

The Kingdom where Everyone is a King: Barrister Ten Years On (Posted on Facebook on 12/16/2020)

A decade ago today, Fuji prophet Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, a Nigerian Civil War veteran who began his full time music career in the early 1970s, joined the ancestors. If Barrister and his fans thought he was already successful when he released "Ire ni Tiwa/Ours is Blessing" (an Ifa oracle inspired self-validating song of his ascension to the metaphoric Fuji kingship) in 1983, they must wait for another five years to experience the meaning of true greatness when he released Fuji Garbage and Barry @ 40—arguably his most famous records. Olabisi Ajala, Nigeria's most famous globe-trotter who authored this 1978 article must have been amazed by what Barrister became in the 1990s.

Fuji wasn't the No.1 popular music of the Yoruba in the 1970s. It would come after Juju, Apala, and of course Sakara. In fact, the traveling theaters of Oyin Adejobi, Duro Ladipo, and Hubert Ogunde would fill any venue faster than any Fuji artist in the 1970s. Women's associations would lavish their precious cash on Batili Alake before considering any Fuji artist during the same period. It wasn't until the second half of the 1980s that Fuji completely overran all other genres, becoming the No.1 pan-Yoruba popular music. What began as music in Lagos in the 1970s would by the late 1990s become a culture and a consciousness lived by millions of people in Nigeria and the global Fuji diaspora. Without Barrister, this would have been impossible.

At the center of Fuji culture is self-citation—a mindset influenced by Yoruba worldview of self-naming. Fuji artists don't expect their competitors to validate them. They validate themselves, first, by performing superstardom before they become one—genuinely. There is no true humility in Yoruba music art, characterized by cut throat competition for fans because what you call yourself is what you end up becoming. Words are not just tools of communication—they are carriers of forces, capable of translating verbality into reality. This explains the allegory of Fuji kingship—in the Fuji kingdom, everyone is a king! For Fuji artists, greatness and self-citation are habits of mind that must be performed for the world to see.

I have attempted a difficult task of translating "Ire ni Tiwa/Ours is Blessing" (1983) to English. To everyone about to read this powerful lyrics: Your victory shall be permanent, your setbacks shall be temporary. Every soul that mocked your humble and mediocre beginning shall live to observe your spectacle of excellence. Every attack launched against you shall become blessing—unlimited one. Amin/Amen/Ase!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G009ecscNI0...>

My drummer took the drum away
As I was about to dance
I have come with a new song
And a new beat
Ayinde o!

Itenini is the custodian of the earth
Orisagbemi is the custodian of the heaven
When Ifa oracle was consulted for Ayinde
The child of Agbajelola
As he was about to be crowned the king of music

The king of Fuji music

His fans were happy for him
They thought he deserves the crown
But, his enemies were sad
They felt he doesn't merit the honor
Yet, they won't wear their cap on their butt
because they dislike their head
They can't stop walking/trying
because they are afraid of falling/failing

So, they protested to Ogun Orogbo
who refused to help them
Ayinde's superiority, Ogun Orogbo insisted
cannot be questioned for the next twenty years
They took their grievance to Ogoji Obi Abata
Ayinde is untouchable, Ogoji Obi Abata advised
His musical authority cannot be contested
until another forty years

They complained to the vulture
Who then reported to the heavenly mothers
The commanders of the nightly powers
Still, the mothers refused to honor their case
They said, Ayinde the child of Agbejelola, is our child
We can't hurt him

The mothers prepared a sacrifice
For the vulture to take to Almighty God
The controller of heaven and earth
The king of all kings
Because the vulture is an untouchable bird
It cannot be molested
Ayinde's achievements cannot be reversed
It is permanent

God gave the sacrifice to the partridge to eat
The partridge became Ayinde's musical voice
So he can continue to sing and sing for forever
I have earned this
I won this battle
Is the song of the partridge

Yours Sincerely in Fuji,
Emperor Saedo Okola and His International Fuji Lions

Spotlight on Sikiru Ayinde Barrister

THE RISE AND IMPACT OF A YINDE BARRISTER

NEVER before in the history of Nigerian show business, has any single musician created so much impact, managed to amass and win the hearts of thousands as rapidly as the younger, more modern musician Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, all within a short span of his emergence.

The reason, of course, is not all that far-fetched. Besides being a highly spirited, volatile artiste, Sikiru, who is continuously trailed by a multitude of Fuji copycats, these days has creativity, style and originality, where others, either met or simply resort to being carbon copies of such top musicians as Ebenezer Obey, Unwilo, Dole Abiodun, Sonny Ade and Pella Anikulapo-Kuti. With Ayinde Barrister's music, it has magical richness, an indigenous rainbow of colours and a variety of dominating styles.

The phenomenal rise and mounting success of this 38-year-old, Ibadan-born and Muslim-bred musician, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, continues to generate as well as perplex, bewilder and dazzle many among his detractors and fans, and even, some fellow musicians.

In all fairness, credit for Sikiru's overnight rise to stardom must be given to his former recording studio — the TVC — from whom he recently parted company, and later established his own recording label — Six O'clock Records (S.O.C.). Both before and after Ayinde Barrister first made the entertainment pages of the "Lagos Weekend" early in 1972, under the tutelage of this writer. The story was then "Bumming Soldier"

Can Musicians. A month later after the story was published, he was given the option of choosing between his Fuji Music and the army. He then opted for music and soon cashed out of the army. Then, came Chief Abioye's TVC who pumped a lot of money and resources into advertising him and the series of Fuji plays he produced for the TVC.

Ever since, his records have consistently been in great demand and often selling with thousands of copies sold soon after they were on market stalls.

Not quite long ago, he dished out another LP "One Nigeria" which sold like hot cakes.

Equally, his latest releases "Exposition One" and "Two" under his Six O'clock Records label, seems to top all others he had recorded before now. This is in terms of rhythm compositions and innovations.

The background story of his immense success and achievements today can be traced back to some years ago when, at the age of 10, he started out his music career as a "Wee" performer during the Muslim 30-day-fasting period.

At the time, he was attending Yaba Polytechnic School by day while by night he performed with 12 other kids of his age group mostly without any remuneration.

Today his Fuji band which started from the scratch has grown into a thriving 25-member band.

Out of the 12 members that started his "Wee" band some 15 years ago, there are seven of them with him today, including his lead drummer, Hadji Abdu Salam Kufel, popularly known as "Seaman". Quite he pays glory to Ebenezer Obey for his guidance.

His initially flat-band



OLABISI AJALA

man and constant companion in the organisation is Adina Olatunji Williams, otherwise known as "Fela". Williams first came in contact with Sikiru when



AYINDE BARRISTER (right), with Mr. Matha Olu Kazeem, the director of Davoli Musical Instruments.

they were classmates at the Yaba Polytechnic.

In 1970 he was asked by Ayinde to resign from his clerical job at the LADPC to join his band as the public relations manager and the band's general manager.

What has probably given the band much lift and colour in its immersion and sound clarity are the sophisticated musical instruments and gadgets it now employs.

These are the world-famous Davoli, manufactured in Italy. Most of the reigning musicians in the country today as elsewhere in other parts of the world, are using the musical instruments to give colour, sound and rhythm to their compositions and innovations.

According to Mr N. Olu



AYINDE SIKIRU Barrister — the Fuji exponent

Jaja and Afro-beats, which we are often constantly bombarded with, now, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister has brought that revolution about with his type of music.

creative music, we know as the Fuji.

Certainly Ayinde Barrister is no longer an artist

whose type of music and egotistic state-of-mind can be brushed aside any longer with the wave of a hand. No. Obviously, he has come to stay, simply because he is a load of talent and a rare, valuable commodity in show-business.



ALHAJI Abdu Salam Kufel, popularly known as "Seaman".



SIKIRU Ayinde Barrister in action at the Olaya Stadium.

Kazeem, whose company, Nil Nubunu Ltd, is the sole agent and distributor in Nigeria, "Davoli musical instruments has gone a long way to create impact and wonderful sound for our artists. Another advantage in the use of the instruments is that the manufacturers in Italy continue to improve on them every day and again. That the instruments can contribute to the great success of Sikiru Barrister is our own pride," he added.

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No doubt, the immense success which the young musician enjoyed during his last tour of Britain did so a long way to remind us that in his kind of music he is a master.

What we needed on our music scene for years now was a change — a diversification and revolution, especially along the line of both