

CONTRIBUTIONS OF YORUBA MUSICIANS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIAN POPULAR MUSIC

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Introduction

Nigerian music as it is today has produced many kinds of art, religious, folk and popular music, some of which are known to be spread around the world. Ogisi (2005) classified Nigerian music into traditional, art, religious and popular music. He stressed further that traditional music is ethnic based and integral to culture, art music is contemplative music for aesthetic enjoyment, religious music is performed for religious activities in and outside the religious centers such as church, while popular music is essentially entertainment music. Nigerian popular music is further subdivided into two types: those in which Islamic musical element fused with African traditional music and those in which African idioms fused with elements of western music such as juju and highlife (Euba, 1989:14).

Nigerian popular music is one of the least researched areas of the various types of Nigerian music and as such different areas such as contributions of Yoruba musicians in the area of popular music are yet to be addressed. Therefore, this paper tries to look into the area of *Juju* and *Fuji* music, their exponents, life history and contributions. Popular music in many African countries have seen turbulence and violence during the transition from a diverse region of folk cultures to a modern nation-state. Nigeria has more difficulty than most African countries in forging a popular cultural identity from the diverse people of the countryside. From its beginnings in the streets of Lagos, popular music in Nigeria had long been an integral part of the field of African pop, bringing in influences and instruments from many ethnic groups, most prominently including the Yoruba.

Concept and Emergence of *Juju* Music

Juju has been defined by various scholars such as Vidal (1983) who calls it “commemorative and panegyric music” (p. 18). Coffins, (1977: 54) defines it as “a guitar-band music derived from the various palm wine styles.” While Waterman, (1982: 60) sees *Juju* as “a regional style of Nigerian urban popular music developed by the Yoruba from Ghana derived from palm wine styles popular in Lagos in the 1930s and 1940s.” Waterman, (1990: 45) defines it as “a local variant of the urban West-African palm wine guitar tradition.” In my opinion, juju can be defined as one of the Nigerian popular music being practised and popular among the Yoruba.

The earliest styles of Nigerian popular music were palm wine music and highlife, which spread in the 1920s among Nigeria and nearby countries like Liberia, Sierra-Leone and Ghana. In Nigeria, palm wine became the primary basis for *juju*, a genre that dominated popular music for many years. During this time, a few other styles, like *apala*, derived from traditional Yoruba music, also found a more limited audience. By the 1960s, Cuban, American and other styles of imported music were finding a large fan base, and musicians began to incorporate these influences into *juju*. By the beginning of the 20th century, Yoruba music had incorporated brass instruments, written notation, Islamic percussion and new Brazilian techniques, resulting in the Lagos-born palm wine style. The term palm wine is also used to describe related genres in Sierra Leone and Ghana. These varieties are more known than Nigerian palm-wine. However, palm wine originally referred to a diverse set of styles played with string instruments (especially guitars or banjos) with shakers and hand drums accompanying. It was an urban style, frequently played in bars, to accompany drinking.

In the 1920s, the first stars of palm wine had emerged, most famously including Babatunde King. King probably coined the word *juju*, a style of music he helped create, in reference to the sound of a Brazilian tambourine or perhaps to the term used as an expression of disdain by the colonial leaders (any native *tradition* was apt to be dismissed as mere *juju* nonsense). By the early 1930s, recording had begun by British record labels like His Master's Voice and more celebrities emerged including Ojoge, Daniel; Tunde, Nightingale and Speedy, Araba. These people along with Tunde, King established the core repertoire that would shape a style of pop music. This early pop music was called *juju* and has

remained one of the most popular genres in Nigeria throughout the 20th Century. Upholding the above view Ogisi (2005) opines: "Tunde King played a form of palm wine music, popular among guitarists in Lagos around 1925. He and his group indigenized palm wine music by composing songs in Yoruba, rendering them in Yoruba singing styles and grafting them to a largely strophic and call-response format. The music was rendered in a narrative song technique, spiced with proverbs, anecdotes from Yoruba tradition and accompanying them with one or more of these instruments: mandolin, banjo, ukulele, or guitar and sekere. Aig-Imuokhuede (1975: 213) opines that "*juju* stems from the minstrel tradition and perhaps derived from the need to entertain at drinking places." Alaja-Browne (1985:3) traced the origin of *juju* to Tunde King and a small group of friends who assembled in the evenings at Till Nelson Akano David's motor mechanic workshop for music making. He was, however, quick to add that:

(In its early years (c. 1929:33), it was not known as juju music, but a kind of "native blues" which centred on reflective songs that are accompanied on the box guitar and struck idiophones, and which provided a means of self-expression and a basis for social interaction among a group of boys.... in the area of Lagos known as Saro Town or Olowogbowo (Alaja-Browne, 1986:1).

Juju Exponents and their Contributions

Tunde King also known as Nightingale 'the sonorous bird that sings at night' to his raving fans when he made the toast on the *juju* music circuit, began his career in the early 40s (Ajirire and Alabi, 1992:30). They commented further that Tunde King was among the first generation *juju* musicians. Nightingale who dubbed his bran of music, owambe was a highly endowed musician. A sonorous voice, knack for best-selling compositions, perfect rendition and a captivating personality were all embodied in the singing bird. As a result of these factors Nightingale became a force to be reckoned with in the hustling music circle of the 50s and the 60s. They added that, no party, particularly in Lagos was complete without Nightingale. And even when Obey and Sunny Ade started the career in the 60s they understudied Nightingale. Tunde Nightingale introduced *sekere* into *juju* music and had several albums to his credit. He died in the year 1981.

Isaac Kehinde Dairo

Also known as I.K. Dairo (Baba Aladura) was born in 1931 at Ijehu-Ijesa the Headquarters of Oriade Local Government in Osun State to an artisan father who worked with Nigerian Railways Corporation. He was enrolled at the CMS School, Ofa in Kwara State in the year 1937; I.K. Dairo due to lack of funds dropped out of school for barbing apprenticeship. Soon after, Dairo not satisfied with the monotonous routine of barbing left Ofa for Ijebu-Ijesa to learn a more challenging trade. He eventually enrolled as an apprentice Osornalo trader (Osornalo is a mode of trading that was common to Ijesa in those days). But once again, poverty drove Dairo out of the Osornalo trade in 1950. In 1951, he left his hometown for Ibadan where he worked as a labourer for the Cappa & D'alberto- a construction firm. It was while in Ibadan that Dairo who had his first public performance as a singer for the veterans of the Second World War in 1946 and for which he was paid a paltry 4 pence started professional music (Ajirire and Alabi, 1992:29). Rejoined Ojoge Daniel on part time basis and two years after his arrival in Ibadan in 1953, he joined Rose Adetola's band. Later that year, he formed his own band, the Morning Start Orchestra.

Dairo recorded "*Apokan abo*" his first record in 1955. A year after his debut, he changed the name of his group to I.K. Dairo and the Blue Spot (Ajirire and Alabi, 1992:2). Ogisi, 2005 added that, in 1959, following the competitions organised for *juju* bands by the Western Nigeria Television, and won by I. K. Dairo, *juju* became widely known across South-western Nigeria. Shortly, thereafter, it evolved from a localized to a nationally recognized genre through I.K. Dairo's hit records especially 'Salome' and 'Angelina'. In 1957, he introduced the harmonica, the accordion and varieties of traditional drums into *juju* music. He was the first *juju* star that dominated the *juju* music scene between 1959 and 1965. Dairo's versatility as a *juju* musician was acknowledged and rewarded with the conferment of the MBE (Member of the British Empire) Honour on him by the then Queen of England in 1963).

Ebenezer Olasupo Fabiyi

Ebenezer Olasupo Fabiyi popularly known as Commander Ebenezer Obey was born on the 3rd of April. 1942 in Idogo, Egbado division of Ogun State to Chief Nathaniel Olasewo Fabiyi and Madam Abigail Oyindarnola Fabiyi (both late). His father was a part time farmer and carpenter while his mother traded in clothes.

Obey one of those whose interest in music manifested at an early age, had his elementary education at the Methodist School Idoگو between 1948 and 1955. While at school, Obey joined the Ifelodun Members Orchestra, a musical group. He was also a member of the Idoگو Methodist Church Choir and a prominent member of the Idoگو Boys and Girls Club, a multi-purpose youth association. Between 1957 and 1959, Obey attended Methodist Secondary Modern School, Asero in Abeokuta. After leaving middle school, he was thrown into the labour market. Tired of trudging the streets and with no job in sight, Obey decided to enlist in the Navy. But again, his efforts in this direction were thwarted. However, Obey soon picked up a job in a Lagos Pools house. He worked as a Pools Clerk in the day and played music at night.

Obey was a percussionist for such reigning bands like Ade Ade, Akibo savage and Fatai Rolling Dollar between 1968 and 1963. However, it was while performing with Rolling Dollar that he perfected his act on the guitar. In 1964, Obey formed his own band, the International Brothers and waxed his debut *EwawoohunOjuri*, a single on Decca label the same year. Producers of a range of chartbusters included Board Members, Christmas Special, *OtaMiD'ehinLehinMi*, *Get your Juju Out*, *Juju Jubilation* etc. During the mid — 1960s, Ebenezer Obey introduced the bass guitar into *juju* music, which he used as a low pitched drum in generating rhythm while fluctuating between the tonic and the dominant tonal degrees in contrast with its conventional role as a harmonic bass. By the mid-1960s, it had been integrated into the *juju* ensemble. Obey has about 100 singles, extended and long playing records to his credit. A widely travelled artiste and holder of several honours and awards including the Practising Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN) award for evergreen record. Obey got wedded to Julianah Olayide Olufade in 1963 and the marriage was blessed with children.

Sunday Anthony Ishola Adeniyi Adegeye

Sunny Ade was born to a royal family in town of Ondo, Ondo State in Southwestern Nigeria on Sunday, 22nd September, 1946. Sunny Ade spent a considerable part of his childhood in the Art town of Osogbo, Osun State capital. Between 1952 and 1960 he attended African Church Primary School and Methodist School both in Osogbo. In 1960, Sunny was enrolled at St. Charles Grammar School, Osogbo. But in 1963 and still in the third form, he dropped out of College. Between 1958 and 1963 he was a part time percussionist with Sunday

Ariyo and Idowu Owoeye's juju bands in Osogbo. In mid-1963, Sunny Ade ran away from home in Osogbo to Lagos where he joined Moses Olaiya Adejumo's (Baba Sala) Federal Rhythm Dandies. In 1965, after spending about 2 years with Adejumo, Sunny established the Sunny Adex and His High Society Band. Later in 1966, Sunny changed the name of his group to Sunny Ade and the Green Spot Band.

Sunny's first record, *Alaanu L'oluwa* released on African songs label in 1967 sold a meagre 13 copies. Undeterred, the following year in 1968 Sunny had his big break with the release of the chart topper, *Challenge Cup*. In 1972, he renamed his band the African Beats and went on to release some of his all-time greats, including *E Kilo F'omo Ode* and *E subiri E bomi* under his own label, Sunny Alade Records. One of the hallmarks of Sunny's music is the expansion of the ensemble from the ten-fifteen man band of Dairo to a much large ensemble of close to twenty, with the percussion section taking the large chunk. The use of traditional percussion instruments like the dundun, akuba and sekere as well as a team of dancers, lends a typical Yoruba multi-media festival atmosphere to the music. The guitars, including the Hawaiian guitar, become more dominant, numbering up to five.

Sunny Ade's popularity soared both at home and abroad to such an extent that he was actually tipped by Island Records to replace Bob Marley (following his death) as the world 'standard barrier of tropical music' (Graham, 1999: 592). Island Records thus worked with him producing one of his greatest hits. *Juju* music under the direction of the French man, Martin Meissonier, in 1982 was very successful and sold at least 200,000 copies. (Waterman, 1998: 482). While his next LP with Island Records, *Synchro system* was also successful, the third one 'bombed', and Island Records dropped. Back in Nigeria, however, Sunny continued to record remarkable success, and at the turn of the century, he became the president of the Performing Musicians' Association of Nigeria (PMAN). To date he remains the King of Juju and perhaps the most financially successful musician in Nigeria (Omojola, 2006:64).

In conclusion, list of juju musicians who had introduced one or more innovations into juju music is in exhaustive. More researches can still be done by other scholars who will like to focus on other musicians through their contributions.

However, the decline in originality and creativity by some *juju* musicians in Nigeria is a serious concern for all. Nigerian *juju* musicians should be patient by being under tutelage of renowned *juju* musicians as mentors before releasing an album. Also, using experiences around them in composing their music as well as discouraging using vulgar language and what is against the cultural values of one's society will help enhance their music.

Juju music as a part of Nigeria's musical heritage needs to be championed, preserved and documented like other aspects of Nigeria culture. As part of cultural and creative arts, it is best preserved in audio and visual recordings. Nigerian music should be given more priority over foreign music in the area of patronage by the governments and the society at large. Nigerian music vis-a-vis African music should be given more prominence in the curriculum of primary, secondary and tertiary education. Importers of western musical instruments should be encouraged by reducing taxes on these western musical instruments so as to reduce the cost price for the would be buyers.

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