

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to all the individuals who have helped me, though they number so many more than I can acknowledge. Among them I honour the memory of Dr Obi Igwara (1955–2002), a good friend (her family descended from a Benin prince who left the city) who encouraged me to visit Nigeria for the first time: she told me I would enjoy it. Sadly, in the time it has taken to publish this book others have died who I would also like to remember: Billy Omodomwan, master brasscaster of Oloton Lane, for his friendship and conversation (he died in 1999); *ohen* Ogun Nomayisi and *ohen* Ugheneze for their warm hospitality (they followed in 2004); and *iye ohen* Osagie (who passed away in 2005).

I would like to offer thanks to the Oba of Benin for granting permission, at a palace audience in 1990, to carry out my research. I thank barrister Harriet Adimora and the Adimora family of Anambra state for their assistance. For their help, good humour, patience and comradeship in Benin City I thank Osawe Osaretin, Ossa Earliecce Idukpaye and Able Iyamu. There have been so many *ohens* who have helped me that I cannot record them all but I cherish all the *ugie* (*avan* and *ason*) that I attended and especially the annual festivals, *akhue ebo* and other events that I was lucky enough to be invited to experience. I thank Chief *ohen* Osa Amayo for his mentorship and sagacity. For their kindness, patience and wisdom I thank *ohens* Akpowa, Aitolekpenhae and Aibigie. My gratitude goes to Chief Engineer Ira Uzebu, Professor Joseph Nevadomsky and Dr John Aigbangbe for their generosity, and on a practical note to my half-sister Professor Georgiana Gore for putting me up at the outset in Benin City. I also offer thanks to the brasscaster Osarenren Ogbomo for his friendship in Benin and London; to my PhD supervisor Professor John Picton for his endless patience, good humour and incisive contributions; likewise to Professor John Peel; and to Mike Kirkwood for his cheerful editing. I thank my sons James and William for their patience with this project. Finally I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and joy to be blessed that the Iyeye of Benin took me under her care. I end with the song always used to open the annual festivals of *ohens*: it celebrates the safe passage through the past year of all who attend the anniversary once more, and looks forward to the next with even more blessings.

<i>Iselogbe</i>	Happy anniversary
<i>Ogbe ima vbe dia ru-o, ise</i>	Next anniversary we also shall live to celebrate, blessings
<i>Iselogbe-e</i>	Happy anniversary
<i>Ima ghi ya ukpo ro ukpo</i>	These of this year so shall it be for next year ¹
<i>A ghi mien ukpo ne ima ma setin ghi ru</i>	They will not see the year that we are not able to celebrate
<i>Ogbe ima vbe dia ru-o, ise</i>	Next anniversary we also shall live to celebrate, blessings
<i>Iselogbe</i>	Happy anniversary

1 Literally: we do not exchange year for year