

## Pragmatic acts in selected Ilorin Waka

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### Abstract

*The Ilorin Waka is an islamic and cultural oral entertainment form, usually performed at a given ceremony. During its performance, people gather to savour the melody that the solemn danceable local rendition provides. The Waka is an interplay of education, sermonisation or sensitisation and other sundry messages bothering on serious matters of life, skillfully and meaningfully woven together in unique language. However, this form of poetry has not received enough schorlarly attention to underscore its pragmatic values. The purpose of this study is to analyse the Waka lyrical poetic discourse with the objective of highlighting how Waka performances serve as acts of doing things. The data selected for analysis is a snippet of Waka rendition taken from one of the earliest Waka exponents, late Alhaji Imam Laro Mohammed as documented in Jimba (1997). Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts and Altieri's (1975) Poem as Acts theories are adopted as theoretical framework for study. Findings from the analysis reveal the multiplicity of activities being performed in just a snippet of an utterance to include the acts of challenging, assuring, seeking, avoiding, warning, advising, referring, declaring, asserting and describing, all being speaker-based. At the level of the hearer, the acts of imagining, self-probing and being resolute were also shown. The study is also a revelation of some psychological, metaphorical, referential and inferential acts at the textual part of the Waka pragemme. In all, the study validates the fact that beyond the entertainment value of any typical Waka rendition it is characterised by several pragmatic acts in which both the speaker and the hearer are implicitly engaged.*

Keywords: Ilorin Waka, Pragmatic Acts, pragemme, practs, contextual

### Introduction

Although, language is basically used for communication, it is, in addition, used to imply certain actions that may not be actually stated in an utterance. Negotiating for the unstated but implied meanings of speech, falls within the realm of pragmatics – a field concerned with “the study of linguistic acts and the context in which they are performed”. (Stalnaker, 1975 cited in Adegbija, 1999, p. 189). Included in the variety of discourses in which humans engage, is poetry, a genre, with multiple layers of implied meanings. Its multidimensional meaning potential becomes pragmatically evident, especially when a stretch of utterance is considered based on the notion of discourses being actions. This idea is as propounded in the “Speech-Act” theory by Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Grice (1975) etc. and more recently, in the “Pragmatic Act” theory by Mey (2001). Contrary to the Speech-Act theory, Pragmatic Act theory is a new perspective

to looking at the activities being performed with the spoken or written words from the totality of the utterance constituents and NOT just from any performative verb(s) in the discourse.

Meanwhile, prior to Mey's Pragmatic Acts, scholars had earlier developed the “Poem As Acts theory by which the act content of poetry could be expounded. The application of the “Poem as Act” theory allows for the evaluation of “the quality of the poem as act, by examining how alive it is to the complexity of the situation it presents”.(Altihari, 1975, p.105). Therefore, in this study, the combination of the “Pragmatic Act “ and the” Poem as Act” theories are utilized for explicating the multiple layers of meanings inherent in the Ilorin Waka lyrical data, whose evolution is traceable to the origin of the Ilorin speech community itself.

### Literature review

#### The Ilorin Waka

‘ Waka’ is a distinct oral poetic form,



peculiar to the Islamic speech community of Ilorin, Kwara State of Nigeria which dates back to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and can be categorised under lyrical poetry, considering its characteristic formal and contextual form. On its functionality, Ibitola (2015, p. 21) asserts that, “the Ilorin traditional folklores and traditional music of Waka are a major source of narrating the history of Ilorin which also contain philosophical messages and moral convictions”. This assertion implies that through the linguistic choices by which the Waka lyrics are often times rendered, they serve as platforms for not only mirroring the ills that are inimical to the growth and progress of the local environment, but also ‘philosophizing’ and ‘advocating’ positive acts that ought to be given a pride of place. Of utmost concern in this paper however, are the subtleties of the language of Waka art, which is chanted in the Yoruba language that has been impacted by a few other indigenous languages, as a result of the historical antecedents to the origin of Ilorin as a linguistic community. This is because, although Ilorin city, according to Jimba (1989), Jimoh (1994) and Onikoko (1992), initially evolved as a Yoruba speaking community, overtime however, it witnessed infiltration by an avalanche of different ethnic and cultural groups, resulting in a fusion of the lexical items of the languages in contact, like Hausa, Fulfude, Nupe, Baruba and Arabic, which is the language of the religion generally in practice in the community. Jimoh (1994, p. 9) succinctly captures the resultant effect of the amalgam of the various indigenous and religious languages, when he says: “consequently, a unique Islamic culture with which the diverse culture melted, emerged, and the infectious Yoruba language became the lingua franca”.

It was, and still is, with this dialect of Yoruba language that the Ilorin people conduct their daily businesses, including ceremonies and the accompanying musical and non-musical entertainments, like Dadakuada music, Pankeke music, Balu music, and Waka rendition. Na’Allah (2011, p. 54), rightly asserts that, “in many ways, the development of Waka as an Ilorin traditional genre and as an important symbol of Ilorin

multiculturalism reflect the community’s history and social life”, stressing that, “the Ilorin Waka, even though delivered mainly in Yoruba language, carries Hausa and Fulani cultural flavours with Islamic social contents”.

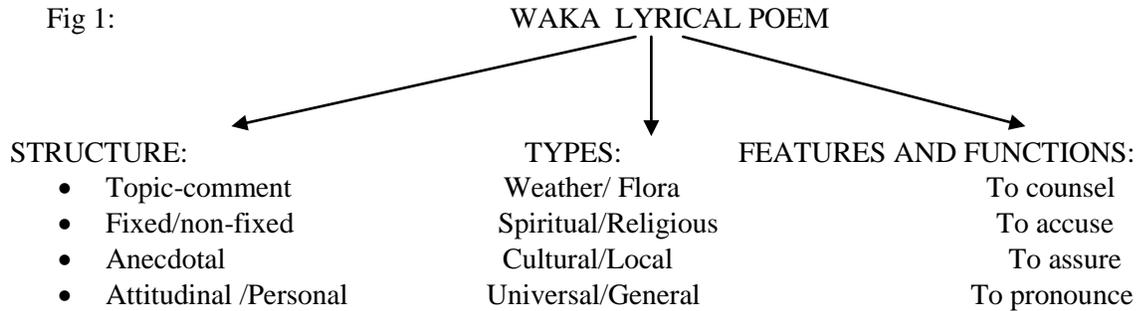
However, there seems to be levels of sophistication in the native speakers’ use of this impacted Yoruba language which could be pinned to their generations, as particularly evident in the Ilorin Waka renditions. Generally, it can be observed that the *senior citizens*’ usages of the dialect is somewhat more advanced in structure than those of the young or average-aged members of the linguistic community. This is a disparity that is also noticeable in the usages by the earliest and latest generation of Waka artistes. In fact, the nearer to history a Waka datum, the richer and sophisticated its language use.

#### **Waka Literary Characteristics**

On a closer and deeper consideration, the Ilorin Waka lyrical poem can be seen to bear literary semblance with the Yoruba proverbs, which, according to Omoloso (2012, p.12), “constitute a special class of utterances, whose meanings cannot be arrived-at by a sole recourse to the meanings of the words of which they are composed...without recourse to contextual considerations”. The similarities shared by both the Ilorin Waka and the Yoruba proverbs in the areas of features, structure, typology and functionality may not be unconnected with the fact that the two art forms are wits and wisdom laden oratures of African tradition. It is for the reasons of sameness, that Odeunmi’s (2007) and Adedimeji’s (2010) categorizations of the nature, structure and functions of proverbs are considered appropriate for adoption in the discussion of the pragmatic acts of the Waka discourse in this work. Their categorization, which are closely related and overlapping, have been fused together to remove the overlap, with an addition of few variables to allow for a deepened analysis of the discourse value of the Waka art. The modified categorization is schematically presented below:



Fig 1:



Source : Researcher Designed

However, studying the Waka poem based on comparison with proverbs or any other literary form only in terms of similarity in structure, thematic underpinnings or functional commitment, may not make for a worthwhile exercise. For a wholesome analysis of the Ilorin Waka lyrical poem, a theory in Pragmatics discipline which takes the context of usage into consideration is quite expedient for employment. Such an exercise will ensure a thorough and down-to-earth explication of the meaning potentials of the Waka discourse, which is noted for its peculiar sourcing of vocabulary from different languages.

### Pragmatics

The word “Pragmatics”, originates from the Greek word, “pragma”, which means, ‘deed’ or ‘action’. The concept developed as a reaction to the purely formalist approach to language (Adegbija, 1999, p. 189). As an insight to what gave rise to the discipline, Mey (2001) notes, that the intense attack, in the late sixties, on earlier theories which bother on ‘syntax- only’ approach to linguistic description occasioned the evolution of pragmatics. The earlier approaches were considered insufficient to interpret utterances, and so, scholars started to provide other paradigms considered useful and usable to account for the meanings of utterances from their contextual perspective. Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975) were among earliest notable pragmatics in this regard. As a linguistic discipline, Pragmatics, generally, concerns the study of language as it is used by people for their own purposes, within their own limits and affordances (Mey, 2001). It is NOT a

study of the extent to which a usage adheres to any rules of the grammar of a language in terms of syntax, morphology or phonetics to negotiate its meanings. Rather, it is the generation of meaning(s) through the deployment of contextual variables to a particular discourse. In the course of deploying context for meaning negotiation, pragmatics take cognizance of the notions of, **implicature, intention, inference, presupposition, mutual contextual belief, speech-acts**, etc. Each of these constitutes, in itself, an area on which pragmatic principles and theories are formulated to deepen the scientific analysis of meaning derivations from any given discourse. Among such theories is, the Speech Act theory, which views language as being used to do things or to perform acts. This Speech Act theory which is a foremost theory in Pragmatics as a discipline is the brain child of J. L. Austin (1962).

### From Speech Act to Pragmatic Act Theory

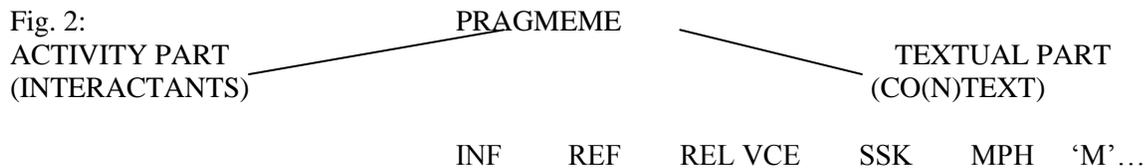
The Speech-act is a communication activity (locutionary act) defined with reference to the intentions of speakers while speaking (illocutionary force of their utterances) and the effects they achieve on listeners (Perlocutionary effect). In essence, the speech act theory and indeed the whole of the concern of Pragmatics is, essentially, on how interlocutors (speakers and hearers) understand one another, in spite of the possibility of their saying what they do not mean, and meaning what they do not say”. Lawal (1997, p. 127). Searle agrees with some of Austin’s classifications of illocutionary acts, disagrees with some and goes ahead to rename those to which he is indifferent, offering additional in-

roads into the explications and understanding of acts being performed with speech. It is noteworthy that, although Austin's (1962) **Speech Acts** theory and the improvement on it by Searle(1969) and other scholars provide the springboard for Mey's (2001) **Pragmatic Acts** theory, Mey departs radically from Austin's and Searle's positions. The main flaws that Mey identifies in Speech Act theory concern the absence of a theory of action and the consideration of the presence of a performative verb in an utterance for the act in it to count. He maintains that a pragmatic look at people using language shows them as performing pragmatic acts. As such, one may conclude that since all human beings are language users, all are engaged in one form of pragmatic acting or another. Therefore, notwithstanding a users' non-compliance with rules, all language usages are

**right**, so long as the users know what they are doing.

In the rational reasoning of Mey (2001), acts performed with language needs not be tied to specific illocuted speech or word, but to the entire utterance. To him, there could be several acts being performed implicitly or explicitly by the interactants (speaker and the hearer) in a discourse. Such generalized pragmatic acts are what Mey subsumes under the concept of **Pragmeme**. A pragmeme, according to him, is the totality of the verbal activities contained in a body of a text or utterance, the variants of which are **practs**, **Allopracts** or **ipras**. In this direction, he provides a schema to guide the understanding and explication of pragmatic acts usually instantiated by content and context in an utterance. The scheme which is made used in this study is as below:

Fig. 2:



- SPEECH ACTS**
- INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS**
- CONVERSATIONAL ('DIALOGUE') ACTS**
- PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTS (EMOTIONS)**
- PROSODY (INTONATION, STRESS,..)**
- PHYSICAL ACTS:**
  - BODY MOVES (INCL. GESTURES)**
  - PHYSIOGNOMY (FACIAL EXPRESSIONS)**
  - (BODILY EXPRESSIONS OF) EMOTIONS**

...

- (NULL)

From the above diagram, a body of discourse or text is conceptualized as a pragmeme, having two opposite left and right sides, one being **Activity** part and the other **Textual** part respectively. In the activity part of a given discourse, by this schema, is contained, the acts that the interactants are performing with their

utterances. The acts range from **direct** and **indirect Speech Acts**, turn-taking verbal exchanges (**Dialogue**), exhibition of **Emotions**, gestures and gesticulations (**Body moves**), deliberate and purposeful varying of voice levels as well as **Facial expressions**, all or some of which the speaker and hearer deploy to make their utterances more meaningful or

understandable. Likewise in the textual part are verifiable instances of **Reference (REF)**, **Relevance (REL)** and **Inference (INF)** made in the speech, allusion to **Metaphors (MPH)** and the **Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK)** evident in the utterance, given the situations and environment in which the speaker and hearer find their affordances. Meanwhile, it is not in every type of discourse that all the classes of activities and contextual features indicated in the Activity and Textual parts of this Mey's schema can be realized. The features are just optional, given the discourse type being examined. For instance, the dialogue feature in the activity part of the schema is practically unrealizable in a lyrical poetic discourse as is studied here, just as it is similarly improbable to account for features like bodily moves and facial expressions in a written or transcribed text as the data for this study. However, what is paramount and relevant to this study is that, "both the interactants and the contexts in which they operate are vital to the understanding of the Pragmeme". Odebumi (2007, p.204)

#### Methodology

The data for study in this paper is a snippet, from one of the various three decades old performances of a prominent Ilorin Waka exponent of his time, the Late Imam Laro Muhammed, the original Yoruba language version which I titled: "*Esan*" ("*Nemesis*"). The snippet of the data is randomly sourced from Jimba (1997). In this study, the original Yoruba language version of the data is first presented in full, side by side with the translation and later analysed in segments, to form five different blocks of utterances, while still being symmetrically linked and discussed. The segmentation is done for ease of a concise and coherent analysis of the entire Waka pragmeme. Also, a deliberate and careful attention is made not to lose the linguistic flavor of the original data by progressively rendering the Yoruba

#### Data Presentation

"Níbi \*kóówa ó pàdè è ta ló yé sí"? *Where everyone will meet with it, who knows?*

"Níbi \*kóówa ó pàdè è ta ló yé sí"? *Where everyone will meet with it, who knows?*

version of every portion of the data referred-to, alongside its translation in the course of analysis. Differentiation between the two versions is indicated with the Yoruba texts in regular type font size, and in quote, while their translations are italicized, throughout the study. Loan words that are contained in the data are also asterisked with a view to calling attention to the effect of their use in the course of analysis.

#### Theoretical Framework

For the descriptive and analytical study of the data, our theoretical model is Mey's (2001) "**Pragmatic Acts**" and Altieri (1975) "**Poem as Act**" theories. Although Pragmatics is a linguistic discipline in which language usage is interpreted from the point of view of users taking context into consideration, the twin theories of "Pragmatic Acts" and "Poem as Acts" that are employed in this study, both primarily on utterances being performances of activities, or communication activities of speakers and hearers. In pragmatic acting generally, interactants are considered as performing actions with the words they speak and hear, and doing so with or without any particular 'action-denoting' word in the utterance. Instead, the totality of the discourse is what constitutes the yardstick to account for the activities in the utterance, technically known as the **pragmeme**. In analyzing the pragmeme of any discourse, as done to Waka in this study, attention is paid to both the activity and textual parts of the utterance, pointing out the conversational, psychological and physical acts, etc, in which the language users are engaged. However, the theory of Poem as Acts is complementarily utilized for data analysis in this work because it is specifically on the explication of poem discourse as a dramaturgy. In other words, because the theory bothers on poetry genre like the Waka and sees poem as performance discourse, it is considered a useful complimentary tool to do an enriching explication of the general Pragmatic Acts contained in the Waka data



- “Ikú tí n wá wa ká tí\* kóowá n yàn lódi” *The death which seeks us but each tries to avoid*
- “Níbi \*kóowá ó pàdé è ta ló yé sí”? *Where everyone will meet with it, who knows?*
- “Èsan ò ní bóti, yìò sèsan fún\* kóowá” *Nemesis cannot be missed, He will apportion it to everyone*
- “Èsan ò ní bóti, yìò sèsan fún\* kóowá” *Nemesis cannot be missed, He will apportion it to everyone*
- “Olówó-ikà n bímọ ẹmí rẹ n gùn” *The devilish rich man bears children and lives long*
- “Kò sì p’Ọlọhun má sèsan fún \*kóowá” *It does not stop God from apportioning nemesis to everyone*
- “Ọlólá-ikà n bímọ ẹmí rẹ n gùn” *The devilish wealthy man bears children and lives long*
- “Kò sì p’Ọlọhun má sèsan fún \*kóowá” *It does not stop God from apportioning nemesis to everyone*
- “Jibìti ò ran Ọlọhun, ẹdá làálù” *God cannot be defrauded, as we do to men*
- “Bóo fẹ o lọ bàrùbá, o lọ ẹ \*dàbàrà” *If you like travel to Baruba land to make charms*
- “Di ataare , o p’ọfọ si, o di yòókù lókùn” *Tie fetish alligator pepper, recite incantations and bind the rest with thread*
- “Kò ságádágodo tó le ran Allahu” *There is no charmed padlock that can cast spell on Allah*
- “Tó lè p’Ọlọhun má sèsan fún kóowá”. *To prevent God from apportioning nemesis to everyone.*

### Analysis

The data above is though a mono stanzaic poetic form, its lines can be segmented into four, in the progression of the different **practs** being expressed in each segment in pursuance of the main theme of the Waka. The first segment, which comprises the first four lines and which opens up on a note of challenge to ‘humans’ in general reads thus:

- “Níbi \*kóowá ó pàdé è ta ló yé sí”? *Where everyone will meet with it, who knows?*
- “Níbi \*kóowá ó pàdé è ta ló yé sí”? *Where everyone will meet with it, who knows?*
- “Ikú tí n wá wa ká tí\* kóowá n yàn lódi” *The death which seeks us but everyone tries to avoid*
- “Níbi \*kóowá ó pàdé è ta ló yé sí”? *Where everyone will meet with it, who knows?*

The text can be said to be an implicit act of challenging the audience through the rhetorical interrogative clause: “Ta ló yé sí” ?” (*who knows?*), because, it expresses the lack of knowledge, by humans, of the venue and perhaps

the circumstance of his eventual death. Thus further implying that human beings are both ignorant and feeble, concerning the fate of death that awaits him, the assurance of which the Waka also expresses, even without any verb denoting it



in the text. Further to the expression of these two speaker-based **practs** of assuring and challenging, is the ignition of the audience's mental process of thought, by leveraging on the **Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK)**, to make the listener engage in the psychological act of 'imagining' an occasion when he will cease to exist; an unpreventable development, whose venue he cannot predict. This affective quality or influence of the Waka on the hearer, depicts the felicity force of the utterance in instilling fears in the reader, thus leading him to the **pract** of being 'resolute' at exhibiting righteousness. By so doing, the Waka achieves one of the functions for which it is purposed, namely, to counsel. It is however interesting to note the opposite direction of movement of the 'humans' and the 'Death', placed before the audience in this same portion of the poem, particularly in the utterance: "*The death which seeks us but each tries to avoid*". By this sentence, both the death and human beings are presented as two dramatic personae acting on a drama stage, one 'seeking', the other 'avoiding'. While death continuously seeks or hunts for the man, the hunted man contemptuously avoids it. The use of the two main verbs, "*seek*" and "*avoid*" in this relative clause, is quite purposeful, because, while the first verb, picks up the illocution of an imaginary act of seeking, by an imaginary being (i.e. death,) and in an imaginary 'context;', the second verb picks up the illocution of the physical act of avoiding by the physical human in a physical context. Again, in this same speech event can be found, the presence of a **Metaphor (MPH)**, evident in the manner the Waka presents one of the persona involved in the ultra-directional rat race between man and death. It is metaphorical (MPH) that, 'death', an abstract phenomena, is said to be 'seeking' and at the same time being 'avoided', as would a concrete, physical or an animate object. Based on all these different **ipras** and **allopracts** seemingly being dramatized and functionalized in this first part of the poem, the reader is led to the second segment which is represented by the single fifth line of the text, which reads as : "*Èsan ò ní bóti , yìd sèsan fún\* kóowá*" (*Nemesis cannot be missed, He will*

*apportion it to everyone*).

The audience, at this juncture, is presented with another different but coherent dramatic situation consequential to the one in the preceding part. His attention is 'shifted' from the previous physical world situational context (where human and death engage in an imaginary hide and seek game) to a different realm or context, existing in the after world, which is understood by foregrounding the **Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK)** existing between the speaker and the listener. While the protagonist and the antagonist in the first drama stage (man and death) are explicitly locuted, the casts here change to the Man and God. But, it is only the protagonist, God, represented with the pronoun, 'HE', that is referenced here. Although it is not explicitly stated, the reader is able to draw the right inference that "God" is the implied sharer of the 'nemesis', to which the utterance refers. It is however noteworthy that, the anecdotal nature of the poem, similar to that of a proverb is noticeable in this line, just as in the first and second parts of the poem. The poem is an 'anecdote', advancing the concept of the law of retribution, applicable in the life beyond to which by dogma, all humans agree even with no scientific proof. Also, the structural feature of a poem having a topic and comment elements is brought to the fore in this portion of the datum. While the topic of the first part is 'death' and the comment is man's ignorance of its venue, the topic of the second part is 'nemesis' and the comment is its inescapable apportioning. All the allopracts in these two parts jointly exhibit the functions of 'counseling' and 'warning'. These first and the second parts of the data show human beings on the earth, transiting through death to the world beyond where he would be visited with the consequences of his actions while on earth. These two parts, also form one of the areas to which the universal appeal of the poem can be pinned as they touch on 'death' and heavenly 'nemesis', which are not exclusive to a particular person, nation or race, but are universally believed, (through the **SSK** and **SCK**) to be attributable to mankind in general. The third part of the poem which runs from the



sixth to the eighth line further connects to the preceding parts, as it re-enacts man, no longer in heaven as found in the immediate last line, but on

“Olówó-ikà n bímọ èmí rẹ n gùn” *The devilish rich man bears children and lives long*

“Kò sì p’Ọlòhun má sẹsan fún \*kóówá” *It does not stop God from apportioning nemesis to everyone*

“Ọlólá-ikà n bímọ èmí rẹ n gùn” *The devilish wealthy man bears children and lives long*

“Kò sì p’Ọlòhun má sẹsan fún \*kóówá” *It does not stop God from apportioning nemesis to everyone...*

This portion of the poem contains the pract of ‘description’, made vivid and intensified with adjectives of different connotations: ‘*devilish man*’, ‘*rich man*’, ‘*wealthy man*’ and ‘*long life*’. There is also the **pract** of ‘naming’ deducible from the utterance’s reference to life successes, symbolized in the possession of riches, wealth and progenies. These luxuries are not only ‘named’, but also ‘rendered’ inconsequential in the allotment of nemesis by God should their possessor be devilishly inclined. Inferentially, it is a **metaphor (mph)**, that these triple allures of life (riches, wealth and children) which ordinarily should be useful to their possessor to get-off the hook of the wages of sins in life, become useless in warding-off nemesis in the after-life. The utterance implicitly ‘alludes’ to the fact that the natural order of this life is reversed in the after-life, as a man becomes incapacitated to use what he owns to assuredly get what he undeservedly desires contrary to what obtains here on earth. Also, it is a paradox that “favour” and “disfavour” are placed in opposition to be successively accruable to a particular individual in the dramatic temporal movement of the speaking voice of the poem. The discourse is

“Bóo fẹ o lọ bàrùbá, o lọ ẹ \*dàbàrà” *If you like travel to Baruba land to make charms*

“Di ataare , o p’ọfọ si, o di yòókù lókùn” *Tie fetish alligator pepper, recite incantations and bind the rest with thread*

“Kòs’ágádágodo tó le ran \*Allahu” *There is no charmed padlock that can cast spell on Allah*

The declarative act which is performed in the above utterance with the explicit use of the verb,

earth, exhibiting different actions. The reference to the different symbolic acts of humans in life is couched in the following lines:

inferentially understood and interpretable as saying ‘favour’ here in life (could) attract ‘disfavour’ in the hereafter, if the former is not positively utilized. This is because, it is a divine favour to be provided with the essentials of life as the poem recounts but such a provision turns out to be the instrumentality of attracting disfavour in the life beyond, if the fortunate man of success, gets steeped in the allures of his affluence, and throws caution to the winds, in his dealings with his fellow humans. He gains the world but loses his soul; So, what does he profit?, the poem seems to imply. It is necessary to point out again that together with the first and the second this third part of the data contributes to the general and universal appeal of the entire pragmeme of the data because the type of man ‘*described*’ as being affluently blessed but devilishly inclined exists in all ages and across climes and cultures. This third part also marks the attitudinal literary feature of the poem, as it points to the negative personal attitude of some class of men in the society taking the shared cultural knowledge (**sck**), into consideration.

The last part of the datum opens on a note of declaration when it says:

travel, also contains a presupposition. This is because, the reference to ‘*Baruba land*’ as the



place to which the audience is urged to travel, presupposes the existence within space of a referent that is so called, which is known to the speaker, and which he (the speaker) assumes may also be known to the audience taking for granted the shared situational knowledge (ssk) existing between them. It is this presupposition that leads the speaker to exhibiting the act of 'referring' to, not only a place named *Baruba land*, but also to an unnamed addressee made identifiable with the second person singular/plural pronoun, in the clause: '*if you like*'... This 'referring' act is done alongside the act of 'directing', issued to the hearer to '*travel to Barubaland*'. But compliance to the directive is also made optional, with the proviso: '*if (you like)*'; even though, this act of giving an 'option' will count only in consideration of the literal connotation of the word, '*if*'. Aside the literal consideration, the pragmatic act inherent in the word 'if' within the content and context of the utterance goes beyond giving a condition or option. The speaker can be understood as 'rendering' into a nullity, the travelling to Baruba to make charms. The poet is saying that, embarking on such a journey will be null and void and of no effect. Therefore, the allopracts contained in this first line of the last part of the datum, are those of 'referring', 'directing' and 'optionalising'. But the speaker is not silent on the reason for which the audience is 'directed' to 'optionally' travel to the place it 'refers'. It gives an explicit 'assertion' of the mission to Barubaland as going there '*to make charms*', which include, '*fetish alligator pepper*', '*spell-casting*', '*incantations*', '*thread-binding*' and '*charmed padlock*'.

It is from this last part of the poem that the reader begins to discern a dramatic change of focus and a descent from the universal or general appeal to African cultural/local relevance, based on the images and imageries (of places and activities) being created in the mind of the audience. This part is the flagship of the Africaness of the datum, notwithstanding its thematic universality, bothering on the phenomenon of death and its aftermath. In other words, it is at this point, that the 'acts of the poem' shifts to a stage dressed in African

costumes, with the protagonist (which all along has been the Man) now cast as performing acts that are contextually peculiar to African environment.

However, the utterance is felicitous enough to trigger some probing questions in the mind of the audience - to wit ; why, of all places, is Baruba land singled out for mention ?, why is the reference to that place in relation to charms?, why does charm making take the fancy for mention? As the reader is psychologically engaged in this self probing activity, he is simultaneously drawing some inferences, like:

- perhaps the speaker is leveraging on humans' particularly Africans' belief in the efficacy of charms to avert consequences of their negative actions;
- perhaps, charms, generally, have levels or grades in terms of efficacy; and
- perhaps, Baruba land is reputable for the *manufacturing* of more efficacious charms than any other places.

All those activities are triggered in the audience in his attempt at getting the speaker's true intention behind the utterance. But the poem later goes ahead to point out another caveat in the concluding line when it declares that "*There is no charmed padlock that can cast spell on Allah*". With this 'declaring' act, the poem does the act of 'nullifying'. The import of the statement is that, although it is characteristic of man, especially Africans, to resort to charms to avert calamities, and notwithstanding the acclaimed proven efficacy of the made-in Barubaland brands of charms, they are a nullity when "*nemesis*" is the ailment or catastrophe purposed for cure or prevention. In effect, the speaker is implying that, it is foolhardy on the part of man to, rather than taking to good deeds have the mindset of the instrumentality of propitiation with charms against the after-life *nemesis* for his diabolic acts on earth.

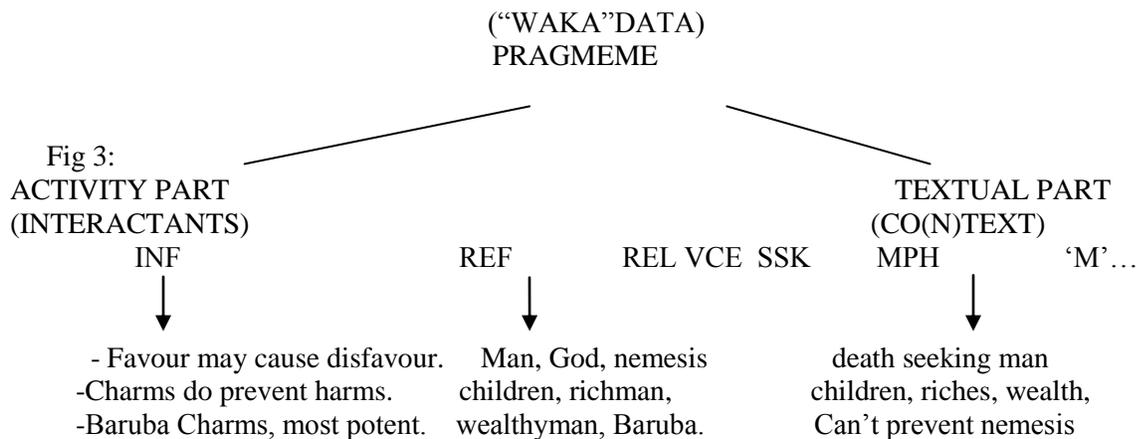
Generally noteworthy is the choice of the Hausa vocabulary of "*Kowa*" and the two Arabic lexis of "*Allahu*" and "*Dabara*" in this Yorùbá language rendered poem . While *Kowa* and *Allahu* directly translate to "everyone" and "God" respectively, the



Arabic word, “*Dabara*” is a corrupt form of “*Da’bbara*”, meaning ‘plan’ or ‘preparation’. Its choice for use may not be unconnected with the fact that perhaps the propitiations that is available in Baruba land is also usually ‘prepared’ through concoction of different items for use. This practice of code mixing is in itself an exhibition of multiculturalism on the part of the speaker and an implied presupposition by him of the hearer’s competence to interpret same. This act also signals the Islamic faith to which the poet

professes and further situates the poem as emanating from not only a Muslim environment, but one with sundry languages “impacted” or “infected” speech community.

All the preceding identified pragmatic acts in the Waka data which have been analyzed based on the theoretical perspective of Mey (2001) are hereby highlighted in summary form below, as a demonstration of the relevance of the pragmatic acts schema of Mey to the Waka :



**SPEECH ACTS**

(Seeking, Avoiding, Declaration)  
As in: “*Iku ti n wa wa ka ti kowa n yanlodi*” (*Death which seeks us but each tries to avoid*)  
“If you like...  
I. Travel to Barubaland  
II. Make charms  
III. Tie fetish alligator pepper  
IV. Recite incantations  
V. Bind the rest with thread “

**INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS**

‘Challenging’ as in: “*Ta ló yé sí?*” (*who knows?*)  
‘Warning’ as in: “*Èsan ò ní bóti*” (*nemesis cannot be missed*)  
‘Assuring’ as in: “*Yó sèsan fún kóowá*” (*He will apportion it to everyone*)

**CONVERSATIONAL (‘DIALOGUE’) ACTS**

Not Realised

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTS (EMOTIONS)**

- I. Imagining
- II. Determination/resolute
- III. (agitated) probing

**PROSODY (INTONATION, STRESS,..)**

- I. “*Ta ló yé sí?*” (*Who knows?*)
- II. “*Èsan ò ní bóti*”! (*Nemesis cannot be missed!*)
- III. “*Jibiti ò ran Ọlòhun*”! (*God cannot be defrauded!*)

**PHYSICAL ACTS:**

**BODY MOVES (INCL. GESTURES)** Not Realised

**PHYSIOGNOMY (FACIAL EXPRESSIONS)** Not Realised

**(BODILY EXPRESSIONS OF) EMOTIONS** Not Realised

- (NULL)

**Findings and Conclusion**

The foregoing descriptions and analysis of the study data has shown that, beyond being an entertainment platform, several practs permeate



through the Ilorin Waka art form through which the poem performs the different functions of counseling, assuring, warning etc, all of which are aimed at appealing to the conscience of its audience thus causing it to be resolute at being of good conduct. Invariably, through this reformatory act, the Waka further justifies the long held view of language being a veritable tool for societal development. Besides, apart from the Ilorin Waka depicting the characteristic features and structures of a literary piece, the study also reveals instances of dramaturgy noteworthy in a poetry genre. Also, although Waka is a portrayal

of the language plurality in the speech community of Ilorin and reflects the peculiar Yoruba dialect being spoken, the universal appeal of the issues it often times addresses, makes its relevance transcend the local environment for which it is performed.

It can therefore be concluded, from the findings, that the Ilorin Waka, like all discourses, is an implicit performance of verbal activities, with the potency to linguistically impact on the psychology of its audience for a positive attitudinal change.

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