

# ÌBà (Homage): A Compulsory Ritualistic Performance for the Yorùbá Oral Artists

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## Abstract

Ìbà (homage or salute to authorities) is a quintessential mandatory ritualistic phenomenon in the traditional programme structure of the Yorùbá oral literature. Existing studies have established its compilation and little of its occurrences in written and oral poetry, prose and other genres of artistic expression but have hardly emphasized its major occurrences, its place and purposes capable of entrenching and maintaining orderliness in contemporary Yorùbá society. This paper investigated its recipients, observation, consequence(s) for jettisoning and reflection on its definite importance as a prominent aspect of the Yorùbá oral literature observed by the ancient oral artists and few contemporary artists in their performances. Eight Yorùbá oral performances imbued with sufficient usage of Ìbà were purposively selected. To strike a balance, four oral performances in texts from the works of Akinwumi Ìsolá (Sàngó Pípe), T.A Ládélé and Dèjò Fáníyì (Èkún Ìyawó), Láwuyì Ògúnńíran (Èsà in Eégun Alaré, prose) and Oludare Olájubù (Èsà) were considered for analysis. The other four include Ìbà in the musical works of Sir Šinà Peters (jujú), King Wásiù Ayíndé (Fújí), Ògúnáre Fóyánmu and Àlàbí Ògúndèpò (Ìjálá). Ìbà is cited for remarks and interpretations from all the aforementioned selected artistic works with a view to ascertaining how and why it is established and utilized to make valid our findings on its importance in homaging. Literal method of translation is adopted to give a direct interpretation of Ìbà excerpts from Yorùbá to English. Based on the analysis and interpretation of Ìbà excerpts in this paper, it was simply revealed that Iba is not a mere “homage” but a traditional mandatory ritual which connotes respect, obeisance, submissiveness and acknowledgement of all supernatural being (dead or alive) before any performance, the absence of which is responsible for social disorder in our contemporary society of today.

**Keywords** – Artists; Ìbà (Homage); Oral Literature; Performance; Ritual; Yorùbá.

## Introduction

Ìbá (homage or salute to authorities) is not just a common phenomenon but also a compulsory ritualistic performance in the traditional programme structure of the Yorubá world. Ìbá is a very prominent aspect of Yorubá oral literature usually observed with utmost spiritual motif by the oral poets before any performance. Unlike what is obtainable in the contemporary Yorubá society today, no traditional oral artist would embark on any artistic performance without appeasing the existing authorities be it seen or unseen in the ancient time. Then, the significance of Ìbá could not have been underestimated by any oral artist as no poet would want to be regarded as a recusant and play with the impending consequences awaiting violation of the act.

Expectedly today, it is obvious that most of the contemporary poets and musicians have almost broken away completely from this impeccable traditional order as little or no attention is devoted to it in their performances. While it is believed that a good number of these artists are either not well tutored or refused to take to tutoring in the traditional way to appreciate the importance of Ìbá; others that are well-grounded and versed arrogantly jettisoned it with self assurance that they are authority in the art; therefore, violation could not spell doom for them. Position of this nature undoubtedly leads to social disorder in today's contemporary society.

By and large, this aspect of the Yorubá oral literature would have gone into extinction if not for the preservative effort of some traditional rulers, poets and few oral artists on ground whose activities and performance are still in-tandem with this aspect of the Yorubá oral literature traditions. Effort to bring back into reckoning the place, importance and purposes of Ìbá (homage) which is capable of entrenching and maintaining orderliness in contemporary Yorubá society is what this paper is all about.

### Ìbá (Homage): A Semantic Enquiry

The semantic variance of the word Ìbá (homage or salutation) in English is incontrovertibly incapable of capturing the true meaning of the subject matter as it is in Yorubá language and literature where its meaning is deeply rooted only in the culture of the people.

Going by its etymology and history, the English 'homage' has its root in 'homo', a Latin expression which connotes 'man'. In medieval times, a king's 'man' by publicly announcing allegiance to the monarch in a formal ceremony. In that formal announcement known as 'homage', the subject kneel and placed his hands between those of his lord, symbolically surrendering himself and putting himself

at the lord's disposal and jurisdiction. As a result of this, a bond is established between the two parties; the vassal's part is to revere and serve his lord while in return, the lord protects the vassal and his family. As time goes on, gradually homage is extended from its ceremonial perspective to the acts of duty and respect done to the lord, and eventually to any respectful act or tribute ([www.Merriam-webster.com](http://www.Merriam-webster.com)).

According to the Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, homage in European society is a solemn acts of ritual by which a person became a vassal of a lord in feudal society. Homage as posited by these editors is essentially an acknowledgement of the two. It involved the vassal surrendering himself to the lord by kneeling and giving his joined hands to the lord, who clasped them in his own, thus accepting the surrender (@2020 Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc/www.encyclopedia.com).

In English language, and as can be seen from our discussion so far, the Oxford Dictionary of Current English (2006) corroborates earlier position that the semantic variance of 'Ìbà` (homage) in English cannot capture its true meaning in Yorubá when it says 'homage' are things said or done as mark of respect or honor shown publicly to someone. Obviously, it is a mark of respect, but for who? May be respect to the king and his vassals or respect from one party to others as established earlier. Or, can we conclude to say it is a respect for the living and dead which is not seen as being mandatory in the contemporary western culture. By and large, Ìbà (homage) is more elaborate and deep in meanings among the Yorubá. It is a mark of respect for the living, the dead, gods, goddesses and the supreme God, the known and unknown, the seen and unseen forces. Homage is equally seen as a mandatory act especially, for the oral artists before performance of any form. Ìbà among the Yorubá is an act of acknowledging the foremost performers or dramaturge before the commencement of any performance. It is a convenient peg on which the significance of any performance is hung. Ìbà (homage) can also be described as a unique way of taking permission from the existing authorities (seen and unseen) before the start of any performance. Indeed, Iba is a necessary a ritual as pouring a libation to the gods, before a feast.

Adélékè (2009) and (2020) pontificates that the exhibition of Ìbà in Yorubá proverbs is the most outstanding form of acknowledgments. He avers that a proverb is often marked by some type of introductory formula like "Yorubá bọ" or "àwọn àgbà bọ" (Yorubá say or the elders say), and a closing formula like "tótó se bí ọwe" or "k'ọwe maa jé tẹyin àgbà" (Regards since it is typically a proverbs" or 'may the proverb be credited to you elders") all of which are tantamount to homage. He maintained that it is not possible for anyone to utter a proverb without paying homage to the elders. The elders in his context of discussion are taken to be the metaphor of previous scholars. In other words, each time a scholar is cited

or acknowledged in any academic work, *Ìbà* is equally observed.

Samuel and Adékọlá (2018) corroborate the importance of homage, especially to elders when presenting the views of one of the experts on *Àgídìgbò* music who maintained that expression of deep reference to elders is not always negotiable in order to secure their approval and attract favorable condition for their performance because they are the main determinants of the success of such performance.

Ìṣolá (1976) submits that *Ìbà* is the Yorubá usual way of expressing acknowledgement and admission of inferiority before super human and supernatural being. As an important aspect of oral literature, the oral artists are always conversant with the implication of disregarding this vital ritual before performance, therefore any coolheaded oral artist will want to acknowledge and recognize the class of super ordinate in order to appropriate their power and forestall antagonism.

Orímóògùnǵé (2004) also agreed with the spirituality attachment of *Ìbà* (homage) in Yorubá oral literature which the subject matter of this paper propagates by re affirming that homage is an example of thaumaturgical expression. To him, *Ìbà* (homage), is an expression that can make the desire of the raconteur happen immediately and in accordance with the Yorubá belief.

### **Method of Data Collection**

It has been established earlier that this paper is an attempt to investigate and identify the recipients of *Ìbà*, reason for its observation, consequences after observation or jettisoning as well as reflecting on the definite importance of *Ìbà* as a prominent aspect of the Yorubá oral literature compulsorily observed by the ancient oral artists and few of the contemporary ones in their performances. In attempt to execute all these, eight (8) Yorubá oral literature/performances were purposively selected for having sufficient usage of *Ìbà*. In order to strike a balance, four are oral performances in texts from the works of Akinwumi Ìṣolá (*Ṣàngó Pipè*), T.A Ládélé and Dẹ̀jọ Fáníyí (*Èkún Ìyàwó*), Láwuyí Ògúnníran (*Èsà* in *Eégun Alaré prose*) and Oludare Olajubu (*Akọjopọ Iwí Egungun*). The other four include *Ìbà* in the musical works of Sir *Ṣinà Peters* (*jùjú*), king *Wàsù Àyíndé* (*Fùjì*), *Ògúndàrè Fóyánmu* (*Ìjálá*) and *Alàbí Ògúndépo* (*Ìjálá*) respectively. By and large, *Ìbà* (homage) is cited for remarks and interpretations from all the selected artistic works with a view to ascertaining how and why it is established and utilized to make valid our findings on its importance. Subsequently, literal method of translation is adopted to give direct interpretation of *Ìbà* excerpts from Yorubá to English.

### **Data Analysis**

It should be reiterated here again that literal method of translation is adopted to give direct interpretation of Ìbà (homage) excerpts from Yorùbá to English. In doing this, certain salient questions are raised in form of sub-headings under which given responses are appropriately interpreted. The questions are:

A. How Does the Oral Poet pay Homage?

In the traditional programme structure of the Yorùbá oral literature, oral artists or poets pay homage to virtually everything that comes to their memories within the premise of the Yorùbá worldview. Homage as a form of acknowledgment, varies from artist to artist. It is important to note that oral artist pays certain homage: first, they acknowledge Olódumare (God) as the creator of heaven and earth; they acknowledge Èṣù as the spirit that brings fortune and misfortune, Ògún as god of Iron, Sàngó as god of thunder and lightning, Òrúnmilá as compendium of knowledge, Àyàn Àgalú as the spirit of drum, Ológbòjò as the spirit of Egúngún (masquerade); then, address the traditional rulers as the intermediary between God and their subjects. Homage is also paid to the witches and wizards. The foremost dramaturge and the founder of any professional guild, elders, children, men and women respectively. Some human parts such as Orí (head), Qwó (hand), Èṣè (leg) male and female genitals have a place in Iba (homage) and so, they are not left out. In essence, every power and principality is addressed and acknowledged. Examples of this abound in Qlájubù (1972) where about four of the aforementioned authorities are addressed and Qògúníran (1972) who acknowledged virtually all the authorities within the confine of the Yorùbá worldview:

Ìbà ó o ò o !

Ìbà ni n ó máa fòní jú

Qlójò òní ma yá a jubà lódò rẹ,

Kí n tó m'áwo se

Ìbà o o o!

Ìbà eni tó dá kí n tó dá

Ìbà eni tó tẹ kí n tó tẹ lójè

Ìbà iyá à mi Qsòròngà, Olókíkí òru

Ìbà afínjú àdàbà tí n je láàrin àṣá

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Afínjú eyẹ tíí je ní gbangba oko

Ìbà ọmọ a-fòru-rìn

(Olájubù, 1972:8)

Homage!

I will use the whole of today for homage,

I will quickly acknowledge the owner of today,

Before embarking on my performance

Homage!

Homage to my predecessors

Homage to the first dramaturge before me

Homage to my mother witches, praise name Ọ̀sòròngà

Homage to the fashionable dove that eats in the midst of eagle

The elegant bird that eats in the open field

The offspring of the one who walks in the dead of the night

Homage in the above excerpt is addressed to three prominent authorities before the actual performance. The first is God the owner of today' (Ọ̀lójó ọ̀nì), the poets' predecessors in the act (ẹ̀nì tó dá kí n tó dá/ẹ̀nì tó tẹ kí n tó tẹ lójẹ) and the third one is the witches (iyá à mi Ọ̀sòròngà). It is also important to note that the poet emphasized much on the importance of Ìbà (homage) before performance when he says:

Ìbà ni n ó máa fòní jú

Ọ̀lójó ọ̀nì ma yá a júbà lódò rẹ

Kí n tó máwo se

I will use the whole of today for homage

I will quickly acknowledge the owner of today

Before embarking on the performance

The more spectacular and elaborate example is that of Ọ̀gúnníran (1972) where

Ọ̀jẹ̀ Lárinnàkà (an iwí egúngún artist) addressed all the existing authorities before his performance thus:

Ọ̀ba k'ẹ̀pẹ́ o, mó júbà k'íbà mi sẹ  
Ìbà ni n ó kó jú ná, aré mi dẹ̀yìn  
Mo júbà baba à mi  
Ọ̀jẹ̀ Lárinnàkà, ọ̀kọ̀ Ìyádùn-ún-ní  
Òun leégún alaré, a-bi-kókó-létí-aṣo  
Ọ̀jẹ̀ Lárinnàkà tí gbé kowèè jóògùn ilàya ...  
Mo júbà pètẹ́ ọ̀wọ̀  
Mo júbà pètẹ́ eṣè  
Mo júbà àtẹ̀lẹ̀sẹ́ tí kò hunrun tó fi dé gbogbọ̀lo itan  
Ará iwájú mo túúbá  
Jànmó-òn mo bẹ̀bẹ́ è̀yìn  
Mo bẹ̀bẹ́ è̀yin kẹ̀ye má sẹ́ y'òwú ù mi je  
Oṣó ilé mo ríba orin-in mi  
Ìbà è̀yin iyá à mi Ọ̀sòròngà  
A-pa-ni-má-wágún, olókíkí òru,  
A t'apá j'orí, a t'èdò jòkàn,  
A t'ídí jòrónro  
Eye a b'apá win-in-in  
Eye a b'ẹ̀sẹ́ win-in-in  
Abirín àṣà lẹ̀sẹ́ mejèèjì  
Ọ̀gogo níyèé, a jí da gòròò ara  
Afínjú eye tí je láàrin òru  
Mo júbà Èṣù Láàlú ọ̀kúnrin ọ̀nà  
Èṣù Láàlú aṣòròkòlẹ́, a-bàásó l'orí

Àlámúlamú bàtà

Ó fẹ̀ bàtà kù jọ́ bámúbámú

Ò sá' mọ́ lógbẹ́, gún' mọ́ lóbe

Èsù Lààlú mo júbà o!

Mo júbà, j'óde òní ó ye mí.

(Eégún Alaré; 39)

May you live long your highness, here is my salutation, may it be acceptable.

I will first render salutation before my performance.

Ọjẹ̀ Lárinnàkà, the husband of Ìyádùn-ún-ni

The masque dramaturge that has knots at the edge of his gown

Ọjẹ̀ Lárinnàkà that burns kowèè for the courage medicine...

I salute the surface of the palm

I acknowledge the sole of the foot

I salute the sole of the foot which does not grow hair up to the lap.

The foremost people I bowed

The congregation I plead for previous misdeeds

I pleaded for my past misdeeds so that, bird will not eat up my wool

I recognised the wizards in my performance

I acknowledged the witches in my show

Tribute to the witches, praise name Ọ̀sòròngà

The night famous killer that does not look for the vulture

He who devours the head through the arms

He who devours human's heart through the liver

The one who swallows the gallbladder through the intestine.

The bird with mysterious fingers

One that walks gracefully with its two legs  
Horned feathers that work sluggishly with the whole body  
A clean bird that flies in the night  
I acknowledge Èsù Láàlú, the road master  
Èsù Láàlú, the one with horn on his head  
The one who detests shoes  
One who dances masterfully without shoe  
One who stabs and inflicts injury  
Èsù Láàlú, here is my pledge  
I salute, let it be well with me today.

In the excerpt above, the artist comprehensively acknowledged virtually all the existing powers and principalities identifiable in the Yoruba world view. These include Oba (king), Baba (his late father), Pété Ọwó (surface of the palm), Pètè Esè (sole of the foot), Ará Iwájú (the foremost people), Jànmó-òn (Congregation), Oşó (wizard), Àjé (witches) and Èsù respectively. (All these are believed to have certain spiritual attachment to the fortune and misfortune of every Yorubá person). The second line of the piece emphasizes the significance of Ìbà (homage) and why it is seen as being mandatory for the oral artist. The sentence 'Ìbà ni n ó kó jú, eré mi dọ̀la' (I will pay homage first, my performance is tomorrow) which is part of the performance and which must come first portrays that ìbà is spiritually compulsory and more important than the real performance. Sometimes, ìbà (homage), is so important that it could be used to offer respect to male and female in an entertaining manner as alluded to in Adéduntán (2009) where a hunter acknowledged male and female using their genitals thus:

Ìbà okó tó dorikodò tí ò ro  
Ìbà iyámòpó tó dorikodò tí ò sẹ̀jẹ̀  
Má jẹ́ ó sù mi í se o  
Má jẹ́ n sịse níbè o  
Má jatupà Ògún ó tidi jò mọ n lọ́.

Homage to the penis that drops and yet does not drip

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Homage to the virginal that opens downward and yet does not bleed

Do not let me tire

Do not let me fail

Save me from the accidental burst of Ògún's lamp

The above is synecdochically presented to pay homage to male and female present at the performance as well as entertaining the audience using both male and female reproductive organs. Synecdoche is a literary device where a part is substituted for a whole. The poet mentioned the male reproductive organ (okó) directly while he presented that of the female metaphorically to show the respect African men always given to women. Here, the oral artist deliberately employed the use of male and female reproductive organs (a part) in substitution for male and female (whole) basically for stylistic effect.

B. Why do the Yorubá oral poets pay homage?

According to Oḷájubù (1972), the constant appearance of Ìbà (salute to authorities) in Yorubá literature underscores a belief that some terrible circumstantial catastrophe will happen to the poet or the artist and his show if necessary pacificatory act is not carried out. In view of this, any artist who does not want to witness calamitous scenario in his performance must first acknowledge Olódumàrè (God) and the lineage from which he received his tutelage; this should be followed by tribute to both the seen and unseen forces like gods, ancestors and other spirits. The moment this is fulfilled, the artist is free to perform. Ìbà (homage) is equally paid to seek the support or the backing of existing authorities before performance. The implication of this is that both the seen and unseen spirits are solidly behind the artist who recognized them and that no evil will befall him.

It has been established earlier that homage must come before the real performance and not after the show. This underscores why it is a mandatory ritual. However, a poet or an artist may decide to be audacious and disregard this lofty traditional programme structure if he has capacity to shoulder the consequence. Láwuyì Ògúniran (1972) presents instance of an iconoclastic Iwì or Esa Egungun artist who broke away completely from this traditional structure by ignoring the presence of his senior colleagues in his performance. In the magical aspect of his performance, he was transformed to a very big crocodile but unfortunately for him he could not reverse to his former self as human being due to an act which his detractors see as an act of disrespect for the constituted traditional authorities-in-council. After a while, Òjélàdè, the crocodile instructed one of his boys in Iwì Egúngún chant thus:

Òjékúnlé ò, s'ó n rí nnkan!

Ayé gbìyànjú, wòn yí mi láwò padà kíakíá  
Ayé, ayé yíi ò se!  
Ayé níi gún'yán eéru  
Ayé níi rokà eèpè  
Báyé sèniyàn tán  
Wòn á tèsè mọ'rìn kíakíá  
Ayé ló s' Agbe tó daláró igbó o  
Ayé s' Àlùkò, tó d' olósun egàn  
Ayé ò ní se yín, e ò ni sise,  
Ayé ló se mí tí mo d'Èrè láàkókó ojo  
Bí ò bá sí isu, kí la ó máa pè ní'yán?  
Bí ò bá sí èlùbó, kí la ó pè lámalà?  
Bí ò bá sí àgbàdo kí la á pè léko yangan?  
Opélopé orí babá mi, un náà ló yo mi  
Nígba tí mo d'Èrè láàkókó ojo  
Ìgbà tó tún d'elèèkeji yíi nkó?  
Kin ní òhún tún ti yíwó o, ará ilú ù mi!  
Òjékunlé, wá sùré relé  
O ó bá mi délé babá mi  
Àdó kan n bẹ l'ájà a-mi-lo-lo-lo  
Ìgbà tó o bá mú u dé  
Gbogbo rẹ yóò sì s'enu're  
Ará àlògbó, omo ekun ní'Bá  
Ayé binú kán-un, wòn so kán-un s'ómi  
Ayé binú iyò, wòn po'yò m'èpè

Ayé bínú Ọ̀jẹ̀lànàdẹ̀,

Wón yí i láwò padà kíákíá.

Ọ̀jẹ̀kúnlé, can you see something?

The World has quickly transformed my skin

People of the World are very wicked

The World pound yam of ashes

The World prepares sand filled Àmàlà

When the World destroys a person

They quickly run away from the scene

The World is behind Agbe's turning to an indigo

coloured one of the forest

The same World transformed Aluko to a cam wood

coloured one of the wilderness

May the World not destroy you,

May you never misbehave

The World is the cause of my turning to a boa

constrictor at the first instance

Without yam, would there have been pounded yam?

Without yam flour, would there have been àmàlà?

Without the maize, is it possible to have a pap?

Thanks to my father's predestined

Which eventually saved me

On the day I was first transformed to a boa constrictor

And what about this second time?

The thing has gone out of hand again my people?

Ọ̀jẹ̀kúnlé, quickly dash home

Go to my father's house

There is a certain dangling charm at the ceiling

When you bring it

All shall be well

An Àlògbó man, the cub of a tiger from the den

The world scorn the potash and threw it into the water

They despise the salt and was mixed with the sand

The world became annoyed with Ọ̀jẹ̀lárinnàkà

And quickly transform his skin.

The above explained one of the consequences of being so audacious to the extent of jettisoning the power that be on the part of Ọ̀jẹ̀ládé, but it rained heavily while he was still expecting Ọ̀jẹ̀kúnlé to bring the charm and this eventually rendered the charm impotent. Incidentally, Ọ̀jẹ̀ládé the crocodile was flooded into a nearby refuse ground where a woman was innocently and co-incidentally threw some maize chaff on the crocodile which eventually transformed Ọ̀jẹ̀ládé to his real human form. This eventually influenced Ọ̀jẹ̀ládé's religious adherence to this important aspect of Yoruba traditional programme structure.

### C. The importance of Ìbà (Homage) among the Yorùbá

Here, data relevant to this sub-heading is presented and analysed. In Yorùbá society, a poet or an artist whose performance is well embedded with Ìbà (Homage) always receive full supports and backing of his audience. This establishes the Yoruba adage that says; “Bí ekòlò bá júbà ilẹ̀, ilẹ̀ á lanu fún un” (when the earth-worm salutes the earth, the earth opens for it). Ọ̀gúndáre Fọ́yánmu and Àlábí Ọ̀gúndépò established this in one of their Ìjálá performances thus:

Àkánó Ọ̀ládùn-un-ní

Tí n bá sùn, tí n bá jí

N ó máa júbà àwọn baba re tó kókó joba

Nítorí àdàse níí hun ni ìbà kíí hùn ‘yàn

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Orí olóyè àkókó yóò maa sọ tíkeyìn dedede  
Ogunlọlá lorúkọ Sọ̀un àkókó ñjé  
Ajagúngbádé omọ Onídugbe  
(Ògúndáre Fọ́yánmu, Olódumàrè, 168, Vol.9)  
Àkàno Ọládùn-ún-ní  
Whenever I sleep or wake up  
I will always acknowledge your predecessors  
who previously ruled  
Because disrespect courts disaster  
Homage paying never does that  
The spirits of the previous chief protects his successor  
Ogunlọlá the first Sọ̀un that reigns  
Ajagungbádé, the offspring of Onídugbe

From the above, in attempt to show importance of Iba (Homage), the artist, Ògúndáre Fọ́yánmu's intention is geared towards appeasing the identified class of super ordinate kings who ruled before the present Sọ̀un of Ògbómòsọ́ in order to appropriate their powers and forestall antagonism; not just for the king but his own performance as well as seeking their supports for the successful tenure of the incumbent hence, the expression.

Orí olóyè àkókó  
Yóò maa sọ tíkeyìn dede  
The spirits of the previous chiefs  
Protect his successor

Àlàbí Ògúndépò is unique and slightly different from the above when he says:

Ìbà o o o!  
Ọlójọ̀ oní mo jùbà k'íba mi kó maa sẹ  
Ìbà lówọ̀ Olódumàrè a gb'òtún

Atení lèbélébé sagbeji ara  
Mo júbà k'íbà mi kó maa se  
Ìbà apété owó  
Ìbà pèlèmbè esè  
Ìbà apétélerísè tí ò hunrun tó fi dé pọọlo itan  
Ọlójó òní mo júbà k'íbà mi kó maa se  
Ìbà alájà t'oun t'ogbóró  
Ìbà elésin t'oun t'èèkàn lésè  
...bí labalábá bá jáko a sù júbà eye oko  
Àgbè jáko a sù júbà kuèkuè  
Àgbè tó jáko tí ò júbà kuèkuè  
Ọkó a sá won lójúgun  
Ọlójó òní mo júbà k'íbà mi kó maa se.  
(Àlàbí Ògúndépò performs ijálá, part 1- you tube; 27 Jul. 2015)

Homage o o o!

The owner of today I pay homage

Let my homage be acknowledged

Homage to Olódumarè who claims the right path

The one who flatly spread the mat to cover his entire body

I pay homage let my homage be acknowledged

Homage to the palm of the hand

Homage to the sole of the foot

Homage to the sole of the foot which does not grow hair up to the lap

The owner of today I salute let my homage be acknowledged

Homage to the owner of dog and its chain

Homage to the owner of horse and its chain

When butterfly enters farm it acknowledges the birds in the forest

When farmer enters farm he acknowledges kuèkuè

The farmer who enters farm without paying homage to kuèkuè  
gets himself hit on the shin by the hoe.

Again, the above excerpt emphasizes the importance of paying homage to God Almighty, the creator of all things including parts of the human body which are equally significant for aiding any performance. According to the poet; homage paying is so significant to the extent that failure to observe it will spell doom for whoever that does not take it serious hence “the farmer who enters the farm without paying homage to kuèkuè, gets himself injured on the shin by his hoe”. It should be stressed here that ‘kuèkuè’ is a phonaesthetic coinage symbolising the sound made whenever a farmer is weeding grass or making ridges on the farm. It is believed to be more superior than the farmer himself because it has always been an existing sound in the farm since time immemorial and so it should be acknowledged.

In Sàngó pípe (Sàngó’s chant), Ìbà (homage), which is a form of acknowledgement is also rendered to plead for needs of the artist before performance. When pleading, the artist keeps mentioning the word wárí or wádè (bowing of hand), an inclination of body in greetings and respect. The excerpt below from Ìṣòlá (1976) encapsulates this important aspect of Ìbà thus:

E è wa ráyé  
Balógun a dè lohùn panije  
Alábàálàṣe!  
Ọmọ dídún niṣé eye  
Oò jíire?  
Ìyàwó àṣèsègbé, bó jí a kúnlè a gbàtẹwó olá  
Mo f’ówó ní  
Mo wá à wárí  
Mo f’órò ó ní

Mo wá à wádè  
Ire gbogbo tí n ó ní  
Ó n be lódò Sàngó tí í jéégún  
Olóomi!  
A-dáni-má-dáni-pa  
Òjògán bojú òrun wò

Can you see the World?  
The subtle voice warlord that kills  
One whose suggestion comes to pass  
Child-like cry is the business of the birds  
Did you wake up well?  
A new bird, having woke up  
Knelt down to be pampered  
I wish to be prosper  
I bowed my head wárí  
I wish to be wealthy  
I paid homage wádè  
All the blessings that I desired  
Are within the reach of Sàngó the masquerade  
My god!  
One that kills halfway  
He who manifests himself through the sky.

In the above quote the expressions ‘wárí’ (bowing of head) and ‘wádè’ (total submission of body in greetings) stand for Ìbà (homage) and the plea for both pros-

perity and wealth from Sàngó respectively. Expressions of this nature, wárí and wádè are semantically parallel to the word Ìbà (homage), so also any word of respect uttered during performance. However, the story is not in any way different in Èkún Ìyàwó (Bridal chant), in terms of plea for marital success where the bride, on the eve of her wedding day pays homage to Èsù. She puts her left leg on Èsù and rendered Ìbà (homage) in Èkún Ìyàwó (Bridal chant) thus:

Ìbà Èsù Láàlú Láaróyè Lárògo

Ebora tí í jé Látòopa

Ilé ọkọ tí n ré yìí

Jé ó sanmí s'ówó

Jé ó sanmí s'ómo

Bàbá ọkọ tí n ó bàá

K'óun má s'elénìní ì mi

Orogún tí n ó bàá

K'óun má s'elénìní ì mi

I acknowledge Èsù Láàlú Láaróyè Lárògo

The spirit whose name is Látòopa

As I get into the wedlock

May it brings riches

May it brings forth children

My father-in-law there

May he never be my detractor

My mother-in-law there

May she not be my antagonist

My co-wife there

May she not be my enemy

The above homage is used strictly for prayer of success, prosperity, child bearing and love from every member of her husband's family in her matrimonial home. The plea of this nature to Èsù is imperative because Èsù is seen as god of fortune and misfortunes.

D. The Nature of Ìbà (homage) in Yorubá Contemporary Society

This aspect discusses data collected from the few contemporary artists who always embrace and observe homage in their performances. It is obvious from the works of many contemporary Yorubá poets and musicians that Ìbà (homage) is not given any priority in their performances, some artists do not even know anything about homage talk-less of observing it. And those who are knowledgeable on Ìbà always audaciously jettisoned it. In short, the issue of Ìbà (homage) being mandatory does not have any meaning to most of these contemporary artists. In spite of the fact that almost all the Yorubá contemporary poets and musicians have broken away completely from this lofty aspect of the Yorubá traditional programme structure, there are some who adhered strictly to this act of propitiating the existing authorities (seen and unseen) before their performance. Prominent among them is Sínà Peters, an accomplished Nigerian Juju musician who in his 1993 album titled 'President' admitted that there is seniority in music and acknowledged foremost musicians of different genre of music thus:

... gbogbo oba onílù pátápátá

Mo júbà yín o

Èyin oba Jùjú pátápátá

Mo júbà yín o jàrè

Gbogbo oba Fújí pátápátá

Ìbà ni mo se

Mo júbà yín o

(President; 1993)

... all the kings of music I salute

All the kings of Jùjú I acknowledge you also

I equally pay homage to all the kings of Fújí music

---

I salute you all

Even as many as the contemporary Fuji musicians, some of them still keep to this traditional programme structure. Among them is King Saheed Osupa who is never indifferent to the issue of paying homage to his predecessors as recorded in his 2013 album titled Endorsement:

Lead: ... wọn ní k'ílẹ̀ ó sè'ba kò fẹ̀ sè'ba  
táyé fi téní lé e 2x

Chorus: E sè'ba àgbààgbà ká yé máa sàfojúdi  
E sè'ba àgbààgbà

Lead: Njé k'ení náà tún sè'ba kò fẹ̀ sè'ba  
Àga di'hun tán'n gbé lé e 2x

Chorus: E sè'ba àgbààgbà ká yé máa sàfojúdi  
E sè'ba àgbààgbà

Lead: Bòmòdé ò tẹ̀rìba f'ágbà o  
Kò lè se'un t'ágbà n se  
Bó kè lè se é mo fẹ̀ kẹ̀ mò  
Kò lè lẹ̀yìn tó máa dáa  
Sé b'áwọn kan ti kọ̀ kọ̀rin síwájú o  
Kó tó di pé a ti è dáyé?  
Ìbà àwọn tó ti kọ̀ kọ̀rin síwájú  
Kó tó di pé a ti è dáyé  
Se b'áwọn kan ti n kọ̀rin  
Kó tó di pé a m'òrin níṣé  
Ìbà àwọn tó n kọ̀rin  
Kó tó di pé a m'òrin níṣé

(Endorsement; 2013)



literature. Homage, as revealed in this paper becomes a ritual because of the belief of the Yorùbá people to address and acknowledge every power and principalities in everything they do. Iba (homage), as shown in this paper is also made mandatory for artists in every performance in order to get soft landing from the existing powers and principalities; that is why it always come first before the real performance. The spiritual importance of Iba to all the powers that be as revealed in the paper is tied to the fortune and misfortune of every Yoruba person.

It can also be deduced that Ìbà` (homage) is used not only for acknowledgement but also entertainment especially, when it is synecdochically presented to salute male and female using their reproductive organs. This is done basically to achieve stylistic effect.

The paper underscored a belief that terrible circumstantial catastrophe can happen to any iconoclast who audaciously ignored this necessary pacificatory and propitiating act in his performance. This is very instructive to those who may decide to be audacious and disregard this lofty traditional programme structure in their respective performances.

It can also be deduced that, this paper emphasised seeking of permission from the existing authorities both seen and unseen, prayer of success, prosperity, spiritual and financial favour before, during and after each performance.

This paper thus established the declining nature of Ìbà` (homage) among contemporary artists and musicians who hardly pay attention as a result of their lack of knowledge about it and act of deliberate jettisoning on the part of those who have knowledge on it. Only few among the contemporary artists expressed and employed Iba in their performances.

Finally, in line with Adeduntan (2009), Samuel and Adekola (2018), it can be deduced that Iba (homage) reflects and emphasizes much on the gerontocentric structure of the immediate community in which Yoruba people operates. This is obvious because age and professional seniority are given much priority in such a way that a drummer measures his own capacity and formidability by the power and strength of the master-drummer (Áyàn Ágalú) whom he pays homage. Homage to such a master drummer is an extra composition to pontificate the drummer's rich pedigree.

## **Conclusion**

It has been established in this study that Ìbà` is indeed a quintessential mandatory ritualistic phenomenon in the traditional programme structure of the Yorùbá oral literature in which its expression in performance attracts divine favour and non expression brings calamity. Ìbà` (homage) as emphasized in this paper is the

Yorùbá expression of acknowledgement or admission of inferiority before powerful human and supernatural forces during performance. It is rendered to appease the identified group of super ordinate in order to appropriate their power or forestall antagonism.

Ìbà should not be perceived as an act meant for the musicians and oral artists alone. It should be seen as the affair of all and sundry, and should rather be strictly adhered to by every member of our contemporary society. Today, people do not respect each other talk-less of giving respect to the elders and by extension those that are due respect including the constituted authorities. This could have been the reason for the socio-economic and political crisis everywhere. By and large, for normalcy and sanity to be restored, the commoner should see himself as a commoner, king as king, chief as chief and prince as a prince. A chief must not behave like a king while respect should be given to those due, whatever and wherever.

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