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## ***Halals and Harams of Aesthetic Performance as Cultural Early Warning System: Field Notes<sup>1</sup>***

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1. As a Muslim Hausa feminist from Nigeria the form of fundamentalism that I have had most direct experience of and with is Muslim fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria. However, it should be made clear from the outset that fundamentalism, as I use the term here, is not peculiar to Islam. The Gush Eminim in Israel, the Baharariya Janata Party (radical Hindus) and militant Sikhs in India, the Christian Right in the USA (like the Oregon Citizen's Alliance) are all fundamentalist. Fundamentalisms then are widely varied in form and appear in many places.<sup>2</sup>
2. ...Among the right-wing jihadist terror groups of contemporary world, Boko Haram has decidedly a notoreity that is right there among the most heinous in calculated, maximum savagery. ...Indeed, with this act of sex slavery and mass rape, Boko Haram is now less like the Taliban and more like John Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) of Uganda...the LRA is a violent fundamentalist Christian sect while Boko Haram

is a fundamentalist Jihadist Muslim group.<sup>3</sup>

### **Background**

In an age of global terror, with a social space increasingly powered by monologic narratives, and now compounded by the proliferation of small arms, how can laughter— the agency of humour, art, and the aesthetics of the sublime —come to the rescue?

At the core of this research paper is an approach that seeks to understand how, at the ideational and performative levels, these aesthetic forms are being utilised by informal, ubiquitous media, even sometimes counter-cultural formations to contend with such extremist ideologies as Boko Haram's in yet a shared aesthetic public sphere as Nigeria's. Besides this, it is also of interest to the research how this is playing out among Muslim aesthetes and artistes in Yoruba-Nigeria. Meanwhile, this could sound laughable with interests committed to resolving global conflict solely with the logic of a Military-Industrial Complex!

The paper critiques such a strategy of reading contemporary conflict, and goes ahead to suggest the conceptual notion of "Cultural Early Warning System" as a potentially viable alternative in the long run. Apparently, seemingly innocuous cultural forms such as the quasi-Islamic derived *Fuji* musical performance, the *Waasi* prose-poem tradition of the, sometimes, itinerant Yoruba Muslim cleric, and the Third Cinema tradition of a Muslim aesthete like Tunde Kelani can also tell deep tales through an age-old African cultural assumption of the capacity of aesthetics to neutralise evil.<sup>4</sup> It needs to be mentioned that "Boko Haram" as used here has both literal and figurative resonations; besides its documented choice of extremes, it has now, in the Nigerian popular imagination, acquired the idea of any such moment, group or instantiation of monologic narrative and circumscription of the public sphere in general.

This is the outcome of a prior ethnographic exploration of an ongoing subject, in terms of actors met, literature explored and audio-visual materials watched and analysed etc. This will consequently inform the unveiling choice of literature, methodology used, presentation of the aesthetic response to Boko Haram by the Yoruba Muslim aesthete and the overall approach adopted in this ongoing research. While Fuji had existed as a musical genre prior to the onset of the current development, the *Waasi* prose-poem sermon tradition referenced here and two agit-prop like dance drama by the cineaste Tunde Kelani, are direct responses to the Boko Haram phenomenon! Even when I am not using any Fuji track which is responsorial to the crisis, it remains pertinent for analysis nonetheless because of its seemingly sacred Islamic origins before sliding to a secular, popular cultural form. Reaction to it by Islamic clerics (who abore a presumed 'syncretic' narrative form) would be equally quite informing of our evolving conceptual and theoretical notion of Cultural Early Warning System (CEWS), especially when conjoined with responsorial aesthetic forms; it would hopefully allow for the emergence of a more dialectical perspective. In short, this research seeks to understand two interrelated cultural phenomena: one, how the Yoruba Muslim aesthete is artistically responding to the ideological narrative of Boko Haram; two, how their chosen performance forms could be used as an aesthetic index to measure the tolerance phases of potential extremist, monologic religious ideologues and narratives within the Yoruba.

#### **A 'Glocal' View**

It would seem apt to suggest that with the enthronement of a unipolar world, especially after the twin factors of the collapse of both the Berlin Wall and the Soviet empire, religious fundamentalisms through groups like the Islamic Boko Haram of Nigeria and the Christian Lord Resistance Army of Uganda, as two cases in point, have further flowered and become a crucial aspect of social living in the world of the 21st century. Ironically, they represent a moral government of sorts to their captive audience(s).

In response, I am proposing and hoping to theorise the conceptual notion of CEWS, and seek how applicable this might be in Yoruba-land in relation to Islamic fundamentalist narratives of the likes of Boko Haram in its attempt to reduce or further shrink the aesthetic public sphere. I align closely with Ayesha Imam's apt observation in the epigraph above that "...Fundamentalisms then are widely varied in form and appear in many places." My study is equally aware that rulers, figures of power and moralists have always been suspicious of the ultimate intentions of the creative essence, art and music, especially because of their narrative ubiquity and their potential for critiquing grand narratives. This is so much so that Plato would frown at the use of specific intervals, William Byrd would risk his life by "composing much in secret for the Roman Catholic Church" (Owen et al., 1998:5) and the Kabyl poet-musician Lounes Matoub would lose his life to the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) of Algeria on account of his secularist stance. Even in more recent times, musicians are beginning to flee Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal on account of the twin activities of its northern Ansar-Udeen and the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The constant arrest of musicians by the Hisba (Islamic police) in the northern Nigerian city of Kano goes on with unabated energy, and now—in the bid to escape an encroaching demonization of their art by Islamic clerics—Yoruba Fuji musicians are having to sometimes justify the right to make music on account of an originary instance of licence in the foundation of Islam! And in one moment of desperation, the acclaimed originator of the Fuji form, Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, had a line in his track yelling, "Ara Mecca n jo" (People dance in Mecca)!

This would appear like tricky, interesting times which scholarship seems to be ignoring at the moment, perhaps owing to an uncritical surrender to the methodology of economic determinism. For too long cultural manifestations have been treated as necessarily a consequence of the howling basement of the stock exchange, but as far back as the early 20th century, Georgy Plekhanov had shed light on how culture could develop relative autonomy from its material base, and the art-society dialectic could be a viable index of measuring social dynamics.

While there has been quite a plethora of comments on Boko Haram in the newspapers, there are few field-based research on it, and even the few exceptions are too narrow and particularistic in the framework of policy making as equally noted by Marc-Antoine Perouse (Ed. 2014), who also referenced scholars in this bracket as Waldek & Jayasekara 2011; Aghedo & Osumah 2012; Forest 2012; Onuoha 2012; Idowu 2013; Sampson 2013.

**Conceptual Clarification: 1.) Fundamentalism, 2.) Fuji Performance, 3.) Cultural Early Warning System**

The nuance in our subject matter and the overlapping nature of some of the ideas compel this further clarification of the conceptual notions of the three terms: fundamentalism, Fuji performance, and Cultural Early Warning System.

**1.) Fundamentalism.** On the first term, I make a distinction, for instance, between the notion of fundamentalism as the denial of plurality and insistence on a monologic discourse with the eagerness to harm, on the one hand, from a decision, on the other hand, to hold on to deeply felt humanistic values such as fundamental human rights, for instance, and a readiness to acknowledge a common humanity of all in a plural dialogue of grey areas. Even when a fundamentalist of the former hue described above attempts to resist dominance with strategic essentialism,<sup>5</sup> it is fraught with danger as such a creed dispenses with, *ab initio*, the idea of a common humanity.

**2.) Fuji.** Of all the other forms of the performative, I have chosen to further shed light on the context of Fuji, which is a more local experience in relation to other forms and traditions as the prose-poem of *Waasi* and the Third Cinema tradition, fairly well known since the sixties. As a term, although Fuji is a musical genre, I have deliberately stressed its larger sense of 'performance' to incorporate its self-idea of a cultural moment. It is a development that has seen the form increasingly ingest into its performance practice such counter-cultural activities as a

unique lingo, evident in a trenchant predilection for the post-proverbial in its speech habit and its deeply celebratory language, its ethical subversion, an often provocative dance style, ruse, parody, game of friendly abuse or even joking relationship, and a rhythm and decibel constantly on the 'edge'.<sup>6</sup> It is all this, as well as the enthronement of a zone of *Ariya* (the utterly festive) and *faaji* (a deeply self-indulging form of relaxation), that gives Fuji performance its trenchantly independent personae from both the secularist and the religious homogenising ethos.

**3.) Cultural Early Warning System.** On the third and last item, I guess it is about time that scholarship should move beyond the gross conceptual limitations that have attended to the term 'Early Warning System' (EWS) that may overlook cultural indices, and evolve the more dynamic notion of 'Cultural Early Warning System', as it is being proposed here. It could be argued that the main problem is the practice of this concept, yet our needs here are particularly urgent as scholarship seems fixated by a certain Cartesian binary mind-set that seeks to understand 21st-century social conflict only through economic or militarist prescriptions, and thereby ignoring cultural nuances that I consider equally crucial as a viable alarm system. For instance, as early as 2004, the African Union launched a committee tagged the Peace and Security Council that comprised the following units: the African Standby Force (ASF), the Military Staff Committee (MSC), the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the Panel of the Wise (POW) and the Peace Fund. Collectively, these bodies fall under the umbrella of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). But even then, the sense of early warning in the African Union has not had the benefit of being activated early enough such that the consequence is evident the frequent resort to peace keeping, a situation that has invited the comment of a scholar in the field to suggest that "This reactive approach has proven to be costly both financially and in terms of the loss of human life" (Tiruneh, 2010:10).

While early warning must necessarily address such material root causes of conflict as poverty, inequality, inadequate political representation, the

uneven distribution of resources and all the economic pointers, it fails utterly if it does not conjoin these with the earliest of conflict indicators – *cultural expressivity* of those very conditions. And cultural expressivities are to be found in language and the individual metacognition which, invariably, propel the thought and action that lead to conflicts' dire consequences! And what is more, its media are quite diverse and would include, among others, vocal (speech, song, narrative, proverb etc.), instrumental (music etc.), visual (all performances, the visual arts, etc.) processing of language, besides the vast area of non-verbal cues, signs and symbols as architectonics of meaning production. By the time the Boko Haram took up arms it had exhausted its first phase of attacking the culturally and aesthetically secular and heterodox, and escaped the radar of early warning system largely, one must presume, because it was devoid of the culture indicator.

#### **Method and Review of the Literature**

The research has so far accessed some primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data consisted of In-depth Interviews (IDIs) with Key Informants (KIs) such as religious leaders, Islamic clerics and clergymen, Fuji musicians and session men, while other interviews are currently being held with knowledgeable actors on the subject matter. A short note has been made on tentative outcomes of some of the IDIs conducted with KIs in the section entitled "Clerical Response" below. Other sources of primary data are the collection of CDs and DVDs, both of the preaching of clerics and performance of Fuji musicians. These texts were content-analysed, and new acquisitions will equally be treated in like manner. Secondary data were sourced from books, articles, magazine write-ups, the internet and other relevant literature on music, Fuji music, religion, Islam, ecumenism, fundamentalism, modernity, globalisation and cultural flux.<sup>7</sup> These were analysed using descriptive methods in relation to the theories of cultural studies and peace and conflict studies. The study is currently being anchored on the Habermasian theory of the public sphere (1996). Although I combine the theoretical approach of cultural studies, I do not reduce the dynamics of the unfolding observations from the field to mere

hermeneutic instances devoid of hidden, hegemonic practices. On this combinatorial approach, I have only partially heeded the caution of Houston Baker who stressed the need for an “Improvisational flexibility and a historicizing of form that are not always characteristic of academic responses to popular cultural forms.”<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, primary exploration of literature on this subject matter strongly recommends adopting the 1989 hierarchy of *Handasah al-sawt* genres model developed by the late Muslim art historian, Lois Lanya al-Farouq. In it, she delineates the status of music in the Islamic world, a theme that seems to underlie much of the conflict generated around Islamic (musical) aesthetic reception, as illustrated overleaf.

| ISLAMIC HIERARCHY OF MUSICAL AND NON-MUSICAL GENRES |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Non-Musiqā</i>                                   | -Koranic Chant (QiRa'ah)<br>-Call to prayer (Adhan)<br>-Pilgrimage Chants (Talbiyyah)<br>-Eulogy Chants (Madih, na't, tahmid, etc.)<br>-Chanted poetry with noble themes (Shi'r)          | Legitimate<br>(Halal)                                   |
| <i>Musiqā</i>                                       | -Family and celebration music (Lullabies, wedding songs, etc.)<br>-Occupational music (Caravan chants, shepherds' tunes, work songs etc.)<br>-Military band music (Tabl khanah)           |   |
| <b>INVISIBLE BARRIER</b>                            |   |   |
|   | -Vocal/ instrumental improvisations (Taqasim, layali, qasidah, avaz etc.)<br>-Serious metred songs Muwashshah, dawr, tasnif, batayhi etc.<br>-Music related to pre-Islamic or non-Islamic | Controversial<br>(Halal,<br>Mubah,<br>Makruh,<br>Haram) |



|  |                       |                         |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|
|  | origins               |                         |
|  | <b>OPAQUE BARRIER</b> | Illegitimate<br>(Haram) |
|  | -Sensuous Music       |                         |

Source: Hierarchy of handasah al-sawt genres (the status of music in the Islamic world) (al-Faruqi, 1989)

Justification of three field case studies: 1.) Fuji, 2.) Islam, 3.) Yorubaland

### Case Study 1. Fuji as Signifier of the hybrid

What qualifies Fuji performance as an appropriate barometer for gauging the temperament of Islamic fundamentalism among the Yoruba derives from within and outside of Fuji as an art form itself. One, scholarly evidence suggests that all across the globe, Islamic fundamentalists have, almost always, first sought to attack music and some other aesthetic forms before denouncing other social practices and enactments that may reside in the sphere of the political and the economic. The attack on cultural formations have never been an aftermath but the earliest indicators of fissures in society; although it must be mentioned that they appear largely hidden because, not having secured power, such reactions by fundamentalists have been conducted in the neighbourhoods and out of the glare of the media. Ironically, this remains contemporary scholarship's blind spot, seeking the manifestly economic indices for early warning signs rather than paying attention to the response by zealots to the slippery zone of counter-cultural narrative energy. The fundamentalist seems to be ahead of contemporary scholarship on this count; he understands that narratives endure, so that which is *not his* must be *vilified*, in place of another, which is *his*—that must be *valorised*. To mention a few examples, scholars have established a pattern that ranges from Kabul (Afghanistan), Kidal, Gao, Timbuktu (Mali), to Maiduguri, Kano and Bauchi (Nigeria) (see Korpe, 2004).

A compelling second reason is that Fuji performance, in the monocultural logic of fundamentalists, could be considered as doubly 'guilty' for, one, it emerged from the Islamic sacral form of *Were* music and, also, Fuji not merely encourages but actually does enthrone an

inter-subjective social space. This is based on the assumption that we are using my methodological choice of "Hierarchy of handasah al-sawt genres". Available literature suggest that such an activity of diverting a supposedly sacral form qualifies as a sinful, desacralizing act, while the attempt at social ecumenism by Fuji flies in the face of the creed of fundamentalists, who seek to breed an ideology of social division and inter-communal hatred. Besides, the amalgam ideology that Fuji is makes it occasionally possible for it to resort to a 'hidden' transcript, such as when it resorts to subtle and oblique gesture, joke, humour and parody which "insinuate a critique of power", sometimes even directed at the practices of Islamic leaders. According to James Scott (1990), the 'public' transcript pertains to the nature of contesting power relations, which is resolved in favour of the status quo, while the 'hidden' transcript relates to forms of resistance to dominance in more subtle ways as indicated above.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, Fuji is an adventurous popular cultural form. It arrives not just with songs and a constantly upgraded instrumentation, it has also evolved a total performance tradition that now includes social codes in dress and a powerful tradition of musical visualisation of new albums that herald dance styles bordering on the risqué, and sometimes challenging the traditional notion of proper, female gender poise in puritanical Nigeria. The centrality of Fuji as a potential conflict indicator is further buttressed if we take on board the fact that even when we attempt to limit the scope of its performance by a definition based on its intrinsic musical qualities, its ultimate meaning can hardly subsist without a consideration of its reception, which, as Karin Barber notes of the popular arts in general, is based on conventions— and those conventions are seldom obvious by looking at the art object alone (Barber, 1997). What this suggests is that the Fuji form promises to develop, and, indeed, has, over the years, developed an interpretive community of its own, and is active in spreading its 'muse-licentious'. We are not likely to find Fuji in the traditional taxonomy of radical genres, yet there is an interestingly subversive side to its practice. It is in this sense akin to the discursive modes earlier alluded to by James Scott.

And in spite of emerging from a sacred foundation, Fuji is an unrepentant defender of the ethos of the Yoruba *Ariya*, whose trans-continental double could resonate in the French *joie de vivre*.

### **Case Study 2. Islam as Field Gauging Mechanism**

Having identified the control-logic as foundational to attempts by many institutions of power, and particularly monotheistic religions in this case, to muzzle the arts, my inclination to study this manifestation in Islamic Yoruba experience stems from the sheer data that identify Islamic fundamentalism, of all fundamentalisms among monotheisms, as the most on the prowl in the last two decades, and particularly “with the highest number of trans-border global collaboration, besides its strategy of unbridled enthusiasm for mass homicide” (Berlinerblau, 2005:116).

### **Case Study 3. Yorubaland as site of multicultural sensibility**

The choice of Yorubaland is informed by the paucity of scholarship, beyond newspaper reportage, that has attended to the increasing, even if seemingly non overt, trend of Islamic fundamentalism in Yoruba-Nigeria, and particularly in spite of the triple crisis of Muslim reaction to modernity’s globalisation, activities of the failing states of sub-Saharan Africa—which Nigeria also typifies—and the increasing migration of fundamentalist ideas, persistently occasioned by the incursion of foreign interest groups, into coastal West Africa. Yorubaland is credited for succeeding in thriving as a multicultural, multi-religious environment in spite of the current global crisis. Yet, how far can it be immune from its surroundings, especially with the activities of AQIM and *Boko Haram*? In addition, a study as this would benefit from seeking to understand the Yoruba perception of the place of music in Islam, the perceptions of the Fuji performers themselves in this regard, as well as the disposition of the different Islamic legal schools (*Madhhabs*) on the cultural production and consumption of music.

### **Further Questions for the field**

The research questions in this respect were motivated by the sheer absence of unanimity on the role of music in Islam, and also the fact that there are “very few Islamic scholars who would say that all forms of music are acceptable” (Otterbeck, 2004:11). The research seeks to ask Islamic clerics and Fuji performers what their understandings are of what the Quran and *Sunnah* say about music. Is there a uniform or are there multiple positions on the place of music in society in the reasoning of Islamic exegetes? What are the historical shifts in the temperament of Islam to music—for instance, the marked difference we can allude to between the eras of Umayyad tolerance and Abbasid intolerance?<sup>10</sup> And what similar shifts can be gleaned in the exegesis of Islamic clerics in Yorubaland? Are there local clerics whose systematic analyses of the Quran and Hadith, combined with rigorous reasoning (*Qiyas*), have led to *fiqh*—which could reflect a regional sensibility in so far as it does not conflict with the holy text? Which are the *Madhhabs* (legal schools) among the Yoruba? This last question is raised even though some Sunni theorists claim that the so-called *bab al-ijihad*, i.e. the gate of independent legal thought, was “closed”, at the time of the canonization of the schools of Islamic law (Gordon, 2002:63). The Hanbali sect holds that it was never closed. This has always been a zone of context among reform movements, and it could be rewarding to know what trends among Yoruba clerics suggest a challenge to such stricture and seek to achieve *Tajdid* (reformation).

And since all religious fundamentalisms tend to enthrone a monocultural narrative, and fan hostility against the ‘disruptive’ potential of secular type music, how can this research develop a model of Cultural Early Warning System in Yoruba society in relation to Fuji performance? Taking a continental overview, Martin Chanock has argued persuasively that “religious practices have nowhere been permanent, uniform and unchanging and both they and the doctrines produced through practice have constantly been in flux” (1997:5). In other words, attempts at representing orthodoxy, both on its merit and above other competing forms, may be no more than efforts to privilege a sense of coherence and truism of a particular creed over others. It is in

this context that the field research will seek to find out if there are zones of heterodox discourse of music in Islam, as articulated by Muslim exegetes in Yorubaland?

### **Fundamentalism and the Yoruba Muslim Aesthete:**

#### **(A). The Clerical; (B) The Musical; (B)The Filmic**

In this final section, we bring to sharper relief other outcomes from the field in relation to the clerical, the musical and the filmic, even in their freshly evolving forms in the country.

#### **(A). The Clerical: A Diversity of Certitudes**

Fieldwork conducted in the last two years is suggesting the emergence of some clerical responses to the performance of Fuji. The first example here had actually died decades before the emergence of the Boko Haram, but citing him helps to put in perspective that even for fundamentalism, it is a process. Field report tells of a figure like Alhaji Abdul Azeez Ajagbe mo Keferi being quite intolerant in his sermons. It equally narrates a history of a cleric always wrestling with all that was considered not strictly doctrinaire Islamic—music, masking tradition and traditional rites of passage; and would engage in physical fight to enforce his logic of Islam against a performing masquerade.

While the likes of Alhaji Dr. Sheikh Muhydeen Ajani Bello might be generally conservative, especially on contemporary morality (as most religious clerics across all faiths are wont to), Alhaji Bello cannot be said to fall in the same camp as the former. His is the more persuasive narrative rather than proclamation of physical enforcement of creed and credo. Some of his publications include “Kilo Baiye Je?”, “Imura Ninu Islam”, “Agbara Obinrin”). Other clerics and their publications include Taofeek Akewugbagold (“Kilawase Laye?”), Khaleefah Alhaji Abdul Muh. Raji (“Essence of Human Creation”), among others. What could be said of all, however, is the sharing of a seemingly uniform opposition to the secularisation of the *Were* form that has become *Fuji*. In

addition, they are trenchant in condemning what has been generally described as a betrayal of faith by its largely Muslim practitioners, besides also querying the appropriateness of stylising Koranic verses as song forms. So far no major incident of physical enforcement of creed has been reported in the field. However, such physical enforcements have occurred in relation to screening of films deemed to have referenced the names of some Koranic personages such as Aisha and Aminat. However, the broadcast narrative of these latter clerics is broadly anti Boko Haram.

The tone of preaching by the Yoruba clerics sampled so far is suggestive that while being strict adherents of the Islamic faith, they still stress a measure of cohabitation with the non Muslim as actually an Islamic obligation, and would constantly reference both the Qoran and Hadith to reinforce the sensitivity that Islam pays to the concept and practice of the 'Neighbour'. This would seem to be a sensibility quite apart from the narrative of the Boko Haram, which appears indeed to take off not just from the doctrine of a supremacist ideology of the inferiority of the non Muslim but equally creates a hierarchy of the Muslim worthy of being spared a life in a manner similar to the 'Islamic State', currently on the prowl in Iraq and Syria. Besides, the narrative of the clerics currently under reference also suggests that even western education could be used to extend the Islamic faith.

**(B). *The Musical: "You are Culpable, Fuji"***

The field outcome on Fuji would suggest the possibility of isolating two interlocking strands relevant to the theme of this paper, and can be delineated thus: Fuji performance as purveyor of cultural and aesthetic hybridity and, at the same time, a potential target of fundamentalist ethos. Understanding this conclusion requires a summary of its origins, shifts, and impulses.

The origins of Fuji music are to be found in the earlier genre of *Were* (pronounced Way-Ray), which was a non-secular entertainment form that accompanied the Islamic Ramadan festival. It was some kind of

vigil music that satisfied the communal aesthetic needs of Muslim youths in the evening after the fast-day. During such gatherings, the *GiRa'ah* (Koranic passages) would be chanted, and other passages of the holy text were usually woven into songs, with the lead singer trying out his improvisational skill, incorporating lyrical elements relevant to the context. This was accompanied with sparse drumming.

An evident shift however occurred in the seventies. With the advent of the oil boom, and the proliferation of the *nouveau riche*, with an unabashed passion to celebrate personal wealth and emphasize superior power relations, Fuji was already sliding into a secular art form. The *nouveau riche* had become the substantive patron of Fuji music. However, Fuji is equally copiously indebted to a variety of earlier Yoruba musical forms such as *apala*, *sakara*, and even *waka*, of which the most known proponents are Yusuf Olatunju, Haruna Isola, Ayinla Omowura and Salawa Abeni. Increasingly though, especially in its most recent manifestation, Fuji has sought to distinguish itself from such earlier musical genres like *were*, *apala* and *sakara* through an experimental fusion of western-type instrumentation and other traditional ones. In addition to an aesthetic already tinkered with, and particularly unlike *Were*, it is pursuing an unrelenting course of syncretism. Fuji's 'bastardy', therefore, perhaps derives not so much from a geneological root as such, but from its own consequent rupturing of its antecedent sacral form and the incorporation of a secular idiom.

In the light of the competitiveness and powerful polarity that mark the religious landscape, indigenous forms of worship contesting with both Christian and Islamic religious practices that exist in Yoruba-Nigeria, Fuji artistes have long seen the need to expand the income space without offending the various religious sensibilities. It is therefore not out of place to come across a Fuji song that attempts to amalgamate all three persuasions, as Kollington Ayinla does in "Kasabubu". In the track he alludes to the fact that he has the mastery of entertainment in the same manner that both Christians and Muslims have mastery over the Bible and Quran, respectively. Elsewhere, the musician had

valorised the Yoruba god of metallurgy (Ogun), and the divinity of twins." Even Ayinde Barrister, who is credited for being more mindful of Fuji's religious antecedents, has been 'forced' into the practice of "saje", a term which connotes hybridisation and the breeziness of lyrics, sometimes taken to challenging limits. In its most reductive literal rendering, 'saje' would come over as hen-pecking! Beyond this though, in order to catch the attention of restive youth, the older and more conservative musicians have been found to sometimes make short, quick incursions into the less restrained zones of the likes of Abbas Akande Obesere, the undisputed leader of smutty art. If you are bent on a comparison, then think of Obesere's transcontinental double in the likes of II Live Crew, Dr. Dre, Snoop Doggy Dogg and Ice Cube!

In short, fellow travellers who are likely to confound conservative religious ethos, they basically celebrate the city as an end in itself! Fuji, in the hands of this tendency, may represent the most vigorous obstacle in the way of the flowering of religious fundamentalism, especially with its penchant for creating an intersubjective social space in which all could commingle, irrespective of creed, in their individual search for laughter and the desire to break out of all institutions and creeds of containment. It is precisely this predilection to a common human ethos, this strength to neutralise and dissipate efforts at enthronement of a monologic public sphere that remains Fuji's abiding strength against the fundamentalist ethic that Boko Haram represents, but this is why it may be, in essence, culpable from the stance of such groups.

### **(C). The Filmic: Nouveau Agit-Prop**

The cineaste, Tunde Kelani, has responded to the emerging threat to the closing up of the aesthetic public sphere with the shooting of movements of dance drama, two of which are noted here: *Efura* and *Yoruba Ronu*. This intervention is quite intertextual in habit with the aesthetic response to such similar contexts by the Nigerian creative community. Indeed, at the height of the sixties' political crisis, the nation woke up to the story of a mystery gun-man who had sneaked into a life cast, replaced the broadcast with a poetry of denunciation, and —



called to action! The State pointed accusing finger at Wole Soyinka, arrested him but the charges could not be sustained. In that toe has been Fela Kuti since the seventies with his contestatory sonics and the calculated performance of dissent as a conscious attempt to guarantee the hallway of a robust aesthetic public sphere. What Kelani is doing with these cine-narratives is to graft a lyrical message over the dance visualisation of aesthetic appeal to the sensibilities of cultural diversity in its multilayered manifestations, spacial and ideational. The lyrics, quite didactic but nonetheless deeply reflective as you find with *Efura*:

Yoruba

Eje ka ma fi'fe barawa lo (2ce)  
 Esin Kan ko'pe, rara o,  
 Esin kan ko'pe k'awa ma yan odi  
 become enemies  
 Eje ka ma fi'fe barawa lo

...

Awa yó sóro ile waa o (2ce)  
 festival (2ce)

Esin Kan ko'pe, rara o,  
 Esin kan ko'pe k'awa ma sóro

Awa yó sóro ile waa o  
 festival

English

Let's live in love (2ce)  
 No religion states, none at all  
 No religion mandates that we  
 become enemies  
 Let's live in love

We will celebrate our ancestral

No religion states, none at all

No religion mandates that we forsake  
 our ancestral festival

We will celebrate our ancestral

By using this formulaic in the broad repertoire of other possible songs in the culture for such a moment in national history, the cineaste is already imbuing the street with its own agency of repetition and adaptation in such a game of continual substitution. Along with the lyrics of *Yoruba Ronu*, the lines appeal to the loftiest and noblest ideals of the culture, yet gently drawing also on the group's shared history in the Nigerian nation, and its common ancestry in an originary primogenitor. The key significance here is a narrative struggle between competing mythologies. By mobilising the myth of Oduduwa, the lyrics is also evoking the passion of *alajobi*—an originary sanguine bond of the

Yoruba; the womb thus, as potential signifier of the common protector of tested and enduring ideals, and the timeless abode of the group prior to newly emerging fundamentalist creeds.

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#### End Note:

<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of an on-going book project on modernities of Islam and Yoruba cultural imaginary, in the context of Islamic modernities and contemporary global trends.

<sup>2</sup> Ayesha M. Imam, a member of the feminist group, Women in Nigeria (WIN), made this observation in an article entitled "Women and Fundamentalism", in Marie-Aimee Helie-Lucas (ed.) *International Solidarity of Women Living Under Muslim Law (ISWLUML.Dossier 11/12/13*. Grabels: 1991:13.

<sup>3</sup> This quote by Professor Biodun Jeyifo of Havard University was published by the Nigerian tabloid *The Nation*.

<sup>4</sup> The 19th century British Anthropologist, Edward Tylor had noted of culture as a "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any

other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society" Edward Tylor ([1871] 1958: 1). And this has been aptly summarised by Gray Ferraro and Susan Andreatta as "Everything that people have, think and do as members of society." (Gary Ferraro and Susan Andreatta: *Cultural Anthropology: An Applied Perspective*, Ninth Edition, Wadsworth, Cengage Learning: 2012: 29). This seemingly simple definition activates crucial terms as "have", "think" and "do", verbs that underscore the potential of agency, especially with the last two. What People "Have" could be described as their material culture or possession, what they "think" their ideas, values and attitude, while what they "do" will, more or less, correspond to behaviour pattern; I am inclined to suggest that here is the crux –the impulse for action, its agency.

<sup>5</sup> See section on counter-discourse, in Ashcroft, Bill et al. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. Madison: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Bakhtinian heteroglossia would find easy resonance within the multiple entendre of many African language- play. See, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*.

<sup>7</sup> In his introductory remarks to *The Marabout and the Muse: New Approaches to Islam in African Literature*, London: Heinemann & James Currey, 1996, Kenneth Harrow calls attention to the fact that "Africa's cultural heritage may be seen as comprising multiple filiations," pg. xii.

<sup>8</sup> The author had come to this conclusion after making a presentation of other potentially helpful theoretical approaches, but finding them too formal. See Houston, A. Baker, *Rap and the Academy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.34.

<sup>9</sup> James C. Scott in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p. xiii.

<sup>10</sup> Even the earlier backing of military and occupational music by the likes of al-Ghazali (d.1111) had been justified only on the claims that it could motivate.

<sup>11</sup> Biodun Jeyifo called attention to the diverse mythopoetic resources of realism, supernaturalism and naturalism in African drama. This, indeed, is constantly appropriated by the Fuji aesthete, and in a manner that essentially enthrones the 'heterodox' narrative. For the three concepts, see *The Truthful Lie: Essays in a Sociology of African Drama*. London: New Beacon Books, 1985: 55-63.