

Sermonizing as Pragmatic Act in Sikiru Ayinde Barrister's Lyrics

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Abstract

A sermon is a talk or advice given by clergy in religious discourse. This sermonizing function, however, seems to have ceased to be an exclusive preserve of the clerics. This paper investigates this pragmatic act of sermonizing in thirty-one (31) selected lyrics of Sikiru Ayinde Barrister (SAB) of the Fuji fame in Nigeria's music industry, using Jacob Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Act theory and Kecskes' (2010) Socio-Cognitive Approach. A surprising depth of sermonizing in various categories, including social, economic and political sermonizing acts were found paramount in his lyrics. The socio-economic sermonizing act relates to family matters, managing marital conflict, child training and upbringing, value of hard work and dedication to duty, family planning, and such other personal values as showing gratitude for being alive and well, honesty, patience, peacemaking, respect for all, leading a responsible life, helping people, resisting doing evil, wishing others well and cooperating in doing good, the ultimate good judgement of God, being prayerful, inevitability of death, destiny, etc. The political sermonizing act calls for unity, peace, progress, political will, creating an enabling environment by the government, protecting democratic norms and the rule of law, and the need to look inward for an all-round national development. This paper concludes that SAB, beyond being an entertainer, is also a master sermonizer, as his sermonizing acts are deep, comprehensive, and revolve around building not only a complete, prosperous human figure but also a prosperous and peaceful nation. The lyrics, which qualify him as a Music Prophet, have something timeless, fresh and refreshing for all categories of people, particularly Nigerians. The limitation to his lyrics is that they are originally produced in Yoruba language; the import of the sermonizing act, however, is universal.

Keywords: *pragmatic act, sermonizing, lyrics, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister (SAB), child training and upbringing*

1. Introduction

Music has always been an impactful instrument of society influence from time

immemorial, and Nigerian music is no different. The impact of music in society is increased by its thematic coverage, reach, availability, involuntary audience, durability, repetitiveness, entertainment nature, memorisability, and long-lasting tunes. Music, according to Olaosun (2016), has enjoyed an “impressive amount of research interest” in fields ranging from education, psychology, philosophy, neuroscience, to linguistics from scholars in and outside Nigeria (p. 18). Fuji music is, especially among the Yoruba speaking people of south-western Nigeria, one of the most popular music genres in Nigeria, followed by Juju and Apala, all of which held sway particularly for a period spanning about 50 years between the late 1960s and 2010. Their focus is mostly entertainment. Other genres include Sakara, Waka, Highlife, Afrobeat, Afro-Juju, Funky-Juju, and Gospel music as well as Hip-Hop music, which was just developing around the time. Leading lights of these top genres are Sikiru Ayinde Barrister and Ayinla Kollington for Fuji, King Sunny Ade and Ebenezer Obey for Juju, while Haruna Ishola and Ayinla Omowura hold sway in Apala music.

Most of these musicians generally sing about diverse issues touching on socio-cultural life, mostly avoiding critical issues of politics, especially during the military era, bad leadership and harsh economic conditions of the people which were topical, prominent issues at the time; and when they do in passing, they try not to offend the government. Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, however, stands out of all these exponents regarding the attention he accords politics and socio-economic issues in his music, including running away to foreign countries after releasing an album regarded as very critical of government policies. This is the rationale for selecting his work for this study.

This present study aims to investigate sermonizing as a pragmatic act in the lyrics of Sikiru Ayinde Barrister of the Fuji fame in Nigeria, particularly the critical sermonizing role which his lyrics were made to play in the political and socio-economic affairs of Nigeria and Nigerians at that time. Therefore it is not so much the genre that prompts this present study, but the pragmatic act that the genre, beyond entertainment, was made to perform and the significance of that act in the Nigeria of that time and the present time. The scope of this paper therefore excludes a discussion of the rivalry and counter claims between Fuji musicians, translation issues, and a comparison of musical expertise.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

According to Kecskes (2010), the socio-cultural interactional view on pragmatics as espoused by Verschueren (1999), Mey (2001) and others describes pragmatics as “a general cognitive, social and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in forms of behaviour” (Verschueren, 1999, p. 7). For Kecskes (2010), this line of thinking “was created partly as an opposing view to the component approach to pragmatics represented by neo-gricean pragmatics, relevance theory, and speech act theory” (Kecskes, 2010, p. 2889). Mey’s (2001) pragmatic act theory originates in, and emphasizes the priority of, the “socio-cultural and societal factors in meaning construction and comprehension” (Kecskes, 2010, p. 2889), which makes the theory societal-centred rather than individual-centred (Mey, 2001, p. 214), implying

that the individual does not act in isolation of their society, and that the individual is “empowered, as well as limited, by the conditions of her/his social life” (Kecskes, 2010, p. 2889).

For Mey, the place of context and situation is crucial, as it would be difficult to understand an utterance properly without recourse to the situation of utterance (Mey, 2001, p. 217) because the utterance and the context determine each other (Mey, 2001, p. 218). This implies that pragmatic acts are situation-derived and situation-constrained. Thus, for Malinwosky (in Widdowson, 2004), an utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation (pp. 36-37; see also Sidnell, 2010, p. 29; Yule, 1996, p. 21; Cutting, 2002, p. 4; Neuliep, 2014, p. 48; etc.). Context could be categorised into two types, namely context of situation or situational context (author and year unknown) which is the immediate physical co-presence (Cutting, 2002, p. 4), and the context of socio-cultural or cultural context which provides the spatial framework within which humans organise their thoughts, emotions and behaviour in relation to their environment (Neuliep, 2014, p. 48; Cutting, 2002, p. 6).

However, while Mey believes that the situation and extralinguistic factors rather than the wordings determine pragmatic acts (Mey, 2001, 2006), Kecskes argues that “the ‘wording’ of linguistic expressions is as important in shaping meaning as the situation in which they are used and supplemented by extralinguistic factors”, and that “[b]oth sides are equally important contributors in meaning construction and comprehension” (Kecskes, 2010, p. 2889). Kecskes’ perspective evolves into a socio-cognitive approach (SCA) which unites the societal and individual features of communication. This theory considers communication to be “a dynamic process in which individuals are not only constrained by societal conditions but they also shape them at the same time” (Kecskes, 2010, p. 2890). Further in his words,

Speaker and hearer are equal participants of the communication process. They both produce and comprehend relying on their most accessible and salient knowledge expressed in their private contexts in production and comprehension. Consequently, only a holistic interpretation of utterance from both the perspective of the speaker and the perspective of the hearer can give us an adequate account of language communication. In this paradigm communication is driven by the interplay of *cooperation* required by societal conditions and *egocentrism* rooted in prior experience of the individual. Consequently, egocentrism and cooperation are not mutually exclusive phenomena. They are both present in all stages of communication to a different extent because they represent the individual and societal traits of the dynamic process of communication (Kecskes & Zhang, 2009). On the one hand speakers and hearers are constrained by societal conditions but as individuals they all have their own goals, intention, desire, etc. that are freely expressed, and recognized in the flow of interaction. (Kecskes, 2010, p. 2890, italics theirs)

In any human interaction, including songs and lyrics, context and linguistic choice are thus crucial, and according to Holmes (2001), linguistic choice is reflective of the participants, the setting or social context of interaction (physical, cultural and psychological), the topic, and the function (purpose of the conversation) (p. 8).

3. Sermon and Sermonizing

A sermon is “a talk on a religious or moral subject given by a member of the clergy as part of a religious service” (*Microsoft Encarta Dictionary*, 2009). It is:

a discourse for the purpose of religious instruction or exhortation, especially one based on a text of Scripture and delivered by a member of the clergy as part of a religious service...any serious speech, discourse, or exhortation, especially on a moral issue. (www.dictionary.com)

Nordquist (2019) defines it as “a form of public discourse on a religious or moral subject, usually delivered as part of a church service by a pastor or priest....” (para. 1). For Abdelhakim (2013), a sermon is “a religious speech...especially in a church or a mosque aiming to persuade people to do something, to accept, support or follow a belief, a method, etc.” (p. 146). A sermon is therefore not only ritualistic and religion-based, it is “entirely in the oral tradition...with the sermonist as the speaker and the congregation as the hearers, and with a live relation between the two” (Thorpe, 1987, p. 96). The origin of the Christian sermon, according to Alikin (2010), dates back to the early centuries:

the Christian sermon originated as a contribution to the conversation in the early Christian gatherings and goes back to the custom of giving speeches at symposia in the Graeco-Roman world in general. The word...has a connotation of intimacy and familiarity, of friendly converse and persuasive argumentation, with overtones of serious intent and instruction. (Alikin, 2010, pp. 185-186)

Abdelhakim (2013) considers a Friday sermon as “a single speech act whose illocutionary force is ‘sermonizing’” (p. ii) which is meant to perform “the function of getting some people to do something, to accept, support or follow a belief, a method, etc.” (p. 157). Some of the questions for which this present paper intends to provide answers are whether only the clergy engages in sermonizing, whether a non-religious setting such as music is also amenable to perform this pragmatic act, and the kind of sermonizing they do. Therefore this present paper takes the sermonizing act out of the religious enclave as an exclusive preserve of the clergy to the homes and streets where people live their entire lives. It investigates sermonizing as pragmatic act in the lyrics of a popular Nigerian music genre, known as Fuji, by Sikiru Ayinde Barrister.

4. Fuji Music and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister (SAB)

Fuji is a popular Nigerian music genre acclaimed to be created by Alhaji Chief (Dr.) Sikiru Ayinde Balogun Barrister (simply known as Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, SAB) in the 1970s. Singer, songwriter and music performer, he was born 9th February 1948 and died 16th December 2010 at 62. He could not complete his higher education in

1961 at the Yaba Polytechnic, Lagos due to financial difficulties but later trained as a stenographer (typist), and his typewriter now resides in his Fuji Chambers in Isolo, Lagos (My Random Thoughts, 2018, para. 4). Meanwhile, he had started singing in 1958 at the age of 10 with the local music form known as “*Wéré*” (Ajiwéré/Ajisààrì), performed to wake muslims up for the pre-dawn meal during the month of Ramadan. He later transformed *Wéré* into Fuji, a brand new genre combining several other forms and musical assemblage such as *Apala*, *Sakara*, *Juju*, *Aro*, *Afro*, *Gudugudu*, and *Highlife*. Releasing his first album in 1965, he later joined the Nigerian Army in February 1968 during the Nigerian civil war and was about to be commissioned as an officer of the Nigerian army in 1976, but on the condition that he would have to abandon music. However, he preferred to resign rather than abandon the love of his life, Fuji music.

As the pioneer of the brand, he succeeded in popularising Fuji music beyond Nigeria and across Africa, including the USA, Canada, the Caribbean, the UK, Germany, and several other European countries, earning himself the MFR, a prestigious Nigerian national award, an honorary PhD in Music from City University, Los Angeles, USA, and the African International Music Ambassador Award. He is described as “one of Nigeria’s best-known singer/songwriters” who “has played an essential role in the evolution of the music of his homeland” (Harris, n.d.), while another sees him as “one of the most prolific musicians Nigeria has known, releasing about 60 albums between 1972 and 2008” (Adekosan, 2015). He released about 127 albums before his sad demise alongside countless stage performances. His contemporary and main rival in Fuji music was Alhaji General Kollington Ayinla who also contributed immensely to the development of Fuji. With other Fuji musicians in Nigeria and in diaspora, and a growing fan base all over the world, Fuji music continues to evolve in sound and style, melody and lyrics. According to a journalist, “[h]e used his Fuji music to shape his audience’s opinions about life, death, music, government, business and employment, to mention but a few” (My Random Thoughts, 2018, para. 27). According to Premium Times (2019), “the late Fuji musician, well respected for his deep and philosophical lyrics...remains largely alive in the hearts of his fans” (para. 1). Ayodele argues that “the release of *Barry at 40*, *Fuji Garbage Series 1* and *2* in 1988, *Current Affairs* and *Garbage Series 3* in 1989, changed the face and nature of not just Fuji music but music scene in Nigeria. It was like a revolution in the music scene” (Ibrahim, 2016, para. 31).

5. Methodology

I was able to acquire thirty-one (31) of Sikiru Ayinde Barrister’s albums. They were closely followed for aspects of sermonizing acts in every line and verses of each album, and lyrics performing the pragmatic act of sermonizing were selected for study, after which the sermonizing acts were categorized into subject matters for analysis. In this study, we take any line, verse or lyric (in an album) as performing the pragmatic act of sermonizing if it aims to exhort to good behaviour, to persuade people to do something, to accept or reject, support or follow a belief, a method, a way of life, etc. without recourse to any particular religion but including all aspects

of morality and decent life and living. To sermonize is “to give somebody a long tedious talk about how or how not to behave” (*Microsoft Encarta Dictionary*, 2009). Therefore, in arriving at the sermonizing acts, it was not just the theme or title of the album that was considered but each line and verse in the content of each album that falls within our definition of sermonization in this study. Subsequently, three (3) of the albums, namely *Fuji Gabbage Series 2*, *Inferno*, and *Fuji Vibration* do not seem to reflect any sermonizing acts.

In no particular order, those albums (available for this study) with sermonizing acts are *Aiye*, *Fantasia Fuji*, *Okiki*, *Reality*, *Destiny*, *Music Extravaganza*, *Fuji Gabbage Series 3*, *Fuji Booster*, *Current Affairs*, *The Truth*, *Fertilizer*, *Fuji Dimension*, *Questionnaire*, *Ise Loogun Ise*, *Suuru Baba Iwa*, *Barry Wonder at 40*, *Maturity*, *Oke Agba*, *Family Planning*, *Oore Lope*, *Appreciation*, *Love*, *Iwa*, *Adieu MKO Abiola*, *Nigeria*, *Ija Pari*, *Ekun Odun*, and *American Special*. Except in *Fantasia Fuji* where one of the long stanzas is in English, the rest had to be translated from Yoruba to English. Records regarding years of album release are either not available or conflicting, and so were left out.

6. Analysis, Findings and Discussion

As mentioned above, twenty-eight (28) out of the thirty-one (31) albums followed, representing 90%, contain sermonizing acts. The acts were then categorized into five major subject matters and discussed as follows:

6.1 Good character and manners

SAB uses his lyrics to perform the pragmatic act of sermonizing in several albums to admonish his listeners on the need for good manners and characters. Such characters and manners include patience, respect for elders, punctuality, hard work, good deeds, obedience to parents, obedience to husbands, being a responsible father, being prayerful, and avoiding being overambitious and materialistic. He stressed the evil of inordinate search for wealth, and the need to prefer to live a peaceful life. What seems to be the preoccupation of his sermonizing act is the admonition to do good always, at times swearing in self-exemplification:

I will always do good in my life I will always do good (4ce)/ I won't plot evil here on earth or in heaven/ I will not envy or resent another person/ I will always do good in my life I will always do good/ If people are raising war against you just continue to do good (2ce)/ If people are plotting against you just continue to do good (2ce)/ Surely the result of every deed will come back to the doer/ Human deeds is going to be their own saviour/ If people are raising war against you just continue to do good. (*Fantasia Fuji*)

He then admonishes the evildoer to stop it:

Please do not do it!
Evil is not good my friend please do not do it!
Evil is not good! (*Fuji Garbage series 3*)

SAB sermonizes the young ones to respect not only their parents but also all elders:

Respect your father and mother, and not only those who gave birth to you
Even if he is older than you by just one day
Remember that you are also going to one day become an elder
Whatever we do to an elder, the ones behind us will one day do to us too. (*Family Planning*)

Admonishing on patience, he says:

Whoever does not die, if he's patient, would later see good things in life
See life! Adeyimika Oyekan later become the king (2ce). (*Fertilizer*)

In the album *Suuru Baba Iwa* ("patience the father of character"), he further admonishes on patience:

My people, patience is highly rewarding/ if we can do it
Whoever has patience has everything, and is such a blessed, lucky person

Elsewhere in that album, he specifically admonishes against impatience in certain aspects of life:

Impatience is the cause of road accident, so drivers please drive carefully;/ Impatience makes one to misbehave to an elder, so patience is so rewarding;/ Impatience leads to theft because you want to be like someone without being as hard working as that person, and hoping for God's help;/ Impatience is the cause of divorce, we are talking from experience please;/ For if the husband can be like the goat and the wife like the sheep, that's all,/ Or vice versa:/ Sheep would never argue with the goat and goat would never argue with the sheep,/ Impatience destroys the home; the one that would render our patience useless, God do not bring such to us,/ We are pleading with you Almighty. (*Suuru Baba Iwa*)

Connotatively, a sheep is shy, timid and easily led, while a goat is stubborn, strong and courageous. SAB is admonishing that a couple would live better together by being one of each, and not by being both goats, or both sheep, and prayed against a pester that can render one's patience useless. His prayer is in recognition of the fact that there are some people who can render one's patience useless with their hardened stubbornness.

On hard work, integrity and loyalty (to one's employer), SAB sermonizes extensively as follows:

Hard work is the solution to poverty; please face yours squarely, because he who works very hard certainly stands to defeat poverty/ .../ My people, the dog insect is killing itself, thinking it is killing the dog/ You are employed to work but you display laziness, saying that your salary is guaranteed whether your boss makes profit or not/ If the factory folds up you simply would run away/ But what if God is supporting the factory owner?/ You

would be the one to lose the job at the end/ And you would get the reward of your bad deeds/ Your boss is your master any day/ An employee that wants to become a master would have to work very hard/ You want to collect the salary of a master without working for it/ The God that created the job owner is also the creator of their worker/ He/She has also faced difficulties before becoming an employer, with plenty of patience before getting money to start the factory for you to work in it/ .../ Whatever we do not suffer for do not last/ It is that which we suffer to acquire that last long with us. (*Ise Loogun Ise*)

In the above excerpt, he addresses the worker directly in the second person pronominal, “you”, while addressing the entrepreneur in the third person, “he/she”. He identifies the need for them to eschew laziness, and nursing the ambition to defraud their employer or caring less about their business failure. He establishes the unprofitable consequence of this attitude using the analogy of the parasitic dog insect known in Yoruba as “èèpà” (/e:pa/) which hosts and lives on the body of the dog but continues to infest the dog almost to the point of death, not knowing that the moment the dog dies it would no longer have a place to live. He thus admonishes workers to be hardworking, loyal, and supportive of their boss, so that they too can one day be on their own.

Also, in his album titled “Maturity”, he associates comfortable life at old age with hard work during the youthful ages:

Seriousness is the principle of business, attending to our job at the right time
Dedication is the principle of business, attending to our job at the right time
Never to laze away at a time we should be working so that we can reap the good fruit of our labour at our old age. (*Maturity*)

In other words, SAB is sermonizing that the best way to prepare for and live well in old age is by working hard and with integrity at a young age.

6.2 The universality and inevitability of death

One of the major preoccupations of SAB’s sermonizing acts is the universality and inevitability of death, devoting large chunks of his album to sermonizing about death and the uselessness of amassing wealth inordinately. Most of the time, he draws an enduring connection between good deeds, death, and destiny. He argues that since we already know that everybody will die, it is pointless to be afraid of it but rather to always be prepared for it, and that the best way to prepare for death is with good deeds. On side two of *Fantasia Fuji*, he presents a whole thesis about death, deconstructing the whole gamut of death’s might and myth, and modus operandi, such as the fact that death understands all languages, cannot be stopped by the most powerful of all herbalists, sorcerers or prophets, takes no bribe, never receives queries from God as to why it kills anyone but enjoys God’s support, takes life at any point without any excuse such as “let me say goodbye to my darling”, as it won’t talk to anyone when it comes; it is the same death for the rich, the poor, the one living in a palace or under the bridge, or the madman or homeless on the street. All this is an argument to convince his audience that there is no way out of its eventuality and to

sermonize them to be prepared:

I am having my dinner let me rinse my hands
Or quickly enter the room and say goodbye to my darling
There is no excuse when death comes. (*Fantasia Fuji*)

Since there is no way out of this, he sees nothing wrong in calling the bluff of death, abusing and describing it in bad, wretched names to perform the pragmatic act of debasing death in the eyes of the people so as not to accord it any special respect, honour, or fear, perhaps this would embarrass death a little:

Who is this hunchback of a thing rushing towards?
Who is this frog of a thing trying to scare?
Who is death trying to terrorize when there is no way out for it?
Whenever it is time it is time. (*Fantasia Fuji*)

Having established this inevitability of death, he goes ahead to paint an emotional picture of a person's last journey into the grave, and the sharing by one's family of the property and wealth that one suffers to accumulate, as a way of pointing out the pointlessness of amassing wealth and not helping others with it:

The day death comes/ all the inordinate ambitions come to an end
While the property left behind is shared without giving anything to the owner
They will take you out of the house you left behind which you are so proud of
Outside of the house/ dig a grave/ and drop you inside it. (*Fantasia Fuji*)

Note the use of the word "drop" by SAB, implicating the lack of any more honour to be accorded a corpse. Even if the corpse is put in a million-dollar casket and gently placed inside a golden grave by excellent undertakers, it still amounts to "dropping" the corpse inside. In other words, SAB is pointing out that the moment one dies, one becomes completely useless, deserving only to be covered up under the soil. This in a way is to make one realise that there is almost nothing to the wealth that one amasses, especially by crooked means. SAB thus admonishes that the best way to conquer death is to be prepared for it, and the best preparation for it is good deeds and faith in God.

SAB renders a picturesque, emotion-laden coverage of the death and burial of Simbiat Abiola and Moshood Kashimawo Olawale (MKO) Abiola, both husband and wife, both extremely wealthy and completely philanthropic, to sermonize his audience not only on the inevitability of death, but also on the inability of wealth, family, knowledge, personality, etc. to stop death from occurring (*see Dimensional Fuji* and *Adieu MKO Abiola*):

I witnessed it in Abiola's house—house of money, wealth, and wisdom/ In Simbiat's palatial residence as the matriarch of Abiola's family before she travelled abroad (for treatment)/ Simbiat was brought in there after she died but she could not stand up/ We

called “mummy, mummy” but she could not respond/ We wept and wept to no avail/ Ha!
I was scared that this world is nothing/ Tinuke has packed her baggage and gone home/
So the day we die we become a statue/ Chorus: The day we die we become a statue.
(*Dimensional Fuji*)

SAB stresses that no amount of crying, medicine, money, name-calling, personality, etc. can bring back the dead. The beauty of songs as a vehicle of sermons is the timelessness of both the song and sermon: people continue to listen to them with their impactful messages even after the death of the singer, thereby finding continuous relevance in listeners’ lives. On the death of her husband, Abiola, he says:

Moshood dies with all his wealth, popularity and personality/ Olawale sacrifices his life so
the Nigerian masses can stop suffering/ Nigerians in general, we will never forget Abiola/
Death kills the spiritual diviner like he has never seen the *Òpẹ̀lẹ̀* (divination string) before/
Death kills the medicine man like he has none available/ And kills the herbalist like he
knows nothing about herbs.

.....

If you happened to see Sanni Abacha in heaven/ say the tasleem (the muslim greeting)
to him/ (because God says) muslims are brothers/ kindly ask him/ Abacha where is your
security detail?/ Calipha where is Aso Rock (the seat of the Nigerian government)/ you
and I what have we brought now?/ Have you now seen that life is vanity, Sanni?/ Power
belongs to God and He never leaves it for anyone at all/ Then leave the rest for God to
judge/ God will never ever be unjust to anyone. (*Adieu MKO Abiola*)

In the above, SAB sermonizes the living that death is inevitable, that this world is complete vanity irrespective of position, power, status, wealth, and scholarship, and that there is final judgement after death.

6.3 Primordality of enemies

SAB calls the audience’s attention to the primordial presence of enemies all around, admonishing them to be wary of them. He often calls them “aiye” or “omo ara-aiye” meaning the faceless people around you. They are faceless because you really cannot point to anyone as your enemy, but believes they are there watching, backbiting, slandering, envying and plotting against you. Citing his own life experiences, he argues:

Whoever is killed by people but does not die
Is certainly the real hero. (*Okiki*)

In his album *Reality*, he chronicles the picture of primordial enemies in life and their double-faced attitude:

The day the foetus takes off into the world/ It begins to attract enemies the moment it
gets into their mother’s womb/ When a pregnant woman approaches from a distance and
frowns her face/ People would ask who sends her to be pregnant/ Who did she tell when

she was enjoying it?/ Useless woman, why is she now scowling about?/ Yet, when she gives birth, they would be the first to greet her. (*Reality*)

He admonishes enemies within and outside to change and desist from evil deeds because they are going to reap the sad fruit of their evil deeds:

The evildoer does not know that there is reward for everything (2ce)
Oh you evil schemers! Your days are numbered. (*Destiny*)

You cannot hurt me but yourself/ Oh envious people/ If you think you are hurting Sikiru/
And you are not ready to take advice and change/ And you fail to realise that you are only hurting yourselves/ When you meet with the anger of God you will be forced to desist. (*Reality*)

He admonishes his audience to be wary of them because there is almost nothing one can do to appease enemies:

It is the same whether you meet them somewhere and greet them happily
Or you meet them on the road and cheerfully show respect to them
Respect does not satisfy them except insults. (*Reality*)

In another thesis, he admonishes that we should also beware of enemies in the guise of friends. He mentions different kinds of friends: the one that divides duties between you equally, the one that advises and tells one the truth, the one that is death to you, smiling to your face but talks bad about you behind you. He argues that the known enemy is better than the hidden, the enemy within is worse than the enemy outside, and that human being is the worst of all creatures of God:

This world!/ Out of all the creatures of God, human being is the worst/ If they eat and drink with you, they still talk bad of you behind you/ They are evil plotters, seeking your death/ If one escapes the "death" from within, then no death can come from outside, as friends are worse than enemies/ So do not fight if a friend schemes against you, family also does so. (*Music Extravaganza*)

He admonishes his audience to do away with enemy-friends immediately as you and they cannot cohabit together peacefully. In direct confrontation he accuses the enemy:

The evil-plotting iroko tree must be cut down (2ce)/ Go! Just go! Go! Just go!/ Your friendship is a pain in the ass/ I will seek some other neighbourhood,/ Where they wish me and my family well (2ce)/ Your friendship is a pain in the ass/ I will seek some other neighbourhood,/ Where they wish me and my family well (2ce). (*Music Extravaganza*)

An enemy is one that does not wish the other person well. The concept of an enemy pervades African traditional and cultural beliefs that hardly anyone can exist without a sense of some people not wishing them evil, either in the family or outside of it.

Anyone who engages in any form of opposition, rivalry, hostility and cruelty to a person or group is regarded by that person or group as an enemy to be avoided. In the African traditional belief, enemies exist everywhere, including workplace, neighbourhood, and family.

6.4 Immutability of destiny

SAB admonishes his listeners to accept their destiny as theirs and stop envying others or planning evil against others. This is SAB's way of rationalising the cause and then the solution to the phenomenon of enmity. He wants them to understand that no two people have the same destiny, including twins. In spite of the fact that twins are from the same mother, born the same day and suck the same breasts, they do not have the same destiny as they may not have the same level of intelligence, be endowed with the same talent, follow the same career to wealth, or live for the same number of years on earth. He uses this argument to sermonize his audience to face their own lives and make something out of it. In *Aiye*, SAB argues:

I'm sure you can see (consider the case of the twins) Taye and Kehinde/ born the same day by the same parents and from the same womb/ The source of Taye's wealth may be different from Kehinde's/ Kehinde may be an engineer while Taye is a trader/ And they may even engage in the same career while Kehinde succeeds in it rather than Taye or vice versa/ Their destiny can never be the same even though they suck the same breasts/ No one can escape his or her destiny. (*Aiye*)

As a result, there is no need to envy anyone as each goes about pursuing their own destiny the way God has written it for them. The Nigerian co-context and situation is amenable to this kind of philosophy as most Nigerians believe in one religion or the other which preaches this ideology. Absence of this understanding, according to him, leads one to plan pointless evil against the other:

Do not because you want to get rich destroy the life of another
Do not because you want to build houses destroy the life of another
Do not because you want to ride Mercedes Benz destroy the life of another
Destiny will certainly never change
There is none to whom God has not given except the one that says theirs is not enough.
(*Aiye*)

In the album *Destiny*, he argues and admonishes that there is absolutely no need to be plotting against one another:

If eight people find themselves in the same kind of job/ The destiny of each has followed them to this world/ Why then should we be suspecting one another?/ When Taye sings, (they say) he is referring to Idowu/ When Kehinde sings, (they say) he is referring to Idowu/ The evildoer thinks he is the one we are referring to/ Oh evil plotters! How apprehensive you are! (*Destiny*)

He admonishes that the success of one does not disturb that of another:

The success of the mother does not disturb that of her daughter, and the success of the father does not disturb that of the mother

Why then are we plotting each other's downfall?

Destiny can never be changed, so let's just calm down. (*Destiny*)

His lyrics have helped to prepare people's minds, and to reduce their worries over events in their lives.

6.5 Politics, leadership challenges and national development

SAB uses his lyrics to perform the pragmatic act of sermonizing his audience on how to move Nigeria to greater heights. He uses his music to challenge and admonish the leadership, the political class, the voters and the electoral umpires. Nigeria has witnessed a series of political turmoil, scarcity, mass protests, austerity measures, military rule, political and electoral violence, coup, and civil war. For SAB, our most important problem is leadership, and he utilizes his lyrics to admonish leaders copiously about the ephemerality of this world:

Because the one who is in-charge yesterday is in the grave

The one who is in-charge today should take care of today

The one that would be in-charge tomorrow is known only to God

And the next? It is known only to God. (*Current Affairs*)

SAB identifies six (6) problems with Nigerians and the need to change:

Out of several that I know militating against us, I know six that are key:

Selfishness, lack of fear of God, insincere love for one another, impatience, self-inflicted hardship, and over-confidence. (*Current Affairs*)

He then admonishes Nigerians to be prayerful and cooperate with one another to move Nigeria to the Promised Land:

Let us cooperate/ let's cooperate with one another to do it well/ So that we can heave a sigh of relief at the end and be grateful/ The only way out is to cooperate with one another in this/ If we can be patient, what is not enough today will soon be plentiful/ Let us be full of prayers/ Let us know what we are doing for peace to reign. (*Current Affairs*)

SAB admonishes Nigerians to love one another sincerely:

A small room is enough for 20 boys to live and enjoy,
if we love one another sincerely (*Barry at 40*);

and to live in peace and eschew violence, painting the gory pictures of war that ravaged communities across Africa such as in Liberia.

Admonishing on the recklessness of heroism and despotism without humanity, he cites the instance of Adolf Hitler of Germany whose grave remains unknown till

today, a phenomenon which for Africans is a sign of the abominable life he lived:

No one knows Hitler's grave till today

The soldier perished without a marked grave for him

He becomes forgotten and unsung at the end of his life

Human beings will suffer the reward of their bad deeds on this earth

Before going to meet the greatest of doom and suffering in heaven. (*The Truth*)

SAB harps on the word "General" which is a military rank which the Head of States give themselves not long after becoming one to sermonize them to provide amenities for the masses in general the way they provide promotions and comfortable lives for themselves:

Plenty of Generals/ We are not asking you not to become Generals/ But generate for us in general/ Provide jobs in general/ Provide housing in general/ Let there be food in general/ And buy generators for NEPA so that we can have stable electricity in general/ Buy also for Water Corporation so that they give us water in general/ So that generations yet unborn would not curse you./ Electricity outage in Ikoyi must be a mistake./ and if there should be light off in GRA/ Within three minutes it is back/ Whereas among the masses,/ They may not have light for two months/ The whole family sleep in darkness/ Hot weather is not body-friendly/ And light is incomparable to darkness/ Yet we are all Nigerians./ Here is the issue in general. (*The Truth*)

He goes ahead to admonish those who embezzle public funds, leading to untold hardship for the masses, to stop it and return the money, otherwise, grievous punishment awaits them and their children both in this world and in heaven. He also cites the example of Qooruna and Nebukadnezar who were extremely wealthy, and how God dealt with them in this world before they died in shame.

SAB sermonizes that we vote out non-performing leaders:

We are the ones oppressing ourselves (3ce)/ Whoever we voted in/ after being sworn in/ if he doesn't do what we want/ If they contest again we should not vote for them again/ Whatever the personality or the party involved/ The term would soon expire,/ If they contest again we should not vote for them again. (*Questionnaire*)

Aside from electoral violence and change of leadership conflict, SAB decries the problem of our backward strides in industrial and technological development in Nigeria. He admonishes Africans, especially the Nigerian leadership to come together and come up with measures on how to get out of our backward and dependent status. For him, there is no difference between the white and the black except the skin colour as both were created by the same God. He thus calls for government support for the masses, and cooperation between the rich and the poor:

It is the same God that creates the black that also creates the white

We blacks should think deeply about this as whites also engage in knowledge sharing.
(*Aiye*)

In Aiye, he recalls that we have had Nigerians who built a vehicle and another that built an aeroplane/helicopter that remains to fly in Maiduguri, but appeared not to have been supported by government or philanthropists in Nigeria. He admonishes government and philanthropists to support and encourage effort-making people to achieve great things for the country. However, he admonishes the Nigerian masses to stop their preference for imported products and patronize made in Nigeria materials:

If the white person is producing rice for sale at exorbitant prices
And if the black does their own even at lower prices
Even if its better than White's, we still go for White's
Thereby throwing outside the money that should be inside. (*Aiye*)

He identifies envy, hostility, and pull-him-down syndrome as the banes of our underdevelopment, admonishing Nigerians to shun this evil attitude:

The whites use their brains to build planes, ships and instruments
We have our own intelligence but for envy
When young ones have money and you envy them
A young person builds a six storey, whereas you have not built a one storey
Then you start hostility against the person. (*Aiye*)

SAB advises that we should stop the envy of one another and at least embark on the production of some few products, such as fertilizer, learn whatever we need to learn and produce these products, not minding to start small:

What does the White call fertilizer?/ It is the soil on the garbage dump/ Add chemicals and that's all/ Let's think deeply about this/ Let's learn how the chemical is produced, and add the garbage soil/ So that we can at least succeed in producing one product effectively/ And stop envying one another pointlessly. (*Aiye*)

Lamenting about the pull-him-down syndrome in Nigeria and Africa, he asks:

What exactly is the problem with us in Nigeria?/ When the White sees a young man struggling to be successful/ They will support him to ensure he succeeds/ How he will succeed is what preoccupies them/ Their joy comes when he eventually succeeds/ What exactly is wrong with we blacks? (*Okiki*)

During the military rule in Nigeria, SAB bares his confusion about the state of the Nigerian nation, and in spite of the military rule at the time, sermonizes the politicians as follows:

Nigeria/ which way are we going (2ce)/ For military men to rule/ our nation at all times/
Politicians/ you better get together/ to practice democracy/ in the way it should be done/
Let's get together/ and do things in common/ For the benefit of our nation/ and the
incoming generation/ Let's think twice before we move (2ce). (*Fantasia Fuji*)

He sermonizes that cooperation, observing democratic ideals and sportsmanship are the necessary criteria for political emancipation from the grip of the military and for national development. He admonishes politicians to be fair in their dealings, shun election rigging, solve the problem of inflation and other economic challenges, increase workers' salaries, fulfil their electoral promises, and improve generally on the welfare of the masses:

Any politician who make promises before election/ But refuses to fulfil their promises is an enemy of God/ Power resides with the politicians/ But we the electorates are also wise/ You will soon exhaust your four year term/ After all, you would never enter the voting booth with us when it's time to vote/ Do well to increase workers' salaries/ A worker who takes home N120 as salary would pay for transport, food/ And takes care of his family,/ Before six days the salary is finished/ This austerity measure is such a serious matter/ Affecting both the rich and poor but in varying degrees/ One can only spend money when he has it./ Inflation is also rife in European countries, in America and the world over/ It is also affecting all Africa countries/ However, that of Nigeria is worse./ Truth be told the masses are suffering/ We should not be paying electricity bills without the light, and water bills without the water./ Let Nigeria be comfortable to live in/ We are saying it at the top of our voices that we the masses are really really suffering/ Do not, because someone does not support your party, construct a road that would take over his well-documented house/ Fear God, Oh you Nigerian politicians

.....

Don't let our case become like that of some other country before we wise up/ When Nkrumah was their leader/ Their nation was very prosperous and was the pride of Africa/ Imagine their situation today/ We are not saying this to spite them, may God comfort them/ We should be exemplars by all standards/ Please don't let us become the one from whom people would learn lessons/ Give us standard hospitals/ And give us education which is most essential. (*Nigeria*)

SAB commences his sermonizing here by clearly stating the basis: whichever politician that refuses to fulfil his promises is an enemy of God. In a nation where religious belief in God is paramount, this is the ultimate. SAB is telling the politicians not to turn themselves into enemies of God because no human can win such a battle. He calls for sportsmanship when election results are declared, makes reference to Ghana, and pleads with Nigerian politicians not to allow Nigeria go the way of Ghana who by then had to run to Nigerian cities where they "scavenge" to survive.

The sociocultural economic and political context of Nigeria as a nation provides the fertile ground for SAB's lyrics. This includes an air of religiosity which permeates the lives of the people, bad governance, the perennial high level of poverty, and a low standard of living occasioned by unemployment, laziness, government insensitivity and a lack of progressive policies that respond to the people's plight. Others are rising population versus retrogressing economy, family disorientation, illiteracy and falling standards of education, incessant military rule, massive corruption in government circles, and electoral fraud. These are negative situations that could make a person misbehave, perhaps resort to devilish antics to make money, and develop psychiatric

issues. SAB's music thus seems to provide some succour, motivation, and hope to his audience through his sermonizing acts in his various albums. There is a shared mutual knowledge and shared religious knowledge between SAB and his audience. As a public commentator, therefore, he is always on the side of the masses, and takes care not to offend their religious, economic and cultural sensibilities. His lyrics are for the entire nation, suggesting that he takes into cognizance the macro context with references to settings and participants such as MKO Abiola, Abacha, NADECO, and Nigeria's political history at the national level (e.g. in the album *Nigeria*). The currency of his lyrics and his perpetual engagement with the government attest to his profound courage, sensibility, wisdom and scholarship.

The beauty of songs as a vehicle of sermons is the timelessness of both the song and the sermonizing acts: people of all ages continue to listen to them with their impactful messages even after the death of the singer. The implication of this is that people continue to take lessons from the lyrics anywhere and anytime they listen to them, especially SAB's music which is full of sermonizing acts and is rich with Nigerian political history.

Although most of the time he engages from the ideological base of the Islamic religion, he is not entirely limited to this as he incorporates Christian views with biblical quotations and plenty of traditional wisdom into his philosophy and sermonizing acts. However, rather than quoting endlessly from these religions, he prefers to cite life experiences to show the reality of his claims. Therefore we see him as a public Prophet (he once described himself as Fuji Prophet sent to perform Fuji music for the people), constantly engaging his people in how to live their lives in the best mode through his sermonizing acts.

His discourse appears limited to the Yoruba-speaking people because most of his lyrics are in Yoruba, perhaps due to his music genre which seems not entirely amenable to the English prosody. Thus any attempt to anglicise his lyrics might lead to a loss of their rhythm, tune, melody, and a host of other musical voice beautifications such as his unique high pitch renditions. SAB is Yoruba, and Yoruba is a tonal language compared to English which is stress-based, although he often briefly switches codes such as Hausa, Arabic and English. This limitation, however, has not affected the universality of his sermonizing acts and message as he often cites historical instances from beyond Nigeria (e.g. Ghana, Libya, Liberia, USA, Russia, Germany, etc.) to support his sermonizing acts. He tried a few times though in *Fantasia Fuji* and *Maturity* where he drops some lines in English in a most beautiful rendition. It is certain that had SAB lived longer, he could have felt challenged by the hip-hop musicians who render their lyrics in hybrid of languages, and I am also certain that he would have done it beautifully judging from his astounding musical talents and from what he did in the two albums just mentioned. The beauty of using his indigenous language Yoruba is that his lyrics are able to reach all the people who speak that language, Yoruba or non-Yoruba, young and old, leaders and followers, educated or not, literate or not. Therefore, common ground is fully established and co-construction of ideas takes place freely.

7. Conclusion

This paper has shown that the clergy are not the only kind of people that engage in sermonizing, and that a non-religious setting such as music is also amenable to performing this pragmatic act. The kind of sermonizing that music can do has also been discussed, judging from what SAB has done with his lyrics. Beyond providing exceeding entertainment to his teeming audience and fans, SAB has utilized the instrumentality of his lyrics to perform the pragmatic act of sermonizing, touching on five crucial aspects of social, economic, spiritual, political and developmental life of the Nigerian people. The Nigerian situation of underdevelopment, wrong socioeconomic and political attitudes, political upheaval and evils provide the right context for his sermonizing acts. We thus see SAB as a passionate public commentator and a great, courageous lover of his country and of everything good and excellent. We also see him as a lover of his people who wants the best for them. He never allowed himself to be cowed by the brutality of the military regime of the time. His ideas are positive, national, well-rounded and focussed.

SAB's pragmatic act of sermonizing seems to be what Nigeria needs more than mere entertainment, which appears to be the only value that most of the contemporary hip-hop musicians in Nigeria have to offer so far. His sermonizing acts are deep and comprehensive, and revolve around building not only a complete, prosperous human figure and family, but also a prosperous and peaceful nation. The lyrics have something fresh and refreshing for all categories of people, particularly Nigerians, especially at this contemporary time. The reach, availability, involuntary audience, memorisability, scope, repetitiveness, poetic aesthetics, timelessness and entertainment nature are the crucial values that combine to give SAB's lyrics a lasting influence on human minds and action.

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