



## THE MUSIC ARTIST AS A SOCIAL CRITIC IN NIGERIA'S CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT: A STUDY OF SELECTED SONGS OF ADVISER NOWAMAGBE

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**Abstract:** *Music, it is said, has a universal language. Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the late Afro Beat king, personified those that ardently criticised Nigerian leaders, especially the military. Songs like, "Zombie," "V.I.P. (Vagabonds in Power)," "Unknown Soldier," and "Beasts of No Nation," lampooned the military mentality, likening them to robots that are remotely controlled. Sonny Okosun added his voice to the condemnation of the Apartheid regime in South Africa through his music. Tracks like "Fire in Soweto" and "Liberation," were some of the pungent messages on the ills of Apartheid. This was just as his "Which Way Nigeria," was a critical comment on the political direction of the Nigerian ship of state. In an era, where pop music has taken over the entertainment scene in Nigeria, and indeed the world, one thing that is worrisome is that most of the lyrics of songs have little or nothing to offer society, in the sense that they are just "all sound and no message for listeners". But then, the approach of Adviser Nowamagbe, an Edo State born musician, is interesting. He has gradually become another Fela of this generation, in that he has made serious commentaries on the political leadership of, not just governors of Edo State, but also The Presidency. He has the conviction that he has to "throw stones" to keep the leaders on their toes. This study posits that there is need for relevant agencies to ensure that apart from entertaining listeners, music should convey messages that point the way forward to the citizenry, the leadership and the society.*

**Keywords:** *Music Artist, Social Critic, Contemporary, Democratic Experiment.*

### INTRODUCTION

Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the late Afro Beat king, personified those that ardently criticised Nigerian leaders, especially during the military regime. Songs like, *Zombie*, *V.I.P. (Vagabonds In Power)*, *Unknown Soldier*, and *Beasts of no Nation*, lampooned the military mentality, likening them to robots that were remotely controlled. Sonny Okosun added his voice to the



condemnation of the erstwhile Apartheid regime in South Africa through his music. Songs like *Fire in Soweto*, *Papa's Land* and *Liberation*, were some of the pungent messages on the ills of Apartheid. This was just as his *Which Way Nigeria*, was a critical comment on the political direction of the Nigerian ship of state. In an era, where pop music has taken over the entertainment scene in Nigeria, and indeed the world, one worrisome thing is that, most of the lyrics of the songs have little or nothing to offer society, in the sense that they are just, "all sound and no message for listeners." However, the approach of Adviser Nowamagbe, an Edo State born musician, is interesting, because he is gradually becoming another Fela of this generation, after Osayomore Joseph (see Inegbinedion 37), making incisive commentaries on the political leadership of, not just the Executive Governors of Edo State, but also The Presidency. He is of the conviction that he has to "throw stones" to keep the leaders on their toes. This study posits that there is need for artists to ensure that apart from entertaining listeners, musical compositions should convey messages that point the way forward to the citizenry, the political leadership and the society.

## THE NATURE OF MUSIC

Any discourse on the fundamental question of *what* music is and its role in society cannot ignore the business of music and how technology has impacted its (music) production and consumption around the world. The essence is to examine what makes a great piece of music and why it is fundamental to the very experience of a people. Music is one of the most primal and fundamental aspects of human culture, which pre-dates the emergence of language itself. This explains the aphorism that, "music is the universal language of mankind." It is and has always been part of the fabric of everyday life. Whenever human beings congregate, music comes into play: weddings, funerals, matriculations, convocations, men marching off to war, sporting events, a night out in the town, religious prayer sessions, romantic dinners, mothers rocking their babies to sleep, and studying with music at the background, among others. Thus, a world without music is unimaginable, because a huge volume of the social communication mechanism would be non-existent.

Music is *constructed* in the minds of artists, using different parts of the brain. The inexpressible depth of music is the fact that it reproduces all of the emotions of the innermost beings. While it does not exist physically, unlike a painting, sculpture or photograph, music is just air hitting the eardrum in a patterned way. Somehow, the air,



which has almost no substance, whatsoever, when made to hit the eardrum by way of sound, can make people dance, cry, have sex, move across country, go to war and so on. In the real sense, music is an organised chaos, but not necessarily in a bad way.

Every era in time is accompanied by music of its time; it is almost like an imprint that reflects the cultural reality always. It is believed that without music, the life span of human beings will be shortened because without music, our ability to emotionally express will be limited and that would be directly linked to our mental and physical health. Little wonder then that William Shakespeare said, "If music be the food of love, play on." Music can be enjoyed, created, and played by virtually anybody. The challenge before artists is to create, sustain, and spread music that can be appreciated by generality of the public. Imagine lullabies for babies; birthday songs; songs to learn the alphabets; songs for games; sound tracks for movies; music to listen to when one falls in love or when one's heart is broken; dance music; wedding music; funeral music, and so on. From the aforementioned, which is by no means definitive, one can tell how much music is integrated into our life. The emotions of joy, sadness, anger, fear and anticipation can be enhanced when paired with the "right" music, and can also manifest emotions by just listening to the music that is paired with it.

However, music has relationship with language, in the sense that the meaning has to be conveyed through it (language), as a medium of communication. But it transcends the limits of language, in the sense that it looks at the way a people cannot express themselves through the spoken or written word and makes up for the lack. Thus, it is an extension of language. As a point of fact, there are some kinds of music that one would find incredibly beautiful, which others may find dissonant and horrifying and vice versa. For instance, Hausa music would make no sense to an Igbo person; but it will definitely make sense to someone who grew up there and speaks Hausa language. The same music can create a great emotional reaction in the latter listener. It has serious impact on people, as Wilson notes:

To the same degree as literacy and language itself, it has changed the way people see the world.... Music is powerful in its impact on human feeling and on the interpretation of events ("The Role of Music in Human Culture").

Music has many functions, like the energy, that gives birth to what is almost a soundtrack to life. It is the social, emotional, and cognitive vehicle of society, reflecting the imprint of our



present identity and the always-evolving identity. The music behind commercials and movies provide the element of entertainment as well as consumerism. What makes a great piece of music is a question of whether there are any inherent or innate properties of music that affect people regardless of temporal or cultural context. It also has immense influence on politics, religion and other social phenomena. The challenge is to understand the extent to which music informs culture and the extent to which culture informs music. For instance, the music of the late 60's reflected the culture of the people; and the culture reflected the music. For decades, music has also legitimised certain world views; it has taken in world views that are often time left of centre and made them seem legitimate in the political or public domain. In order to listen to music, one had to tune to a radio station at the right time; one had to save to buy a record, go over to a friend's house to listen to their records, and so on. Now that music is ubiquitous and available everywhere, the record business is suffering. As a point of fact, music was scarce in the 60's; a musician had to convey the full compliments of his band to play and it was always an attraction. Those were the heydays of Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the guitar mastery of Sir Victor Uwaifo, the melodious Bongos Ikwe, among others. This is not the case now; a musician simply produces an album in a CD and goes to shows with it – probably with one or two personal assistants. He plays the music and just ghosts it.

### **NIGERIA'S POLITICAL EXPERIMENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE**

Nigeria prides itself as the *Giant of Africa*; and the country has seen many political leaders since gaining political independence from British Colonial rule on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960, namely,

1. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe – President (1 Oct. 1960 – 15 Jan. 1966).
2. Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa – Prime Minister (1 Oct. 1960 – 15 Jan. 1966).
3. Maj-Gen. J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi – Head of State (15 Jan. – 29 July, 1966).
4. Gen. Yakubu Gowon – Head of State (29 July, 1966 – 27 July, 1975).
5. Gen. Murtala Muhammed – Head of State (27 July, 1975 – 13 Feb. 1976).
6. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo – Head of State (13 Feb. 1976 – 1 Oct. 1979).
7. Alhaji Shehu Aliyu Shagari – President (1 Oct. 1979 – 31 Dec. 1983).
8. Maj-Gen. Muhammed Buhari – Head of State (31 Dec. 1984 – 27 Aug. 1985).
9. Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida – Military President (27 Aug. 1985 – 27 Aug. 1993).



10. Chief Ernest Shonekan – Head of State, Interim National Government (27 Aug. 1993 – 17 Nov. 1993).
11. Gen. Sani Abacha – Head of State (17 Nov. 1993 – 8 June, 1998).
12. Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar – Head of State (8 June, 1998 – 29 May, 1999),
13. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo – President (29 May, 1999 – 29 May, 2007).
14. Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua – President (29 May, 2007 – May, 2010).
15. Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan – President (6 May, 2010 – 29 May, 2015).
16. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari – President (29 May, 2015 – To date).

The country has also been plagued by as high as ten coups d'état that have shaken its social, cultural, religious, economic and political foundations (see Ayakoroma 12-20). The first, masterminded by five army majors, led by Chukwuemeka Kaduna Nzeogwu, was against the First Republic on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1966, in which many politicians lost their lives. The confusion that followed necessitated Maj-Gen. Aguiyi-Ironsi, the General Officer Commanding, Nigerian Army, to take over the mantle of leadership as the Head of State. This signalled the beginning of the militarisation of the Nigerian state (Adigwe 261-262). A chain of strikes against successive military regimes was to follow. Gen. Aguiyi-Ironsi met his demise on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1966, in a counter-coup paving way for Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon. Brig. Murtala Muhammad pushed out Gen. Gowon on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1975, only for Lt. Col. Bukar Suka Dimka to assassinate him (Murtala) in an abortive coup attempt on 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1976, and Gen. Obasanjo had to steer the ship of state (Ambaiwei 14-15). Seen in certain quarters then as an unwilling Head of State, Obasanjo never hesitated to hand over power to a democratically elected government on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1979, with Alhaji Shehu Shagari as President, heading straight to his Otta Farm, Ogun State, to enjoy his retirement.

The second attempt at civil democratic rule was terminated by Generals Buhari and Idiagbon on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1983, only for Gen. Babangida to edge them out in a palace coup on 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1985. Babangida, then fondly called, "Maradona," by the local press, because of his suave way in dealing with national issues, claimed to have survived a controversial coup plot in December 1985, alleged to have been mooted by Maj-Gen. Mamman Vasta, a renowned poet and his erstwhile classmate and close friend. He survived another coup attempt by Maj. Gideon Orka on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1990, in which Lt. Col. U. K. Bello,



his aide-de-camp, was killed. Babangida wasted no time in lining up all the suspected coup plotters at the firing squad.

However, Babangida's machinations to prolong his stay in office boomeranged as a result of his annulment of the 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1993 elections, acclaimed to have been "the freest and fairest" in the Nigeria then. He was forced to, in his own words, "step aside," on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1993, leaving behind a capricious Interim National Government, under Chief Ernest Shonekan, which was in turn edged out by Gen. Abacha on 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1993. Again, Abacha claimed to have survived a coup plot in March 1995, purportedly led by Col. Lawan Gwadabe, a former Governor of Niger State during the Babangida regime. The said coup generated controversy as government first claimed there was no coup and that the officers were being arrested for spreading "rumour." But events took a new turn as Gen. Obasanjo and Gen. Shehu Yar'Adua were implicated in the coup saga, eventually convicted to serve different jail terms as the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), under serious local and international pressures, commuted their death sentences. Unfortunately, Yar'Adua and Abiola died in prison detention under mysterious circumstances; and as providence will have it, Obasanjo came out of prison, became "the beautiful bride" in the political process and eventually won the 1998 presidential election under the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). He also secured a second term on office, which terminated on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2007, having failed in a purported scheme to get a third term. The interesting thing is that before leaving office, President Obasanjo installed Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, then former Governor of Katsina State, as his successor. The incapacitation of Umaru Yar'Adua paved way for Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to assume office, as Acting President, based on the "doctrine of necessity," and eventually President on the demise of the former. The then ruling PDP lost power, during the 2015 presidential elections, to a coalition of four different political parties that formed All Progressives Congress (APC), under the leadership of the incumbent President, Muhammadu Buhari.

One clear thing from the above scenario is that Nigeria has had a relatively unstable political history. This has affected various spheres of the country's national life. Issues like bribery and corruption, ethnicity, nepotism, rising unemployment, high crime rates, power failure, poor health services, declining quality of education, scarcity of water, problem of food security, Niger Delta youth militancy, political and election-related violence, abandoned



contracts syndrome, poor maintenance culture, and the current Boko Haram insurgency, are just a few of the problems militating against the political system. The situation is such that elected and appointed political officers see their positions as avenues for personal aggrandisement instead of selfless service to the people. While the country could be said to have experienced a moment of respite from military adventurers, the cataclysmic war among politicians is such that elections are seen as do-or-die affairs. Elsewhere, we have looked incisively at the imperatives of re-inventing the political process in Nigeria, using Nollywood, the contemporary Nigerian film industry, as a veritable platform. There is no gainsaying the fact that all of the above, and many more, provide raw materials for music artists to turn to in their works.

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSIC IN NIGERIA**

Music and dance have remained an integral part of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage just as they remain the pedestal of the people's cultural identity. Music encapsulates the world view of a people: their lineage, aspirations, philosophy, religion, history, social, economic and political systems. The traditional music of a people includes folk and popular music, some of which are known world-wide. Also, the styles are peculiar to the various ethnic groups, each with its unique technique, instruments, and songs.

The late 1960s through the '70s and '80s was an extremely fertile era for music in Nigeria, as indeed it was around the world. While Afro-juju music made waves in the South-West, with musicians like Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey and Fela Anikulapo Kuti, as its foremost proponents, Osita Osadebe, Oliver de Coque and Bright Chimezie institutionalised highlife music in the South-East; artists like Cardinal Jim Rex Lawson, Chief Inyang Henshaw, Sir Victor Uwaifo of the *Joromi* fame, and Sonny Okosun ruled the music scene in the South-South; and Northern Nigeria bubbled with the functional and entertaining songs of the local folk music genre, especially Dan Maraya Jos, who became one of Northern Nigeria's most popular folklorists, whose career had taken him to many countries of the world. Bongos Ikwue's unique "folk-soul" style of music enjoyed national and international acclaim, as he became one of the very few Africans whose album hit platinum under PolyGram Records in Europe (Adah & Chiama 1, 4, 5). Bongos (as he is popularly called), through the rich messages of his songs, is most remembered as the voice in the signature tune of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) popular drama serial, *Cock Crow at Dawn*, produced and directed by Peter Igbo in the early 1980s.

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Incidentally, Nigerians have made quite an impact in the music industry, nationally and globally. Artists like Victor Olaiya, Chris Okotie, Majek Fashek, Wasiu Ayinde Barrister, Felix Liberty, Orits Wiliki, Christy Essien, Onyeka Onwenu, and Edna Ogholi, to mention just a few, are in the league of accomplished musicians, who contributed immensely to the development of the music industry in the country, at one time or the other. They looked at society and expressed their feelings through their lyrics to address such conditions. The unique thing about all of the aforementioned musicians was that, their songs had meaning; they had philosophical depth; just as they had stories to tell. Developments in the modern trends have been to the contrary.

### **THE CONTEMPORARY MUSIC INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA**

The music industry in Nigeria, just like in other countries around the world, has not been static; it has been consistently undergoing a process of transformation through exposure to diverse musical styles from foreign cultures. This process of assimilation and integration has left a long trail of musical traditions, ranging from blues, highlife, pop, reggae, country music, Afro, and Hip-Hop, among others. Musicians like Femi Kuti, Tuface Idibia, P-Square, D'Banj, Davido, Timaya, Darey Art Alade, Bracket, Flavour, Ruggedman, J. Martins, Wande Coal, Tiwa Savage, Wizkid, and Duncan Mighty, are just a few of Nigeria's global exports, as far as the music industry is concerned. While it is generally agreed that the musicians have made impact in the national and global music scene, it could be argued that, most of the songs they compose could be best termed as, "all noise and no meaning." In other words, the songs are popular in dance halls and may be winning awards, here are there, but they hardly make any sense to the listener.

As a point of fact, there are permutations that ten musicians are likely to rule the music world in Nigeria in 2014 (Erhariefe 45-47). Afro-beat maestro, Femi Kuti, scion of the legendary Fela Anikulapo was listed as one of the Nigerian musicians that will rule 2014. The projection was informed by the fact that, Femi had been nominated four times for the Grammy Awards so far. KCee, with his hit songs, *Limpopo* and *Baby Pull Over*, has also taken the music industry by storm, after having started as KC Presh before. Sean Tizzle with *Sho lee* and *Boogie down*, Ice Prince with *Oleku* and *Fire of Zamani*, and Wizkid with *Holler @ ur boi*, *Jaiye Jaiye* and *Caro*, have all been seen as potential chartbusters in 2014. On his part, the rating of Davido of *Gobe* and *Skelewu* fame has experienced a meteoric rise, such that a show he was to feature in New York in March 2014 was stopped by the Police because it





was over-booked, and constituted a security threat. Furthermore, after his hit music, *Kukere*, Iyanya, winner of the inaugural MTN Project Fame West Africa competition, has earned endorsements worth ₦100million.

In spite of the lack of philosophical depth in their songs, many Nigerian music artists get nominated for national and international music awards. Banky W, Iyanya and Waje, were among others nominated for the 2014 World Music Awards, which was founded in 1989 under the high patronage of Albert II, Prince of Monaco and is held in Monte-Carlo. In an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Iyanya, who was nominated in as high as six categories said,

I feel honoured and blessed that the works I have put out have been recognised all over the world. It's always great for an artist to hear about a nomination or win an award no matter where it is taking place or the people he's competing with ("Banky W, Others Nominated...").

The NAN report disclosed that a total of 21 Nigerian artists were nominated in seven out of the nine categories of the awards, namely, World's Best Song, World's Best Album, World's Best Video, World's Best Female Artist and World's Best Male Artist. Others are World's Best Group, World's Best Live Act, World's Best Electronic Dance Music Artist, and World's Best Entertainer. Other Nigerian artists nominated included Femi Kuti, Tuface, Wizkid, Tiwa Savage, D'banj, P-Square, Sheyi Shay, Dr. Sid, Don Jazzy, Phyno, Darey, Davido, Ice Prince, Kcee, Modenine, Olamide and Timaya. The awards are presented to the World's best-selling artists in the various categories and the best-selling artists from each major territory; and the winners are determined through online and SMS votes from all over the world.

For quite some time now, the criteria by which the success of music was calculated had everything to do with revenue. Now it is much more nebulous – there is an incredibly dynamic dialectic between the musician and the listener. The musician is supposed to inform the listeners, just as the listeners inform the musician. It is much less viably profit-driven. Musicians who are still out there desperately trying to just make money are not doing that well; whereas musicians who are embracing this new strange paradigm are personally, artistically and professionally succeeding more. In the new climate, when people are disingenuous, the audience becomes aware of it very quickly. In the olden days, artists and labels could be a lot more disingenuous and it would take the listener a long time to figure it out.



The fact remains that most common way one becomes involved with music is through listening or attending a musical show. Listening to music from a CD player at home, in the car, on the computer, or on an iPod could be a very personal and fulfilling experience. Somehow, one of the main concerns over current trends in music is the portrayal of images and influence on teenagers. Yvonne Mazzulo observes that, millions of people watch music videos that reveal certain body images and assume they should look, act, and dress, every bit of such images, adding that, the problem with this was the images such videos set for the society. In other words, the music industry has been brainwashing the values of the people, to the extent that they concentrate on value appearance instead of personality and intelligence (Mazzulo 1).

The question then is why people, especially the youths, who watch such videos often, think they have to look and behave like such artists. Incidentally, the lyrics of most of the music being produced have become increasingly daring and obscene – particularly with regard to promoting sex, drinking, drugs, nudity, violence, and so on, which have all become part of the landscape of the everyday life of Nigerian youths. On the other hand, some of the songs being composed hardly have meaningful lyrics; they are more of repetition of mono-syllabic words. Songs like, *Baby Pull Over*, *Pass me the Lighter*, *Kukere*, *E dey Pain*, *Skelewu*, *Hold your Change o*, among others, readily come to mind. For instance, Hogan et al aver that, teenagers listen to music, “on an average of 40 hours per week,” and the music they listen to promote the ideas that demoralise the society (1219). Of course, this is a matter of serious concern in the Nigerian society because teenagers a lot and they become easily influenced by the music they listen to and the musical videos they watch.

### **A STUDY OF SELECTED SONGS OF ADVISER NOWAMAGBE**

The name, Adviser Nowamagbe, may not sound very familiar at the national level; but he has made a name for himself in Edo State because of his brand of popular protest music. Now in his mid-40s, Nowamagbe is the only child of his parents, who hails from Uga community in Uhumwonde Local Government Area (with headquarters in Ehor) of Edo State, lost his mother when he was 5years old, and his father when he was 12years old. The implication is that he did not enjoy the love and protection of his biological parents. As the leader of his musical band, Etin-Oba Power Sound, Nowamagbe prides himself as, the Masses Chairman and the Music Ambassador for Democracy Nigeria. This sobriquet is informed by the fact that, through his music, he fights the cause of the masses, who have no



say in governance. This is the path that had been charted by Osayomore Joseph, another Edo state born musician, who is noted for always coming out with songs with virulent attacks on the actions and inactions of the government. Nowamagbe has to his credit several albums and has the full complement of a live band that performs at different occasions.

Just as art mirrors society, Nowamagbe is an artist, who portrays both the good and bad sides of governance. In *Ebude*, Nowamagbe harps on the need for people to stay clear of violence, backstabbing, murder, betraying and communal disputes; in *Ewean*, he sings about stealing of government money and other types of corrupt practices; in *Questions and Assignment for New Oshiomole*, he criticises many actions and inactions of Comrade Adams Oshiomole, a government that did not elect local government chairmen for four years, asking whether their monthly allocations were intact, and swearing that it should be “back to sender” for all the bad things by the Nigerian Government against the masses; while in *Agbonighowan*, he maintains that life is all about destiny; and that all fingers must not be equal. In other words, there must always be the rich and the poor in the society; and all that a person needs to do is just simply mind his/her business.

The removal of subsidy on fuel by government on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2012 forms the backdrop for Nowamagbe’s *Mr. Subsidy*. It will be recalled that the **Occupy Nigeria** anti-fuel subsidy removal mass protest, organised by Civil Society groups in Lagos, in the wake of the removal of fuel subsidy, was believed to have been high-jacked by some unscrupulous politicians. While government was of the opinion that the protest was not a true reflection of the position of the masses but of those who sponsored them, civil rights groups and the main opposition party took a swipe at President Jonathan, saying he had alienated himself from the people. Somehow, Nowamagbe appears to toe this line of thought, as he too takes a swipe at the President, even attacking his person, saying he is doubtful if the President was really from the Niger Delta. He even questions the rationale behind somebody who has a PhD in Zoology being the President of the Country instead one who read Administration, as if reading Public Administration automatically makes one a good administrator. It is against this backdrop that two songs, *Oshiomole and Odubu* and *Okada men*, have been selected for this study.

**Song:** *Oshiomole and Odubu*



In *Oshiomole and Odubu*, Nowamagbe takes a look at the performance of Comrade Adams Oshiomole and his deputy, Odubu, in Edo State, which he finds commendable. He wonders how the Comrade Governor was getting money to develop the state, making it to 'shine' (*nwananwana*) when his predecessor, Lucky Igbinedion was always complaining that there was no money. He notes that as he mentioned the former governor's name in the song, he (Lucky) would be panicking; but that he could not sing the song without mentioning the Lucky's name, because he wanted people to compare what he did in eight years with what Oshiomole had done in three and a half years. To him, it was like Oshiomole and Odubu had spent more than 32 years in office, and that Igbinedion did not only cheat Edo people, he killed them. He recalls that Igbinedion's dismal performance had made Edo people to give him, what has come to be termed, "the pure water treatment." Lucky, "a whole *Oriohaneroro*" (special child), was publicly disgraced at the Ogbe Stadium, Benin City, as the masses pelted him with sachets of pure water.

Nowamagbe then goes on to hail Oshiomole, a governor who would be passing by and fathers, mothers, and children will all come out of their houses and follow him to wherever he was going. He goes on to thank God for the miracle because between May 1999 and May 2007, he says, "Edo State was in a condition of catastrophe, totally destroyed like Afghanistan and Pakistan." The emergence of Comrade Adams Oshiomole, a man, who is not very tall but smart and endowed with the wisdom of King Solomon, and another God-fearing, handsome man, Dr. Pius Egberare Odubu, to lead and free the people of Edo State totally from destruction, was a miracle. As a point of fact, to him, Oshiomole's coming was a testament of answered prayers. He thus affirms that, as long as the government of Oshiomole and Odubu give Edo people everything they want, the government will continue to receive his support, loyalty and respect, as the Masses Chairman. It will be recalled that Oshiomole took over from Professor Oserheimen Osunbor as Governor of Edo State on 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2008, following a court judgement that ousted the latter, who had assumed office 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2007.

Nowamagbe informs that in their second term in office, Oshiomole and Odubu had plans to build an international airport for Edo State just like the one in Amsterdam; an international seaport like the one in Hamburg, and construct an underground railway line, adding that, he likes that one so much (*Eoo ona ye mwen gbe vbo ko*), as well as an underground railway line to link Benin City, Ekpoma, Uromi, Auchi and Okpella. They also had plans to build a



giant petrol chemical plant and a refinery in Edo State, and construct an overhead bridge to link back of Guinness to Saint Saviour (in the state capital), in addition to other areas that they had not touched during their first term in office. According to him, all the projects will receive the consent and support of the Federal Government of Nigeria and will be done before year 2014. His appeal to Edo people then is for them to vote for Oshiomole and Odubu, as they did for then President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, so that they will continue the good work. He stresses that he was not making the appeal because he had been induced with money, but that just as he had criticised the bad governance of the previous administration, he would do same if they, Oshiomole and Odubu, derailed.

Of interest is that, Adviser Nowamagbe advises Lucky Igbinedion not to complain if people insulted him on the street, or even poured palm oil on him, because of the work they see Oshiomole doing in the state. He states that, Lucky has been receiving insults now that he is out of office, especially inside *tuke tuke* (bus). On passing any place work is in progress on projects initiated by Oshiomole, passengers would say: *Eeehen igbo vba re evbo na vbe rhian nan? Te Lucky khian vbe howa.* (So, there is money in this state like this? Lucky, God will punish him). He thus counsels Lucky to go to Awe Moda, kneel down and beg Edo people, and show it on television for one week, saying that the people would quickly forgive him. He even offers to join him to beg, but later changes his mind, saying he did not embezzle money with him (Lucky). The song ends with the chorus, thus:

Eoo Oshiomole zumalele  
Eoo Oshiomole zumalele  
Oshiomole zumalele  
You with Odubu na wonderment  
I say you with Odubu na wonderment

There is no arguing the fact that this song is a critical commentary on political leadership of Edo State. While Nowamagbe commends Oshiomole for his developmental initiatives, he castigates the government of Lucky Igbinedion.

**Song: *Okada Men***

In the song, *Okada Men*, Nowamagbe protests the decision of the Comrade Governor to ban the use of motor bikes, popularly called, *okada*, in Benin City, the Edo State capital. According to him, the State Government had claimed that the policy action was based on the menace of *okada*: that *okada* can only be used for private purposes; that it was poverty



that made people to use it for transportation; that okada riders were always very reckless; that okada riders were the causes of several ghastly road accidents killing or maiming passengers; and that okada were being used as means of get-away from scenes of armed robberies by the culprits.

In *Okada Men*, Nowamagbe vents his anger, arguing that the way Oshiomole was going about governance, especially in his second term, was as if he had overthrown government before becoming the governor of the state or that he voted himself into office:

My Comrade Governor, Sir!  
Remember that we suffered for you  
We suffered to vote for you  
As a governor of this state  
So that you can do for us  
All things that will make us enjoy democracy  
Comrade Adams Aliyu Oshiomole  
We did not vote you to come dey decide  
The kind of motor wey everybody for Benin must drive  
Or to come dey ban some people from the occupation  
Wey dem take dey earn their living  
Even when it is not incriminated (at all)

Oga Aliyu Oshiomole  
The way wey you take dey take decision now  
Especially for this second term  
You dey take some decision like say you overthrow government  
Before you become the governor of this state  
Which means you dey do like say  
Na you vote yourself as the governor of this state

Nowamagbe makes reference to Oshiomole's controversial appointment of a retired army officer as Permanent Secretary and the Local Government elections in Edo State, saying they were,



shuffling candidates even within the same party like say una dey shuffle  
whot?.... Election wey some people win, una no allow them resume office.

He opines that the decision about motor bike riders was not fair because many frustrated,  
unemployed graduates used okada to survive, pointing out that the State Government  
should have put in place alternatives or palliatives before the sudden ban. He asks:

My Comrade Governor, Sir!

Before you ban motor bike riders

What was the alternative or job opportunity you created

For the people wey dey use okada money

Dey train their children or take care of themselves....

My Comrade Governor

What provision did you make for those

Who borrowed money with interest

To start up okada business like, for example,

Selling of okada and selling the parts of okada?

The crux of Nowamagbe's argument is that people are not forced to use okada as a form of  
transportation; that government needed to put in place alternative means of transportation  
before the ban; that Benin is not like Lagos or Warri, where there are many multinational  
companies and industries; that there are several overhead bridges being constructed by  
Lagos State Government everyday which Oshiomole should have been seeing; that even if it  
is right to ban okada, as it is done in other states, Oshiomole should not be the one to carry  
out that action in Edo State, because the okada men gave him 100% support during his  
election. It will be recalled that in the aftermath of the 2007 elections, in which Professor  
Oserheimen Osunbor was declared winner, Oshiomole went to the Election Tribunal, and on  
all the days he went to court, the okada men followed him in a convoy, refusing to work on  
those days. Such was his popularity that when the tribunal eventually declared him winner,  
there was jubilation everywhere. To Nowamagbe, it was unimaginable that, Oshiomole  
could leave his support base and take such a far-reaching decision that would adversely  
affect the masses.

Oooooo! Oooooooooo!



Adaaaammmmmms  
So, you forget so soon!  
Okada people who laid down their life for you in 2007 election  
They sacrificed their time for you when the case was in court  
Many of them refused to go to work and stand by you  
Throughout for so many months until you won the case in court and  
become the Governor of Edo state

The chorus of the song, which he infuses repeatedly, are words of consolation for the helpless okada men:

Okada (3x)  
Men make una no cry oo  
Make una no weep too much  
(Repeat once)  
I sabi wetin una dey feel  
Nothing to care for the families  
All of us dey see am sey na una carry am to promise land  
E come pay una back with poverty  
e baba ma o wana se  
(Repeat)

It is the view of Nowamagbe that people are not forced to enter okada, and that all the money being stolen by some people in government is not done through okada. He also counters the argument, in some quarters, that there were too many non-natives in Benin, saying that these were the people making businesses to boom in capital cities.

Now, remove non-natives from Lagos city  
Whether no be only the La go remain  
Then make una remove non-natives/strangers from these areas wey una dey  
call Benin City whether no be only the B go remain  
And I want to remind you people  
If to say America drive away all the non-natives from America long time ago  
Obama, who his father came from Kenya, could not have been a citizen of  
America not to talk of ruling America twice.





Nowamagbe is surprised that those who should talk were keeping quiet, probably because of the GMG (Ghana Must Go); or that the decision did not affect them. He warns that a time may come when the Comrade Governor may decide to ban all buses and taxi from running town service, except government-owned ones, or that only jeeps should drive on the roads of Benin City. As far as he is concerned, he is a messenger from God, who had been sent to deliver the message to the "Comrade Governor", declaring that any candidate anointed by Oshiomole for important positions, come elections 2015/2016, will surely fail because he is spoiling the chances of people close to him.

If you think I am lying  
This is a bet; this is a very big bet  
Let Oshiomole introduce anybody to us  
As governorship candidate come 2016 election  
In fact, that person may not even win him own local government  
Na that time una go know the gravity of all these mistakes  
Wey Oshiomole dey make

Before ending the song, Nowamagbe advises that, firstly, Oshiomole should drop the "Aminarian system of leadership;" secondly, he should tell okada riders to go back to the streets in order to bring down transport fares; thirdly, he should choose a colour for private riders; and finally, he should issue ID cards and regulate the time for okada men to work. His warning is that if the Comrade Governor is angry with his advice, he should not forget:

I want you to remember say  
Na that thing wey I know how to do  
Even when you never be governor of this state  
That thing wey I know how to do  
When make you recognise me and send some people to come and call me  
And you begged for my support  
Say na the same thing na him I dey do to you so  
And I gave my support with the power I had

## **CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS**

The analysis of the musical perspective of Adviser Nowamagbe in the two songs selected reveals that, if the Comrade Governor, Adams Oshiomole, was highly elated with the song,



*Oshiomole and Odubu*, he must have been jolted with *Okada Men*. In other words, it is clear that the song, *Okada Men* is a direct contrast with the complimentary or patronising posture of *Oshiomole and Odudu*. Both songs examine several areas of governance. For instance in *Oshiomole and Odubu*, Nowamagbe takes a swipe at the dismal performance of the former governor, Lucky Igbinedion. This approach is in tandem with the role of the artist as an observer of life, as the mirror of society, and as the conscience society. Like a documentarist, the artist warns society that certain things are not going right and that unless something is done to ameliorate the situation, society will be worse for it.

One the other hand, *Okada Men* is an outright condemnation of an action, which was seen by generality of the people as innocuous. Unfortunately, many political leaders take decisions to the detriment of the people who they are supposed to govern. Thus, instead of protecting the interests of their followers, they leave them vulnerable to all the harsh conditions of life. That Oshiomole who was a revered labour leader could act like a dictator, refusing to allow an opposing party candidate in the local government elections is surprising. This is even in the face of the so-called, "One Man One Vote" sloganeering. The bottom line is the imperative of good governance in Nigeria's polity. This is what will guarantee the provision of the basic necessities of life: food, shelter, clothes, and utilities.

## CONCLUSION

Music needs to convey a message to the listener. The current craze where artists compose songs that are "all noise and no meaning" is not in the best interest of the creative enterprise. While the production of dance hall music is a major factor in the popularity rating of music artists, there is every need for such compositions to have messages that would have positive impact on the younger generation. From the above analysis of *Oshiomole and Odubu* and *Okada Men*, it could be surmised that, Adviser Nowamagbe appears to be doing that with his Highlife-Afro brand of music, an apostle of the legendary Fela Anikulapo Kuti.

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