

Book of Healing

Joseph Odùmósù

Edited and translated by Michael Ọládẹ̀jọ Afọláyan and Helen Tilley

An essential reference on West African healing practices from the early Yorùbá canon

The first book-length study of Yorùbá therapeutics, encompassing thousands of remedies for more than 160 different ailments, *Ìwé Ìwòsàn (Book of Healing)* was originally published in 1910 by Ìjẹ̀bù healer, politician, and public intellectual Joseph Odùmósù. Much of the scholarship on African healing cultures has been reconstructed from unwritten sources and texts produced by missionaries, colonial officials, and anthropologists. Of the small number of firsthand accounts in African languages (beyond Arabic) that have survived in written form, Odùmósù's is the most extensive and encyclopedic.

While the existence of Odùmósù's massive work is well-known in southwestern Nigeria, it has not previously been available in English. Michael Ọládẹ̀jọ Afọláyan and Helen Tilley have translated the volume in its entirety, and here use it as an entrée into greater understandings of Yorùbá medicine, spirituality, and print culture during a time of rapid change under British colonialism and the spread of Christianity.

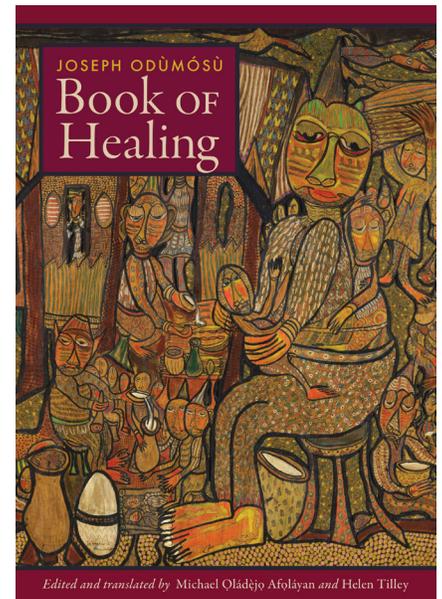
Joseph Odùmósù (1863–1911) was part of a burgeoning cultural and political renaissance in southwestern Nigeria that crystallized in the wake of British conquest. He acquired the first printing press in his home district of Ìjẹ̀bù, launched its first magazine, spearheaded a trade boycott, and presided over a chapter of the Aborigines Protection Society. He was also a healer, exposed throughout his lifetime to different specialist groups and self-identified as an *onìsẹ̀gùn* or master of medicine.

Michael Ọládẹ̀jọ Afọláyan is an expert in systemic text linguistics with a special focus on Yorùbá language and literature. He is the author of *Fate of Our Mothers: The Collected Memories of an African Village Boy* and the English translator of Isaac Oluwole Delano's 1953 novel *Aiyé D'Aiyé Ọyinbó (Welcome to the White Man's World)*. Now retired from Southern Illinois University, he works part-time as an educational consultant.

Helen Tilley is an associate professor of history with courtesy appointments in law and anthropology at Northwestern University. She is the author of the award-winning book *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge* and the editor of several volumes, including *Therapeutic Properties: Global Medical Cultures, Knowledge, and Law*.



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"An outstanding work of scholarship that promotes a corpus of indigenous African knowledge. Odùmósù's book is the first comprehensive compilation of Yorùbá medical diagnoses and recipes. This translation will bring Odùmósù's original text to global attention and make it accessible to a wide range of researchers, students, and readers across different disciplines and walks of life."—**Akinwumi Ogundiran**, author of *The Yorùbá: A New History*

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