

Research article

Cultural Revitalisation and Resistance: The Religious Politics of Fela Anikulapo Kuti and Bishop Matthew Kukah

Olusegun Adebolu Oladosu^{1*}, Oluwasegun Peter Aluko,²
Sunday Akintayo Idowu³

¹²³Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

* olusegunoladosu1@gmail.com

Abstract This paper examines the intersection of cultural revitalization, religious politics, and resistance in the works of two prominent Nigerian figures: Fela Anikulapo Kuti and Bishop Matthew Kukah. Through his music, rituals, and symbolic shrine, Fela championed the revival of African Indigenous Religion, resisting the dominance of foreign faiths, particularly Christianity and Islam, while challenging political corruption and social injustice. In contrast, Bishop Kukah, a Christian cleric, has consistently used his platform to critique political injustice, advocate for freedom and rights, and combat religious hypocrisy. Despite their differing methods – Fela's use of music for cultural and religious revival and Kukah's reliance on the pulpit and public discourse – both figures have sought to combat neocolonial subjugation and promote African self-emancipation. This study provides insights into the complex interplay between religion, politics, and cultural identity in contemporary Nigerian society by comparing and contrasting their approaches.

Keywords Bishop Matthew Kukah; Cultural Revitalisation; Fela Anikulapo Kuti; Music; Religion; Religious Politics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's intersection of cultural revitalization, religion, and political resistance represents a dynamic interplay that has shaped the nation's sociopolitical landscape. This paper explores the contributions of two prominent Nigerian figures – Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the Afrobeat legend, and Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, a Roman Catholic cleric and social activist – who have both utilized their respective platforms to challenge political corruption, social injustice, and religious hypocrisy. Their efforts, though rooted in different spheres, converge in the overarching goal of advocating for African identity and self-emancipation amidst the enduring effects of colonialism and neocolonial subjugation.

Fela Kuti, an icon of African cultural resistance, employed music as a medium of artistic expression and a platform for sociopolitical commentary. Through his provocative lyrics and symbolic use of the shrine as a space of indigenous spirituality, Fela challenged the dominance of foreign religions – particularly Christianity and Islam – while promoting a revival of African Indigenous Religion (Olorunyomi, 2013). His music and rituals can be seen as a form of cultural resistance against neocolonial influences, a stance that positioned him as both a cultural revivalist and a political activist (Moore, 2009). Fela's critique of foreign religions was deeply intertwined with his opposition to the corrupt political elite, whom he accused of exploiting religious institutions to entrench their power (Veal, 2000).

On the other hand, Bishop Matthew Kukah, though firmly rooted in Christianity, has similarly used his clerical and public platform to critique political injustices and call for systemic reforms in Nigeria. Unlike Fela's overt cultural rejection of foreign religions, Kukah works within the framework of Christianity to advocate for social justice, focusing on the rights and freedom of Nigerians, particularly in line with governance and political corruption (Kukah, 2011). His sermons and writings underscore the moral failings of Nigeria's leadership, as he calls for a return to ethical governance rooted in Christian principles (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Despite his religious affiliation, Kukah's efforts align with Fela's broader vision of an emancipated and just African society.

Cultural revitalization is a significant aspect of resistance and identity formation in post-colonial societies. Scholars have extensively examined how cultural revival movements seek to reclaim and reassert traditional practices and beliefs marginalized or suppressed during colonial rule (Nesterova, 2024; Oyedola & Oyedola, 2015). This process is particularly relevant in the context of African indigenous religions, where

efforts to revive pre-colonial spiritual practices and cultural values often challenge the dominance of foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's seminal work, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, emphasizes the importance of reclaiming indigenous languages and cultural practices as resistance against neocolonial domination. Ngũgĩ argues that cultural revival is crucial for reclaiming autonomy and identity, as colonialism sought to erase indigenous cultures and replace them with foreign norms (Thiong'o et al., 1986). Similarly, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon explores how colonialism affects cultural identity and highlights the post-colonial struggle to reclaim and revitalize suppressed cultural forms. Fanon contends that cultural revitalization is integral to the liberation process, as it helps to restore a sense of identity and self-worth that colonialism sought to undermine (Fanon, 1961).

African indigenous religions play a vital role in this cultural revival. Scholars like John S. Mbiti argue that these religions are not merely spiritual systems but also essential components of social cohesion and cultural identity in African communities (Mbiti, 1969). Mbiti's work underscores the significance of indigenous spiritual practices in shaping community life and preserving cultural heritage. Additionally, Isidore Okpewho highlights the role of indigenous religions in maintaining cultural continuity and resisting the erosion of African traditions due to external influences (Okpewho, 1992). Similarly, Irele emphasizes the importance of these Indigenous religions in maintaining cultural heritage amidst the dominance of foreign religions (Irele, 1981).

The impact of neocolonialism on African identity formation has been a significant focus in academic discourse. Kwame Nkrumah's concept of neocolonialism, as articulated in *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, addresses how economic and political control persists even after formal colonial rule ends. Nkrumah's analysis reveals that neocolonialism perpetuates the legacy of colonial exploitation by maintaining economic and cultural control over former colonies, thereby affecting identity formation and cultural practices (Nkrumah, 1965). Further, Hountondji argues that neocolonialism involves a continuation of colonial cultural dominance, which undermines efforts to revitalize and reclaim indigenous cultures (Hountondji, 1996).

The relationship between religion and politics in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted. Religion significantly influences political activism and public life, with Indigenous religions and foreign faiths (Christianity and Islam) playing critical roles

(Aluko, 2023; Oladosu & Aluko, 2019). Religious leaders often engage in political discourse, using their platforms to address social justice issues and advocate for governance reforms (Roso et al., 2024). For instance, Falola and Heaton (2008) discuss how religious figures have historically influenced political activism in Nigeria, reflecting the interplay between religion and politics in the country (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Bishop Matthew Kukah, a prominent Nigerian cleric, exemplifies how religious leaders use their platforms to critique political corruption and advocate for justice (Kukah, 2011). Kukah's critiques of political malpractices and his calls for social justice illustrate the significant role of religious authority in shaping political discourse and promoting social change. Traditional leaders and Indigenous religious practitioners also utilize their platforms to challenge political injustices and advocate for cultural preservation, as discussed by (Olaopa & Ogundare, 2023).

The historical influence of religion on Nigerian governance is marked by the introduction and entrenchment of Christianity and Islam during the colonial period. These foreign religions have become major forces in Nigerian society, shaping political and social dynamics (Lewis, 2001). The interplay between religious and political interests in Nigeria reflects broader social and cultural dynamics, including issues of sectarianism and political manipulation. (Jatau & Maza, 2023; PaulIkechukwu & Clara, 2015) explore how religious influences have both contributed to social justice and posed challenges in governance, highlighting the complex relationship between religion and politics in post-colonial Nigeria.

Overall, the literature comprehensively explains how cultural revitalization, religious politics, and resistance intersect in Nigeria. The works of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Fanon, Mbiti, and others offer valuable insights into the processes of cultural reclaiming and resistance against neo-colonialism. At the same time, studies on the role of religion in Nigerian politics shed light on the dynamic relationship between religious and political spheres. This paper aims to compare and contrast the approaches of Fela Kuti and Bishop Kukah in their respective struggles for cultural and political liberation. By examining their work through religious politics, cultural identity, and political activism, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the role of culture and religion in resistance movements in Nigeria. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on how cultural and religious figures can play pivotal roles in challenging systemic injustices and promoting social change.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing textual analysis, historical contextualization, comparative analysis, and interviews to explore the contributions of Fela Kuti and Bishop Matthew Kukah. Fela's song lyrics, Kukah's speeches and writings, and interviews with relevant stakeholders are examined to identify their approaches to cultural identity, political activism, and religious advocacy. The research places their activism within Nigeria's socio-political context, contrasting Fela's use of Afrobeat for grassroots mobilization with Kukah's reliance on Christian ethics and public discourse. A review of relevant literature and themes of cultural preservation and political resistance further supports the analysis, highlighting their influence on contemporary Nigerian society.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Fela Anikulapo Kuti: A Life and Legacy in Afrobeat

Olufela Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti (before changing his name to Anikulapo-Kuti) was born on October 15, 1938, in Abeokuta, the capital of modern-day Ogun State, Nigeria (Hamilton, 2008; Idonije, 2014). As he became popularly known, Fela was the third of four children born to Reverend Israel Oludotun Ransome-Kuti and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti (née Thomas), both prominent figures. His father was an Anglican reverend and the first president of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), while his mother was a foremost female activist (Veal, 2000). Fela attended his primary and secondary schools in Abeokuta and was raised in a Christian household. Growing up, he was an energetic African child, loved by many despite his unconventional character (Philips, n.d.).

Fela's upbringing, especially his activist parents, likely played a crucial role in shaping his career as a renowned activist, using music as his medium to voice opposition to societal injustices. His love of music could also be traced to his father and grandfather, whose Christian hymns were influenced by indigenous Abeokuta songs (Veal, 2000). Abeokuta, known for its contributions to Nigeria's political, legal, musical, and educational development, played a key role in shaping the lives of prominent figures such as Professor Wole Soyinka and Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (Hoiberg, 2010). This environment contributed to Fela's growth and his distinct approach to music.

Fela studied music at the Trinity School of Music in London despite his father's desire for him to become a lawyer (Arogundade, 2015). After completing his studies, he married Remilekun Taylor in 1960, with whom he had three children: Yeni, Femi, and Sola, before relocating back to Nigeria in 1961 (Idonije, 2014). Fela's music remains influential and is regarded as a legendary figure whose work resonates across generations. He passed away on August 2, 1997, and his burial occurred on August 13, 1997, in front of his Kalakuta domain in Lagos (Arogundade, 2015). Fela was deeply rooted in African cultural identity, which he exhibited throughout his life. This cultural orientation extended to his family, who also embraced his lifestyle. African traditions, including governance, religious practices, and social systems, played a key role in Fela's worldview (Veal, 2000). His identity was heavily influenced by the cultural norms of Abeokuta, his hometown.

The people of Abeokuta, particularly the Egba community, were known for their indigenous religious practices before the introduction of Christianity and Islam. Divinities such as Ogun, Ifa, and Obatala were venerated, and ancestral worship was deeply ingrained in the fabric of their society (Idowu, 1973). This cultural backdrop shaped Fela's religious and philosophical orientation. The arrival of foreign religions, particularly Christianity and Islam, contributed to the erosion of indigenous beliefs. However, Fela, through his music, advocated for cultural revitalization and the preservation of African traditions, often challenging foreign religions (Olorunyomi, 2013). Fela showed his African identity through various means. For instance, he adopted indigenous religious practices in his everyday life. His famous "Shrine" was not merely a music venue but a place of spiritual expression, where rituals and acts of worship were carried out. His polygamous marriage to twenty-seven women in 1978 was conducted by an Ifa priest, demonstrating his adherence to African traditional customs (Idonije, 2014).

Fela embodied this cultural pride in many aspects of his life. He changed his name from Ransome-Kuti to Anikulapo-Kuti, which translates to "I have death in my pouch," symbolizing his rejection of colonial legacies and his assertion of African power. His song lyrics often criticized African people's preference for foreign goods over locally produced materials. For example, in his song, *Africa Man Dey Talk*:

*Na so, na so
Africa man dey talk,
Him go see Him own thing
Him own thing wey come from Africa
Him go say him no want*

*Na the thing wey come from outside Africa
Na hin him want
He be fool! Big fool!*

That is it, that is it,
The way African man usually talks
He will see his own things
The Africans made things
He will reject them
But things made from elsewhere are what he wants
He is a fool, a big fool!

Fela's commitment to his African identity also extended to his personal life. In 1978, he married twenty-seven women in a traditional ceremony conducted by an Ifa priest, a bold rejection of Western marriage norms (Idonije, 2014). Moreover, he changed his surname from "Ransome," an English name, to "Anikulapo," a Yoruba name meaning "I have death in my pouch," which further emphasized his embrace of African culture and his rejection of colonial legacies (Olorunyomi, 2013).

3.2. Afrobeat as a Platform for Religious and Political Revitalisation

Fela was not only an outspoken critic of foreign political powers but also of foreign religions. He often mocked Christianity and Islam for perpetuating the suffering of the masses while enriching their leaders. In *Shuffling and Shmiling*, Fela expressed his disdain for these religions:

*Suffer suffer for world
Amen
Enjoy for heaven
Amen
Christian go dey yab
Amen
In-spi-ri-tu-heave-o
Amen
Muslim go dey yab
Amen
Allahhu Akibar
Amen
Arch Bishop na miliki,
Pope na enjoyment,
Imamu na gbaladun*

Suffering in the world
Amen
In anticipation of enjoying in Heaven
Amen
Christians keep blabbing
Amen In-spi-ri-tu-heaven-o
Amen
Muslims keep blabbing
Amen
Allahu Akbar
Amen
An Arch Bishop's life is one of ease
That of the Pope is enjoyment
And that of Iman is also an enjoyment

These lyrics reveal Fela's belief that foreign religions promoted passivity and promised rewards in the afterlife, all while their leaders lived in luxury. His music became a medium for advocating the revival of African indigenous religion and rejecting the societal structures imposed by foreign religions. Fela consistently invoked African deities such as Sango, Ifa, and Esu in his performances, symbolizing his commitment to indigenous religious practices.

Fela openly embraced and practiced the religion of his ancestors, expressing this through his music and his life. Music, as a medium, has long been recognized for its power to connect with the spiritual realm through the inherent nature of sound (Foley, 1999). Among the senses that provide knowledge, hearing is unique in allowing the human mind, and particularly the religious imagination, to grasp and experience the transcendent in a spiritually significant way (Foley, 2015). In this sense, music serves as "a form of presence that does not seek to 'give answers,' but instead draws both the performer and listener into a shared space" (Saliers, 2007). Fela used music not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a tool to rejuvenate and promote Indigenous religious practices.

Fela's "Shrine" can be understood and recognized as both a place of worship and a religious temple, as it embodies all the key features of a shrine, including liturgy, sacrifices, and the presence of religious functionaries, serving as a site for spiritual devotion. As Idonije (2014) notes, the term "Shrine" was deeply significant for Fela, who used the space to realize his pan-African ideology. He viewed the Shrine as a place of worship, comparable to a church or mosque, aligning with the political ideals

of figures such as Kwame Nkrumah, Malcolm X, and Marcus Garvey. During this research, Femi Kuti, who joined his father's band at 16, confirmed in a personal interview at the Afrika Shrine on December 26, 2018, that he adheres to the African indigenous religion. He emphasized that African deities like Sango, Esu, Ifa, Ogun, and the ancestors are venerated in the Shrine. However, he explained that the rituals of veneration extend beyond the pouring of libations and include other symbolic actions.

In the interviews conducted with Olalekan Animasaun, Rilwan Fagbemi, and S. A. Idowu at the Kalakuta Museum on 18 December 2019—who were notable members of Fela's band—it was consistently highlighted that before any musical performance at the Shrine, Fela would perform symbolic rituals. One such ritual involved divination, which he would conduct immediately upon entering the Shrine. This divination was carried out using cowry shells, a palm-oil-soaked wick, honey, a bottle of gin, and, notably, his marijuana (which he considered a sacred herb). Another significant ritual was the sacrifice of a fowl. Fela would grab the fowl, place his foot on its neck, and pull its legs to kill it. Afterward, he would suck the blood from the freshly slaughtered fowl. According to (Olorunyomi, 2013), this act symbolized Fela's deeper connection with spiritual forces. The spirits were believed to arrive at the moment of the fowl's death, as Fela would lose consciousness and communicate through signs, aiming to break free from an incomprehensible experience. This suggests that Fela was primarily focused on rituals of propitiation, invoking the favor of the deities to ensure his continued success.

Additionally, Fela poured libations to honor his deified ancestors, which included figures like Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, and his mother, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, before each musical performance (Olaniyan, 2004). This practice is rooted in ancestral veneration, a key component of African indigenous religion. As these rituals of divination, fowl sacrifice, and libations were carried out, a low but gradually intensifying background of music played. The music featured traditional instruments such as the metal gong, bass drum, wooden clef, sekere, and cymbals. Following these preparatory rituals, Fela and his band members and dancers would take the stage, perform, and entertain an audience that had often waited long into the night. During performances at the Shrine, Fela would often pause to offer further sacrifices to the ancestors and deities, particularly Ogun, Sango, and Esu. As (Olaniyan, 2004) explains, these practices were part of Fela's effort to lift Africa out of its dire conditions. He believed that Africans could transform their suffering and

injustice into peace and justice, but this transformation required a return to the Indigenous deities (Noah, 2019).

A notable gesture during Fela's performances was the raising of both hands in what is known as the Double Black Power salute, a symbol of African pride, resilience, and the fight for black liberation (Oyebade, n.d.). This act demonstrated Fela's political revitalization of African identity through his music. After the performances, Fela often returned to the Shrine to perform less elaborate rituals. Entering with his left foot first, he would taste various substances with his left forefinger, including honey, salt, palm oil, palm wine, Atlantic seawater, freshwater, and schnapps, while touching a sacred object known as the Asante Stool. The fowl sacrificed earlier in the evening would then be taken to a three-way crossroads and left there.

Fela's religious practices demonstrated several elements of African indigenous religion, including belief in the Supreme Being, deities, spirits, ancestor worship, magic, and traditional medicine. However, his approach to divination differed from conventional methods practiced by priests, as he did not use the typical ritual tools. As Olorunyomi (2003) observes, Fela did not aim to recreate traditional religious structures strictly; instead, he aimed to offer an alternative perspective in a society where both colonial and post-colonial elites had denigrated indigenous religious practices. He was content if his practice promoted a heterodox discourse.

Fela used his music to revive the Indigenous religion, which was becoming increasingly marginalized (Kanu, 2014). Through the two songs selected for this study, it was evident that Fela frequently invoked deities such as Ifa, Osiris, and Edumare, challenging them to punish him if he was deceitful. He also criticized foreign religions, exposing the corruption of their leaders. Importantly, without Fela's music, the rituals of fowl sacrifice and ancestor worship, among others, might not have been revived.

3.3. Bishop Matthew Kukah: A Champion for Social Justice and Cultural Integrity

Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah was born on August 31, 1952, in Anchuna, Ikulu Chieftdom in Zangon Kataf local government area of Kaduna State, to Pa Vincent and Mama Hauwa Kukah. Ordained a priest in 1976, he became known for his outspoken views on social and political issues. Kukah earned his PhD in Conflict Resolution from the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom and has served in various pastoral and administrative roles within the Catholic Church in Nigeria. In 1995, he was appointed as the Bishop of Sokoto Diocese. Kukah is widely respected for his advocacy

for human rights, social justice, and democratic governance. His works include numerous publications on religion, politics, and social issues, making him a prominent voice in Nigerian public life (Kukah, 1993).

Kukah has served in various capacities in his sacerdotal roles, from Parish Priest to Deputy General Secretary and later General Secretary of the Catholic Secretariat. His contributions include crafting prayers addressing bribery and corruption and advocating for Nigeria during military rule. His appointment as Bishop of Sokoto Diocese in 2011 by Pope Benedict XVI marked a significant milestone in his clerical career (Aruwan, 2022). Kukah's advocacy extends beyond religious leadership into national development and governance. His involvement in the Oputa Panel (Human et al. Commission), the National Political Reforms Conference, and the Ogoni-Shell Mediation Initiative demonstrates his commitment to addressing Nigeria's political and social challenges. His work in electoral reforms and security challenges further underscores his dedication to improving governance and societal stability (Aruwan, 2022).

Bishop Matthew Kukah utilizes his role within the Catholic Church as a powerful platform to address and critique the socio-political landscape of Nigeria. In his sermons and public addresses, Kukah engages in what can be seen as a form of modern-day ritualistic advocacy. Just as religious rituals are designed to connect the faithful with divine principles and moral truths, Kukah's speeches aim to reconnect Nigerian society with its foundational ethical and moral values. This approach is emblematic of how Kukah uses religious space as a stage for societal critique and moral guidance.

In his public addresses, Kukah often frames his arguments within the context of moral and ethical teachings of the Church, invoking principles of justice, integrity, and compassion. His critiques are not merely political but are infused with a deep sense of moral urgency, reflecting his belief that societal change must be grounded in ethical and spiritual renewal (Kukah, 2003). This method of advocacy serves to elevate social and political discourse, urging both individuals and institutions to reflect on their values and actions in light of moral imperatives. Bishop Kukah's social commentary addresses critical issues such as poverty, inequality, and political corruption. His notable works, including *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Kukah, 1993), *Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria* (Kukah, 2003), and *The Shattered Microcosm* (2000), provide in-depth analysis and critique of Nigeria's socio-political landscape (Aruwan, 2022; Kukah, 1993, 2007). His writings advocate for greater social

justice and inclusivity, challenging both political leaders and citizens to engage in efforts for a more equitable society.

3.4. Comparative Analysis of Fela Kuti and Bishop Matthew Kukah

To compare Kukah and Fela is like comparing two polar poles that may never meet, but there is a point of convergence between the duo. This is the area of freedom fighting for many Africans, especially Nigerians. Kukah is one of the elites Fela spoke against vehemently as a Christian cleric. But just as a person cannot be judged by his/her appearance, Kukah may not be judged by his religious calling.

Just recently, Kukah, in his famous 2020 Christmas Speech, berated the activities of the government of the day for its lackadaisical attitudes toward the nation at large. Hitherto, Kukah used his clerical stand to achieve a lot in the emancipation of many Africans and Nigerians. He has never failed to speak out in the face of misdemeanors and the suffering of the masses. He is the opposite of Fela's song (*Sorrow, Tears, and Blood*), released in 1977. In the song, Fela says:

*My people sef dey fear too much
We fear for the thing we no see
We fear for the air around us
We fear to fight for freedom
We fear to fight for liberty
We fear to fight for justice
We fear to fight for happiness
We always get reason to fear
We no wan die
We no wan wound
We no wan quench
We no want go
I get one child
Mama dey for house
Papa dey for house
I wan build house
I don build house
I no want quench
I wan enjoy
I no wan go
Ah
So policeman go slap your face
You no go talk*

*Army man go whip your yansh
You go dey look like donkey....*

My people are too afraid
We are afraid of things we cannot see
We are afraid of the air around us
We are afraid to fight for freedom
We are afraid to fight for liberty
We are afraid to fight for justice
We are afraid to fight for happiness
We always have reason to be afraid
We do not want to die
We do not want to get injured
We do not want to die
Mum is at home
Dad is at home
I want to build house
I have built a house
I do not want to die
I want to enjoy
I do not want to go
I have just only one child
I want to enjoy life
This is why the policeman will slap your face
Such a person will not talk
The Army personnel will wipe your bottom
Such will look like a donkey...

From this song above, Kukah has decided to rise to the occasion by being the “voice in the wilderness” against injustice in the country, especially during the reign of President Muhammadu Buhari, who has shown to be an ethnic and religious jingoist with his lopsided appointments. In the face of endless bloodletting, a collapsing economy, social anomie, domestic and community violence, kidnappings, armed robberies and so on, Kukah has always stood firm in talking down the administration of the Buhari government. As earlier mentioned, in his popular Christmas’ Speech that sparked different reactions, especially that of reproach from many Northerners and Buharideens (Buhari’s staunch followers), Kukah said: “President Buhari deliberately sacrificed the dreams of those who voted for him for what seemed like a program to stratify and institutionalize northern hegemony by reducing others in public life to second-class status. He has pursued this self-defeating and alienating policy at the

expense of greater national cohesion. Every honest Nigerian knows that there is no way any non-Northern Muslim President could have done a fraction of what President Buhari has done with his nepotism and gotten away with it" (Sahara Reporters, 2020).

However, this is not to say that it is only during the administration of Buhari that Kukah became a powerful voice for the masses; he has been very vocal even during the past administrations, especially the times of Obasanjo and Jonathan. During the time of Obasanjo, he was a member of the famous Oputa Panel that was set up to investigate different human rights violations. His inclusion in the panel shows his penchant for upholding human rights for all and sundry, devoid of religion, ethnicity, and so on. This is also not far from the life of Fela, who is believed to have used his songs to push for a just cause in the country, especially by making Nigerians in particular and Africa in general trace back their root to the African way of life (most importantly, their religion).

Not minding his way of life, Kukah himself said: "Fela's moral life is another matter altogether, and we must not make it stand in the way. He loved this country. He was a rebel with a cause. Given his background, he had everything to gain from the system but rebelled against it because he wanted something for others, not himself. Had he wanted, he would have been living a far more dignified and meaningful life in the chic resorts of Los Angeles. However, he chose to live and die here (in Nigeria). That indeed was a sacrifice" (Akhidenor, n.d.).

The above shows the self-sacrificing life Fela lived to fight for the good of the masses in the country. This is also the kind of life Kukah lived despite being a religious cleric. He has dared to speak out when others keep mute. However, while Fela eschewed himself from the government largesse, it could be said that Kukah had served in different government initiatives like the Human Rights Violation Investigation Commission, Reform Committee, and the National Political Reform Conference. Apart from fighting for human rights and freedom, these two countries have been at the forefront of revitalizing African culture against Western culture, which is being made into a universal value. While Fela used songs as his combative force, Kukah had hitherto used the pulpit and his different writings, together with seminars, conferences, and so on, to propagate his beliefs. Also, the two bemoan the colonialization of the Africans, most especially that of mind that many Africans have now learned rather to remain quiet and not fight for their freedom.

4. CONCLUSION

While Fela and Kukah may have operated in different spheres and utilized distinct methods, they shared common ground in their commitment to human rights advocacy and cultural revitalization. Fela's confrontational musical approach and Kukah's articulate activism both aimed to challenge oppression, promote truth, and revive African cultural heritage. Fela's music served as a powerful tool for revitalizing Indigenous culture and challenging the influence of Western ideologies, particularly in the realm of religion. Kukah, through his speeches, writings, and public engagements, has worked to address the impact of Western influences on Nigerian culture and society, advocating for greater authenticity and autonomy. Ultimately, both Fela and Kukah have made significant contributions to advancing humanitarian principles and affirming truthfulness in their respective spheres. Their efforts have helped to shed light on the complexities of Nigerian society and inspire others to take action in pursuit of justice, freedom, and cultural preservation.

STATEMENT

The authors declare that they share equal contribution to the final manuscript and have no conflict of interest.

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