



YORÙBÁ POLITICAL SONGS: A COMMUNICATION TOOL FOR CRITIQUE AND PROTEST

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ABSTRACT: *People in contemporary politics are generally demonstrated as self-centered villians whose interests in politics are mainly focused on their personal aggrandizement and not for the masses who are working tirelessly to survive. Among the people are the politicians who depend on the feast of the masses' daily sweat and who fail to provide for the people and their enviroments' basic needs. The aim of this paper is to identify and establish that Yorùbá political songs, which is an aspect of Yorùbá literature usually constructed to reflect either positive or negative attitude of their leaders towards the masses and to also counter and disqualify their lacadeisical attitudes of running the government of the people, is seriously affecting the development of their communities and Nigeria as a whole. This paper presents a structural analysis of some selected Yorùbá political songs using linguistic, thematic, and discourse analysis techniques. It also examines politicians' use of language, how they form their words to reflect the uncare attitude of their leaders. Fifteen political songs were collected from various political followers. Ten of those songs which were imbued with abuse, curse, hatred, riddle, financial fraud and political shift jubilation were randomly selected. The paper concludes that, in as much as songs promote the well-being of the society and enhance people's lives, they can also be used to caution bad habits that may have serious negative effects on the society.*

KEYWORDS: Yorùbá political songs, Cultural tool, Critique and Protest.



INTRODUCTION

Yorùbá people of south-western Nigeria have their own codes of conduct that regulates moral behaviour of all members of the communities and failure to abide with the regulations is usually met with critique and protest which can easily culminate into political unrest. Similarly, songs serve as tools for political communication, mobilization, and resistance. Among the Yoruba people, songs are regarded as a major form of traditional communication which is rendered to resist evil and/or encourage desirable behaviour. Song is one of the universal oldest ways of expressing thoughts, emotions and ideas in different tribes. There is no occasion in Yorùbá life that is not accompanied by songs: birthday, marriages, chieftancy and funeral rites are all occasions for lyrical songs of great beauty (Beier1952). Beier states further that “everyday life is accompanied by a great deal of impromptu singing, a kind of musical thinking, in which the singer puts everything to a tone”{Beier1956: 23}. Ajibade (2005) states: “Yorùbá people express joy, happiness, sadness, protest, resentment and worship through songs. Songs play a significant role in politics in ensuring mass participation and effective services delivery.” Political songs are used among Yorùbá people to encourage, convince, appeal, cajole, lure and sensitize for good governance.

Yorùbá political songs are used by politicians, political parties, protesters, followers and communities people to express their feelings, disseminate information, convey political mission of the candidate, mobilize people in order to achieve their target, condemn bad behaviour of the politicians, campaign against politicians with collective ideas. This is done to either criticize those in power, expose their negative attitude and to support the candidate of their choice or deflect from one party to another. Political songs can also be used to encourage or disqualify particular arbitrary act in politics so as to knock down any unwanted candidates. Political song is a motivational method used by large group of people to criticise political power tussles and provide avenue for policies for stability of social change.

It is also a tool in which series of proverbs and metaphors are employed in lyrics for raising awareness and shaping political movement, to advocate for social changes and to also convey powerful messages while trying to avoid direct confrontation with the oppressed and politicians who are dictatorial in orientation.

Political song is also a major component to indicate where there are lapses, reshape politicians' negative opinion, advocate for public legitimate right and hold government accountable for their lapses. This analysis provides insight into how these songs function as cultural and political expressions, influencing governance, leadership, and activism within Yorùba communities.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ON SELECTED YORÙBÁ POLITICAL SONGS

Linguistic Features of Yorùbá Political Songs

Language is a powerful tool in political communication, and Yorùbá political songs use unique linguistic features to engage audiences, express political opinions, and mobilize support. This section explores the syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and tonal variations found in selected songs, illustrating how Yorùbá political songs communicate their messages effectively.



Many Yorùbá political songs rely on repetition, parallelism, and call-and-response to enhance their message and ensure easy memorization. These techniques help the songs resonate with listeners, making them effective tools for political mobilization.

Below are the presentations of the selected Yorùbá political songs while the English translation is written immediately after the original materials for clear and detailed-explanation.

Song 1 :

Kẹlẹja má a gbẹja lọ

Kẹlẹja má a gbẹja lọ

Arẹgbẹ ti gbé màálù dé

Kẹlẹja má a gbẹja lọ

(The owner of the fish should take it away,)

(The owner of the fish should take it away),

(Arẹgbẹ has brought us the cow)

(The owner of the fish should take it away),

The above excerpt uses repetition (*Kẹlẹja má a gbẹja lọ*) to reinforce its message of leadership continuity. The phrase " *Arẹgbẹ ti gbé màálù dé*

"*Arẹgbẹ has brought us the cow*" symbolises political achievement, portraying the leader as one who delivers on promises. The simple structure makes the song easy to sing and remember, ensuring widespread adoption.

Song 2 :

Oore ni

Oore ni

Ibi tẹ ẹ lé wa dé lawà yìí

Oore ni

A ò mò pé

A ó dé ibi tá a wà yìí

Oore ni

(It is a blessing

It is a blessing

We never thought



We would get to where we are

It is a blessing

This song follows a parallel structure that creates balance and emphasis. The phrase "Oore ni" (It is a blessing) is repeated to highlight gratitude. The structure, where one line builds upon another, makes the song flow smoothly while reinforcing its central message of acknowledging leadership efforts.

Semantics and Meaning

Yorùbá political songs often use metaphors, proverbs, and idiomatic expressions to convey deeper meanings. These elements enrich the lyrics, making them more expressive and culturally relevant.

Song 3 :

A ti gbó pé wón dìtẹ̀ wa

Má a dúpẹ̀ lówó Aláwùrà

Tó mú ẹ̀ gòkè àgbà

Ká má a bínú

Şe bí Ọ̀lórún ló gbé Alárẹ̀mú ga

(We heard they betrayed us

I will thank Almighty)

Who lifted you to the top)

Let us not be angry)

Isn't it God that lifted Alaremu?)

The word "dìtẹ̀" (betrayal) is a symbol of political disloyalty. The phrase "Ọ̀lórún ló gbé Alárẹ̀mú ga" (It is God who lifted Alárẹ̀mú) suggests that political success is divinely ordained, reducing the impact of opposition attacks. The metaphorical use of "gòkè àgbà" (lifted to the top) emphasizes upward mobility, reinforcing political elevation.

Song 4 :

Labalábá tó dìgbò lẹ̀gún-ún

Ayé ẹ̀ má dá a lẹ́bi

Láìpẹ̀ nì yóò dalákùṣà nínú aṣọ



Wọn lé e, wọn ò lé e bá

(A butterfly that bumped into a vulture

Do not blame him)

(Soon, he will become a rag leader)

(They chased him away, but they couldn't stop him)

The above song shows the metaphor "Labalábá tó dígbò lègún-ún" (A butterfly that bumped into a vulture) criticizes politicians who shift alliances for personal gain. The phrase "Wọn lé e, wọn ò lé e bá" (They chased him away, but they couldn't stop him) reflects political resilience, indicating that opposition attempts to suppress the leader have failed.

Pragmatics and Context

Political songs use directive speech acts, satire, and implicit criticism to engage audiences and influence their perceptions of leaders.

Song 5 :

ẹyin tórí i yín burú

Tẹ ẹ páwa là ń ẹ yín

Orí i yín korò

Orí i yín ò daa

Tẹ ẹ páwa là ń ẹ yín

Those who are not in their correct state of mind

Alleged us of being the brain against their success

Your heads are bitter

Your heads are bad

For saying that we are evil planners

This song uses **satire** to mock political opponents. The phrase " *Orí i yín korò* "

"*Orí i yín ò daa*, " (Your heads are bitter, Your heads are bad) ridicules their incompetence. By repeating " *Tẹ ẹ páwa là ń ẹ yín*

" (For saying we are planning evil against you), the song reinforces the idea that bad leaders will be held accountable for bad governance.



Leadership and Governance

Leadership and governance are dominant themes in Yorùbá political songs. These songs either praise good leaders or criticize corrupt politicians, using language that influences public perception.

Song 6: :

Arégbé, ò n jọlá iwà rẹ

Èrò léyìn rẹ

Ò n jọlá iwà rẹ

Ìwà ló yẹ kí á wò

Gbogbo ibikíbi tí a bá wà

Ìwà ló yẹ kí á wò

Ò n jọlá iwà rẹ

(Aregbe, you reap from your good character

The people are behind you

You reap from your good character

Character is what we should consider

Wherever we are

Character is what we should consider(You reap from your good character)
This song praises a political leader, Arégbé, a former governor of Osun State, by focusing on his character and integrity. The repetition of "*Ò n jọlá iwà rẹ*" (Your character shines bright) reinforces the idea that good leadership is defined by ethical conduct. The phrase "*Ìwà ló yẹ kí á wò*" (Character is what we should consider) serves as a political message, urging voters to support leaders based on their values rather than material gain.

Resistance and Protest

Resistance and political activism are strong themes in Yorùbá political songs. These songs express frustration with poor governance and mobilize people to demand change.

Song 7 :

Ó sù wa

Ìlú le

Ó sù wa

Ọmọdé n kígbe



Ó sù wa

À n fẹhónú hàn

Ó sù wa

APC sù wa

Ó sù wa

APC ẹ ó lọ

(We are tired

We are fed up

We are tired

It is no more convenient for us

The country is hard

We are tired

Young people are shouting

We are tired

We are protesting

We are tired

We are tired of APC

APC, you must leave)

The song employs repetition ("*Ó sù wa*") to express frustration with poor governance. The phrase "*Ilú le*" (The country is hard) captures economic hardship, while "*À n fẹhónú hàn*" (We are protesting) signals active resistance. The direct address "*APC ẹ ó lọ*" (APC, you must leave) turns the song into a political demand. This song is also expressing dissatisfaction with governance. The repetition turns the song into a direct political demand, making it a mobilization tool against the ruling party in the country.

Unity and Civic Engagement

Political songs also encourage unity and civic responsibility, urging people to work together for national progress.

Song 8:

E jé ká gbé orílẹ̀-èdè wa sókè

Ká sọwọ pọ̀, ká ségbé pọ̀

E jé ká gbé Naijiria sókè



Ibì kan la má a wà

(Let's lift our country up

Let's join hands and bring our parties together

Let's lift Nigeria up

We are in this together)

The above song is a call for national unity and cooperation. The phrase "*Ká sowó pò, ká ségbé pò*" (Let's join hands and bring our parties together) encourages collaboration among citizens. The song promotes a sense of shared responsibility, urging people to look beyond tribal and political differences.

Hope and Transformation

Hope and transformation are themes that inspire people to believe in a better future despite political struggles.

Song 9:

A máa lọ síwájú

Kò sí ohun tó máa da wa dúró

A máa lọ síwájú

È gbé orí wa sókè

(We will keep moving forward

(Nothing will stop us)

We will keep moving forward

Lift our heads high)

This song is motivational, reinforcing the idea that progress is inevitable. The line "*Kò sí ohun tó máa da wa dúró*" (Nothing will stop us) gives a sense of resilience, while "*È gbé orí wa sókè*" (Lift our heads high) symbolizes hope and national pride.

Power and Ideology

Political songs reflect power struggles, influence public perception, and promote specific political narratives.



Song 10 :

Sai Saraki kò ní olódì Sai

Èyin ni kí ẹ sinmi

Olótẹ ni ẹ jẹ kí á bi léèrè

(Saraki has no enemy

You have to give yourself rest of mind

Let us ask the traitors)

The above song promotes political dominance by suggesting that the leader (Saraki) has no enemy. The use of rhetorical language strengthens the leader's position, while " *Olótẹ ni ẹ jẹ kí á bi léèrè* " (*Let us ask the traitors*) discredits opposition figures.

CONCLUSION

The paper has critically examined the Nigeria political system as it is presented in Yorùbá political songs. The fact has been established that some of the politicians are 'power drunk' who can likened to be oppressors that always use language of deceit to get power and turn back when their assistance is highly needed by those who voted for them to acquire the position. The paper concludes that political songs should be continuously used to advocate for justice and fight for the masses' legitimate right from the grassroot to the upper levels of government. It can also be used to destabilize bad intentions of the oppressors and political domination of leaders on masses. It should be used as an effective tool to protest for caution for any form of oppression notice on the part of their leaders. They are also a powerful form of political expression that reflects the realities of governance, leadership, and public sentiment.

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