

QUEEN OF SHEBA

Seven riddles asked by Makeda, the Queen of Sheba to King Salomon.

1 – **Ahan**

But where does that power come from?
Is it your hand that bears the sword?
Then what part of your body gives you
This infinite power over men?
And where does that power come from?
Is it your foot that rushes to the battle field?
Then what part of your body gives you
This infinite power over men?

Answer:

*Your **tongue**, oh, King of Kings,
It enthralls the one who listens to you.
Your **tongue**, oh, King of Kings,
Has the power of life and death over your people.*

2 - **Eyin**

This bird has no flesh
This bird has no blood
This bird has no feathers
Its color is as pure and beautiful as gold
This bird might be dead
Or it might be alive
This bird does not move
Its color is as virginal and sweet as milk

Answer:

*An **egg** has no flesh
An **egg** has no blood
An **egg** has no feathers
Its color is as pure and beautiful as gold
An **egg** might be dead
Or it might be alive
An **egg** does not move
Its color is as virginal and sweet as milk*

3 - **Omije**

Sometimes it is sweet, sometimes it is bitter
The water that suddenly appeared along my journey
Sometimes it is honeyed, sometimes it is harsh

The wave that seized me all along my path.

Answer:

*The water of **tears** is sometimes sweet, sometimes it is bitter
These **tears** that suddenly appeared along your journey”
“The water of **tears** is sometimes honeyed, sometimes it is harsh
These **tears** that seized you all along your path.”*

4 - **Ogbo**

Birds idolize it
Fish despise it
Birds idolize it
Fish despise it
It's the rich man's finery
But also what the poor take with them to their tomb.

Answer:

***Flax, flax, oh King of Kings.**
Birds go mad over its leaves
Flax, flax, oh King of Kings.
From which the net is made that fish so greatly dread
Flax, flax, oh King of Kings.
That bedecks your vanity, you the most powerful of men
Flax, flax, oh King of Kings.
From which is sewn the shroud of the indigent man, your brother!*

5 – **Alikama**

It's buried deep inside the darkness
And yet it's still alive!
The farther it fades into the void
The more life around it comes to bloom
It's buried deep inside the darkness

Answer:

*It's buried deep inside the darkness
It's the grain of **wheat** the farmer sows,
And yet it's still alive!
Like the seed from which our son will spring
It's the grain of **wheat** the farmer sows,
And the farther it fades into the void.*

6 – Ife

What is this bit of nothing, this breath,

--No, it isn't love—

What is this bit of nothing, this spirit,

--No, it isn't love—

That with impatience makes the heart

Explode of he who feels it?

What is this bit of nothing, this spirit,

--No, it isn't love—

Answer:

What is this bit of nothing, this breath,

*"It's my **desire** for you, Makeda"*

What is this bit of nothing, this ethereal spirit,

*"It's my **desire** for you, Makeda"*

It makes my heart explode

With impatience tonight, oh lovely Makeda

What is this bit of nothing, this breath,

*"It's my **desire** for you, Makeda"*

7 – Obinrin

Seven, nine, two, one, seven interrupt each other

Seven, nine, two, one, nine begin

Seven, nine, two, one, two offer a drink

But only one accepted!

Answer:

Seven days interrupt the flow of blood

Seven, nine, two, one

Nine months begin a feverish awaiting

Seven, nine, two, one

Two breasts offer a drink to

Seven, nine, two, one

*One thirsting little **child!***