

## **From Music Promotion to Kingship: The Adetunji Brothers in Perspective (Posted on Facebook on 5/2/2020)**

Today, Don Jazzy is Nigeria's most influential hip hop record label owner. But his career did not emerge out of emptiness. Decades before him, some Nigerians broke into music promotion, a domain monopolized by Europeans and their Nigerian "collaborators" during the colonial era. The decolonization of Nigerian musical art from the 1950s was possible because fearless Nigerians, like the Adetunji brothers, ventured into record label ownership. Indeed, the Adetunjis were decolonizing African music, decades before 21st century scholars began to speak big, big and vague English about cultural and knowledge decolonization. They are the decolonizers of decolonizers!

When the Adetunji brothers (the present Olubadan [king] Oba Saliu Akanmu Adetunji and his brother Alhaji Ambali Adetunji) relocated to Ita Agarawu in Lagos in the 1950s to work as tailor and bricklayer, they did not know they would become shooters of musical stars and shapers of artistic destinies. But they had something going well for them—they are from the lineage of professional drummers, the renowned Ile Alusekere of Popo Yemoja in Ibadan. As drummers and praise singers, they understand the core features of quality music—imposition of order on lyrical chaos and on disparate sound to produce a rhythm! A good music, they know, emerges out of careful arrangement of sound instruments, gradational lyrics, and intelligible composition. Hence, a promising artist cannot beat them in their own game. In fact, they did talent hunting before Project Fame West Africa!

We don't know everything about the Adetunjis for now. But we know why their record label (Omo Aje Records) was successful. These brothers combined sound business ethics, a deep sense of community, and towering love for music to give us some of the finest Fuji artists across generation. Undoubtedly, they were gatekeepers of fame, who wanted profit for their investment in artists. Yet, they knew that money making is not enough—Omoluabi, the epitome of good conduct, is paramount. We often hear the common story that the Adetunjis picked K1, the richest and the most prolific Fuji artist alive, from the gutter in the 1970s. But the gutter in this regard is a metaphoric one. It stands for lack of fame and humble beginning.

The Adetunji and K1 friendship has remained intact since the 1970s. They toured the world together, leaving deep imprints on the memories of Fuji fans. As one would expect, K1 played at the coronation of Adetunji senior in 2016, about four decades after he picked him from the figurative gutter. Lovers of Yoruba music would easily discern this gangan beat in praise of the Adetunji brothers by K1: (from 2:38-2:55 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCa-5wCTtqQ>)

Adetunji Omo Balogun  
Ma te sun  
Awo erin ni se  
Ma te sun!  
Adetunji the child of Balogun  
Don't desecrate/disrespect it  
The skin of an elephant  
Don't desecrate/disrespect it!









