

LANGUAGE AND LYRICAL CONTENT OF *OGU MASE* MUSIC: AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF *MIPA MAWU* AND *VALE* SONG TEXTS

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Introduction

Song texts as a form of utterance are inspired from the use of the song as an avenue for communication, reflecting personal, social and communal experiences. These reflections are then organized into what we formally refer to as themes. Themes are a further replication of the daily activities, beliefs, events, happenings and experiences of the society. Obviously, song texts are expressed with the use of language. Merriam (1963:187) noted that the most obvious means of understanding human behaviour in connection with music is the song text. Nketia (1974:189) explained that the treatment of song as a form of speech utterance is inspired by the importance of the song as an avenue for verbal communication. Agordoh (1994) consequently, concluded that language serves as a vehicle that transports song texts to the understanding of the listener.

This establishes that language and lyrics of songs are interwoven and interrelated. In order to convey meaning to the listener, the music-text synthesis which is an offshoot of the effect of language on music and resulting in speech melody must be well considered or managed. Lyrics play several important roles in music. These include educative, communicative, historical, social control, healing, political and eulogy just to mention a few.

This paper focuses on the language and lyrical content in Badagry *Ogu-Mase* music. The people in Badagry, Lagos state are pre-dominantly referred to as Ogu and are believed to have migrated from Dahomey, present day Republic of Benin.

O. O. Loko & F.R. John: *Language and Lyrical Content of Ogu Mase Music: An Expo...* These people are blessed with a rich cultural heritage of musical arts, most of which are used to accompany several festivals, seasonal ceremonies and celebrations. Mesewaku and Adeyemi (2000) opined that among Ogu people, festivals are occasions for the worship of the gods, spirits and ancestors. Other musical arts are also used as accompaniment to sacred, religious and socio-religious activities.

Mase being a socio-cultural music was created by Yedenou Adjahoui a native of Avrankou in Benin republic along with its three variants or genres namely, *Mase-Ake*, *Mase-Gohoun* and *Mase-Eyo* (John, 2021). The author further explained that *Mase-Ake* is the most complex genre in *Mase* music and this underscores the reason for its performance rarity. The rhythms played by the accompanying instruments in *Mase-Ake* are quite complicated as a result of its reoccurring syncopated rhythms when compared to *Mase-Gohoun* and *Mase-Eyo* which have effortless instrumental rhythms.

John (2021) noted that *Mase* music employs both idiophones and membranophones in its instrumentation. Idiophones are musical instruments that are produced from naturally sonorous materials and depend on the vibration of their bodies for sound production when they are hit or struck. Membranophones on the other hand are musical instruments that are made of skin membrane of animals. The membranes are stretched tightly at the ends of a round or square wooden frame usually held firmly with pegs positioned around the frame.

As a result of the socio-cultural and communal nature of African societies, music has become a ubiquitous part of their everyday life activities and specifically, music among the Badagry-Ogu people is functional and utilised for various day-to-day purposes which includes festivals and ceremonies (John, 2021). Accordingly, *Mase* music is performed mainly for social functions and life celebrations such as weddings, birthdays, naming ceremonies, coronations and burial celebrations to mention a few. Omibiyi-Obidike cited in Udoh (2016: 2), corroborated that music speaks the mind of the people and finds its place in all social activities like work, games, dances and religious activities. Additionally, Omojola (2014) stressed that in Nigerian societies, musical performances aside from the aesthetic values, are considered as a form of human activity with the perception of their significance within the total cultural context of the society.

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Due to the dearth of scholastic information on *Mase* music, this study on language and content of lyrics in Badagry *Ogu-Mase* music provides a comprehensive documentation of its origin and function thereby contributing to the literature on *Ogu-Mase* music. It also discusses the effects of *Ogu-Mase* song texts on the audience and presents a detailed textual analysis of Badagry *Ogu-Mase* music of two major locales- Akarakumo and Lagon-Thogli

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Contrell's (1972) theory of social facilitation. With regards to a musical performance, the theory suggests that facilitation is a result of positive appraisal received from others as against the disparaging effect when the appraisal from the audience is negative. It further suggests that there is also a direct psychological effect of the cognitive appraisal of co-performers or audience. These psychological effects are physically expressed in the form of increased heart beat rates, usually associated with increase in oxygen supplies and sharpening of vision resulting in optimal arousal and ultimately optimal performance. The result of a negative facilitation is usually physically observed in such attributes as sweating, breathlessness, impaired visions body shakes and tremors. These have consequential impairment on the performance of the musical ensemble or individual performer.

Methodology

Various bibliographic sources, published and unpublished works of scholars in related fields were consulted for knowledge about existing and related literature. These provided background information on the history, performance practice, instrumentation and stylistic patterns of *Mase* music. Mrs Klunonido Ajo, an indigene of Ajara-Vetho in Badagry and the English and Phonics instructor at the Lagos State University International School, edited the English translation of the *Mase* songs. The internet also provided search engines such as Google, Wikipedia and access to e-books and related websites. Unstructured questionnaire was used during interviews with the respondents. Recording devices such as video recorder, camera and notebooks were utilized during the field work. Financial incentive and gifts were prepared as an enticement and appreciation to encourage respondents' support.

Nature, Content and Effects of Song Texts *Ogu-Mase* Music

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Musical sounds and song texts are quite inseparable in *Mase* music and this is because the melodies and melo-rhythmic patterns imitate the linguistic features, tonal inflections and tonal contours inherent in Ogu language. Nketia (1970) described African vocal texture as a distinct colouration which is a concomitant of the phonetics of the languages in which the songs are sung. *Mase* music is hinged on fundamental values and perceives music as a form of communal and communicative activity and art. The essence in addition to being an aesthetic art among Badagrians is viewed as a social or celebratory human activity. Both vocal and instrumental texts in *Mase* music are derived directly from the Ogu language.

Instrumental Texts

Specifically, the *Apotin* which serves as the lead instrument in the *Mase* instrumental ensemble, incorporates the concept of imitating the tonal inflections and linguistic features of Ogu language by playing extemporized and danceable melo-rhythmic patterns at the high points of particular songs to complement the theme, while spontaneously drawing inspiration from the lyrical content of the lead vocalist (John, 2021). With regards to communication, the melo-rhythmic patterns played by the *Mase-Apotin* converses with the lead singer and other members of the *Mase* music ensemble and the audience. Members of the *Mase* instrumental ensemble respond rhythmically and on their instruments. Also, in response to the melo-rhythmic patterns played by the *Mase-Apotin*, the lead vocalist occasionally draws inspiration for his thematic material and lyrical content.



Vocal Texts

The conception of vocal texts in *Ogu-Mase* music is drawn from social and current events in the society. This is as a result of its characteristic feature as a spontaneous compositional and social sonic art form. The thematic materials are based on the particular event or patronage for which it is staged. These themes include eulogy, satire and philosophy to mention a few.

Audience Participation

Consequently, there is a concerted interaction between the *Ogu-Mase* ensemble and the audience which sprouts from the nature of compositional spontaneity, thematic materials, verbal terminologies and language of the *Ogu-Mase*. John (2021) observed that audience participation in Ogu-Badagry music is a prevalent and significant feature. The audience is observed to assess the *Mase* ensemble and respond by giving gestural, and monetary appreciations. Members of the audience usually show appreciation and positive reception by either spraying money notes or join the dancers on the stage.

With regards to the gestural response which includes in addition to dancing and light body movements a member of the audience who is aroused or inspired by the performance is allowed to join the singers or musicians on any of the accompanying instruments depending on his proficiency. This is against the concept of western music practice that separates the musicians or musical ensemble from the audience and only allows for audience participation at the end of the performance. This corroborated in Omojola (2014:10) who observed that musical performances are characterized by an engaging interaction between professional musicians and other members of the community who in addition to providing a critical assessment of the performance, usually participate by dancing, singing and clapping.

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Textual Analysis of *Mipa Mawu* by *Ogu-Mase* Ensemble of *Lagon-Thogli* in *Badagry*

	Ogu language	English Translation
Lead vocal	<i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa e e</i>	The God praising group is here praising Jesus
Response	<i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a</i>	The God praising group is here giving praise to Jesus
Call	<i>Awe pon wa we mi wa</i>	Friends, we have come
Response	<i>Miu le we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a</i>	We are here praising Jesus
Call	<i>Aziza se do wa we mi wa...</i>	The composer says, we are here
Response	<i>Miu le we to Jesu we si gig pa a</i> <i>Mipa Mau e sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a a</i>	We are here praising Jesus The God praising group is here giving praise to Jesus presently

The speech and laughter

Solo	<i>Be mi na ho ya a?</i>	Can we perform right now?
Response	<i>Mi na ho gbau u u</i>	Yes, we are ready
Call	<i>Mi bo konu do po ma pon</i>	Okay, let's laugh once for me
Response	<i>Ah a ah aah ahh aah a a a ah</i> <i>Mi na ho o</i>	Ah aah aah aah aah a a a a ah We are ready to perform
Call	<i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu esin gigo pa e e e</i>	The God praising group is here giving praise to Jesus presently
Response	<i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a a</i>	The God praising group is here giving praise to Jesus presently

Call	<i>Awe pon wa we mi wa</i>	Guys see, we have come.....
Response	<i>Miu le we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a</i>	We are here praising Jesus
Call	<i>Aziza se do wa we mi wa...</i>	The composer says, we are here
Response	<i>Miu le we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a</i> <i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a</i>	We are here praising Jesus The God praising group is here giving praise to Jesus presently
Solo	<i>Mi bo do to bo, nuyonwato te we nu gon Jesu we sin gigo ma pa ya a?</i> <i>Haugbele mi do to, unyonwato te we nu gon Jesu we sin gigo ma pa ya?</i> <i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a a</i>	Listen, which successful man can do without praising Jesus? Guys listen, which successful person can do without praising Jesus? The God praising group is here giving praise to Jesus presently
Call	<i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa</i>	The God praising group is here Giving praise to Jesus presently
Response	<i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a a</i>	The God praising group is here giving praise to Jesus presently
Call	<i>Wa we mi wa</i>	We have come
Response	<i>Mi u le we to Jesu we sin gigo pa</i>	We are the group rendering praises to Jesus
Call	<i>Wa we mi wa</i>	We have come
Response	<i>Mi u le we to Jesu we sin gigo pa</i> <i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a a</i>	We are the group rendering praises to Jesus The God praising group is here praising Jesus

<p>Solo</p>	<p><i>Mi do nu do mejome vive ni wa bo, Loko yen ton ma do gbese se ya? Dr. Loko, Akluno Jesu tin to awbantwe me yen do dagbe e na yin sin. Loko ma do agun se me, ye le we yin mejome vive, Oganse lo po ye so yin, Loko ma do gbese se ya, hie we mi kan fifon bio na. Mejome vive, ye u le we sin gbe na be yi do. Dr. Loko yenton die to agun se ma Ose he daminu eton de ma no je hoho pa li, Loko ma do gbese se ya Badagry we sin ajivi, Tohon we sin ajivi ho do we 'han se de, Ye le we so hen mejome vive do wa fi egbe, Nu he aso wa na mi ndo nu lo sinyen gba hu u u</i></p>	<p>Tribute to One of our own resourceful persons, Loko our own, are you listening to me? Dr. Loko, our Lord Jesus is in your battles, it shall be well with you surely. Loko is with us right now, He is the highest dignitary here, And Loko is one of my great masters, I hope Loko is listening to my voice right now? I pay homage to you and ask for your well-being. The great integrity man's voice would hide they think, Dr. Loko, my intimate buddy is here in our midst. What God has done can never be destroyed, I hope Loko is listening to my voice right now? The Son of Badagry, the great Son of Tohon is whom my song is talking about He has brought another great Son to us today, What you have done for us is very resourceful and we appreciate it.</p>
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Song ends.

Thematic material of *Mipa Mawu*

The text of *Mipa Mawu* is written in Ogu language. The thematic material of *Mipa Mawu* is a eulogy as in the case of most Mase songs. The song is a eulogy or praise of Dr. Olugbenga Loko, a native of Tohon, Badagry, Lagos. A characteristic feature of Mase music is the spontaneous compositional process which is also regarded as an improvisation or extemporisation. Dr. Olugbenga Loko, an associate professor in the music department of the Lagos State University, was present during the musical performance at Lagon-Thogli in Badagry. The lead singer was then inspired to spontaneously compose (while performing) a eulogy of him. Agu, (1999) identifies that speech tone, imitation and the use of excessive improvisation are prominent features of African songs.

Stylistic devices in the text of *Mipa Mawu*

Olusoji (2014) identified some stylistic features in African music. They include:

Parallelism
Word play
Repetition
Incantatory.

These features are discussed with respect to *Mipa Mawu*

Parallelism: Olusoji (2014) defined parallelism as a form of repetition in which one part repeats another. An example of parallelism in *Mipa Mawu* is

Mi pa Ma u e sii
Hagbele we to Jesu e sii gigo pa o
The God praising group is here,
giving praise to Jesus

Word play: This refers to a twist and use of words to create and convey its appropriate meaning. Example of word play in *Mipa Mawu* is:

Ose tha mi nu ma no je wowo pali
Your creator never snores nor loses sight of you

Repetition: Olusoji (2014) noted that various musical devices are used to express different forms of repetition. Such terms include call and response. Antiphonal and

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 solo refrain. These devices are usually used to create emphasis and extend the length of the musical phrase.

Ogu Language

Lead vocal	<i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa e e e</i>
Response	<i>Mipa Mau we sin haugbele we to Jesu we sin gigo pa a a a</i>

English Translation

Lead vocal	The God praising group is here giving praise to Jesus presently
Response	The God praising group is here giving praise to Jesus presently

Incantatory: This has to do with a declamatory style of singing. It is a combination of singing and spoken words. The lead singer implemented this technique while improvising.

Textual Analysis of *Avale* by Ogu-Mase Ensemble of Akarakumo in Badagry

	Ogu language	English Translation
Lead vocal	Jehun wa dan de mo hun ado na zuntin? Akluno Jiwheyewhe, gbe se to Alo twe me, Okougbe-ton plou do afo se nu ma.	Which strong wind can uproot the forest tree? Lord, almighty God, my life is in your hand, Life worthy dust (sand) plant it on my footpath.
Lead vocal	Ana wa nu de e togbe fi, bo jijo ma d'ekon na we, Ama gan wa nu lo, Okougbe-ton plou do afo se nu ma. "Jejee" ana wa nu de e togbe fi, eyin jijo ma d'ekon na we,	Whatever you are doing or 'you want to' in this world, But you lack good character and discipline, You can't succeed, life worthy dust, God plant it on my footpath. Sincerely, whatever you are doing in this world,

	<p>Ama gan wa nu lo, Okougbe-ton plou do afo se nu ma.</p> <p>Jehun wa dan te we nu hun'do na zuntin?</p> <p>Jiwheyewhe, Maugbeno, gbese d'alo twe me, Okougbe-ton plou do afo se nu ma.</p>	<p>But you lack discipline, you can't be successful,</p> <p>Life worthy dust, plant it on my footpath. Which strong wing can uproot the forest tree?</p> <p>Almighty God the owner of the world, my Life is in your hand, Life worthy dust plant it on my footpath.</p>
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Response	Jejee, Jehun wa dan te no hun'do na zuntin?	Sincerely, which strong winds can uproot the forest tree?
Response	Akluno Jiwheyewhe, gbe se to Alo twe me, Okougbe-ton plou do afo se nu ma.	Lord, almighty God, my life is in your hand, Life worthy dust, plant it on my footpath.
Response	Ana wa nu de e togbe fi, bo jijo ma d'ekon na we,	Whatever you are doing or 'you want to' in this world,
Call	Ojejejee	Sincerely
Response	Ama gan wa nu lo, Okougbe-ton plou do afo se nu ma	But you lack good character and discipline
Call	Bo jijo ma d'ekon na we	you lack discipline
Response	"Jejee" ana wa nu de e togbe fi, eyin jijo ma d'ekon na we	You can't succeed, life worthy dust, God plant it on my footpath.
Call	A han-an	Truly you can't
Response	Ama gan wa nu lo, Okougbe-ton plou do afo se nu ma.	Sincerely, whatever you are doing in this world, But you lack discipline, you can't

		successful,
Call	Okougbeton	Life worthy dust

Response	Jehun wa dan te we nu hun'do na zuntin? Jiwheyewhe, Maugbeno, gbese d'alo t'we me, Okougbeton plou do afo se numa.	Life worthy dust, plant it on my footpath. Which strong wind can uproot the tree? Almighty God the owner of the world, My life is in your hand, life worthy dust plant it on my footpath.
Call	Jejee, Jehun wa dan te no hun'do na zuntin shen-un, Ka vi e no hun'ado na zintin, Aziza Afiotin kan se mi se? Eyin mi to nu nado jeje, me po do na yi ope do ho de me yeble yeble, Bo mi na doho pede he to han lo me, bo mepo na to han bleun de.	Sincerely speaking, Strong winds can't uproot the forest trees at all, Or, does it uproot the forest trees, I, the wider big tree Singer is asking you? If we are to say right now, everyone needs to response to this little by little, And we need to explain few words in this song, For us to understand what the song is all about.
Call	Mi gbo mi ni do we pede; Yide, yide, Respo	Please, let's dance a little; That's, That's
Response	Azin de de de	Express your body rounds
Call	Depeemi, depeemi	Guys, guys, young boys
Response	Azin de de de	Dance and express yourself
Call	(Yeye) 'Jehon wa 'than te no mo do na zun 'tin? Res: Akuluno Jiweyewhe ogbe se d'alo t'we me;	What whirlwind could insult the tree? Lord God Almighty, my life is in your hands;

	Oko 'gbe ton polo tho afo se nu ma	Life's sand surrounds my feet.
Response	Jeje A na wa 'nu de to 'gbe fi, Bo jijo'o ma d'ekon na we; A ma gan wa 'nu lo; Oko 'gbe ton polo tho afo se nu ma.	Sincerely speaking, To achieve anything here on earth, Without good health, You can't achieve it. Life's sand surrounds my feet.
Call	Jeje (2x)	Sincerely speaking, (2x)
Response	A na wa 'nu de to 'gbe fi, (Aha) Bo jijo'o ma d'ekon na we; (Ojijo'o ma d'ekan na we) A ma gan wa 'nu lo; (Aho o) Oko 'gbe ton polo tho afo se nu ma. (Aha) Ojehon wa 'than te no mo do na zun 'tin? Jiweyewhe Mau 'gbeno, 'gbe se do alo t'we me; Akuluno Jiweyewhe ogbe se d'alo t'we me; Oko 'gbe ton polo tho afo se nu ma.	To achieve anything here on earth, Without good health, You can't achieve it. Life's sand surrounds my feet. What whirlwind could insult the tree? Lord God Almighty, my life is in your hands; Lord God Almighty, my life is in your hands; Life's sand surrounds my feet
Call	(Jeje) Ojehon wa 'than te no mo do na zun 'tin shiun?	(Sincerely speaking) What whirlwind could insult the tree?

Thematic material of *Avale*

Avale presents a philosophical theme, drawing from the use of proverbs, ethical and moral sayings. It makes use of certain figurative expressions and figure of speech. The text of *Avale* is presented in Ogu language. As observed in *Mipa Mawu*, *Avale* is also characterised by spontaneous compositional process. The lead singer of the *Ogu-Mase* ensemble at Akarakumo, identified as Peter Afionse was observed to be drawing thematic inspiration for proverbial sayings and experience. He identified the place of God as the possessor of the universe, sole protector of man and consequently seeks for protection and guidance. He also advocates for a healthy life style without which some life exploits cannot be realised. His use of figurative expression is hinged on his personification of the whirlwind possessing the ability to insult an object. Proverbially, he speaks against laziness, procrastination and non-execution or ineffectualness, thereby soliciting for action and a do-it-now attitude.

Stylistic devices in the text of *Avale*

Stylistic features in African music identified by Olusoji (2014) and found in *Avale* include

Word play

Repetition

Incantatory.

Allusion

Conclusion

This study focused on analysis of song text and stylistic devices employed in Ogu *Mase* music. Specifically, the song texts of '*Mipa Mawu*', composed by the *Mase* ensemble of Lagon-Thogli village and *Avale* composed by the *Mase* ensemble of Akarakumo both located in Badagry, Lagos State were used as examples. Like other musical genres from minority ethnic societies, *Mase* music is marked by a scarcity of literature, particularly in terms of communication within the scope of its performance practice. Socio-cultural elements, membranophonic and idiophonic instruments, and audience engagement distinguishes *Mase* music which is sung primarily in Ogu language.

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The melodies and melo-rhythmic patterns are modelled after the linguistic traits, tonal inflections, and tonal contours found in Ogu language. Communication in *Mase* music is channelled across the personnel in the ensemble. This also extends to the audience who appreciate the music with positive gestures as responses. The song texts as well as other compositional devices overt in *Mase* music clearly shows that indigenous musical expressions have a high level of communication capability. The varied reactions of the audience during field work also demonstrate that *Mase* music is an important element of the Ogu people's traditional values. *Mase* music is characterised by purely improvised themes with alternating instrumental rhythms in a compound quadruple time played at a moderate tempo.

As with most *Mase* songs, the thematic content offered in the literary analysis of *Mipa Mawu* is a eulogy. Indigenous music, in contrast to the current dominant position of popular music in Nigeria, should be supported and preserved for posterity, given worldwide yearnings for cultural progress.

Nonetheless, through studies, analyses, and explorations of *Mase* music, this study chronicled and supplied resources, laying the groundwork for future research and exploitation.

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