


ART ACTIVISM AND POLICE BRUTALITY IN NIGERIA: LEMI GHARIOGWU'S ARTISTIC PORTRAYAL OF FELA ANIKULAPO KUTI'S ALBUM JACKET

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Abstract

Brutality has been a conspicuous menace for decades among the officers of the police force in Nigeria. Several measures have been introduced to criticize disrespect for human values, oppression, apathy, pain, suffering, callousness, atrocities, political subjugation, unbearable government agenda, and infringement on the fundamental human rights of the people. However, this excesses still persists amidst the law enforcement officers. This study focuses on the illustrative Portrayal of Fela's music philosophy by Lemi Ghariogwu through the eye lenses of art activism, and police brutality in Nigeria. Selected album jacket illustrations by Lemi Ghariokwu that resonate with Fela Anikulapo Kuti's lyrics form the concern of this study. The study hinges on deconstructionist theory in engaging polysemous visual representations to interrogate socio-political and economic impetus in Nigeria. Visual elements are engaged in this study as a form of disengagement from other stereotyped artistic genres for the campaign against police brutality. Art activism was engaged as metaphoric, iconic, or symbolic constructs within a socio-political context for political communication. The purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of the visual imagery analyzed, with the criteria for selection being situated in the context of the socio-political themes. The paper concludes that economic and socio-political oppression in Nigeria as portrayed through the engagement with album jacket of Fela's songs needs urgent attention. There is a need for a total reformation of the police structure and service to ensure a better policing system in Nigeria.

Keywords: Art, Activism, Police brutality, Nigeria, and Album Jacket

Introduction

The conversation on police brutality has gained public attention in Nigeria. In a democratic state, the fundamental human rights of citizens needed to be protected for such a state to experience peaceful co-existence. In October 2020, protesters clustered across the street at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos to agitate for police reform and point the government's attention to reoccurring police brutality. The vociferation emanated due to false accusations and consistent harassment of the youth by the police on the streets of Lagos and by extension to other states of the federation as well as the lingered anger over police excesses and accusations of illicit torture, harassment, unjustified arrests, shootings, rape, extortion among other incriminating offense leveled against the SARS, a Nigerian police unit in Nigeria. The protest ballooned into grievances against the government with agitation for police reform due to the nonchalance attitude to put up a proactive action by the government to permanently curtail these abnormalities spreading like an inferno.

Beek and Göpfert (2013) argue that police officers and gendarmes occasionally beat civilians to assert their authority. They torture suspects to get information or shoot dead armed robbers to deliver instant justice. They are supposed to act as the violence specialists of the state, yet their use of violence is highly controversial. Civilians often fight back when they encounter police, but otherwise demand even harsher methods in the fight against crime, while NGOs complain about police brutality (p.477). This resonates with the provocations of Afro-beat maestro Fela Anikulapo Kuti, who used his lyrics to expose the ills of mal-administration, police brutality, embezzlement, misappropriation of public funds, unconstitutional power abuse, and governmental torment using police and soldiers since 1976. The general function of the police force is to prevent and detect crime, preserve law and order, apprehend offenders, protect the life and properties of citizens and enforce laws and regulations. Groenewald and Peake in Chukwu et al. (2020) aver that the police institutions were created to provide the requisite enabling environment for citizens to live and work towards the social, economic, and political development of the society. It is, however, disheartening that the citizen's right to a fair hearing and access to the rulings of the constitution's benefits is just a mirage due to the ferocious deeds of the police.

Since the advent of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the police's vicious and hostile attitude towards the members of the public has resulted in the loss of lives and property, dehumanization, breakdown of law and order, massive corruption, socio-political ills, and economic crisis taking example of End SARS scenario of 8 October 2020 to 20 October, 2020. Chukwu et al (2020) argue that going by their unrepentant disposition, the sight of police officers anywhere, irrespective of the circumstances, sends fears down the spines of people as arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention, and other forms of threats until family members negotiate payment for the release of their loved ones. There is an adage amongst the Yoruba of Nigeria that runs thus: “when the forward movement becomes impossible, returning to where you are coming from becomes the alternative”. This corroborates the statement of Beek and Göpfert (2013) above that the masses fight back when they can no longer condone the nuisance exhibited by the police. The forgoing further substantiates the agitations and the clamour for better policing through a thorough reform.

In this light, this study focuses on art activism as a visual representation of engaging police brutality, exposing the culture of human torture and torment as portrayed in selected album jacket paintings by Lemi Ghariokwu. These resonate with Fela Anikulapo Kuti's lyrical themes of *Alagbon Close*, *Kalakuta Show*, *Zombie*, *the beast of no nation*, *Confusion Break Bone*, *upside down*, *fear not for man*, and *'sorrow, tears and blood.'* The study adopts a deconstructionist theory to engage polysemous visual representation rooted in textual connotative interpretations. Deconstruction played a major role in the animation and transformation of literary studies by literary theory (often referred to simply as “theory”), which was concerned with questions about the nature of language, meaning and the intertwining connection between literature and diverse discourses that framed human experiences and histories. Deconstructionist theory treated works of art not as the fusion of literary and figurative meanings but as instances of the intractable conflict between meanings of diverse types. Individual's work is examined not as a self-contained artifact but as a product of relations with other texts of discourses, literary non-literary. The theory also placed special emphasis on the ways in which the works themselves are implicitly critique and the methods engaged.

Visual elements were used to disengage from other stereotype artistic genres to interrogate police brutality as a cog in the wheel of economic and socio-political development and the need for its global intervention in Africa. The jacket album paintings for this study were purposively selected from the 26 album cover designed by Lemi Ghariokwu for Fela Anikulapo Kuti within socio-political themes between 1974 and 1993. These artworks were collected from the archive of the artist for research engagement. Artivism is a concept of protest that was engaged as metaphoric, iconic, or symbolic constructs within a socio-political aura.

Understanding Art Activism, Protest Arts and Police Brutality in Nigeria

Art is a formidable tool for resisting a dictator or oppressive government. Since the mid-1990s, art has attracted increasing attention as an instrument for social movements and organisations. Scholars have begun to appreciate the importance of art in forming a movement's identity, mobilizing resources, and ensuring effectiveness. Of all the art forms, Visual arts are probably the most commonly used in civic action and, although the variety of artistic expression is endless, paintings, photographs, sculptures, videos, graffiti, and holograms are some of the forms used. Especially in countries where freedom of expression is severely limited, art functions as an alternative channel of communication: when demonstrations are banned, organisations shut down or media subjected to severe censorship, art is often the only possible instrument of protest (Goris and Hollander 2017,14).

Scholars such as (Mansbridge 1990; Naples 1992; Ryan 1992; Staeheli 1994; Staeheli and Susan 2003) have expatiated the issues of political action, activism, social problems, and the need to direct efforts towards them. Research on Nigerian art activism has tended towards preoccupation with photography, sculptures, videos, graffiti, and other artistic forms. However, little or no scholarly attention has been directed at the engagement of album cover design as a form of activism, this forms the lacuna that this research tends to fill.

Art Activism is becoming a global issue in Nigeria, where artists use genres of art as a weapon to address injustice and socio-political contestation in the community. Artivism is a coinage of 'Art', and 'Activism' which describes the essence of art as a tool of enquiry in a non-violent campaign for the fundamental human right of the people. Artivism, also dubbed Protest art (resistance art) is one of Nigerian art referenced as instrumentalization of socio-political transformation. It is a confrontational and social-reflective art engagement that captures human unbearable conditions, suffering, pains, agony, torture, torment, and all form of socio-political circumstances prevailing in the country. Art as a tool demonstrates and articulates the atrocities experienced by people living under the consequence of brutality. Svirsky (2010,163) defines activism as involving local instigation of new series of elements intersecting the actual, generating new collective enunciation, experimentation, and investigations, which erode good and common sense and cause structures to swing away from their sedimented identities. The struggle for accessible and democratic societies across the world, specifically in Africa with the

benefit of essential resources and life support has always been the craving of activists. With this in mind, the activity of the activist, especially artist-oriented ones, is a nonviolent movement at the Centre stage of ensuring participatory and inclusive democracies as dividends for the citizens.

Brutality: The culture of Torture and Torment

Torture is perceived as human practice with a long discreditable history. It has an intertwined relationship with torment when describing the dehumanizing condition that the human body is subjected to. Torture has been approached by scholars as to the social-psychological conditions that trigger inhumanity, an extensive type of violence engaged as an expedient technique of interrogation for the extraction of intelligent information which metamorphoses into psycho-physical aftermath (Constanzo & Gerrity 2009; Makwerere, Tafadzwa & Musorowegomo, 2012). The concept of torture in an official space is engaged to inflict severe mental or physical pain, on someone to extract information or to confess to a crime committed. Kenny (2010) avers that torture is the systematic and deliberate infliction of severe pain or suffering on a person over whom the actor has physical control, to induce a behavioral response from that person (p.154). Scholars definition captures torture as political torture or public torture. This is engaged to describe the action of the state and religious groups. This is not limited by the importance of the act. He proposed that looking across space and time as a germane step will enable a more enriched and interesting comparative analysis of torture without the consideration of prognosticating its essence. Feith (2012) opine that torture is a technology of pain, the more or less crude maximization of suffering on the Other's body. Accurate knowledge and mapping of "trigger points" can convert it into a refined "acupuncture" of pain. The torturer dehumanizes the victim by reducing him/her to a body under control (p.92).

From Feith's perspective of argument, the optimum intention of the person inflicting torture is to subject a person under control using an element of dehumanization. Blakeley (2007) avers that the horribleness of torture is what makes it appear to lend itself to the acquisition of intelligence, the deterring of potential and actual political opposition, and the securing of legitimacy. He explained that all manner of torture methods is currently used, including beatings, electric shock, rape, acts that resemble drowning and suffocation, burning with fire and chemicals, sensory deprivation, the witness of the torture of others, especially loved ones, and threats of the same, and sham executions. Those who justify torture for intelligence assume it works because of its effects on victims. It is believed that victims will respond to torture because they would rather speak up than suffer the physical and psychological torment involved. Derivatives from scholarly views above indicate that torture can be categorized as a useful tool of the state, especially during cross-examination and investigative process. This is often an attempt to inflict pain in a calculated way to an illicit response from a criminal or a suspect in most cases. When torture is applied in this situation, this argument justifies torture as legitimate machinery of the state to maintain law and order. This resonates with the findings of Kenny's research. However, torture can also be arbitrarily utilized as an element of oppression, domination, control, slavery, kidnap, and dehumanization. The law enforcement officers, sometimes, engage in corrupt practices of extortion and jungle justice to destabilize their victims and use power arbitrarily to cover up their shortcomings. Hence, torture in this sense is described as an act of brutality. Torment is the description of a state or condition that places a person under extreme suffering. It is a state that causes sadness, sober reflection, and traumatic experiences. Several innocent individuals have been extorted and wrongly accused of the crime they know nothing about. These categories of people now live their lives being paraded with defamation of character. They struggle with inner pains and agony which has been bottled-up due to threats levelled against them by a police special anti-robbery squad. Torment, therefore, mirrors the aftermath of torture.

Exposing Police Brutality Through Protest in Nigeria

Nigeria is a nation prone to several incidences of police brutality and the infringement on the fundamental human rights of the people which has stirred up rigorous public agitations. Various sectors have reacted in contentions against the callousness of the police, yet there has been a consistent refusal of this allegation by the authority of police agencies in Nigeria on the use of torture and torment as a strategy of forcefully engaging suspects in conversation to retrieve facts. The negligence of the government to find a lasting solution to this cruelty has endangered many innocent citizens. Scholars have directed research on police brutality, abuse of power, and the disparagement of the basic human rights of the people for some decades. (Aborisade and Obileye, 2018; Madubuikwe-Ekwe and Obayemi 2019; Alemika and Chukwuma, 2000; Akinyetun, 2021; Okoye, 2021; Ulo, 2021). Police brutality is a civil right violation where police as law enforcement officers exercise undue or excessive force against humanity. It is one of the major obstacles to the prospect of the Nigerian police being a positive factor in pro-poor change initiatives. The police in Nigeria, with the backing of autocratic leaders and repressive laws - frequently acted outside the rule of law. Often, they were laws unto themselves, maiming, killing, and detaining persons arbitrarily and with impunity. In Nigeria, police repression had been institutionalized since colonial rule. However, police repression became increasingly intensified under the successive military regimes after 1966. As it has been observed, police repression has persisted, and in most cases intensified.

Abati in Iwuoha and Aniche (2021) argue that the prevalence of police brutality in Africa is a function of political leadership failure rather than colonial legacy (p. 4). Nigeria has been faced with police brutality consistently since 2015 when Muhammad Buhari was elected president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The increased brutality of the police and the violation of human rights resulted in the recent agitations by Nigerian youths against SARS extra-judicial killings, which were recently re-ignited by a video shared via social media showcasing a SARS officer assaulting a young Nigerian in Delta State on October 3, 2020. Subsequently, several other pictures and videos of similar assaults and extortion by officers of the SARS resurfaced on social media with an End SARS hashtag created to further amplify the issues in national conversations. This led to uncoordinated protests by youths calling for the dissolution of the SARS and metamorphosed into a national protest from October 8, 2020 (Business Day as quoted in Ulo 2021,182). Activism and protest of 2020 against human rights violations and police brutality fall on bad governance. Corruption has eaten deep as a cankerworm into the value system of the nation. Insecurity, illicit killing, kidnap and disregard for constitutional rulings become the order of the day. The government has lost its credibility, capability, and sovereignty to fix the existing political dilemma.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 1: Author. Fela Anikulapo Kuti's portrait, Medium: Pen, Staedtler graphite pencils, Size:5.2 x10.7 inches, (Courtesy of the Artist)

Figure 2: Author. Lemi Ghariokwu's portrait, Medium: Pastel and Pen, Size:5.6 x10.2 inches, (Courtesy of the Artist)

Fela Anikulapo Kuti and Lemi Ghariokwu: The Intertwined artistic narrative of Police Brutality

The year 1976 was the evolution of the artistic collaboration and florilegium of design prospects between Fela Anikulapo Kuti, a Nigerian Afro-Beat musician, and Lemi Ghariokwu, an album cover designer who produced powerful musical narratives and striking art images on 26 explosive albums. These addressed socio-political themes and condemned corrupt government's brutality with cultural etch, passionate articulation of open resistance and optimism. The arts and political ideologies of these activists resonate with the urgency for a changing society. The drawing above in (Fig. 1) is the figurative illustration of Fela Anikulapo Kuti (b.October 15, 1938, Abeokuta, Nigeria—d. August 2, 1997, Lagos, Nigerian) an afro-beat musician and activist that fused American blues, jazz, and funk with traditional Yoruba music. Interestingly, the aura of mystery surrounding Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the Afro-Beat maestro, obscured his ideal picture and created for him an exploding myth that lives till today. Although named Olufela Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti, Fela dropped "Ransome" as his family name claimed it was a slave name, replaced it with an unconventional appellation "Anikulapo" (death in his quiver), and adopted a shocking nickname, "*Abami Eda*" (supernatural being) (Moore as quoted in Alimi and Anthony 2013, 75).

His views and efforts on human rights were an admixture of personal principles and societal influence. A man of complex character, Fela exhibited these through his songs; the conflict between tradition and modernism, indigenous and foreign cultures, and the resultant effect of identity crisis in African society. The tyranny of the masses by the ruling class and the affluent were the major theme of his songs. As a courageous epitome, Fela used his songs to educate and encourage oppressed African people to fight for their rights. (Alimi and Anthony 2013,91). Olaniyan (2001,76) confirms that Fela, as his fans call him, is renowned for his distinctive "Afro-beat" sound (itself a masterly blend of diverse forms), his politically charged lyrics and anti-establishment politics, his offbeat charismatic figure, his many encounters with the Nigerian authorities leading to his repeated harassment, prosecutions, and imprisonments, and his general flamboyantly nonconformist lifestyle. In spite of the agonising experience and the consistent harassment, Fela was put through at the hands of the government, three factors seem to account for Fela's radicalism. First, it was rooted in his family background; second, personal experiences both in childhood and adulthood were also factors; third, interactions with both individuals and societies were other

decisive factors (ibid). With an indefatigable campaign against tyrannical governance, Fela's explosive instrumental produced politically inflaming lyrics which the artistic narratives of Lemi Ghariokwu resonate with. The drawing in (Fig 2) above is the figurative illustration of Lemi Ghariokwu, b.1955, Lagos Nigeria, was a self-trained Fine Artist with a special interest in Graphics design with artistic prowess dovetailing into painting and collage paste-up design. He had a call to fame through the body of works produced as a visual narrative to accompany Fela Anikulapo's Kuti denigratory anti-government lyrics with its illustration, caricature, and distorted collage. The conspicuous social realism of Lemi's works created between 1974 and 1993 was so significant in Fela's musical career. His artistic career as a sleeve designer begins in 1974 when for the first time, he sees the cover of Fela Kuti's new album 'Rofo rofo' fight', he decides to draw his version of the album cover as a means of practice. Lemi shows his version to the journalist Babatunde Harrison in his portfolio, he is so amazed by his cover version of Fela's 'Rofo rofo' fight that he decided to introduce Lemi to Fela directly. So the two men start their collaboration. The first album cover he designed for Fela is 'Alagbon Close' in November 1974. This is the first time that an album cover is being reviewed with the music therein.

As far back as 1980, he was also the consulting album cover designer for Polygram (Phonogram+Polydor) records in Nigeria for 11 years. The album covers of some other musicians were also designed by Lemi. These include Osita Osadebe, James Iroha, Bob Marley, Kris Okotie, Lucky Dube, Gilles Peterson, Miriam Makeba, Ivory Music, National Encomium, Kennis Music, 2 Face idibia, Tony Tetuila, Lagbaja, Kenny St. Brown, Sound Sultan, EMI, CBS, Ivory music and about a hundred other musicians across the globe. He has designed over 2000 album covers. His career has lasted for over forty years learning to research and follow trends in his field of art. Peter Tosh, Marcus Garvey, and Malcolm X were instrumental in the mental liberation that built Lemi into a socially conscious man getting inspired by the happening in his immediate environment. His works were influenced by philosophical views of society, political reasoning, and human expression. He produced art that is revolutionary, political, and sensual.

Visual Narratives of Police Brutality, Torture, and Torment

As earlier articulated, the visual Imageries for the campaign against police brutality in this narrative were produced by Lemi Ghariokwu, a Nigerian visual artist, creating the visual concepts of Fela Anikulapo's Albums jacket covers between 1974 and 1993. A total of 26 jacket covers designed by Lemi formed the population for the study. Ten high-resolution images of the jacket cover designs engaged in this research were collected from this artist with approval to engage the artworks strictly for research purposes alone and not for any kind of commercial exploitation. These images reflect the themes of brutality, torture, torment, pain, agony, abuse, and the deprivation of fundamental human rights of the people. The artist metaphorically used red and black to represent bloodshed and the doom the masses were experiencing at the hands of the power brokers. Yellow ochre was used to induce anxiety and distress and x-ray the criticality of the situation at hand. The green and blue capture the active role of the men in uniform as the agent of torture and torment to conceal corruption in the society when in actual sense, the peace of the masses has been murdered.

Torture and Unlawful Detention as the element of Brutality

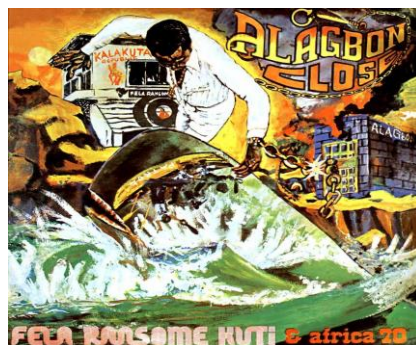


Figure 3: Lemi Ghariokwu. Alagbon Close. 1974.(courtesy of the artist)

Fig.3 is titled *Alagbon close*, visual imagery which got its name from the street of the police headquarters where Fela was imprisoned. This artwork was the first Compact disc painting commissioned produced by Lemi Ghariokwu using oil on board with a collage approach depicting Fela's experience at the *Alagbon* maximum prison in Lagos. Lemi depicted Fela Anikulapo in chains under the terrible dehumanizing experience in the prison. Fela's community called 'Kalakuta' was plundered with several levels of brutality melted on Fela which led to skull injuries. This invasion must have been due to Fela's malfeasance in his kingdom- Kalakuta Republic- which include sexual domination, women exploitation, HIV saga, drug abuse and the induction of so many youths into illicit sex and drug addiction. These among others must have been the reasons the politicians of

his time never took him serious. However, the message of Fela Anikulapo was a heavy blow to the military administration. After his prison experience, Fela produced this song to lampoon the police as one of the few artists working in African space whose works adopted a figurative or metaphorical use of words or expression as a contemporary response to address socio-political contestation. The visual imagery depicted on the album jacket represents the view of Fela as a parody to criticize the existing political and social status quo. Lemi employed the artistic approach of creating alternate realities in an attempt to resonate with the trauma Fela was subjected to while in the prison. The rendering in the background of the painting is the illustrative narrative of brutality, torture, and emotional torment with which the police inflicted pain on Fela using a baton to turn things upside-down creating an atmosphere of chaos under the instruction of a tyrannical government. This scenario is tantamount to a colonial experience in a post-colonial period. The painting pictured a sense of detachment from a peaceful ambience existing in Fela's haven through the infliction of pain and agony rooted in subjective defense. Fela's agitation and campaign for an ideal society were toppled by the torment of police brutality, peradventure, due to his immoral life style that was a counter-narrative to his agitations for an ideal society. *Alagbon* was captured as a jail pit of hell and anguish where prisoners suffered untold pain. Despite the torture and dehumanizing attempt on Fela, his Kalakuta Republic stands on a rocky and firm foundation that could not be broken. Lemi further satirized the police by capturing Fela as a triumphant personality who has broken the chains and danced over a capsize police patrol boat.

Justice: Compensation for Dehumanizing Experience



Figure 4. Lemi Ghariokwu. Kalakuta show. 1974. (courtesy of the artist)

A simplistic narrative was portrayed in (Fig.4) titled 'Kalakuta show' illustrating the attack waged against the Kalakuta republic as depicted in Fela's song. The painting describes how the police brutalized Fela with batons, guns, and axes to inflict pain on him and massive destruction on his 'Kalakuta Republic'. Lemi also addressed the legal contribution of kanmi Osobu, Fela's lawyer, in his painting challenging the government for the release of Fela and compensation for the dehumanizing experience he was put through. John Collins gave the account of his 1985 conversation with Fela Anikulapo Kuti and how the name 'Kalakuta' was originated. According to him, Fela was imprisoned in a police cell at the (Central Intelligence Division) in Lagos. The cell he occupied had the name "the Kalakuta Republic" as given by the prisoners. Sometime later, after his release from the cell, Fela discovered during his tour to East Africa that "kalakuta" is a Swahili word that means "rascal." From this discovery, Fela concluded that, if rascality is going to bring the expected result, then it is better used. He concluded that the government officials are corrupt and they have to be dealt with 'rascally'.

Tyrannical Governance

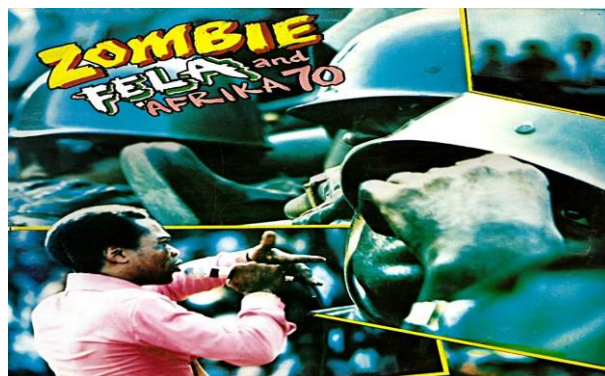


Figure 5. Lemi Ghariokwu. *Zombie*. 1977. (courtesy of the artist)

(Fig. 5) titled *Zombie* is a serious lampoon to the existing threat and tension inflicted on the community by the tyrannical government of the military regime in Nigerian governance in 1977. The artist used this painting for a controversial design cover to stir-up nationwide hatred for military leadership. It was a direct attack to point out the ills, shortcomings, and corruptible acts in governance. The inspiration for this album cover came after the artist had scanned through Tunde Kuboye's 1960 Nigerian independence photographic collections. This work was produced through a paste-up of three photographs selected from dozens of earlier selections made, edited to fit in the album size which is later finished up with a thick brush lettering. The visual interpretation resonates with the lyrical satire portrayed by Fela Anikulapo Kuti in his song *zombie*. He articulated the deeds, traits, and services of the military and the police with a metaphoric expression that suggests that they lack personal initiative, creativity, self-will, intelligent direction, and focus. The crafted word 'Zombie' was used to describe the condition of the military and the police officers as a puppet in the hands of a puppeteer. A will-less and speechless human generation whose appearance looks strange and emits an unwelcoming attitude. It also gives the representation of reanimated human into a strange character.

Blood spillage



Figure 6a-b. Lemi Ghariokwu. *Sorrow, Tears, and Blood*. 1978. (courtesy of the artist)

(Fig. 6a-b) above titled *Sorrow, Tears, and Blood*, is a multi-panel painting depicting the visual narrative of Lemi Ghariokwu as he narrates the military retaliation on Fela Anikulapo Kuti's 'Zombie' musical album released as an act of insubordination and the decision to scold the military and police brutality, abuse of power, bad governance, endemic corruption, and the abnormality in governmental policies adopted as a special mode of operation through the 'Zombie musical album' he had earlier released on February 18, 1977. The painting depicted the inflicted sorrow, tears, and blood spillage of innocent people living in Fela's haven. The military juntas with the collaboration of the police, orchestrated a destructive attack by setting the Kalakuta republic ablaze, a utopia of the land of asylum accessible for the welcome of all outcasts left in Lagos, under the command of General Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo. Lemi illustrated his concept to create a reminiscence and mental picture of the agony which was inflicted by the soldiers and police on Fela. The Colour red, as depicted in the painting is a metaphor for the increasing destructive activity meted on the civilians by the police force. The background depicts bloodshed ironically describing the attempts the police have shown in protecting life and properties through severe damages. The illustration of wailing women, litter of the dead bodies of several outcasts sheltered by Fela, and the scenes of torture were captured through this painting. The painting also focused on the gruesome torture and torment of *Olufunmilayo Kuti*, Fela's mother, a Pan Africanist, an anti-colonial activist who was thrown out of the window and died shortly after the incident from her injuries.

...this uprising will bring out the beast in us'

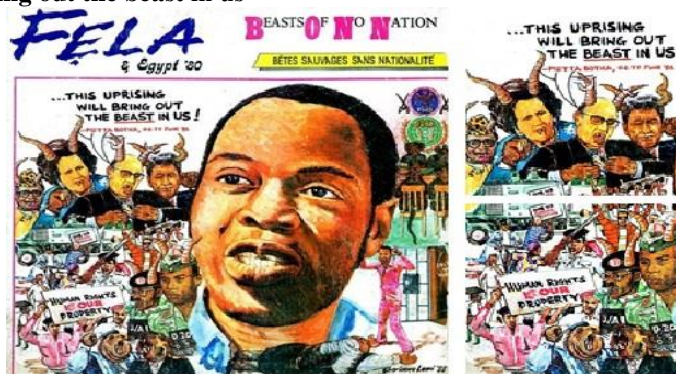


Figure 7a,b, and c. Lemi Ghariokwu. *Beasts of No Nation*. 1988. (courtesy of the artist)

Beast of no nation album design in (Fig.7a,b,c) was produced by Lemi Ghariokwu after parting route with Fela but still maintaining a business relationship with him. Fela's ideology was integrated into this comprehensive illustration. Several names had mentioned in the lyrics of the beast of no nation which was also leveraged by Lemi in his artistic trajectory; the illustration of Ronald Reagan of the U.S., Margaret Thatcher of the UK, former President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, and Pieter Willem Botha, a former South African Prime Minister who upheld apartheid. Some rodents were depicted in military uniforms with the insignia of the Nigerian army. The album illustration also pictured a satirical portrayal of General(s) Buhari and Idiagbon and other African leaders as the beast of no nation, '...this uprising will bring out the beast in us'. This in itself indicates that the military regime undermined the fundamental human rights of the citizen and the value of lives and property. He also lampooned the military government in Nigeria that had sent him to jail -- General Buhari, who interestingly is now the incumbent president in Nigeria for the second term. Lemi further positioned Fela in the 'black power' salute as a free man from Jail-house been paid obeisance by the chief judge that condemn him to five years' jail term

Leadership with the testimonies of embezzlement and corruption

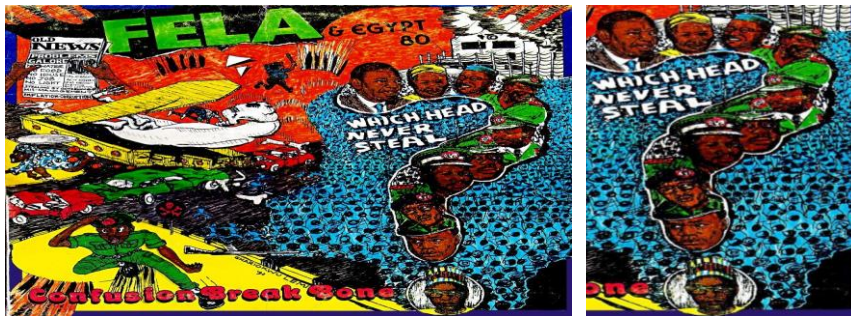


Figure 8a-b. Lemi Ghariokwu. *Confusion Break Bone*. 1990. (courtesy of the artist)

Confusion breaks bone as depicted by Lemi in (Figure 8a-b) captures Nigerian leaders as the perpetrators of corruption and lawlessness putting the masses into a state of confusion and torment. The artist used his visual illustration to create a conversation which resonate with Fela's lyric that the governmental agenda revolves around the destruction of state properties and the negligence of the government officials to provide the social amenities needed for the survival of the masses. He presented a newspaper illustration and captured the scarcity of food, erratic electricity supply, and joblessness as old news that suggests that the element of inflation, austerity, and gross corruption in Nigeria is not a new culture. The leadership of Nigeria was metaphorically interrogated through a conspicuous question mark with a statement, 'which head never steals'? This superimposed icon on the teeming population depicted in blue with the figurative representation of the populace living an agonized life under the torment of bad leadership gives rhetoric's that deserves the right answer. The artist used his visual narrative to challenge past Nigerian leaders; Azikiwe Nnamdi, General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, Murtala Mohammed, Olusegun Obasanjo, and Shehu Shagari from the first republic in 1963 to the second republic that elapse in 1983 as individual not exonerated from the act of stealing. The derivative of colonialism in a post-colonial period was pointed out in the lives of these leaders as exemplified in military regalia and the emulation of the colonial masters.

Fearless, bold and brave in persecution



Figure 9a-b. Lemi Ghariokwu. *Fear Not for Man*. 1977. (courtesy of the artist)

One of man's greatest enemies is phobia. (Figure 9a-b) titled fear, not for man depicts Fela Anikulapo Kuti's persistence, boldness, and defiant way of criticizing corruption and maladministration of the military government was on the increase and generated fear in the heart of his fans over the possible consequence this might generate from the government. Given this fact, Fela gave a very short, blunt, and fearless lyric of consolation titled '*fear not for man*'. An adaptation from the quote of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the father of Pan-Africanism, "The secret of life is to have no fear". Lemi's painting captures fearlessness as portrayed by Fela. This artwork was produced using black and white photographic collections of Tunde kuboye to create a collage paste-up of different facial expressions of Nigerians' power clipped into textual narrative and advocacy for fearlessness. Blood effect was created on the photograph of Fela using ecoline to create boldness, fearlessness, and total readiness for whatever situation that may come his way.

Nigeria and the state of Confusion



Figure 10a-b. Lemi Ghariokwu. *Upside Down*. 1976. (courtesy of the artist)

Fig. 10a-b was a painting developed for another album jacket of Fela Anikulapo kuti titled *Upside-down*. In 1976, about forty-eight years ago, Fela prophesied the Nigerian future and sent out a note of warning through his song to call the attention of Nigerian leaders to socio-economic backwardness and advice the government to learn from the West. *Upside-down* is a musical production that featured Sandra who came on a visit to Fela. She actively supported and stood by Fela in his transformation years in the United State. This artwork was used by Lemi for a perfect description of the African Situation has portrayed by Fela Anikulapo Kuti, a well-traveled African, whose travelled experiences surpassed any university professor. In reminiscence of Fela's experience, he remarked that it is expedient to classify his experience into dictionary words 'upside-up and downside-down'. He laments that there is a high level of structure and organisation in the economic and socio-political system of the Western world compared to a dysfunctional system in Nigeria. Lemi Ghariokwu's painting illustration depicted the pains and concern of Fela through the use of metaphor, irony of situation, and symbolism to drive home his meanings. The painting captured a man turned upside-down in bondage, road traffic congestion, hunger, joblessness, abandoned construction projects, erratic light, the need for a good road network, unemployment, a down-trodden economy, and a fallen educational system. All these symbolise the confusion that reigns in Nigeria. The use of words such as 'go slow', '*molues*' denote how terrific Lagos traffic could make a man lose his confidence and become suddenly incapacitated with withered aspiration. Lagos traffic as compared to someone locked up in jail to complete prison term on the highway. In this painting, the reflection of the past has lingered and metamorphosed into the present Nigerian predicament.

Conclusion

The ambience of the conundrum that encompassed Fela Anikulapo Kuti '*Abami Eda*' is enigmatic and explosive which transcends his life into immortality. Even in death, the Nigerian Fela Anikulapo-Kuti (1938-1997) remains, without doubt, Africa's most controversial popular musician, and the one with perhaps the largest following outside the continent. Olaniyan (2001) opines the salient function of art in a society is to expose Socio-political questioning in a manner that will provoke and ignite intellectual conversation (p.76). The essence of art as articulated by Chinua Achebe is to create alternatives to reality, which could be beckoned on for a way out when it is necessary (Rowell,1990). With this in mind, it is the responsibility of the artists to engage visual elements as ammunition for intervention in societal problems.

This article has discussed the tyrannical traits of the ruling class and Police brutality as a global phenomenon in African space especially in Nigeria by adopting the Marxist Contextual approach as the conceptual framework. The study has examined art activism as a measure of questioning disrespect for human values, oppression, sufferings, callousness, atrocity, political subjugation, unbearable government agenda, and infringement on the fundamental human right of the people as portrayed in selected album jacket paintings by Lemi Ghariokwu which

resonate with Fela Anikulapo Kuti's lyrics. His artistic thought and concepts depicting human rights are his reflection on Fela's songs to educate and encourage the oppressed to fight for their rights. The sub-themes were categorized based on the metaphorical narratives discovered in the paintings, pointing to the economic and socio-political challenges in Nigeria. Whatever sentiment or over-blowing depiction conspicuously captured in the selected visual Imageries, yet, it is evident that they are contemporaneous with police brutality and gross corruptible patterns among public office holders in Nigeria. They represent the common problems within several strata of society calling for urgent solution. Moreover, the album jackets also trigger the curiosity of Fela fans about the content of each album. And as they unpack the graphics on the album covers, their minds are further illuminated to identify with the struggle, and become members of the activism movement consciously or unconsciously.

Fela's ideology was integrated into the comprehensive illustrations created by Lemi Ghariokwu's artistic trajectory as he satirically illustrated tyrannical leaders as the 'beast of no nation'. The visual Imageries were also released to condemn police brutality, abuse of power, bad governance, endemic corruption, and the abnormality in governmental policies adopted as a special mode of operation. This research has articulated the deeds, traits, and services of the military and the police with a metaphoric expression that suggests that they lack personal initiative, creativity, self-will, intelligent direction, and focus. The crafted word 'Zombie' as used in the context of this article was used to describe the condition of the military and the police officers as a puppet in the hands of puppeteer. A speechless human generation whose appearance looks strange and unwelcoming. It also gives the representation of reanimated human into a strange character. The article has also discussed the effects of economic and socio-political oppression in Nigeria through the engagement with the artworks in connection with Fela's songs. Hence, this calls for a total reformation of the police structure and service to ensure a better policing system in Nigeria and by extension to other African countries.

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