

## SURA YA ISHIRINI NA TANO

When the district commissioner arrived at Okonkwo's compound at the head of an armed band of soldiers and court messengers he found a small crowd of men sitting wearily in the obi. He commanded them to come outside, and they obeyed without a murmur.

"Which among you is called Okonkwo?" he asked through his interpreter. "He is not here," replied Obierika.

Mkuu huyo wa wilaya alipofika kwenye boma la Okonkwo akiongozwa na kikosi cha askari wenye silaha na wajumbe wa mahakama alikuta kundi la watu wachache wakiwa wamekaa kwa uchovu kwenye obi. Akawaamuru watoke nje, nao walitii bila manung'uniko.

"Nani kati yenu anaitwa Okonkwo?" aliuliza kupitia mkalimani wake. "Hayupo hapa," alijibu Obierika.

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"Where is he?" "He is not here!"

"Yuko wapi?" "Hayupo hapa!"

The Commissioner became angry and red in the face. He warned the men that unless they produced Okonkwo forthwith he would lock them all up. The men murmured among themselves, and Obierika spoke again.

Kamishna alikasirika na kuwa nyekundu usoni. Aliwaonya wanaume hao kwamba wasipomtoa Okonkwo mara moja atawafunga wote. Wanaume hao walinung'unika wao kwa wao, na Obierika akazungumza tena.

"We can take you where he is, and perhaps your men will help us."

"Tunaweza kukupeleka alipo, na labda watu wako watatusaidia."

The Commissioner did not understand what Obierika meant when he said, "Perhaps your men will help us." One of the most infuriating habits of these people was their love of superfluous words, he thought.

Kamishna hakuelewa Obierika alimaanisha nini aliposema, "Labda wanaume wako watatusaidia." Mojawapo ya tabia ya kukasirisha zaidi ya watu hawa ilikuwa kupenda kwao maneno ya kupita kiasi, alifikiria.

Obierika with five or six others led the way. The Commissioner and his men followed their firearms held at the ready. He had warned Obierika that if he and his men played any monkey tricks they would be shot. And so they went.

Obierika pamoja na wengine watano au sita aliongoza. Kamishna na watu wake walifuata bunduki zao walizokuwa wamezishikilia tayari. Alikuwa amemwonya Obierika kwamba ikiwa yeye na watu wake wangecheza hila zozote za tumbili wangepigwa risasi. Na hivyo wakaenda.

There was a small bush behind Okonkwo's compound. The only opening into this bush from the

Kulikuwa na kichaka kidogo nyuma ya boma la Okonkwo. Uwazi pekee ndani ya kichaka

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compound was a little round hole in the red-earth wall through which fowls went in and out in their endless search for food. The hole would not let a man through. It was to this bush that Obierika led the Commissioner and his men. They skirted round the compound, keeping close to the wall. The only sound they made was with their feet as they crushed dry leaves.

Then they came to the tree from which Okonkwo's body was dangling, and they stopped dead.

"Perhaps your men can help us bring him down and bury him," said Obierika. "We have sent for strangers from another village to do it for us, but they may be a long time coming."

The District Commissioner changed instantaneously. The resolute administrator in him gave way to the student of primitive customs.

"Why can't you take him down yourselves?" he asked.

"It is against our custom," said one of the men. "It is an abomination

hiki kutoka kwenye kiwanja hicho ulikuwa ni tundu dogo la duara kwenye ukuta wa ardhi nyekundu ambamo ndege waliingia na kutoka katika kutafuta chakula bila kikomo. Shimo halingeruhusu mtu kupita. Ilikuwa kwenye kichaka hiki ambapo Obierika aliongoza Kamishna na watu wake. Walizunguka kiwanja, wakiweka karibu na ukuta. Sauti pekee waliyotoa ni kwa miguu yao huku wakiponda majani makavu.

Kisha wakafika kwenye mti ambao mwili wa Okonkwo ulikuwa ukining'inia, wakaacha kufa.

"Pengine watu wako wanaweza kutusaidia kumteremsha na kumzika," alisema Obierika. "Tumetuma wageni kutoka kijiji kingine ili watufanyie, lakini wanaweza kuja kwa muda mrefu." Mkuu wa Wilaya alibadilika papo hapo. Msimamizi shupavu ndani yake alitoa nafasi kwa mwanafunzi wa mila za zamani.

"Kwa nini huwezi kumshusha ninyi wenyewe?" Aliuliza.

"Ni kinyume cha desturi yetu," alisema mmoja wa watu hao. "Ni

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for a man to take his own life. It is an offence against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it. That is why we ask your people to bring him down, because you are strangers."

"Will you bury him like any other man?" asked the Commissioner.

"We cannot bury him. Only strangers can. We shall pay your men to do it. When he has been buried we will then do our duty by him. We shall make sacrifices to cleanse the desecrated land."

Obierika, who had been gazing steadily at his friend's dangling body, turned suddenly to the District Commissioner and said ferociously: "That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself and now he will be buried like a dog..." He could not say any more. His voice trembled and choked his words.

"Shut up!" shouted one of the messengers, quite unnecessarily. "Take down the body," the

chukizo kwa mtu kujiua, ni kosa juu ya Ardhi, na mtu afanyaye hatazikwa na watu wa ukoo wake. Mwili wake ni mbaya, na ni wageni tu wanaoweza kuugusa. kwa nini tunawaomba watu wako wamshushe, kwa sababu ninyi ni wageni.

"Utamzika kama mwanaume mwingine yeyote?" aliuliza Kamishna.

"Hatuwezi kumzika. Wageni tu ndio wanaoweza. Tutawalipa watu wako kufanya hivyo. Atakapozikwa basi tutafanya wajibu wetu naye. Tutatoa dhabihu ili kuitakasa ardhi iliyotiwa unajisi."

Obierika, ambaye alikuwa akitazama kwa makini mwili wa rafiki yake unaoning'inia, alimgeukia Mkuu wa Wilaya ghafla na kusema kwa ukali: "Mtu huyo alikuwa mmoja wa watu wakubwa sana huko Umuofia. Ulimfukuza ajiue na sasa atazikwa kama mbwa. ..." Hakuweza kusema zaidi. Sauti yake ilitetemeka na kukaba maneno yake.

"Nyamaza!" alipiga kelele mmoja wa wajumbe, bila lazima kabisa. "Shusha mwili," Kamishna

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Commissioner ordered his chief messenger, "and bring it and all these people to the court."

"Yes, sah," the messenger said, saluting.

The Commissioner went away, taking three or four of the soldiers with him. In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa he had learned a number of things. One of them was that a District Commissioner must never attend to such undignified details as cutting a hanged man from the tree. Such attention would give the natives a poor opinion of him. In the book which he planned to write he would stress that point. As he walked back to the court he thought about that book. Every day brought him some new material. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought:

aliamuru mjumbe wake mkuu, "na uwalete na watu hawa wote mahakamani."

"Ndio, sah," mjumbe alisema, akitoa salamu.

Kamishna akaenda, akiwachukua askari watatu au wanne pamoja naye. Kwa miaka mingi ambayo alihangaika kuleta ustaarabu sehemu mbalimbali za Afrika alikuwa amejifunza mambo kadhaa. Mojawapo ni kwamba Mkuu wa Wilaya hapaswi kamwe kuzingatia maelezo yasiyo na heshima kama kumkata mtu aliyenyongwa kwenye mti. Uangalifu kama huo ungewapa wenyeji maoni duni juu yake. Katika kitabu alichopanga kuandika angesisitiza jambo hilo. Aliporudi kortini alifikiria kitabu hicho. Kila siku ilimletea nyenzo mpya. Hadithi ya mtu huyu ambaye alimuua mjumbe na kujinyonga ingevutia usomaji. Mtu anaweza karibu kuandika sura nzima juu yake. Labda si sura nzima lakini aya ya kuridhisha, kwa vyovyote vile. Kulikuwa na mengi zaidi ya kujumuisha, na mtu lazima awe thabiti katika kukata maelezo. Tayari alikuwa amechagua jina la kitabu, baada ya kufikiria sana:

The Pacification of the Primitive  
Tribes of the Lower Niger.

Pasifiki ya Makabila ya Asili ya  
Niger ya Chini.

## A GLOSSARY OF IBO WORDS AND PHRASES

**agadi-nwayi:** old woman. *mwanamke mzee.*

**Agbala:** woman; also used of a man who has taken no title. ...  
*mwanamke; pia kutumika kwa mtu ambaye hajachukua cheo.*

**Chi:** personal god. *mungu binafsi.*

**efukfu:** worthless man.. *mtu asiye na thamani.*

**egwugwu:** a masquerader who impersonates one of the ancestral spirits  
of the village. *kinyago anayejifananisha na mizimu ya mababu wa  
kijijini.*

**ekwe:** a musical instrument; a type of drum made from wood. **eneke-  
nti-oba:** a kind of bird.

**eze-agadi-nwayi:** the teeth of an old woman.

**iba:** fever.

**ilo:** the village green, where assemblies for sports, discussions, etc.,  
take place.

**inyanga:** showing off, bragging.

**isa-ifi:** a ceremony. If a wife had been separated from her husband for  
some time and were then to be re-united with him, this ceremony would  
be held to ascertain that she had not been unfaithful to him during the  
time of their separation.

**iyi-uwa:** a special kind of stone which forms the link between an  
ogbanje and the spirit world. Only if the iyi-uwa were discovered and  
destroyed would the child not die.

**jigida:** a string of waist beads.

**kotma:** court messenger. The word is not of Ibo origin but is a  
corruption of "court messenger."

**kwenu:** a shout of approval and greeting.

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**ndichie:** elders.

**nna ayi:** our father.

**nno:** welcome.

**nso-ani:** a religious offence of a kind abhorred by everyone, literally earth's taboo.

**nza:** a very small bird.

**obi:** the large living quarters of the head of the family.

**obodo dike:** the land of the brave.

**ochu:** murder or manslaughter. *mauaji au mauaji.*

**ogbanje:** a changeling,- a child who repeatedly dies and returns to its mother to be reborn. It is almost impossible to bring up an ogbanje child without it dying, unless its iyi-uwa is first found and destroyed.

**ogene:** a musical instrument; a kind of gong.

**oji odu achu-ijiji-o:** (cow i. e., the one that uses its tail to drive flies away).

**osu:** outcast. Having been dedicated to a god, the osu was taboo and was not allowed to mix with the freeborn in any way. *kufukuzwa. Kwa kuwa alikuwa amejitolea kwa mungu, osu ilikuwa mwiko na haikuruhusiwa kuchanganyika na waliozaliwa huru kwa njia yoyote ile.*

**Oye:** the name of one of the four market days. *jina la moja ya siku nne za soko.*

**ozo:** the name of one of the titles or ranks. *jiina la mojawapo ya vyeo au vyeo.*

**tufia:** a curse or oath. *laana au kiapo.*

**udu:** a musical instrument; a type of drum made from pottery.

**uli:** a dye used by women for drawing patterns on the skin.

**umuada:** a family gathering of daughters, for which the female kinsfolk return to their village of origin.

**umunna-:** a wide group of kinsmen (the masculine form of the word umuada).

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**Uri:** part of the betrothal ceremony when the dowry is paid.

**The End**