

# SIXTEEN GREAT POEMS OF IFÁ

*Ọjálá and the Choice of Orí*

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vi. **Àjàlá and the Choice of Orí**

The following poem tells the story of how **Orí** is chosen in **òrun** (heaven) and the consequences of this irrevocable choice on every individual. The story concerns three friends — **Orísẹ̀ẹ̀kú** (the son of **Ògún**) **Orílẹ̀émèrè** (the son of **Ìja**) and **Afùwàpé** (the son of **Òrúnmilà**) — who were going to the abode of **Olódùmarè** to choose **Orí**". The three friends were warned, probably by people who knew the problems of people going on the long journey, not to stop anywhere on the way but to go directly to the home of **Àjàlá**, "the potter who makes heads in **òrun**". The two friends, **Orísẹ̀ẹ̀kú** and **Orí-lẹ̀émèrè** took the advice seriously and failed to call on their fathers despite the fact that they passed by their fathers' homes on the way. But **Afùwàpé**, the son of **Òrúnmilà**, insisted on seeing his father and thus left his two friends to continue on their journey while he stayed for a while with his father.

**Orísẹ̀ẹ̀kú** and **Orílẹ̀émèrè** finally reached **Àjàlá's** house after a lot of problems on the way. But they did not find him at home. They therefore asked for the store-house of heads and each one made his own choice. Unfortunately, the heads they chose were useless ones with the result that when they arrived on earth, they worked hard but they did not achieve any good results.

When **Afùwàpé** left his two friends, he went into his father's house. His father performed divination for him and the **Ifá** priests who performed the divination asked his father to perform sacrifice with three small bags of salt and three times nine thousand cowries. The **Ifá** priests gave him part of the money and the salt to take with him on the journey. After travelling for a long time, **Afùwàpé** got to the house of a gate-keeper and he

asked for the way to Àjàlá's house but the gate-keeper insisted that he would first of all finish cooking his soup before he would show the way to Afùwàpé. While they were cooking the soup, he noticed that the gate-keeper was using ashes instead of salt to sweeten his soup. He therefore introduced salt to the gate-keeper who liked it so much that he told Afùwàpé the secret about Àjàlá which led to his choice of a good Orí.

The gate-keeper told Afùwàpé that Àjàlá was an incorrigible debtor and that he was always hiding in the ceiling of the house to avoid his creditors. He therefore advised Afùwàpé to pay off the debts owed by Àjàlá so that the latter could emerge from his hiding place and attend to him personally while choosing his Orí. When Afùwàpé got to Àjàlá's house, he paid off the creditors he met there and Àjàlá emerged from hiding. The result was that Afùwàpé chose a good Orí and when he got to the earth, he became a very prosperous person.

There are a number of important points in this story. First, we see the importance of sacrifice as a means of leading one aright all the time. It was the sacrifice of money and salt which Afùwàpé made in his father's house which led him to make the right choice of Orí in the house of Àjàlá. He introduced the salt to the gate-keeper who liked it so much that he told him what to do at Àjàlá's house. He used the money to pay off Àjàlá's creditors thus making it possible for that incorrigible fellow to choose the right type of Orí for him.

Secondly, we see the importance of salt as a ritual and civilizing commodity. The gate-keeper who did not know salt can be regarded as a symbol of ancient and primitive culture while Àjàlá's introduction of salt to him can be regarded as a powerful civilizing influence

for which the gate-keeper was so grateful. In the folklore of many cultures of the world, salt is usually regarded as a commodity with important ritual and commercial significance. In this particular story, it could be regarded as the commodity which one must have in order to have the secret and important knowledge which can affect the choice of one's destiny in life. In other words, salt is synonymous with good, orderly and civilized life while lack of it represents primitive and useless life. This is probably why salt is used during the christening ceremony of Yoruba children. Salt is synonymous with good, happy and sweet life.

Thirdly, this story clearly shows that once the choice of **Orí** has been made, one has made for oneself a final and irrevokable decision. The only thing that can affect this choice is hard work over a long period of time, the proceeds of which are fed into sacrifice. In other words, the person who has chosen a bad **Orí** in heaven cannot expect to make any progress in life until he has worked very hard and performed a lot of sacrifice with the proceeds of his hard work. But for the person who chose a good **Orí** there is no problem at all in achieving a good life. However, he too must work hard since **Orí** merely represents the potential to achieve success in life.

This extremely fatalistic outlook to life so characteristic of Yoruba belief is redeemed partially by the concept of sacrifice mentioned above. Nevertheless the Yoruba still cling tenaciously to the concept of **Orí** in explaining success or failure in life. It means therefore that, to a large extent, the individual is not entirely responsible for what he achieves or fails to achieve in life. Belief in **Orí** may be regarded as a sort of escapism but it certainly has far-reaching social and psychological consequences.

Èbìtì, ègbàkè ní yèdí pèè.  
A díá fún Orísèèkú, ọmọ Ògún;  
A bù fún Orílèémèrè, ọmọ Ija;  
A díá fún Afùwàpẹ tíi sọmọ Ọrúnmilà,

5 Níjọ tí wọn nírelé Olódùmarè lọ rée yanrí.  
Àwọn mètèèta tí a dárúkọ wọnyí, ọrẹ ni wọn.  
Nígbà tó dojọ kan ni wọn bá gbìmọ pọ pé  
Kí àwọn ó lọ sílé ayé,

10 Kí àwọn ọ jọ máa gbébé;  
Bóyá ibèè lè san àwọn ju ọrun lọ.  
Ni wọn bá fi ọrọ náà lọ àwọn àgbàlagbà tó jù  
wọn lọ.  
Wọn ní bí wọn bá níọ sílé ayé,  
Wọn ní látí kọkọ lọ sí ọdọ Àjàlà

15 Látí yan ìpín níbè.  
Wọn ní “èèwọ kan náà ni ẹ ní látí sà o.  
Bí ẹ bá níọ;  
È kò gbọdọ yà sí ọtún,  
Bèè ni ẹ kò gbọdọ yà sí òsì,

20 Ilé Àjàlà ni kí ẹ máa lọ tààràtà.”  
Wọn sọ fún wọn pé :  
“Bí ẹnìkán bá gbúroo babaa rẹ lónà,  
Kò gbọdọ yabè o.”  
Wọn ni ilé Àjàlà ni kí wọn ọ máa lọ tààrà.

It is the snare which strikes suddenly.

Ifá divination was performed for **Orí ẹ̀ẹ̀kú**,<sup>1</sup> the son of **Ògún**;

Ifá divination was performed for **Orílèèmèrè**,<sup>2</sup> the son of **Ìja**;<sup>3</sup>

Ifá divination was performed for **Afùwàpé**,<sup>4</sup> the son of **Òrúnmilà**;

5 On the day they were going to the abode of **Olódùmarè** to choose **Orí**,

These three people were all friends.

One day, they deliberated together,

And decided that they would go to the earth,

They decided that when they arrived on the earth,

10 They would settle down there,

Hoping that the earth would be better for them than heaven.

They asked for advice from older people,

And they were told that before going to the earth,

They must first of all go to **Àjàlá**<sup>5</sup>

15 To choose **Orí**.

They were warned thus, “You must observe one prohibition.

When you are going,

You must not turn to the right,

Neither must you turn to the left.

20 You must go straight to the house of **Àjàlá**.”

They were warned thus,

“Even if one of you hears his father’s voice on the way,

He must not go there.”

They were told to go straight to the house of **Àjàlá**.

- 25 Wọn ní nígbà tí wọn bá yànpín tán lódò Àjàlá  
 Ni kí wọn ó tóó kọrí sóde ìsáláyé.  
 Wọn ní àwọn gbọ o.  
 Ni wọn bá múra,  
 Ó dilé Àjàlá, alámmò tíi mọrí.
- 30 Nígbà tí wọn rìn sàà,  
 Wọn kan Afabéré-gúnyán níbi tó gbé ñgúnyán  
 pèlú okini.  
 Wọn ní ẹ òlẹ o, baba.  
 Ó ni, “hòo.”  
 Wọn ní, “ẹ jòò,
- 35 Ọdò Àjàlá làwọn ñlọò.”  
 Afabéré-gúnyán ní àfi bí òún bá gúnyán òun tán  
 Ni òún tóó leè júwe ònà fún wọn.  
 Ni Afùwàpẹ bá gba abéré lówọọ rẹ,  
 Lọ bá níí gúnyán.
- 40 Ó gúnyán náà fún odidi ọjọ mэта  
 Kí ó tóó gún un tán.  
 Nígbà tí ó gúnyán yíí tán,  
 Ni Afabéré-gúnyán wáá sọ fún wọn wí pé  
 Kí wọn ọ máa lọ.
- 45 Ó ní bí wọn bá rìn diẹ.  
 Kí wọn ọ yà sí apá ọtún.  
 Ó ní wọn ọ kan oníbodè kan mbè

- 25 They were told that it was after choosing **Orí** from  
**Àjàlá**  
 That they would go to the earth.  
 They promised to heed the warning.  
 They got themselves ready,  
 And started off on their journey to the house of  
**Àjàlá**, the potter who makes heads.
- 30 After walking for some distance,  
 They got to He-who-pounds-yams-with-a-needle  
 pounding yams with a small needle.  
 They said, "Father, we greet you."  
 The old man replied, "Thank you."  
 They pleaded, "Please, Sir,
- 35 We are going to the house of **Àjàlá**."  
 He-who-pounds-yams-with-a-needle said that he  
 must first finish pounding his yams  
 Before he showed them the way.  
**Afùwàpé** took the needle from him,  
 And started to pound the yams with it.
- 40 He pounded the yams for three days  
 Before he finished the job.  
 When he finished pounding the yams,  
 He-who-pounds-yams-with-a-needle told them that  
 They were free to continue on their journey.
- 45 He told them that after travelling some distance,  
 They should turn to the right.  
 Where they would find a gate-keeper.



Kí wọn ó bèèrè lẹwọọ rẹ,  
Yóó sì júwe ọ̀nà fún wọn.

50 Nígba tí wọn rìn sàà,  
Ni wọn bá dé ibìkan.  
Ni Orísẹ̀ékú, ọ̀mọ Ọ̀gún, bá dúró sii.  
Ó bèrẹ̀ síí gbúròóo babaa rẹ,  
Bó tí ńmú apó,

55 Tó ńmú ọ̀fà,  
Tó ńmú ọ̀run.  
Orísẹ̀ékú, ọ̀mọ Ọ̀gún ní òun ó lọ  
Bá baba òun palẹ̀ ogun mọ̀ o.  
Ni wọn bá rán an létí pé

60 Ẹ̀e bí wọn ti ka èèwọ̀ fún àwọn  
Pé àwọn ọ̀ gbọ̀dọ̀ yà sí ibìkan.  
Ni Orísẹ̀ékú, ọ̀mọ Ọ̀gún, bá sísẹ̀,  
Ó ní kò burú.  
Ni wọn bá ńlọ.

65 Nígba tí wọn rìn sàà,  
Ni wọn bá kan ilé Ọ̀rúnmilà.  
Wọn ńgbọ̀ tí Ọ̀rúnmilà ńsẹ̀pọ̀n Ifá poro poro poro.  
Ni Afùwàpẹ̀ bá dúró sii.  
Àwọn méjì yókù ní kí ó jẹ̀ kí àwọn ọ̀ máa lọ.

They should ask from that man,  
And he would show them the way.

50 After travelling some distance,  
They got to a certain place.  
**Orísèékú**, the son of **Ògún**, stood still,  
When he heard his father's movement.  
He heard his father taking his quiver,

55 And taking his arrows,  
And taking his bow.  
**Orísèékú**, the son of **Ògún**, then said that he would  
go  
To help his father prepare for war.  
But his comrades reminded him that

60 They had been warned  
Not to call anywhere on the way.  
Then, **Orísèékú**, the son of **Ògún**, moved forward.  
He said that was alright,  
And they continued on their journey.

65 After travelling some distance,  
They came to the house of **Òrúnmilà**.  
They heard **Òrúnmilà** striking his divining board  
loudly with his **Ìròkẹ́**.<sup>6</sup>  
**Afùwàpé** then stood still.  
The other two urged him to let them go on,

70. Afùwàpẹ ní òun ò ní lọ mọ,  
 Àfi bí òún bá fojú kan baba òun.  
 Ni wọn bá rán an létí èèwọ tí wọn kà fún wọn.  
 Afùwàpẹ sá kọ jálẹ,  
 Ó ní òún fẹẹ fojú kan baba òun.
75. Lọ bá rá giiri wọlé.  
 Ni wọn bá ńlọ.  
 Nígba tí Ọrúnmilà fojú kan Afùwàpẹ,  
 Ó bi í níbi tọ ńlọ.  
 Afùwàpẹ ní òún ńlọ sóde isálayé ni,
80. Ọún sì ní láti kọ lọ yanrí lódò Àjàlá.  
 Ni Ọrúnmilá bá kó Ifáa rẹ,  
 Ó fi kan Afùwàpẹ lóri.  
 Ìgbà tí yóo da Ifá náà sílẹ,  
 Ogbèyónú (Ogbègúndá) ni wọn rí.
85. Nígba tí àwọn babaláwo ilé Ọrúnmilà wo  
 Ifá náà suun,  
 Wọn ní, “Ìwọ Ọrúnmilà,  
 Ibìkan ni ọmọdọ rẹ ńlọ yìi,  
 Kọmọ náà ó lè rí ipín rere mú níbẹ,
90. Ebo ni kí ó ẹ.”  
 Kín ni àwọn ọ ha rú bá yíi?  
 Wọn ní kí wọn ó ní egbínrín iyọ mẹta,

70. But **Afùwàpé** said that he wouldn't go  
 Until he had seen his father.  
 They reminded him of the warning given them.  
 But **Afùwàpé** refused completely,  
 And insisted that he must see his father.
75. He then hurried into the house.  
 The two others left him,  
 And continued their journey.  
 When **Ọ̀rúnmìlà** saw **Afùwàpé**,  
 He asked him where he was going.
80. **Afùwàpé** said that he was going to the earth,  
 And he must first go to **Àjàlá** to choose **Orí**.  
**Ọ̀rúnmìlà** then took his divinatio ninstruments,  
 And with them he touched **Afùwàpé**'s head.  
 When he cast the instruments on the ground,
85. **Ogbèyónú**<sup>8</sup> (otherwise known as **Ogbègúndá**)  
 appeared.  
 When the priests of **Ọ̀rúnmìlà**'s household studied  
 it carefully,  
 They said, "You, **Ọ̀rúnmìlà**,  
 Your son is going on a journey to a certain place.  
 So that he may choose a good lot there,
90. Let him perform sacrifice".  
 When **Ọ̀rúnmìlà** asked what they would use for  
 sacrifice,  
 He was told to perform sacrifice with three bags of  
 salt.

Kó sì ní egbeḡgbàafà ọ̀nà m̀eta.  
Ni Ọ̀rúnmilá bá kó gbogboo rẹ̀ kalẹ̀,

95 Ni wọn bá ẹ́fá fún Afùwàpẹ̀  
Wọn bu diẹ̀ fún un nínú iyò náà,  
Wọn sì fún un ní egbàafà nínú egbàaàsán tí ó rú.  
Ni wọn bá ní kí Afùwàpẹ̀ ọ̀ máa lọ.  
Nígbà tí Afùwàpẹ̀ jáde nílẹ̀ Ọ̀rúnmilà,

100 Kò rí Orísẹ̀ékú, ọ̀mọ̀ Ọ̀gún,  
Àti Orílèémèrè, ọ̀mọ̀ Ìja mọ̀.  
Wọn ti lọ ní ti wọn.  
Nígbà tí àwọn méjì yí ńlọ.  
Wọn kan oníbodè àkókó,

105 Wọn bèèrè ilé Àjàlá lówọ̀ọ̀ rẹ̀.  
Oníbodèé ní ilé Àjàlá jìnà síhìn.  
Ó ní bí kò bá jìnà ni,  
Òun ibá fi hàn wọn.  
Ni wọn bá bínú kúrò lódòọ̀ rẹ̀,

110 Wọn bèèrè lódò ẹ̀lòmíràn.  
Ni wọn bá délé Àjàlá.  
Nígbà tí wọn délé Àjàlá,  
Wọn ọ̀ bá a nílẹ̀.  
Ni wọn bá jókòó dè é.

And three times twelve thousand cowries.

**Òrúnmìlà** got all the materials ready,

95 And the sacrifice was performed for **Afùwàpé**.  
Part of the salt

Together with twelve thousand cowries was given  
to him.

They then asked **Afùwàpé** to proceed on his journey.  
When **Afùwàpé** came out of **Òrúnmìlà**'s house,

100 He saw neither **Orísèékú**, the son of **Ògún**,  
Nor **Orílèémèrè**, the son of **Ìja**.

They had gone.

When these two were going,

They got to the keeper of the first gate,

105 And asked for the house of **Àjàlá**.

But the gate-keeper said that **Àjàlá**'s house was  
too far,

He said if it was not too far,

He would have taken them there.

They left him in anger,

110 And asked another person.

At last, they reached **Àjàlá**'s house.

When they got to the house of **Àjàlá**,

They did not find him at home.

They decided to sit down and wait for him.

- 115 Nígbà tó di ọjọ kejì tí Àjàlá ò dé,  
 Ni wọn bá wí fún àwọn ará ilée rẹ pé  
 Nìkan kan làwọn wáá ẹ.  
 Wọn ní àwọn wáá yanrí ni.  
 Ni àwọn ará ilé Àjàlá bá dáhùn pé
- 120 “Bó bá ẹ pé torí ni,  
 Orí m̀be ǹlẹ”  
 Ni wọn bá mú wọn lọ síbi tí Àjàlá m̀rí sí,  
 Nígbà tí Orísẹ̀ẹ̀kú ọ̀ bọ̀ọ̀ síbẹ̀,  
 Orí tọ̀ jẹ̀ tuntun,
- 125 Tí Àjàlá ò tii sun rárá ló mú.  
 Nígbà tí Orílèémèrè nàà ọ̀ bọ̀ọ̀ síbẹ̀,  
 Orí ǹlá kan bá yìi ló gbé  
 Làimọ̀ pé ó tí fọ̀ sára.  
 Ni àwọn méjèèjì bá gbé oríi wọn borí.
- 130 Ni wọn bá fọ̀n ọ̀n,  
 Ó di òde ayé.  
 Ó kù diẹ̀ kí wọn ó dóde isálayé,  
 Ni òjó bà dé.  
 Òjò yí rọ̀ tí tí,
- 135 Ọ̀ kọ̀, kọ̀ dá mọ̀,  
 Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni ó ǹpa Orísẹ̀ẹ̀kú àti Orílèémèrè.  
 Nígbà tí òjó pa Orí yìi tó bẹ̀ẹ̀,

- 115 When, on the second day, **Àjàlá** did not return,  
They told the people of **Àjàlá's** household  
That they had come for a certain thing.  
They said that they had come to choose **Orí**.  
The people of **Àjàlá's** household answered thus,
- 120 "If that is your mission,  
Numerous heads are available."  
They then took them to **Àjàlá's** store-house of  
heads.  
When **Orísèékú** entered,  
He picked a newly-made head
- 125 Which **Àjàlá** had not fired at all.  
When **Orílèémèrè** also entered,  
He picked one very big head  
Not knowing that it had cracked.  
The two of them put on their clay heads,
- 130 And hurried off  
On their way to the earth.  
A little distance before they reached the earth,  
It started to rain.  
It rained for a long time,
- 135 And it refused to stop.  
Yet it was beating **Orísèékú** and **Orílèémèrè**.  
After the rain had beaten their heads for long,



Lọ bá bèrè sí mumi yó.  
Bí oríi wọn náà bá kẹ̀ yììn,

140 Ní ọ̀ bàá ri bọ̀ sílẹ̀ pọ̀,  
Orí ọ̀sáà ní kẹ̀ yììn  
Títí tí ọ̀ fi bú lẹ̀gbẹ̀ẹ̀,  
Tó fi ri dànù,  
Tí gbogboo rẹ̀ẹ̀ wáá kù pelebe.

145 Ni wọn bá fi bèẹ̀ wọlé ayé.  
Nígba tí wọn délé ayé tán,  
Wọn ọ̀sẹ̀ ọ̀sẹ̀,  
Wọn ọ̀ rẹ̀rẹ̀ jẹ.  
Bí wọn bà fi eépìni ọ̀wòwò,

150 Eépìni náà lè tún dá gbèsèe kọ̀ọ̀-kan-àbọ̀  
Sí wọn lẹ̀rùn.  
Nígba tí wọn ọ̀ kiní yìi títí,  
Fún bí ọ̀dún mẹ̀wáá,  
Tí wọn ọ̀ rí ojútùúu rẹ̀,

155 Ni wọn bá mééjì kẹ̀ẹ̀ta,  
Wọn looko akònilọ̀gbọ̀n.  
Àwọn awòyeróye wáá fi yé wọn pé  
Orí tí wọn mú ni ọ̀ d́áa.  
Wọn ní, “Nígba tí ẹ̀ mbọ̀,

The heads became water-logged.  
As a result, the heads expanded,

140 And they started to drop off in bits.  
The heads expanded more and more,  
Until the sides were completely worn away,  
And started to drop off in lobes.  
So that what remained was flat and small.

145 It was in that state that they entered the earth.  
When they got to the earth,  
They worked and worked,  
But they had no gain.  
If they traded with one half-penny,

150 It might lead them  
To a loss of one-and-a-half-pennies.  
When they did this  
For about ten years  
Without any hope of improvement,

155 They added two cowry-shells to three,  
And went to consult Ifá priests.  
These wise men told them that  
The fault was in the bad heads they had chosen.  
They asked them, "When you were coming to the  
earth,

- 160 Ñjẹ òjọ pa yín lònà?”  
 Wọn ní, “Bẹẹ ni.”  
 Wọn ní, “Nígbà tí ẹ mbọ wá silé ayé,  
 Orí burúkú lẹ gbé.  
 Bí orí náà kọ bá ẹ tútù,
- 165 A ẹ èyí tó ti fọ sára.”  
 Wọn ní, “Bẹ ẹ ti mbọ lònà un,  
 Tójò npa yín,  
 Ni Orí burúkú tẹ ẹ gbé nyinrin,  
 Tó níri dànù.”
- 170 Wọn ní, “Nígbà tí ẹ ó fi délé ayé,  
 Orí tẹ ẹ gbé kò jù peḷeḷe lọ mọ.  
 Láti ìgbà náà, gbogbo iṣẹ tí ẹ nṣe,  
 Orí burúkú peḷeḷe un lẹ fi nídí,  
 Ó sì di ìgbà tí ẹ bá kún un títí,
- 175 Tí ó bá dé déédéé èyí tí ẹ gbé kúrò lóde ọrun,  
 Kí ẹ tóó máa rí ẹ.”  
 Nígbà tí Afùwàpẹ mbọ,  
 Tó rìn sàà,  
 Ó kan oníbodè àkókó.
- 180 Ó bi í léèrè ilé Àjàlá.  
 Eléyiun ní àfi bí òún bá se ọbẹ tí òun nṣe tán.  
 Ni Afùwàpẹ bá jókòó tì í,

- 160 Were you beaten by rain ?”  
They answered “We were”.  
The Ifá priests said, “When you were coming to  
the earth,  
You chose bad heads.  
If they were not unbaked heads,
- 165 They must have been broken ones.  
As you were coming to the earth,  
And you were being beaten by rain,  
The bad heads you chose were wearing away,  
And dropping off in pieces.
- 170 Before you arrived on the earth,  
Your heads had become very flat.  
Since then all the gains from your work,  
Were being used to replenish the worn-off parts  
of your bad heads.  
And it is when you have replenished them suffi-  
ciently
- 175 So that they are restored to their original sizes,  
That you will begin to prosper very well.”  
When **Afùwàpé** was coming,  
He walked some distance,  
And got to the keeper of the first gate.
- 180 He asked from him the way to Àjàlá’s house.  
The gate keeper said that he would first finish  
cooking his soup.  
So, **Afùwàpé** sat patiently by him,

Ọ mbá a á koná.

Ibi tí Afùwàpẹ ti nkoná

185 Ló ti rí i pé eérú ni oníbodè mbù sínú ọbẹ.

Ó ní, “Baba, eérú lẹ mbù sọbẹ yí !”

Babá ní ohun táwọ̀n jẹ ní tàwọ̀n nù un.

Ni Afùwàpẹ bá mú ọkan nínú egbínrín iyọ̀ rẹ,

Ó bu iyọ̀ níbẹ,

190 Ó fi sínú ọbẹ.

Ló bá ní kí oníbodè ọ tọ ọ wò.

Nígba tí oníbodè ó fi kan ẹnu,

Ó ní níbo ló ti rí ohun tó dùn tó bá yí ?

Ó ní òjẹ o lẹ bun òun níbi iyókù ?

195 Afùwàpẹ ní kò burú,

Lọ bá kó egbínrín iyọ̀ méjèjèjì fún un.

Nígba tí wọ̀n se ọbẹ yí jiná,

Ni oníbodè bá dide,

Ọ saájú,

200 Afùwàpẹ tẹ lé e.

Wọ̀n rìn tí tí,

Wọ̀n búrìn búrìn,

Ni wọ̀n bá sún mọ ilé Àjàlá.

Ni wọ̀n bá bèrẹ sí gbáriwo.

Helping him to kindle the fire.

As **Afùwàpé** was helping to kindle the fire,

185 He noticed that the gate-keeper was putting ashes  
into the soup.

He said, "Father, what you are putting into the  
soup is ordinary ashes".

But the old man said that that was what he always  
ate.

**Afùwàpé** then took one of his bags of salt,  
And took a little salt from it,

190 And put it into the soup.

He asked the gate-keeper to taste it.

When he tasted it,

He asked **Afùwàpé** whence he got such a thing.

He implored **Afùwàpé** to give him more of it.

195 The latter agreed,

And gave him the two bags of salt.

When they finished cooking the soup,

The gate-keeper stood up.

He led the way,

200 And **Afùwàpé** followed him.

They walked for long.

They walked and walked.

When they came close to **Àjàlá's** house,

They started to hear a loud noise.

- 205 Oníbodè ní, “Ilé Àjàlá ni wọn tí ñpariwo un.”  
 Ó ní, “Àjàlá ò sí òlé nù un,  
 Ó ti sá pamọ́ fún olówó rẹ̀ nù un.  
 Olówó náà ní ñpariwo báun.”  
 Ó bi Afùwàpẹ́ bó bá ní owó lọwọ́.
- 210 Afùwàpẹ́ ní bèè ni.  
 Ó ní bí Afùwàpẹ́ bá fojú kan olówó Àjàlá náà,  
 Kí ó bá Àjàlá san owó tí ó jẹ́ ẹ́.  
 Nígba tí Afùwàpẹ́ délé Àjàlá,  
 Ó bá ẹnì tí Àjàlá jẹ́ lówó náà
- 215 Tí òkè, tí òyán bí ẹ́sin.  
 Ni Afùwàpẹ́ bá bi í ní iye gbèsè náà.  
 Ó ní ẹgbàafà ni.  
 Ni Afùwàpẹ́ bá tọwọ́ bàpò,  
 Ló bá san án.
- 220 Nígba tí ó san owó náà tán,  
 Tí olówó náà lọ tán,  
 Ni Àjàlá bá bé sílẹ́ láti òkè àjà,  
 Tọ́ sá pamọ́ sí.  
 Ó kí Afùwàpẹ́,
- 225 Afùwàpẹ́ náà kí i.  
 Ó ní òjẹ́ ọ́ bá ẹ̀nikan níhìn ?  
 Afùwàpẹ́ ní òun bá a,

205 The gate-keeper said, "That noise is from **Àjálá's** house."

He said, "That shows that **Àjálá** is not at home. He is in hiding to avoid his creditor.

The creditor is the one making that noise".

He asked **Afùwàpé** if he had money on him,

210 And **Afùwàpé** said he had.

The gate-keeper said that if **Afùwàpé** saw the creditor,

He should help **Àjálá** to pay up the debt.

When **Afùwàpé** arrived at **Àjálá's** house,

He found the creditor,

215 Shouting, neighing like a horse.

**Afùwàpé** then asked him the amount of money involved.

The creditor said the amount was twelve thousand cowries.

**Afùwàpé** then opened his bag,

Brought out the money, and paid the debt.

220 After he had paid the money,

And the creditor had left,

**Àjálá** jumped down from the ceiling,

Where he had hidden himself.

He greeted **Afùwàpé**,

225 And **Afùwàpé** also greeted him.

He asked whether **Afùwàpé** found someone in the house,

And **Afùwàpé** said he found someone



Tọ sọ wí pé o jẹ̀ òun ní ẹgbàafà.  
Afùwàpẹ ní sùgbọ̀n òun tí san owó náà o.

230 Ni Àjàlà bá dúpẹ̀ lẹ̀wọ̀ Afùwàpẹ̀.

Ó bí i pé kín ló wáá ẹ.

Afùwàpẹ̀ ní òun wáá yanrí ni.

Ni Àjàlà bá mú un,

Ó ní kọ̀ kálo.

235 Nígba tí ọ̀ yá,

Wọ̀n dé ibi tí Àjàlà mọ̀ orí sí.

Wọ̀n bá ọ̀kànlérúgba orí níbẹ̀.

Ni Àjàlà bá ju ọ̀pá irin sí ọ̀kan,

Níse ló bú pẹ̀ẹ̀.

240 Àjàlà ní, “O ò rí i,

Èyiun ọ̀ d́áa.”

Ó tún rí èkejì,

Ó ju ọ̀pá irin sí i,

Èyiun náàá tún bú pẹ̀ẹ̀.

245 Àjàlà ní èyiun náà ọ̀ d́áa.

Ni wọ̀n bá tún ńkáàkiri

Títí tí Àjàlà fi rí ọ̀kan,

Ó tún ju ọ̀pá irin sí òun náà,

Ó dún kangó kangó, koro koro.

Who said that you (**Àjàlá**) owed him twelve thousand cowries.

**Àfùwápé** said he had paid off the money.

230 **Àjàlá** then thanked **Afùwápé**,

And asked him what he wanted.

**Àfùwápé** said that he had come to select an **Orí**.

**Àjàlá** then took him,

And asked him to come along.

235 After some time,

They got to **Àjàlá**'s store-house of **Orí**.

They found two hundred-and-one<sup>10</sup> **Orí** there.

**Àjàlá** threw his iron rod at one,

And that one broke into pieces.

240 **Àjàlá** said, "Don't you see ?

That one is not good".

He saw another one,

And threw his iron rod at it.

That one also broke into pieces.

245 **Àjàlá** said, "That also is not good".

So, they went on searching,

Until **Àjàlá** saw one,

And he threw his iron rod at that one as well.

It gave a loud and sonorous sound.

- 250 Ó tún gbé e,  
 Ó jù ú mọ̀lẹ̀,  
 Ó yí gbiiri.  
 Lọ bá gbé e fún Afùwàpẹ.  
 Afùwàpẹ ní ẹ̀ ẹ̀yí lọ ẹ̀ dára ?
- 255 Ajàlá ní bèè ni.  
 Ni Afùwàpẹ bá gbé e karí.  
 Lọ bá kọ́rí sọ̀nà òde ìsálayé.  
 Ó kù diẹ̀ kó dóde ìsálayé ni òjọ̀ bá dé.  
 Òjò yí pọ̀ tó bèè gẹ́é,
- 260 Ó sì pa Afùwàpẹ etii rẹ̀ẹ̀ fẹ̀rẹ̀ẹ̀ di.  
 Bèè ní ntaá dànù.  
 Koro koro ni orí náàá yè nígbà tí ó délé ayé.  
 Nígbà tí Afùwàpẹ délé ayé tán,
- 265 Lọ bá bèrẹ̀ síí ẹ̀ ọ̀wò,  
 Ó sì níjẹ̀ ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ èrè.  
 Ó níre ní ànító.  
 Ó kọ̀lé, ó kààsẹ̀.  
 Ó ní ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ aya,
- 270 Ó sì bímọ̀ lọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ pẹ̀lú.  
 Kó bùşẹ̀ gàdà,  
 Kó bùşẹ̀ gèdẹ̀,  
 Ni wọ̀n bá fi joyè Orísanmí.

- 250 He then took it,  
And threw it on the bare ground,  
He gave it to **Afùwàpé**.  
**Afùwàpé** asked whether that was a good one.
- 255 **Àjàlá** said it was good.  
**Afùwàpé** then fixed it on the head,  
And started to go towards the earth.  
Just as he was about to get to the earth,  
it started to rain.  
The rain was very heavy,
- 260 And it beat **Afùwàpé** so much that he was almost  
deaf.  
As the rain was beating **Afùwàpé**'s **Orí**,  
The rain particles were dropping off.  
The **Orí** was quite intact when he arrived on  
the earth.  
When **Afùwàpé** eventually got to the earth,
- 265 He started a trading business,  
And he made a lot of profit.  
He had enough of good things.  
He built a house, and furnished it with decorated  
doors.  
He had many wives,
- 270 And he had many children as well.  
After some time,  
And in due course,  
He was honoured with the title of **Orísanmí**.<sup>11</sup>

Nígbà tí Orísẹ̀ẹ̀kú, ọmọ Ọ̀gún,

275 Àti Orílẹ̀émèrè, ọmọ Ẹ̀ja, fojú kan Afùwàpẹ̀,  
Púrú ni wọn bú sẹ̀kún.

Wọn ní, “N ọ̀ mọ̀bi olórí gbé yanrí o,  
M̀bá lẹ̀ yan tẹ̀mi.

N ọ̀ mọ̀bi Afùwàpẹ̀ yanrí o,

280 M̀bá lẹ̀ yan tẹ̀mi.”

Afùwàpẹ̀ náàá sì dá wọn lóhùn wí pé :

“Ọ̀ ọ̀ mọ̀bi olórí gbé yanrí o,

Ọ̀ bá lẹ̀ yan tẹ̀.

Ọ̀ ọ̀ mọ̀bi Afùwàpẹ̀ yanrí o,

285 Ọ̀ bá lẹ̀ yan tẹ̀.

Ibikan náà la ti gbé yanrí o,

Kádàrá ọ̀ papọ̀ ni”.

When **Orísèékú**, the son of **Ògún**,

275 And **Orílèémèrè**, the son of **Ìja**, saw **Afùwàpé**,  
They burst into tears.

They said, "I don't know where the lucky ones  
chose their **Orí**,

I would have gone there to choose mine.

I don't know where **Afùwàpé** chose his **Orí**,

280 I would have gone there to choose mine."

**Afùwàpé** answered and said,

"You don't know where the lucky ones chose  
**Orí**,

You would have gone there to choose your own.

You don't know where **Afùwàpé** chose his **Orí**,

285 You would have gone there to choose your own.

We chose our **Orí** from the same place,

But our destinies are different."

## NOTES

1. **Orísèékú.** A personal name the meaning of which is obscure.
2. **Orílèémèrè.** Another personal name with obscure meaning.
3. **Ìja.** Name of a minor Yoruba god.
4. **Afùwàpé.** Another personal name.
5. **Àjàlá.** A common Yoruba personal name.
6. The loud noise mentioned here must have been produced by the hitting of **iróké** (carved ivory or wooden object of Ifá) on the divining board.
7. The Ifá divination instruments were used to touch Afùwapé's head so as to communicate the wishes of his **Orí** to the Ifá instruments through which **Òrúnmìlà** acting as a spokesman of **Orí** would reveal the latter's wishes to the client.
8. **Ogbèyónú.** One of the minor two hundred and forty **Odù**. Its actual name is **Ogbègúndá**, that is a combination of **Ogbè** on the right and **Ògúndá** on the left.
9. The ceiling of a traditional Yoruba building is made of mud spread over a wooden base. It is usually solid enough to hold most household implements which are kept there. It is also solid enough to hold a man repairing the roof or mending any part of the ceiling itself.
10. The number two hundred and one is commonly mentioned in Yoruba mythology. The number of gods in the Yoruba pantheon is variously put at two hundred and one or four hundred and one.
11. **Orísanmí.** A personal name or name of a title which means "Orí has rewarded me abundantly".