

ORÍKÌ EGÚN

**Praising the Ancestors
by
Awo Falokun Fatunmbi**

Introduction

The invocations in this volume are for use with a personal ancestor shrine and may be used for public performance of rituals involving *Egungun* Masquerade.

The invocations for the ancestors are traditionally followed by a recitation of the ancestral lineage of the person who is saying the invocation. The name of the ancestor is preceded by the phrase *Iba se* followed by the name of the ancestor. In traditional *Ifa* ancestor invocations the name of the ancestor is followed by a short poetic phrase describing the significant accomplishments of the person names. For the person who is new to the tradition and who has no family lineage *oriki* the task of writing short poetic descriptions of their ancestors can be challenging and rewarding. It is challenging because it may evolve extensive research and rewarding because it will become a part of the family oral tradition passed on to future generations.

It is appropriate to recite the family history portion of the invocation in the language most familiar to the ancestors. Because many of us have limited information on family history it has become traditional in the Diaspora to recite the ways in which you imagine you ancestors may have crossed over as a way of remembering the unknown ancestors.

Many *Ifa/Orisa* communities in the Diaspora have developed their own traditions associated with ancestor reverence and these should be honored and maintained. The *oriki* in this book are traditional invocations that may be used in supplement lineage traditions or to reclaim forms of ancestor reverence commonly found in traditional Yoruba communities.

Ancestor reverence involves an interaction between traditional forms of ritual and specific requests made by the ancestors through divination and the voice of the ancestors who speak through mediums. Ancestor reverence is a birth right so there is no one correct way to approach the important process of remembering those who have gone before us.

Ire

Awo Falokun Fatunmbi

Egbe Ifa Ogunti Ode Remo

EGÚN JE WA MEMU
(Pouring Libation to the Ancestors)

Ìbà se Ose - Oyeku.

I respect that sacred scripture that guides our communication with the ancestors.

E nle oo rami oo.

I am greeting you my friends.

Eie dudu baro Babalawo la npe ri.

The black bird that touched the dye in the name of all diviners.

Eie dudu baro Babalawo ma ni o.

The blackbird that touched the dye in the name of all diviners in his name.

Igba kerindinlogun a dana igbo Ose.

The sixteenth time we make a fire in back of Ose.

O digba kerindinlogun a dana igbo Ose'na oo rami o.

The sixteen fires do not harm me.

O jo geregere si owoko otun.

The roaring fire burns to the right.

O gba rere si tosi o.

The roaring fire burns to the left.

Ora merindinlogun ni won ima dana Ifa si.

The sixteen places that we make fires of wisdom.

Emi o mona kan eyi ti nba gba r'elejogun o. Ase.

When I did not know the road to follow, I should have followed destiny.

* This is a traditional Ancestral prayer used when making an offering of *oti* (liquor) to the ancestors at a public gathering. The *oti* is either poured on the ground three times from the bottle, or sprinkled three times on the ground with the middle finger.

ORIN

Emi o mona kan o. Eyiti nba gba a r'elejogun e e. Eyi nab gba r'elejogun. Eyi nba gba r'elejogun. Egbe ope o.

When I did not know the road to follow, I should have followed destiny, I should have followed destiny, I should have followed destiny, May all the elders hear my song.

- This song can be used following the pouring of libation.

EGÚN JE WA MEMU

(Pouring Libation to the Ancestors)

Call: **Omi tútù, Ona tútù, Ilé tútù, Olójó 'ni mo júbà.**

Cool Water, Cool Road, Cool House, it is the Owner of the Day we respect.

Response: **Ìbà à se.**

We give praise.

Call: **Ìlà Oòrun mo júbà.**

It is the Spirits of the East I respect.

Response: **Ìbà à se.**

We give praise.

Call: **Ìwò Oòrun mo júbà.**

It is the Spirits of the West I respect.

Response: **Ìbà à se.**

We give praise.

Call: **Aríwa mo júbà.**

It is the Spirits of the North I respect.

Response: **Ìbà à se.**

We give praise.

Call: **Gúúsù mo júbà.**

It is the Spirits of the South I respect.

Response: **Ìbà à se.**

We give praise.

Call: **Akoda mo júbà.**

It is the diviner Akoda I respect.

Response: **Ìbà à se.**

We give praise.

Call: **Asèda mo júbà.**

It is the diviner Asèda I respect.

Response: **Ìbà à se.**

- Call: We give praise.
Ìlẹ̀ mo júbà.
It is the Spirit of the Earth I respect.
- Response: **Ìbà à se.**
We give praise.
- Call: **Èsù Òdàrà mo tutu.**
It is the Spirit of the Divine Messenger of Transformation we respect. (call the names of all roads of Èsù represented at the ceremony)
- Response: **Ìbà à se.**
We give praise.
- Call: **Awon Iku Orún mo juba.**
It is the Spirit of those who live in the Realm of the Ancestors I respect.
- Response: **Ìbà à se.**
We give praise.
- All **Ajúbà o, Ajúbà o!**
I give respect, I give respect.
Ase.
May it be so.

* This is an ancestral prayer used when pouring libation in a public using a call and response format. The offering of *oti* may be poured on the ground from the bottle, or sprinkled on the ground with the finger. The actual pouring of the *oti* occurs when saying the words: *Omi tutu, Ona tutu, Ilé tutu.*

ORÍKÌ EGÚN

(Praising the Ancestors, invocation for consecration of Ancestor shrine and Aso Egún)

Egúngún kiki egúngún.

Praise to the mediums of the Ancestors.

Egún ikú ranran fe awo ku opipi.

Ancestors who have preserved the mystery of featherless flight.

O da so bo fun le wo.

You create the words of reverence and power.

Egún ikú bata bango egún de.

The drums of the Ancestors announce the arrival of the Ancestors.

Bi aba f'atori na le egún ase de. Ase.

On the strong mat you spread your power, the Ancestors are here. May it be so.

* This is an effective invocation for possession by ancestor spirits. It is also used for the consecration of an ancestor shrine.

ORÍKÌ ADIMU EGÚN

(Praising the Ancestors when offering libation and cola nut)

Egúngún wa yana wa neni, je wa memu.

Ancestors please call on us today, and drink our palm wine.

Egúngún Baba Iya yana wa o, je wa gb'obi pa.

Ancestors, Fathers and Mothers, please come so that you may accept offerings and split the cola nut.

Egúngún wa yana wa. Ase.

Our Ancestors please call. May it be so.

* This invocation is spoken either when making an offering of food to the ancestors or when opening *obi abata* for divination.

OFO ASE EGÚNGÚN

(Invocation for Ancestors to Mount the Mediums)

Ìbà a se Oyeku Meji ati Oyeku Meji, mo juba.

I respect the Holy Scripture that honors the Ancestors and I give it praise

Ìbà a se Egún, mo juba.

I respect the Spirit of the Ancestors and I give them praise.

Ìbà a se Arúku, mo juba.

I respect the Spirits that transform our Ancestors and I give them praise.

Ìbà a se Eluku, mo juba,

I respect the Spirits that elevate our Ancestors and I give them praise.

A dupe gbogbo egún embelese Olodumare.

I thank the spirit of those ancestors who honor the Spirit of Creation.

I ni (name) omo (name of spiritual parents).

I am (name) child of (name spiritual parents).

Egún pèlé o. Egún pèlé o. Egún pèlé o.

Ancestors I greet you. Ancestors I greet you.
Ancestors I greet you.

Egún mo pé o. Egún mo pé o. Egún mo pé o. Ni igba meta.

Ancestors I call you. Ancestors I call you. Ancestors I call you. I call you three times.

Egún ikú ranran fe awo ku opipi. O da so bo fun le'wo.

Ancestors who have preserved the mystery of featherless flight. You create the words of reverence and power.

Egún wo'le wa. Yana wa neni. Egún wo'le wa. Yana wa neni. Egún wo'le wa. Yana wa neni.

Ancestors you are welcome at this house. Please call today. Ancestors you are welcome at this house. Please call today. Ancestors you are welcome at this house.

Je wa adimu pa. Ti won ba nje lajule Òrun ba won je. Bi ekolo ba juba ile ile a lanu.

Come and accept our offering. Whatever good things are eaten in the Realm of the Ancestors please partake. If the earthworm pays homage to the Earth, the Earth shares Her abundance.

Omode ki Ijuba ki iba pa a. Ma ja kiki won Òrun, a dupe.

If the child honors their parent they never suffer from neglect. All respect to the powers of the Realm of the Ancestors.

Ìbà Baba. Ìbà Yeye. Ìbà Baba. Ìbà Yeye. Ìbà Baba. Ìbà Yeye.

Praise to the Fathers. Praise to the Mothers. Praise to the Fathers. Praise to the Mothers. Praise to the Fathers. Praise to the Mothers. We respect the Fathers and the Mothers.

Mo juba (name of ancestor)

I praise (name of ancestor)

* (Include all those ancestors you wish to remember preceded by the words; mo Juba).

Egún fun me lo mo, a dupe. Egún fun me la l'afia, a dupe.

Ancestors we ask for your help and give you thanks. Ancestors we ask for good health and we give you thanks.

Egún Oro ti ase fun Òrun ni awon, a dupe.

Ancestors we ask for the power of transformation from the Realm of the Ancestors and we give you thanks.

Ìbà Oluwo (name of chief priest). **Ìbà Iyàgba** (name of chief priestess) I respect (name of chief priest.) I respect (name of chief priestess)

Ìbà Ojugbona a ko ni li - 'fá, a ko ni li Òrìsà.

I respect all those teachers who have taught me the ways of Ifá and Òrìsà.

Ki kan mase (name of elder).

I ask for the support of (name of elder)

* (Name each elder you want to acknowledge preceded by the phrase Ki kan mase)

Egún e nle o o ramí o o. Èmí o mona kan eyi ti nba gba Orí Egún. Ase.

Ancestors, I am greeting you my friends. When I do not know which road to follow I will turn to the wisdom of the Ancestors. May it be so.

* This invocation can be used for greeting *Egungun* dancers in a public ceremony.

ORÍKÌ EGÚNGÚN

(Welcoming the Mediums to a public ceremony)

Awa náà ní n je dede, Egún ní n je dede, awa náà ní n je dede.

We are magnificent. Ancestors are magnificent, we are magnificent.

Egún ní n je dede, awa náà ní n je dede, Okuùnkùn - bojú - òpópó ní n je dede.

Ancestors are the magnificent, we are the magnificent, Thick - cloud - overcastting - the - sky is the magnificent.

Awa náà ní n je dede. Ojò - kún - lò - lò - falè, ní n je dede.

We are the magnificent, Flood - covering - the - ground is the magnificent.

Awa náà ní n je dede, awa náà ní n je dede. Ase.

We are the magnificent, we are magnificent. May it be so.

* This invocation can be used for greeting *Egungun* dancers in a public ceremony.

OFO ASE ADIMU EGÚN

(Invocation for presenting food to the ancestors)

Má jòòkùn ma, ma jekòló, ohun tí wón bá njè Lájùlé Òrun, ni kó ma-bá wón je. Ase.

Don't eat millipedes, don't eat earthworms, but whatever good things they eat in the Realm of the Ancestors, eat with us now. May it be so.

* This invocation is to be used when presenting *adimu* (food offering) to the ancestors.

ORÍKÌ AYELALA

(Praising the Ancestral Mothers)

* Spoken by female initiates

**Igbo, igbo, igbo, Yeye, Yeye, Yeye, Ore Yeye, Ore Yeye,
Ore Yeye,**

Praise, praise, praise, Mother, Mother, Mother, the
very Mother, the very Mother, the very Mother.

kawo o Kabiyesile, okekeluje Oba obinrin. **A - ji - fotin
we b - oyinbo,**

hail chief of the Mothers, the mighty and awesome
Queen. She who baths in gin like the foreign men,

a - ji - nijo - oloran - gbagbe, a - ja - ma - jebi. Igbo o.
Ase.

She who takes vengeance when the evil-doer has
been forgotten, She who can never be guilty when
she takes action. Praise. May it be so.

* This invocation is used to call the ancestral mothers.

Yoruba Pronunciation

There are twenty-five letters in the Yoruba language, seven vowels and eighteen consonants.

The vowels are A E E I O O U. The marks under the letters E and O create different sounds from the letters E and O, without the marks. Any mark under a Yoruba means you add an H sound to the letter. Marks are found under E, O and S.

The Yoruba alphabet with English words that have the same sound or intonations.

A (ah)	Sounds like the A in Ark
B (bee)	Sounds like the B in Bee
D (dee)	Sounds like the D in Deal
E (ay)	Sounds like the E in Eight
<u>E</u> (eh)	Sounds like the E in Egg
F (fee)	Sounds like the F in Feel
G (gi)	Sounds like the G in Give
GB	No English equivalent
H (hee)	Sounds like the H in Hill
I (ee)	Sounds like the I in Bee
J (gee)	Sounds like the J in Jeep
K (kee)	Sounds like the K in Keep
L (lee)	Sounds like the L in Leaf
M (mee)	Sounds like the M in Milk
N (nee)	Sounds like the N in Nil
O (aw)	Sounds like the O in Odd
<u>O</u> (oh)	Sounds like the O in Oh
P (pi)	Sounds like the P in Pit
R (ree)	Sounds like the R in Read
S (cee)	Sounds like the S in Sea
<u>S</u> (Sh)	Sounds like the S in Sheep
<u>T</u> (tee)	Sounds like the T in Tea

U (oo)	Sounds like the U in You
W (we)	Sounds like the W in We
Y (yee)	Sounds like the Y in Yield

Yoruba language is tonal meaning the relative pitch of letters effects the meaning of the word. There are three basic tones used in Yoruba that be described as *do re mi* or the first three notes of the tempered scale. Normal speaking voice would be *re* an accent slanting from left to right would be *mi* and an accent slanting from right to left is *do*.