

KONGLANJO !  
(SPEARS OF LOVE WITHOUT ILL-FORTUNE)

BY  
BONGASU TANLA-KISHANI

I. CALLING

1.

There,  
Where fields pasture our cattle,  
grow our corn,  
sar-millet,  
kikéng — plant and forests  
that nest our birds and shrines  
from sunburns and sunstrokes ;  
Where drums blend breathings  
of Mǎnjǒng festive gongs  
Inviting and inviting  
For the Fon's Solemn Call  
To a sacrificial grove with palm-wine,  
camwood, baskets of black fowls, a tethered goat,  
corn-loaves and bags of unmasked capsules of kola nut,  
We stitch'd and webb'd  
Every tiny smile to season  
The smouldering log fires of incense  
Invoking Mighty Ngǎ-Mbom.

There,  
Heralds emerge  
Struggling and nagging like hunting dogs  
with the unposted omens of their incoming;  
On the one hand they display a new coin of faith  
On the other a new arm-quiver of knowledge  
And in fright we smother all our tears of persuasion  
In a riotous bid of transmitting relics and tracks of all  
We had wrought and reaped and conveyed through our days.

But in vain !  
In vain do our streams of blood  
Replace streams of our victim's blood  
In a bid to entice you, O Heralds,  
From your resolute way !  
In vain, O Heralds, you fail to drink  
From our medicine-pots of faith and knowledge :  
In vain do you forget to wave our Fon's distaff

In token of your calling  
In token of our coming  
To share in the benevolence of your new oracle.

2.

Heralds !  
Whatever news you bear  
We still cling to the best —  
Inquirers on a pilgrim's staggered step.

Echoes of our legends  
Brood on men's words  
Soothe men's woes  
But echoes of riverfalls  
Spill rivers of hope  
Springs of joyful hope —  
A spirited push to a pilgrim's end.

We are pilgrims from a cradle  
In our ancestor's land  
With shoulders laden with palm-wine calabashes,  
palm-oil, palm-bags of groundnuts,  
palm-kernels and baskets of towering cocks  
That sing the morning or evening hymns  
At every majestic stone — now  
Becoming a mushroom home  
With florid ornaments of blood.

Heralds all !  
We cling to the shrine of our VêDô-ô's father's father's... father.  
For,  
On this stone the first victim  
From this stone the first trickle  
To this stone we return  
Around this stone we flirt with the gods.

Heralds !  
Here  
A rustling hush  
c-r-a-c-k-l-e-s  
to reign beyond those palm-fronds  
of muffled voices of coughs and steps on dry leaves.

Here  
benumbed with atonement and thanksgiving  
Our setting sun buries still

the voice of a cock  
the morning guest welcomes  
black fowls, tethered goats  
a loaf, kola nuts and canwood.

Here Ngà-Mbom Smiles !  
And from there we plough, we sow, we crop  
Seasons of Mánjông, Chông and Chikàng --  
drummings  
We oil and salt with ingredients of xylophone notes  
As we smile too  
And mount years of vigils  
Weeping over our dead,  
Attending to our sick,  
And rejoicing over our new born.

3.

Ngà-Mbom ! May we keep to the spoors of faith !  
May evil omens pass and go their solitary ways,  
And leave our children and lands in peace !  
If they come in the wind, let them fly above the highest clouds !  
If they spring from our soils, let them be washed by rain and stream !  
If they fall from the heavens, let thunder and lightning consume them  
And should they suddenly appear in our land as if from nowhere  
May you enlighten our innermost spider-college of medicine-pot boilers  
To determine whether they be brought by man and not by a god !  
Ngà-Mbom ! Behold prayerful spears of rain we keep showering  
On these nubile shrines, — the anvil of your name —  
We surely chose but never made,  
To crop and awaken life  
For the strong, the sick, the dead  
And those being born into life and death.

For  
Whither you smile  
We chew and eschew the spittle that moistens  
Our sacred moulds of reconciliation at every cross-road.  
Our door-step log drips the unblemished blood of a rightly chosen victim  
We pour libations and plant anointed trees of memorial nights and dreams !  
Horizons wane our fears with a myriad of uninvited songs  
We improvise on ancestral octaves to grace  
A kwi'fon-drumming of prayers and vows beyond those sacred palm-fronds  
Where our seers labour best and sound.

Ngà-Mbom ! May we spot and cry shame on whoever mocks you !  
May our foes ignore our woes !  
May we sow and reap in folds ; May we grow strong ; May we prosper !  
May the good-hearted live long with the rhythms of the seasons !  
May the evil-doer and the warrior miss their way !  
May we build on the epitaphs of ancestral feats !  
May the realms of our households never dwindle under our feet !  
May our offspring hunt for game of therapeutic inspirations

From the upper stream-forests to the lower stream-forests ;  
From the hillside forests on our left to the hillside forest on our right !  
May echoes of our lineage name toll and spread beyond years issuing  
From the echoes and rhythms of these Mánjông festive gongs (kú-ngu-ngu!) !

Ngà-Mbom ! Inspire our furrowed fruits !  
Inspire the soils whither our proverbial lineage head first ventured  
To woo, crown, govern and nurse  
With royal tools and stools now frizzled and freshened  
With due slaps of stately usage and libations.  
Ngà-Mbom ! We pray Thee, inspire our Tikari stock !

Inspire this revolving stock to scan the silence of our days  
Still girded and yoked to the very navel of mirroring generations !  
Inspire us through these incoming unfolded hymns !  
Inspire us through this spider's gait !  
Inspire us through this porcupine's spikes !  
Inspire us through the dictions of these kola nut parings !  
To scan the remnant isthmuses stemming from our florid homes !

Ngà-Mbom ! Let our forgotten words still breathe forth and whisper our needs  
Let these siphon-hands we clap, couple and mouth-cup, decant  
Fortune-designs you handwrite on the untattooed leaves of our age !  
Let the eyeless bear and keep up with the eye-owner's counsels  
For the welfare of our peoples and lands !  
Let the weathering days never disdain and break out  
From the hands of the rain-maker !  
Let our medicine-pots duly reward the innocent, the thief and the witch !  
And let good omens never return our spears unstained !

But Ngà-Mbom nay ! Within your seasons we gave birth to all :  
The good-hearted and the evil-doer, the wise and the foolish,  
The thief and the witch ! Ngà-Mbom again nay ! Our times now burn  
With unwieldy flames driving us headlong to embrace the unknown  
With our blameless arms. Ngà-Mbom ! Alone you know it nameless to our ears ;  
Shapeless before our eyes and untroudden from ancestral days !  
If it be death, let it take us and avoid our children  
And no longer sustain us thus spell-bound  
Within this sacred labyrinth of seers and non-seers !  
But if it be life, why should she awe us still —  
Already usurped and riven as we are  
From rival eras before and after our footfalls ?  
Why should she now crown us suddenly with frailty's best, enabling  
Volunteers to sing the songs of our own making and woes ?  
Ngà-Mbom, once more nay ! Let it go back through this spittle of disdain  
As it came ! (tài) !  
Ngà-Mbom ! Thou who gave us to our times and lands  
We pray thee to receive our supplications from within this grove  
Inflated with the silence of your presence !

4.

For, here, as in days of old  
Wind, storm and thunder

Bird, tadpole and termite  
 Worm, stream and stone  
 Eavesdrop  
 And woods and springs sprout  
 And resilient snakes freely move and canvass  
 From ant-hill to ant-hill fondly mirroring  
 Garlands of nature's cowries  
 And a fair flair for both the evil-doer and the peace-maker,  
 While, driven into ecstatic spells, we welcome  
 Every incoming season with flutes, drums and gongs :

Fáy í tóng lóng á jí :  
 fe-c !

Thus the Fay sounds the flute :  
 fe-c !

Fáy í tóng lóng á jí :  
 fe-c ! fe-c !

The Fay sounds the flute :  
 fe-c ! fe-c !

Fáy í kum nshum á jí :  
 tí-díng !

Thus the Fay sounds the drum  
 tí-díng !

Fáy í kum nshum á jí :  
 tí-díng ! tí-díng !

The Fay sounds the drum :  
 tí-díng ! tí-díng !

Fáy í kum ngem á jí :  
 kí-ning !

Thus the Fay sounds the gong  
 kí-ning !

Fáy í kum ngem á jí :  
 kí-ning ! kí-ning !

The Fay sounds the gong :  
 kí-ning ! Kí - ning !

Fáy í kum ngu' á jí :  
 kú-ngùng !

Thus the Fay sounds the wooden-gong  
 kú-ngùng !

Fáy í kum ngu' á jí :  
 kú-ngùng ! kú-ngùng !

The Fay sounds the wooden-gong  
 kú-ngùng ! kú-ngùng !

Kú-ngùng ! kú-ngù-ngùng ! kú-ngùng ! kú-ngùng !

Kí-ning ! kí-ning ! kí-ning ! kí-ning !

Tí-díng ! tí-dí-díng ! tí-díng ! tí-díng

Kú-ngu-ngùng ! kú-ngùng ! kú-ngùng !

KÚ-NGÚ-NGÚNG ! KÚ-NGÚNG ! KÚ ! ... KÚ-NGÚNG !

5.

Out from this ecstasy we journey still  
 On the spoors and echoes of unforgotten proverbial names  
 drumming anew the first ancestral ventures  
 of Lê' and Jíng, a life-begotten-couple  
 once dementedly driven and tossed  
 through rival winds of dissension and hunger  
 away from all  
 the eye can see  
 the ear can hear  
 the nose can smell  
 the hand can touch

And thus left to drill their last drops of hope  
 sprouting fear from the eye  
 whispering hope into the ear  
 blowing life through the nostrils  
 and planting courage in the hand  
 in a bid to coddle our way.

On the one day  
 We harvest crops winnowed from nature's sowing  
 And name it *Káxí*, harvesting Day ;

On the one day  
 We enkindle fire and alert its clamorous voice  
 And name it *Réxéy*, a fire-heralding Day ;

On the one day  
 We tender our log fires to smoulder while we yet forage  
 And name it *Kíloxéy*, a fire-nursing Day ;

On the one day  
 With naked ears we wrestle through wind and storm  
 Until we become rivals to their laws  
 And name it *Nséxí*, a law-deafening day ;

On the one day  
 Worn out we snail-pace with the rhythms of our footfalls  
 And name it *Gè : gè* : a nerve-and-muscle-drooping Day ;

On the one day  
 We stock seeds into barns  
 And proclaim the dusk of the dry-season  
 With the harvest of the last *Kísho*'-plant reddening  
 And ripening with the predictions of the first homestead rains  
 And name it *Ngóyùm*, an all-round storing Day ;

On the one day  
 We sow, sell and sheathe in harmony with the dictions  
 Of a diviner-egg,  
 And name it *Waylùn*, an egg-pod planting Day ;

On the one day  
 We crown with a solemn sacrifice  
 To ride peacefully over our days  
 And rid our revolving stock of ill-omens  
 Amidst drummings of a tattered *Ngwéróng*  
 Usurped from a father's homestead  
 And kept with its germ-talent of inventions and laws  
 Knitting the Fon and people into a single breath of unity  
 And name it *NTANGRIN*, a reconciliation Day  
 A *NGUMBA-NGWERONG-AND-KWI'FON DAY !*

Wa' bin !

Youth of every land ! Youth of every time !  
 As if with the trappings of our royal wine-calabashes  
 We cease not to harness and oil your punipkin-jaws !  
 As if invited by a drummer's voice  
 We dance our dance of age to the sway of time's tunes  
 To open the footpath of your dance  
 And spellbind you to rattle the cymbals of your fashion  
 And live the way our fuzzy forerunners live !  
 Not in vain do we keep unfolding these secret rites  
 of the first spider-legged wecks we store still  
 With seasons of sunshines and rainfalls on those ledges of years  
 Whither we stem like a stream from its source !  
 Whither we stem like corn-grains from corn-cobs !  
 Whither we stem like forests from the soil !  
 Whither we stem like a knife from its handle !  
 Whither we stem like rain from the sky !  
 Whither we stem like a road from a homestead !  
 Whither we breathe forth like life from our veins !  
 Not in vain do we crown and name our daughter, N T A N G -

IN COMMEMORATION - Yes IN COMMEMORATION of the first hammock-bridge

Of our first crossing away from parental homesteads !

Listen ! Wa'bin listen !

To every voice blowing centuries of dreams into your ears !  
 Wa'bin ! Listen to them saying from within this caravan of streams  
 We are more than a start ! We are more than the end !  
 Let us name, write and praise  
 The first of things, peoples, lands and times  
 Known and unknown, born and still to be born, harvested or planted :  
 Things first spoken but never done !  
 Things first done but never spoken !  
 A wedlock of webs of silence and words,  
 As the cobweb-spinners of our times !

The first of things and peoples to have overridden and despoiled  
 The first lands for our revolving stock, Oh Tikari Wa'bin !  
 The first to have driven all like a river  
 Into the first ebb and flow of new names !  
 The first to have unfolded the first dreams  
 Under the first roofs away from the first rainfalls and sunshines  
 That tended our first crops !  
 The first to have begotten and sang the first lullabies  
 To our first children within the first homesteads !

The first to have invented the first set of tally-sticks to record  
 The first southerly moonrise we proverbially capture to name  
 The first *Ngwéróng* drumming and gong-sounds behind the first palm-fronds  
 Inviting and inviting *Ngiri* drumming into a relay-race of vigilance  
 Through seasons of fortune and misfortune ;

The first to have sprinkled this rounded stone of sacrifice  
 with the first camwood-powder and planted the first perennial *hiking* ;  
 The first elephant that provided the first tusk-sound  
 For the first *Tàamánjòng* who rallied the first *Mánjòng* to crown  
 The first lion to have soothed his noble feet on the first leopard-skin !

The first to have evaluated the first of nature's cowries !  
 The first to have inaugurated the first market with the first anointed tree !  
 The first to have winnowed the first calabash for the first libations !  
 The first to have tattooed with the first hairstyles !  
 The first to have carved the first wooden doors and hearthposts !  
 The first to have boiled the first medicine-plants in the first medicine-pots !  
 The first to have harkened to the first biddings of a spider !  
 The first to have sent and deciphered the first message with porcupine-spikes !  
 The first to have harkened to the first voice of kola nut pairings !  
 The first to have recalled the rains after the first rainlessness !  
 The first to have spotted the approach of the first locust of destruction !

The first to have begotten, seared and branded on these parental first names  
 Spill hallowed unhurt within the breathings of a sacred lineage - taboo !  
 The first to have worn the first head-wear, neckwear and girdle  
 With their corresponding staffs of nobility !  
 The first to have inaugurated the *Ngéng* mask-dance with the first xylophone !  
 The first to have invented every *Mánjòng* and *Chóng* family-dances  
 With the first drums and cymbals !

The first to have begotten You, Oh *Chíkàng*, Unrivalled Offspring of *Biikan* !  
 The first to have endured the first whips of a lineage invitation  
 To couple with the first lineage lady and put on the first lineage head-wear !  
 The first to have paid the first stir of our rising suns, Oh *Tikar* !  
 The first to have heard the first stir of our rising suns, Oh *Tikar* !  
 The first, the first... Mothers and Fathers of our inventions and laws  
 An age of ages ago, Oh Wa'bin, Youth of every land and time !

Kí-ngí-ngíng ! Kí-ngíng ! Kí-ngíng !  
 Kú-ngù-ngùng ! Kú-ngùng ! Kú-ngùng !

7.

*Ngà-Mbom* ! In this grove we breathe the same breath of unity with the Fon !  
 Let this trickles from our rams and cocks not miss their way !  
 We pray for peace, good harvesting and planting seasons !  
*Tàawóng* take ! May Your good-natured gongs ever sound the approach of seasons !  
*Tàawóng* take ! May your stately hoe open our farms to new seasons !  
*Tàawóng* take ! May your wine strengthen you to guide every incomer !  
*Tàanto* take ! Let this bloodstained feather bear testimony to our sacrifice  
*Ngàywír* take ! Let this bloodstained feather bear testimony to our sacrifice  
*Tàamfu* take ! Let the sound of your drums and taks assemble the Fon's people  
*Tàangwà* take ! Let our Mbokam game yield to the wishes of your spears and dogs  
*Tàamánjòng* take ! May you open the ears of young folks to new things !  
*Tàawóng* take ! May you open the ears of young folks to new things !  
*Tàawóng* take ! May you blow life into the children you name !  
*Tàawóng* take ! May you blow life into the children you name !

You present beneath our feet ! You breathing around our feet !  
 May you drink from this medicine-pot of unity, rub this camwood of nobility,  
 Lick up this oil of harmony, season your ways of life with this salt of truth  
 And share this kola nut of laws and friendship !

You present beneath our feet ! You breathing around our feet !  
 Let no fears lull you from your earthened might and rights !  
 You, fathers of the lands ! You, mothers of the lands !  
 Youth of every land and time ! Kwí'fón - Custodians in our new springs !  
 If you sink, sink with kwí'fón on your shoulders !  
 If you rise, let the kwí'fón drummings open your steps !  
 We are more than a start ! We are more than the end !  
 Yet invaded, twisted and planted to grow roots of fears -  
 Roots of fears that strip every oasis of our knowledge ;  
 Roots of fears that presage a new disease without chixir  
 Roots of fears that drill their tonguewisters into our lives !

Nay ! Ngà-Mbom once more take and pour fortune on our lands !  
 Let he that goes, go with the peaceful steps of fortune !  
 Let he that comes, come with the tidings of a good harvesting season !  
 Let these trickles sprinkle fortune on our lands and times !

Kú-ngù-ngùng ! Kú-ngùng ! Kú-ngùng !

Kí-ngí-nging ! Kí-nging ! Kí-nging !

Kú-ngù-ngùng ! Kú-ngùng ! Kú !

To-day We proclaim and inaugurate a new harvesting season !  
 To-day We proclaim and inaugurate a new planting season !  
 News We winnow like Kola Nut Out of Pods !  
 News We pluck Like Unripe Fruits From Podding Winds !

KÚ-NGÙ-NGÙNG ! KÚ-NGÙ-NGÙNG !

Children will be tilled like fertile lands  
 And wooed to weather on with varying hairstyles !  
 Showers of blood will drive off showers of rain to recede into their homes !  
 Pumpkin-plants will withdraw their gourd like pods !  
 Lands will exhale and exchange names for gold and weep  
 Like the heavens without consolation !  
 News planted to grow in clumps within farms of winds !  
 There is a skin-disease grafted somewhere to spray new incoming winds !  
 There is fertility sewn up unopened like a wedding raffia bag  
 bearing new medicine-plants for our weathering days !

KÚ-NGÙNG ! KÚ-NGÙNG ! KÚ-NGÙNG ! KÚ-NGÙ-NGÙNG ! Kú !

A Market Message with the sealed orders  
 Of the Fon and People for a new planting and harvesting season  
 A Market Message breaking silence with the single breath  
 Of scers and their Mother-Kwí'fón exchanging vigilance over all  
 With the Ngiri drummings and avoiding blood  
 Like you, O Mighty Chikáng ! Mountainer of the Tà'ajò' Hills !

KÍ-NGÍNG ! KÍ-NGÍNG ! KÍ-NGÍ-NGÍNG ! KÍ !

KÚ-NGÙNG ! KÚ-NGÙNG ! KÚ-NGÙ-NGÙNG ! Kú !

KÚ-NGÙ-NGÙNG ! KÚ-NGÙNG ! KÚ-NGÙNG !

KÚ-NGÙ-NGÙNG ! KÚ-NGÙNG ! KÚ-NGÙNG ! Kú ! ... Kú-ngùng !

## II. ANSWERING

S-S-S:D> S-S>S> D> M>> S>>F>>

Shíkumkum ko' ! shíkumkum ko' ! ji a yaa uu !  
 Shíkumkum ko' ! shíkumkum ko' ! vibing ye yuu !  
 Shíkumkum ko' ! shíkumkum ko' ! vilung ye nsay !

Bits of frictions battling  
 Bits of exertions welcoming our lands  
 Bits of exertions trapping heavenly doves !  
 Bits of exertions trapping earthly kites !  
 Bits of exertions expelling every yardstick  
 We now break and heap behind our ears on soils  
 Embalmed to redder with centuried layers of drummings and carvings !  
 Bits of exertions battling with locust-caravans hastening into our lands !  
 Bits of exertions battling with the Ntém-Ntém disease of our Kola trees !  
 Bits of exertions we welcome through patches and wisps of scarecrows !  
 Bits of exertions reaping our lands  
 defiling palm-fronds and boughs ornamenting godly groves  
 We pray you to fear a Kwí'fón earth-born disease !

For

here

where fields pasture our cattle,  
 grow our corn,  
 sar-millet,  
 kikéng-plant and forests  
 that nest our birds and shrines  
 from sunburns and sunstrokes ;  
 Where drums blend breathings  
 Of Mánjòng festive going  
 Inviting and inviting  
 For the Fon's Solemn Call  
 To a sacrifice with palm-wine,  
 camwood, baskets of black fowls, a tethered goat,  
 corn-loaves and bags of unmasked capsules of kola nut.  
 We stitch and weave webs bearing  
 Every tiny smile to season  
 The smouldering log fires of seasons  
 To invoke Mighty NYUY-MBOM.

Here

Heralds emerged  
 Struggling and angling like hunting dogs  
 With the unposted omens of their incoming ;  
 On the one hand they displayed a new coin of faith  
 On the other a new arm-quiver of knowledge  
 defiling our Kwángkwáng bows of knowledge

And in fright we smothered all our tears of persuasions  
 In a riotous bid of transmitting relics and tracks of all  
 We had wrought and reaped and conveyed through our days.

Heralds!

Whatever news you bear  
 We still cling to the best —  
 Inquirers on a pilgrim's staggered step.  
 NYUY-Mbom sends you as He sends us!  
 We are pilgrims from a cradle  
 In our Ancestor's Land!

Behold libations going before our feet  
 Proclaiming our coming to the departed beyond our feet!  
 Let our children lead our way!  
 Let our children continue our way!

S: - f: - :      S: - f: - :      S: - f: - :  
 TÍNG - DÍNG    TÍNG - DÍNG    TÍNG - DÍNG  
 KÍNG - NGÍNG   KÍNG - NGÍNG   KÍNG - NGÍNG  
 FÍ: - FÁ:       FÍ: - FÁ:       FÍ: - FÁ:  
 KÚNG - NGÚNG   KÚNG - NGÚNG   KÚNG - NGÚNG (1)  
 K Ú N G - N G Ú N G   . . Ú N G . . . U   . . U . . U   . . ung.(1)

(1) S.O.S. SOUND!

Rome 1970, Kitiwum 1973.  
 Paris 2nd, 1978, November.  
 Feast of Every Soul.  
 By BONGÁSÚ TANLA-KÍSHANI

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## OUR DAYLIGHT

Ethiopia! Ethiopia!  
 When will you open out  
 the new pages of your gardens?  
 I keep nursing you in my dreams  
 like a farmer tending her seeds  
 twisting you in my heart, and  
 re-echoing still  
 like *Shingongon* croons her days  
 with lullabies of our lore  
 rhythming with the music  
 of those eye-stripped beads  
 ageing from mother to daughter  
 beside a wooden bedpost.

Ethiopia!  
 Already distance dawns  
 Where time plants its clumps of ripening seeds  
 and I gaze on at each day's horizon without you.

Isolated, searching, I pray  
 the winds to do no more than freshen you  
 the rains to wash and bless you  
 the waves to elevate and preserve you  
 the sun to brighten you  
 and leave you wholly mine  
 for tomorrow's ripening daylight.

By BONGÁSÚ TANLA-KÍSHANI

—oOo—

## A FARMER'S DREAM

Ethiopia!  
 Awake and blossom  
 Like our crops!

In my dreams I walk up and down  
 through horizons of seasons and lands  
 marked with sacred palm—fronds of laws  
 planting seeds, harvesting crops  
 whither my children's children's.... eyes meet  
 their dreams  
 whither my parents' parents' parents'..... ears  
 no longer discern the rhythms of our talks  
 envying and wondering  
 why maiden-reeds should keep showering  
 the kisses and comfort of their shadows

upon streams  
why leaves should keep confiding  
to the winds  
why rivers should keep flowing away  
with their blessings  
why birds should keep pursuing  
the clouds  
abandoning the soils  
whither lie rations and food-crops  
for their days.

Ethiopia !  
I keep shouting and calling for you in my dreams  
to awake and blossom from within our soils  
Like our crops.

Ethiopia !  
Awake and blossom  
Through your rains  
Awake and blossom  
Through your suns  
Awake and blossom  
With your children  
Awake and blossom

Nkūnyā, Nkūnyā !  
Awake and blossom  
Nwāyo, Nwāyo !  
Awake and blossom  
Nyā:ng 'na Nyā:ng  
Awake and blossom  
To the hearing of all  
Awake and blossom !

Ifi na die O !  
Awake and blossom !  
Ifi na money O !  
Awake and blossom !  
Ifi na waka waka O !  
Awake and blossom !  
Ifi na chop, drink wata O !  
Awake and blossom !  
Ifi na die lif pikin O !  
Awake and blossom !  
Awake and blossom ! .... !

By BONGÁSÚ TANLA-KÍSHANI

Nothing is lost  
Nothing is lost where  
silence, forgetfulness and ageing hope  
survive.

Nothing is lost  
from the catalysts of waves  
driving our heroes ashore.

Nothing is lost  
in what rots off  
when crops ripen.

Nothing is lost or forgotten  
in a singer's solfa  
feeding on the decaying notes  
of our age.

Nothing is lost or forgotten  
in the writer's torn pages  
ushered to eternalize in the scrap-paper bins  
of our forgetfulness.

Nothing is lost even if forgotten  
at each twist of the artist's eye  
enriched with continuous sighs and patience  
before those choiceless bits  
falling off as unruly as unmistaken  
to unveil the incoming hero.

Silhouettes rife with the clamour  
of filings, rejected and born to die  
I embrace them all with the arms of posterity  
upgrading the rejected and the chosen.

Dreamy still I mutter  
Nothing is lost for a tattooed race issuing  
from lost generations ;  
Let us install their shadows, light and darkness.  
Let us eat their grains without devaluing their chaffs.  
Let us read the smile of the dahlia and the farmer  
within their gardens blooming still  
with weeds and crops.

For  
nothing is lost  
where silence, forgetfulness and ageing hope  
survive.

By BONGÁSÚ TANLA-KÍSHANI

TO OUR KNOWN SLAVE

By BONGÁSÚ TANLA-KÍSHANI

(In Memory of BUN'GO alias Robert Shilling of ÁBÉRDIN.....)

I now perch  
suspended in the thin air  
of discrimination  
competing with Eiffel's patterns  
refusing to take turns of vigilance  
over the tomb of the unknown soldier. I want  
to search for the tomb of the known slave  
in this sea still rocking  
around my neck  
with the unevaporated waters  
that set passions amuck —  
where I cry and shout for you, Ethiopia  
calling you  
with those earthened names of slaves  
we buried in effigy beyond our bridges..

I cry and shout  
for a child we named in memory — *The House Floor!*  
bidding caravans of life merchants  
to untomb names from lovelessness set amuck  
in this sea of passion, discrimination...  
*Our House Floor!* I cry and shout  
resolute to unearth the known slaves.  
With an opened mouth I shout *Nsaalav O —O—O—O ...*  
running away from every colour of forgiveness  
still longing for an impossible forgetfulness.

Bongású Tanla-Kíshani

Paris, 30th August, 1979.



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