

Inside the Home of Sound: An Audio Entry into Nigeria's Past (Posted on Facebook on 7/25/2020)

Deep in the heart of the old business district of Dugbe in Ibadan is a colonial-style building housing Radio Nigeria, a federal establishment, which started as the Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service in May 1960. It is easy to view radio technology in Nigeria (as elsewhere in Africa) as an instrument of political power control and of indoctrination. After all, it was a major medium through which colonial and postcolonial elites propagated fear, announced violent takeover of government, and legitimized themselves as the authentic pathway to nation-building. Conversely, radio stations are also sites of counter-revolution and political protest. It was in this same Ibadan radio station that Wole Soyinka launched his jailbird identity, thus becoming an activist whose ideas transcend the ink of his pen. In 1965, alaye held the radio station "at gun-point" and proudly went to jail for it!

But radio technology in Africa is more than political power control. To start with, it is a major cultural and artistic site of collective memory. Until the end of the 20th century, radio plays and music performed live or recorded in radio stations were far more popular than any form of broadcast entertainment. From audio recording of interviews to public and private events, Radio Nigeria houses a treasure that the public and scholars have completely overlooked. I do not think there is any research topic that does not have an audio material at Radio Nigeria. No single individual can have the radio station's expansive collection of music. Thousands of them, across genres, existing in their original forms. To underestimate the impact of the radio in shaping musical taste is to overlook a core feature of everyday life in most parts of Nigeria. With their transistor radio, households and communities enjoyed countless songs and programs. For many, nostalgia of radio station music is the starting point for narrating family histories.

Today, we think of digital music as the solution to restricted access to sound. But digital sound is about preservation and expanded access to art--it will never replace the feelings that one would get from breathing and communing directly with the original physical artifacts and material culture of the past. Since a component of historical writing entails what I call "evidence-based imaginative thinking," holding the original copies of music albums and enjoying the cover art help me to concretize the past. It is this intimate connection with the past that differentiates a field from a computer desk researcher.

I think that access to original music records gives a unique meaning to musical art as physical or tangible work --just like a book or a piece of painting and sculpture. Beautiful pictures of Fuji artists printed on album jackets/sleeves/covers put a human face on the voices that dominated the airwaves several years ago. Yet, admiring the art of the album covers is not enough, treating them as visual narrative of the past is far more important to me.

Yours sincerely in Fuji,
Emperor Saedo Okola and His International Fuji Lions!



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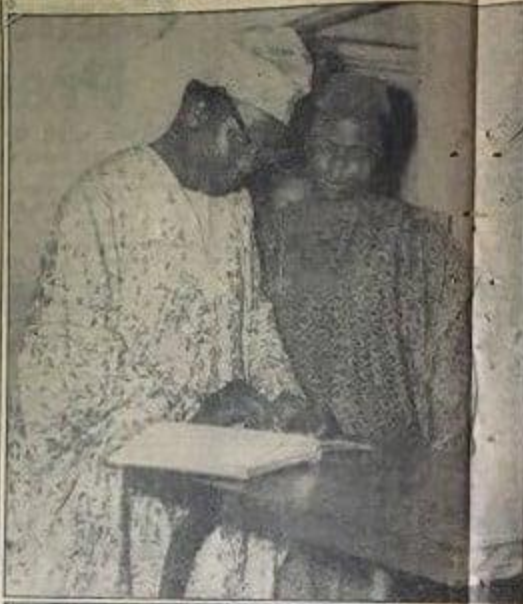
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MILP 001



W.N.B.S. OPENED AT IBADAN BY PREMIER AKINTOLA



THE Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNBS) was officially opened by Chief A. G. Akintola, Premier of Western Nigeria, at Ibadan on Sunday.

TOP LEFT: Chief Akintola is signing the WNBS' Book after the opening ceremony.

TOP RIGHT: Chief Akintola is presenting a bottle to celebrate the station during the ceremony. Mr. D. A. Mungro, Acting Governor of the Region, is on the right. Mr. J. C. Sanyal, Western Nigeria Director of News Affairs.

MIDDLE LEFT: Chief M. O. Sowoh (left) was sending the Premier to the station.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Chief Sowoh greeting Chief S. A. O. Oshodi, Western Nigeria Director of News, second from left. Mr. O. Oshodi, a director, W.N.B.S.

BELOW: From left, Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Ruffin, Mr. D. Chubbuck, Station Manager, W.N.B.S.; Chief J. T. Nkomo, Chairman, Western Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation; Chief Akintola and Chief Oshodi.







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EFFECTS (S.P.)

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