

WHERE **in** AFRICA?

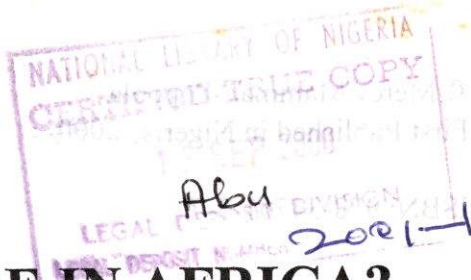
A CULTURAL SAGA FROM DENVER TO LAGOS.



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By:

MERCY MAMMAH-POPOOLA, Ph.D.



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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my friends, Betty Larimer and Mev Fredenburg, and to the family of Dr. McFadden who not only made it possible for me to come to the United States, but made my first year a blessed and memorable experience. Thank you.

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PART I

CULTURE

—INTRODUCTION—

This book invites you to discover the richly rewarding culture, and realistically presents the experience of a third world country vacation and travel. Whether planning the trip of a lifetime or a lifetime of trips, **Where in Africa?** will provide you with experiences and information that you can appreciate and use on any trip to any African Country. While some deep villages in Africa are very remote, and very few in these villages still go naked or partially naked, majority of Africans as you will see from reading this portrayal of the cultural richness of an African country do wear clothes and do not go about naked.

Also, while many books have been written about travelling to European countries, few books exist about travelling to African countries. Even at this, close to 99% of the books that exist about Africa are written by non-Africans who have collected facts and fiction in an essentially eclectic manner and gone ahead to organize and present such data as standard text! This book instead is written by an African with personal

experiences of living in Africa. The experiences shared are presented from the viewpoint of one who is living in the Western culture presently, and from travelling extensively to many European countries while still visiting Africa frequently.

Travelling somewhere, anywhere, is always an experience the majority of us will undertake during the course of our life. Experiences during travelling can discourage us from further journeys or vacations, or could trigger a new way of life where we always look forward to yearly vacations away from our stressful jobs and life.

While travelling is almost always going you be part of our life, vacationing is an experience that needs to be planned so that we can get a positive story and experience out of it. However, when we travel or take a vacation to an area we have no knowledge or control of, there may occur, in the course of that trip, some negative experience or some unplanned, uneventful incidents. In every trip, there may be some discomfort or some pleasure. How we relate or adjust to things that happen to us in a given trip would influence how we further plan subsequent trips or tell others about taking trips to that part of the world.

Travelling and vacationing in Africa (wherever in Africa) could open a new world for any traveller. However, being prepared through the acquisition of some information about the part of Africa one is travelling to could make all the difference as per the memories the traveller will be left with at the end of the trip.

For a Westerner - and by this I mean one from America, some part of Europe, and Canada - to travel to Africa, a developing continent, could be compared to night

and day. This however, must not give the traveller too much concern as in whichever part of the world we travel to, we are bound to experience some cultural variations. The food may be different, the weather may be different, the accomodation may be different or the transportation may not be as easy or as comfortable. The entertainment and attractions may also vary. However, travellers are going to share some similar experiences, like packing, carrying, acquiring or losing luggage. Whether you get your luggage safely after waiting three hours in a non-air-conditioned baggage carousel in Lagos' Murtala Muhammed International Airport or you miss part of your luggage in Denver at the time the famous Denver International Airport was putting its baggage system together, the experience is bound to be interpreted with some feelings.

Where in Africa? is our attempt to help travelers to Africa understand some of the cultural diversity and experiences that we face when we travel or go on vacation to a developing country from a developed country. The book will take us from the usual orderliness of a Western developed culture, like Denver, Colorado in the United States, to a country where western-type order is not always the norm. This book will present some of the things we have to be prepared to experience when travelling to a developing country. It will present some guide to travelling specifically to Nigeria, encourage tourism and, most importantly, take away some of the phobia of Westerners visiting an African country.

This book grew out of the desire to document in writing my own experience while taking a vacation. The

examples are intended to simplify the process of travelling as a cultural experience. Our journey will begin with the experience of an American, my friend, who made the journey to Nigeria without the luxury of this book or any other tourist guide book.

Finally, the book will present some general information on ethnic foods and artifacts to make us more culturally sensitive wherever we may plan to travel or vacation to. Specifically, it is a story of travelling to one African country, Nigeria - potentially one of the world's greatest nations - which today is striving to build a new social, political and economic infrastructure and thus develop both the nation and her peoples.

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—CHAPTER 1—

WHERE IN AFRICA?

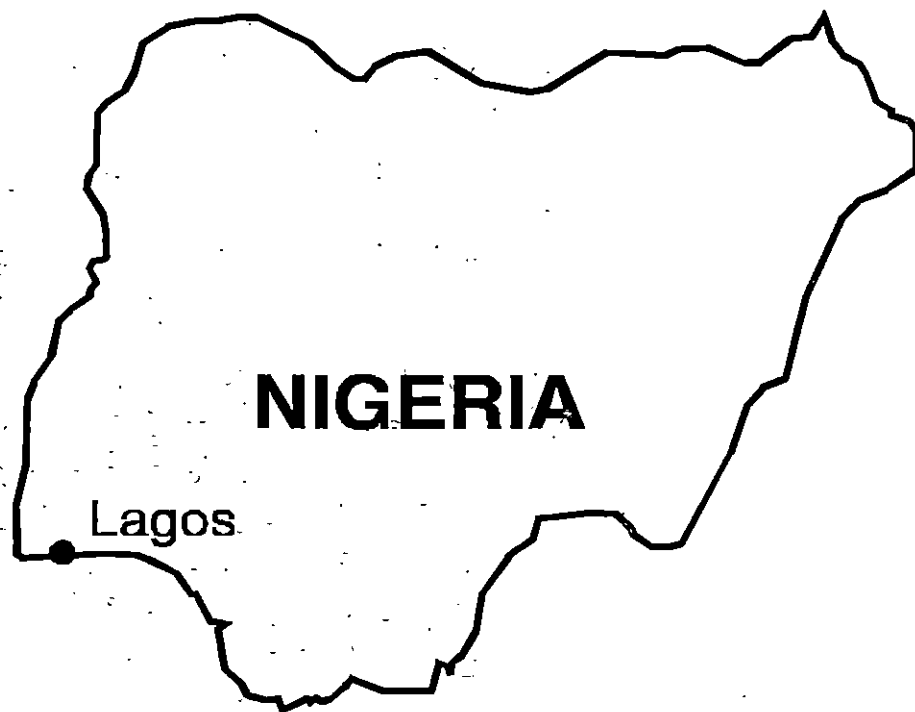
“I would love to visit Africa with you,” said Ruth, as I informed her that I was scheduled to travel to the land of my birth, and where my parents and siblings yet reside, in the near future. Ruth, my American friend, knows that I am from Africa, and I believe we have had a discussion on which part of Africa I hail from.

“Where in Africa?” I replied. She asked, “Where did you say you are from again?”

“Nigeria,” I said and added, “I will be glad to explain the continent of Africa to you.”

And so, I proceeded to give her a lecture of Nigeria and Africa as I always do when my American friends give me an impression on their confusion over how big Africa really is as a continent.

As I talked and described Africa through the specific instance of Nigeria, one of about fifty countries in Africa, I drew an imaginary map in the air with my



"This is the map of Nigeria," I said as I drew.

fingers. I could see some confusion in Ruth's eyes, and so I asked her for a pen and picked up a piece of paper I found close by.

"If I want to go with you to Nigeria, where then in Nigeria are we going?" Ruth asked. I proceeded to draw the map of Nigeria, and gave her some specific information about Nigeria as compared to Denver, Colorado.

"Nigeria is a country in the Western part of the continent of Africa. Nigeria, like the United States of America, is a country with many states. Like in the United States, where you have the New Yorkers, the Southerners, the Texans, East Coast, West Coast, etc., Nigerians may be Northerners, Southerners, Westerners and Easterners.

Northerners are mostly Muslim, the Easterners and Southerners mostly Christians, and the Westerners a combination of Muslims and Christians. However, I am from the South but will be visiting the West, and probably the central part Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria. The capital used to be Lagos.

"I know Lagos," she said. "Tell me about Lagos, as I have heard so much about it," Ruth requested.

"Yes, I know you have heard of Lagos; as almost every one who knows anything about Nigeria always knows about Lagos." In fact, if you go to Nigeria the major recognized port of entry by air for international flights is the Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos.

Lagos is also famous because it is like New York in several ways. While many Nigerians abroad will tell you

they are going to Lagos, 98% of us really come from other states in Nigeria. We all probably have family and relatives in Lagos State, as it used to be and is still, the land of opportunity for many Nigerians. I continue to explain Lagos, and all its glories and vices.

"I wish I can take my daughter with me to the Mother Land," Ruth burst out. "I would love to go on vacation to Africa, I mean Nigeria, just to see Lagos."

Why Africa has been called the "Mother Land" by many African-Americans is not surprising to me. Going back to our roots is always a dream of many including myself. Paradoxically, however, for many in Africa, there is the contrary dream of traveling abroad to see the land of "Milk and Honey" that America is.

Coming to the United States was a dream for me over ten years ago. I wanted to not only see the land of "Milk and Honey," as most of my colleagues who had travelled to the United States before me had described it, but I wanted the opportunity to advance my career while there. Yes, I can truly say today that America is not only a land of "Milk and Honey" but is a land of opportunity, and a country truly blessed. As the song states, ... "God bless America, the land of the free..., God bless America my home, sweet home."

However, there are basic differences between Nigeria and the United States. While Nigeria is a country like the United States, unlike the United States, Nigeria is not developed. While you will see beautiful homes, and roads and schools, the majority of places are still underdeveloped. Even when there is electricity, the system does not work 24 hours a day. That means we may

have light (electricity) for three days out of seven as electricity supply is rationed. Also, when there is no light, depending on where you stay, you may experience heat as there may not be any air conditioning or fans.

Also, Nigerian schools are not as equipped as their American equivalent. For instance as at 1999, there were only two schools in Nigeria offering Masters in Science in Nursing, and none offering Ph.D.'s.

There is no university in all major cities. Until recently, it was almost unheard of to work and go to school at the same time. There are hardly any viable student loans schemes or work study programs, organized financial aid, grants to support education or other educational incentives. If you don't have your cash (money) to go to school, you can forget school. Further, the credit card system that is commonplace in America barely exists in Nigeria and very few transactions are cheque-based. You pay cash for 98% of everything. In fact, there are no Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid or any other social safety net program for the poor and elderly. One reason we call America "the land of milk and honey" and that the country is blessed is because of the presence of very many social and financial support systems to jump start anyone.

Seeing a depressed look however, on Ruth's face, I had to reassure her about the power of her dollar. "You see, Ruth, one benefit of travelling to a developing country is that you can spend less. One dollar currently is equivalent to 95 Nigerian Naira, which means if you have 1,000 dollars you can get 95,000 Naira which will be more than you need for local expenses during your vacation.

However, the value of the currency depicts the price of goods".

In order to prevent further confusion, I avoided giving Ruth further information about Nigeria at that point. Two weeks later, she notified me she will be coming to Nigeria with her daughter. I was very thrilled, and so we proceeded to share some facts about Nigerian culture. For the purpose of this book, I will first begin with some information about culture in general.

—CHAPTER 2—

CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

No matter what comparisons we make or attempt to make in life, and in whatever part of the world we experience life's situations, no two cultures are the same or can ever be the same. Though we are constantly attempting to compare apples and oranges, we know it is a difficult thing to do. Thus, for us to enjoy our vacation and/or travel, we have to be willing to separate the apples from the oranges, call a spade a spade, and be willing to be culturally sensitive in order to embrace the cultural experience and variation.

Culture represents a way of perceiving, and evaluating one's world. It provides the blueprint or guide for determining the values, beliefs, practices, art, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits of a particular village, city, state, country, society or continent.

Some Characteristics of Culture

Culture has some basic characteristics.

1. It is learned via language and socialization.
2. It is transmitted from parent (adopted/ natural/ acquired) to child, and from generation to generation.
3. Its attributes are shared by all members of the culture-group, and binds them together. This, therefore, distinguishes members of one culture-group from members of other culture-groups.
4. It is placed in history as developed or developing based on the availability of natural resources, environment and technical factors.
5. It is ever changing and a universal phenomenon.
6. All cultures are equal and share certain basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, transportation, love, dignity and respect.
7. Cultures have subcultures within them which in turn could be majority or minority sub-cultural groups.

Some ways to Develop Cultural Sensitivity

- * Recognise that cultural diversity exists.
- * Demonstrate respect for people as unique individuals even if they do not dress or eat the way we do.
- * Respect and enjoy the unfamiliar.
- * Identify and examine your own cultural beliefs and values.
- * Go back in history and attempt to place a culture in time and place and recognize and celebrate variation.
- * Be willing to modify and adjust.
- * Do not expect all members of one cultural group to behave in exactly the same way.
- * Appreciate that each person's cultural values are ingrained and therefore very difficult to change.

It is important to present information about culture, because travelers are always going to places that are different from where they live and call their culture. Having lived in two cultures this far, I find it easy to enjoy both for their time and place in history.

When I first came to America, I was very fascinated by the beauty and comfort of the homes but yet it was cold for me then. I could not believe the tomatoes I saw in the stores. They were fresh and solid, with no insects or ants surrounding them. Some were even prepacked!! I was also fascinated by the number and orderliness of the cars, traffic lights, and other facts of life. Seeing and playing with snow for the first time was an experience of

joy itself for me.

But as I live in America for one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight years, I began to see the other side of American culture I can never live with. This is the loneliness of private life lived by the citizens. And so I find myself going back to the life of sharing and warmth in the land of my birth frequently because as they say east or west, home is the best and this is irrespective of the fact that home could be the most remote part of Africa! However, when I get to Africa, I find myself wanting to come back to my home in America.

Whether we are in the east or the west, we all need certain basic fundamentals of life. We need food, shelter, communication, clothing, accommodation, transportation, toileting, socialization, etc.

All cultures address these basic needs for their members, and also for travelers. Because this book is geared to making a tourist acquire knowledge about traveling to Nigeria, we will spend the first section providing information about these basic needs. We begin from Denver International Airport.

—CHAPTER 3—

From Denver International Airport (DIA) to Murtala Muhammed International Airport (M²IA), Lagos.

As we begin our journey from Denver International Airport in Denver, Colorado, a major metropolitan city in the United States, I cannot help but remember the stories and tales surrounding the opening of the airport. As I, a Nigerian, had heard countless horror stories about losing a luggage or item without the possibility of reacquiring it by my fellow Nigerians, the story of DIA seemed to me like child's play and, was a humouring experience to witness. From all standards, Denver is not only an orderly city, but a city full of life and beauty with the amazing mountain view in the west

of the city.

In this section, I plan to present the story of some of the experiences of DIA and compare it with those of M²IA. DIA was developed to replace the long, old Stapleton Airport which did not have international travel advantage. In collaboration with a major airline, DIA was developed to have one of the fastest, computerized, record-setting baggage delivery systems. Millions of dollars were invested in the planning and development phase. When completed, it was truly most beautiful, indeed an eye-sight but when the luggage system was being tested in preparation for opening, several problems occurred making the airport and Denver famous instantly.

From the stories published, this particular computerized luggage system had only been tried in one other country, and the engineers that developed the system had no experience of actual operation on a system the size of DIA. The major airline backing the DIA system was very sure the airport would be a star international airport. There were several supporters of the airport like the Mayor, the Governor, Senators, etc., lobbying for it. However, the financial burden was huge and was going to be passed on to the taxpayers, and so there was public outcry when the system failed to work. Many people also grew impatient as the date scheduled for the airport's reopening kept changing. Some wrote letters to the powers that be in Washington, D.C. and the government and the Mayor were being blamed over the problems with the luggage system and subsequent delays with the opening of the airport.

Denver made international news, and many talk show hosts and hostesses during the day and night found the problem amusing. It became top news in the major newspapers and prime TV news in the United States, Canada, Europe, etc.

But, as a Nigerian who was not used to the luxury of functional and efficient systems, these problems seemed not to be problems at all! I recall that on my coming to the U.S., for the first time, I was carried away by the sheer fact of my trip that I never noticed the heat I experienced in the Murtala Muhammed International Airport where the air conditioner seldom works. As for the conveyor belt luggage system, much of the time the belt does not move and so the staff have to carry the luggage by hand. However, on my last trip - after staying in the U. S. for over five years and having enjoyed an air conditioning during my travels within the U.S. - I could not help but notice and make comparisons.

Coming from DIA to MIA with my friend was a surprise from the moment we arrived to the moment we left the airport. When our plane landed in Lagos, almost everyone stood up before the seat belt sign was turned off! Passengers were even removing overhead luggage before the plane came to a complete halt.

Ruth was very surprised and attempted to ask me why all the "rush"? All I could say was that it could be part of the joy and excitement of returning to one's homeland after a long time away. I then instructed her to follow me.

By hustling and bustling, we made it to the luggage carousel where we had to wait for almost two hours

before we could get our luggage in an area of the airport where there was no working air conditioner.

People were busy talking about the joy of coming home that very few had time to complain about the heat and the perspiration while they waited in an overcrowded area, where the outdated and damaged carousel busied itself to bring one luggage every few minutes.

As we had to wait all that time, I attempted to explain the "rush" to Ruth and her daughter, but she was too miserable - and by this time, sweating profusely - to listen to my explanation of the rush that was still going on. There were no Coke machines anywhere nearby or a water fountain. Even if there was a water fountain, I would not have encouraged her or myself to drink from it even if it worked.

Rules make a society within a culture. Within a society, certain simple rules like "stay in line" and "await your turn" are made for safety, and to avoid citizens delaying a process that could run smoother if everyone obeyed. Travelers standing up or unbuckling their seat belt prior to the sign being turned off is a common practice I see during my many regular flights. However, the degree to which this law is broken varies from country to country. Also, smoking is another issue during flight. Almost all flights, domestic and international, have banned smoking but when the same airline is going to some other country, the rule is different. For instance, on our trip we took KLM, the Royal Dutch Airline, from the U. S. to Amsterdam, and there was no smoking on the plane.

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Taking the same KLM to Nigeria from Amsterdam, there was smoking all through and even when many passengers complained, nothing was done about it.

At the tail end of our trip, I was not able to sit down and explain what we call "the rush" to Ruth as almost everywhere we went there was always a rush. My only explanation of the "rush" experience in Nigeria and other African countries even today, is that when there is not enough to go around, people rush to get the little there is.

By the time we left M²IA, after waiting three and a half hours for our luggage to be claimed and having gone through customs, Ruth could not help but say: "And we complained about DIA." I wish everyone could experience standing for two hours for luggage, in an airport without air conditioning and a tiny luggage system where she encounters the biggest packed luggage ever in her life, then they will appreciate the tiny initial inconveniences of a luggage system like DIA.

PART II

AFRICA: NIGERIA

—CHAPTER 4—

NIGERIA, AN AFRICAN COUNTRY

Africa is a large continent like Europe, Asia, Antarctica, North America, South America, and Australia. In each of these continents there are different countries and cultures. The African continent happens to be so vast and diverse in culture that the continent is in turn divided not just into countries, but further into four separate sections, West, East, South and North Africa. Lagos in Nigeria is different from Cairo in Egypt in North Africa, Johannesburg in South Africa and Nairobi in Kenya in East Africa.

Therefore, to say I am going to Africa without specifying the part of Africa is a misnomer that is frequently heard by travellers not born in Africa. The

reason it is important to specify where and which part of the continent one is going to is because while Africans share some common characteristics, every country and section has different cultural values and expectations. The currency, language, and at times, food and clothing are very different. In the light of this, to write a book on traveling to Africa will require a detailed description of the particular country, or region and this will take years of research. Thus, this book is only the first in a series of books to tell you about the major countries in Africa, and I will begin the volume by describing Nigeria.

History and Geography

Nigeria is named after the Niger River in Nigeria. Nigeria, according to modern history, was first discovered by an explorer called Mungo Park in 1795. After Mungo Park came Fredrick Lugard sent by the British government who created the crown colony of Nigeria in the early twentieth century. Lugard united the whole region, and the protectorates. As a former British colony, Nigerians on gaining independence in 1960, were supposed to have the same rights as British citizens and be able to travel to Britain without any restrictions a la visa controls. Today, however, Nigerians have to stand in long lines and for hours on end after paying astronomical fees for a chance to get a British visa, which is very frequently denied.

The population of Nigeria was estimated at a time to be over 118 million people judging from figures from the 1991 census head count. It is about half the population of the United States, but about 1½ times the size of Texas, one state of the fifty states of the U.S. Nigeria has many different ethnic groups. The northern part of Nigeria faces the Sahara desert, and the country is divided by two major rivers, which flow through the country, called the Niger River from the west, and the Benue River from the east, and these two rivers meet at the center, forming a giant "Y".

Nigeria was at a time divided into nineteen states, and currently into thirty-six states. The creation of the new states has increased political tension as ethnic leaders jostle to share the nation's wealth.

Nigeria is very near the equator. That means there is no winter or summer. Instead there is a rainy season, which starts in May and lasts until October. The rest of the year is the dry season. The nearer one is toward the sea in the south the rain is heavier, and lesser toward the Sahara. At the end of the rainy season, the rivers are flooded with heavy trees floating in the rivers, and the channels are very swampy. Many channels form creeks and cross rivers which supply many parts of Nigeria leading to flourishing trade in timber, lumber, palm trees, oil, etc. Also, because of the many rivers in the south, the southerners are known for their art and skills at boating, fishing, and swimming. Some southerners can swim before they walk, and some homes are built on water lines.

The temperature in the southern part of Nigeria is

about an average of 27 degrees centigrade (80 degrees Fahrenheit) and very humid. The temperature in the northern part of Nigeria is an average of 43 degrees centigrade (110 degrees Fahrenheit) and as cold as 19 degrees centigrade (67° Fahrenheit) in the morning, but generally the north is very dry.

Nigeria has over 200 ethnic and linguistic groups. Some of these used to move about from place to place. However, Nigeria is a country blessed with an incredible mix of cultures, languages, traditions and rapidly increasing population leading to some major problems such as nepotism, discrimination, favouritism and other socio-economic problems.

Wildlife is abundant in some parts of Nigeria, but not to the degree found in Eastern Africa. Antelopes, hippopotamus, crocodiles, monkeys, and chimpanzees are some of the wildlife that can be found in different parts of Nigeria. However, because of their threat to the population and forest destruction, some of these wild animals are confined to national game reserve areas such as Yankari Games Reserve, that is east of the Jos Plateau which is a "must see".

Nigerian History

Prior to 1960 and during the era of colonization, Nigeria was colonized or governed by the British. However, in 1960, Nigeria became fully independent and a member of the Commonwealth of nations. In 1963, it was called the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Before

independence, the British not only ruled the country, but created or gave autocratic rights to local leaders which not only influenced their views on education, culture, politics, power and prestige, this lopsided equation may be a cause of the political greed that is dividing Nigerians today, and destroying the economy and development.

The history of Nigeria has also been marked by mutual distrust among Nigerians. Nigeria's history is also one of "from riches to rags" because of the greed of politicians and military rulers, as many problems have developed in the last two decades. Some of these problems have to do with political unrest and rapidly increasing population and the once developed health care system is rapidly failing or has failed. There is also decreasing national income, homelessness, endemic starvation and the devaluation of the national currency.

The history of Nigeria however, goes beyond the current problems facing Nigerians. Nigerians are a self-assured, smart and intelligent breed of humans. Not only can we win the Olympic Soccer Championship, but we will continue to work through our problems. Although our daily lives continue to change as different leaders govern the country, I will present life in Nigeria as it is today in the next section with a blend of history and government.

The Government

Nigeria, a West African country, is one of the largest countries in West Africa, and is located in the lower

right corner of the western tip of the African continent. Prior to colonization, Nigeria was governed by Kings and chiefs like the Olu of Warri, Emir of Kano, Oni of Ife, etc. After the attainment of independence, the country was, as it were, no longer governed by these local or regional ethnic kings and chiefs, but by ministers-in-council who now take direction or direct command from the democratically elected president, governors, legislators and civil leaders. However, because these local kings, Obas, Emirs, and Olus continue to be part of our rich culture and heritage, I will provide descriptions of some of these rulers, as they still exist and remain very highly regarded in the country. The opportunity to visit one of these local leaders should be one of the highlights for any one who takes a trip to Nigeria as their palaces are still being run with pomp and pageantry even as there are modern modifications and changes. I, at times, equate some of the influence of some of these leaders to that of the King or Queen of England.

Obas for instance, are dressed in beautiful embroidered gowns and slippers decorated with gold and silver, wear golden crowns and carry colourful decorated staffs. Obas live in palaces and have many helpers which are equivalent to maids or servants, and they may have more than one wife. Some Obas maintain a large personal staff, alongside their extended harem. One Oba is known to have had fifty wives and up to 100 servants. Obas' servants bear their sword and stool, and are around them at all times. The servants or personal body guards that are very close to the Oba, and some of his officials and friends are also dressed in flowing robes,

especially on special occasions. On such special occasions, drummers and talking drums go ahead not only to announce the coming of the Oba and his entourage, but to provide guests with entertainment and music.

Obas are primarily custodians of communal land. They are responsible for giving lands to farmers, for giving permission for use of a piece or pieces of land for timber or for public buildings and schools. They also act as judges for their villages or towns.

Obas have councils, and meetings are held in Obas' palaces or chambers. Some major Obas like the Olu of Warri, the Alaafin of Oyo, the Alake of Abeokuta, the Oni of Ife, and the Oba of Benin are very powerful and some of their realms date back to 500 A. D., and are still very popular and powerful today. A visit to their palaces can not only be the highlight of one's journey, it can also be the cultural experience of one's lifetime. There are other Obas that are not as popular. Some of these originated from these powerful Obas, but went ahead to found their own kingdoms, which are named after them.

Not all kings and chiefs in Nigeria are called Obas. Obas are unique only to the southern or western part of Nigeria. The easterners for example have no Obas. Instead, they have "elders". These "elders" are sometimes called "Obis". On the other hand, the northerners have Emirs. Emirs are powerful rulers and like Obas and Obis, they are always dressed in colourful clothes with printed designs.

Governing Nigerians is a challenge to leaders. As far back as I can remember, corruption was very

widespread, partly because of the vast disparity in ethnic groups and languages and also due to the divide and-rule programme of the British.

Almost every group has its own leader/chief/king who is competing at some level with the other group. In fact, there is in all an estimated total of 206 different ethnic groups in Nigeria and over 206 different languages. That means, I can travel from one place to the other within the country and not communicate with the next person unless we all speak English, or Pidgin/Broken English, which is generally common.

Nigeria has undergone different forms of government from democratic to military to democratic. Until May 29, 1999, Nigeria was ruled by military governments presided over by Heads of States. The last Head of state was General Abdulsalami Abubakar. In the last twenty years, Nigeria has attempted to transit to civilian rule with an elected democratic president. At every instance, a coup has been plotted and the democratically elected president has either fled the country, been imprisoned or removed from office and the military taken over the governance of the country. Even with political parties, ruling Nigeria has always been survival of the fittest to some extent, and which ever group is the strongest and has more political clout, or can lobby the most, wins.

Nigeria has recently elected a democratic leader in the person of President Olusegun Obasanjo, and the Vice President is Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. This recent government has been sworn into office and from the look of things even now Nigeria may finally have commenced

the process of rebuilding with a leader who has promised not to arrest, detain and imprison anyone eventually. However, to be able to give a clearer picture of how the country is actually governed, I will describe the major cities of Nigeria.

—CHAPTER 5—

THE REGIONS AND MAJOR CITIES IN NIGERIA

For the sake of this book, cities will be used interchangeably as major or large cities, and villages will be referred to as towns. The major cities that will be presented in this book will be taken from each region.

Nigeria, just like Africa as a whole, is divided into the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western sections. Lagos was the Capital of Nigeria, before the present one, Abuja, which is located in the center of the country.

The major cities that will be discussed are Kano from the Northern region, Enugu from the Eastern region, Ibadan from the Western region, and Benin and Warri from the Southern region. To be able to visit any of these places will give one the opportunity to visit the Obas, Olus, Obi's and Emirs palaces. In addition to these major cities, Lagos, the former capital, and Abuja the present capital,

will also be discussed. Other major cities in Nigeria that you may want to see that will not be discussed are Kaduna and Jos from the northern section (These towns are close to Kano and shares similar experiences and some cultural similarities) and Port Harcourt, which has the second largest port in the country.

Lagos

Lagos means "lagoon" in Portuguese and is named after the Portuguese who established a port in this area of the world in the 15th century. Lagos is the former capital of Nigeria, and the major airport of entry to Nigeria for non-African international flights. Lagos is also a major seaport of entry to Nigeria and is where majority of slaves were shipped from in the days of slavery.

Lagos is a major city like New York in the United States. It has every thing a modern city needs and has by any standards. However, not all parts of Lagos are like New York, and not all parts have all the day to day necessities of a modern city. In fact, some of the citizens in Lagos still live the classical picture of a third world country. The other noticeable difference between Lagos and other modern cities of the world is the disorderliness, lack of organization, the human traffic, over-crowdiness and filth in some areas in Lagos.

Lagos, however, originated as a narrow channel from the sea into a lagoon in the middle of the Bight of

Benin. This channel came to be known by the colonial masters' because it was an easy transportation and hiding ground for slave traders with powerful African chiefs capturing the weaker tribes, and selling their citizens to the white slave traders. In 1861, for instance, it has been documented that the British gave the powerful king of Lagos a thousand bags of cowries to persuade him to halt trading slaves with other European whites so they could keep control of Lagos. Once Lagos was colonized by the British, exploitation of natural resources such as palm oil, and timber became the major issues.

In order to get local government officers to assist them in the exploitation of the country, many local chiefs, kings, obas and emirs were made puppets of the colonial system. These developed the Nigerian mentality of bribery, corruption and nepotism that continue to retard Nigerian growth.

However, the British colonial masters did attempt to open Lagos up and, develop Lagos like other major world cities by building paved roads and connecting bridges linking suburbs to the mainland and neighbouring islands. One of such bridges is the longest in the world, and every tourist needs to travel on, or drive through the Eko bridge in Lagos.

Lagos is the biggest and fastest growing city in Africa. Today, this major city is so overpopulated that the government has had to move the federal capital to Abuja. Lagos, because of its overpopulation, is famous for its "go slow" or periods of long traffic jams. Apart from the traffic jams created by cars and insufficient road spaces and diversions, the human traffic in some parts of Lagos

during the busy times of the day is also a "must see". The population of Lagos is so heavy that despite the new network of highways and overpasses, the frustration caused by the traffic jams and human traffic frequently results in quarrels, fighting, accidents, road rage, etc.

Also, because of the overpopulation of Lagos, there are not always enough regular jobs to go around, and so one can find hawkers trading their wares at almost any hour of the day to traffic - stuck motorists. One can be in his or her car and shop for almost everything from food to tires.

Abuja

Abuja is the present capital of Nigeria, and is located in a strategic central position in Nigeria. Unlike Lagos that grew as an opportunist city, the government is taking its time to develop Abuja to avoid repeating some of the major problems currently created by overpopulation and lack of planning in Lagos. Some of these plans revolve around creating health centres, shopping centres, fire stations, police stations and parks around residential areas.

Kano

Kano is the capital of Kano a northern state, and the whole city is surrounded by an immense high wall with thirteen gates and a huge Mosque in the center.

Kano has a major airport and the people of Kano are predominantly Fulanis and Hausas. Islam is the mpredominant religion. From here, you can still find people riding on camels to the Sahara desert, which is just above the state and makes the state very dusty from the Sahara wind. You will quite frequently find people covering their faces to shield their eyes and nostrils from the dust in this state.

Enugu

Enugu is located in the eastern region of Nigeria, only a few kilometres from the trading center of Onitsha. Onitsha has a beautiful new cathedral, and the people in Enugu are predominantly Christians. Igbo is the native language of the people in Enugu. The biggest market in the whole of West Africa is located in Onitsha. Also, a huge coal mine is located near Enugu. Onitsha, Enugu's neighbour, is not only known for its commercial status- which mostly leads to traffic jams - due to lack of parking space and over crowding - it also has a famous bridge which runs across the River Niger.

Ibadan

Ibadan is the capital city in the western region. It is the second largest city in Nigeria and grosses a population of over one million inhabitants. Ibadan has

one of the finest universities in Africa and many students from all over the world come to Ibadan to study and experience the rich culture of this great historic city of the Yorubas. Yoruba is the native language of the people in Ibadan.

Benin City and Warri

Benin City is located in the south it is the capital of Edo State. Warri, like Benin, was in the old Bendel State. Benin and Warri are two great cities in the South or Midwest as some call it. For monarchs, Benin has the Oba of Benin while Warri has the Olu of Warri, who has been mentioned previously. The Olu of Warri has recently been a controversial title that had led to recent political struggle among the three major ethnic groups that inhabit Warri. Two other reasons for the political struggle - apart from leadership - are the fact that Warri is a major oil producing city and the creation of Delta State. Because of the present struggle, the next chapter will provide some detailed information about Warri as an example of the ethnic tensions that Nigeria and indeed the world is confronted with today.

—CHAPTER 6—

WARRI, "THE OIL CITY"

Warri is the capital of Delta State. It was previously a major city in Bendel State. The major ethnic group in Warri is the Itsekiri. However, with the recent creation of Delta State, which includes the Urhobo and Ijaw who were historically tenants of the Itsekiri in Warri, there have been recent disputes and clashes as the other groups lay claim to ownership of Warri leading to death and destruction of properties. The "Oil City" has today become a city of constant warfare.

However, a brief historical account of some of the problems in Warri over the last 70 years between the Itsekiri and their former tenants, the Urhobos and Ijaws, who are now claiming ownership of parts of Warri land, will put the issue in perspective.

The major issue in the political struggle in Warri today is the fear of Itsekiri domination. This is very surprising as Itsekiris are the friendliest breed of humans. As their daughters freely marry the Urhobos and the Ijaws, Itsekiris have never objected to any other ethnic group moving into their land as these settlers can be routinely seen farming, fishing and trading with others and even owning land. In fact, the Itsekiri first welcomed the white man to the southern part of Nigeria. Perhaps this kind and open door policy is one reason for the problems the group is facing today.

Warri is surrounded by many small but popular Itsekiri cities like Ode Itsekiri, Batere, Ugborodo, Escravos, Ubeji, Ifiekporo, Gbokoda and Ajatiton, which are owned and inhabited, principally by the Itsekiri; Burutu, Bomadi and Patani (comprised mostly of Ijaws) and Okpe, Ughelli, Sapele and Oleh (inhabited by the Urhobo and Isoko) are some other popular cities surrounding Warri. Because of the connection between the oil refinery in Warri and these small cities amongst several other commercial and political interests, several of the Ijaws and Urhobos, who were original settlers and tenants in Warri, began to claim ownership of parts of Warri and engage the Itsekiris, the rightful owners, in a series of land cases in court. Over time, however, these court cases were not settled to please the Urhobos and Ijaws and rather favoured the rightful owners - the Itsekiris. Many of these decision where made as far back as 1923 in London's highest court, the then Privy Council, as the British colonized and governed Nigeria before the 1960's.

While the Itsekiri have been pronounced the owner

of Warri land many decades ago, there have recently occurred attacks on the Itsekiri by the Urhobos and Ijaws which has led to bloody riots not only in Warri, but also in the surrounding cities. Prominent among these are the frequent attacks on Ubeji. One major reason Ubeji is a hot spot for inter-ethnic rivalry is because it is the site of the Warri oil refinery.

Another attack has been on the title of the "Olu of Warri." The "Olu of Warri" is not just a title, but is a ruling position for the Warri Kingdom. The Olu of Warri is one of the major kings in Nigeria, as discussed in Chapter Four. With the rise of several Urhobo in the arena of local political administration, the Urhobo have made an issue of the title and with the creation of the Delta State, they have made the recommendation to change it to the "Olu of Itsekiri". Paradoxically however, no Urhobo man will stand any such suggestion on their own kings being called the "Uvwie of Urhobo". This recommendation has resulted in outcries by the usually peaceful Itsekiri people, who have taken their case to the President and courts to avert breach of the law.

—CHAPTER 7—

DAILY LIFE AND LIVING IN NIGERIA

Language and Communication

The most common language spoken in Nigeria is English. A variant of this is the popular Broken or Pidgin English. English is the language of official communication. However, as mentioned before, Nigeria has over 200 ethnic and linguistic groupings. Of these, there are three most spoken languages, namely, Yoruba, the second official language of the west; Hausa, the second official language of the north; and Igbo, the

second official language of the east. The South is very unique as there are several other second official languages, like Edo, Urhobo, Itsekiri, and Esan. You can travel 100 miles in Nigeria and the language and culture will be totally different. In fact, if you attempt to learn any Nigerian dialect, you will find it useful only in a certain area. The moment you leave that area, you should be prepared to speak a different language.

The good thing about communication in Nigeria however, is that the majority of citizens of Nigeria can speak some English. Hence there is no need to learn any new language unless you will be going to live in a particular village. By village, I mean the very remote rural communities of Nigeria. In that case, you will need to learn about other things such as food and clothing of that community or subculture.

Religion

Religion is part of Nigerian daily life. However, just like the region determines and decides the languages, the region also influences a lot of the religious activity of the people. Although you can find all the world religions in Nigeria, the two major religions practiced are Christianity in the south and east, and Islam in the north. The west also has many Christians, especially since the coming of foreign western missionaries to that part of the country. Pagan practices and the worship of idols and gods can still be found in Nigeria, but the majority of Nigerians are Christian or Muslim.

Festivities

Festivities occupy a vital place in Nigerian society. All Nigerian ethnic groupings celebrate their history with some form of festival at some point in their life. During the festive period, it is like homecoming for that group and majority of members come together for their cultural festival. The occasion of these many festivities means different things to different groups, but the most common occasions celebrated are the beginning and ending of harvest, the date of acquisition of their language and freedom and the birth or death of a king or chief. It could also be as simple as the birth of a child, a child coming of age or the death of a member. At these occasions, no formal invitation is necessary. They are marked by colourful traditional outfits, dances, music, drumming, bonfires and acrobatic displays.

Although marriages are celebrated by Christians and Muslims with a wedding, couples have to be married in their traditional manner also. Traditional marriages are the highlight of a woman's life, as the parents will have the opportunity to provide or transfer some cultural expectation to the bride and groom. During this time, gifts are exchanged and all Nigerians look forward to this festive occasion which is unlike Western wedding practices as its foundation is rooted in local culture. Any traveller who has the opportunity to attend one such traditional marriages should not hesitate.

One festivity which is celebrated by the Itsekiri of the south yearly for seven days is also one festival that

tourists should like to experience. During this festive event where everyone dresses colourfully, every day is marked by a dramatic piece of artistic dance by masqueraded members called "Umale" (see picture in Part IV). The dramatic art involves masqueraded members dramatizing love, hate, riches, family life, and other aspects of the people's world view. This festival is moreso very humorous, very engaging, and can trigger off conflicting emotions of peace, fear and contentment. It is a "must see."

Dressing

Dressing, like religions and languages, in Nigeria is unique to regions. While southern woman traditionally dress in two layers of wrapping, with a bow and head scarf, women from the east, north and west have only one wrap with a small piece tied around the waist, and a head piece also. However, the materials are different and unique to regions.

Most wrapping clothes are wrapped several times and tied in a knot to secure it. The type of head scarves worn will depend on the occasion, and goes from simple to complex and from cheap to expensive. These scarves could be very colourfully bright like the ones worn by the national newscasters, or as simple as the ones worn by market women.

While women wear head scarves, men wear hats which also vary, depending on the region. Men wear pants, shirts, suits, and at times, long straight robes (called

“agbada”) or wraps that are placed around the neck. Today however, many working Nigerians are dressed like foreigners, Westerners precisely. Thus, it is common to find modern Nigerians in coat or 2-piece or skirt suits or dresses and pants.



Carrying kids on the back is a common practice in Nigeria, as only few people can afford strollers. It is also the traditional way young mothers have been trained. Thus it is part of the woman's dressing also to carry kids on their backs. While most will use the second wrapper, some will add an additional piece of cloth. This piece is called "oja" among the Yoruba.

The Art of Balancing Things on the Head

Nigerians also frequently carry things on their heads. When I first came to America, I was surprised that no one does this. On one occasion, I had so many books to carry to class and I did not have a backpack or bag, and so I carried the heavy ones on my head and had my notebooks in one hand while holding my umbrella in the other hand. I could not understand why everyone kept looking at me until another student, staring so hard at my head, did not see me and bumped into me sending most of my books flying all over the place.

The art of balancing things on one's head is something done without thinking in Nigeria. You see, the majority of homes do not have personal cars to use for moving goods and other personal effects and so for short distance transfers, we often carry things on our heads. I also recall growing up and helping my mother carry goods to the open market. I must have carried goods like a bag of rice weighing over 100 pounds back and forth, making up to ten trips taking it to the market and

bringing back what was not sold. This act is not only cultural, but it is a routine means of short distance freighting and very valuable for trading and our daily life. As there is no running water in most homes, we frequently carry water on our heads from the public taps to our homes.



Trading and Markets

Trading in Nigeria is done most of the time in an open market system. Some of our markets are in houses, some are simple covered roof stands, and some are in the open - on table stands. Very few supermarkets exist in rural communities. There are some markets that operate every day, but others are operated on certain days of the week. However, on any given day and time one can also find a store like the American 7-Eleven convenience stores or a gas station-type convenience store.

Markets are not only a place for trading, but frequently a social event as friends meet to discuss, it is a place to hear all the town gossip or the latest news. There are also native doctors, jugglers, dancers and musicians in some market places for entertainment or treatment.

Bargaining

Bargaining is integral to buying and selling in Nigeria. If you don't know how to bargain or you are shy about bargaining you will simply buy goods for costs far beyond what they are worth. There are hardly any open markets/stores where prices are set in stone.

Bargaining is a Nigerian way of life. A trader can tell you a good costs \$10 for example, and you may be able to get the good for \$1-\$5 if you know how to bargain like they do at garage sales in the U.S. Some ethnic groupings appear to be more skilled in the practice of bargaining than others.

The most important thing to remember is that there is oftentimes a bargain. Except for just about 10% of trading centers, most places you will go to buy anything, you will need to bargain. You may need an honest friend or interpreter to help you do the bargaining, as you may be uncomfortable doing so or may not know how.

All kinds of goods are sold in the markets. Some of these are crops, vegetables, fruits, school supplies, building supplies, electronics, clothing, decorations, cattle, animals, carvings, sculptures, etc. While in some markets goods are well organized in sections, some may simply have one type of these goods and not the other.

Buying of decorative arts, crafts, carvings, and sculpture should not be done if possible in an open market. Instead, they should be purchased at the artist's store which is always a safer place, and can be returned if there is a problem as long as you collected a receipt for the purchase.

Housing

Housing in Nigeria are of all types, shapes, quality and come with different levels of comfort. While electricity is now common in most homes, supply is still rationed. Some homes are built with mud-bricks, and some with cement, and others with thatch or wood. Roofs are covered with asbestos, thatch or zinc and doors are at times made with beautifully carved wood decorations. In the big cities, and some towns and villages, you will find very tasteful housing like is found

in any part of the world, as some Nigerians are very wealthy and know how to display their wealth.

Nigerians are a very welcoming and generous human species. They have no problem living ten in a room if that's what it takes to keep people from being homeless. They also do not have the luxury of sending their elderly to nursing homes, and so quite frequently you can find four to five generations of family and friends living under the same roof. "The family" is very important. This goes beyond the father, mother and siblings to include uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, grandparents, step brothers and sisters. One leader once said it is not the house that makes the people or the culture but the people that live in the house.

The housing conditions of a family depicts the size of its financial strength. Almost all houses are built and paid for by individuals in its totality since Nigerians do not have the luxury of the credit, mortgage or loan system. Owning cars or a house is mostly considered to be a sign of wealth, as different from the U.S. where it is considered a necessity.

Hospitality

The *hospitality* of Nigerians to one another, and to strangers, is reflected in the way they can give up their bedroom to visitors. Visitors are treated with respect and kindness. Even the poorest villagers will offer sugar cane, food or anything they have to their visitors. There is nothing like there is "no free lunch in Nigeria" because if

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a Nigeria invites you for lunch or any meal, they pay for it and do not expect you to pay or share the bill. You also do not need an invitation to stop in your neighbour's home for a visit or chat. Neither do we expect family and friends to call before coming for a vacation or holiday. You just show up, and will be welcomed by a Nigeria friend and family anytime.

Living in Nigeria for some can however be compared to living in any developed country, but for some Nigerians it is living without the ability to meet basic human needs like food, clothing, and shelter.

—CHAPTER 8—

LODGING AND HOTEL ACCOMODATION

Seeking lodging and hotel accomodation during vacations, could be a very challenging and painstaking experience. Whether you seek one in a Western or European country, or in Africa, comfort is one factor to consider. In most African countries like Nigeria, large cities offer a wide range of different types of accomodation. There is the elegance and comfort of a renowned hotel chain and then the more simple bed and breakfast style of comfort. No matter what accomodation you acquire, the amount of money one spends may eventually determine how comfortable your accomodation is because money talks quite frequently in Nigeria.

A comfortable hotel accomodation will vary from one person to another irrespective of which culture you are coming from. I remember a personal story of travelling to Orlando, Florida in America, with my kids. We got a very inexpensive ticket, and were hoping to stay

with a long - time friend, like a free bed and breakfast style of accomodation. When I called to arrange the accomodation with my friend who lives in Orlando, I realized from talking to her that she currently has over six family members living in a three-bedroom house, and was also very heavily pregnant at that time. Under the circumstance therefore, lodging with her was not possible and so I commenced a search for cheap hotel accomodation. We found a hotel about twenty minutes drive to and from Disneyland. In fact, the airline's vacation and travel department assisted us in booking this special accomodation and car rental deal. Over the phone, the hotel staff painted a picture of some elegance with a swimming pool and a comfortable room.

On arriving at the hotel, we had to request a change of room three times. The first room was on the third floor where the noise from the air conditioner was so bad there was no way we could sleep. There was only one staff on duty, and to get him on the line was very difficult. So I left the kids in the room and went to the office which was in a separate buliding from the "accommodation".

After waiting ten-fifteen minutes, he was glad to show me other rooms. We finally settled for a room on the first floor close by the swimming pool. We then left our luggage aside, and went out to look for food as the hotel did not provide or have feeding arrangements. When we got back, it was exciting to see people swimming and we decided to join. Unfortunately for us, it started raining and we had to go back to our room, but we could not get in as water from the rain was at the front of the room, and had entered the room. As we had to walk on water to get

into our room, we requested for another room.

This time we got a room my kids continue to call "spooky" until today, as after we settled in the room and started to explore our new environment, one of my kids found a dead cockroach. That was it for us. Although, we did spend three nights there so we would not lose our money completely, we stayed in the hotel only to change and sleep, and spent most of our time exploring the city. On our last night, we had to pay for one night's accomodation in an elegant hotel which was faultlessly clean, and well-run, but very expensive.

The comparison of the two hotel accomodations was very real to my then 4 and 6 year old kids. They never forgot the "spooky" hotel, and always want to go back to the "best" hotel when we go to Disneyland.

As I look back on this event, I cannot but see that I have changed my perspective on living in ten years of living in the United States. The "spooky" hotel would probably have been regarded as "heaven" by Nigerias as there was light, a clean bed, a television, an antique safe, an indoor shower, a toilet facility, a dining table, a swimming pool, carpet on the floor, air conditioning, etc. But having been exposed to the various ways you can have all these things on a daily basis and in different levels of comfort, we could not help but call it "spooky". If getting an accommodation like the one I described as "spooky" could happen in a developed country like America, you can imagine what type of accomodations you can get in a developing country. The "best" hotel we stayed in had all things I listed above, but in addition, we also had our choice of breakfast menu as part of our

accommodation. We also had room service at night when we returned from exploring Disney's thrills, and I had someone to assist us with our luggage when we were about to leave. The office was in the same building as the rooms, and there were working trolleys to move our luggage. There was also a swimming pool which was well kept.

In Nigeria, there is a variety of some of the finest deluxe and first class hotels like you can find in any country, but you can be sure to pay well over \$100 - \$200 a day. These hotels are fashioned after the quality of room and services you can get in any Western or European city like New York or London. However, you get additional unique experience of having the traditional tours of unique Nigerian culture and artifacts as the hotels are located in excellent places with excellent views.

If cost is a factor when travelling on a Nigerian vacation, there really are other places where one can safely stay, at affordable cost which can range from \$10 to \$100 a day. You can even get bed and breakfast arrangements. Depending on how much you want to pay, you may or may not get air conditioning, or lights 24 hours a day. There may not be room service or swimming pools, there may not be food served in the hotel, there may not be a working television in the room, or carpet, or clean bed sheets and safety for your property may not be guaranteed.

My advice to foreigners is to travel to a city where you know someone, or can be sure of someone meeting you and navigating you through this variety. Talk to people that have been there or live there. The comfort of your accommodation could make or unmake your vacation .

—CHAPTER 9—

TRANSPORTATION

Coming to the United States and owning my own car within my first six months in the U. S. is something I will never forget. My first car was an old 1973 Chevrolet Impala. It ran very well but smoked, yet I was so thrilled at having the car that I took pictures of it and sent it to everyone back home. I was able to drive to school by myself, to go to the stores, to go to church and eventually go to work where I was able to trade that car in for a brand new car after one month on the job. That's easy with credit of course, and that fortunately, and unfortunately, happens to be the American way.

Keeping a personal car in America is a common day necessity. Very few people use the public bus or transportation system which is available. However, being able to have a car where you can go and come whenever you have to is a necessity in the Western culture, but this could also be a vice. Back in Nigeria, as I was used to walking everywhere, even in a city, or riding the bicycle,

weight gain had never been a problem for me. Today, as I look at my successful weight management regime, I have come to realize that both the food and the luxury of always driving a car, and never walking or running, contributed a lot to my initial weight gain in the U.S.

Having said that, I will also add that having a car during a vacation in a city one is not familiar with may not be the best experience. Having a tour guide or having someone drive you could give you time to enjoy the beauty of the city.

The most common and quickest means to get to any African country is by airplane. Unless you use a supersonic jet or your own direct airline, you will probably be spending the night traveling on a plane. You do not need to pack any food for the flight as all airlines serve dinner, snacks, and breakfast. There may be a European country stop, unless you take an African Airline which travels from New York directly to Africa nonstop. Some African airlines may connect to another flight from another African country depending on the African airline you take.

Expect the traveling time in the air to range from 15 hours to 23 hours depending on the amount of stops or connecting flights. Apart from the airlines with seats that are at times compact in the economy section, you can always find a way to stretch out and sleep with some minimal discomfort. Also, most international airlines do show movies at night to keep flyers entertained.

Although travelling can be lots of fun, remember that travel outside the United States can present a number of challenges for a person traveling to a developing

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country. When you travel through different geographical time zones, your circadian cycle and normal daily schedule will be different and may be altered. Nigeria is eight hours ahead of Denver, Colorado in the United States, and is about the same time as in the United Kingdom.

On arriving in Nigeria, there is always transportation. You will find taxis begging to take you to your destination. You may want to make prior ground transportation arrangements if you are not with a group for safety reasons.

—CHAPTER 10—

COMMON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

There are many things to consider when traveling to another country. The following section deals with some of these considerations.

Passports, Visas and the Embassy

Any foreigner traveling to a foreign country should be about to understand and know how to access the embassy of their home country. Everyone also needs to know if they need a visa or not to enter a particular country. While a valid passport is a must to travel to any country, not all countries require visas depending on the relationship between the two countries.

If you are an American and in Nigeria, here is the

name and the address of the American embassy. Almost all foreign embassies are located on this street and surrounding areas within walking distance.

U.S.Embassy
No 3 Eleke Crescent
Victoria Island, Lagos

Phone

Living in a country like the United States is a luxury in almost all areas of life, especially in terms of telephones. The telephone system is so well developed that not only can one make a call any where and talk with anyone in the country, but there are ways to leave messages, to find out who called, when they called, talk to different people at the same time, connect people in other developed countries, and have conference calls among peers living and working in different states. The possibilities and benefits of the telephone in America are endless.

I used to work for a national company as a clinical specialist in my field, and there were about fourteen of us all over the country which was divided into regions. All the clinical specialists usually met at a different state on a rotating basis every three months. The company would pay our salaries while we were gone for about three-five days a week, pay for flight rickets, pay for feeding, accommodation, ground transportation-a rental car - and pay for us to tip the service, people, etc. The cost was

huge, but our function in quality care programme development was very useful.

It got to a point however, that the company was having some financial crisis, and was cutting down on all non-essential costs. We were told we could not meet as a group physically again. Our boss then came up with the idea of telephone conference calls. It was an experience for the specialists to call into a line, and we all could talk and listen to each other. Though it cost a lot for the phone calls, but the company was able to save up to 95% of the original cost of transportation, travel fares, accomodation, etc. As we did not have to leave our facility, we were only off work for 1 hour - 90 minutes of time instead of the three - five days off.

Here is a listing of the major telephone codes to some major cities in Nigeria:

City	Telephone Code
Abuja	09
Benin City	052
Calabar	087
Enugu	042
Ibadan	022
Jos	073
Kaduna	002
Kano or Katsina	055
Lagos	01
Maiduguri	076
Owerri	083
Port Harcourt	084

Sokoto	060
Zaria	068
Warri	053

To make a phone call directly, for instance to Lagos from the U. S., you will dial as follows:

011-234-1 and then your number

To make a call from Lagos to the U. S., you would dial as follows: 009-1- and then your number.

Telephone calls via the Nigerian Telecommunications Plc (NITEL) are expensive from hotels. To call from a public telephone is not as expensive, but very inconvenient and uncomfortable. Also, it may not be safe. The best way to make phone calls is to call your party and give them your number, and have them call you back. That way they can call from the U.S. for 10 to 20 minutes and pay less than \$20. But if you have to call and pay from a hotel with NITEL connecting, you may pay up to \$40 - \$60.

Tour

Many airlines have or can arrange special tour packages. However, be prepared to spend from \$3,000 to \$6,000. However, if you travel with a friend or make your own arrangements, you will spend about half of the above. Going on an African safari is another way to visit Nigeria. Here you however, must be specific about where

in Africa you are taking the safari tour. Before traveling, visit a local library to get some details on possible places to tour.

In Nigeria, some places you could tour are:

The National Theatre in Lagos
Tafawa Balewa Square in Lagos
Bar Beach in Lagos
Oni of Ife, Olu of Warri, and Oba of
Benin's Palaces
Emir of Kano and Sultan of Sokoto's Palaces
The National Museum in Kano
The Nanna Museum in Koko

During the tour, ensure you get around in a safe car or taxi. You can rent a car and driver, for instance, at the Sheraton Hotel in Ikeja, Lagos.

Avoid the bus system if you can, as you can get hurt in some places. You can also get from one state to another via airplane, but that may be expensive. So, the rental car may be the best deal if prearranged.

Money

Currently the dollar (U. S. currency) is worth a lot more than the Naira (Nigerian currency). For instance, if you have ten American dollars, it will give you almost 960 Nigerian Naira. That is a lot of money. The above stated rate is equivalent to the current bank exchange rate. At any given time, you can get a higher rate in the black

market, and lesser rate via Western Union. I would advise against exchanging money via the black market.

The situation of the Nigerian currency today is sad. I remember when I first came to the United States, one dollar was almost equivalent to one Naira. While you can get a lot for the dollar today, you have to however, pay a lot for goods today in Nigeria, which was not the case then.

Time

Nigeria uses the Greenwich Meridian Time (GMT) plus one hour. That means that when it is 1200 noon in Nigeria and 11.00 a.m. in London, it is 7 a.m. in Denver, Colorado, and 8 a.m. in New York, and that will be 6 a.m. in Florida.

The concept of time figuratively is not as simple as stated above. If there is one thing that puts a positive or negative light in our life, it is the notion of how we view time. In the U. S., for instance, when you are invited to a party say as important as a wedding that is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. when it is five minutes past 10 a.m. everyone will be looking at their watches if the party has not started.

In Nigeria, by 10 a.m. the bride and groom would probably not be present. In every probability the arrangements for the wedding will still be going on. If people start showing up by 11 a.m., you are very lucky and, if the event actually starts by 12 noon, you should be very glad. Nigerians could be very patient, which may

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account for the very low incidence of heart attacks in Nigeria compared to the U. S. (other factors, of course, are the fast foods, inactivity and diets with obesity present in the U. S.).

Health

If you have a chronic health condition like high blood pressure or diabetes, do carry all the medical supplies you will need during your stay in Nigeria. While at any given time you can get medication and medical help, the quality may not be the same or you may pay too much for medication. One other risk is the fact that you may get outdated medication and not know it.

Traditional doctors, at times called native doctors, witch doctors and pagan priests, can also treat sick people. These doctors are not medical doctors, but some do really heal certain illnesses by using certain herbs and plants. Today, some Nigerian universities, scientists and doctors are studying the art of native doctors.

Music

If you like music, do not miss some of the Nigerian musicians, like the Egypt 80 Band made popular by the late Fela Anikulapo Kuti and his son, Femi. There also are other artists like King Sunny Ade, Sonny Okosun, Ebenezer Obey and *Lagbaja*. These musicians entertain at different times in the week and months. Late Fela stands

out as he was a most politically vocal musician, frequently criticizing government policy and politics in his lyrics. His tape recordings can be found anywhere in the country. Another new musician, like Lagbaja who is not only a singer but an artist, composer, drummer, and entertainer is not well known in all of Africa. His masked face which is associated with his style is unique to Nigeria and the world of music.

Literature

Nigerians are great writers and story tellers. Two of the most famous of the lot are Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka. Wole Soyinka is not only recognized in Nigeria, but in the world as he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986. Soyinka writes poetry, novels and plays. He uses myths and legends of the Yoruba people in his work.

PART III

—CHAPTER—

FOOD RECIPES

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—CHAPTER 11—

FOODS IN NIGERIA

If you are expecting to see fast food restaurants of any type with drive by stations, think again. Yes, while you can find one or two places that sell hamburgers, fries (different types) and sandwiches depending on where you stay, you may have to drive a long way for good ones. However, you can find hawkers or children selling finger foods or snacks in many busy streets. Also, there are many "kiosks" and stores attached to homes where you can get snacks at any time.

It is important to note that while you cannot get hamburgers or fries like in McDonald's, Burger King or Wendy's in the United States to mention a few of the choices, you can get some really Nigerian delicacies and similar foods from Mr Biggs, Chicken George and Big Treat in Lagos.

Dining could be most satisfying if care is taken to ensure that one takes all measures to eat clean, well cooked

food. Some hotel accomodation provide breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks at all times while others do not. So inquire about that and what type of food they serve. Room services are also available in some hotels.

Nigerian cuisines are of various types depending on the part of the country you are in. However, you can get international cusines such as Continental meals, Creole, Mexican, Chinese, Mediterranean, Oriental, Italian and other Western dishes in several Nigerian hotels. Recipes of local dishes that you may want to try are presented in the following section.

Some Major Nigerian Food Recipes

Most of the ingredients in these recipes can be found in any African or international market/mart. This section will present these major ethnic recipes as stew and soup recipes, rice recipes, and popular snacks.

Most Nigerian soups and stews can be eaten with carbonhydrates like rice, yams, potatoes and other traditional foods like pounded yam, pounded rice, eba, garri, fufu, plantain, etc.

STEW AND SOUP RECIPES

Egusi Soup

Melon Vegetable Soup

One of the favourites of the Yoruba ethnic group.

- 2 lbs of Beef
- 1 lb of dried Fish
- 1 cup of ground Egusi (melon seed)
- 1/3 cup of Palm or Vegetable Oil
- 2 cups of chopped Spinach
- 1 medium sized Onion
- 3 large sized Tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons of Tomato Paste
- 1/2 tablespoon of dry ground Red Pepper
- 3 cubes of Maggi or Bouillon (Beef flavour)
- 1/2 teaspoon of Thyme
- Salt to taste
- Broth (from boiled beef)

Season meat with salt, thyme, 1 cube of Bouillon and 1/4 of the onion in a 4 qt. pan. Add water and boil for about 40 minutes or until meat becomes tender (save broth). Clean and dry fish in warm water. Blend onion, tomatoes and pepper with meat broth. Add meat broth to egusi and allow to sit for about 3 minutes. Heat oil and fry onion until light brown. Add Egusi, meat, and blended tomatoes and pepper. Cook for about 20 minutes stirring lightly as it cooks then add tomato paste. Add fish, maggi and salt to taste. Cook, uncovered for about 10 minutes. Add spinach and cook for about 5 minutes. Serve with pounded yam, rice, eba, or fufu.

Ofe Soup

One of the favourites of the Igbo of the Eastern States.

- 2 lbs dried or fresh Beef
- 1 lb dried Fish
- ½ lb Stock Fish (cut into small pieces)
- ⅓ cup of Palm Oil
- ¼ cup of ground Crayfish
- 1½ cup of Ugu (Pumpkin leaves)
- 1 tablespoon of dry ground Red Pepper
- 2 cubes of Maggi or Bouillon
- 2 cups of Water
- Salt to taste

Season meat with salt and boil until tender. Clean and boil stockfish with salt and water until it is soft to taste. Break dried fish into large chunks and soak in warm water. Put water, palm oil and pepper in a pot and bring to boil. Add stock fish, meat, dried fish, crayfish and pepper. Cook for about 15 minutes. Stir. Add maggi or bouillon and ugu leaves. Cook for another 5-7 minutes. Serve with pounded yam, rice, eba, yam or plantain.

Spinach Soup with Shrimps

- Spinach as needed
- 1 oz. can of Tomato Sauce
- 2 teaspoons of Tomato Paste
- Salt to taste
- 20 or ½ lb. medium-sized Shrimps
- Dash of Pepper
- 1 medium-sized Onion, pureed
- 1 cup of Water
- ½ cup Oil

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Shell shrimps and season with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt. Put a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of oil in pot and heat. Add the shrimps and fry for a few seconds, then add tomato sauce, tomato paste, pureed onion, a dash of pepper and 1 cup of water. Cover and cook for 7 minutes. Add the spinach. Cover and cook for another 7 minutes then serve with rice, eba or pounded yam.

Miya Yakwa Soup

One of the favourites of the Hausa people of the Northern States.

- 1½ Ibs of Beef
- ½ cup of shelled raw ground Peanuts
- 5 tablespoons of Vegetable Oil
- 1 Ib. Yakwa leaves or collard greens
- 2 large Tomatoes
- 1 large Onion
- 2 Cubes of Maggi or Bouillon
- 4½ cups of Water
- Salt to taste
- Broth (from boiled beef)

Clean and cut beef into chunks. Season with salt and $\frac{1}{5}$ of the onion. In a 4 qt. pan, boil for about 40 minutes or until tender (save broth). Blend tomatoes and onion. Heat oil and stir - fry tomatoes and onion for about 5 minutes. Add meat and broth. Stir, add water and allow to boil for a few minutes. Mix the peanut with a little water and add to the soup. Add maggi or bouillon cubes and the cleaned

and shredded Yakwa leaves. Stir and cook for about 6 more minutes. Serve with rice, plantain, yam, eba or fufu.

Banga Soup

(Palmnut Soup)

A favourite of the Itsekiri people of Delta State.

- 1 can of Banga (palmnut or palmfruit juice)
- 2 lbs of Chicken
- 1½ lbs of dried Fish
- 1/3 cup of ground dried Crayfish (popcorn shrimps)
- 1 medium sized Onion
- 1 tablespoon of dry ground Pepper
- 1 tablespoon of dried collard green
- ½ tablespoon of ground Atariko (traditional seed, optional)
- 2 cubes of Maggi or Bouillon
- 6 cups of warm Water
- Salt to taste

Boil the palmnut Banga juice for about 3 minutes. Cut meat into chunks, season and boil with salt and ½ of the onion for about 20 minutes. Clean fish by soaking in warm water. Bring to boil and add meat, fish, shrimp, onion (finely chopped) and atariko. Cook for about 20 minutes. Add maggi and allow to cook for about 7 minutes. Add salt to taste. Serve with rice, cooked edible starch, eba, yam, green plantain or pounded ripe plantain.

Okra Soup

- 12 oz. of frozen or fresh Okra
- 1 lb of Beef
- 1 lb fresh or oven dried Fish
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of Palm or Vegetable Oil
- 2 Maggi or Bouillon cubes
- 1 tablespoon of dry ground Red Pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ of small Onion (slice or chopped)
- 1 pinch of Thyme
- Salt to taste.

Season beef with onion, thyme and salt and put in a 4-6 qt sauce pan. Add water and cook on low for about 35 minutes or until meat becomes tender. Chop okra with a knife or in a blender. Clean fish and shrimps. Add oil, fish, maggi (bouillon) cubes, pepper and boil for about 12 minutes. Stir in okra and cook for about 7 minutes. Serve with fufu, rice, eba, yam, pounded yam or plantain.

Eggplant Stew

- 1 Eggplant, sliced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of Oil
- Dash of Pepper
- 1 small Tomato, pureed
- 1 tablespoon of Tomato Paste
- Salt to taste
- 1 small Onion, pureed

Put sliced eggplant in a sauce pot and cook until soft, then mash into a pulp. Put $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of oil in a sauce pot and heat, then add pureed onion and tomato, a dash of pepper, tomato paste, eggplant pulp and salt to taste.

Cover and cook for 10 minutes. Boil eggs (number depending on persons). Dish the eggplant stew onto a flat plate and put the hard-boiled eggs on top. Serve with boiled plaintain, dodo, yams, potatoes or rice.

Egg Stew

- 5 Eggs, beaten
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of Oil
- 1 8 oz. can of Tomato Sauce or 2 fresh tomatoes, pureed
- 1 small Onion, pureed
- 1 teaspoon of Tomato Paste
- Salt to taste
- Dash of Pepper

Put $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of oil in a sauce pot and heat. Add pureed onion, tomato sauce and tomato paste. Let it cook for 7 minutes. Add the beaten eggs and keep on stirring until the egg looks scrambled. Eat with rice, potato, yam or dodo (see section on snacks).

Chicken or Beef Stew

- 3 lbs Chicken or Beef
- 1 cup of Vegetable Oil
- 3 cans of 14½ oz Stewed Tomatoes (or Sauce)
- 1 large sized Onion (chopped)
- 2 Maggi cubes or Bouillon cubes
- 1 teaspoon of dry Red Pepper
- 2 pinches of Curry Powder
- 1 pinch of Thyme
- Salt to taste
- ½ cup of Tomato Paste
- ½ Tablespoon of Season-All

Season chicken or beef with onion, curry, season-all and thyme. Add salt to taste. Boil until meat becomes soft. In a large sauce pan, heat oil until it becomes sizzling hot. Crush or grind stewed tomatoes, if you don't have the sauce. To the oil add onion, stewed tomatoes, maggi, curry, thyme, pepper and salt. Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add meat (the meat may be fried or use as cooked) and cook for about 15 minutes. Allow to cool before serving. Serve on white rice with vegetables or yam or dodo or eba.

Corned Beef Stew

- 1 12 oz. of Corned Beef
- 1 8 oz. can of Tomato Sauce
- 1 medium sized Onion, sliced

Dash of ground Red Pepper

½ cup of Oil

1 teaspoon of Tomato Paste

Put ½ cup of oil in a saucepan and heat. Add the sliced onions, let it cook in the oil until soft. Add the tomato sauce and paste. Cover and let it cook for 7 minutes. Add the can of corned beef and mash.

RICE RECIPE

Coconut Rice

2 cups of Rice

2 cans of Coconut Milk

1 small Onion

1 can of Corned Beef

Salt to taste

Water

Dash of Pepper

Bring coconut milk to a boil and add other ingredients. Cover and turn to lowest heat. Add corned beef. Allow to cool partially before serving. Serve with vegetable and chicken or beef.

POPULAR SNACKS

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1 cup of Sugar
1 tablespoon of Yeast
1½ cups of Warm Water
Vegetable Oil for deep frying

Mix yeast in water. Add sugar and allow to stand or ferment for about 15 minutes. Add flour to mixture and mix. Cover and let stand for about 30 minutes. Heat oil until very hot (about 400°). Put one scoop at a time into oil and deep fry until golden brown.

Coconut Candy

1 Coconut
Sugar to taste
Warm Water

Cut coconut into small chunks of fine and thin slices. Mix sugar with warm water. Put coconut chunks in a frying pan, pour sugar/water mixture over the chunks and fry until coconut turns brown.

Roasted Corn

Fresh Corn
Oven
Outside grill

Set oven 350° and put corn on rack, turning from side to

side until brown all over. You may use outside grill also.

Suya (Peppered Shish-Kabob)

Pieces of Beef or Goat Meat

Ground Red Pepper

Onion, chopped

Salt

Skewers

Push pieces of meat through skewers. Mix red pepper and salt in a three-to-one ratio (or to taste). Spread over skewered meat. Put in preheated oven, or for best results, cook on open grill. Turn frequently until done. Serve with chopped onion and rice or as snack.

Dodo

(Fried Ripe Plantain)

- 4 ripe Plantains (bright yellow and partially firm)
- Vegetable Oil for deep frying
- Salt (optional) to taste

Peel plantain and slice into desired shapes (diagonal, round, small chunks or cubes). Season lightly with salt. Heat oil till hot (about 400°F). Deep-fry plantain till golden or light brown. Avoid over cooking for it can easily get burnt. Remove plantain from frying pan or pot and drain out excess oil by placing on white paper towel. Plantain can be served as a light meal with stew or as a side dish.

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Chin-Chin (Fried Sweet Dough)

- 1/2 cups White Flour (or self-rising flour)
- 1/2 cup sugar
- Water and Milk as needed
- Oil for deep frying
- 2 small Eggs

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Pour the flour in the bowl and make a well in the center. Beat the eggs and mix with flour. Add the sugar to the water and milk, then add gradually to the mixture of flour and eggs. Mix to stiff consistency. Place on a board and knead with your hands until smooth. Cut into small chunks and deep fry in heated oil until golden brown. Drain, cool and store in air-tight containers.

Boli (Roasted Plantain)

- 3 ripe Plantains (firm, not soft)
- Oven

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Set oven to 350° or roast on open grill. Peel plantain and put on the oven rack to roast. Turn to cook evenly. Remove when it is easily pierced with a fork. Eat with salted palm oil or stew.

Steamed Bean Cakes (Moyin-Moyin)

- 2 cups of Bean Powder
- 1/2 cup of Oil

- 1 fresh Tomato (finely chopped)
- ½ medium-sized Onion (finely chopped)
- 1 4 oz. can Tomato Sauce
- 2 hard-boiled Eggs
- ½ cup of Corned Beef
- Salt to taste
- Water
- Foil paper

PREPARATION OF PASTE

Mix the bean powder to form a paste in a bowl and add the tomatoes, onion, tomato sauce and salt to taste. Heat oil, then add slowly to the mixture.

PREPARATION OF POT FOR STEAMING

Lay a sheet of foil paper at the bottom of pot. Put 1 cup of water and bring to boil. Cut sheets of foil paper and fold in funnel form then spoon in the paste. In each funnel, put 2 teaspoons of corned beef and 2 slices of hard-boiled egg. Cover the mouth of the funnel by twisting the foil paper then put in the pot. Cover tightly and let it cook for about 1½ hours. Cover tightly and let it cook for about 1½ hours. Open to add water every now and then. Will form a firm mass when it is done. Remove from pot and allow to cool partially in order to set. Serve alone or with rice, fried chicken, beef, custard or garri.

Akara - Fried Bean Cakes Fried Blackeye Peas (African Hush Puppies)

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3 cups of Blackeye Pea Powder
1 medium chopped Onion
½ teaspoon of dry ground Red Pepper
Salt to taste
Vegetable Oil (deep fry)

Mix the powder to form a paste. Mix the paste with onion, pepper and salt. Add a little bit of warm water (the mixture should remain thick). Continue mixing until the mixture becomes about the consistency of a thick cake batter. Heat oil (about 400°). Use tablespoon or scoop to drop the batter into the hot oil. Fry until golden brown. Drain excess oil. May be served as snack or as a side dish with Akamu (cornmeal) or custard.

PART IV

ETHNIC OUTFITS AND ARTIFACTS





Ben

In this powerful, informational book, Mercy Mammah-Popoola counsels and encourages travellers to Africa, specifically Nigeria, on how best to explore the richness of an African travelling experience.

Mercy Mammah - Popoola is a Nigerian who is now a citizen of the United States. She has given numerous presentations to groups travelling to Africa, and worked with missionaries travelling abroad.

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