YORUBA SALUTATIONS

ROBERT CAMPBELL, in his "Pilgrimage to my Motherland," says, "There is not a more affable people found anywhere than the Akus. Not even the French are more scrupulous in their attention to politeness than they. Two persons, even utter strangers, hardly ever pass each other without exchanging salutations; and when known, the greatest attention is paid to the relative social position of each in their salutations. Equals meeting will simply say '*aku*.' The superior usually salutes first, and when the disparity of position is great, the inferior prostrates. The young always prostrate to the aged. Women kneel but never prostrate themselves. Sons, without reference to age or rank, prostrate to their mothers. They never suffer anything to interfere with the observance of these courtesies. There is an appropriate salutation for every occasion. For instance, *akuario*, good morning; *akuale*, good evening; *akuske*, for being industrious; *akabo* or *akuabo*, for returning from a journey; *akatijo*, for long absence; *akujoko*, for sitting or resting; *akudaro*, for standing or walking; *akurajo*, expressive of sympathy in distress; *akuero*, for bearing a burden; *akualejo*, for entertaining a stranger."

Mr. Campbell is here referring to the people of the interior, but the coast folk are no less polite, as will be seen from the undermentioned forms which were given to me by Mr. Beecroft, son of a Yoruba who accompanied the late Consul Beecroft on many of his journeys and who therefore adopted his name. The most common form of salutation in Lagos is *okuabo*, a compound of *o* "you," *ku* "salute," *abo* "shelter." The answer is *O*, or *mo dupe*, "I thank you."

O ku awuro o, or *o or ekaro* for "good morning."

O ku asan o, or *ekasan o* for "good day," i.e., mid-day.

O ku ale or *ekale* for "good evening" up to 8 p.m.

Odi awure o, or *odaro* for "so long" or "until you come back."

Then on entering a house you say :

Okuabo, "Welcome."

O, O, is the answer.

Ekulailai, "I salute you at home."

O, O.

Ekuatijo, "I have not seen you for a long time."

O, O, or then the host repeats *Ekuatijo*.

Ekulailai, "I salute you ever."

Ekulailai.

Ile nko? "How is the house?"

Owa, "It lives."

Awon omode nko? "How are the children?"

Awon wa, "They live," or "are."

Obinrin nko, or *aya re nko?* "How is your wife?"

O wa.

Ara ile gbogbo nko? "How are all the members of your house?"

Awon wa.

The host then says :

Alafia kolo de bi? "Hast thou come in peace?"

Alafia ni mo bi. "Yes, I have come in peace."

E ku ewu, or *ekwewu*. "You are out of danger."

O, O, or *Adupe lowo Olurun*. "Thank God."

While sitting : *Ekiyoko*, "Salute your seat."

O, O.

On departing : *Odigbose*, for *O di igba to ba se*, "Good bye" or "till it becomes time enough" should pass.

On the birth of a child.

To the mother,

Mo iyo fun nyin. "I rejoice with you."

O, O.

E ku ori re ri. "You have a good head."

O, O.

O ku ati Qrun bo. "For coming down from heaven."

O, O.

Ako tabi abo? "Male or female?"

Aboni. "Female."

Ki Qlqrun ke li eti. "May God cut off her ears or may her life be spared."

O, O

Ki Qlqrun ki oka a kun wa. "May God count this as one of us."

All the family then say : *O, O adupe ese o.* "Thank you, you have done well."

You answer : *Ti re ala (iyola).* "Your child will be saved."

At a marriage

To the man and his wife.

Ki Qlqrun se nyin li ore ara nyin. "May God be your friend."

O, O.

Ki O fun nyin li omo anfani. "May He give you a good child."

O, O.

Ki Qlqrun o fun nyin ni suro. "May God give you patience."

O, O.

Ki Qlqrun ma je ki a ri dasi. "May God allow not that you see misfortune."

Adupe.

At a death.

Pele o, O kuiroju. "I salute you, Endurance."

O, O.

O ku agba. "Old age."

O, O.

O ku suro. "Patience."

O, O.

Ma banuje pupo. "Do not be too much grieved."

O, O.

F'okan si Qlqrun. "Put your heart to God."

O, O.

Ki Qlqrun (kio) ko tu o ninu. "May God comfort you."

O, O.

Ki Qlqrun ko de 'le fun oko. "May God give earth to the dead."

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