

A Dead Goat that Talks like a Human (Posted on Facebook on July 30, 2021)

It is my pleasure to share with you a short clip from my ongoing documentary on Fuji. This portion will appear in the episode, "A Dead Goat that Talks like a Human," which focuses on the life and times of Fuji drummers. The entire documentary will have 10 episodes. I plan to shoot for the next three years and then edit for two years. Even if I work at a supersonic speed, it would still take me at least another five years to complete the book and the documentary.

The decision to produce 10 episodes (50 minutes each) is informed by the desire not to silence some narratives in order to hone others. In selecting which story to tell, researchers, writers, and creatives (knowingly or unknowingly) perpetrate or initiate a new regime of exclusion they claim to be correcting. This is particularly true in the story of popular culture, which has focused almost exclusively on the exploits of bandleaders who are predominantly men. The stories of women (as distinguished artists, mothers, wives, patrons/backers/financiers, spiritual advisers and healers, lovers, and everything in between) have traditionally been neglected. Hence, one episode of my documentary will focus on "Women of Fuji." Because the documentary will be free and accessible to all, I don't have to worry about the political economy of art, which allows film production companies to limit creativity (thus intensifying the horror of artistic and historical exclusion) because of market and profit.

The episode, "A Dead Goat that Talks like a Human," is inspired by my own past ignorance of the role of drummers in popular culture. I almost killed myself with regret when I realized, just a year ago, that drummer Tony Allen, was co-creator of Afrobeat. What is true about Tony Allen's obscure or rarely acknowledged role in Afrobeat invention is correct about other unknown drummers who invented the rhythm that defined genres that shot artists into limelight. The Fuji documentary and the book are about knowledge production as much as about a personal war against my own ignorance. Interviewing Alhaji Ayanwale Aderoju Yekini, Barrister's lead talking drum percussionist and captain of 23 years met this purpose. If Barrister is the greatest Fuji artist ever liveth, Aderoju is the greatest Fuji drum percussionist ever cometh. The interview was satisfactory, not just because it provided the right data for the documentary and the book, but also because it satisfied my aesthetic imagination. The background, "the Drum of Honor I" and a decorative door panel at the reception of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan is ideal because it conveys some symbolic, semiotic, and metaphoric messages.

I got 59 years old Aderoju to reproduce his classic 1988 tune, "Gbón'mi sí mojò," which he dedicated to Barrister on his 40th Birthday. His facial expression as he forced his unspoken words through a dead goat skin, the poetics of meaning making, and the dexterity of the percussion all celebrate biological fatherhood, superior masculinity, and sexual fecundity. Gbón'mi sí mojò, a euphemism for phallus sexual penetration, hails men with superfluous and fertile sperm. In street language—alaye, hide your face if your poron is weak! It is one of the most ubiquitous Fuji sounds, not because it is easy to decode, but because it appeared in "Barry @ 40th"-- one of the most famous Fuji albums of all eras.

In translating my imagination into reality, I have relied on the best hands and heads available to me. By allowing me to use their space to shoot the scene, Director Senayon Olaoluwa and his colleagues continued to uphold the reputation of the Institute of African Studies as the home of advanced scholarly creative research. Leye Fabusoro, a respected filmmaker and a fellow UI graduate, brought another professional cameraman (named Provost) and rendered free service to complement the work of Tobi Richard. Tolani Onike and Busuyi Adeleye did all the heavy load lifting and equipment

packing. They are not ashamed of their role, after all, K1 was Barrister's packer. Adelabu kiri panla ri, oro itan ni!

I still have many years of apprenticeship and self-teaching before I can legitimately call myself a filmmaker. I think this short clip, a sample of my visualization, represents a few feet in millions of uncovered miles.

Yours Sincerely in Fuji,  
Emperor Saedo Okola and His International Fuji Lions