

S. J. Timothy Asobele

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S. J. Timothy-Asobebe

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Professor S. J. TIMOTHY-ASOBELE

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This work is dedicated to my late Mother's father, Chief Michael Ojo Osanaiye, the Obarokan of Odogbalila lineage of Kabba City, who is versed in Yoruba herbal and verbal art and to her daughter Mrs. Grace Bamidele Asobele born at Ile-Ife in 1925, where her father sojourned as a notable driver and to Miss Yetunde Ibirewo Timothy-Asobele.

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FOREWORD

This piece is just a tip of the iceberg from Professor Asobele's treasure house of knowledge. The academic flame burning hot in him has germinated into this, which will be closely followed by other series.

In this volume, the author displays **Ayò Mí Dé, Omo Ọ̀dò Àgbà, Akùkọ̀ Gàgàrà, Ogbón Ológbón** and **Òkúrorò Ègbón**. He brings to the fore his dexterity by projecting us into Yoruba belief system, especially Yoruba customs and institutions as expressed in these works.

Going through his analyses is entertaining and didactic. His expression is fluid and will endear readers to rush for the texts and have a feel of them in full.

DEJI MEDUBI

Dept. of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies
University of Lagos.

After a deep meditation, I discovered that there is sense in the Paris Academy's authority's decision. After all, all the cultural references that the beginners and scholars in English language will need will be easily assimilatable if taught with the mind of French. Linguistic ambiguity will be explained in clear French language to the French learners.

This is because one can best dialogue with people whose lifeways one understands very well. Paradoxically, the lifeways of these Paris-Academy professors are very close to the "mind" of the French learners of English.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | | Page |
|--------------------------|--|-----|------|
| Dedication | ... | ... | 1 |
| Acknowledgements | ... | ... | 2 |
| Foreword | ... | ... | 3 |
| Contents | ... | ... | 4 |
| Preface | ... | ... | 5 |
| Effective Learning Skill | ... | ... | 11 |
| Part One | | | |
| Chapter I | Ayomide by Lasun Adewale | ... | 18 |
| Chapter II | Kokumo Omo Odo Agba by Akofe Adeniyi | ... | 40 |
| Chapter III | Akuko Gagara by Lere Adeyemi | ... | 51 |
| Chapter IV | Ogbon Ologbon by Kehinde Adepegba | ... | 71 |
| Chapter V | Okuroro Egbon by Iyiolá and Olusewa Akinola | ... | 82 |
| Part Two | | | |
| Chapter VI | Greetings in the rural settings | ... | 96 |
| Chapter VII | General Revision on Yoruba Cosmology | ... | 105 |
| Chapter VIII | Objective test for Yoruba at JSS 3 Level | ... | 110 |
| Chapter IX | Essay writing and New Spelling and Orthography in Yoruba | ... | 113 |

PREFACE

During my tenure as a moniteur of English Language and Comparative Literature at University of Paris, Residence Universitaire Jean Zay in Antony town, South of Paris, from 1976-1979, I was fascinated to discover the following titles:

- i. P & M Carpentier-Fialip: **Grammaire de l'Anglais Vivant**, Paris, Hachette 1977.
- ii. A.R. Tellier: **Grammaire Anglaise**, Paris, Sedes, 1971 ;
- iii. Françoise Dubois-Charlier: **Elements de linguistique anglaise : Syntaxe**, Paris, Larousse 1980 ; and
- iv. M.L. et G. Groussier ; P. Chantefort: **Grammaire anglaise : Themes construits**.

These titles were written by French Professors to teach English in French language. I wondered aloud why teach English in French? Is it to save money that would have been spent in paying Professors from Oxford and Cambridge Universities salaries and to put paid to the English new found relevance as a world language over and above French language often tagged the language of diplomacy?

After a deep meditation, I discovered that there is sense in the Paris Academy's authority's decision. After all, all the cultural references that the beginners and scholars in English language will need will be easily assimilatable if taught with the mind of French. Linguistic ambiguities will be explained in clear French Language to the French learners.

This is because one can best dialogue with people whose lifeways one understands very well. Paradoxically, the lifeways of these Paris Academy professors are very close to the "minds" of the French learners of English.

I was then not surprised when in 1981 I was confronted with the same debate in the Department of African Languages, of the University of Lagos when I took up a tenured job as a Lecturer II in the then Department of Modern European Languages.

What strand did the debate take then? There were two schools of thought. One that maintained that all African Languages projects, theses should be written entirely in those African Languages taught in the Department to wit: Yoruba and Igbo (Edo was then taught at Diploma level).

The second school of thought posited then that projects for BA degree, and MA, M.Phil and PhD Theses should be written outrightly in English language.

The first school of thought sees no reason to teach Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Kabba(Owe) languages in borrowed tongue; the English language, and that such a situation will lead to the death knell of African Languages. I do not share this their anxiety because even Jewish language in all the Diaspora lands the dispersed Jews lived, survived in its purest form. So there is no threat to African Languages yet, since the masses of the people in the innermost villages of Nigeria will still speak in their mother tongues. The classical evidence of this is the Yoruba Diaspora in El Salvador city of the State of Bahia in Brazil, where Youth Culture, language exist in its purest form.

Our position is that we should open up to other cultures of the world by making our cultural heritage available to other people and other civilizations of the world.

This is what influenced the several papers I delivered at the Staff seminars of the Department of African Languages of University of Lagos in the 1980s. Such papers as: Yoruba Cinema, Yoruba

Language and Culture; the translations of **Èdà** and **Òbakòso** by Dúró Ladipo, **Lánké Omu** by Kólá Ògúnmolá, **Òbalúáyé** and **Láńgbòdó** by Yẹmí Ògúnnyẹmí etc. were delivered by me during the Staff Seminars organized by the Departments of African Languages and English and the University of Lagos Cultural Centre, of which I was then a board member. It was during our tenure that the board created the present Department of Creative Arts.

What are we saying? We are saying that there is sense in giving our worldview the visibility that it deserves in the comity of nations. Hence my one thousand page Kabba-English dictionary research which I have been conducting in my mind since my student's days at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka since 1970/71 session.

I have also given visibilities to the French translations of the above Yoruba authors' works in the leading translation journals in the world to wit: **Meta** published in Montreal in Quebec Canada, **Babel**, which is the organ of **The Federation Internationale des Traducteurs**, published in Europe and in **Le Linguiste** published in Belgium, thereby giving vent to my much popularized theory of the need for dialogue of cultures amongst people of the world, in order to stem the tide of wars, conflicts and misunderstanding.

What is more, as recent as March 2007, I published in Yoruba Language *Book of Old Tunes of Primary and Sunday Schools of St. Andrew Anglican Cathedral Kabba 1950s-1960s Renditions* to highlight the linguistic heritage that the Anglican Communion endowed us with in Kabba Diocese, through their teachers, Catechists and Reverend gentlemen and clerics.

This latest addition is a continuum or an article of faith, in this our manifest role of cultural dialogue and peacemaking among people of the world through translation and Comparative Literature.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



PROF. S. J. Timothy-Asobele, was born in Kabba on the 5th of August, 1949. He is married with children. He attended Government Secondary School Okene (1963-1967); Federal Government College, Sokoto (1968-1969);, University of Nigeria Nsukka (1970-1974); University of Dakar (1972-1973), The Sorbonne University of Paris (1975-1979). He holds the following qualifications; BA (Hons) Languages (UNN), Diploma (Dakar); CES, MA, DEA, Doctorat de 3 cycle (Paris); He was awarded a Scholarship by AUPELF-UREF in April 1997. He is a member of New York Academy of Science, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Nigerian Folklore Society, Chairman, Lagos State Library Board and Member of the Board University of Lagos Centre for Cultural Studies. He is a specialist in the field of Literary Translation and African and Comparative Literature. He is a Lecturer and the Chairman Coordinator of the Department of European Languages University of Lagos, Post Graduate Committee and Professional degree in Translation respectively. He conceived the Voice of Nigeria (VON) French Programmes on African Literary Masterpieces in 1990. He conceived the Community Theatre for Mass-Mobilisation for DFFRI and MAMSER in 1988, was Chairman, Nelson Mandela reception at CBAAC, where he was Assistant Director of Research and Editor *Journal of Black and African Arts and Civilization* in 1989-1990. He is the author of *Ogu Umunwanyi* a play devoted to the historical Aba Women's War, 1928, *Kabba*; A play, *Gamji* a play devoted to the legendary Sir Ahmadu Bello, the premier of Northern Nigeria; *Tree of Trinity*, *Lion Head*, *Diaspora*, *Brotherhood of Cain*, *Langbasa*, all collections of poems, *Le Francais au Nigeria*; *Une cartographie dynamique*, *New perspectives in the Training of Translators and Interpreters in Nigeria*. *The Essentials of French Grammar for predominantly English Speaking Learners*, *Top TV Comedians and Operas*, *Yoruba Cinema of Nigeria*, *Historical Trends in Nigerian Indigenous and Contemporary Music*, *Contemporary Nigerian Arts & Artists: A Modern Guide*, *Essays in World Theatre*. Prof. Timothy-Asobele translated into French the OAU and ECOWAS Summits Cultural Programmes held in Abuja in June and July 1991 respectively. As a seasoned translator and researcher in the field of translation, terminology, he believes terminologists, translators and interpreters can help build the AU, ECOWAS and UNO. He was a rapporteur during July 2003 Leon Sullivan Summit held in Abuja Nigeria. He was invited by African-Union (AU) to II Conference of Intellectuals of Africa and the Diaspora to present a paper on African Languages in the Educational Systems in Africa and in the Diaspora in July 2006 in the City of Salvador, State of Bahia, Brazil. He used to lecture at the Nigerian Foreign Service Academy, Marina, Lagos, especially on Cultural Diplomacy. He is a patron of the Association of West African Young Writers with the Headquarters at 125A, Apapa Road (Moshood Abiola Way), Ebute-Metta, Lagos. He is the Chairman Department of European Languages Consultancy Committee of University of Lagos. Prof. Timothy-Asobele reads the Holy Bible at 5a.m. daily as a hobby. He plays lawn tennis and hockey.