

A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

Yoruba is written in a modified version of the Roman alphabet, using three special letters, ẹ, ọ and ẹ, to represent the three sounds e as in 'bet', o as in 'hop' and sh as in 'shop', instead of e, which sounds rather like the vowel sound in 'bait', and o as in 'hope'. These usages vary: in the towns where I worked, for instance, many people make no distinction between 's' and 'ş', pronouncing both as 's'. In addition, the language has a tonal structure which is conventionally represented by accents. As this book has little to say about the Yoruba language, in order to simplify matters for the general reader I have left out tonal marks and avoided many underdots in both personal names (most of which are fictitious) and place names, where I have used the familiar anglicised forms current in most of the literature on Nigeria.