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Poems

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Abstract
A SHOT IN THE EYE, THE MASTER TORTURER'S COMPLAINT:

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Taban Lo Liyong

A SHOT IN THE EYE

Contrary to what journalists cooked up
Dada does not mean daddy:
Big, medium or small;
Good, passable or bad;
Charitable, murderous or mean...

Dada does not mean first steppings
Or children uttering their first sounds
Or storks jabbing at frogs
Or musicians rhyming tralala...

A man may be called Dada
Not because he has lost all his teeth
Nor because he has filed them sharp
Nor because he swims in his pyjamas...

A man may be called Dada
Not because Tzara created a movement
Nor because his fingers are aristocratic
Nor because they can go around an opponent’s neck...

A man may be called Dada
But a woman cannot be called Dada.

For a woman, the name would be Leyong
Signifying her father’s demise before her birth...

A man may be called Dada
Because he is odong-piny –
Has remained to be born
When his father had departed –

A man may be called Dada
Because he is Obote –
Gleanings, post-humous...
Deprived, depriving...
Depraved:

both.
THE MASTER TORTURER'S COMPLAINT:

Your Excellency says we should not experiment any more
With breaking bones and creating new shapes of limbs and torso
Moulding freaks with one eye, half teeth, chopped genitals
Nor tune the sons of devils to sing their weird antiphona

Well, Your Excellency, ours, is a profession as any
We try to improve on our potentials, better our performances
And, by all accounts, that is progress and attention to duty
I am sure Your Excellency has not found us wanting in extracting confessions

The Sons of Britain taught us how to deal with enemies of the crown;
The Sons of Israel passed on to us the fruits of their tribulations
The Sons of Hitler gave us the vintage performance,
Even the Small Koreans were not without resources...

As you can see we have a formidable history of professionalism;
And selflessly we do our duty, for the stability of the state:
We always succeed in getting to the bottom of the matter:
True confessions, false, faked, or made-up: are all the same

It is not the poor sons of bitches whose cries reach hell or heaven:
It is their relatives and the populace who fear for them
And who therefore choose to walk the straight and narrow path:

The victims are as good as dead: we have no problem with them...

Come to think of it: I have also had enough: the pitiful cries
The beggings, the curses, the bribes – attempted and turned down, or
otherwise –
I am also ready to call it a day; to retire and learn to embrace my wife
But what do we do with those surrealistic works of art in the galleries?
Of course, unlikely as it might be, perhaps Your Excellency is also fed-up?
I would not mind a rise or change of professions, this arena is too confining!!

'If according to you, the artistries are superlative, and not observable
Then you may abort!'

Thank you. I ask for no more.

(A fisherman caught a Nile perch. Inside it were what looked like human limbs. Some were held together with iron chains and aluminium rods.)