

Book Reviews

Adire Cloth in Nigeria 1971 – 2016

Doig Simmonds, Pat Oyelola and Segun Oke, editors

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Illustrated in colour and black and white

Àdìrè Cloth in Nigeria was first published by the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan in 1971 with five chapters which included: *Dyeing Methods in West Nigeria* (Nancy Stanfield), *The Chemistry of Dyeing* (Segun Oke), *The Origin of Some Àdìrè Designs* and *Àdìrè Cloth in Nigeria 1989 & Cloth Identification* (Jane Barbour), *The Devolution of the Jubilee Design* (George Jackson) and a preface by Bisi Akpata. The current edition, with a foreword by Professor Dele Layiwola and the editors' introduction, has three additional chapters; *An Overview* by Nike Okundaye, *An Update* by Pat Oyelola and Margaret Areo's *Some Àdìrè Motifs and Their Meaning*. The new edition also has contributions from John Picton (*Indigo dyed textiles and Yoruba Modernity*) and Doig Simmonds (*Signatures and stencils*) as appendices.

The editors' introduction and Dele Layiwola's brief foreword provide the link between the first edition and the current one. While Layiwola draws attention to the use of àdìrè in the documentation of local histories and its use as a medium for conscious expression of national identity, the editors' introduction gives an appraisal of what informed the need for the current edition, dedicated to the memory of three of the original contributors (Nancy Stanfield, Jane Barbour and George Jackson) their informants and the àdìrè artists of the time. The new edition also acknowledges and identifies various materials from museums and individual collections across the globe to make the new edition more comprehensive.

The thrust of this book, *Àdìrè Cloth in Nigeria* is to provide, in a concise manner, essential information germane to the history and production of àdìrè, the Yoruba tie & dye cloth. Traditionally, all dyed cloths are called *aso-aró*. Àdìrè, an essential part of Yoruba dress culture, is a patterned *aso aró* (dyed fabric). The word *àdìrè*; *a – dī – a – ré* (we tie and dip in dye) describes the tie & dye patterned cloths called *àdìrè oníko*. This meaning has been extended to all forms of resist patterned cloths including *àdìrè eléko* (corn-pap [corn starch] batik) and *àdìrè alábéré* (stitching), as well as all other forms of contemporary *àdìrè*. It is not certain when the Yoruba

started making *àdìrè* cloth, it is, however, certain that the use of dye – *aró* among the Yoruba is as old as the weaving industry. While a lot has been written on *àdìrè* as a material for dress-making and its spread, there exists no comprehensive publication on the history, design and production of *àdìrè* and the artists.

Although the original chapters are reproduced in the book as earlier published, this new edition should be viewed on its own merit. Each of the chapters comes with editorial notes and illustrations in colour. The preface by Bisi Akpata provides a brief history of *àdìrè*, its methods of production and its spread. The short introduction which reveals the period of popularity in terms of production and patronage also provides a good background for the subsequent chapters. Nancy Stanfield's *Dyeing Methods in Western Nigeria* dwells on the techniques of production, designs, materials and different methods of achieving the variety of designs and their names. The chapter provides information on the production of the blue dye called indigo and the dyeing process. It also gives the market value of *àdìrè* in the 1960s when the survey was conducted.

Segun Oke, a soil chemistry expert in his *Chemistry of Dyeing* attempts to trace the history of the blue (indigo) dye back 5000 years. The chapter complements Stanfield's discussion on the production of indigo, with scientific explanations to colour fastness and the quality of the dye. Jane Barbour's *The Origin of some Àdìrè Designs* reproduces a photographic collection of patterns, their names and how the names were derived from the method used in preparing the design or to commemorate an event. This chapter also attempts an interpretation of the various patterns. Barbour states that 'every cloth has its own name which it normally retains even when long distance trading is involved' and that the traders of *àdìrè* are more accurate in identifying the name of a cloth than the makers. Barbour also describes the division of labour in the *àdìrè* industry with specialists in painting, dyeing and sewing— all contributing to the production of a wrapper (*iro*). Her chapter draws attention to peculiar differences in motifs and designs that distinguish one pattern from the other eg, *Olókun* and *Ìbàdándùn*. This chapter, however, raises a lot of questions for further study: meaning, signature, images/objects, what they symbolise and the criteria for quality.

George Jackson's *The Devolution of the Jubilee Design* is an analysis of *àdìrè* cloth inspired by a medallion type of design used for the commemoration of King George V and Mary's silver jubilee. While it may be difficult to explain the motive for using *àdìrè* to create the Jubilee design, the motifs and inscriptions on some of the cloths suggest their possible use as a commemorative fabric. Jackson attempts a descriptive

analysis of the motifs on some of the cloths and an explanation on the border line inscriptions—that the identity of the artists of these great works is still veiled and should act as a challenge to art scholars and historians.

Jane Barbour's second chapter (five) is the last essay from the earlier edition which gives the book its name: *Àdìrè Cloth in Nigeria*. While the first part of the chapter is her 'eye witness' account of the decline in demand for àdìrè in the late 1980s and the efforts made at reviving the art, the second part is a catalogue of stenciled designs with their names and suggestions on how the àdìrè cloth industry could be preserved.

The three new chapters and the two appendices are updates meant to bridge the gap between the first edition and the present time. *An Overview* by Nike Okundaye reveals her efforts at ensuring that the art of àdìrè cloth making does not die. It discusses her training of young artisans in the skills of àdìrè making and innovation in the use of cassava starch (*láfún*). Her chapter also discusses supporting auxiliary industries for dyeing such as pot making.

Pat Oyelola's *An Update* adds a deeper historical perspective to the book. It also presents a detailed description of the technique of producing àdìrè *eléko* in its various forms, e.g., hand painted and stenciled; the naming and multiple naming which may suggest a need for further studies. The update also recognizes the introduction of coloured àdìrè by Betti Okuboyejo.

Margaret Areo's *Some Àdìrè Motifs and Their Meaning* comprises data which support the earlier chapters and the names of some common motifs as well as samples of contemporary dress styles made from the resist dyed fabric.

The new edition also has contributions from John Picton (*Indigo dyed textiles and Yoruba modernity*) and Doig Simmonds (*Signatures and stencils*) as appendices. Picton's historical perspective presents àdìrè as part of an emerging visual modernity local to Nigerian cities using Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan as examples. Picton draws attention to the relationship between the development of àdìrè textiles and the evolution of a modern Yorùbá identity with reference to the cities and the urban middle and upper classes' use of local dress forms in furtherance of this newly evolved cultural identity. He sees the evolution of àdìrè as another part of "complex process of cultural re-invention by means of which a local modern world came into being".

Simmonds' reference to motifs as the 'signature' of the artist on the other hand, calls for further research on àdìrè and the identity of the uncelebrated artists.

Àdìrè Cloth in Nigeria 1971 to 2016 will be useful to scholars, students, art historians and those who are interested in its tradition and innovations over time, as well as those concerned with the making and wearing of àdìrè as apparel and its contemporary use as wall hangings. The book contains succinct field notes that raise numerous questions for further research and points to a gap in the literature that needs to be filled.

*... When producing a good àdìrè piece,
both the head and the hand must be correct.*

Nike Okundaye, 2001

Babasehinde Ademuleya
Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile-Ife

Annotated Checklist of Vascular Plants of Southern Nigeria

Dr. Emmanuel Izaka Aigbokhan, UNIBEN Press
University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria; 2014. 346 pp.

The *Annotated Checklist of Vascular Plants of Southern Nigeria* is a comprehensive and systematic compilation of vascular plant diversity in the tropical rainforest region of Nigeria, which is also an important part of the Guinea forests of West Africa, one of the global hot-spots of biological diversity. Ultimately, the book addresses the Linnean shortfall on the number of species in the southern part of Nigeria.

The author, Dr. Emmanuel Izaka Aigbokhan is a senior lecturer in the Department of Plant Biology and Biotechnology at University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. He received his PhD in 1998 from Old Dominion University, Norfolk VA, U.S.A. In addition, he did some postdoctoral research and teaching at different universities on east coast in the United States.

This book could not have been published at a better time, when there is global advocacy to address global taxonomic impediments, as result of the lack of experienced taxonomists and adequate field surveys. This book provides a revised and updated compendium of plant diversity in southern Nigeria, building on the solid foundation established by the great taxonomists and naturalists who have been scanning every nook and cranny of the country surveying and collecting plants; and turning their surveys into publications, which are still valid for academic use.

However, many of these publications addressed specific plant families, plant habits, or plants with specific ecological functions, thus limiting their use in general botanical knowledge. In addition, new plants have been discovered and described while names of some plants have been changed.

Consequently, the *Annotated Checklist of Vascular Plants of Southern Nigeria* provides the most recent botanical information on Tracheophyte diversity in southern Nigeria.

As an experienced and erudite taxonomist and botanist, Dr. Aigbokhan's book is compelling. His writing style is admirable and his meticulous attention detail as demonstrated in this book is admirable. Not only is the book an asset to professionals, but will also prove useful to individuals interested in vascular plants.

The book is organized into a mega-table and three appendices. The table comprises 1300 vascular plants distributed within the southern region of Nigeria and comprises all states in the South-West, South-East and South-South geopolitical zones of the country.

The table presents the scientific, common and local names of the plants, in addition to their family, habit, origin, distribution and main uses. It is imperative to always mention the local and common names of plants, as a way of preserving those local languages and the indigenous knowledge surrounding them. Long before European naturalists landed on African shores, species were identified by local names and the accuracy of those local names in differentiating species was noted by Dr. Ernst Mayr and his team in New Guinea and other areas he visited¹. Furthermore, local names can be used as an indicator of nativity and distribution of species. The author also added vital information on the distribution of these species, including the endemic species, which are long over due for research attention.

Annotated Checklist of Vascular Plants of Southern Nigeria also distinguishes between the species that are indigenous to tropical Africa and naturalized exotic plants. The importance of this information is pivotal to botanical research, as many of the upcoming biology graduates cannot differentiate between the two. Worse still, the Internet is replete with many published articles where naturalized exotic plants have been erroneously classified as native plants. This information is extremely important and was painstakingly added to this publication, while an article is in press on a systematic compilation of all naturalized exotics in Nigeria, their origins and present ecological function in their new habitats. Equally important is the inclusion of the uses of the plants on the table, which is a product of the ethnobotanical uses and current bioprospecting of the plants.

The appendices are a perfect illustration of the phylogenetic ordering of the species in this checklist, based on the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group (APG) III system. This is very useful in addressing the Darwinian shortfall and is highly instrumental in research on the phylogenetic and evolutionary relationship of species, especially in Africa where there is a wide gap in phylogenetic research.

The author also included a general name index, which makes it easier for readers to navigate through the list. However, readers are warned to be cautious about the names of the plants in this checklist because local names of a plants vary widely among different communities, including those adjacent to each other. Furthermore, biological names of plants also vary, especially from one continent to another, many of which are actually synonyms or old names still being used. This is because plant

taxonomy is dynamic and new discoveries often lead to reviewing the taxonomic status and classification of already described taxa.

Sub-Saharan Africa is a hotbed for research with so many research gaps waiting to be filled. This is due to the trend of species richness in latitudinal gradient in favour of the region. Yet, this region also suffers terribly from taxonomic impediments that further exacerbates the Linnnean and Wallacian shortfalls. The *Annotated Checklist of Vascular Plants of Southern Nigeria*¹ further advances the knowledge of the species richness and natural history of this biodiverse region. Much credit should be given to Dr. Aigbokhan who meticulously put all these together in a book, for academic and research purposes, for both the professionals and interested general readers.

¹ Wilson E.O (1992). *The Diversity of Life*. W.W Norton & Company, New York, 424pp.

Reviewed by Temitope Israel Borokini, senior scientific officer at the National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB), Ibadan, Nigeria.

Anna Hinderer, Pioneer Missionary

by Ann Meakin (with a foreword by the Bishop of Norwich)

Connaught Books, 2015

Anna Hinderer and her husband David are still well-remembered in Ibadan for their work in the 19th century in establishing the Christian faith and education in the area. Between 1853 and 1869, they had three long tours of residence in the Kudeti area of the town. Like all Europeans who came to West Africa at that time they both suffered long periods of illness and in Anna's case her health was permanently compromised to the extent that she died in 1870 soon after returning to England at the age 44 years.

Ann Meakin, the author of this new account of Anna's life and work, is resident in the Norfolk village of Martham, where David Hinderer was curate in charge of the parish church when Anna died. After discovering the Hinderer's connection with the village she renovated Anna's grave in the churchyard and as a keen local historian began to research her background. The book is largely based on Anna's own writings in her journal and in voluminous correspondence with friends, family and supporters which are available in *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country* by C.A and D Hone (1877) published by the Religious Tract Society, London. In addition, there is much new information, especially with regard to Anna's family background and activities in Britain, based on the author's own research.

I should at this stage declare my own interest in Anna Hinderer and this book. In the 1950s, as a young lecturer in physics at the University of Ibadan, I lived for 10 years in Ibadan, and read Ellen Thorp's biographical novel about Anna Hinderer *The Swelling of Jordan* published in 1951 by Lutterworth Press. My interest was captured by the coincidence that Anna had grown up in the Suffolk coastal town of Lowestoft where I was born and raised and that she had worked in Ibadan almost exactly 100 years before my own period of residence. Now long retired, and living back in Lowestoft, it has been a pleasure to assist Ann Meakin in a minor way with a little genealogical research and with guidance round the old part of Lowestoft where Anna grew up.

It is remarkable that a Norfolk-born girl, the daughter of a village grocer, with little formal schooling, should ever become a missionary in Nigeria. Anna lost her dearly loved mother when she was only 5 years old. Her father William Martin, married

again and started a new family and Anna went to live in Lowestoft with her grandfather John Martin, a local saddler, and her Aunt Mary who kept house. Anna was a devout church-goer and soon came under the influence of Francis Cunningham, the long-serving vicar of the local parish church, and his wife Richenda. Before long she was taking her own Sunday-School classes, visiting the poor and assisting the Cunninghams with secretarial work and companionship. Richenda Cunningham was a member of the powerful Gurney family of Norfolk and a talented woman, and must have influenced Anna's upbringing considerably. When David Hinderer, a missionary employed by the Church Missionary Society, preached in Lowestoft on his first leave from the Abeokuta Mission, it is not surprising that a rapid courtship took place resulting in marriage in October 1852.

David Hinderer was born in the German state of Wurtemberg and worked as an artisan before training to become a minister. His aspiration to be a missionary was fulfilled when he came to England to train with the Church Missionary Society. During his first tour with the Abeokuta Mission he visited Ibadan, was well received by the local chiefs and stayed several months. When he returned to Nigeria in 1853 with his bride, land was made available to him there to establish a new Mission at Kudeti.

Anna settled quickly into this environment and started to learn Yoruba. Her main interest was with the children and after she had started classes many of the children stayed in the mission compound. A break-through occurred when Yejide and Akielle, children of Olunloyo, one of the local chiefs, began to attend the classes. David Hinderer was often away on trek and Anna began to rely heavily for help, especially when she was unwell, on their servant Daniel Olubi, who became first a friend, and then a teacher in the school.

Most of the book deals with the day-to-day activities of the small mission community, told in Anna's own words from her journal and letters. This is accompanied by a restrained and sensitive commentary from the author, herself a committed Christian. Contact with the outside world was intermittent and unreliable. It was a four-day journey to and from Lagos for mail, money (in bags of cowries) and supplies, and dangerous during times of unrest. In their second tour at Ibadan, due to the hostility of the Chief of Ijebu, they were completely cut-off for a time and forced to sell off most of their possessions to buy food for the children; Anna and David were reduced to near starvation. Throughout their stay, both Anna and David suffered long periods of fever and at times seemed close to death, (which was the

fate of many of their missionary colleagues). Eventually Anna was evacuated to the coast by a military party from Lagos sent by the governor and she proceeded to England for her second leave and recuperation.

The Hinderers returned to Ibadan at the end of 1866 after a long leave in which they stayed with various friends in England and in Wurtemberg. David spent some of the time in translating *Pilgrims' Progress* into Yoruba and also in preparing a Yoruba hymn book. In the unstable conditions of the time they realised that the future of the mission depended upon their work being taken over by local people. By the end of 1868, with a resurgence of tribal warfare and a marked deterioration in their health, it became necessary for them to make arrangements to leave. Daniel Olubi would take over as leader of the mission and Akielle the running of the school. Anna, a very sick woman, left Nigeria in early January 1869 leaving David to make the final arrangements; he followed in September.

Anna died in June 1870, only three months after they had moved into the Martham vicarage. She is commemorated in stained glass windows in two churches in Ibadan and also in the Lady Chapel in Liverpool Cathedral as one of the noble women of Britain. David Hinderer, iron man that he was, returned to Nigeria for one more tour establishing churches in Lekki and Oda-Ondo. He died in Bournemouth in 1890 at the age of 71 years.

The book is well-produced, with numerous illustrations. There is a thoughtful foreword by the Right Reverend Graham James, the Bishop of Norwich, the diocese in which Anna was born and grew up and where she decided to devote her life to spreading the Christian message.

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The Balogun in Yorubaland: The changing fortunes of a military institution

Mufutau Oluwasegun Jimoh and Philip Oloruntola (eds.)

BookBuilders: Ibadan, 2016

I have long been fascinated by the history and culture of Nigeria. After studying for my bachelor's and master's degrees at the universities of Cambridge and London, I first travelled to Nigeria six years ago to commence research for a doctoral degree. This research focused on the role of higher education in Nigerian decolonization and development from the 1930s to the 1960s. While doing research at the University of Ibadan, I was fortunate to meet the co-editor of this volume, Mufutau Oluwasegun Jimoh, and I met him again in London soon afterwards while he was doing research based at Birkbeck, University of London. I am currently a lecturer in history at King's College, London.

The Balogun in Yorubaland: the changing fortunes of a military institution. What can the curious reader expect to find therein? First it is a multi-authored book comprising an introduction, nine chapters, and two appendices that put forward a variety of arguments. The book considers the role of the 'balogun' title amongst Yoruba societies in the nineteenth century. In it we learn about some of the memorable and important holders of the balogun title. The book analyses the similarities and differences in the use of the balogun title between different parts of Yorubaland. And it shows how, over time, the balogun title has been invested with new meaning and significance up to the present day. The book engages with important themes in the history of the Yoruba people, especially the role of chieftaincy institutions, as well as themes that are essential to all historical study, such as the relationship between continuity and change.

The first chapter, by Gabriel Oguntomisin, affords us an invaluable overview of the role of the balogun title across the Yoruba territories, showing the variety of military, civil and religious meanings that have been invested in it. It traces how the balogun title assumed a greater importance in the era of the so-called 'Yoruba Wars' of the nineteenth century. The balogun was a chief with particular responsibility for war. Sometimes the balogun led armies on behalf of civil authorities, and sometimes for their own purposes. Some established military-oriented governments, becoming great warlords in their own right.

With the coming of missionaries and British colonial administration, the role of the balogun generally metamorphosed into a title with more civil than military significance, a trend that has continued into the twentieth century. New kinds of balogun titles emerged, notably those with religious significance, so that today in Abeokuta, there are three balogun title holders: one for the city, one for Christians, and one for Muslims. This fact is a great testament to the tradition of religious pluralism among the Yoruba, a characteristic that the rest of the world has much to learn from.

The second chapter, by Taiwo Olatunde, Philip Oloruntola and Mufutau Oluwasegun Jimoh, focuses on the balogun in Ijebu-Ode. The chapter is notable for its account of the famous Balogun Onafowakan, who during the nineteenth century intervened in civil administration, even deposing the paramount king, and launched a courageous war against the British in a bid to defend Ijebu autonomy. The writers show how during the colonial period, the balogun became an important intermediary between Ijebu people and the British, a role which preserved the balogun title and gave it a new form of importance. This *re invention* of the balogun title was reflected in the emergence of subordinate balogun offices in the 1920s, and in what the writers describe as a new tradition of 'pomp, fanfare and feasting' around balogun title holders. The postcolonial balogun title holders have been notable philanthropists, businessmen, and recently advocates of a new Ijebu state.

The third chapter, by Rasheed Olaniyi, traces how in Ogbomoso the balogun title emerged amidst the ferment of the Yoruba wars, and how later the title related more to civic duties. As in many other places, the balogun title became important because the nineteenth century was a time of war, but the title also accrued political importance later in the century. We learn from Olaniyi how the 'Baale' appointed balogun title holders as war chiefs *in the hope that they would be killed*, to leave the Baale to rule untroubled by rivals. With the end of the Yoruba wars, the title became less important, although now the balogun is a member of the advisory council of Ogbomoso, playing a role in law and order through collaboration with police and vigilante groups, and engaging in the arbitration of disputes.

The fourth chapter, by Mutiat Titilope Oladejo, focuses on the balogun in the city of Ibadan. It was of particular interest to me because Ibadan is the Nigerian city that I know best. Militarism was crucial to the early history of Ibadan, and the balogun thus held commensurate importance. When the Baale died in the nineteenth century, the balogun was offered the title. Remarkably, from the 1840s to the 1890s, Oladejo tells that about four balogun rejected the office of Baale, in favour of accumulating

prestige and wealth from war. An important part of this chapter is the way it shows how the balogun's influence in Ibadan relied on wider networks of trade around the Atlantic Ocean: the sale of slaves, palm oil and palm kernels, and the purchase of firearms and ammunition.

Political conflicts in nineteenth century Ibadan emerged between the Baale and the balogun, especially because of the balogun's particular investment in Ibadan's war economy. After 1893, and Ibadan's annexation by the British, balogun title holders, apparently with some reluctance, diversified into trade and farming, and in the colonial era were included in town council meetings.

The fifth chapter, by Philip Oloruntola, focuses on the balogun in Epe in relation to the changing composition of the town. In Epe, the balogun was distinctive as the only chieftaincy title not linked by custom to one of the town's eight quarters. The balogun usually came from the two main quarters, had to be native born, of social standing, and warlike, because, as elsewhere, it was fundamentally a military title until the arrival of the British.

Chapter five gives an important account of the recent history of balogun title holders, including the present balogun, Chief Lanre Razak. In recent years the balogun has been a community leader, spokesperson, and philanthropist. I was interested to learn that the balogun today serves on the Police Community Relations Council, a powerful echo of the balogun's nineteenth century focus on security and military functions. Today the balogun of Epe is the Balogun General of the Epe Division, first amongst equals in the division's balogun title holders.

The sixth chapter, by Lanre Davies, is about the balogun in Egbaland. The chapter shows how the loosely structured relations between Egba communities affected the status of the balogun. The Egba adopted titles including the balogun while they resided in Ibadan in the early nineteenth century. Balogun Sodeke led the Egba to found the great city of Abeokuta, and played a central role in defending the young town and leading it to prosperity, by attracting immigrants and developing its military strength. He welcomed Saros and Christian missionaries. Sodeke was an exceptional individual who held the balogun title, but wielded even more wide ranging powers. His death left the absence of a strong central authority in Abeokuta. The missionary Henry Townsend persuaded the Egba authority to restore the Alake title, as the British favoured a strong king, and the Alake was appointed in 1854. This, together with the eventual conclusion of the Yoruba wars, led to the balogun role becoming primarily ceremonial, and a reward for exceptional citizens.

The seventh chapter, by Monsuru Muritala, focuses on military chiefs in Ijeshaland. It interestingly explains that the balogun title was not used in Ijeshaland, because of the particularities of local politics. In Ijesha, warlords were called Elegebe. They had similar characteristics to the balogun in Ibadan and elsewhere, including power, influence and access to revenue, but the Ijesha retained its customary chieftaincy structure. Similarly, even today religious versions of the balogun title are not used much as in other regions because in Ijesha it lacks a traditional basis. This chapter forms a fascinating case study of the variety of customs amongst the Yoruba.

The eighth chapter by Olusanya Faboyede concerns the balogun in Akoko in northeastern Yorubaland. An agricultural area with no paramount chief, Akoko saw frequent chieftaincy disputes. Each subgroup of the Akoko confederacy evolved its own balogun institution in the course of their migration from Ife. During the nineteenth century the balogun had a dual role in internal and external security, arbitrating in land disputes at home as well as leading armies. Some baloguns effectively exercised the powers of a Baale, because of the power and wealth of military elites in the context of nineteenth century intra-Yoruba conflicts. In Akoko, baloguns were answerable to their oba, but could also influence the oba. As elsewhere, during the colonial period the conclusion of intra-Yoruba wars and the creation of the 'Native Authority' police force made the customary functions of the balogun less important.

And finally the ninth chapter, by Saad' Yusuf Omoiya, addresses the balogun institution in Ilorin. The balogun played a key role in the wars with the Old Oyo empire during the nineteenth century expansion of the Ilorin emirate. The balogun was a military commander but also a member of the emirate council, where he had an administrative role. Baloguns became enormously important, exceeding even the power of the emir, a trend which was truncated by the growth of British power. The British supported the emir against the balogun title holders who, as elsewhere in Yorubaland, were particularly hostile to the British. Leading baloguns were arrested, although in the end they were acknowledged by the British as chiefs, but below the emir in the chiefly hierarchy. Disputes between the balogun and the emir continued until recent times.

What, then, can we conclude about this well-written and compelling volume? First, this book is evidently a significant contribution to our understanding of the vibrancy of pre-colonial Yoruba society, particularly for those interested in chieftaincy. It also provides some fascinating case studies of how sometimes the title is less important than who holds it.

It shows the balogun title, and its transition from a military to a civic position, is product of a living, vibrant history. It is a fascinating case study of the processes of continuity and change in Yoruba societies, and indeed for all societies. As I read the book, I was reminded of the British institution of knighthood. Like the balogun title, knighthoods were originally titles associated with military leadership, but over the centuries their meaning has altered, most recently to a mainly honorific functions, according to which knighthoods are awarded to people of great social merit.

The book is a work of deep learning and deserves to be widely read, both in Nigeria and further afield. It reminds us of the ongoing need to cherish and support the university sector in Nigeria and the work of Nigerian scholars. This is of course important for the Nigerian nation, for the education of students, and for the health of civil society. But it is also essential that a country as large, populous and important as Nigeria is heard in international academia. It is important for Nigeria, and for the world community.

Reviewed by Tim Livsey

King's College, London