

ÌBÀ (HOMAGE): A Compulsory Ritualistic Performance for the YORÙBÁ Oral Artists

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Abstract

Ìbà (homage) is a quintessential mandatory ritualistic phenomenon in the traditional programme structure of Yorùbá oral literature. Existing studies have established its compilation and its infrequent occurrences in written and oral poetry, prose and other genres. Most of these studies have hardly emphasized its major occurrences, or its place and purposes, which are capable of entrenching and maintaining orderliness in contemporary Yorùbá society. This paper investigates recipients, consequence(s) of jettisoning, and reflection on its definite importance as a prominent aspect of the Yorùbá oral literature observed by the ancient oral artists and a few contemporary artists. Eight Yorùbá oral performances imbued with sufficient usage of Ìbà have been purposely selected. To strike a balance, four oral performances in texts from the works of Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá (Şàngó Pípè), T.A Ládélé and Dèjò Fáníyì (Èkún Ìyàwó), Láwuyì Ògúnníran (Èsà in Eégún Alaré, prose) and Olúdàre Olájubù (Èsà) are analyzed. The other four include Ìbà in the musical works of Sínà Peters (Jùjú), King Wàsù Ayìndé (Fújì), Ògúnàre Fóyánmu and Àlàbí Ògúndépò (Ìjálá). Ìbà is cited for remarks and interpretations from all the aforementioned 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. The literal method of translation has been adopted to give a direct interpretation of Ìbà contents from Yorùbá to English. Based on the analysis and interpretation of Ìbà in this paper, it is simply revealed that Ìbà is not a mere “homage” but a traditional mandatory ritual, which connotes respect, obeisance, submissiveness, reverence and acknowledgement of all supernatural being (dead or alive). It can be concluded that the absence of all these are responsible for social disorder in our contemporary society.

Keywords: *Ìbà (Homage), Yorùbá, oral literature, artists, ritual, performance.*

Ìbà (homage, reverence or salute to authorities) is not just a common phenomenon, but a compulsory ritualistic performance in the traditional programme structure of the Yorùbá people. Ìbà is a significant aspect of the Yorùbá oral literature usually observed with utmost spiritual motifs by the oral poets before any performance. Unlike what is obtainable in the contemporary Yoruba society of today, no traditional oral artist would embark on any artistic performance about the past without appeasing the existing authorities, whether seen or unseen. Then, the significance of Ìbà 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 (Olájubù 1975: 886-889).

According to Abímólá (1975: 877-911), Ìṣòlá (1976: 80-103), and Àlàbá (1985: 83-86), ìbà is a verbal reverence to superior authorities and beings. In this paper, ìbà is regarded as fundamental to the Yorùbá traditional beliefs and spirituality. It is a way of making superior powers

or specific beneficiaries feel elated, and thus, a way of urging such powers to willingly surrender whatever is required of them or accede to any request that is made of them. Among the Yorùbá, it is believed that the pioneers in any field of human endeavour should be respected by those who come after them as a prerequisite or condition to paving the way for greatness. Ìbà, the Yorùbá indigenous homage is a verbal art that gives the chanter and the society at large abundant confidence that whatever they embark on will be fruitful, prosperous and rewarding. Hence the proverbial saying among the Yoruba "àdàṣe ní hun ni, ìbà kì Í hun èniyàn" (Orímóògùnjé 2016: 2).

The attachment of homage to religious belief is equally corroborated by Johnson-Bashua who is of the view that homage is equivalent to worship because it is an expression of reverence and respect paid to a superior. According to her, homage is one of the basic religious acts that define piety in the Yorùbá religion and culture, the recognition and acknowledgement of the Supreme Being, divinities and ancestors, as well as people's connection with them (Johnson-Bashua 2017). It can also be said that the Yorùbá are regarded as rich in morality and spirituality derived from religion. This means that for anybody to comprehend the traditional values of the people, they must understand their religious background in the context of Yorùbá worldview and culture. In spite of their present affiliations to Christianity and Islamic faiths, the Yorùbá are tenaciously adhere to the heritage of their traditional religious beliefs. This invariably plays a vital role in the sustainability and revitalization of ìbà in the performances of the few oral artists of today who refuse to break away from the old order. Homage is not just a part of the religion but the very core of it; it represents the commonest act of worship and an important part of the spiritual tradition of paying profound respect to the supernatural.

As expected today, it is obvious that most contemporary poets and musicians have almost broken away completely from this impeccable traditional order, as little or no attention is paid to it any longer in their performances. 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 Ìbà. Unfortunately, even other artists who are well-grounded and versed in Yoruba traditional beliefs are not always serious about its observation as ìbà is arrogantly jettisoned in their performances with assurance that violation cannot not spell doom for them. A position of this nature undoubtedly leads to social disorder in today's contemporary society.

By and large, this aspect of the Yorùbá oral literature would have gone extinct if not for the preservation efforts of some traditional rulers, poets and few oral artists on ground whose activities and performances always exhibit strict adherence to observation of Ìbà. Efforts to bring back into reckoning the place, importance and purposes of Ìbà (homage/reverence) which is capable of entrenching and maintaining orderliness in contemporary Yorùbá society are what necessitates this paper.

All the various tribes of the Yorùbá nation trace their origin from a leader called Odùduwà and the city of Ilé-Ifè, in today's south-western Nigeria. Ilé-Ifè is fabled as the spot where God created man, white or black. The seven principal tribes that sprang from Odùduwà's seven grandchildren are the Òyó, the Benin, the Òwu, the Kétu, the Sábé and the Pópó. The others are the offshoots of one or the other of these seven tribes. Yorùbá are the main ethnic group in Èkìtì, Lagos, Ògùn, Òndó, Òṣun, Òyó State and some parts of Kwara, Kogí and Èdó State in Nigeria. They equally spread to other African countries such as Egypt, Ghana, Togo, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast and Liberia. As far back as 15th to the 19th Century, Yorùbá people migrated

to countries like Cuba, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago and Saint Lucia (Akinlabí and Adéníyì 2017). Yorùbá as a language belongs to the Sudanic family of languages, the vocabulary of which is built up largely of monosyllabic words, and of words which can be broken into their monosyllabic elements. This places it in the same group of isolating languages as Chinese and makes it of necessity a tonal language. In spite of their present association with Christianity and Islamic faith, the belief and organisational structure of their religious system remain solid and intact. Yorùbá people believed in Olódùmarè or Ọlórún as the Supreme Being whose supremacy is absolute. Olódùmarè is acknowledged by all divinities as unique and paramount. Yorùbá cosmology consists of Supreme Being, several divinities known as Ọrìṣà, and group of spirits, ancestral forces and other supernatural agencies (Faniyi 1975). The semantic variance of the word Ìbà (homage, salutation or reverence) in English is incontrovertibly incapable of offering the accurate meaning of the subject matter as it is in Yorùbá language and literature where its meaning is deeply rooted only in the culture of the people (Johnson-Bashua 2017: 52-61).

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 kneels and puts 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 passed, 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 (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2020). According to the Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, homage in European society is a solemn act 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 (ibid.).

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 Yorùbá by saying ‘that, homage are things said or done as mark of respect or honour shown publicly to someone. Obviously, it is a mark of respect, but for who? It 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 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 deeper in meanings among the Yorùbá. 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. Ìbà, among the Yorùbá 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.

In a 2020 Inaugural lecture, Adélékè pontificates that the exhibition of Ìbà in Yorùbá proverbs is the most outstanding form of acknowledgments. He avers that:

a proverb is often marked by some type of introductory formula like “Yorùbá bọ” or “àwọn àgbà bọ” (Yorùbá say or the elders say), and a closing formula like “tótó ẹ bí ọwe” or “k’ówe máa 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.

(Adélékè 2020: n.p.)

He maintained that it is not possible for anyone to utter a proverb without paying homage to the elders. The elders in this context are taken to be the metaphor of previous scholars. In other words, each time a scholar is cited or acknowledged in any academic work, it is assumed that ìbà is observed.

The importance of Iba (homage) to elders is equally corroborated in Agidigbo music where it is made clear that an expression of deep reference to elders is not always negotiable in order to secure their approval and attract favourable condition for their performance because they are the main determinants of the success of such performance (Samuel and Adékólá 2018: n.p.). It has also been submitted that Ìbà is the Yorùbá usual way of expressing acknowledgement and admission of inferiority before superhuman and supernatural being (Ìṣòlá 1976: n.p.). As an important aspect of oral literature, the oral artists are always conversant with the implication of disregarding this vital ritual before performance. As a result of this, any coolheaded oral artist will want to acknowledge and recognize the class of super ordinate in order to appropriate their power and forestall antagonism.

In his 2004 paper, Orímóògùnjé is also in agreement with the spirituality attachment of Ìbà (homage), in Yorùbá oral literature which the subject matter of this paper emphasises. He maintains that “homage (iba) is an example of thaumaturgical expression, a unique expression that is capable of making the desire of the raconteur happen immediately and in accordance with the Yorùbá belief” (Orímóògùnjé 2004: n.p.).

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. In attempt to execute all these, eight Yorùbá 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 Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá (Ṣàngó Pípè), T.A Ládélé and Dẹjo Fáníyì (Èkún Ìyàwó), Láwuyì Ògúnńíran (Èsà in Eégún Aláré prose) and Olúdàre Olájubù (Àkójọpò Iwì Egúngún). The other four include Ìbà in the musical works of Ṣínà Peters (Jùjú), king Wásìù Àyíndé (Fújì), Ògúndàre Fóyánmu (Ìjálá) and Àlàbí Ògúndépò (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 Yorùbá to English.

In this section, certain salient questions are raised in the form of sub-headings under which given responses are appropriately interpreted. The question is: *How does the Oral Poets 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 an oral artist pays certain homage: first, they acknowledge Olódùmarè (God) as the creator of heaven and earth; they acknowledge Èṣù as the spirit that brings fortune and misfortune, Ògún as god of Iron, Ṣàngó as god of thunder and lightning, Òrúnmìlà 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), Ọwó (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 Ọlájùbù where about four of the aforementioned authorities are addressed and Ògúnníran where virtually all the authorities within the confine of the Yorùbá worldview are also acknowledged:

Ìbà ó o ò o!
 Ìbà ni n ó máa fòní jú
 Ọlójó òní ma yá a júbà lódò rẹ,
 Kí n tó m'áwo ẹ
 Ìbà o o o o!
 Ìbà ẹni tó dá kí n tó dá
 Ìbà ẹni tó tẹ kí n tó tẹ lójẹ
 Ìbà iyá à mi Ọṣòròngà, Olókíkí òru
 Ìbà afínjú àdàbà tí n jẹ láàrin àṣá
 Afínjú ẹyẹ tí jẹ ní gbangba oko
 Ìbà ọmọ a-fòru-rìn

(Ọlájùbù 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 Ọṣòròngà
 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' (Ọlójó òní), the poets' predecessors in the act (ẹni tó dá kí n tó dá/ẹni tó tẹ kí n tó tẹ lójẹ) and the third one is the witches (iyá à mi Ọṣòròngà). 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
Ọlójó òní ma yá a júbà lódò rẹ
Kí n tó máwo ẹ

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

Ọba k'ẹpẹ o, mó júbà k'íba mi ẹ
Ìbà ni n ó kọ jú ná, aré mi dẹyin
Mo júbà baba à mi
Ọjẹ Lárinnàkà, ọkọ Ìyádùn-ún-ní
Oun leégún alaré, a-bi-kókó-létí-aşo
Ọjẹ Lárinnàkà tí gbé kowèè jóògùn ilàyà ...
Mo júbà pètẹ ọwọ
Mo júbà pètẹ esè
Mo júbà àtẹlẹsẹ tí kò hunrun tó fi dé gbogbọlọ itan
Ará iwájú mo túúbá
Jànmọ-ọn mo bẹbẹ ẹyin
Mo bẹbẹ ẹyin kéyẹ má ẹ y'òwú ù mi jẹ
Oşó ilé mo ríba orin-in mi
Ìbà ẹyin iyá à mi Ọşòròngà
A-pa-ni-má-wágún, olókíkí òru,
A t'apá j'orí, a t'èdò jọkàn,
A t'ídí jòrònrò
Eyẹ a b'apá win-in-in
Eyẹ a b'esè win-in-in
Abirin àşà lẹsẹ mejèjẹ
Ọgọgọ ní'yèè, a jí da gòròò ara
Afínjú eyẹ tí jẹ láarin òru
Mo júbà Èşù Láálú ọkúnrin ọnà
Èşù Láálú aşòròkolẹ, a-bàásó l'orí
Àlámúlamú bàtà
Ó fẹ bàtà kù jó bámúbámú
Ò şá'mọ lógbé, gún'mọ lóbe
Èşù Láálú mo júbà o!
Mo júbà, j'ode òní ó yẹ mí.

(Oláwuyi 1972: 39)

May you live long your highness, here is my salutation, may it be acceptable.
I will first render salutation before my performance.
Ọjẹ Lárinnàkà, the husband of Ìyádùn-ún-ní
The masque dramaturge that has knots at the edge of his gown

Ojè Lárinnàká 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 plead for my past misdeeds so that, bird will not eat up my wool
 I recognise the wizards in my performance
 I acknowledge the witches in my show
 Tribute to the witches, praise name Òṣòròngà
 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 Èṣù Láàlú, the road master
 Èṣù 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
 Èṣù Láàlú, here is my pledge
 I salute, let it be well with me today.

In the analects above, the artist comprehensively acknowledged virtually all the existing powers and principalities identifiable in the Yoruba world view. These include Ọba (king), Bàbá (his late father), Pètẹ Ọwó (surface of the palm), Pètẹ Èṣẹ (sole of the foot), Ará Iwájú (the foremost people), Jànmọ-òn (Congregation), Oṣó (wizard), Àjẹ (witches) and Èṣù respectively. (All these are believed to have certain spiritual attachment to the fortune and misfortune of every Yorùbá 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 kọ jú, eré mi dọla' (I will pay homage first, my performance is tomorrow), which is part of the performance and which must come first, portrays ìbà as spiritually compulsory and more important than the real performance. Sometimes, ìbà (homage/reverence), is so important that it could be used to offer respect to male and female in an entertaining manner as alluded to in Adédùntán (2009) where a hunter acknowledged male and female using their genitals thus:

Ìbà okó tó doríkodò tí ò ro
 Ìbà iyámọpó tó doríkodò tí ò sẹjẹ
 Má jẹ ó sù mi í ṣe o
 Má jẹ n ṣiṣe níbẹ o
 Má játùpà Ògún ó tidí jò mọ n lọ.

(Adédùntán 2009: n.p.)

Homage to the penis that drops and yet does not drip
 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 synecdochally 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. The next question is: *Why do the Yoruba Oral Poets pay Homage?*

The constant appearance of Ìbà (salute to authorities) in Yorùbá literature underscores a belief that some terrible circumstantial catastrophe will happen to the poet or the artist and his show if the necessary pacifying act is not carried out. In view of this, any artist who does not want to witness a calamitous scenario in his performance must first acknowledge Olódùmarè (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 (Olájubù 1972: 56).

Homage always comes first before performance because of its spiritual tradition of giving profound reverence to the supernatural. This emphasizes why it is a mandatory ritual. However, a poet or an artist may decide to be audacious and disregard this lofty aspect of the Yorùbá oral literature if he has capacity to shoulder the consequence. In his 1972 book, Ògúnníran presents instance of an iconoclastic Iwì Egúngún 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 boa constrictor but, unfortunately, for him, he could not reverse to his former self as human being due to an act which his detractors see as lack of respect for the constituted traditional authorities-in-council. After a while, Òjèládé, the crocodile instructed one of his boys in Iwì Egúngún chant thus:

Òjèkúnlé ò, s'ó n rí ǹkan!
 Ayé gbìyànjú, wón yí mi l̀awò padà kíákíá
 Ayé, ayé yíi ò sè!
 Ayé níi gún'yán eéru
 Ayé níi rokà eèpè
 Báyé s̀eniyàn tán
 Wón á t̀esè m̀ò'rìn kíákíá
 Ayé l̀ó s'Agbe t̀ó daláró igbó o
 Ayé s'Àlùkò, t̀ó d'olòsùn ẹ̀gàn
 Ayé ò ní s̀e yín, ẹ̀ ò ní s̀ise,

Ayé ló ɣe mí tí mo d'Erè láàkókó ojo
 Bí ò bá sí iṣu, kí la ó máa pè ní'yán?
 Bí ò bá sí èlùbó, kí la ó pè lámàlà?
 Bí ò bá sí àgbàdo kí la á pè lẹkọ yangan?
 Ọpẹlọpẹ orí bàbá mi, un nàà ló yọ mi
 Nígbà tí mo d'Erè láàkókó ojó
 Ìgbà tó tún d'ẹlẹẹkeji yíi ñkó?
 Kin ní ọhún tún ti yíwó o, ará ilú ù mi!
 Ọjẹkúnlé, wá sùré relé
 O ó bá mi délé bàbá mi
 Àdó kan n bẹ l'ájà a-mi-lo-lo-lo
 Ìgbà tó o bá mú u dé
 Gbogbo rẹ yòò sì ɣ'enu're
 Ará àlògbó, ọmọ ẹkùn ní'Bá
 Ayé binú kán-ún, wọn sọ kán-ún s'ómi
 Ayé binú iyọ, wọn po'yọ m'èpè
 Ayé binú Ọjẹlànàdé,
 Wọn yí i lówò padà kíákíá.

(Oláwuyi 1972: n.p.)

Ọjẹkúnlé, 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?
 Ọjẹkúnlé, 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 Òjèlárinnàkà
 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 Òjèlàdé. It rained heavily while he was still expecting Òjékúnlé to bring the charm and this eventually rendered the charm impotent. Incidentally, Òjèlàdé the boa constrictor was flooded into a nearby refuse ground where a woman was innocently and co-incidentally threw some maize chaff on the boa which eventually transformed Òjèlàdé to his real human form. *This ultimately influenced Òjèlàdé's religious adherence to this important aspect of Yoruba traditional programme structure.* This leads us to the issue of *Importance of Homage among Yoruba.*

Here, data relevant to this sub-heading is presented and analysed. In Yorùbá society, a poet or an artist whose performance is imbued 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 earthworm salutes the earth, the earth opens for it). Ògúndáre Fóyánmu and Àlàbí Ògúndépò established this in one of their Ìjálá performances thus:

Àkàno Oládùn-ún-ní
 Tí n bá sùn, tí n bá jí
 N ó máa júbà àwọn baba rẹ̀ tó kókó jòba
 Nítorí àdàṣe ní hun ni ìbà kíì hùn 'yàn
 Orí olóyè àkókó yòò máa sọ̀ tìkẹ̀yìn dedede
 Ogunlọ́lá lorúkọ̀ Sọ̀un àkókó níjẹ̀
 Ajagungbádé ọmọ̀ Onídugbe

(Foyanmu 2008)

Àkàno Oládùn-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
 Ogunlọ́lá the first Sọ̀un that reigns
 Ajagungbádé, the offspring of Onídugbe

From the above, and in attempt to show importance of Ìbà (Homage), the poet, Ògúndáre Fóyánmu's intention is geared towards appeasing the identified class of superordinate kings who ruled before the present Sọ̀un of Ògbómòṣó. This is done *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
Yòò máa ọ̀ tìkẹ̀yìn 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!
Ọ̀lọ́jọ́ òní mo júbà k'íba mi kó máa ẹ̀
Ìbà lówó Olódùmarè a gb'òtún
Atení lẹ̀bẹ̀lẹ̀bẹ̀ ẹ̀agbeji ara
Mo júbà k'íba mi kó máa ẹ̀
Ìbà apẹ̀tẹ̀ ọ̀wó
Ìbà pẹ̀lẹ̀mbẹ̀ ẹ̀sẹ̀
Ìbà àpẹ̀tẹ̀lerísẹ̀ tí ò hunrun tó fi dé ọ̀ọ̀lọ itan
Ọ̀lọ́jọ́ òní mo júbà k'íba mi kó máa ẹ̀
Ìbà alájá t'òun t'ògbóró
Ìbà ẹ̀lẹ̀sin t'òun t'èèkàn lésẹ̀
...bí labalábá bá jáko a sì júbà ẹ̀yẹ̀ oko
Àgbẹ̀ jáko a sì júbà kùẹ̀kùẹ̀
Àgbẹ̀ tó jáko tí ò júbà kùẹ̀kùẹ̀
Ọ̀kọ a ẹ̀ ẹ̀ wọ̀n lójúgun
Ọ̀lọ́jọ́ òní mo júbà k'íba mi kó máa ẹ̀.

(Àlàbí 1998)

Homage o o o!
The owner of today I pay homage
Let my homage be acknowledged
Homage to Olódùmarè 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 kùẹ̀kùẹ̀
The farmer who enters farm without paying homage to kùẹ̀kùẹ̀
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 does not take it seriously. Hence, “*the farmer who enters the farm without paying homage to kùèkùè, gets himself injured on the shin by his hoe*”. It should be stressed here that ‘kùèkùè’ 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 *Şàngó pípè* (*Şàngó’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 head), an inclination of the body in greetings reverence and respect. The analects below from *Ìşòlá* encapsulates this important aspect of *Ìbà* thus:

E è wa ráyé
 Balógun a dè lóhùn panije
 Alábáálàşẹ!
 Ọmọ dídún nişẹ ẹye
 Oò jíire?
 Ìyàwó àşẹşẹgbé, bó jí a kúnlẹ a gbàtẹwọ olá
 Mo f’ówó ní
 Mo wá à *wárí*
 Mo f’órò ó ní
 Mo wá à *wádè*
 Ire gbogbo tí n ó níí
 Ó n bẹ lódò Şàngó tí í jéégún
 Olóomi!
 A-dáni-má-dáni-pa
 Ọjògán bojú ọrun wò

(*Ìşòlá* 1976: 80-103)

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 *Şàngó* the masquerade
 My god!
 One that kills halfway
 He who manifests himself through the sky.

In the above, the expressions ‘wárí’ (bowing of head) and ‘wádè’ (total submission of body in greetings) stand for Ìbà (homage/reverence) and *the plea for both prosperity and wealth from Ṣàngó* respectively. Expressions of this nature 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 Èṣù. She puts her left leg on Èṣù and rendered Ìbà (homage) in Èkún Ìyàwó (Bridal chant) thus:

Ìbà Èṣù Láàlú Láaróyè Lárògo
 Eḃora tí í jé Látòpa
 Ilé ọkọ tí ò ré yí
 Jé ó sanmí s’ówó
 Jé ó sanmí s’ómọ
 Bàbá ọkọ tí n ó bàá
 K’óun má ṣ’elénìní ì mi
 Orogún tí n ó bàá
 K’óun má ṣ’elénìní ì mi

(Faniyi 1975: n.p.)

I acknowledge Èṣù Láàlú Láaróyè Lárògo
 The spirit whose name is Látòpa
 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

Homage in the above is *used strictly for prayer of success, prosperity, childbearing and love from every member of her husband’s family in her matrimonial home*. The plea of this nature to Èṣù is imperative because Èṣù is seen as god of fortune and misfortunes.

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 Yorùbá poets and musicians that Ìbà (homage) is not given any priority in their performances. Some artists are not versed in homaging and are less concern about its observation. And those who are knowledgeable about it always carelessly 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 Yorùbá contemporary poets and musicians have broken away completely from this lofty aspect of the Yorùbá traditional programme structure, there are some who adhere 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'* on youtube admitted that there is seniority in music and acknowledged foremost musicians of different genres of music thus:

... gbogbo ọba onílù pátápátá
 Mo júbà yín o
 Èyin ọba Jùjú pátápátá
 Mo júbà yín o jàre
 Gbogbo ọba Fújì pátápátá
 Ìbà ni mo ẹ
 Mo júbà yín o

(Peters 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 Fújì music
 I salute you all

It has also been observed that, as many as the contemporary Fújì musicians, some of them still keep to this aspect of traditional programme structure. Among them is King Saheed Òşùpá who is never indifferent to the issue of paying homage to his predecessors as recorded in his 2019 album titled *Endorsement* on youtube:

Lead: ... wọn ní k'ílẹ́ ó ẹ̀'ba kò fẹ́ ẹ̀'ba
 táyẹ́ fí tẹ́nì lé e 2x
 Chorus: Ẹ ẹ̀'ba àgbààgbà ká yé máa ẹ̀fọ́júdí
 Ẹ ẹ̀'ba àgbààgbà
 Lead: Njẹ́ k'ẹ́nì náà tún ẹ̀'ba kò fẹ́ ẹ̀'ba
 Àga dí'hun tán'ń gbé lé e 2x
 Chorus: Ẹ ẹ̀'ba àgbààgbà ká yé máa ẹ̀fọ́júdí
 Ẹ ẹ̀'ba àgbààgbà
 Lead: Bọmọ́dẹ́ ọ̀ tẹ̀rìba f'ágbà o
 Kò lẹ́ ẹ̀'un t'ágbà ń ẹ̀
 Bó kẹ́ lẹ́ ẹ̀ é mo fẹ́ kẹ́ mọ́
 Kò lẹ́ lẹ́yìn tó máa dáa
 Ẹ́ b'áwọ́n kan tí kọ́ kọ́rìn síwájú o
 Kó tó dí pé a tí ẹ́ dáyé?
 Ìbà àwọ́n tó tí kọ́ kọ́rìn síwájú
 Kó tó dí pé a tí ẹ́ dáyé
 Ẹ́ b'áwọ́n kan tí ń kọ́rìn
 Kó tó dí pé a m'órin níşé
 Ìbà àwọ́n tó ń kọ́rìn
 Kó tó dí pé a m'órin níşé

(Akorede 2019)

Lead: The earth was told to pay homage but was reluctant and
 the worldly people spread mat on it (2x)
 Chorus: Salute the elders, stop being audacious
 Pay homage to elder
 Lead: It was the turn of the mat to pay homage but it failed to do so
 And the chair was placed on it (2x)

Chorus: Salute the elders, stop being audacious
 Lead: If a little child refuse to salute elders
 He cannot do what the elders can do
 And if he does
 Its consequence will not be palatable
 After all, some people have played music
 In the past before we were born
 Homage to those that played music before we were born
 Some have been playing music before we decided to choose music as profession
 Homage to those who have been playing music
 before we decided to choose music as profession.

From the foregoing, it can be said that most contemporary musicians under study acknowledged their predecessors. This shows that age and professional seniority are of utmost importance. Significantly, for oral artists, homage is for securing elders' approval as well as attracting favourable conditions for their performances since it is believed that foremost musicians are the major determinant of the success of such performances.

It can be deduced from the foregoing that *Ìbà* (homage) is indeed a mandatory ritualistic phenomenon in the traditional programme structure of the Yorùbá oral literature. Homage, as revealed in this paper is a required ritual observed according to religious belief of the Yorùbá people to address and acknowledge every power and principalities in everything they do. *Ìbà* (homage/reverence), as discussed in this paper has been made compulsory for artists in order to get a soft landing from the existing powers and principalities in their performances; that is why it always come first before the real performance. The spiritual importance of *Ìbà* to powers and principalities is tied to the fortune and misfortune of every Yoruba person. It has also been revealed that *Ìbà* (homage) is used not only for acknowledgement, reverence or salutation, but also for entertainment, especially when it is synecdochally presented to salute male and female using their reproductive organs. This is done basically to achieve stylistic effect.

The paper accentuates a belief that terrible circumstantial catastrophe can happen to any iconoclast who audaciously ignored this necessary pacifying and propitiating act in his performance. This is very instructive to those who may decide to be daring and disregard this lofty aspect of the Yoruba traditional programme structure in their respective performances. The paper equally emphasised seeking of permission from the existing authorities (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 Adédùntán (2009), Samuel and Adékólá (2018), it can be said that *Ìbà* (homage) reflects and emphasizes much on the gerontocentric structure of the immediate community in which Yorùbá 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 (*Àyàn Àgalú*) whom he pays homage. Homage to such a master drummer is an extra composition to pontificate the drummer's rich pedigree.

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, reverence or admission of inferiority before powerful human and supernatural forces during performance. It is rendered to appease the identified group of superordinate in order to appropriate their power or forestall antagonism.

Ìbà should not be perceived as an act meant for 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. This is in line with Johnson-Bashua's position that no major functions, ceremonies and programmes begin in the Yorùbá culture without initial reverence of precedent and authority. This is to reiterate that everything that happens to mankind in the natural world inevitably has a connection to the spiritual world. As a result of this, man needs to communicate and maintain connectivity with the spiritual world for him to maintain harmony and tranquility. Ìbà not only seeks to create stability in one's world, but also serves the purpose of reaffirming or strengthening one's metaphysical views of the world around him. It also testifies to the dynamism and wealth of Yoruba culture and reveals the means by which the Yoruba make sense of the material and spiritual world around them. Today, as generations pass and the influence of Christianity and Islamic faith broaden, ìbà becomes immensely significant to the continued existence of the Yorùbá culture. It is through this aspect of the Yorùbá oral literature that practitioners remain glued to their religious root and historical tradition. Yorùbá people cannot afford to be detached from their religious beliefs and traditions of many years. To do this is to physically and spiritually erase their identity and all they represent.

Notes:

1. This is where ìbà is equated with acknowledgement in academics.
2. Explaining how unsuccessful the performance of Agidigbo will be without homaging.
3. Homage is observed to avoid accidental and calamitous occurrence in performance.
4. Spirituality implication of homage to the Yorùbá is said to be sacrosanct.
5. Emphasizing seniority which must be acknowledged in Ijala chan.

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