

## APPENDIX 1:

### Odù – Ogbèatè <sup>1</sup>

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Ká dijú ká wí pá a kú,           | Let us close our eyes and pretend to be dead,                       |
| Ká wẹ̀nì tọ̀ fẹ̀rà̀n ẹ̀ni.       | Then we will truly know those who love us.                          |
| Ká b̀r̀r̀n b̀r̀r̀n b̀r̀r̀n,      | Let us walk on a long and tiresome journey,                         |
| Ká fẹ̀sẹ̀ kọ̀ gbàrà gbàrà gbàrà; | Until we hit something with our foot, stumble and lose our balance; |
| Ká wẹ̀ni tí ó ẹ̀ni pẹ̀lẹ̀.       | Let us observe those who sympathize with us.                        |
| Èyẹ̀n yọ́owù tọ̀ bá ẹ̀ni pẹ̀lẹ̀, | Whoever it is that sympathizes with us,                             |
| Eléyuuṣì lọ̀ fẹ̀rà̀n.            | Is the person who truly loves us.                                   |
| Èkún Aríra là ń sun,             | We are weeping for Aríra,   |
| Àaaa!                            | Àaaa!   |
| Èkún ara wa là ń sun.            | We are weeping for our own selves.                                  |
| Èdú ọ̀ mọ̀ mọ̀ kú mọ̀,           | Èdú is no longer dead,  |
| Se bí lajà lọ̀ wà o?             | Don't you know that he just in the attic?                           |
| Èkún ara wa là ń sun.            | We are weeping for our own benefit.                                 |

According to Kólá Abímbólá the refrain in lines 8, 10 and 13 exactly matches the title and refrain of the Yoruba-Trinidadian song, “Yé! Èkún Ara Wa la Mi Sun.”<sup>2</sup> Abímbólá goes on to explain his interpretation as follows: “To an English speaker, the words from the two sources may not look the same, but actually they are. First, “Aaaa!” is an onomatopoeic synonym for “crying.” Just as

crying can sound like “aaaa”, so can it sound like “ye.” Hence, “Aaaa!”—an onomatopoeic word for crying—is conveyed by “Ye!” in the Yoruba-Trinidadian song. Therefore: Aaaa! = Ye!

Second, Oyo Yoruba is notorious for what are called “vowel assimilation” and “consonant elision” in linguistics. Basically, Oyo Yoruba cuts out unnecessary consonants and contrasts or changes two, three or four sequential vowels to form shorter or different words. This is because Oyo Yoruba functions in Yoruba language the same way Queen’s English functions in English language. That is, anyone who speaks any dialect of English (be it Cockney English, Black County English, or Texan English) will understand the Queen’s English. In the same way, anyone who speaks any dialect of Yoruba will understand Oyo Yoruba. Hence the rendition of lines 8, 10, and 13 as “Ekun ara wa la n sun” is exactly the same as “Ekun ara wa la mi sun”. The consonant “m” in the word “mi” has been removed, and vowel elision has been applied to “i” to turn it into a new vowel “n.”

Although the stand-alone word “n” in lines 8, 10 and 13 may look like a consonant to an English speaker, in this case, it is actually a vowel – and that is why it has the accent mark above it. In Yoruba language, only vowels take accent marks (upper or lower). The one and only exception to this accent mark rule is the “s” that sometimes has a dot underneath. Therefore, *Ekun ara wa la mi sun = Ekun ara wa la n sun.*”

## Appendix 1 Notes

<sup>1</sup> The transcription and translation of these verses from *Ogbèatè* are cited from Kólá Abímbólá, *Ifa Poems for Daily Encouragement* (Conyers, GA: Orisaworld Publications, Forthcoming 2014). Abímbólá's linguistic analysis of the two sources was provided via an electronic correspondence to the author, June 8, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> See track 15, “Yé! Ekún Ara Wa la Mi Sun,” on *Peter Was a Fisherman: The 1939 Trinidad Field Recordings of Melville and Frances Herskovits*, Vol. 1 (Rounder Records, CD 1114, 1939).

**This Appendix was prepared in direct consultation with:**

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