

Of Sex and Vulgarity: The Original African Fuji Michael Jackson (Posted on Facebook 11/1/2020)

Heavens let loose in 1991 when Abass Akande Obesere released "Introduction," the album, which launched him onto the galaxy of Fuji superstars. Obesere experimented with sexually-explicit songs and went on to build a nonconformist career that dramatized vulgarity. The self-proclaimed "Original African Fuji Michael Jackson," did not impersonate the real Michael Jackson. He was only his personificator on the African continent. A moral crusade to stop Obesere from corrupting young kids failed simply because Fuji sound was everywhere! If your parents didn't play his dangerous songs at home, they can't stop you from enjoying it at the motor parks and in public buses. Some rich kids who went to school in private vehicles loved their parents' drivers because he played the music "mummy does not like" in the car.

Yet, Obesere did not pioneer sexually-explicit lyrics and words in popular music. Direct or contextual reference to sex have historically been part of oral communication. Places like Ibadan even have a day dedicated to vulgarity as part of a yearly veneration of the city's founding goddess, Atage Olomu Oru. Nude arts, including paintings, sculptures, woodcarvings, have always given expression to both the physical and the internal world of African religion and spiritualities. Only a person with a poor sense of art appreciation and a skewed understanding of African spiritualities would sexualize the artistic impression of Yoruba female deities that celebrates peace, fertility, and rebirth. There is more than meets the eye in African art.

But something is unique about Obesere's "invention." First, he initiated what I would term "massification of vulgarity" -- that is the unendingly public consumption of lewd oral art through sound, blasting from massive speakers in public spaces. Second, the creation of an oral dictionary of new words, sayings, slangs that borrowed extensively from a repertoire of African and cosmopolitan cultures. Asakasa, a new language culture emerged in the inner cities to the bewilderment of older folks who panicked about the future of young children. The stereotypes of Asakasa created new class stratification. You don't know a "garage" boy or girl by dressing alone, but also by language use.

Obesere should be a role model for any artist, scholar, or entrepreneur who is resisting predatory elements, including a Nigerian-American idiot who bragged that I cannot publish a book in the United States without his patronage 10 years ago. Obesere was successful because he didn't succumb to gerontocratic intimidation when he was younger and vulnerable. Like his music, he couldn't be silenced because he did not let anyone, including the proxies of his enemies, define what constitutes authenticity and how and when to celebrate success. Obesere did not allow his violent tormentors to appropriate or take credit for his success. The best scholars, like the best artists, are also the most independent, the most creative, the most rigorous, the most audacious. They don't depend on anyone for intellectual visibility; rather they work hard and rely on non-predatory mentorship to claim a space in the galaxy of ideas--rightfully, ethically, respectfully, and honorably.

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

