

Hello 1 2 2, Hello 2 2 2: Sound, Technicians, and the Social History of Fuji Technology (Posted on Facebook on 04/8/2020)

It is now 9pm on Saturday, October 24, 1987. The sound technician spits “Hello 1 2 2, Hello 2 2 2” onto the microphone to test musical instruments and to alert the community to an impending spectacle, as eight-year-old Saheed Aderinto, among other uninvited guests, assemble at the Odinjo venue of the 10th memorial party for Oba (king) Adebimpe of Ibadan. Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, the first among equals in Fuji, is the artist of the day.

Fuji is one of the most profound of the cultural achievements of the Yoruba in the 20th century. No doubt, it gained enormous artistic currency because of the brilliance of artists, who combine raw lyrical talent with topnotch composition in Yoruba, Arabic, and English. However, without technicians and sound technology, it would not have become what it is. The transition from "Were" to Fuji took place not just because artists found new secular sites to exhibit their talent, but also because they leveraged on existing sound technology. To ignore the amplifiers, mixers, speakers, and sound technicians and electronics repairers (who rent out musical instruments to artists), is to miss something crucial about that thing called Fuji.

Technology’s importance transcends its clear ability to help humans achieve what they cannot do; in reality, it shapes social and political relations at the most basic level. The difference between “small” and “big” Fuji artists is not about talent alone, but also about the quality and quantity of the sound technology they can deploy. If the acquisition of new sound technology marked a turning point in the career of artists, it also introduced them to new forms of danger. While not ruling out "juju" factor, the sound technology of the 1980s, according to Oladimeji Johnson (pictured below), would always burst into flames during performance because of poor technical knowledge and the quest for heavy sound, which placed enormous burden on the amplifiers and the mixers.

However, few Fuji artists would accept the scientific explanation for the failure of their sound technology. Anything, they think, can go wrong if the “powers that be” are unhappy! I’m more concerned about how alleged spiritual attack on instruments generate narratives that shape power relations, than on trying to establish if an unhappy senior citizen in the neighborhood can truly bewitch a Western technology and ruin a party.

*****This interview was conducted before the restriction on movement and public gathering. I have stopped conducting interviews and now staying at home.

Photo Credit:

[Amusa Kabiru Babatunde](#)





