

Filmic Agency: Promoting Local African Writers (Part 2) by Saheed Aderinto.

I'm sharing another clip from the first episode of The Fuji Documentary premiering in early February. When I interviewed Hajia Fodheelat Oreoluwa Dikko, author of "The Philosophy of Dr. Sikiru Ayinde Barrister," for the Fuji Documentary, I wanted to understand how a writer who didn't have any university degree in philosophy defines "philosophy."

Unlike most academic philosophy books that came out of doctoral research, the origin of Dikko's book is unusual. It had its roots in social media. After posting a lot of writings on Barrister's perspective on a wide range of topics, her fans asked her to compile all her Facebook posts into a book. She did. And a book was printed!

This public-facing approach to local knowledge production is one of the reasons I found her book useful and her perspectives indispensable. Like Baba Odeyemi and the other three writers who featured in the documentary, Dikko performed her text and affirmed her conviction that philosophy is not a classroom subject alone.

To some people, Barrister was a showman, a musical statesman, who expressed deep political ideas using songs. To others, he was a lyricist, a wordsmith, and a composer of the highest rank. For Dikko, Barrister was a philosopher and a prophet. Her perspective thus expands the visuality and textuality of the documentary and allows me to take popular culture into a domain beyond entertainment. The intersections of music and philosophy are why her contribution to the documentary is vital.

Dikko's claim that Barrister is a philosopher is hard to debate. The oral and written texts of the Yoruba and Islam that Barrister used have been in existence for centuries. Curating them for public consumption in the 20th and 21st centuries involved identifying common grounds between the two civilizations. Indeed, Islam took a strong root among the Yoruba partly because the early converts were more interested in the points of convergence than the points of divergence in Yoruba and Islam.

Revelation and faithfulness, kindness and good conduct, sacrifices and worship, misdeeds and repercussions, death and immortality, tribulations and triumphs are dominant features in the stories/lived experiences of Yoruba orisas and the Muslim prophets. It is this same tradition of seeing the world through multiple, yet complementary perspectives, that allowed artists like Barrister to manage the contradictions of living inside dual spiritual bodies. One minute, Barrister is unleashing Quranic verses in Arabic, another second, he's mobilizing Ogun's survival in the "wilderness of life" to justify why Orunmila and the terrestrial mothers should protect him from his enemies.

Come on February 10, "Mr. Fuji: Barry Wonder" will premiere at Barryfest, the biennial celebration of the legacies of Fuji Creator Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, in Ibadan.

Yours Sincerely,
Isola Alakola