

Muta Jero of Bodija: Agbero in the Day, Fuji Prophet at Night (Posted on Facebook on August 27, 2021)

Directly opposite Amala Skye canteen in Bodija, a major food market in Ibadan, is a motor park where Muta Jero works as a staff of the National Union of Road Transport Workers. As darkness consumes daylight and vehicular movement subsides, Muta Jero transforms into a Fuji prophet. Loud speakers, mixers, amplifiers, microphone stands, drums of different sizes, and a generator replace stalls previously occupied by daytime traders. The marketplace, a confluence of all kinds of heads—wet and dry—is a terrifying locale for any artist to perform. Thankfully, Ijuba—pre-performance appeasement to all principalities (known and unknown, seen and unseen) humbles the strongman and guarantees a trouble-free spectacle. One at a time, market women danced to the floor to place an average of 200 naira on the forehead of their own star, who through informal governmentality, secures their space of livelihood.

A week later, Muta Jero played for another kind of women in the market—the Kara girls. And I was there to film him. Kara, a corrupted word from kraal—a temporary enclosure for cattle—was a colonial railway terminal located in the southern end of Bodija. From a railway layover for food animals transported from the North, Kara would develop into an ethnically heterogeneous community with all the features of anonymity and nightlife, including brothels. It's the cheapest place to buy sex in Ibadan for one principal reason—the girls' overhead cost is low. Because the brothels are shops rented out to an individual prostitute, pimping is decentralized, thus reducing the power of fat cats. The police, who collects “protection” money so the girls can work in peace, are the real pimps in Kara. Short time in Kara is Figo.

I overheard one National Youth Service Corps member pricing sex, while I was filming. He was asked to pay 3k for short time. He negotiated 2k. I screamed to myself, “Weere, won ti gba e. Figo lo wo e. Figo.” He later changed his mind and started pricing daybreak. Pricing daybreak at 9pm? Who does that? But what do I know? I'm just a cameraman, covering Muta Jero's performance in the lungu of Kara. Apparently, the corper needed a place to sleep for the night, while also poronizing. Two to beat One, they call it. There is nothing innovative about his strategy. Since the 1920s or earlier, migrant men like him have sought temporary accommodation and sexual pleasure in prostitute's room.

Back to Muta Jero. After playing a beautiful tune, “Iya daada ni ya mi” to praise one senior woman, kneeling all the way down to her feet in a clear recognition of the power of motherhood, Muta Jero hailed area boys to avoid a broken head. Shedi Bala Bala, the moment Kara girls have been waiting for, arrived as predicted. If you think the Shedi Bala Bala challenge on Instagram is a show, take a trip to Kara. Shedi Bala Bala rave scored many points in Nigerian sound culture. At least for the first time, women who do not sell sex for a living publicly imagined and performed the daily routine of Oloso.

Muta Jero's identity is why Fuji qualifies as popular culture. And that's why he would have a stand-alone episode in “Fuji: A Documentary.” His art gives a real-life meaning to all the abstract theories of popular culture we read in books—the fandom, the space, the fluid positionality of the performer and spectators. Fuji is popular art, not just because it's a commercial music, massified through high-range speakers in public spaces, but because it defined its own criteria for stardom, organically. Fuji is not royal art. The poor doesn't have to worry about being refused entry into K1's exclusive performance at Awujale's palace because they will enjoy him at Ojude Oba, which is open and free to all. If you are angry that Club Quilox won't let you see Shako Rashidi because of expensive ticket,

wait until Fuji Repete concert at the National Stadium and you can jump the fence and not pay a shi shi. The idea of a single public doesn't exist in Fuji; rather it has multiple publics with converging interests—entertainment, pleasure, and happiness!

I arrived home from Kara at 11pm. Suddenly, my head started expanding. Then I realized the after effect of inhaling weed in Kara. Vernacular medicine came to rescue. I soaked gari in cold water and rushed it—as prescribed by street doctors who will never relocate to Saudi Arabia because their service is highly valued on the tarmac. I slept off, and woke up 8 hours later for another day. Isola, nothing do me, I assured myself!

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

September 7, 2021

The Selection Committee

Fulbright Fellowship
IIE/CIES
1400 K Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Professor Saheed Aderinto: Fulbright Fellowship

I am pleased to write that the Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Ibadan is happy to host Professor Saheed Aderinto for the Fulbright Award.

The IAS is a premier interdisciplinary institute in Africa with 57 years of research, teaching and publishing excellence on African Cultural Law, African Music, African Visual Arts, Anthropology, Cultural and Media Studies, Diaspora and Transnational Studies, Gender Studies, Traditional African Medicine and Belief Systems, and Transformational Studies in Africa. The IAS also maintains the following research units: The Centre for Arabic Documentation, the Women's Research and Documentation Centre, Institute Museum, Studio/Archive of Sound and Vision, Digital Africana, and the Traditional Medicine Documentation and Research Center.

Professor Saheed Aderinto's research experience, publication record, and academic leadership make him an idea Fulbright Fellow at the IAS. As the author of over 104 scholarly publications,

including books chapters, articles and reviews in leading historical and African studies peer-reviewed journals and encyclopaedia entries, Professor Aderinto no doubt possesses an exceptional research and publishing pedigree that can benefit faculty and students at the IAS. Moreover, Professor Aderinto is well-known for his academic leadership in Africa, most especially through his work with the annual Lagos Studies Association (LSA) Conference. This international meeting platform, to which he was central to founding, attracts established researchers and students from all over the African continent and beyond. He is, therefore well positioned to provide critical intellectual leadership to researchers and students of the IAS. It is also worth mentioning that Professor Aderinto has been a volunteer mentor to Research Fellows and students of the IAS, informally. Through the LSA Conference, experienced fellows have collaborated with Professor Aderinto to organise seminars and mentoring programs while our students volunteer to gain experience during the often week-long program.

In addition to leading seminar-styled lectures during the fellowship period, Professor Aderinto will design and implement an interdisciplinary academic writing seminar in collaboration with academic staff of IAS and the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences. He will also introduce a course on academic journal and book publishing.

In support of Professor Aderinto's Fulbright fellowship, the IAS will accommodate him at our on-campus visiting researchers' lodge and a furnished office space. Other institutional supports will include airport pickup and ground transportation.

I strongly support Professor Aderinto's Fulbright Award application without any reservation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Senayon Olaoluwa

Director of Institute of African Studies