

Review of: "Kingship, Karaole and the Question of Loyalty in Colonial Akoko-Yoruba, 1900-1960"

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The paper is very interesting as it presents little known aspects of non-colonial power structure and social organization. I agree with the critical comments already formulated by other reviewer (insufficiently defined methodology, lack of clearly indicated corpus of sources). I believe these difficulties may only be solved in the long run, as the author perseveres with his research and progressively builds up his professional workshop (a stock of appropriate tools and materials). The author identifies the sources for his research in a very general, imprecise way: "Pieces of information gathered from purposive interviews conducted across communities in Akoko-Yoruba". I believe it would be crucial to offer details on how, where, from whom, by whom, when, etc. such interviews were conducted.

Another aspect that should be made more clear is the precise articulation between the relatively remote time (1900, pre-colonial...) and the present day. The author introduces the comments on the current situation without showing with sufficient clarity how these time planes articulate, how far the institutions changed or remained the same ("The point must be made that the *karaole* greeting is **now** a silent but useful instrument..."). On this point, the author concludes: "The point must be made that kingship and other traditional political institutions throughout Nigeria are not what they used to be in their pristine state, while this is true, the traditional content of the institution has not been eroded as consultation through the *ifa* oracle is still relied on..." - this phrase suggests the crucial role is played by the ifa oracle, nonetheless this oracle is not discussed in the paper (it is only mentioned in this concluding sentence). Perhaps it is thus an important omission?

I have the feeling that the present paper has just an introductory value. It is certainly not the closure of any research project. The readers should value it for what it is, as it brings new topics and concepts into the scholarly debate. The overall impression is that the paper offers a general outlook, and the reader is craving for more informative, detailed approach - this is something that the author is probably able to provide already at the present stage of his research. Just to give an example: The author speaks of "socio-political discontents among the hitherto united towns and cities in Yorubaland" - and I would like to know which towns, what are their names, in what part of the country, what was the precise cause of those "discontents", etc.

As I am a scholar working far from the Nigerian and generally African context, I think it may be useful that I make the author aware of the difficulties and perceptions of his foreign readers. As a person who is less familiar with Yoruba cultural context, I need more explicit information concerning basic notions. I think it would be useful to mark a clear distinction between proper notions and metaphors of European origin that appear as a part of the language of expression (i.e. English). Just to give an example, the author speaks of "the blue-blood members of the royalty in an *Ebi* commonwealth". I

guess that the notion of blue blood (as a synonym of nobility) is just an idiom used in English and should be read metaphorically. Nonetheless, I would prefer that the author uses the concepts that are proper for the Yoruba context to avoid possible misunderstandings and let the foreign readers have more clear and precise perception of Yoruba cultural specificity.

Another example of the same kind: the author speaks of “the ‘good books of the colonial government” - what are they? Is it just a metaphorical expression (i.e. those people were on good terms with the government) or it should be understood properly as some sort of books or registers? For the foreign reader, less familiar with the Nigerian reality, such expressions may be source of misunderstandings.

In the paper, there are two spellings of the same notion: is it Karaole or Karole? (or there are two things?) - once again, this is very confusing for a reader outside Nigeria, unfamiliar with the Yoruba linguistic background.

Overall, if the author keeps in mind that his paper will be read by people from different cultures, it may increase the clarity of his presentation. He could present in a more systematic way the institution of the traditional king, the way such a person is identified (by the oracle), chosen and accepted by the community, and then the central question of the traditional greeting and its role in conservation of power (+ the interference of the colonial government in this traditional process). I guess the author did not do this, because he believed certain things are very obvious and there is no need to speak about it. Yet a research paper, in order to be exhaustive and systematic, often needs to present apparently “less interesting” aspects. It is good to have in mind the addressee of the paper is the international academic community, not just Yoruba or Nigerian scholars who are very familiar with the cultural context.