



**From Mentor to Mentee: An Appraisal of a Sustainability Practice in *Fuji* Music,  
South-West, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the systematic process of the teaching of *Fuji* music through years of mentoring, a process that could be adopted from traditional society into modern music education in Nigeria. The paper highlights mentorship as a virtue that was cultivated in the 70s between Sikiru Ayinde Barrister – the acclaimed Originator of *Fuji* music, and Wasiu Ayinde Marshal, his Mentee. This work adopted a survey/descriptive method, drawing data from both primary and secondary sources. This was done to explore the pedagogical techniques, socio-cultural influences and socio-historical context that contribute to the sustainability and transformation of *Fuji* music. The findings revealed, among other things, that mentorship has contributed to the genre's sustainability in the face of modern challenges, and the interaction between mentors and mentees reveals a dynamic exchange where traditional practices are adapted to contemporary contexts, ensuring the continued relevance and vitality of *Fuji* music. The paper, therefore, recommends the documentation and archiving of mentorship practices, music and performance practices, including historical context. This preservation effort contributes to protecting and preserving the cultural heritage of *Fuji* music for future generations.

**Keywords:** Mentorship, *Fuji* music, Pedagogy, Music tradition, Yoruba

**Introduction**

The Yoruba people, situated in the southwestern part of Nigeria, are endowed with a rich and diverse musical heritage that reflects their spiritual, cultural and social values. Music plays a predominant role in Yoruba culture, and it is so connected with religious practices, social rituals, and community events, with a wide range of genres, instruments, and performance styles as essential components of these traditions. While several genres exist in popular music within the South-western Nigeria, "*Juju*" music developed in the early 20th Century and was popularised by artists like Chief Ebenezer Obey and King Sunny Ade. The development of

Juju music has been connected to some neo-indigenous music. *Apala* music, for example, exemplifies a blend of Yoruba traditional music and Islamic influences, which was popularised by Haruna Ishola. In the same vein, *Awurebe* and *Ijala* were identified as a part of the traditional genre of Yoruba poetry and music that has its roots in the oral traditions of the Yoruba people (Adesina, 2015).

While some of these genres were being differentiated by rhythm, tempo, dynamics and the type of musical instruments used, *Fuji* music emerged in the late 1960s from the traditional Yoruba music genre *Wéré*. *Fuji* music shares unique features with *Wéré*, having borrowed those identical traits, and became a type of music tradition that was developed by Sikiru Ayinde Barrister and later joined by some notable *fuji* musicians that had evolved into a famous contemporary genre (Adesina, 2011). *Fuji* music has the combination of Islamic religious influences with traditional Yoruba rhythms and instruments. It also includes complex drumming rhythm and a call-and-response musical style. The instrument used in this *Wéré* music is *Sakara* drum, both big and small.

The importance attached to Yoruba musical traditions has not been without the fear of sustainability, especially how future generations can be connected to the past. Thus, indigenous learning structures and strategies have been intensely embedded in their culture, traditions, and communal values. This learning system embraced both formal and informal education, designed to impart knowledge, skills, and values vital for individual and communal interests (Fadipe, 2017). Some of the learning systems include Apprenticeship Systems, On-the-Job Learning, Family and Community Learning, and Mentorship and among others.

## Theoretical Framework

This paper makes use of Social Learning Theory (SLT) as propounded by Bandura 1977. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) posits that people learn behaviours, attitudes, and optional responses by observing and imitating others with similar cognitive processes, thus mediating the kind of learning that occurs. The theory indicates that significant learning often occurs completely without error through the act of watching and imitating another person, known as a mentor. Social learning theory is prominent in traditional musical settings because modeling is critical to the students' watching, listening and performance of the music in the manner and style of the teacher. Samuel (2005) made use of the same theory, where he emphasised that the training and mastery of female *dundun* performers is through assimilation and through the participant-observation method. According to Samuel, significant learning often occurs through the act of watching and imitating another person, known as a model. Following the pattern of the theory, the teacher as a model is central to the development of listening and performance skills. The students imitate the model and evaluate their attempt to recreate it, showing increasing ability to match the model in performance.

Achieving a successful outcome is very necessary in any human endeavour; hence, learning requires the active participation of the learner, and a method of teaching can only be considered successful if the result is progressive towards the objective of a course. It is worthy of note that the level of assimilation depends on natural talents and the ability to recall all that has been registered for performances. The mentorship between Sikiru Ayinde Barrister and Wasiu Ayinde Marshal illustrates the core principles of Social Learning Theory, including modelling, observational learning, and social interaction.

## Origin of Fuji Music

The *Were* music, which has been transformed into *Fuji* music today, was a type of traditional music used mostly for religious purposes. The *Ajiwere* is the general name given to

the group and also to the major singer among the members of the group. It simply means the people that perform *Were* music. This *Were music* served dual purposes during the fasting period, providing entertainment and also ensuring that no committed Muslim missed the meal (*sari*) between 3:30 am and 5:00 a.m. (Agu, 2017). This *Ajiwere* music was a practice in the western part of Nigeria, but mostly noticed then in Ibadan and Lagos metropolis. It was a practice that originated from an initiative from a group of creative young boys who saw an opportunity of going about and waking Muslim faithfuls. Doing this, some Muslim faithful that loved the act did appreciate them with a token which made it more interesting. The major local instruments used were *Sakara, Sekere, Agogo and Bembe*. Among the foremost exponents of *Were* music include Raliat, Sikiru Onisemo Ajadi Ganiyu Kasali, Sakariyau Olayigbade, Taye Ayileru, Ayinde Muniru and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister Agbajelola, as revealed in Sikiru Ayinde's album titled *Fertilizer* (Wikipedia contributors, 2024).

Sikiru Ayinde Barrister was a stand-out figure in *Were* music because of his exceptional talent. The combination of his voice and the percussion accompaniment made him the best among his contemporaries. In about 1953, at the age of five, Barrister was already using *were* music to entertain people and neighbours in his locality. Barrister's unique approach, which included integrating Quranic recitations into his *Were* lyrics and introducing the harmonica and flute into the genre in the late 1950s, distinguished him among his peers. His passion for his craft contributed to the evolution of a new music genre: Fuji.

Fuji music has grown appreciably to where it is today through the innovative style and effort of Sikiru Ayinde Barrister by combining some of the characteristics from *Sakara, Apala, Juju*, and even Highlife, as noted by Barrister himself in his music. From the early 1970s until his death on December 16, 2010, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister played a pivotal role in establishing Fuji music as a respected genre, known for its melodic voice, compelling lyrics, and dynamic rhythms.

Today, Fuji music's influence has gone beyond its Islamic roots in Yorubaland, crossing social, religious, and ethnic boundaries. It has also become a global music genre that is being sampled by artistes of other genres. Among the notable fuji musicians that have emerged include Kolawole Ayinla, Adewale Ayuba, Sulaimon Atawewe, Fatai Adio, Sina Akanni, Ayinla Karashi, Saheed Osupa, Student Fuji, Rashidi Ayinde, Sefiu Alao, Waidi Akangbe, Sikiru Olawoyin, Agbada Owo (who experimented with the guitar), Iyanda Sawaba, and Wasiu Ayinde Barrister (K1 De Ultimate). They brought their various modifications to the genre.

### **Concept of Mentorship**

Anthony (2020) avers that Mentorship is an affiliation between two people where the individual with more experience, knowledge, and connections is able to pass along what they have learned to a more junior individual within a certain field. Mentorship in music is more than teaching—it's about nurturing creativity, resilience, and vision. It bridges generations, ensuring that while music evolves, its soul remains intact. For every great artist, there's often a mentor who believed in them before the world did. The more senior individual is the mentor, and the more junior individual is the mentee. Numerous scholars have different definitions of mentorship. Dzickowski (2013) sees a mentor as any person responsible for guiding and nurturing individuals early in their careers, adapting their roles to meet the needs of mentees. Mentoring is seen as one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner (mentee) by a more experienced practitioner (mentor), designed primarily to assist the development of the mentee's expertise and to facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession.

Aydin and Arslan (2022) are of the opinion that Mentorship expresses a dynamic connection wherein a seasoned or knowledgeable individual (the mentor) extends guidance, support, counsel, and feedback to someone less-experienced or knowledgeable (the mentee), aiding their personal, professional, or academic growth. Anthony (2020) believes that the

activity of mentoring has been performed for many years and in virtually every society. In fact, the word itself dates back to antiquity. The word mentor was derived from a character in Homer's *Odyssey* named Mentor, whose identity was assumed by the goddess Athena in order to guide the son of Odysseus through some life difficulties (Udom et al, 2020). Since that time, those who provide personal counsel in any field have been called mentors, and those who receive guidance have been termed mentees. Mentorship is said to include psycho-social support, career guidance, role modelling, and communication. Vital elements of mentorship encompass the following:

### **Modern Mentorship in Music**

The teaching and learning of music, either in the four walls of the classroom or outside the classroom, can be referred to as music pedagogy. Abolagba et al (2010) aver that music education can take place in various settings, including schools, community centers, private studios, and online platforms. It often involves a combination of formal instruction, practical experience, and opportunities for exploration and experimentation. Adebowale (2018) summarised music education as the intentional and structured process of teaching and learning about music, about various aspects such as theory, history, performance, composition, and appreciation. It is not just about training individuals on how to play instruments or sing, but slightly about fostering a deep understanding and appreciation of music in all its forms. At its fundamental, music education aims to develop individuals' musical skills, knowledge, and understanding, while also nurturing their creativity, expression, and emotional intelligence.

Bheble and Maphosa (2017) are of the opinion that through music education, students learn to listen critically, think analytically, and communicate effectively through music. Ruismaki and Ruokenen (2006) expressed that the primary goals of music education in comprehensive schools are twofold: firstly, to nurture students' musical cognition and cultivate their aesthetic and cultural sensitivities; and secondly, to foster an environment conducive to the exploration of individual musical expression and engagement in communal musical endeavours (Sepp, 2010). This involves connecting students in authentic musical experiences such as singing, instrument playing, exploring diverse musical styles and genres, leveraging technology, and expressing their creativity through improvisation, composition, and movement. Such approaches are advocated by educators to advance the notion of comprehensive music education (Sepp, 2014). The views on music education expressed above underscore the relevance and importance of mentorship in music in traditional society.

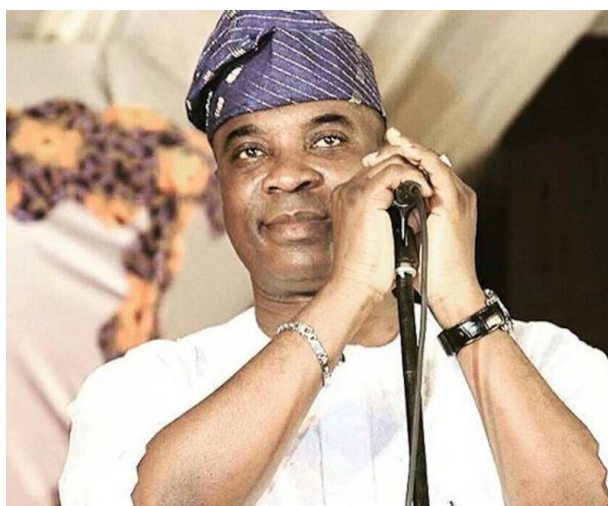
### **Brief History of Sikiru Ayinde Barrister (Mentor)**



**Sikiru Ayinde Barrister** (1948-2010): Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde Ololade Balogun, better known by his stage name as Ayinde Barrister, was the pioneer of Fuji music, a popular genre in Nigeria that blends traditional Yoruba music with contemporary influence. He was known for his

innovative approach and significant contributions to the fuji music from *were* music of then to the now fuji music (Lawal, 2013). Artistes are sometimes nick named by fans depending on their lifestyles and this brought about Alhaji Agba as one of his stage names. He started his musical career in 1958 having served in the Nigerian military and fought during the Nigerian civil war. Alhaji Agba began the journey of fuji music as a member of the *Ajisari Ajiwere*. This 'Were' genre evolved to become Fuji music, which Barrister named after Mount *Fuji*, the Japanese Mountain of love (Ademola, 2010). He released so many albums in his time. Some of these albums include *Bisimilahi (1977)*, "*Oke Agba (1980)*" "*Iwa (1982)*" "*Esinmi Rascality.(1982)*" "*Nigeria (1983)*" "*Fuji Garbage (1988)*" "*Okiki, (1986)*" "*Barry At 40 (1988)*, and he is also remembered for lyrics like *Ara Mecca*, which addressed Muslims who believed music had no place in Islam. Other notable tracks are "*Alomoko Abake Oloyaya*," "*Ijo Olomo*," and "*Bi Iku Se Lagbara To*," a tribute to the late soccer star Muda Lawal, among others (Ademola 2010). He died of diabetes related causes at the age of 62 on Thursday, December 16,2010 at St. Mary's Hospital in London.

### Brief History of Wasiu Ayinde Marshal (Mentee)



### Wasiu Omogbolahan Olasunkanmi Adewale Ayinde Marshal

Olasunkanmi Wasiu Ayinde Adewale Omogbolahan Anifowoshe is best known as K1 De Ultimate or KWAM1 was born on March 3, 1957, in Agarawu, Lagos, Nigeria, but he is a native of Ogun state. His father is from Ijebu Ode, while his mother is from Ilupeju in Ondo state. KWAM1 is a renowned Nigerian Fuji artiste that popularised a style within a Fuji genre derived from the work of Fuji pioneer, Ayinde Barrister, Marshal, as he is fondly called, is one of the Barrister's protégés and played a crucial role in the evolution of Fuji music through the mentorship guidance of his master. He launched his first album, *Iba*, featuring the notable track, *Abode Mecca* in 1980 and later followed by his most acclaimed album, *Talazo* in 1984. He has earned numerous titles and music accolades. King Wasiu Ayinde had many musical albums to his credit. Some of these includes *Vivid Imagination*, *Ara-Edide*, *Ilekun Ayo*, *Orin D'owo*, *OmoNaija*, *Won Tun-Nna*, *Aiye*, *Ultimate Medley*, *Ijebu Fowosere Medley*, *Sun – Sun*, *Canada 98 Part 2*, *Eyo*, *Ma Shote*, *Consolidation*, *The Ultimate Fuji Collections*, *Ade Oriokin* to mention a few.

## **Traditional Mentorship Style: A Case Study of Sikiruayinde Barrister and Wasiuayinde Marshal**



**(Mentor) Sikiru Ayinde Barrister**

**(Mentee) King Wasiu Ayinde Marshal**

The traditional mentorship style used by Sikiru Ayinde Barrister for Wasiu Ayinde Marshal provides a valuable case study in understanding how mentorship shapes careers in music, especially within the perspective of the Nigerian Fuji music genre.

Olasunkanmi Ayinde Marshal, K1 De Ultimate, discovered his passion for music at the age of 8. Although, his parents were initially resistant, he remained persistent in his ambition. By the time he was 15, he had triumphed in numerous local music competitions. Subsequently, he joined Ayinde Barrister's ensemble, the supreme fuji commanders, from 1975 to 1978, having previously worked under him as an instrument handler. He confirmed this in one of his numerous interviews with (Nigerian Voice) where he stated that he used to share a room with Ayinde Barrister. He also incorporated the name Ayinde into his own after obtaining his mentor's consent and approval. Some of the traditional mentorship styles adopted by Barrister to his mentee are presented below:

**Personal and Professional Guidance:** This includes One-on-One interaction that Barrister provided in the mentorship to Marshal. He often allowed personal interactions that included informal advice, guidance on performance techniques, and insights into the music industry. Wasiu Ayinde Marshal described his relationship with Barrister as that of father and son. He explained that he did not formally learn Fuji music from Barrister as an apprentice, but rather admired him from a young age and chose to associate closely with him. Barrister welcomed him into his life and treated him affectionately, almost like family. During this period, Wasiu learned values, character, and ideals from Barrister through daily interaction and living with him. ( Tomi Falade March 19, 2022 Independence Newspaper).

**Professional Standards:** Barrister instilled high standards in Marshal, focusing on stage presence, musical proficiency, and professionalism, which helped shape Marshal's career. This professionalism has been of great assistance in his career and one of the major reasons why he is still the role model to many fuji musicians of today.

In the early stage of his career, Wasiu started working with Barrister's band, initially helping to pack and transport instruments before becoming a full member of the group in the 1970s. This gave him practical exposure to the Fuji music scene and Barrister's professional world, even if Barrister was not his formal music instructor. Barrister endorsed Wasiu publicly; he reportedly gave him his cap on stage and symbolically passed part of the Fuji music legacy to him, effectively recognizing him as a successor or a leading figure.

Wasiu originally adopted the name “Ayinde Barrister” with Barrister’s blessing before later changing it to Marshal, showing the personal and professional influence Barrister had on his identity early in his career. (Legit.ng. 2025)

**Exposure and Opportunities:** Barrister offered Marshal opportunities to perform alongside him, allowing him to gain experience and exposure. This hands-on approach was crucial for Marshal’s development as an artiste. Through Barrister’s established network, Marshal was introduced to influential figures in the music industry, facilitating connections that would benefit his career. Barrister’s mentorship included practical training in music, including rhythm, vocal techniques, and traditional Yoruba musical styles. This training was essential for Marshal’s mastery of Fuji music.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The traditional mentorship style exhibited by Sikiru Ayinde Barrister (mentor) and Wasiu Ayinde Marshal (mentee) highlights the reflective impact of personal leadership, exposure, and expert development in shaping a successful music career. It was a unique way of sustaining the tradition, especially in a music setting. This mentor-mentee relationship has not only been able to sustain but also to make music tradition so relevant to the entire world of music through the awareness brought to it by the creative mindset of the mentee. It has brought about many others to join the fold of fuji musicians. The likes include Alhaji Kollington Ayinla who was also a significant figure in fuji music, Adewale Ayuba, Sefiu Alao, Rasheed Ayinde Merenge, Shina Akanni, Abass Obesere., Ajibola Pasuma, Saheed Osupa etc.

In conclusion, the study on “From Mentor to Mentee Practice: Sustainability as Mentorship in Fuji Music, South-West, Nigeria” highlights the critical role of mentorship in preserving and evolving Fuji music within this region. Mentorship practices in Fuji music have not only facilitated the spread of musical skills and cultural knowledge but have also contributed to the genre’s sustainability in the face of modern challenges. The interaction between mentors and mentees reveals a dynamic exchange where traditional practices are adapted to contemporary contexts, ensuring the continued relevance and vitality of Fuji music. By adapting these traditional methods to today’s context, modern mentors can offer valuable support and guidance, keeping mentorship principles both relevant and effective in the current music.

Some of the recommendations include:

That the documentation and archiving of mentorship practices, musical compositions, and historical context should be prioritized. This preservation effort will protect and preserve the cultural heritage of Fuji music for future generations.

Enhance Training Programmes: Create and implement structured training programmes that blend traditional Fuji music techniques with contemporary music practices. This approach will ensure that mentees are prepared to innovate while honoring the genre’s foundational roots. Local communities in the mentorship process through workshops, performances, and educational events should be involved.. Active community participation can strengthen the cultural fabric and build a robust support network for emerging musicians.

Implementing these recommendations will enable the Fuji music tradition in South-West Nigeria to flourish, adapting to contemporary trends while preserving its rich cultural heritage

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