

Muta Jero's Name Has Entered Book: Turning a Fuji Artist into Knowledge (Posted on Facebook on November 21, 2021)

Three weeks ago, I received a request from Emeritus Professor Karin Barber of the University of Birmingham to use my August 27 Facebook post titled, "Muta Jero of Bodija: Agbero in the Day, Fuji Prophet at Night" in her forthcoming book on African popular culture. Professor Barber is a leading scholar of African studies. Her book on the Oyin Adejobi theatre group and many other works have shaped the field of African popular culture in significant ways. I'm grateful to Emeritus Professor Barber for playing by the rules (by seeking my approval to use my write-up), and even sending me the preface of her book to make sure my material is properly used. It is heartwarming to see my research on Muta Jero, which Barber described as "brilliantly engaging," in the epigraph of the preface of her book, and to be used to emphasize why we still want to use the much-contested term "popular." Professor Barber used Muta Jero's life story to uphold her long-standing conviction that our understanding of African experience must be built from below (that is, from on-the-ground organic experience of people) not from above (theoretical abstractions that are far disconnected from local lived realities).

I write my Facebook posts, derived from my ongoing book and documentary research, to expand access to knowledge. To demystify the process of creating knowledge. To unmask obscure people, correct misrepresented narratives, and (re)tell uncommon experiences. To give intellectual strength to the daily lives of millions of people of the past and the present, who live in and for Fuji. To emphasize the interrelatedness of everything. I want Fuji to be the subject of the most sophisticated debates about Africa at the highest level of global knowledge arena.

I want the academic world to know Barrister, just as they know Fela. I write those Fuji posts to get the traction to write the book because I don't always know what I think I know until I write about it. Those short posts give clarity to my cloudy thoughts, tame my roving ideas, and enhance my research focus. I'm happy that Karin Barber, one of the most truly distinguished scholars ever liveth, is helping me to achieve my mission for Fuji, even before the book and documentary projects are completed.

The title of this post, "Muta Jero's Name Has Entered Book" is a literal translation of "Oruko Muta Jero ti Wo'we." The advent of print culture introduced new conception of virality in Africa. Printed names/stories/lives traveled far and wide, into places of power, and were consumed by people of influence. People were fascinated that their names were known, not only in words, but also in print, by people who didn't have to read African languages or English to know the content of printed materials. The permanency of printed names aligned with new notions of what I call "printed immortality." Because print culture was associated with "authenticity" and "permanently" ---whatever appeared in print was/is deemed authentic--- people cared about how their names entered or were printed in the "book." The permanency of printed names takes a slightly different dimension in the academic world where "ordinary" ideas, peoples, and things can be transformed into knowledge. In this regard, Muta Jero is not just a printed name, but also knowledge.

Ideas and knowledge are created to be used, with correct attribution and acknowledgement, not to be stolen. Be an honorable person. Be Karin Barber! I have archived all my Facebook posts since 2018 on my website. <https://www.saheedaderinto.com/fieldwork-research-note>

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