ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would be impossible to thank individually all the people who did me kindnesses in Okuku. Many of them are named in the following pages, as performers of *oriki* or as interpreters, explainers and tellers of history. However, there are some to whom I owe special gratitude. During the three years that I lived in Okuku, I stayed with the family of Mr G. A. Akindele. To all of the Akindeles I extend my heartfelt thanks for their generosity, hospitality and tolerance. I had the privilege of being made an honorary daughter of the late Olokuku, His Highness James Olaosebikan Oyewusi II. From the moment of my first arrival, in July 1974, to his untimely death in March 1980, the Olokuku showed me every kindness. Always entertaining, unfailingly gracious, he was also in his way a man of genius. It was an honour to be admitted into his confidence.

In 1977 I left Okuku to take up an appointment at the University of Ife, but our connection did not come to an end, rather it expanded as our spheres of operation diverged. My parents, Charles and Barbara Barber, and my brother John visited Okuku at different times. The Olokuku also visited my parents in Leeds, where he liked to say he had been offered 'seventeen different kinds of meat, including zebra'. He made my Ph.D. graduation day at the University of Ife memorable by attending it with an entourage of eight of the town chiefs, even though he was by then very ill. His successor, the present Olokuku, His Highness Samuel Oyebode Oyeleye Oluronke II, has continued the gracious tradition and made me feel as much at home in Okuku as ever. Our connection was symbolised and cemented through his kind action, supported by the chiefs and the Okuku Welfare Association, in conferring on me the chieftaincy title Iyamoye in 1984. As the Olokuku said, 'We want you to know by this that you can never leave us, except physically'.

I also owe special gratitude to Joseph Faramade Ajeiigbe, who helped me enormously with my research during my second and third years in Okuku. Not only did he transcribe almost all my recorded texts, he also went through them with me, word by word, commenting in Yoruba on local allusions,

obscure meanings and poetic idioms. His guidance and contacts were also very helpful in the rest of my field work.

At Ife, I was fortunate enough to be supervised in my Ph.D. research by Professor Richard Taylor and Professor 'Wande Abimbola. I am also grateful to Professor 'Sope Oyelaran and Professor A. Akiwowo for many illuminating discussions over the years, first as a student and later as a colleague. Professor Olabiyi Yai has long been a formative influence in my thoughts about Yoruba literature. When I began the long drawn-out process of rewriting my thesis for publication, Jane Bryce and Ruth Finnegan gave me the benefit of detailed readings and comments on the first draft. John Peel has been a patient, constructive and encouraging critic throughout the production of the present version, and Chris Wickham also made many helpful suggestions. I owe most of all to Paulo Farias, who read all my numerous drafts with unfailing perceptiveness, and provided constant support and encouragement.