

The think-think musician!

Fela Anikulapo Kuti’ political thoughts about citizens and the state of Nigeria in ‘Akunakuna Senior Brother of Perambulators.’

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Abstract

We hermeneutically interpret Fela’s song *Akunakuna Senior Brother of Perambulators* to establish that specific musical lyrics contain political thoughts and theories that deserve continuous intellectual exploration. This is quite different from the many others produced through the idea of ‘arts for arts’ sake’. Traditionally, especially between 1970 and 1997, Fela’s songs interrogated the dominant socio-political policies and practices in Nigeria and other countries of focus. *Akunakuna*, specifically, interrogated such political concepts as the state, citizens, the public, justice and ‘government of the people’, notably from daily socio-political interactions. This has propounded a semblance of political thoughts and theories that we, in this article, consider empirical because they are derived from practical circumstances of citizens-government power relations within the state.

Keywords: State, Political Thoughts, Political Theories, Fela, Citizens, Nigeria

Introduction

Fela Anikulapo Kuti is difficult to put in a sacrosanct context. He is called a musician, activist, revolutionary, rebel and many more. Yes, he is all of these, but more of some other personalities that may be evolving. Even if one adopts the appellation ‘musician’ that is the most used for him, one cannot still contest that his kind of musician was rare, perhaps as rare as the Afrobeat popular music genre that he created. In contexts, contents and actions, many of Fela’s Afrobeat albums interrogate, criticise, correct and rebuke dominant socio-political policies and practices. Most writings that have analytically

interrogated them cannot but agree that their themes are political and that, as expressly put by Olaniyan (2004: 26), they “intervene very cogently in political problematics”.

A few of those writings that so submit are Labinjo’s (1982) ‘...protest music and social process in Nigeria’, Mabinuori-Idowu’s (1986) ‘...why black man carry shit’, as well as Ayu’s (1986) ‘Creativity and protest in popular culture...’. They were published during Fela’s lifetime. After Fela’s *ancestorisation* in 1997, Olorunyomi (2003), Olaniyan (2004), Shonekan (2009), Eesusola (2012) and others would continue to explore and explain the political dimensions of Fela’s music. Thus, from and beyond the foregoing writings, there is a sense of assuming that Fela Anikulapo Kuti’s Afrobeat is a radical departure from the dominant practice in the Second Republic of Nigeria, where most popular musician’s works praised the elite and the ruling class in reinforcement of their anomie. Additionally, Afrobeat is much unlike many other popular music genres that indulge in what Ayu (1986:3) calls “the illusory notion of arts for arts’ sake”.

By Afrobeat, we refer to a bi-morphological concept of ‘Afro’ and ‘beat’. It was created by Fela Anikulapo Kuti. It is a political genre. As the creator once declared, the purpose is the critical exploration of the socio-political contradictions that confronted - and are still confronting- Nigeria and Africa (Olorunyomi 2003, Olaniyan 2004; Shonekan 2009). Afrobeat is a conglomeration of artistic, social, political and spiritual activities that Fela often presented in songs, dance, costume and jesting (Yabbis). Between 1970 and 1979 in Nigeria, it was a significant means of raising socio-political consciousness amongst regional and continental African audiences, especially youth.

But even beyond its generic categorisation as ‘political’, Fela’s Afrobeat’s major preoccupation is interrogating the state and other political institutions vis a vis their power relations with citizens. As Lagbaja succinctly declares, most times, the songs raise philosophical concerns: “*When he put mouth for song, philosophy go de flow*”: When he begins to sing, philosophy issues forth (cited in Olaniyan 2004:6). Many of Fela’s songs engage in political thoughts. Others attempt to theorise political issues and raise general consciousness towards politics. Of the many songs, however, the main focus in this study is Akunakuna Senior Brother of Perambulator (1987), with supplementary lyrics examined from Confusion Break Bone (1992).

The discourse of this article flows from its general overview to the specific one of examining political thoughts, theories and philosophy within the context of the state, citizens and other related concepts. This establishes a theoretical foundation for the paper. It also stands as a prelude to utilising the lyrics of the selected songs for analysis. It draws freely from the lyrics of these songs and interprets them hermeneutically. Indeed, the contents of some popular music sometimes contain strong intellectual substances capable of complementing those in conventional intellectual sources such as books and journals.

State and citizenship in the context of political thoughts

Political thoughts, political theory and political philosophy are often interchangeably used, and, as Crick (1967) observes, any discussion of political activities, situations and institutions at all often ultimately approximates one, some or all of the three. Sabine's (1973) classic demonstrates this. The classic presents a detailed analysis of various political philosophers and their respective proclamations as 'political thoughts'. But it is titled 'A history of political theory'! Right from the introduction, Sabine interlinks political theory and political thought with political philosophy, even political ideology. Teachers, students and analysts from disciplines such as Sociology, Political Science, History and Philosophy have continued to use them, just as Sabine does not appear to envisage any clear distinction amongst these concepts. This may be because every process of political thinking or political thought is potentially theoretical and philosophical, suggesting why Crick is quick to declare that the political thought–political theory debates are all distinctions of abstraction and that, in reality, political thoughts and theories derive from and relate with each other. It is on this 'interchange tradition' that the three concepts are used in this paper.

The concepts of state, citizens, and government will always come to mind in any discourses of political thoughts, theories, and philosophy. The state, particularly, is very crucial in this regard. This is because, irrespective of what theoretical orientation it is perceived from, the state exists *de facto* in the affairs of man. Man makes the state through the involvement of other men. The state becomes the man, and man can only be a man when in the state; that is, when in the company of others. The wisdom in one of Aristotle's most

quoted sayings thus remains evergreen: Man, by nature, is a political animal, and outside the state, man is either a beast or God.

Although this doctrine is far from being free of certain unresolved ambiguities and challenges, the simplicity of its message is that the state is a form of human association. Where man is, the state is; where there is the state, man is. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) states that,

“...that man is much more a political animal than any bee or herd animal is clear. For, as we assert, nature does nothing in vain, and man alone among the animals has speech. Speech reveals the advantageous and the harmful and, hence, the just and unjust. For it is peculiar to man compared to the other animals that he alone has a perception of good and bad and just and unjust and other things of this sort, and partnership in these things is what makes a household and a city” (1253a8).

Citizens also become critical in political theory, thoughts and philosophy. A citizen is a person who, by place of birth, nationality of one or both parents or naturalisation, is granted full rights and responsibilities as state or political community member. Citizens are the highest stakeholders who must be protected and provided for by the state. It comes with responsibilities within the political system, often expressly declared in the laws (Eeusola, 2009). The state can award or withdraw citizenship of any of its members, but it must also be based on the laws.

Akunakuna Senior Brother of Perambulators

Akunakuna opens with the phrase, “In this state of Nigeria...”. The word ‘state’ to represent Nigeria instead of ‘country’ or ‘nation’ should be noted as one of those things that convincingly presents Fela’s songs as intellectual and political. State and Country are often used interchangeably because they can be contextually synonymous. But while they both refer to any political unit with sovereignty over an area of territory and population, ‘state’ is often preferred by the ‘informed’: mostly intellectuals, policymakers, diplomats and other professionals. The country is more imprecise and ambiguous, used often in everyday discourse and street parlance (Mohammed, 2018). A similar concept to both is ‘Nation’, but this often represents a group of people who share similar cultures and worldviews but do not necessarily have sovereignty (Eric, 2020). Fela appears to consciously ignore the use of country and nation to represent Nigeria even when he was a popular musician, and that these

words were the popular ones around him. The opening stanza of *Akunakuna* reads:

In the state of Nigeria In the state of Nigeria

We get important places There are important institutions.

One of the important places One of the important institutions (is)

The court of law and justice The court of law and justice

Contextualising Fela's the State of Nigeria

Sometimes, it is difficult to have a full understanding of an artiste's mind when they write their songs and draw their lyrics. However, the personal background and socio-political environment of their art are often relied on in untying their lyrical knots and in understanding the theme or themes of their skill beyond the subject matters. These two issues provide a good platform for understanding Fela's choice of words in the phrase 'the state of Nigeria' that opens the song *Akunakuna*. It is not sure if Fela was sure that Nigeria, as of 1987, was a state. But definitely, he knew Nigeria was not a nation. Even the scholarly circle is agog with the debates on whether or not the country is a state in the technically correct sense of the word (Miliband 1983, Eghosa 1998, Walter, 2013; Spruyt 2002), or the 'mere geographical expression' that one of her founding fathers, Obafemi Awolowo (1947) called it.

Fela's use of the state of Nigeria was in 1987. But things started far before then. On 11 August 1958, he left Nigeria for Trinity College, England, to obtain a bachelor's degree in Music. The Nigeria he left behind was that in which the British colonial interlopers newly handed over political power to the elite of weak economic background; elite who had to steal state's wealth to improvise a ruling class (Ekeh, 1975; Ake, 1981 and 1985, Amin, 1972, Ihonvbere, 1996). This system is what Joseph (1991) refers to as Prebendalism. Olorunyomi (2004) observes that Prebendalism characterises the nature of the emergent Nigerian state, while Joseph (1991) contends that any fruitful discussion about Nigeria must consider the "nature, extent and persistence of a certain mode of political behaviour, and his social and economic ramifications". This is why he suggested the conceptual notion of using Prebendalism to explain the centrality in the Nigerian polity of the intensive and persistent struggle to control and explore the offices of the state. Olorunyomi (2004) maintains that Nigeria was still a prebendal state right in the sense Richard used it.

With the manifestation of Prebendalism in Nigeria, the political elite could not focus on working towards coalescing social values that would build hegemony, create social order and enhance quick socio-political development. Instead, they concentrated on developing coercive state instrumentalities for the dual purpose of abetting their looting and suppressing possible revolt from the people. This made the police venal. It also rendered the military politicised and mercenary.

Fela had returned to this same Nigeria in 1963 when the country moved from one crisis to another. The military intervened in partisan politics in 1966, plunged the country into a thirty-month civil war that ended in 1970, and finally truncated the process of political maturity that would have dialectically resulted from the crisis. Now in control of political power, the military elite weakened the emergent civil society and its ability to set an agenda. Kleptomania endured. Consequently, mass unemployment, poverty and decaying infrastructure appeared, even amidst executive recklessness. Shonekan (2009: 6) describes the Nigerian State of Fela's time as turbulent and painful and then declares Fela and his mother that "Both mother and son cultivated the following among the masses as a result of their knowledge and enlightened stance on the problems their people encountered".

These problems were highlighted by Olaniyan (2003) and Olorunyomi (2003) as rampant corruption, nepotism, executive lawlessness, military rascality, and crude repression. "This background helps to explain why Fela devoted enormous attention to the political patron to undermine its symbolic figure since it was precisely the patron-client relation that provides a sustaining framework for the manifestation of prebendal politics in Nigeria" (Olorunyomi, 2003:16-17). It also explains why he, in most cases, directed his verbal rebuttal (yabbies) at officers of the state and members of the dominant class. His song, ITT (1979), makes this clear. It was a direct attack on the personality of the then Head of State, General Obasanjo, and his close friend, MKO Abiola, a businessman Fela considered one of the compradors of multinationals.

Labinjoh (1982) gave an additional explanation of the state of Nigeria during Fela's time. He noted that the discovery of oil in the immediate post-colonial era led to the frustration of the masses and the embourgeoisement of the few who either belonged to the corridor of political power or were compradors who connived with multinationals to loot the nation's wealth. This

Fela would later explain in ITT (1979). Labinjoh concludes that this situation choked the masses and removed them from the mainstream of government welfare. Fela, exposed to the quality of life elsewhere in Europe and America, began to protest against it.

Thus, Fela left Nigeria with rising expectations. He got further political knowledge elsewhere in the UK and the US. This additional political knowledge is likened to what Zurcher and David (1981) call 'political engagement'. But he returned to seeing these expectations aloof as he confessed in an interview, 'I came back home to change the entire system'. But when the system was antithetical to change, Fela developed high disillusionment for the Nigerian State with his high protest potentiality and internalized protest disposition as we shall explain later. His response was not different from what he called "deciding to face the regime" because, as he declared in the same interview, "if someone is not firm, the society will break up" (F. Anikulapo Kuti, cited in B. Hoskyns, personal communication, August 1984). Fela was referring to the Nigerian State.

In addition, it should be noted that *Akunakuna* was produced during a military interregnum, when all forms of freedoms of speech, association, and movements were restricted, and all fundamental human rights were put on hold following the suspension of the constitution. Most media houses operating during this period were government-owned. The few owned by individuals would either be sympathetic towards the government to attract its patronage or avoid criticizing it to avoid sanction. Even international news was first filtered before it got disseminated to the people. Around that time, the teaching of Marxism was banned in most universities to avoid the growth of radicalism among the youth. A big lacuna then existed in terms of citizens having critical information about their government, as well as giving their views and opinions towards it.

It was Fela and his Afrobeat that filled this gap. Most citizens who patronized the shrine during this time did so to get the latest information about their government through Fela's songs and Yabbis sessions. It was the only space they had to express their views about their country. In other words, the military elite that controlled Nigerian political power weakened the civil society and its ability to set agenda. They also monopolized the instrument of information. The few non-government-owned media houses were seriously cross-filtered and sanctioned when they published anti-state issues. This trend

continued until much later in the 1990s. Under the situation, there was limited information on the part of the people. Freedom of expression as well as political association was restricted. Consequently, people remained helpless in the face of the reckless kleptomania activities of the ruling elite. Amidst these, there was mass unemployment, poverty, and decaying infrastructure.

According to Olaniyan (2004:2), this is why Fela engaged in “comprehensive venomous critique of both institutions and individuals he sees as causes and perpetrators of the reigning incredible social anomie”. It also explains why Fela, in most cases, directed his verbal rebuttal (yabbies) at officers of the state and members of the dominant class. Fela continued to insist that he engaged in deviant activities not because he was a criminal, but as a way of spiting the dominant class in Nigeria (See ITT, 1979: Country of Pains, 1989; and B. Hoskyns, personal interview, December 1984). It was under this situation that Fela’s Afrobeat music of political protest found its way across classes and stratifications of people during the period under study, despite the desperate efforts of the successive Nigerian government to suppress it with the NTBB labelling (Not To Be Broadcast). Nigeria, currently under study, was a prebendal state of an improvised ruling class. Because it was improvised, the ruling class could not create a hegemony that would regulate social order, so, they resorted to coercive state instrumentalities. This weakened civil society and its ability to operate as a balancing force between the government and the governed.

Theoretically, and in terms of popular defining characteristics, Nigeria may be called a state due to the presence of geographical location, population and definite territory. However, scholars often differ over the logic of each of the foregoing characteristics serving its purpose or performing its functions (Walter, 2013; Spruyt 2002; and Hendrik 2002). Hendrik identifies two characteristics of the modern state as having greater capacity to intervene in their societies and being buttressed by the principle of international legal sovereignty and juridical equivalence. Hendrik adds that modern states tend to be organized as unified national polities and that they have rational-legal bureaucracies. However, certain critical questions arise here: What happens when the supposed state is tied to the apron of her colonial masters and cannot take policy decisions based on the popular wills of her citizens? Does the state have sovereignty? If a part of a country’s territory is in contest or occupied by non-state actors or terrorists, does the country still have a definite territory? What if the social institutions in a state, represented by the

Ministries, Departments and Agencies collapse beyond performing their basic functions, is the state still a state? Extending them further, how, for instance, is a country a state when her territory is porous and legally contended, and her sovereignty is hijacked by foreign powers and domestic individual state actors?

Perhaps, these interrogations prompted many state-skeptic scholars, such as Eghosa (1998), Spruyt (2002) and Ajayi (2007), to often refer to Nigeria and some other political formations in Africa as states. If Nigeria is viewed from the foregoing lensed, it might not pass the test of being a state. Beyond these functionalist sentiments, those who have social contract traditions should also support the argument that social contract is the foundation of any state. They could argue based on the fact that since there was no social contract between the different peoples that were amalgamated in 1994 into an entity called Nigeria, the country is not a state in a true sense.

The foregoing interrogations appear to be the underlying reason for Fela's positions in the Nigerian State. Cultural and national homogenization figured prominently in the rise of the modern state, and the state in itself is the hegemony of the ruling class (Eesuola 2009). Thus, instead of the Nigerian State, Fela preferred 'the state of Nigeria'. The choice is based on the critical situation Nigeria was in around the time *Akunakuna* was composed. Also, Fela did not use 'Nation' because in the song he was going to discuss citizenship, political power and other institutions; these are concepts not often used with the nation. Where there is no state there cannot be citizens. So, as Fela declared, "Even the Head of State is not a citizen"! This is because, according to him, the court of law and justice is occupied by 'serious' people:

In the court of law and justice, In the court of law and justice,
Serious people dem dey there is occupied by serious people

Who are the 'Serious people' who occupy the court of law and justice, as Fela declared; what do they do and why are they tagged 'serious'? 'Serious' was a popular slang of the 1980s in Nigeria, and it meant 'mad', 'abnormal' or 'psychotic'. So, whenever, around the period under study, it was said that someone was 'serious', it meant they were larcenous and of unsound mind. That gave birth to the slogan '*Eni to serous wa l'Aro*' (The serious person resides in the Psychiatry Hospital, popularly called 'Aro' in Nigeria). In Fela's opinion, Nigeria's court of law, the police, and the entire institution of justice were occupied and controlled by such 'serious' people of larceny and unsound

minds. The reasons they are so described are best suggested in the part of *Akunakuna* lyrics as follows:

Make you hear di nonsense things | Imagine the nonsense things
Dis serious people dem dey do | That these serious people do
Make you hear di yeye things | Imagine the senseless things
Dis serious people dem dey do | That these serious people do
Police go arrest people for road for wandering | Policemen would arrest people for wandering
Police wey no get destination | Policemen that had no destination
Police wey waka about perambulating | Policemen that moved about perambulating
Harassing the man wey get destination | Harassing the man who had destination
Harassing the woman wey get destination | Harassing the woman who had destination
Trying to fuck women by force by road by night | Trying to rape women at night by road side
Police go charge dem for wandering | Policemen would charge them for wandering
Police dey wander, go charge you for wandering | Police that wander, arrest citizens for wandering!
Steve Wander, himself e go dey wander | Even Steve wonders would begin to wonder

To Fela, the ‘nonsense and senseless things done by the serious people in the justice system are best summed up as naked abuse of state power woven around the law of wandering. There was in Nigeria, the Decree 2 of 1984 which empowered the state security and the Chief of Staff to detain for up to three months without charges, individuals deemed to be a security risk to the state. This was in spite of section 41 (1) of Nigeria’s 1979 Constitution provides that: “Every citizen of Nigeria is entitled to move freely throughout Nigeria and to reside in any part thereof”. The ‘serious people’ ignored this constitutional provision. They attacked many harmless individuals conducting commercial or social activities in the streets- individuals who were, in the first place, denied basic social security and infrastructure and had to discretionally resort to petty trading for survival. According to Fela, these serious people would...

Arrest poppop seller,
 Arrest akara seller
 Arrest moinmoin seller
 Arrest rice seller
 Arrest soap seller,

Arrest amala seller
 Arrest ice cream seller,
 Very very hot food
 Very very fresh food,
 Carry dem go for court
 Magistrate pass judgment;
 Pof pof exhibit,
 Moinmoin exhibit,
 Rice exhibit

The serious people would hide under Decree 2 to oppress, suppress, and incarcerate citizens in such ways that could, to use Fela's phrase, make even 'Steve Wonders wonder'. *Akunakuna* alleges that the police would confiscate all the foregoing items and send them to the court where the magistrate, after being bribed, would pass judgment and declare them as exhibits to be kept away forever from the owners. And just where would the items be kept after being declared as exhibits? Fela alleges rhetorically that the magistrate and other officials of the court, including the police, would consume them:

After dem don take the food from the owner | After confiscating the food from the owner

Magistrate go take some money from them | Magistrates would take some gratifications from them

Him go send dem all away from the court | He would dismiss them from the court

Magistrate go open mouth anyhow | Magistrate would open mouth carelessly

Open mouth anyhow to start to chop moin moin | Open mouth anyhow to start eating moin moin

Police go open mouth anyhow | Police would open mouth carelessly

Open mouth anyhow to start to chop puf puf | Open mouth carelessly to start eating puf puf

Fela had observed the same pattern of state repression in another song: *Confusion Break Bone* (1990). The period fell within the same era of military interregnum in Nigeria, and the state of the country was the same of violence against the citizens. In CBB, Fela reveals:

This time around 1985 and '87 | This time around 1985 and '87

Police go seize expensive goods... | Police would seize expensive goods...

...dem start to burn burn dem | ...and start to burn them
 Army go go market... | Army would go to markets...
 ...anything wey cost money go burn burn dem | ...and raze anything of monetary values
 Why dem like to burn the things wey dey cost money! | Why does the state like to burn property!

And what is the ideal thing for government and its agent to do about the welfare of citizens instead of burning? Fela postulates that,

Government fit sell to people cheap-ee cheap-ee | Government could subsidise for people
 Government fit dash people wey no get-ee money | Government could assist the poor
 Na di burn burn, na him dey sweet-ee dem pass | But they preferred burning!

The foregoing lyrics of Confusion Break Bone must have influenced the ultimate conclusion in *Akunakuna* that in Nigeria, there are no citizens but only members of the public; and even the head of state is not a citizen because of the way he is treated by the same contradictions he created. The implications of this are many in the Nigerian political system, and, considering the statement of Fawehinmi (2016) that “Nigerians are agonising over the high price of commodities and social amenities like transport, medical bills and house rent while corruption has eaten so deep into the fabric of the society, that the masses have been deprived of decent living”, Fela appears to have been vindicated.

Fela concludes that a state in which all of the foregoing occur is no state in the real sense of it, but a ‘Country of Pains’. This is from the background knowledge that the fundamental purpose of the state is to protect as well as provide for citizens who make it. Even this is mentioned in the Section 1 of the constitution of Nigeria. In the *Country of Pains*, “you see policemen who wander, perambulate and gallivant like prostitutes (*Akunakuna*) going ahead to brutalise, arrest and jail citizens who have destinations”. In such a political formation, no citizens exist, not even the Head of State. All inhabitants are mere members of the public:

E no easy o, eh no easy to be Nigerian | It is not easy to be a Nigerian
E no easy o citizen no dey for Nigeria | It is not easy, in Nigeria there are no citizens
E no easy o public dey citizen no dey | It is not easy, the public exists but no citizens

Even head of state no be citizen at any time | Even the head of state is no citizen at anytime

However, while declaring that there is no citizen in Nigeria, Fela turns around to declare himself as a citizen, but not without giving conditions upon which he earned the citizenship. The following provides a rather mild account of what Fela went through in Nigeria, while trying to be a citizen who should have a voice in the affairs of his state:

To be citizen | To be a citizen
Dem must fit to kill you | You may be marked for assassination
While dem kill you finish | After killing you
You must wake up again | You must survive it
Dem must burn your house too | Your house must be burnt
Dem must kill your mother | Your mother must be killed
Dem must charge you sabotage | You must be charged for sabotage
Dem must jail you five years | You must be jailed for five years
E no easy o, eh no easy to be Nigerian | It is not easy to be a Nigerian citizen
As I be citizen I fit talk something | I am a citizen, I have experienced all these

The conclusion reached in the lyrics is that the state of Nigeria during the period under analysis is such that,

Government of the people na spoilers | Government of the people is a destroyer
Police go spoil you by beating | Police will destroy you with violence
Government go spoil you by wahala | Government destroy you with victimisation
Judge go spoil you by jailing | The judge will destroy you with jail

And that,

After this don happen to you one time | After these have happened to you one time
You go start to make up your mind yourself | You go start to make up your mind
You go start to point at your enemy... | You will start identifying your enemy

That enemy is the repressive government of Nigeria. In foregoing lyrics, Fela used his personal experience of repression from Nigeria while he was merely trying to be a citizen and make his country a state. An account of his experience is succinctly provided by Britannica in what follows:

The firebrand singer, who gyrated over the keyboard as he sang in English and Yoruba, struck a chord among the unemployed, disadvantaged, and oppressed. His politically charged songs, which decried oppression by Nigeria's military government, prompted authorities to routinely raid his club, looking for reasons to jail him. Near there he also set up a communal compound, which he proclaimed the independent Kalakuta Republic...A 1977 raid on the complex by Nigerian authorities resulted in his brief incarceration and the death of his mother the following year due to complications from a fall. In exile in Ghana in 1978, he changed his name from Ransome to the tribal Anikulapo. In 1979 Fela formed a political party, the Movement of the People, and ran unsuccessfully for the presidency of Nigeria. Five years later he was jailed for 20 months on charges of currency smuggling. Upon his release, he turned away from active political protest and left his son, Femi, to carry the torch of Afro-beat music. Fela was jailed again in 1993 for murder, but the charges were eventually dropped.¹

Theoretical framework

The discourse so far has been that knowledge is not limited to one source, and that political thoughts, theories and philosophy are not exceptions. They can derive from many sources including popular music. This is what the *odu Ifa Ogbe 'Weyin (Ogbe Iwori)* says in one of the two hundred and sixty-five *odu* (thesis) in the Yoruba indigenous knowledge system. *Ogbe 'Weyin* stands as the primary framework for this discourse. It says,

Ogun ogbon o pin s'ile Olugbon | Two scores of wisdom is not limited to the house of Olugbon

Ogbon oye o f'ikale s'odo Aresa | Three scores of intelligence is not limited to the house of Aresa

Mo mo tan o si nle Owaragunaga | Omniscience is not found in the house of Owaragunaga

Ooni Alaka Esu o j'oba imoran | Ooni Alaka Esu is no king of counseling
bi eni ateeke | like a permanent mat

Ibi taa a ba ti r'ogbon la ti i k'ogbon eni | One seeks wisdom wherever it avails

A d'ifa fun Ajere | This philosophically explains the case of Ajere,

tii s'omo bibi inu Agboniregun | A biological child of Agboniregun

Ajere nle o,

1 See Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/Human-Rights>

Abeti lu j'ara won n'igba igba | Ajere whose ears are open and connected in ten scores

To complement the Ogbe 'W'eyin theoretical ground is the Multi-Source Hypothesis. Originally used in biblical studies to assert that sources of understanding the gospel can be as multiple as the biblical Matthew, Mark, John and Luke - even when they are not directly interdependent, the Multi-Source Hypothesis was first postulated by Marsh (1823). Bombard (1979) proposed a structurally similar one and now, Rolland (1984) and Burkett (2004) have further developed it.

Both Ogbe W'eyin and the Multi Source Hypothesis speak to the indispensability and inevitability of multiple sources for any phenomenon that must remain functional, and to which the trinity of political thought, theory and philosophy cannot be an exception. As demonstrated in this paper, one of those sources is popular music, specifically the Afrobeat of Fela Kuti. By the nature of what they do, popular musicians often recall and report political occurrences in their environments. In doing so they draw attention to, as well as document, political history some of which may snowball into political thoughts, theories and philosophy. The is just like Ajere has scores of openings through which it accesses, processes, and utilises information.

Fela's political thoughts and theoretical postulations

Theorising is the act of interrogating a set of ideas about a phenomenon in order to explain it in terms of how it occurs or should occur, how it is, or it should be based on certain ideas that are testable. When this is done with focus on the state, citizens, and the use of power, amongst other concepts, it essentially becomes political theorizing, dealing with the ideas and principles that shape constitutions, governments and social lives in a systematic manner.

But how do the selected lyrics of *Akunakuna* and *Confusion Break Bone* qualify as political thoughts? Political thought often addresses questions about the nature, scope, and legitimacy of the state, public agents and institutions in the ways they relate amongst themselves and with the citizens (Crick 1967). In general, they often cover concepts such as state, liberty, justice, law, and the enforcement of laws by authority (Crick; Dienk, 2020). Political thinkers, theorists and philosophers often reflect on or interrogate what preceding are, whether or not they are needed and for what purpose. Those who engage in political thoughts also ponder over what makes the state and government

legitimate, the way the state and government should be constituted, and their dispositions to rights, liberty, and freedoms of the members that make the state. Political thoughts are often interchangeably used with political theories and philosophy (Crick 1967; Sabine 1973).

The lyrics, *Akunakuna* and *Confusion Break Bone*, explored and interpreted in this paper also establish some theoretical postulations. The first is that the state is a conglomeration of social institutions which are quite central to the state. Fela calls these social institutions 'important places'. The term social institution is widely used to describe social practices that are regularly and continuously repeated, are sanctioned and maintained by social norms, and have a major significance in the social structure. Social institutions establish patterns of behaviour and create a plurality of roles in society. They are an interrelated system of social roles and social norms, organized around the satisfaction of an important social need or social function. They also mean organised patterns of beliefs and behaviour centred on basic social needs.

Fela *Akunakuna* observes that in any state or state, there should be some social institutions that are indispensable to the survival of the State. This is why he calls them important places, one of which is that of Law and Justice. Fela insists that the social institution covering law and justice must be occupied by people of sound and fair minds, not larcenous ones. Failure to do this will reduce the state to a country of pains, and the law enforcement agents who are supposed to be protectors and helpers of the people will become 'spoilers international'. Fela also earmarked roles for soldiers and police in the state, claiming that the former should defend citizens while the latter helps them in daily activities.

Other postulations expressed are that the social institutions must be occupied by people of sane minds to enable the government to function towards the people. Like Plato's recommendation that the philosopher king should rule, Fela emphasises the quality of minds, not of a single ruler but of those who lead the social institutions. His idea is a strong set of ministries, departments and agencies, not necessarily a strong state. The ideal state should be fairly socialist and philanthropic by subsidising the lives of the citizens and providing outright essential items and services. Where the state lacks these characters, it becomes a spoiler. The people there become de-citizenised, unconcerned and unpatriotic, mere 'public' as Fela states.

State repression degrades and de-citizenises people, making them ‘bad minders’ who create insecurity everywhere to the extent of threatening the political system. Citizenship is active and critical involvement in the affairs of the state. It is not an overt creation, instead, it must be earned through people’s active participation in state affairs, even at the risk of serious repression (The Guardian 2 June 2018). The idea of citizenship is a “relationship between an individual and a state to which the individual owes allegiance and in turn is entitled to its protection”. Citizenship comes with several rights and privileges, which, as Eesuola (2009: 26) argued, distinguishes some people from others in the political system.

Fela thinks that killing, arson, frivolous jailing, and many other forms of state repression are not unlikely to occur to anyone willing to be a citizen, but an aspiring citizen must endure them and remain committed towards building their state:

To be citizen | To be a citizen

Dem must fit to kill you | You may be marked for assassination

While dem kill you finish | After killing you

You must wake up again... | You must survive it

Finally, law and justice, for Fela, are the same important institutions of the state. Their responsibilities are shared between the police enforcing the law and the judiciary interpreting it. The police, as an important institution of the state, must coordinate the affairs of the citizens and help them in daily activities.

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to demonstrate that political thoughts, theories and philosophy- viewed interchangeably or differently- are often a product of reflections on the political environments. They can evolve from anyone who cares to think deeply, irrespective of education, gender, race or career. Furthermore, the trio can be expressed and documented in different ways. Plato wrote in dialogue, Aristotle wrote in prose, and Socrates never wrote, but he orally handed down his thoughts to his disciples in a way similar to how Orunmila established the Ifa Indigenous Knowledge System that is used amongst the Yoruba and other nationalities of the world (See Olouwole, 2017; Eesuola 2021).

Fela's *Akunakuna* and *Confusion Break Bone* bring about four basic political thought concepts: State, Citizens, Law and Justice and Social Institutions. Like most thinkers were influenced by their political environments, Fela's songs represent his observation of the political events during military rule in Nigeria. The songs raised some theoretical issues regarding a 'network of concepts and generalizations about political life involving ideas, assumptions and statements about the nature, purpose and key features of the state; and about the political capabilities of human beings' (Held, 2020).

The lyrics of *Akunakuna* and *Confusion Break Bone* (CBB) interrogate the life of the average Nigerian citizen, which is characterized by frustration, lack of security of lives and property, hopelessness, and despondency. Other issues raised in the lyrics that are associated with being a Nigerian citizen are police brutality, judicial corruption, human rights abuse and state repression. As demonstrated here, the ability of a political thinker, theorist or philosopher is to interrogate political issues, and it can be traced to certain innate behaviour or dispositions acquired through socialization. While Fela's case is tied to the latter, the dominant socio-political situations around him during the military interregnum in Nigeria propelled his thinking, philosophizing and theorizing issues of politics. It is greatly needed to further explore many more of Fela's songs for the identification of possible empirical socio-political contents in them- empirical because they must have been drawn from practical social experiences as contained in *Akunakuna*.

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