

Book Review: Abdulrahman OSHIOKE ARUNAH, A history of Auchi Kingdom, Ilorin, Haytee Press and Publishing Co. Nig. Ltd, 2010, pp. 368, ISBN 976-8090-25-7

Suleiman Yakubu

Institute of Historical Sciences, University of Pardubice, Czech Republic

susukhaldun@gmail.com

Abstract. Abdulrahman Oshioke Arunah is a retired colonel of the Nigerian army. He holds a Training Support Certificate, an equivalent of a Masters Degree in Educational Technology in Nigeria. Before he joined the Nigerian army in 1972, he was a teacher and taught students at a secondary school. He has a very rich knowledge of the history and cultural practices of the Auchi Kingdom. His professional experience is teaching in a secondary school, Education officer, Chief Instructor, Deputy Commandant of the Nigerian Military School, Executive Secretary of Armed forces Schools Management Board and the Assistant Director of Army Education at the 2nd Mechanised Infantry Division, all in the Nigerian army except his teaching experience in the secondary school. The author consulted lots of archival materials, primary and secondary sources.

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Abdulrahman Oshioke Arunah is a retired colonel of the Nigerian army. He holds a Training Support Certificate, an equivalent of a Masters Degree in Educational Technology in Nigeria. Before he joined the Nigerian army in 1972, he was a teacher and taught students at a secondary school. He has a very rich knowledge of the history and cultural practices of the Auchi Kingdom. His professional experience is teaching in a secondary school, Education officer, Chief Instructor, Deputy Commandant of the Nigerian Military School, Executive Secretary of Armed forces Schools Management Board and the Assistant Director of Army Education at the 2nd Mechanised Infantry Division, all in the Nigerian army except his teaching experience in the secondary school. The author consulted lots of archival materials, primary and secondary sources.

The book is a very valuable resource material for the history of the Auchi Kingdom and the Etsako community as a whole. The book covers the cultural practices of the people, traditions of origin and intergroup relations of the people of the kingdom. All the above-mentioned issues are addressed and simplified in a way and manner that the readers will immediately have an insight of the major issues and events of the Auchi Kingdom over several centuries. The author's dream, right from his childhood, was to write a history of the Auchi Kingdom due to his great love for his hometown and to showcase the rich cultural and

traditional practices of the kingdom. He also desires to prevent the history from going extinct. He also authored several other books.

There are few studies that have addressed the history of the Auchi Kingdom but these studies have focussed on just some certain aspects of the history. Some of such areas includes religion, kingship, kinship, politics etc. Abdulrahman Oshioke Arunah's book attempted to cover a comprehensive history of the Auchi Kingdom. It must be noted, however, that the history of the Auchi Kingdom or any other history can not be comprehensive or complete where some very vital information would be missing. This is as a result of the fact that African is heavily indebted to oral tradition. It is popularly said that without oral tradition there is no African history¹.

The book under review is to address some of the lapses and lacuna that was encountered during the writing and publishing of the book. The author attempted to mirror the Auchi Kingdom's origin to present times. He also attempted to predict the future of the Kingdom. He further claimed that a great bulk the history Auchi Kingdom is based on oral tradition voluntarily rendered by the willing elders and supplemented with archival materials of the British colonial masters that were sourced from National Archival at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. This is sequel to the fact the Auchi Kingdom lacks much documented information of its history and this remains a virgin field for archaeological work. That is to say that little or no archaeological works have been carried out at the early settlement site of the Auchi Kingdom. There is an urgent need for archaeologists to get engaged in the unearthing of artifacts, relics and vital items that would be very useful for the reconstruction of the history of the Auchi Kingdom.

In the preface of the book, the author attempted to mirror Auchi from its foundation to the present day with some lacunas. The British introduced the indirect rule system and sent some British representatives to the Auchi Kingdom as District Officers to oversee the administrative activities of the traditional rulers in the early nineteenth century. The activities of the British in the Auchi Kingdom span a period of sixty-three years but only four pages of the book was devoted to their activities. The author mentioned a few activities and innovations that were carried out but these are very insignificant compared to what the British were able to accomplish within the period of sixty-three years. Some of the innovations by the British that were not mentioned by the author in his book are- the abolition of some bad cultural practices such as the forcing of victims that were accused of witchcraft and sorcery to drink a foul-smelling concoction. It was believed that anyone that survived after the drinking of that concoction was innocent but if the person died, he or she was guilty as charged. Other innovations of the British were the introduction of western ideas and thought, western dressing style, new building patterns and styles and new political culture².

The monograph under review is one of the first books to be published containing a comprehensive history of the Auchi Kingdom where the cultural, traditional, political, economic, spiritual practices of the people in the Kingdom was outlined and explained. The book contains thirteen chapters, which also includes bibliography, appendices and some personal interviews conducted by the author. The first chapter, which is the introductory chapter, is about the traditions of origin of the Auchi Kingdom where he explained that the first settlers migrated from the Benin Kingdom but the author failed to mention another tradition of

¹ A. AJAYI and E. J. ALAGOA, *Oral Tradition and Oral History in Africa and the Diaspora: Theory and Practice*, Lagos, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, 1990

² Robson, MOMOH, *New perspectives on the history and politics of Nigeria: The Etsako, Experience*, Edo: Afenmai Grafix, 2016.

origin where it was believed that Auchi people migrated from Bauchi State in Northern Nigeria. It is very important to note that in African history there is always more than one tradition of origin of the history of an empire, kingdom or community³.

The body of the book describes very important issues such as the list of kings that ruled over the Kingdom and important members of the royal family of the kingdom, agriculture, intergroup relations, trading activities, traditional religion, the advent of the Islamic religion, festivals, social activities, biographies of some very notable personalities of the Kingdom and a conclusion. These mentioned issues are clear and well-established facts but the author failed to mention some other issues that were present in the Kingdom. In the area of religion, the Auchi people practiced the African Traditional Religion (ATR) before the advent of the Islamic religion to the Kingdom. When the Islamic religion was introduced, a large section of the Auchi people rejected it and preferred to continue with their traditional religion. The Islamic religion

as adopted as a state religion in 1914 and everyone was forced to accept it. The author failed to mention in the book that many of the inhabitants that adopted Islam still practiced the African Traditional Religion alongside, that is to say that they practiced two religions. This practice is known as SYNCRETISM. This practice is found in most countries in Africa⁴.

Also, in the main body of the book, the author acknowledged the invent of the Nupe people in the Auchi Kingdom but not much was written about them. Chapter two explained in details how the Nupe military forces conquered and took over the Auchi kingdom and established their rule over the kingdom in 1860. The author failed to explain or outline the innovations that were introduced in the Auchi Kingdom by the Nupe people. Only events were explained by the author but the impact of the innovations on the Auchi Kingdom was not explained. There were a lot of innovations that were introduced by the Nupe people. These includes the Islamic religion, Islamic names, new administrative system, new taxation system, new mode of dressing (flowing gowns), tribal marks on the face, the use of horses by kings and a host of others. These innovations have remained with the people till the present day even after the Nupe were defeated by the British in 1897⁵.

While the book maintains its consecutive and uniform character, readers that have some knowledge of the history of the Auchi Kingdom would observe that not much was mentioned about the pre-Nupe era in the Auchi Kingdom. The indigenous socio-cultural, political and economic life of the people was not mentioned. In history, there are basically root causes why an empire or kingdom is evaded. There were reasons why the Auchi Kingdom was taken over by the Nupe warriors and these reasons were not explained by the author. The Auchi Kingdom had indigenous cultural and traditional practices before the arrival of the Nupe warriors. These traditional and cultural practices served as the binding force of the people. Some of these practices have survived till the present day. Other authors were able to mention some of these issues in their respective books.

This criticism of this book is based on my personal observation of the book but does not really affect the exceptional quality of the text or the research that was carried out. The topic and concept of this review are thorough and unique in African Studies. Other authors have acknowledged this book in their research due to its importance and contribution to historical knowledge.

³ J. D. FADEIYE, *Historiography and Methods of Teaching History for N.C.E and Undergraduates*. Oyo, Immaculate City Publishers, 2004.

⁴ Orobator, AGBONKHIANMEGHE, *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist*, New York, Orbis Books, 2018.

⁵ K. M. Seghosime, *Origin and Development of Auchi*, Auchi, SmileSsteel Global Digital, 2011.