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EDITORIAL

The importance of the Oşun Groves in Oşogbo has at last been acknowledged by UNESCO through their conferment of the status of World Heritage Site. Certain individual members of the Nigerian Field Society, acting under the auspices of the Oşun Grove Support Group, played a vital rôle in drawing the attention of the nation and the world to the significance of the Groves.

They are of significance first and foremost to the people of Oşogbo, being the site of the pact made between Laro, the founder of Oşogbo, and the goddess Oşun, who promised the people her protection if they, in turn, would refrain from harming the creatures in her Groves. Thus the Groves are an example of conservation maintained by indigenous sanctions for hundreds of years, remarkable indeed, since the Groves are completely surrounded by urban development.

On a national level, the preservation of the Groves shows how ordinary people with a pride in their heritage, supported latterly by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, a government parastatal, have prevented the destruction of their history.

On an international level, the Groves are of importance to the Yoruba of the diaspora whose beliefs, carried through the hell of the Middle Passage, were "bedrocks of endurance and survival" (W.S., 1991). But the fame of the Groves rests not only on their connection with the Yoruba Orişà, which many may regard as mere legend, but also on the New Sacred Art, statuary which embellishes the shrines, created by Buraimoh Gbadamosi, Saka, Raifu, Lani, Adebisi Akariji and Susanne Wenger. These works of art stand amid undisturbed forest where the fauna thrives, safe from the trap and gun of the hunter. It is a place where peace prevails.

Frontispiece: Crown for an initiate of Oşun, by James Norman-Ogun Yomi, Brooklyn, New York. Collection of the artist (Courtesy, *African Arts*)