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## Poems

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## Poems

### **Abstract**

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

# 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.)