In the market of Ejigbomekun,  
Only I, Ogun, can sleep naked with a witch,  
And wake up the following morning to drink a sharp draft of palm wine.

!1. I am Ogun, who made my place in Ire,  
After departing Ile Ife., the city of a thousand and one shrines.

12. I was not born in Ile Ife either. 13. I am not a native of Ile Ife. 14. True I grew up in Ife. But as with everyone else, Ile Ife for me was merely a point of departure, from where to see where to move to settle down. 14. I knew that I did not want to settle in Ile Ife. 15. It was too urban for me. 16. There was too much drumming and laughing.

17. The women's eyes were too open to wealth. 18. They loved money more than anything else. 19. Everyone knows that Ile Ife women were materialistic.

20. Their men? Party creatures. 21. They were not fighters. 22. They were revelers.

23. They held festivals and feasts at the slightest pretension. 24. It was an easy-going and jovial population, which I found annoying, and out of tune with my hot temperament. 25. The people made me jealous and angry by their easy ways.

26.My ways are not easy. My ways are difficult. Tiring. 27. I was in Ile Ife only because I was one of the one million and one divinities who descended on a single chain, with the first diaspora from the other world, orun, to this world, aye. 28. So I

was there at the beginning, when Eledumare created things from nothing.

2.1. Seven are my identities,

Seven are my ways,

Seven are my women,

Seven a week are my festivals,

Seven is my number,

Seven my game.

2. I have seven names,

Seven houses,

Seven goats and

Seven chicken, which feed

Seven times a day on

Seven warps of corn meals.

3. I have seven friends and

Seven slaves, seven sons and

Seven daughters married to

Seven different husbands.

4. After seven times seven decades of living in Ile Ife, I made my way for the seven day journey from Ife Oodaye to Ire. 5. On the seventh day, I arrived the gate of Ire, with elaborate walls guarded by seven dwarfs and seven giants, who asked me my name seven times.

6. Seven times I said nothing.

7. The seventh time, I said

“Even if you do not know me, did you not hear the rumbling of my throat?

Even if you do not know the sea, did you not hear the rumbling of the water?

Even if you have never seen the lagoon, did you not just taste the sharp bite of a salty soup?”

8. The seven dwarfs and seven giants saluted me seven times, open the seven gates into the town of Ire and hailed me inside.

9. I went straight to the seventh street, to a pavement lined with seven palm trees, where seven chiefs and seven commoners sat silent, around seven kegs of palm wine. 10. They drank, all silent and serene, looking happy and contented with themselves.

11. And I was hungry, and my throat was parched with thirst. 12. I took seven leaps, went up to them, and saluted them seven times. 13. But they did not answer me. 14. I greeted them seven times with the codes of Our Mothers, but they did not respond. 15. On the seventh greeting, I kicked six of their seven kegs of palm wine.

into the pavement, and shattered their gourds.

16. I drank straight from the narrow neck of the seventh keg of palm wine. 17. My eyes red and bulging, I slaughtered the seven chiefs and seven commoners, because of their arrogance. 18. I asked to be taken to palace of the king, who hearing of my approach fled from the city.

19. I took his seven wives and made them my queens. 20. I took his seven crowns and wore them one by one. They fitted perfectly.

21. So I said, "Who the crown fit, he will wear it." 22. So I kept the crowns and became the ruler of Ire, resplendent in an ancient palace, with seventy seven suites.

23. For seven years of peace, followed by seven years of war, I ruled Ire from my palace during the peace, and led the battles during the wars. 24. For seven weeks, I drank nothing but blood at the battle of Ihoriho, against naked giants who invaded city after city, and made everyone walk naked on the streets. 25. The people of Alara had succumbed to the ravaging army of Ihoriho, and they began to walk naked on the street. 26. The people of Ajero similarly fell to the army of Ihoriho, and they also began to walk naked on the street. 27. The ladies of Tamodun also walked without a stitch, when the army of Ihoriho took their city. 28. I watched with dread and fury as the army of Ihoriho marched toward the city of Ire, approaching the seven gates with impunity.

3.1 The women of Ire fasted for seven days when they saw the army of Ihoriho marching on the gates of our ancient city. 2. The women sent their seven war lord to meet me and arrange a surrender with the general of the Ihoriho army. 3. I sat silent. 4. Angry. Furious.

5. My favorite wife brought my favorite dish of seven wraps of pounded yam.

6. Another wife produced seven pieces of canine meat.

7. It was my new concubine who served me with seven kegs of palm wine.

8. I kicked away the dining table, angry, furious.

9. I asked for the counsel of the diviner,  
Who consulted the oracle.

10. The oracle said I was right.

11. Only blood will flow at the battle of Ihoriho, but no food.

12. On the seventh day with no food,

13. After seven days of eating or drinking nothing but blood,  
My eyes were red like the heart of a kernel of fire.

I saw nothing but anger and fury.

I asked them to lead me thus to the army of Ihoriho.



14. They asked me to go with a garrison of seven thousand fighters. 15. I said no. 16. I marched alone into battle against the army of Iboriho. 17. I fell into the midst of the army of Iboriho, and slaughtered them left, right and center. 18. As they tried to cut me down, they hacked and killed one another.

19. The gore and blood that witnessed the massacre remain till today at Ire. Because this is what makes the clay at the central market look so red. 20. The general of the army of Iboriho fled, and I went after him. 21. After chasing him from town to town for seven days, I found him hiding among seven women, in the court of Ilaramoko.

22. I took his seven women and added them to mine. 23. I took his head and added it to the display of trophies on my seven racks of war skulls. I told the people of Ilara that they may wear clothes. Till today they continue to wear clothes in Ilara. I told the people of Ijero that they may return to wearing clothes. And till today, you will see them wear clothes in Ijero. The women of Tamodun were also happy to return to their high fashion attires. Everyone was happy to be free of the tyranny of the Iboriho army.

24. Thus peace remained in Ire for another seven times seven years. 25. I lived in the pleasure of my women, and made many handsome princes for the town of Ire. 26. But I soon got tired of domestic life.

## The Flash of Sango

1.1 Bring me a ram.

To quench my hunger.

Bring me a thousand bitter kolas.

I owe my stomach a small snack.

2. Or who want me to strike them

With a live flash of lightning and thunder?

Only those who are doomed from birth.

Only those troubled by Esu.

Would stumble across the crossroads.

Would step on my dance wands.

Only those ready for the executioner.

3. I am the king of Koso.

I am the author of lightning.

My voice is the thunder

That comes with the summer storms.

4. When the sky turns black, beware because I may just strike again.

They called me the king of Koso,

Not because they failed to recognize

My kingship over the whole of the land.

But they all knew I was partial to Koso

Because of Koso's northern connection,

5. After all, Eji my mother

Was a northern princess,

Dark and beautiful like a polished ebony figure.

6. My mother was a gifted princess. 7. The daughter of the Nupe king of Elempe.

8. She was given as a child bride to the Alaafin as part of a treaty between the two

kingdoms. 9. The Alaafin gave the Elempe his beautiful daughter in return. 10. It

was important to the treaty that the Elempe make the first gesture of offering a child

bride at least once to a new Alaafin. 11. The Alaafin was not compelled by the treaty

to return the gesture, but he custom expected him to do so.

12. The Alaafin was truly stunned by the beauty and innocence of Eji the child

bride who was given to him at the age of four years. 13. She was intelligent, with

bright open eyes, always with a broad smile for everyone. 14. Her mother, the Nupe

king's favorite, had died in childbirth. 15. The Nupe monarch could not bear seeing

the little girl who resembled her mother almost like a copy. 16. The king of Elempe

therefore decided to give her away as a child bride to the newly elected Alaafin of Oyo.

16. The woman who nursed my mother since Eji was a baby moved from the land of the Nupe to Oyo and continued to raise the child. 17. The Alaafin saw Eji daily since she was a baby until she was a young woman. 18. The Alaafin regarded Eji almost as his own baby, since she grew up in his palace. 19. He promised Eji that if she bore him a son, the son would become the king after him. 20. When Eji was eighteen years old, she bore the doting king a son, me. 21. They named me Sango, because of the speed with which I came out of my mother's womb. 22. In an instant, and it was all over. 23. I crawled out myself, and in a week I was already talking, imitating the greetings of those who came to greet the new baby. 24. They were startled when the new baby returned their greetings. 25. Everyone knew I was a special kind of baby.

2.1. I began to walk by the time I was six months. 2. By my first birthday, I was already apprenticed to Orere, the greatest herbalist in the land, to learn about the power of herbal arts. Orere moved into the palace to give his undivided attention to schooling. Most of the time we spent roaming the forest, studying leaves. 3. By the age of three, I could make explosives simply from rubbing two leaves together. 4. I was especially interested in fire and explosion. 5. By the age of ten, I knew how to control lightning and thunder, and make them do my wish.

6. My father, the Alaafin Jakuta died suddenly one day while doing acrobatic riding on his new horse. 7. The cursed horse threw him up and he landed on his neck, breaking it. 8. He died on the spot. 9. He was hardly cold before his younger brother seized power as Regent. 10. He declared Eji my mother one of his queens. 11. When she resisted, he ordered her repatriated to Nupeland, the land of her fathers. 12. I was returning from researching into leaves when I found my mother sobbing. 13. In tears, she told me of the new edicts. 14. She was forbidden from taking anything with her, except her son, that is me.

15. I had been working on some herbs for about three months. 16. This particular combination of leaves had lethal electricity properties that worked with natural forces. 17. By pointing the combination of leaves in a particular direction, after saying some incantations, you can direct lightning at anything, in any path, and at different intensities.

18. The Regent's ploy was to get rid of both my mother and me in one stroke. 19. The Regent knew that it was the wish of the deceased king for me, Sango, to be king after his death. 20. But the Regent decided to become king himself. 21. He called the kingmakers together and bribed them. 22. The three kingmakers who

refused his bribed died mysteriously one after the other. 24. All the rest decided that he was going to be the next king.

23. On the day the kingmakers were about to announce their decision to make the Regent the new king, I, Sango, decided to strike first. 24. The king-to-be sat amidst the kingmakers in the central hall, as they prepared to vote formally and make their decision known to the city. 25. He was not supposed to be there, since he was the one being voted on. 26. Everyone already knew that some fraud was going on inside the palace. 27. But nobody could do anything because the people were afraid. 28. Many people went about feeling sad that Eji and I, the favorite prince, were going to be banished from the Oyo kingdom. 29. Eji had resigned herself to her fate, and was prepared to return to Nupeland, where her father was still reigning.

3.1. I was furious. For the first time, fire came out of my mouth as I spoke to my mother, reassuring her. 2. I had eaten certain herbs that reacted inside me to cause fire and smoke to come out of me. 3. But I had not demonstrated this power in public before. 4. When my mother saw the fire and smoke coming from my mouth, she fell on her knees, and she was afraid. 5. I marched out, pointed the electricity leaves at the sky and stood still for a moment, with powerful Oro of incantation coming out of my mouth, mixed with fire and smoke.

6. Instantly, the sky began to darken. 7. In a matter of minutes, the sky was completely dark. 8. Suddenly the dark sky was torn into jagged flashes of electrical sparks, as lightning, thunder, and a rainstorm blended into a frightening, extreme mid-day weather condition. 9. Everybody ran indoor, shut the doors and windows, and tried to block their ears from the deafening noise of the loud thunderstorm.

10. A loud explosion from the sky struck the central hall with the king-to-be and the kingmakers wining and dining and congratulating themselves. 11. The lightning strike was a direct hit on the building and in a moment, the historic hall and its entire royal contents were incinerated, without affecting any other building inside or outside the palace.

12. In a matter of minutes, the dark sky cleared, the sun began to shine again, the rain stopped, and the only difference was the smoldering central hall. 13. Everyone knew it was the work of Sango. 14. But everyone also supported me, because they knew that I was claiming what was mine. 15. I refused to be cheated by those who thought they had the power to cheat me. 16. Justice became the theme of my rule. 17. Everyone knew that if they wanted justice, I gave it to them.

18. The palace cleaners soon cleared the rubbish of the central hall. 19. There was a long-standing tradition of not mourning those struck by lightening. 20. Only thieves, murderers and such gangsters got struck by lightning. 21. The deceased

were not mourned. 22. Shedding tears for the victims of lightning could turn the sky dark for another lightning strike. 23. No burial ceremony was possible because there were no remains found in the charred pile left after the thunderstorm.

4.1. Authority was naturally passed to me with no fuss. 2. To give myself some more room, I called my builders, and constructed a small palace for myself in Koso, outside of the main palace. 3. I moved Eji and her northern relatives to the new palace. 4. No one knew in which of the two palaces I slept on any night. 5. I kept my enemies guessing. My enemies were many. 6. But they were afraid of me. 7. Those who were relatives, friends and workers of the killed king makers and the king-to-be were angry and envious. 8. They all swore to kill me. 9. But none of them dared to openly grumble. 10. They knew that the same death that claimed their fathers and patrons could visit them.

11. There was truly a revolution. 11. The poor people of the kingdom felt empowered. 12. If the rich and powerful oppressed the poor, the poor ones came to me for justice. 13. I gave the people the justice that they deserved. 14. They sang my praises. The women composed songs. 15. Professional poets rendered chants for me in voices never-before heard.

16. They called me the master of all herbs. 17. It is true that my master, Orere, gave all his knowledge to me before he passed. 18. And I used my intelligence and curiosity to fill in the gaps where they existed. 19. But I never thought that I could be regarded as the greatest herbalist of all times. 20. Being king of the largest kingdom on earth seemed like nothing next to this honor.

21. Even as king, I still spent most of my time in the forest, doing botanical studies for electricity. 22. Nobody noticed my absence because my mother always performed my duties, which were mostly ceremonial. 23. The government was set up to operate smoothly without the king playing any active role. 24. A king was not expected to make the decisions, but he was there to ratify the decisions.

25. My time in the forest was fruitful. 26. I discovered how to convert lightning to electric power. 27. I then wanted to see how the electricity could be used for light. 28. Once I could achieve this power, there would be no need for the small palm-oil lamps, made out of clay, for lighting the homes. 29. Light would come into individual homes directly from the skies, whenever needed. The streets would all be lighted at night.

5.1. The experiment was successful when I tried it in the forest. 2. I went back to the city of Oyo to announce my discovery. 3. I asked the town criers to announce that I was about to demonstrate a new discovery. 4. I was no longer going to use my power for destructive purposes, as I was already known for doing. 5. Some of my

enemies were already composing songs about how I used my powers to expand my own influence for political gains. 6. I wanted to show the people that my power was for them. 7. My power was for creative purposes. 8. Sango's power was for the benefit of all the people.

9. All my people gathered one evening in front of their houses as the town criers requested of them. 10. I told my mother Eji exactly what to do in the palace. 11. Seated under an ose tree, I was in the forest delivering the incantations to ensure that things went smoothly. 12. From the top of the hill where I sat, I could see the entire city of Oyo, as I looked down.

13. At exactly the hour that I asked Eji, my mother, to snap her fingers at the calabash that I left for her, the entire city Oyo was fully lit with a cool natural electricity light. 14. Every part of the city was lit. 15. People could control the light simply by snapping their fingers.

16. I returned to the city triumphantly, to take a rest from my studies. 17. The people of Oyo declared me a living god, the orisa of lightning and thunder. 18. The most gifted artists of the land were asked to make sculptural objects to celebrate my ascendancy into the ranks of orisa.

19. No one would let me leave the palace for the forest to continue my studies. 20. I was delayed in the city, confined to my palaces, as the people continued to celebrate my divine kingship as the most benevolent period in the history of the land.

21. But I knew that my enemies were also fast at work. 22. There were many people dedicated to destroying my work. 23. One night they succeeded. 24. Without any warning, the natural electrical light went out in half the town, while it stayed lit in half the other. 25. I knew that sabotage was at work, and immediately left for the forest. I knew exactly what to do, once I reached my camp on the hill. 26. As soon as I got there, I saw that things had been changed. I began to rearrange the herbs to make things work again. It did not take me any length of time before I fixed the problem. 27. I looked down on the city, and electricity returned to the entire land. 28. From many miles from the city, you could hear the audible cry of "Sango!" that went into the air in praise of my name as the light returned. 29. I began to descend to return to the city.

5.1. I mounted my horse and my guards led the way. 2. We had not gone more than twenty miles before we heard a group of horses galloping toward us.

3. Oya, my favorite queen, led the group. 4. I thought they came to greet me in celebration. 4. But they had bad news. 5. No sooner did we leave the top of the hill and began descending before strange things started happening. 6. By that time, we could not see it because we were no longer on top of the hill. 7. But the city of Oyo

began to burn. 8. The light from Sango's electricity suddenly exploded into flames and consumed the city. 9. Many people were already burnt to death, and as Oya fled the city, the city continued to burn. 10. Oya had come running to tell me to turn off the switch.

11. Immediately we rode back to the top of the hill and I turned off the switch. 12. But as I looked at the city from the hilltop, I knew that we were too late. 13. A large section of the city of Oyo was gone. 14. The old palace section was most affected. 15. The city that my ancestors built, I ignorantly used my craft to destroy. 16. My mother Eji perished in the palace fires. 17. I asked to be taken to Koso, where the shrines of my ancestors were placed. 18. The shrines were totally untouched by the fires. 19. My own shrine, the ones built by my devotees to enshrine me as divinity, was also untouched by the fire. 20. The fire did not spread to the Koso section of the city. 21. There in Koso, among my trusted friends, we did the last rituals. 21. They brought me a ram with large twisted horns. 22. They brought me a thousand bitter kolas. 23. My concubines cooked large pots of my favorite dish of bean soups. 24. Oya made me a large bowl of oka meal. 25. I sat on a carved mortar, with double-headed axe decorations. I become the ultimate pestle. 26. After feasting to my utmost delight, I rested on my beloved Oya's loins, and I entered the ground, and returned to orun.

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