

## FORWARD

The Play Alapa is great attempt by Armstrong Idachaba to document the dramatic circumstances that surrounded the life and times of an Igala enigma Dr Steve Achema.

In this play, Idachaba mythologizes his struggles which were characterized by suspicious, hate and envy. The traditional oligarchy sees Alapa as radical and non-conformist. So they strategize to tame his excesses. But Alapa is a unique character and inspiring character, he is loved by the people and he is always on the side of the people. To Alapa, it is better to die in the struggle than betray the cause of the poor, downtrodden and the marginalized. The people are sad when he dies tragically but their hope in the future is renewed when the state that he did not die in vain. To them he remains a hero and inspiration even in death.

The play is about the virtue of service to humanity in spite of the odds

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ISBN-978-34556-3-4

*First performance at St. Fatima hall Idah, in commemoration of the first memorial of Dr. Stephen Makoji Achema- Former special assistant to the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.*

Chorus

1. Ekali agbede me!  
Ekali Agbede O!  
Ekali Agbede O!  
Ataoji ji
  
2. Ola Ata nanabe  
Ata ogbeku gbeku  
Ola Ata nana gb
  
3. Iye te wunyi o kache  
Iye te wunyi o kache  
Iye te Wunyi o kache

Prologue (*Lights come on to reveal pockets of people on stage in action*)

Narrator: Good evening Ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the enacted realities of my story. The story of a kingdom. The story of a pauper with a history and a tradition, living together in the waves of life, of harmony, peace and tranquility. The Igala people, Ojoshama shala, the almighty and the discerning, blessed them with a king to serve as perfect link between the worlds of the living, dead and unborn. (There is sudden darkness, closely followed by rhythmic drumming).

Voice of Ojo Mr. Dear people. Here comes my son to live with you like you. You must listen to him, never He shall be your Atta, yes your father. You shall rule along with him. Avoid sinful infirmities, but be spiritually consecrated and physically dedicated to the development of the land. ( the drumming increasing, Attah is standing in the centre of the people. All bow to worship him, the Attah is wearing the kingly feathers, the facial mask "ejubejuailo' and other traditional accouterments).

All: Gabaidu! (Greeting him prostrate).

Aganapoje: Thank you my people, my father, Ojo Shamashala sends his greetings. His blessing, I bring unto you. His peace and tranquility, I bring unto you. With my arrival, you shall not have problems. All things shall from henceforth work together for common good. I shall be your head and you my body and soul. Together we shall share love, unity and purpose.

All: Gabaidu! Ache! (there is singing, dancing they sing a song Afonu neme! Afonu neme eeh!)

Narrator: That as you can all see, are the happy people of the Igala kindom, celebrating the arrival of their Attah. But generations after, a new Attah emerges, and evil forces are at work, there is disharmony. Chaos begins to reign. The people disobey Ojoshamashala (men and women file past in pains and anguish hands tied behind. Faces blinded, various kind of

deformities and slavery). The hand of the evil one is on the land. The heart of man is not a tune with Ojo, the people rise against the elected one Ojo. There is fear, there is betrayal, there is fear. But Ojo shama shala, the all knowing God, saw their pains and brought to earth a child to save the people from the wickedness of the evil one. (flash back. There is black out and light comes on a l m o s t [Enter king Aganapoje and his aide and body guards.] (The royal Okakachi blares. There is singing, drumming and dancing, the Gabaidu sights a pregnant woman by the side). Aganaboje (pointing his walking stick at her) who is that woman and what is wrong with her (royal aides rush to her side to hold her up).

Woman: Gabaidu (prostrating) I am Iyeh the daughter of Atadoga and married to Achema. I have been pregnant for 3 years, do you take pity on a poor wretch, the curse of the evil one is upon me, just leave me alone and go your way, may God give you wisdom to rule this land.

Aganapoje: Woman, I foresee greatness in your unborn child, I foresee the liberation of my people. A star shall shine and bring forth a new life, for my people. Go, woman, you shall give birth to a child and his name shall be Omakoji. May the blessing of Ayegba be with you. Woman answers Ache. (she managers to go off the stage).

Narrator: Back to the realities of the day, the boy child is born and has grown into a full blown man. He is christened

Steven Omakoji Atah Kikoji Oja. He stood for the oppressed in the society, he stood for the down trodden. But will, he survive the phenomenon of evil reaction to good. The sledge hammer of the evil one. Questions. I tell you, will n e v e r end. Yes-what about the traditions of the people. What a b o u t justice. The extent and nature of power, and of politics.

Kings are kings they come as they go. The evil they do consume Oboni after Aganapoje, it consumes the constructive, the When good is relegated, something fills its place. Well, something. Ameh Oboni great king among the ancestors he brings dignity to rulership. He brings care and patriotism. But takes his own life, the force of evil. In his place reigns another .

## MOVEMENT ONE.

*(Light opens to reveal Gabaidu in his courtyard, enter prisoners bound hand and feet, eyes blinded, followed by Ojidu brandishing a whip).*

Ojidu- Gabaidu: These are the men you asked me to arrest.

Gabaidu: Thank you Ojidu, please read out their offences.

Ojidu: Etubi, for refusing to greet the king. Achagba oma kowe for stealing the King's goat. Iye, for refusing to sleep with the king. Abah, treasurer of state, for not bringing in money.

Gabaidu: Yes, they committed the atrocities against me. I, Idu the Lion, yes I am a Lion, I have strength, I have authority

Ojidu: Gabaidu, you are the forest that dwarfs the Ukpehie tree, you are the shade of the desperate squirrel. You are the only living fire of humanity. You create, you erase, you choose to protect, you destroy. Gabaidu, a cat does not joke with the powers of a Lion though they look like cousins.

Gabaidu: Sometime, you make me feel like Ojo.

Ojidu: Must I say Jachi, though you are one of us, you are mightier than us. You have power.

Gabaidu: (To Ojidu) I am filled with power like the keg of wine returning from the tree top, Ojidu you have lived in this palace for Your father served my father for 100 years. What I like about you is your sweet tongue. You

can move mountains with your tongue. (pause). (the royal drummers beat the drums they sing the song, Iye tewunyi o ka che, Iye tewunyi ka che) stop! (they all stop) next time Ojidu, the royal masquerades must be here to dance for me.

Ojidu: Certainly Gabaidu, at the Italo festival or at the ocho. But Gabaidu did you say dance? Gabaidu they don't dance.

Gabaidu: You mean they don't dance? Yes. But I have absolute powers over them, like I have over you. They must dance for me.

Ojidu: Tradition Gabaidu! It hasn't happened before it is Abominable, how can a royal masquerade dance. It is just like saying you dance.

Gabaidu: So what is wrong with my dancing? I danced all my life to Sabada *(he makes Sabada dance steps and all the people cheer him. Some cover their faces seeing an abomination).*

Ojidu: (Who has closed his eyes all the while slowly opening) Gabaidu, no Attah dances in public, it is not proper, it is against the tradition.

Ojidu: (Who has closed his eyes all the while slowly opening) Gabaidu, no Attah dances in public, it is not proper, it is against the tradition.

Gabaidu: Mine is a regime of change. Yes, I shall dance with my own masquerades, "ekpo Iye dany egwa iye" the daughter bean and the mother bean all belong to the parent stock. I shall dance.

Do you hear me. I say i shall dance, the royal masquerades will Gabaidu: You see, I am always right. The cat is not the same as the Lion though they may be cousin. The Prisoners, they think I have forgotten (*back to his Position*) Oya Ojidu they must be punished in restitution to the land, they must die.

Victims: Mercies! Gabaidu, Gabaidu, mercies.

Gabaidu: Take them in, we shall prepare them for punishment during the next festival, Ojidu.

Ojidu: Gabaidu, a lion is lion. These ones shall be properly dealt with Afterall, you have not sacrificed to the gods for a long time, ye the land needs to be cleansed with their sweat. Now rogues come, this regime is in fact a regime of change. (they are taken out).

Gabaidu: (to the audience) now you see, I am a lion, I can devour you. I mean all of you, dangerous you can be, my cousins. You are rats, you are rodents. You are creepers of the night. Darkness is your marching code and like them you dont mind eating yourself, but I can eat all of you, I am a lion. My praise name is Gabaidu, I am the owner of all the land. My father's name is Ayegba yeah! All the land belongs to me.

Alapa: (from the audience) now Gabaidu, quiet a little

while, you have begun to see yourself as a different entity. I really don't know what you think of yourself ,but i have a story for you. All these things belong to the people not you. You are a custodian for the people. Stranger, you have begun to see yourself differently. I have a story for you, listen.

Narrator: Once upon a time, a dog ruled over a land. The dog was a l w a y s barking, such that visitors always ran away until he h a r d l y desert him, soon nobody returns to the palace. Then they the people regroup and decide, to go back and reclaim their land On reaching the house they find the king dog eating people, he is cut down to pieces with his own matchet and the dog dies. (Action back on the stage)

Aga: But I am not a dog, I am Agabidu of the Ayegba dynasty. I am a Lion. I can eat a dog.

Alpa: But are you not scared of matchets. Like a dog, a matchet can devour you. If not one then two, three consistent strikes.

Aga: Now Ojidu, arrest this man he dares to challenge me I say arrest him (as Ojidu moves stop.) By the way who the dog are you.

Aid: This is Alapa of the fire eating generation!

Alapa: Out of the fire of Otutubatu, by the achieves of the famous gold smith did I emerge, out of the hearth of the furnace of the metallic castle of Abutu Eje

Grandson of Atiele who devoured Oguche Ekpo by a singular stroke of the fore of his forebears.

Aid: Alapa- me gwa Alapa Ebije.

Alapa: I know you Otuba of the ordinary fame. Many times did we run at Adukpo with you, and on many occasion did I wrestle you to the floor. You are ordinary like us. I know your strengths and weaknesses.

Gabaidu: (They sing Ukpa da alu amo unedo kina chomi mo. Ejo defu Now I can see, there is what you call opposition. That Negedu is enmity. People are after my seat, yes and I shall deal with them ruthlessly.

Negedu: Gabaidu, the lion does not warm itself first with its Scrotum in fire. Technology Gabaidu. The chief of Etutekpe used our kind of matchets in a war attempt and they shut the shit out of the anus of his men. Modern technology Gabaidu, guns pistols and revolvers. They fire sixty in seconds.

Ojidu: Gabaidu that's true, I think that boy the short one, he Has technology. He wore the English mans dress and he fooled us, though he was alone.

Messenger: (Coming on stage) Gabaidu there is a modern man waiting to see you (all of them including Gabaidu carry weapons).

Achor: (lying on the ground) Gabaidu, I come with peace and good tidings. I

am from the city Gabaidu. But born and bred in this royal. presence, simply I am on account of tradition. The kingdom must not die. I have been sick when I heard that a young man. challenged you. I think they say his name is Alapa.

Gabaidu: Exactly, you could not be more correct, you see I am a lion. And that Alapa is a dog. I will eat him up, I will eat him up.

Achor: True but he is modern and Gabaidu he is a wizard. But I know how to deal with him. In the city we say settlement. What do I get from you.

Achor: A parcel of land here in Idah and a membership of the council.

Ojidu: (conferring with Gabaidu) I don't like this man. No one invited him yet he brings himself, come to think of it a modern man looking for Chieftaincy title. I find him suspicious. He may take your stool. You just watch. ( to Achor) young man who are you and what do you do

Achor: My name is Achor of the Gago Dynasty. I am a patriot, my objective is the development of the kingdom. Well to answer your second question, I am a successful businessman I ask for land just to develop it. You know the kingdom needs roads, new house etc. And the title for the protection of the stool. I am a patriot. Outside here I pay lot of money to make up the image of the land. Yes, western media deficiency syndrome,

neocolonialism. They say we are barbaric and illiterate. So on behalf of you, I will repair our image. You'd excuse me because I have an official engagement right now in Lagos.

Ojidu: Wait. Don't go yet. (to Gabaidu) the man's grammar is too much. What does he mean by bar-bar -, to what. I don't understand this man.

Gabaidu: Guess you are just jealous. He will help me deal with Alapa (to Achor) Ehen young man. Do you know how to deal with opposition.

Achor: Cheaply, yes very cheap. First the traditional approach, you know the traditional ballistic missile, call the witches and wizards in the land let them meditate over him for just 7 days on the 7th day he dies in an accident. He likes driving cars you know, simple it will look like a natural occurrence.

Achor: Simple as well, you will build a modern army. Armed to the teeth, you can sell your palm oil to foreigners then they will give you materials, arms and ammunition. With that you will deal squarely with any attempt to poke fingers into your eyes. Once the head is off the body bleeds to death. Make them starve, cause them hunger. Seize all their properties. (To Ojidu) I told you he is very intelligent. My son you have great wisdom. I will give you an award title. Ojidu give out invitations to the chief of Odu, the district Head of Etutekpe, the Onu Dekina and all other chiefs immediately. Achor I need you in my

cabinet, you are by my decree presented with the title of Adoko of the kingdom, you shall be my chief adviser, you shall help me set up a very powerful army, strong enough to crush opposition.

Achor: Gabaidu and with an army you shall deal ruthlessly with the insurgence of that brat rat and any others. Let me also caution us. I am quite convinced beyond doubt that there shall be sanctions against us. Yes by enemies, who shall hate our style, open sheer jealousy, grand hatred styled upon the pragmatism of our use of this horn to campaign for the unification of our actions and then earn us support and friends from neighboring villages. (*Another place, Villagers are presented, they converge for a meeting*).

Ikani: Alapa remains our hope.

Ataguba: strange how the highly placed behave, really strange how they undermine our potentials. Strange indeed.

Ataguba: God is wonderful my people. I never saw a man though rich yet caring for the poor. Always on the side of the weak. educated, yet on the side of the uneducated.

Old woman: Were it not for him what would have been my fate. He it was that built me a house when I was ejected by the king's brother who took my late husband's estate for his farm.

Old man: Were it not for Alapa I'd be a dead man today, all the dress I wear is given to me by Alapa.

Ataguba: My people I tell you he is God sent. See the number of our children he is supporting in schools, In politics and business. Truly he inspires us we must support him. His dreams must not die. (action back to the palace)

Gabaidu: The lion of the country hereby orders the beginning of the coronation of the eagle, let there be drinks, women and dances to celebrate. (As the celebrations begin it gets more and more exotic, the celebration is a party of immorality and vain corruption. The invited chiefs arrive, courtesies are soon abandoned and the scene is simply reckless). (Blackout) (Acting is back to the villagers) (As they talk Oko arrives)

Ataguba: Now Great citizens. I beg you to be quite for a moment. Let us get an idea of the scenario. Oko tell us what you saw and heard.

Oko: My fellow compatriots, we live in terrible and insane times. When I was a child, a king was a king and tradition was tradition. It respected itself and did not bother to seek it, because it was well deserved and naturally bequeathed. Queen Ebule of the compassionate fame, in her romance with Achadu did not forget

Ataguba: Oko of the parrot generation, why don't you hit the nail on the head you better hurry, you know it is not my desire to be caught here by Agabaidu and his team of scavengers.

Ako: (demonstrating the sound of gun shots-gisam, gisam,

*Gisam*) and you run like a coward. In the times of tradition you found the source of the ailing sound close it up and fill up the trump to nonsense. (The people show displeasure and consent). In times of old, a challenge throws out the force in you, especially youthful urge Then, the sound of strength was sound of music, you were energized by your environment. There is really nothing to fear about the king at this moment. He is displaying his usual flagrant disregard for his stool. More than 3 times he messed it up. He fart 6 times. Creating the sound of thunder on a rainy windy night.

Crowd: (*showing surprise*) you don't mean it?

Oko: And in his winous stupor, he invested the crown on Achor.

In the glare of all of us but it was disgusting. I mean it smells, the whole place smelt of stench. The pig turns itself in mud and thinks it is having a bath.

Ataguba: Tell us what title did he give the sycophant.

Oko: You call a chief a sycophant, you see? Exactly what I say, disregard for constituted authority. How can we keep the horde together, you call a chief sycophant.

Ataguba: You talk so much; one would think you are on their side. So you don't abhor sycophant's. After all and you think there is nothing disgusting about the smell of the dung provided there is honey Oko: Ha! That is the metaphor of the vagina. If you must say, sycophant, praise singing all give power and



glorification.

Ataguba: Cut the vain glorification! Why don't you join them, let us be certain on whose side you are.

Oko: simple, I talk to much, drink too much, see nothing, So I need to have a conscience at least, you all know my father, that he had opportunities to steal but he did not. As chief stores man of the kingdom he was in charge of transport and logistics. The one soldiers call ordinance. But he never stole, though some time, I don't know my feelings about him. I Only respect him because one day his colleague who stole just hit a stone and died. My mind and conscience keeps saying because he was a thief, my own father fell off a mountain head on and landed on his feet. He only jogged and jumped up and down and came back home for a drink.

Ataguba: Quite! Parrot, now what title did he give Achor.

Oko: Do you say quiet. Okay quiet. Search your conscience. How many of you can see Abacha and not fill your stomachs with it. You say hunger. We hunger so much you eat your conscience. But not me I tell you. I think I told you it was disgusting. The whole place smelt of wine and women corruption I tell you corruption.

Atag: So his title is corruption. My dear people I think It is due time we name him an enemy. Oko! Your time is up.

Oko: (laughing) don't blame me I am quite sorry you know . but you see how can the son of a Gago be a crowned prince. It confused me I hope that your massively poor clan will not venture any confrontation with him because part of the recommendation is death by hanging. (the people run in all directions).  
(*Coming in from the stage*)

Achor: Are these people mad? Do I look like a masquerade. They see me and they run yes! Now I remember my charm and charisma. I am strong . I am a chief and they are peasants. (Alapa Emerging form opposite side he is with two aids).

Alapa: Achor, you look indeed like a masquerade the multi flamboyance of your apparel and the acuterment of leisure you wear on you is indicative only of a mask.

Alapa; (whispers to his aid) Aid Achor you desecrated our privacies and liberty with winous excesses. Sit down here.

Achor: But you are a peasant, you ordering me to sit down, what is the world turning to, who is your father. Alapa see the sort of seeds you plant in this society. Can you imagine the impudence.

Alapa: The voice of the oppressed is the voice of God. You better obey.

Aid: Should you open your mouth too wide you will

receive strokes of the cane. Will you now sit down and obey simply instructions?

Achor: Yes sir, yes sir! (he is shivering and his fear and cowardice is easily noticeable).

Aid: (conferring with Alapa) now get out of here. I say get out and repent of your sins and crimes against God and man.

Alapa: (as the chief runs holding the loose ends of his sokoto trouser) that Imagine a chief to be crying and shouting when faced with a mere toyish threat. All that matters is seizing the weapon, mind you, just the matchet. Beside the matchet, there are other weapons they use, day in day out to perpetuate their obnoxious aspirations like royalty, like pride, ancestry, flagrant abuse of authority. I tell you, seize just one of it and you will destabilize the entire system.

Aid: Honestly I never knew the chief was such a coward .

Alapa: Exactly, you see that is how it works the coward had no choice than to prostrate and shout jachi to you. You could be a chief yourself. Just own the power and challenge their authority. But I warn you, you must first of all seize their authority, their tool of power. (As the peasants return, they are happy to see Alapa they sing in praise of his idea).

### Movement III THE KINGS PALACE.

Ojidu: Gabaidu, this reign of yours remains the most celebrated of all generations, positive change have we seen, more do we envision. Yours is a brazen restoration and presentation of power and dignity (he is drinking). And who says power is not relevant, warriors might, matchets with power, your land, houses and your titles. You are the king . the owner of the land and all therein.

Gabaidu: see why, I always talk about your prophetic ingenuity? Mighty elephant of kingdom dominance. I own this land, it belonged to my ancestors so shall it belong to my off-springs. Mine is it at all spheres. (*to the audience*) do you still think I am same one you saw at thle6 beginning. But I told you, did I not?

To the Audience Yes my people I hope you are all enjoying this show. This idiot Alapa, is he still there in the crowd. (*chief runs on stage. There is pandemonium*).

Gabaidu: (Hiding beneath a chair) now you tottering adult why does your intellectual currency always fail you? You cheapen your chiefly discretion to behave as a peasant.

Chief: He is still here, he almost killed me.  
Gabaidu Who the hell is the monster who...  
Chief The man... Alapa

Gabaidu: Did you hear that, of all the things you have acquired, land and titles, that rat still scares you. He parades himself in philosophical in diffusion, even physical jeopardy. See what he has turned my own chief into. an agent of the ancestral custom treated like a garage ragamuffin. Now is the time to teach the idiot a lesson. Who says radicalism encourages disrespect. Arrogant senselessness, to make change imperative. Change ought to be a fixed concept.

Achor: Gabaidu now is the critical stage, the point of assault and we will need all our warriors alive. Now will I prove my practicability, first, let us fetch a consultant. Someone from the university, a Don. He will explain all the logistic details and theoretical base, I have in mind Professor Aduku who is waiting outside. A battle is fought with all arsenal. We must forecast and analyse. You don't go to battle with your eyes shut.

Aga: Call him in (the professor is called in).

Prof: Great Agabaidu of the Ayegba reincarnate. You who is the face that scares the face "ejubeju ailo". The lion of the Akpoto terrestrial debacle the consuming image of the terrestrial and the extra terrestrial chasm.

Aga: Prof, Prof welcome (to Ojidu) his grammar is bombastic. So you are a

Prof: By the wish of the ancestral order I do. A son of Achagaba who is queen mother of the Ejuogba dynasty.

Ojidu: What is your settlement (prof confers with Achor)

Prof: A little chieftaincy title will do, so that I can be close to you and help you to solve land matters. The capitalization of the spatial ambience of property, establishes a need for us to adumpretize. Alapa is the only bone in the meal of the kingdom. It beats my imagination, how a little rat could make an entire castle shake. A sledge hammer strategy will adequate. The strategy is to keep him permanently quite. Do we have weapons?

Actor: Prof, a lot of those weapons, machetes, cutlasses, bows and arrows, all of them are available for total emancipation from resistory politics.

Prof: Then the next stage is mobilization. We mobile the warriors to deal with him squarely.

Aga: Ojidu, mobilize the warriors immediately. (Ojidu runs out Immediately. light fades .light opens to reveal Alapa's camp, women and men seated together)

Alapa: After that humiliation, I expect retaliation. I know that he will be so hurt he'd want to kick the shit out of my mouth. We must preempt to exist. I know they will kick us right now. This life is about honour, truth and justice. We must take positions or be extinct. We must resist today for the future to survive. The future is a child. It must not suffer pollution nay injustice. We must educate the ignorant to the blind

Ajanigo: Their camp is rich with matchets, warriors, all intended to teach you a lesson. Theoretically they have employed professor Aduku to give them strategies and statistics. Now let's countermove

Akagwu: Ayibe me o! that bloated toad king Otaji of Iga, God curse him! One day, he was on an official tour of his district, he saw my beautiful wife not minding she was pregnant for me, he seized her and married her. I complained but all I got was torture and slaps, I stopped complaining, she died one day while delivering a baby.

Alapa: Some of us have had our lands confiscated like Ohiemi here.

Ohiemi: It was in the presence of Alapa. One day, Achor, that sucking leech. He sawed logs of tree on my farm. He told me it was nice for cocoa and that he will employ labour. Next I found myself in the palace of the chief as a disobedient citizen and he took my land. Now I can have my land.

Alapa: yes your land now belong to you. But the battle still rages on.

Ocheni: What about my title that I was deprived. Now fellow countrymen. We will need to cleanse the land of all this stain of corruption.

Maaminet: But we need a king. The land must not operate Without a leader, not a ruler I say a leader.

The Crowd: Alapa! Alapa (a new gown is made for Alapa amidst songs and praises, carried shoulder high and a song begins)

Praise: Sing all Hail Alapa. The king! Is King! The hornest of the vampire, to the busy vampire is a sweet abode. You shall create for us a new land, you shall not like other kings be consumed in the passion of power and materials but of respect and mutual growth. Collective growth based on justice and equity. Tell us, what kind of leader shall you be. (as they carry Alapa shoulder high action shifts) Ojidu. Idoits they thought they won. A fight is not over until it is over. We shall employ all means. (to the Guard) why do you look at me this way?. You see we are a force (pointing to his group on stage) we don't loose in a battle you use all arsenals. Yes all arsenals. Yes all arsenals you shall see (action fades to the other camp the shouts gradually die down confusion begins Alapa holds his stomach, he is gradually loosing breath there is pandemonium gradually it rises to a dirge. Darkness over darkness strange the power of darkness)

Okoko: We must not despair we shall raise again. let us enforce A change, let us reclaim ours. let us raise. Alapa is not dead and cannot die. ( as they strategize to move lights fade, they sing. This battle is just begun. This is the time to fight. A time for victory, a dirge.)