

BOOK REVIEWS*Sandbank City Lagos at 150***John Godwin and Gillian Hopwood****Kachifo, Lagos (2012) pp. xvi; 262**

“Sandbank City” is a portrait of Lagos taken from many different angles—historical, social, architectural, environmental and colonial. It is written by John Godwin and Gillian Hopwood, both professional architects and long-term residents of Lagos, who through their research and photographs, have provided an invaluable record of the changing face of the city. Many buildings of historical interests have fallen victim to the lust of the developer, including the elegant residence of Henry Carr, one of Nigeria’s most distinguished sons. Concerned about this situation, the authors and others of like mind in 1995, established LEGACY, a group whose interest was the preservation of historic sites, which reflects the work of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments. Since then, LEGACY has restored two historic buildings in Lagos : a colonial building ‘1898 in the Railway Compound, Ebute Metta and the residence of Dr. Charles Jenkins Lumpkin (1851-1919) an immigrant to Lagos from Sierra Leone in the late 19th century. One can think of other buildings in Nigeria also worthy of LEGACY’s attention and action, particularly the 19th century house in Kudeti, Ibadan, home of the missionaries, David and Anne Hinderer.

For those interested in the technical problems of building in Lagos, there are details and photos in the chapter titled: “The Town Engineer’s Problems” which deals with matters which concern us all – sanitation, water-supply, road congestion, street-trading, electricity, over-crowding and uncontrolled building.

Profusely illustrated with photographs, this book provides an introduction to Lagos which reflects the background of the authors. I found that the index, however did not do justice to the treasure-trove of information within the covers of this book.

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Nigerian Forests: Protection and Sustainable Development

Edited by Eyo Okon, Deni Bown & Augustine Isichei

Published by Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State, Nigeria.
320 pp.

Nigerian Forests: Protection and Sustainable Development is, as stated in the Preface by the editors, Eyo Okon, Deni Bown and Augustine Isichei, a compendium of the papers presented at a symposium to mark the World Environment Day 2011, which had the theme "Forest: Nature at Your Service". The symposium appropriately focused on forests in a year declared by the United Nations General Assembly as the Year of Forests with the theme Forests for People, Forest for Life, and in which the UN Convention on Biological Diversity made Forest Biodiversity: Earth's Living Treasure the theme of its International Day for Biological Diversity.

In terms of structure and organization, following a brief foreword by Chief Emeka Anyaoku, the book proper opens with the text of the keynote address by Chief Philip Asiodu at the symposium. Thereafter, the book continues with 25 other chapters, of various lengths, bringing the total number of chapters to 26 and the volume to 320 pages. A good number of the chapters are copiously illustrated with good quality colour photographs, maps, figures, data charts and text boxes, while the front and back covers are adorned with truly forest images in colour. The chapters and paragraphs are well laid out and the font size pleasant to the eye. There is a discernible effort to arrange the chapters approximately in an order of closeness to the central theme of the book, so that other than the first chapter, which is the text of the keynote address to the symposium and is a general treatment of the whole of the environment, the subsequent chapters begin with the core subject of forests, their values and the services they provide, their protection by laws and regulations, their management especially by participatory and community-based approaches leading to exploiting the emerging forest-based responses to climate change that have the potential of yielding co-benefits, the characteristics of their soils and included waters, before treating their associated wildlife and insects, threats to their integrity from invasive plant species, their specialized values for greening the urban environment, and in relation with urban agriculture and horticulture their use for addressing environmental issues, before tailing off with forests as a rich source of medicinal plants and a case study of a forest restoration project. It is difficult to fit chapter 19 on Biotechnology in this series.

In terms of content, the 26 chapters of *Nigerian Forests: Protection and Sustainable Development* cover a wide range of issues related to or dealing directly with Nigerian

forests and their management. The opening chapter is a general treatment of the daunting environmental challenges facing Nigeria. It is centred on a 14 point agenda that is recommended for urgent adoption and implementation by the Nigerian leadership to make up for lost time in addressing general Nigerian environmental failures including escalating forest loss in the face of a rapidly rising population and pressure on forests. The agenda is consistent with those earlier given by the author in his Chief S. L. Edu lecture to the Nigerian Conservation Foundation in 2007, but curiously omits listing Climate Change in the 14-point agenda for action, although climate change is stressed in the text as an emerging challenge.

Forest values, the resources and services provided by forests and the challenges faced in maintaining the forest estate are the focus of chapters 2, 3 and 6, with Chapter 3 standing out by stressing the nexus between forests, human nutrition, food security and poverty reduction in the context of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. chapters 4 and 5 deal comprehensively with protecting forests through laws and regulations and introduce the reader to relevant international treaties and initiatives on the subject, but do not mention the potentials of non-legal approaches like community engagement in achieving protection of forests.

Fortunately, chapters 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13, to varying degrees, draw attention to the potentials of participatory community engagements, not only for protecting forests and stemming forest degradation, but also in advancing the benefits that can be gained from forests, including by tapping into international initiatives, like the REDD or carbon trading mechanisms, that are primarily designed for combating climate change. It should be mentioned here that the seemingly intractable problems of uncontrolled forest clearance that leads to forest degradation and reckless bush burning, were recently successfully addressed through community engagement, in pilot projects of the Building Nigeria's Response to Climate Change (BNRCC) Project implemented by the Nigerian Environmental Study Action Team (NEST) in communities in Cross River State. By introducing communities to land use planning and helping them to set up structures to monitor the implementation of the plans, and by training community members in controlled burning, the two scourges of forest degradation were largely controlled. Agroforestry as a land use approach that helps to maintain soil fertility and reduce the need for continuous clearance of forest for farming is appropriately dealt with in Chapter 11 following a very comprehensive treatment of Soil, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry Development in Chapter 10. I found this last chapter to be succinct and a highly informative treatment of the characteristics of

Nigerian soils in the context of their utilization and the role of forests in their protection. To a limited extent Chapter 18 presents a similar detailed treatment of the hydrology

and physico-chemical characteristics of a typical rainforest river, the Owena River in southwest Nigeria. chapters 14, 15, 25 and 16 deal with the wildlife or insect associations of forests, while the remaining chapters of the book deal with plant invasions (Chapter 20), medicinal plants (chapters 21 and 22), forestry for greening the built environment (Chapter 17), forestry and urban agriculture and horticulture (chapters 23 and 24, respectively) and lastly, the case study of forest restoration in IITA Forest Project (Chapter 26).

The book is largely free of editorial faults, although one like '1973' instead of , presumably, '1937' (line 1, para. 4 p. 4) throws up the absurdity of the Colonial Government still being around to enact a Forestry Act in 1973 when Nigeria became independent in 1960. Eagle-eyed editing and insistence on consistency should have sought to harmonize the figures given for the land area of Nigeria so that we do not have 924,000 km² in line 4, paragraph 5 of p.1 and 983,213 km² for the same area in line 1, paragraph 4 of p. 8. The latter derives most likely from the retention of the erroneous conversion of the area of Nigeria from the Imperial units to the metric system, perhaps even before the adjustment of the area with northern and southern Cameroon, and carried in some literature since then! More substantively, a statement like 'Forestry is the art and science of tree resources.....', which is inadequate should have been filtered out by closer editing. The Dictionary of Forestry, by the Society of American Foresters (1998; <<http://dictionaryofforestry.org/dict/term/forestry>>), defines 'forestry' as the science, art, and craft of creating, managing, using, conserving and repairing forests and associated resources to meet desired goals, needs and values for human benefit. The crucial fact missing from the statement appearing in the book under review is the concern with trees 'for human benefit'

Except for the last chapter, which reports a project that essentially aims to restore a forest degraded by farming and encroachment by invasive exotic species, the book contains no treatment of regeneration of the forests. Loss of natural forest is due to a combination of exploiting the forest at a rate faster than it can regenerate itself and our failure to institute appropriate silvicultural treatments to promote natural regeneration. Considerable work was done on the subject at Omo Biosphere Reserve that could have been drawn upon to make this review of Nigerian forests and their sustainable development more complete. We need to continue the search for how to regenerate natural forests in Nigeria to sustain the services we get from such complex forests. The above notwithstanding, the initiators of the symposium from which this volume derives, the contributors to the volume and the editors must be congratulated for what amounts to an update of the state of knowledge on Nigerian forests, following the *Nigerian Rainforest Ecosystem* which I edited in 1979, and *Essential Partnership: The Forest*

and the People, The Report of the Conference of Rainforest of South-eastern Nigeria and South-western Cameroon, edited by Emmanuel Obot and John Barker in 1996.

Nigerian Forests: Protection and Sustainable Development is a veritable reference source recommended for reading by any that have an interest in Nigerian forests.

Review by David Okali

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