Ore mi (oh-ray me)

There are three great loves in Yoruba-land
That make all three parties rejoice:
The King and Queen's love are by birth decreed
But oh-ray's is a mutual choice.

The king's love of son is a fatherly love
That depends on your acts after birth.
If you serve him well the love may be strong
And depends on your actions and worth.

The queen's love for you is a motherly love
And needs no reward to stay strong.
Whatever you do, her love remains true
And she'll for you eternally long.

The oh-ray's bond is by mutual choice
And has little to do with your birth
Which of the three in Yoruba-land
Is strongest and of greatest worth?

There were once two men in Yoruba-land
Who established an "oh-ray ship" bond

Though they loved both the King and the Queen

They were of each other most fond.

One day, one of them had a fight

With another man who he slew

In panic he ran to his friend and asked

Oh-ray me, what shall I do?

If the king should discover my deed

He would surely punish me sore

And perhaps I'd be killed; Or even worse,

Banished from here evermore.

His friend told him to dress in rags

And act like a crazy man

When questioned he should utter nonsensical words,

And should his face constantly fan.

His friend then prepared a cooking fire

And near it placed a large pot

Filled with water and medical herbs

And told him to worry not.

When the king arrived and questioned the man

He acted as he had been told.

He answered the king with nonsensical words

And made meaningless sounds manifold

His friend told the king that his friend was insane

And had been retained in that yard

For the past thirty days under treatment

And always under tight guard.

The king believed the man at his word

And rode off on his great steed

Saying a crazy man like that

Could not have committed the deed.

Seven months passed and the friend asked his friend'

Which to you is most dear?

The love of the King, of the Queen or my love

Answer truly without any fear!

The friend replied though I love you true

My love of the Queen is much stronger.

Then go and tell her what you have done

Or we shall be friends no longer.

The friend confessed his crime to the Queen

That the killing by him had been done

And she straightforward informed the King

But asked him to pardon their son.

Meanwhile, that son returned to his friend

And asked him what now should he do.

The friend then said, confess to the king

But add what I'll now tell to you.

When the king arrived and questioned the man

He admitted his foul evil deed

But added he had also slain

The mother of the king's steed.

"I also killed the man at the lake

And his dog that walked by his side.

I also killed my own mother

And the sire of the steed that you ride."

The King on hearing this nonsense

Concluded that he was insane

And mounting his mighty steed once again

Rode off in the drizzling rain.

The man who confessed returned to his friend

And was asked the same question again

Which is the greater bond of love

Love of King, of the Queen or one's friend?

After a slight hesitation

The friend straightforward replied

Though the love of the Queen and the King may be strong

It's the friend's love that can't be denied.

Later the friend of the man passed away

And he mourned for that friend now long dead.

Another man came and asked if he could

Take him for a friend in his stead.

At first he refused, saying no other man

Could replace that best friend who lay dead

But the new man persisted and indeed insisted

That he would be just as true in his stead.

With the passage of time, he was nearly convinced

But In order to stop future rue

He , decided to test his new friend

To see if this new bond was true

So he went all alone to the forest to hunt

And a great antelope found.

After killing the stag, he did not take it home

But buried it, like a man, in the ground.

He then told his new friend,

that he had killed a man,

And showed him the place of the grave.

And thae friend to the king quickly ran.

He informed him that his new best friend

Had killed, in the forest, a man.

The king arrested the “insane man” and said

Defend yourself now if you can?

The new friend, the King, and the soldiers

Then went to the place of the grave.

But when they dug up the antelope

Many apologies gave.

The false friend exposed, the man never took

Another to be his best friend.

The **oh ray** bond still survives today;

But this story has come to its end.