

## MISSION ATLAS PROJECT

### AFRICA

### NIGERIA

#### Basic Facts

##### Name:

*The Federal Republic of Nigeria with its capital in Abuja*

##### Population:

Population has grown from 107,286,046 in 1997 to 111,506,095 in 2000 and to 126,635,626 in 2002. With a growth rate of around + 2.61% the population will reach over 138,698,398 by 2010 and 183,041,179 by 2025.

Population density stands at 116 persons per sq. Kilometer or 301 persons per sq. mile. Age structure stands 0-14 years 43.71%; 15-64 years 53.47%; 65 + years 2.8% (2001 estimate).

The birth rate stands at 39.69 births per 1000 population and the death rate at 13.91 per 1000 population. Infant mortality rate is 73.34 deaths per 1000 live births.

Life expectancy is 51.07 years for both men and women

Around 5.06% of the population suffers from HIV/AIDS with over 2.7 million persons infected. In 1999, it was estimated that 250,000 deaths were attributed to AIDS.

[http://www.geographyiq.com/countries/ni/Nigeria\\_people.htm](http://www.geographyiq.com/countries/ni/Nigeria_people.htm),

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/english/imperial/nigeria/origins.htm>.

##### Geography:

Nigeria has a total area of 923,768 sq. Kilometers. In the south, one finds mangrove and tropical rain forests while in the north savannah and grassland predominate. The *Niger-Benue river system* drains the country.

Nigeria has common boundaries with *Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon*.

##### Government:

Nigeria follows a Federal Republic form of government with a president elected by the voters to a four year term. The legislature is bicameral with a House of Representatives composed of 360 members and a Senate composed of 109 senators. Voting qualifications call for universal suffrage for all citizens 21 years of age and older—voting is not, however, by secret ballot.

The nation is divided into 36 states and boasts an army of 77,000 troops.

##### Economy:

The Gross Domestic Product of Nigeria stood at \$ 32 billion in 1996. The primary agricultural products are palm oil, peanut oil, rubber, cotton, sorghum, millet, maize, yams, cassava, timber, and livestock. Nigeria also produces wealth through mining of coal, tin, columbite, limestone, iron ore, lead zinc, gypsum, barite, and Kaolin. The most important income source from the earth is petroleum. Petroleum from the south helps support the nation. Manufacturing, which accounts for 7 % of the nation's wealth, is centered on food products, brewed beverages, refined petroleum, iron and steel, motor vehicles, textiles, footwear, and paper.

Overall, the employment breakdown stands at 50% in services, 43% in agricultural, forestry, and fishing, 7% in industry. The personal income stands around \$280 or about .9% of the USA

Peoples:

Nigeria has some 490 different people groups but three of these, the *Hausa/Fulani*, the *Yoruba*, and the *Ibo* make up the majority of the population and have the major political influence.

**The primary people divisions are:**

*Guinean* (49.5%) that include Yoruba, Ibo, Nupe, Edo, and others with many following Christianity

*The Hausa-Chadic* (20.6%), live in the north and follow Islam

The *Bantoid people* (12%) live in the south-west and include the Ibibio, Tiv, Anaang, Kaje with many Christians

The *Fulbe* (11%) who live mainly in the north, speak Hausa and follow Islam *Kanuric* (3.2%) that includes three sub-groups and follows Islam

*Sudanic* (1.2%) who live in the north-east and are largely ethnic or traditional religionists.

Language:

The official language is English but Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, Fulani, Kanuri, Tiv, Pidgin English, and many other tongues are used. In all 470 languages exist in Nigeria and 96% of the populations use 21 major languages.

Nigeria has a 64% literacy rate.

Religion:

Nigeria is a secular state that promises freedom of religion. Especially in the north, Islam has special privileges and in recent days, Christians have faced persecution.

Estimates count between 30-50% as Muslim; and 40-60% Christian (this figure includes Catholics, Anglicans, Orthodox); and some 18% other including traditional. A more realistic estimate sees:

Christian, (including Catholic, and independent)	52.6%	(58,663,357)
Muslims,	41%	(45,717,499)
Traditional	5.9%	(6,679,215)
Non-religious	0.40%	(446,024)

## Urbanization:

The urban/rural division now stands at around 44% with rural at 56%. The largest cities are *Lagos* (5 million), *Ibadan* (1.7 million), *Kano* (1.5 million), *Abuja* (500,000), *Port Harcourt* (1.2 million), *Enugu* (900,000), *Jos* (650,000).

Encarta Encyclopedia; Johnstone and Mandryk

## Historical Factors

Human cultures developed differently in the northern and southern parts of Nigeria. In the early centuries AD, kingdoms in the drier, northern savanna, prospered from trade ties with North Africa. At roughly the same time, in the wetter, southern forested areas, city-states and other federations arose and were supported by agriculture and coastal trade. Both of these developments changed when Europeans entered in the late 15th century, slave trade arose during the 16th through 19th centuries, and formal colonization by Britain began at the end of 19th century. While Nigeria achieved independence in 1960, the nation has been plagued by unequal distribution of wealth, ineffective, often corrupt governments, and frequent violent confrontations between peoples.

*Encarta Ency., Britannica*

## **Pre-Colonial History in Southern and Northern Nigeria**

### **In the North**

The *Nok* culture, that flourished between 500 BC and AD 200, became the earliest identifiable civilization in Nigeria's north. This culture is also the earliest of West Africa's known ironworkers. The real identity of the *Nok* culture is unknown. The culture is named for a village where miners first unearthed their artifacts.

The *Nok* are famous for their figurines—finely crafted people and animals in terra-cotta. Most of these figures have been found near *Akure* but some are evidenced on the *Jos Plateau*. Evidence suggests that some of these people had practiced settled agriculture since at least 5000 BC. The *Nok* people influenced centuries of central Nigerian sculpture. Today the art of several central Nigerian peoples continues to reflect *Nok* style. *The Kanem-Bornu Empire* is the northern region's first well-documented state. This Empire, the kingdom of *Kanem*, emerged east of *Lake Chad* in what is now southwestern Chad by the 9th century AD. The existence of the *Kanem-Bornu* kingdom is attested by Arabic writers. In the northern regions of *Hausaland*, the *Bayajidda* legend claims some middle-eastern ancestors for the Hausa. Islam came early to the northern parts, including the region of the Hausa.

*Kanem* profited from trade ties with North Africa and the Nile Valley, from which it also received Islam. The *Saifawas*, *Kanem's* ruling dynasty, periodically enlarged their holdings by conquest and marriage into the ruling families of vassal states. The empire, however, failed to maintain a lasting peace.

During one conflict-ridden period sometime between the 12th and 14th centuries, the *Saifawas* were forced to move across Lake Chad into *Bornu*, in what is now far northeastern Nigeria. There, the *Kanem* intermarried with the native peoples, and the new

group became known as the *Kanuri*. The Kanuri state, centered first in Kanem and then in Bornu, known as the *Kanem-Bornu Empire*, is often referred to as *Bornu*.

The Kanuri eventually returned to Chad and conquered the empire lost by the Saifawas. Its dominance thus assured, Bornu became a flourishing center of Islamic culture that rivaled Mali to the far west. The kingdom also grew rich in trade, which focused on salt from the Sahara and locally produced textiles. In the late 16th century, the *Bornu* king *Idris Alooma* expanded the kingdom again, and although the full extent of the expansion is not clear, Bornu exerted considerable political influence over *Hausaland* to the west.

In the mid- and late 18th century, severe droughts and famines weakened the kingdom, but in the early 19th century Bornu enjoyed a brief revival under *al-Kanemi*, a shrewd military leader who resisted the *Fulani* revolution that swept over much of Nigeria. *Al-Kanemi's* descendants continued as traditional rulers within *Bornu State*. The Kanem-Bornu Empire ceased to exist in 1846 when it was absorbed into the *Wadai sultanate* to the east.

*Encarta Ency. Britannica*

The Hausa-Fulani cultures assumed a dominant role in Nigeria early in history. The Hausa cultures were smelting iron as early as the 7th century AD. The exact beginnings of the Hausa culture is unknown but they seem to have begun in northwestern and north central Nigeria, to Bornu's west. Legend holds that *Bayajidda*, a traveler from the Middle East, married the *Queen of Daura*, with whom he produced seven sons. Each son is reputed to have founded one of the seven Hausa kingdoms: *Kano, Rano, Katsina, Zazzau (Zaria), Gobir, Kebbi, and Auyo*.

However founded, the seven city-states developed as strong trading centers, typically surrounded by a wall and with an economy based on intensive farming, cattle raising, craft making, and later slave trading. In each Hausa state, a monarch, probably elected, ruled over a network of feudal lords, most of whom had embraced Islam by the 14th century. The states maintained persistent rivalries, which at times made them easy prey to the expansion of Bornu and other kingdoms.

A perhaps greater, if more subtle, threat to the Hausa kingdoms was the immigration of *Fulani* pastoralists, who came from the west to make a home in the Nigerian savanna and who gained control over large areas of Hausaland over several centuries. In 1804 a Fulani scholar, *Usuman dan Fodio*, declared a *jihad* (holy war) against the Hausa states, whose rulers he condemned for allowing Islamic practices to deteriorate. Local Fulani leaders, motivated by both spiritual and local political concerns, received Usuman's blessing to overthrow the Hausa rulers. With their superior cavalry and organization, the Fulani overthrew the Hausa rulers and also conquered areas beyond Hausaland, including *Adamawa* to the east and *Nupe* and *Ilorin* to the south.

After the war, a loose federation of 30 emirates emerged, each recognizing the supremacy of the *Sultan of Sokoto*, located in what is now far northwestern Nigeria. The first sultan of Sokoto was *Usuman*. After Usuman died in 1817, he was succeeded by his son, *Muhammad Bello*. The *Sokoto Caliphate* dominated the region throughout the 19th century through military and economic power.

### **In the Southern Regions**

Nigeria's oldest archaeological site lies in its forested region, at *Iwo Elero* near *Akure* in southwestern Nigeria. Stone tools and human remains at the site date from 9000 BC.

The first well-documented kingdom in southwestern Nigeria was centered at *Ife*, which was established as the first of the *Yoruba* kingdoms in the 11th or 12th century. Over the

next few centuries, the *Ife* spread their political and spiritual influence beyond the borders of its small city-state. *Ife* artisans were highly skilled, producing, among other things, bronze castings of heads in a highly naturalistic style. Terra-cotta, wood, and ivory were also common media.

Shortly after the rise of *Ife*, the *Kingdom of Benin* emerged to the east. Although it was separate from the Yoruba kingdoms, Benin legends claim that the kingdom's first rulers were descended from an *Ife* prince. By the 15th century, Benin was a large, well-designed city sustained by trade. Its cultural legacy includes a wealth of elaborate bronze plaques and statues recording the nation's history and glorifying its rulers.

At about the same time as Benin's ascendance, the major Yoruba city-state of *Oyo* arose. Situated northwest of *Ife*, *Oyo* used its powerful cavalry to replace *Ife* as *Yorubaland's* political center. *Ife*, however, continued to serve as the spiritual center of Yorubaland. When the Portuguese first arrived in the late 15th century, it was the *Oyo* who controlled trade with them, first in goods such as peppers, which they secured from the northern interior lands and transferred to the southern coast, and later in slaves.

In *Oyo*, as elsewhere throughout coastal West Africa, the traffic in slaves had disastrous results—not just on those traded, who were largely from the interior, but also on the traders. As African nations vied for the lucrative commerce, conflicts increased, and the people worked at slavery rather than other forms of agricultural and economic advancement. As a result, when Britain banned the slave trade in the early 19th century, *Oyo* was hard-pressed to maintain its prosperity. The *Oyo* state of *Ilorin* broke away from the empire in 1796 and later joined the northern *Sokoto Caliphate* in 1831 after *Fulani* residing in *Ilorin* seized power. The *Oyo* empire collapsed, plunging all of Yorubaland, *Oyo*, *Ife*, and other areas into a bloody civil war that lasted for decades.

Along with the *Yoruba*, the *Igbo* arose as a strong cultural and political influence in early periods. In southeastern Nigeria, archaeological sites confirm sophisticated civilizations dating from at least AD 900, when fine bronze statues were crafted by predecessors of the modern-day *Igbo* people. These early peoples, who almost certainly had well-developed trade links, were followed by the *Nri* of northern *Igboland*. With these exceptions, *Igboland* did not have the large, centralized kingdoms that characterized other parts of Nigeria. A few clans maintained power, perhaps the strongest of which was the *Aro*. The *Aro* lived west of the Cross River, near present-day Nigeria's southeastern border, and rose to prominence in the 17th and 18th centuries. The *Aro* were oracular priests for the region and used this role to secure large numbers of slaves. The slaves were sold in coastal ports controlled by other groups such as the *Ijo*.

### **Colonial History in Nigeria**

Compared with other parts of West Africa, Nigeria felt the influence of Europe later. Unlike in Ghana and Senegal, no European fortifications were built along the coast, and Europeans—mostly British—came ashore only briefly to trade weapons, alcohol, and other goods in return for slaves. It is not clear what portion of the vast number of slaves taken from West Africa (estimates range from about 10 to 30 million) came from Nigeria.

### **Earlier Colonial History**

Colonial history in Nigeria actually began in the 1800s. In 1807 Britain abolished the slave trade and enlisted other European nations to enforce the ban. Britain's motivations were partly humanitarian—there was a reform movement at home—and partly economic: The British Empire no longer had American colonies whose economic growth depended

on slaves, and moreover the rise of industrialization meant Britain needed Africa's raw materials more than its people. Consequently, trade in products such as palm oil, which Europeans valued highly as an industrial lubricant, replaced the trade in humans. Most of Nigeria's former slave-trading states were weakened by the loss of income. A few managed to continue a much-reduced contraband slave trade until the 1860s. Others used slave labor to farm plantations of oil palm.

British trading companies such as the *United Africa Company* took advantage of the weakened empires and established depots at Lagos and in the Niger Delta. Meanwhile, explorers such as *Mungo Park* and *Hugh Clapperton* of Scotland, *Richard and John Lander* of England, and *Heinrich Barth* of Germany charted the Niger River and its surroundings. The explorers, some of them funded by trading companies, laid the groundwork for the eventual expansion inland of the trading companies. Missionaries also facilitated the process of replacing the slave trade with "Christian commerce." Some inland peoples took advantage of new opportunities to produce goods for the Europeans, but most resisted and were forcibly subjugated.

### **The European Division of Africa**

In 1884 and 1885 European powers carved Africa into areas of influence at the *Berlin West Africa Conference*. After Britain's claim to Nigeria was established, The English moved quickly to consolidate its territory. The *Colony of Lagos*, first declared in 1861, was expanded, and in 1887 a new protectorate, *Oil Rivers* (later the *Niger Coast Protectorate*), was created in the Niger Delta. The British also waged bloody and ruthless war on resisting coastal and forest peoples, particularly in *Benin*, *Nupe*, and *Ilorin*. The British control in the south was secure by 1897.

While Britain was consolidating these areas, it granted the *Royal Niger Company* a trading monopoly in the north. In return the company agreed to advance British interests, economic and political. The company set up headquarters at *Lokoja*, located at the meeting of the *Niger* and *Benue rivers* in central Nigeria. It extended its trade northwest up the Niger and northeast up the Benue. Treaties were signed with several African states, including *Nupe*, *Sokoto*, and *Gwandu*, thus depriving French and German rivals access to the northern region.

In 1900, with the south secure, Britain revoked the Royal Niger Company's charter and declared that a colonial government would administer Nigeria as two protectorates: one in the south and one in the north. Lagos was incorporated into the southern protectorate in 1906. Simultaneously, Britain went to war against the *Sokoto Caliphate* in the northwest, conquering it by 1903. Remaining pockets of resistance within the caliphate and elsewhere in northern Nigeria were quelled over the next few years. In 1914 Britain joined the two protectorates into a single colony, and in 1922 part of the former German colony of *Kamerun* was attached to Nigeria as a League of Nations—mandated territory.

### **Indirect Rule**

Britain governed Nigeria via indirect rule, a system in which native leaders continued to rule their traditional lands so long as they collected taxes and performed other duties ensuring British prosperity. Uncooperative or ineffective leaders were easily replaced by others who were more compliant or competent, and usually more than willing to enjoy the perks of government. Britain was thus saved the huge economic and political cost of running and militarily securing a day-to-day government.

Indirect rule operated relatively smoothly in the north, where the British worked with the *Fulani* aristocracy, who had long governed the *Sokoto Caliphate* and who were able to administer traditional Islamic law alongside British civil law. In the south, however, traditions were less accommodating. In *Yorubaland* indirect rule disrupted historical checks and balances by increasing the power of some chiefs at the expense of others. Moreover, although the Yoruba kings had long been powerful, few had collected taxes, and citizens resisted their right to do so under British mandate.

In the southeast, particularly in *Igboiland*, many of the societies had never had chiefs or for that matter organized states. Consequently, the chiefs appointed by Britain received little or no respect. In Nigeria's culturally fragmented middle belt, small groups were forcefully incorporated into larger political units and often ruled by "foreign" Fulani, who brought with them alien institutions such as Islamic law.

The British carried out a few reforms, including the gradual elimination of domestic slavery, which had been a central feature of the Sokoto Caliphate. They also provided Western education for some of Nigeria's elite. In the main,, however, Britain limited schooling as much as feasible.

Britain redirected almost all of Nigeria's trade away from Africa and toward itself, a move that undermined the northern region's large, centuries-old trade across the Sahara. Britain further changed the economy by introducing new crops and expanding old ones, such as oil palm, cotton, groundnuts, and cacao, almost all of which were sold for export. Iron and tin were also mined, and railroads were built to transport products. Because Britain required Nigerians to pay taxes in cash rather than goods, most Nigerians had little choice but to grow cash-yielding export crops or to migrate seasonally to areas where paying jobs could be found.

### **Opposition to the British**

Throughout the early 20th century, Nigerians found many ways to resist foreign rule. Local armed revolts broke out sporadically and intensified during World War I (1914-1918). Workers in mines, railways, and public service often went on strike over poor wages and working conditions. A large general action in 1945 by 30,000 workers stopped commerce for 37 days.

Anger over taxation caused other conflicts, including a battle in 1929 fought mainly by Igbo women in the *Aba* area. More common was passive resistance through actions such as avoiding being counted in the census, working at a slow pace, and telling stories ridiculing colonists and colonialism. A few political groups formed to campaign for independence, including the *National Congress* and the *National Democratic Party*, achieved slight results. In 1937 *Nnamdi Azikiwe*, an Igbo nationalist, who founded the newspaper *West African Pilot*, gave the growing movement a voice by World War II (1939-1945). Many Nigerians fought for or otherwise aided Britain in this war and thereby increased the pace of nationalism.

The growing anti-colonial feeling was most strongly articulated by two groups, the *National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons* (NCNC), led by *Azikiwe* and supported mostly by Igbo and other easterners, and the *Action Group*, led by activist *Obafemi Awolowo* and supported mostly by Yoruba and other westerners. By the early 1950s, other parties had emerged, notably the *Northern People's Congress*, a conservative northern group led by the *Hausa-Fulani* elite. The regional power bases of these parties foreshadowed the divisive regional politics that would follow colonialism.

Pressure for independence from within Nigeria was complemented by pressure from other nations, and from reformers in Britain and in other colonies. In 1947 the British responded by introducing a new constitution that divided Nigeria into three regions: the *Northern Region*, the *Eastern Region*, and the *Western Region*. The Northern Region was mainly *Hausa-Fulani and Muslim*; the Eastern Region, *Igbo and Catholic*; and the Western Region, *Yoruba and mixed Muslim and Anglican*. The regions each had their own legislative assemblies, with mainly appointed rather than elected members, and were overseen by a weak federal government. Although short-lived, the constitution had serious long-term impact through its encouragement of regional, ethnic-based politics. The constitution failed on several counts, was abrogated in 1949, and was followed by other constitutions in 1951 and 1954, each of which had to contend with powerful ethnic forces. The *Northern People's Congress (NPC)* argued that northerners, who made up half of Nigeria's population, should have a large degree of autonomy from other regions and a large representation in any federal legislature. The NPC was especially concerned about respect for Islam and the economic dominance of the south. The western-based Action Group also wanted autonomy; they feared that their profitable western cocoa industries would be tapped to subsidize less wealthy areas. In the poorer east, the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons wanted a powerful central government and a redistribution of wealth—the very things feared by the Action Group.

The eventual compromise was the 1954 constitution, which made Nigeria a federation of three regions corresponding to the major ethnic nations. It differed from the 1947 constitution in that powers were more evenly split between the regional governments and the central government. The constitution also gave the regions the right to seek self-government, which the Western and Eastern regions achieved in 1956. The Northern Region, however, fearing that self-government (and thus British withdrawal) would leave it at the mercy of southerners, delayed the imposition until 1959.

In December 1959, elections were held for a federal parliament. None of the three main parties won a majority, but the NPC, thanks to the size of the Northern Region, won the largest plurality. Sir *Abubakar Tafawa Balewa*, head of the NPC, entered a coalition government with the eastern NCNC as prime minister. The new parliament was seated in January 1960.

### **Nigerian Independence 1960**

Nigeria attained independence on October 1, 1960. In 1961 the *Cameroons Trust Territories* were split in two. The mostly Muslim northern Cameroons voted to become part of the Northern Region of Nigeria, while the southern Cameroons joined the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

Regional and ethnic tensions escalated quickly. The censuses of 1962 and 1963 fueled bitter disputes, as did the trial and imprisonment of leading opposition politicians, whom *Prime Minister Balewa* accused of treason. In 1963 an eastern section of the Western Region that was ethnically non-Yoruba was split off into a new region, the Midwestern Region. Matters deteriorated during the violence-marred elections of 1964, from which the NPC emerged victorious.

On January 15, 1966, junior army officers revolted and killed Balewa and several other politicians, including the prime ministers of the Northern and Western regions. Major-General *Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi*, the commander of the army and an Igbo, emerged as the country's new leader.



Ironsi immediately suspended the constitution, which did little to ease northern fears of southern domination. In late May, Ironsi further angered the north with the announcement that many public services then controlled by the regions would henceforth be controlled by the federal government. On July 29 northern-backed army officers staged a counter-coup, assassinating Ironsi and replacing him with *Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon*. The coup was followed by the massacre of thousands of Igbo in northern cities. Most of the surviving Igbo sought refuge in their crowded eastern homelands.

### **Nigerian Civil War**

In May 1967 Gowon announced the creation of a new 12-state structure. The Eastern Region, populated mostly by Igbo, would be divided into three states, two of them dominated by non-Igbo groups. The division would also sever the vast majority of Igbo from profitable coastal ports and rich oil fields that had recently been discovered in the Niger Delta (which until then was a part of the Eastern Region). The leaders of the Eastern Region, pushed to the brink of secession by the recent anti-Igbo attacks and the influx of Igbo refugees, saw this action as an official attempt to push the Igbo to the margins of Nigerian society and politics. On May 27 the region's Igbo-dominated assembly authorized *Lieutenant-Colonel Odemegwu Ojukwu* to declare independence as the *Republic of Biafra*. Ojukwu obliged three days later.

War broke out in July when Nigerian forces moved south and captured the university town of Nsukka. Biafran troops crossed the Niger River, pushing deep into the west in an attempt to attack Lagos, then the capital. Gowon's forces repelled the invasion, imposed a naval blockade of the southeastern coast, and mounted a counter-attack into northern Biafra. A bitter war of attrition followed, prolonged by France's military support for the Biafrans. In January 1970 the better-equipped federal forces finally overcame the rebels, whereupon Gowon announced he would remain in power for six more years to ensure a peaceful transition to democracy and civilian government.

### **Restoration, Coups, and the Nigerian Second Republic**

Nigeria achieved the restoration of peace and the reintegration of the Igbo back into Nigerian life with remarkable speed. The newly developing oil trade stimulated the recovery. By the mid-1970s, Nigeria would be the world's fifth largest producer of petroleum. Along with rapid growth came shortages of key commodities, crippling congestion in the ports, and demands for redistribution of wealth. The bulk of Nigeria's income and wealth, however, remained in the hands of an urban few despite efforts at redistribution.

Unwisely, *Gowon* announced, in 1974, that the return to civilian rule would be postponed indefinitely. High prices, chronic shortages, growing corruption, and the failure of the government to address several regional issues had led to widespread dissatisfaction. On July 29, 1975, *Brigadier Murtala Ramat Muhammed* overthrew Gowon in a bloodless coup. Muhammed moved quickly to address critical problems that Gowon had avoided. He replaced corrupt state governors, purged incompetent and corrupt members of the public services, instigated a plan to move the national capital from industrial, coastal Lagos to neglected, interior Abuja. Muhammed further declared that civilian rule would be restored by 1979 began a five-stage process of transition.

Muhammed's reforms resulted in his extreme popularity with many Nigerians. Even though he was assassinated on February 13, 1976, the coup failed and his administration remained in power. His successor, *Lieutenant-General Olusegun Obasanjo*, continued

Muhammed's reforms, including the move toward civilian rule. Obasanjo also created seven new states to help redistribute wealth and began a massive reform of local government.

In 1977 Obasanjo convened a constitutional assembly, which recommended replacing the British-style parliamentary system with an American-style presidential system of separate executive and legislative branches. To ensure that candidates would appeal to ethnic groups beyond their own, the president and vice president were required to win at least 25 percent of the vote in at least two-thirds of the 19 states. The new constitution took effect in 1979. The restructured administration was called *Nigeria's Second Republic*.

### **The Second Republic of Nigeria**

The Second Republic maintained life for only some four years. Elections for the Second Republic were held in July 1979. Most parties received votes along ethnic lines, the exception being the *National Party of Nigeria (NPN)*, which commanded support from several corners of the country and won the most legislative seats. The NPN fell short of a majority, however, and often joined forces with the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), a mainly Igbo group led by *Azikiwe*.

In the presidential elections, NPN candidate *Alhaji Shehu Shagari* won the largest number of overall votes, plus significant totals in other areas of Nigeria. The results provoked a brief but important constitutional crisis. The federal election commission ruled in favor of Shagari, giving him the election and consequently undermined the new constitution's authority.

Once in office, the new federal, state, and local governments embarked on ambitious programs of development to cure the weak economy. Although several of the initiatives were productive, many more were expensive and economically unsound. Others were riddled with corruption. In 1982 the world oil market collapsed, leaving Nigeria unable to pay its short-term debts, much less finance the projects to which it was committed. Eventually, the country was also unable to import essential goods.

In January 1983 the governments ordered the expulsion of all unskilled foreigners, claiming that immigrants who had overstayed their visas were heavily involved in crime and were taking jobs from Nigerians. Between 1.5 and 2 million people, the majority of them Ghanaian, were forced to leave in less than two weeks. The move was widely condemned, especially by West African states, although it proved very popular in Nigeria. In the elections of 1983, the NPN claimed a decisive victory over several opposition parties, while observers cited widespread instances of fraud and intimidation.

### **Return of the Military Rule**

On New Year's Eve 1983, army officers led by *Major-General Muhammadu Buhari* overthrew the Shagari government in a bloodless coup. Buhari's government enjoyed widespread public support for its condemnation of economic mismanagement, of government corruption, and of the rigged 1983 elections. This support waned, however, as the government adopted a rigid program of economic austerity and instituted repressive policies that included a sweeping campaign against "indiscipline," a prohibition against discussing the country's political future, and the detention of journalists and others critical of the government.

Buhari's support lessened and in August 1985, *Major-General Ibrahim Babangida* overthrew him to wide acclaim. Babangida rescinded several of Buhari's most unpopular decrees, initiated a public debate on the state of the economy, and eased controls over

business. These actions set the stage for negotiations with the *International Monetary Fund (IMF)* for aid, a new round of austerity measures, and better relations with the country's creditors. For a time, Nigeria achieved a measure of economic recovery.

Babangida maintained a firm grip on power, shuffling key officers from position to position to ensure they would not become too strong and forbidding political parties. Many Nigerians were disturbed by the general's favoring of northern elite interests. In 1986 and 1990 Babangida faced and suppressed coup attempts. Other tensions escalated, particularly religious strife between Christians and Muslims; several states, including *Kaduna*, *Katsina*, and *Kano*, had severe religious riots in the early 1990s.

In early 1989, in preparation for a transfer to democracy, Babangida approved a new constitution that introduced only minor changes to the 1979 constitution. In May he lifted the ban on political organizations but refused to recognize any of the new parties, instead channeling politics into the government-created *Social Democratic Party (SDP)* and *National Republic Convention (NRC)*. Federal legislative elections were finally held in July 1992, with the SDP winning a majority in both houses of the legislature.

The presidential elections were delayed, finally held in June 1993, then annulled by the military when SDP candidate and wealthy publisher *Moshood Abiola* won a large majority. Babangida, however, claimed he still supported a transition to democracy and in August transferred power to an interim government. *Ernest Shonekan*, a civilian appointed as interim leader, was forced out after three months by Gen. *Sani Abacha*, a long-time ally of Babangida, who became president and banned all political institutions and labor unions. In 1994, Abiola was arrested and charged with treason.

### **Nigeria Under Abacha**

The *Nigerian Labour Congress*, which had already held a general strike to protest the annulled election of Abiola, organized another general strike to protest Abacha's coup. Political pressure groups such as the *Campaign for Democracy* also stepped up protests against Abacha. In May 1994 the government announced plans for political reform and held elections for local governments and delegates to yet another constitutional conference.

In October 1995 Abacha lifted the ban on political activity, promised a transfer to civilian power in 1998, and later allowed five parties to operate. However, he continued his repression of dissidents, including the hanging of writer *Ken Saro-Wiwa* and eight other activists in November 1995. Saro-Wiwa and his fellow dissidents were critics of the oil industry, which had brought a range of environmental ills to their *Ogoni* homeland in the Niger Delta. Also in 1995, a number of army officers, including former head of state Gen. Obasanjo, were arrested in connection with an alleged coup attempt. In 1996, Kudirat Abiola, an activist on behalf of her imprisoned husband, was murdered.

The government dubiously accused the activists of murdering government supporters, gave them a hasty, unfair trial, and executed them. Criticism of the Oil Industry and the Multinational Corporations has been a recurring theme in much of Nigerian rhetoric in recent years.

The Abacha government imprisoned many people, among the most prominent being former president *Olusegun Obasanjo*, former vice-president *Shehu Musa Yar'Adua* (who died in prison in December 1997), and the 1993 president-elect *Moshood Abiola*. Other prominent Nigerians, including *Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka*, fled into exile. The execution and imprisonment of opponents and other violations of human rights

intensified international pressure on Abacha and resulted in Nigeria's suspension from the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Internally, Abacha managed to maintain support from some segments of the population, especially among his Hausa-Fulani compatriots. In 1995 a constitutional commission presented a draft constitution. Abacha promised to implement the constitution and return the country to civilian rule following presidential elections in October 1998. He was widely expected to be declared the winner of the elections, as all five officially sanctioned political parties had nominated him in April 1998. However Abacha died suddenly in June, 1998, and was succeeded by *Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar*, who immediately freed Obasanjo and other political prisoners. Riots followed the announcement that Abiola had also died unexpectedly in July, 1998, while in detention. Abubakar then announced an election timetable leading to a return to civilian rule within a year. All former political parties were disbanded and new ones formed. A series of local, state, and federal elections were held between December 1998 and February 1999, culminating in the presidential contest, won by *Gen. Obasanjo*. The elections were generally deemed fair by international monitors. The *People's Democratic Party* (the centrist party of Gen. Obasanjo) dominated the elections; the other two leading parties were the *Alliance for Democracy* (a Yoruba party of the southwest, considered to be progressive), and the *All People's Party* (a conservative party based in the north). Following Obasanjo's inauguration on May 29, 1999, Nigeria was readmitted to the Commonwealth. The new president moved to combat past and present corruption in the Nigerian government and army and to develop the impoverished Niger Delta area. Although there was some progress economically, government corruption remained a problem and the country was confronted with renewed ethnic and religious tension. The religious and ethnic conflict occurred in part as a result of the institution of Islamic law in Nigeria's northern states, and led to violence in which thousands of people have died since the end of military rule.

One Igbo statesman, Emeagwali, describes the religious problem of the Muslims establishing *Sharia Law* in the North by stating that the Nigerian constitution stipulates that we are Nigerians first and then Muslims (or Christians) second. When fanatic northern Nigerian elected officials insist that Muslims are Muslims first and Nigerians second and, therefore, are entitled to live by the *Sharia Islamic law* they subvert the Nigerian Constitution, according to Emeagwali.

The contradiction, says Emeagwali, is these elected officials were elected through a secular constitution that is the supreme legal document of the land. Each official swore to uphold the constitution. After being elected, some Muslim officials now want that constitution subordinate to *Sharia Law*. Proponents of *sharia* argue that the constitution guarantees freedom of religion while opponents argue that freedom of religion does not mean that Islam will be the state religion and take precedence over the constitution. When a northern Nigerian state adopts Islam as the state religion, it in fact puts the state above the nation and its constitution. In other words, "freedom of religion" does not entitle some northern states to create an Islamic state within the secular state of Nigeria. More specifically, the Nigerian constitution does not permit the adoption of Christianity or Islam as the state religion. *Sharia Law* is subordinate to the constitution and to impose it as the supreme law of a state is equivalent to violating and overthrowing the

constitution. It is nonsensical for *sharia* to be superior to the constitution and to operate two sets of contradictory laws in any state, even if most of the state residents want *sharia*. An argument often made is that they should allow most of the people in a given state to adopt Islam as their state religion. The latter will be impractical. For example, if they allow most of the people in some northern states to designate Islam as their state religion, then should most of the people in oil-producing states who have demanded be allowed to retain 100 percent of the oil revenues? In practice, religious fanatics are selectively using *Sharia Law* to oppress the poor and women.

The Nigerian religious problem gained international attention with the Miss World Pageant was moved from Nigeria to England due to strife from the Islamic sectors of society in Kaduna. Over 200 persons died in riots. Many other deaths have been attributed to the strife over the imposition of *Sharia Law* in the northern Nigeria.

A small success was achieved in Apr., 2002, when Abacha's family agreed to return \$1 billion to the government; the government had sought an estimated \$4 billion in looted Nigerian assets. Army lawlessness has also been a problem in some areas.

Encarta Encylopeida, Columbia Encyclopedia, [www.nigeriafonet.com](http://www.nigeriafonet.com), emeagwali.com, [CNN.com](http://CNN.com), Reuters AlertNet, [http://www.beaconschool.org/~dkaen/history\\_nigeria.html](http://www.beaconschool.org/~dkaen/history_nigeria.html).

## Religion

Africa attracts the attention of all persons who study or consider religion. In this continent, one finds remarkable instances of traditional religions, dominant influence by Islam, spreading sectors of Christian ministry, and even an expanding non-religious population. When the religious ferment is combined with the remaining problems of colonialism, the intertribal conflicts, and the newly emerging economic issues, a situation beset by difficulties clearly exists. Nigeria has a typical African expression of traditional religion practice and indigenous, separatists churches

### **Non-Christian Religions**

#### **Traditional Religions**

Traditional religion in Nigeria follows the nature of traditional religion in the Sub-Saharan portions of Africa. While the numbers followers who fully participate in traditional religions is declining due to efforts of Muslim and Christian mission efforts, the importance of the traditional religions both in Nigeria and its influences in other lands (primarily Brazil, the Caribbean, Cuba, Mexico, and into North America). The syncretization is particularly intense in areas dominated by Catholic faith.

Many estimate the followers of traditional religion in Nigeria to be around 6,680,000 or some 5.99% of the people. Johnstone suggests, however, that traditional religions claim closer to 13% of the people—a total closer to 13,500,000. Johnstone suggests the totals for Islam and Christianity should be considered lower than the usual figures.

Traditional religion in Nigeria takes several forms, according to the various people groups. Since over 490 people groups are identified over Nigeria, the situation involving their religious expressions remains uncertain.

#### **Traditional Yoruba Religion**

Traditional Yoruba religion centers around a pantheon of deities called *Orisha*. The major faith that grows out of the belief in Orisha is called *Ifa Religion* or Yoruba Religion. The word *Ifa* is the Yoruba word for god and is the same as *Olorun* (*Olodumare*). Yoruba oral tradition teaches that the high god, *Olorun* (*Olodumare*), asked

*Orishala* to descend to create the first Earth life at *Ile-ife*. *Orishala* was delayed and his younger brother, *Oduduwa*, accomplished the creative work. Later, sixteen other orisha came to earth to create humans and live with them on earth. The descendents of each of these deities are said to have spread Yoruba culture and religious practices throughout Yoruba land.

The basic pantheon of Yoruba gods is variously estimated at 201, 401, or 601. Some of these deities existed before the creation of *Oduduwa*, others came into being at the creative time, others are heroes or heroines who left important messages for the people, and still others are natural phenomena (mountains, rivers, hills). The sacred city of *Ife* legitimizes a royal hierarchy and undergirds belief in the gods. When a child is born, a diviner, *babalao*, is consulted and determines which orisha the child should follow.

Adult Yoruba often honor several deities.

The most popular of the hundreds of gods in Yoruba culture are *Sango*, the god of thunder and lightning, *Ifa*, also known as *orumilia*, god of divination, *Eshu*, the messenger and trickster god, and *Ogun*, the god of iron and war. Yoruba religion also has strong tones of *shamanism* and shows similarities with *Native American Spirituality* although no contact is considered between the Yoruba and Native Americans.

The *Gelede* is a mask used in the *Gelede cult*, which is connected with witches. The ceremony takes place only in the southwestern parts of Yorubaland, on both sides of the border with the Republic of *Benin* (i.e. in the *Egbado*, *Shabe*, *Awori*, *Oho*, *Nago* and *Ketu Kingdoms*). The witches of *Ketu* are said to have founded the cult, whose purpose is to appease the spirits of witches and to utilize their power to protect communities against malevolent forces.

The ceremonies usually take place annually and at funerals on the death of members and, as in *Epa*, the masks consist of two parts, a mask and a superstructure. The superstructure may depict many secular motifs. Masks may be made to represent a great member of the society. Membership of the society is open to both sexes, but women hold some of the most important titles. The festival is often in celebration or honor of the great mother, the ancestor of all women and of witches- *Iya Nla*. When the dances are to be performed, the participants and old women gather in the market square and pray to the spirits. The ceremonies start at night with an *Efe* (a special masquerade) performance, and the following day the main *Gelede* ceremonies begin. The masks appear in identical pairs draped in multicolored costume. *Ife* is the senior male dancer whose songs are mostly satirical consisting of a running commentary on current events. This is usually very entertaining and sometimes predicts future happenings.

In Yoruba thought, *ashe* is the cosmic life force, the supernatural energy from the creator God that can bring things into existence. To the Yoruba, witchcraft is a real and threatening phenomenon. Elderly women are typically identified as witches because they are thought to possess large amounts of *ashe*, a neutral energy or life force. *Ashe* endows these women with supernatural abilities with which they can bring disease, destruction, and death to individuals and society, or blessings, peace, and prosperity.

In order to win the favor of witches, Yoruba men perform *Gelede*, a lavish and expensive multimedia dance spectacle. The Yoruba have a saying about *Gelede*: *Oju to Wo Gelede Ti Dopin Iran* (The eyes that have seen *Gelede* have seen the end of drama).

Yoruba religion has strongly influenced religions such as *Santeria*, *Lukumi*, *Macumba* in Cuba. Religion in *Benin*, to the west of Yorubaland, and in the southern areas of *Congo*

have been more influential in *Umbanda* and *Kardecism* in Brazil, *Vodun* in the Caribbean (primarily Haiti), and Kongo. The religious systems of Kongo and Yoruba have similarities and differences but have interacted and influenced each other.

[www.africana.com](http://www.africana.com), <http://www.ekiti.com/israk/yoruba.htm>.

### **Traditional Igbo Religion**

The Igbo, a profoundly religious people, believe in a benevolent creator, *Chukwu*, (*Chuku* or *Chineke*) who created the visible universe (*uwa*). Other minor deities exist under him, *Anyanwu* (The Sun), *Iwa* (The Sky) *Ale* (The Earth). *Ale*, the most important minor deity, is connected with ancestors-*Noiche* and *Ajoku*, the divinity associated with Yams. The ancestors usually appear as masked dancers (*Mmuo*) who dance during festivals and an opposing force, *agbara*, means a spirit or supernatural being. In some situations people are referred to as *agbara* due to an almost impossible feat performed by them. In a common phrase the Igbo people will say *Bekee wu agbara*. This means the white man is spirit. This is usually in amazement at the scientific inventions of the white man.

In addition to the natural level of the universe, Igbo also believe that reality exists on another level, the spiritual forces, the *alusi*. The *alusi*, minor deities, are forces for blessing or destruction, depending on circumstances. They punish social offences and those who unwittingly infringe their privileges. The role of the diviner is to interpret the wishes of the *alusi*, and the role of the priest is to placate them with sacrifices. Either a priest is chosen through hereditary lineage or he is chosen by a particular god for his service, usually after passing through a number of mystical experiences. Each person also has a personalized providence, which comes from Chukwu, and returns to him at the time of death, a *chi*. This *chi* may be good or bad.

*Ikengais* consists of a ritual in the Cult of a man's right hand. The right hand is used to do virtually all important things, such as wield a tool or weapon, feed oneself, offer a sacrifice or make a gesture; the *Lenga* symbolizes masculine strength and the ability to achieve through one's own efforts that is the Igo concept of status and success. *Ikenga's* are usually personal objects owned by individuals, they may also be owned by entire communities.

*Ikenga's* and the attendant rituals are common to the *Igbo*, *Urhobo*, *Igala*, *Bini*, and *Ijo* of Nigeria. The shrines consecrated to the *Ikenga* spirit, through offerings and sacrifices, are intended to ensure success in all "manual" enterprises, particularly those in which the right hand is used. *Ikenga's* include a standing or seated male, a stool, and horns. The stool denotes authority; the stance of the figure and the protecting or curved horns suggest vitality and assertiveness. Periodic offerings are made to one's *Ikenga* to ensure in economic and personal undertakings.

*Ofo* are sacred symbols of truth, justice, law and authority. They play a role in sacrificial rituals, prayer, oath taking, pronouncing judgement, deliberating policy within the family or community, and involving blessings or curses. Brass *Ofo* often serve as symbols of family or community authority and become revered family heirlooms.

Bronze *Ofo* serve as symbols of power and authority for office holders and titled men, or a sacred family icon. *Ofo* represents the collective power of the ancestors and the truths given by *Chuku* (The High God). The *Ofo*, symbolizes the link between the living holder of family or ruling authority and their ancestors. They also symbolize the link they make between *Chokwu* the High God and Humanity, and between the living, the dead, and those yet to be born (*Njaka*). *Ofo* plays a role in prayer, ritual sacrifice, contact of spirit patrons, magical uses, naming ceremonies, determining calendars of events, affirming

moral uprightness, sealing covenants, legitimizing states or office, decision making, settling disputes, taking oaths of administration, and promulgating and enforcing laws. *Mmwo masks* are extensively used in Igbo religion. These masks have differing names: *Mmuo-Mmo-Maw* (Men's society); *Agbogho Mmuo* (Maiden spirit); *Oko Rosianma* (Good- Spirit)." White face may connote death or the world of spirits. Light coloring of the face also evokes purity, beneficence, wealth and other positive qualities. Elaborate coiffures depict real life items and other materials (i.e. mirrors, etc.). These masks, that can represent two kinds of spirits, either male or female, worn at funerals and other ceremonies. Frequently they represent beautiful maidens with delicate features and elaborate coiffures (or other superstructures). One mask, *Odu Gummuo* depicts strong or brave spirit. The Horns projecting from the mask and the deliberate, menacing gait, express male prowess in war and hunting. These masks are associated with funerary activities, but they do not generally embody souls of the deceased as funerary masks do in some other Igbo areas.

The Igbo strongly believe that the spirits of one's ancestors keep constant watch over a person. The living show appreciation for the dead and pray to them for future well being. It is against tribal law to speak badly of a spirit. Those ancestors who lived well, died in socially approved ways, and were given correct burial rites, live in one of the worlds of the dead, which mirror the worlds of the living. They are periodically reincarnated among the living and are given the name *ndichie* – the returners. Those who died bad deaths and lack correct burial rites cannot return to the world of the living, or enter that of the dead. They wander homeless, expressing their grief by causing harm among the living. The funeral ceremonies and burials of the Igbo people are extremely complex, the most elaborate of all being the funeral of a chief.

Several kinds of deaths, however, are considered shameful, and in these circumstances no burial is provided at all. Shameful death includes women who die in labor, children who die before they have teeth, those who commit suicide, and those who die in the sacred month. For these people funeral ceremonies consist of being thrown into a bush.

Traditional religious beliefs also led the Igbo to kill those that might be considered shameful to the tribe. Single births were regarded as typically human, multiple births as typical of the animal world. So twins were regarded as less than humans and put to death (as were animals produced at single births). Children who were born with teeth (or whose upper teeth came first), babies born feet first, boys with only one testicle, and lepers, were all killed and their bodies thrown away in secrecy.

Igbo regard religion with great seriousness a fact that can be seen in their attitudes to sacrifices, which were not of the token kind. Religious taboos, especially those surrounding priests and titled men, involved a great deal of asceticism. The Igbo expected in their prayers and sacrifices, blessings such as long, healthy, and prosperous lives, and especially children, who were considered the greatest blessing of all. The desire to offer the most precious sacrifice of all led to human sacrifice – slaves were often sacrificed at funerals in order to provide a retinue for the dead man in life to come.

The Igbo provide no shrine to *Chukwu*, nor were sacrifices made directly to him, but he was conceived as the ultimate receiver of all sacrifices made to the minor deities.

The minor deities claimed an enormous part of the daily lives of the people. The belief was that these gods could be manipulated in order to protect them and serve their



interests. If the gods performed these duties, they were rewarded with the continuing faith of the tribe.

Different regions of Igboland have varying versions of these minor deities. Among the minor deities in various regions are *Ala*, the earth-goddess, the spirit of human fertility, and the productivity of the land. *Igwe* is the sky-god. Igbo do not appeal to this god for rain because rain is the full-time profession of the rain-makers--Igbo tribesmen who were thought to be able to call and dismiss rain. *Imo miri*, the spirit of the river. The Igbo believe that a big river has a spiritual aspect; it is forbidden to fish in such deified rivers. *Mbatuku*, the spirit of wealth. *Agwo*, a spirit envious of other's wealth, always in need of servitors. *Aha njuku* or *Ifejioku*, the yam spirit. *Ikoru*, the drum spirit. *Ekwu*, the hearth spirit, which is woman's domestic spirit.

As is true in most areas of the world where traditional religions have been active, the beliefs, actions, practices, and rituals of the traditional religions remain in the lives and behaviors of many people who have embraced the "world religions," such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. The statement, "If you scratch a Javanese Moslem you will find an animist," is as accurate for most of Africa as for Indonesia. The traditional religions, far from being dead, are active and functioning in most cultures of the world.

[http://www..ohanae.org/oputa/igbo\\_race.htm](http://www..ohanae.org/oputa/igbo_race.htm)

### **Totemic Religion Among the Mumymre People**

Many of the Traditional Religious practices in the northern parts of Nigeria show strong totemic aspects, ancestor cults, and secret societies. The totemic groups are of primary importance in *Mama* religion, for a lineage's membership in a certain group is defined by the group to which their ancestors belonged. Offerings and sacrifices are made to the family ancestors to appease them and to thank them, especially during harvest times. The dancing of bush cow masks is known to be a part of a secret society whose main purpose is to ask the ancestors who are associated with the bush cow for abundance and agricultural fertility.

The skulls of ancestors are considered the resting place of their souls. Wooden statues that are carved to represent the dead are placed near the skull of the deceased person. It is believed that the spirit is then able to enter the statue which can be transported into the house where it is involved in the daily lives of the living.

The seven grades of *Vabong* secret society regulate *Mumuye* religious life. Men achieve entry into the society through initiation ceremonies which include flagellation and an explanation of the meaning of masks and other magical objects. Mumuye artists are famous for their wooden statues known as *Iagalagana*. These figures vary from 30 to 160 cm in height and display elongated features and exaggerated ear lobes. Carved by blacksmiths or weavers, they are kept in a separate hut located on a family compound, and are entrusted to the family member who has magical powers. The *Iagalagana* have divination, apotropaic and rainmaking functions, and serve as prestige objects. The *Dakakari* people inhabit part of north-west Nigeria and produce terracotta grave markers with a standing human or animal figure set on top of a sphere as a part of their Traditional religion that also centers on ancestors.

### **Islam**

Muslims in Nigeria are estimated at over 45,717,500 or 41% of the population. The annual growth rate stands at around + 2.7 %, a little less than the suggested annual growth rate of Christianity.

Islam is particularly strong in the northern areas, among the Hausa and Fulani peoples. Muslims in the north are striving to bring *Shari'a Law* (March 2001) to power. This effort has caused national turmoil and persecution of Christians in the region. The effort to impose *Shari'a Law* in northern Nigeria is the source of much turmoil and strife including the killing of thousands.

As seen earlier, Islam came to the northern regions of Nigeria as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD.

[http://www.geographyiq.com/countries/ni/Nigeria\\_people.htm](http://www.geographyiq.com/countries/ni/Nigeria_people.htm).

### **Non-Religious**

While those classed as non-religious number less than 500,000 in Nigeria, the annual growth rate of these people has reached + 8.5%. This alarming increase demonstrates the pressing need of evangelism and church growth for this important nation.

### **African Independent or Indigenous Churches**

African Independent (Charismatic, spiritual, Indigenous) Churches continue to multiply in Nigerian Church Life. Many of these church-type groups reveal a highly syncretistic nature to the degree that some Christians are slow to acknowledge them as Christian.

The groups often incorporate indigenous ideas, practices, fears, and religious rites into organizations that claim to be Christian. The underlying cause of much of this "Africanized" church practice may well be the paternalistic, western, non-indigenous nature of much of the early church ministries. Evangelical Christians should be slow to condemn these movements and should seek ways to help them achieve a satisfactory contextualization of the Gospel in the Nigerian milieu. Notice the inclusion of numerous of these movements in the section on Church Groups in Nigeria.

Barret, Johnstone, Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa, Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*

### **Marginal Christians**

#### **Roman Catholic**

Roman Catholic ministry began in Nigeria as early as 1487 and the Church now claims as many as 15 million adherents, some 8,500,000 members in over 16,000 congregations. This total gives the Catholic Church 13.45% of the population with an annual growth rate approaching + 4.1%.

#### **Orthodox**

Three groups of Orthodox Churches serve in Nigeria but their numbers remain very small. The *Greek Orthodox Church* was started by Greek traders and continues to minister largely to Greek and other visiting nationals. This Church reports only around 1000 members. *The American Orthodox Catholic Church in Nigeria* has reports some 10 congregations with 200 members and 500 adherents. The *Coptic Orthodox Church* has some 200 members with 500 adherents.

#### **Non-Christian**

##### **Jehovah's Witnesses**

Jehovah Witnesses began work in Nigeria in 1921 and had reached a state of active witnessing by 1925. The Church now claims 4339 congregations, with 226,300 members and over 600,000 adherents.

### **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints**

The Mormons began in Nigeria around 1953 and have some 4000 members and 8000 adherents. A small group known as the Reorganized Church of Christ of the Later-Day Saints has some 800 members.

### **Christian Scientists**

The Christian Scientist movement has two societies in Nigeria with around 100 members and perhaps as many as 200 adherents.

### **Evangelical Christians**

The Christian family in Nigeria is divided between the Protestant Churches that boast of 15.84% of the population in 523 denominations and the Independent Churches with 18.25% of the population in 4200 denominations. Anglicans have some 10.12% of the people. Marginal groups, Catholics, and Orthodox have smaller numbers.

### **Protestant**

#### **The Anglican Church**

The Anglican Church in Nigeria is organized in at least eleven dioceses. The first Anglican work began in 1842. Anglicans now report a total of over 9000 congregations, with 3,000,000 members, and 11,000, 000 adherents.

#### **The Assemblies of God**

The Assemblies of God began in Nigeria in 1939 and new report over 7700 congregations with 650,000 members and 1,800,000 adherents.

#### **The Methodist Church**

The Methodists in Nigeria began in 1842. They have churches primarily among the Yoruba, Ibibio, Ijebu, and Ibo peoples. Today, the Methodists in Nigeria report over 3400 congregations with 680,000 members and 1,700,000 adherents. The Zion Methodist Church, which began as a schism in the Methodist group, operates primarily among Igbo people. This group, that started around 1942, numbers 28 congregations, with 20,000 members.

#### **The Presbyterian Church**

The Presbyterians began work in Nigeria in 1846 and are found mostly in the southern area of the nation among Igbo and Ibibio peoples.. Presbyterians report some 700 congregations with 90,000 members and 214,000 adherents.

#### **Churches of Christ**

Churches of Christ began in Nigeria around 1947 and have reached a total of over 2000 congregations with 75000 members and 150,000 adherents.

#### **The Mennonite Church**

The Mennonites entered Nigeria in 1957 with missionaries from North America. They have over 49 churches and 4500 members primarily in the southeastern areas of Nigeria.

#### **Nigerian Baptist Convention**

The Nigerian Baptist Convention is the Nigerian expression of the work begun in 1850 by missionaries of the Southern Baptist Convention. Churches affiliated with the Nigerian Baptist Convention serve over most of Nigeria and now number over 6660 with more 1,040,000 members and 1,800,000 adherents. The Nigerian Baptists support training schools, medical facilities, publishing ministries, and humanitarian efforts.

#### **The Qua Iboe Church**

The Interdenominational Mission of Belfast opened a mission at *Ibuno* on the *Qua Iboe River* in 1887 and despite efforts among other people groups remains primarily among the *Ibibio*. The Church has some 1200 congregations, 160,000 members, and 214,000 adherents. The group also operates schools, hospitals, leprosaria, and a nurses training program.

### **The Evangelical Church of West Africa**

Growing out of the work of the Sudan Interior Mission as early as 1893, the ECWA Church gained independence in 1956. SIM still maintains as many as 400 missionaries in West Africa. The ECWA now reports over 6000 congregations, 2,500,000 members, and 4,600,000 adherents. This Church has been active in missionary sending efforts with some results in the north

### **Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria**

This Fellowship, TEKAN, was formed in 1955, loosely binds some eight groups that grew out of several mission efforts such as the Sudan United Mission, Church of the Brethren, Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, United Methodists, and independent Nigerians. The group's high requirements for formal church membership keep membership low but attendance in these churches is high. This fact helps explain the higher numbers of adherents as compared to members in these Churches. *The Church of Christ in Nigeria* (TEKAN) has over 840 congregations with 250,000 members, and 1,400,000 adherents. *The Church of Christ/Tiv* (TEKAN) reports over 3300 congregations, 210,000 members, and 950,000 adherents. *The Christian Reformed Church* (TEKAN) has 600 congregations, over 76,000 members, and 185,000 adherents. *The Evangelical Reformed Church* (TEKAN) reports 280 congregations, 171,500 members, and 600,000 adherents. The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, which began in 1913, is affiliated with TEKAN. This Church has over 890 congregations, 18,500 members and as many as 700,000 adherents.

### **The Seventh Day Adventist Church**

The Seventh Day Adventist began in Nigeria in 1914 ministers in the Central and Northern regions. The group reports over 620 congregations, 155,000 members, and 305,000 adherents.

### **Apostolic Church of Nigeria**

Beginning in 1931, the Apostolic Church of Nigeria has over 7500 congregations, 550,000 members, and 900,000 adherents.

### **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Nigeria**

This Church began in 1936 as the ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod but changed in 1964 to affiliate with the Missouri Synod Lutherans. Working primarily among the *Ibibio*, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Nigeria has 1200 congregations, 160,000 members, and 715,000 adherents.

### **The Christian Brethren Church**

The Christian Brethren Church, started by the Plymouth Brethren Group in 1925 has almost 450 congregations, 150,000 members, and 450,000 adherents.

### **The Free Protestant Episcopal Church**

The Episcopal Church in Nigeria began in 1946 and has around 17 congregations with 4000 members and 6300 adherents.

### **International Church of the Four Square Gospel**

Since its beginnings in Nigeria in 1954, the Four Square Gospel Church has grown to over 35 congregations, 1300 members, and 3000 adherents.

#### **The Reformed Church of Christ**

The Reformed Church of Christ reports some 300 congregations, 40,000 members, and 85,000 adherents.

#### **Independent, Indigenous, Spiritual Churches**

Listing these Churches separately from Evangelical Churches does not indicate any lack of appreciation for them or criticism of them. These Churches project a different from of Evangelical Christianity and deserve a distinctive place. While some Independent Churches may go too far in their contextualizing of the Faith and the Church, the traditional Churches have fallen into the opposite error. The sheer number of these Church groups makes listing of all impossible. Only the larger and better known of the groups will be mentioned.

#### **The Christ Apostolic Church**

The Christ Apostolic Church began as early as 1917 and now reports over 6800 congregations, 700,000 members, with over 2,000,000 adherents.

#### **The Church of God Mission International**

This Church now reports over 5500 congregations, with 800,000 members, and 1,400,000 adherents.

#### **The Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim & Seraphim Church**

The original group of this Church has experienced many schisms and splits over the years. The Church began in 1925 and has now a total of over 1000 congregations with 100,000 members and 300,000 adherents.

#### **Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim & Seraphim Mt. Zion**

A 1929 schism from the C&S Church, this Church has over 360 congregations, with 10,000 members, and 20,000 adherents.

#### **Cherubim & Seraphim Church of Zion in Nigeria**

From its beginnings in 1948, this Church has grown to over 4000 congregations, 400,000 members and 800,000 adherents.

#### **The Holy Order of Cherubim & Seraphim**

This Church is another of the several that use this name. The Holy Order Church is Pentecostal and has its headquarters in *Kanduna* (northern Nigeria). The Church has over 200 congregations and 50,000 members.

#### **The Gospel Faith Mission**

This Church began in 1959 as a doctrinal schism from the Christ Apostolic Church. It now reports over 1300 congregations, 150,000 members, and 350,000 adherents.

#### **Living Faith Ministries**

This ministry reports 800 congregations, 160,000 members, and 400,000 adherents.

#### **The Holy Flock of God**

The Holy Flock of God split from the Cherubim & Seraphim Church and now has some 15 congregations with 10,000 members.

#### **The Church of the Lord (Aladura)**

This Church began in 1930 and uses the Yoruba word, *Aladura* that means pray, in its name. The Church has almost 1200 congregations, 450,000 members and 1,250,000 adherents.

## The Deeper Life Bible Church

The Church has Over 6000 congregations, 450,000 members, and 800,000 adherents.

Barrett, Johnstone [www.bethany.com/profiles/p\\_code/279.html](http://www.bethany.com/profiles/p_code/279.html).

[www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/ecumenical/aic-e.html](http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/ecumenical/aic-e.html).

### People Groups

Among Nigeria's 113, 000,000 people, some 490 people groups are found. The 36 states in Nigeria are grouped in six political zones. From the standpoint of people groups, the nation can be considered in three main regions, the Southern Zones, the Central Zones, and the Northern Zones—with different of the people groups being predominant in one of the zones. While Christianity is strong in the southern zones, Islam predominates in the northern.

### Peoples in Southern Nigeria

Over 42 million people live in the Southern Region of Nigeria, a region that reports a population that runs between 70% and 80% Christian. The major people groups include the *Igbo*, *Ibibio*, *Ijaw*, *Urhobo*, the *Yourba*. While Islam claims only between 5 and 20% of these people, some 15 to 20% follow Traditional Religions.

### The Yoruba People

Today, over 20 million people speak some dialect of *Yoruba*, which belongs to the *Kwa* group of the *Niger-Congo languages*. Most Yoruba speakers live in southwestern Nigeria. They form a majority in Lagos, Africa's second most populous city. Yoruba speakers are traditionally among the most urbanized African people. For centuries before British colonization, most Yoruba speakers inhabited a complex, urbanized society organized around powerful city-states. These densely populated cities centered on the residence of the king, or *oba*. The basic social units were patrilineages in which inheritance, descent, and political position pass through the male line. Though they lived in cities, traditionally most Yoruba men farmed crops such as yams, maize, plantains, peanuts, millet, and beans in the surrounding countryside. Many men also engaged in crafts such as blacksmithing, manufacturing textiles, and woodworking. Traditionally, Yoruba women specialized in marketing and trade, and could gain considerable independence, status, and wealth through their commercial activity. While many Yoruba speakers continue to farm and trade today, they generally also grow and sell cash crops such as cocoa. Meanwhile, the millions of Yoruba in modern cities such as Lagos pursue a diverse array of manufacturing and service occupations.

Originally Hausa speakers used the name Yoruba for the people of the *Oyo* Kingdom. Europeans appropriated the term to refer to all speakers of the Yoruba language. Yoruba speakers identify themselves as members of several different groups, including the *Ife*, *Isa*, and *Ketu*. Some of these Yoruba-speaking groups identify with the larger community of Yoruba speakers. Others, such as the *Sabe*, *Idaisa*, and *Ketu* consider themselves separate ethnic groups and do not feel a sense of community with other Yoruba speakers, though they share Yoruba origin myths. All of these groups, however, share a similar material culture, mythology, and artistic tradition.

According to folklore, the Yoruba originated from the mythical *Olorun*, God of the Sky, whose son, *Oduduwa*, founded the ancient holy city of *Ile-Ife* around the 8th century C.E. Linguistic and archaeological evidence suggest that, in fact, speakers of a distinct Yoruba

language emerged near the *Niger-Benue* confluence some three to four thousand years ago. From there they migrated west to Yorubaland between the 8th and 11th centuries. Strategically located on the fertile borderland between the savanna and the forest zones, *Ile-Ife* was the center of a powerful kingdom by the 11th century, one of the earliest in Africa south of the *Sahel*. Its rulers taxed both food surpluses and trade. While the institution of kingship probably predates the emergence of *Ile-Ife*, the holy city became the preeminent Yoruba spiritual and cultural center.

Oyo, however, became a powerful military state by the 17th century. The rulers of Oyo acquired horses by selling slaves to Europeans and reselling the manufactured goods to Hausa traders. The Oyo cavalry invaded neighboring Yoruba and non-Yoruba kingdoms alike, including *Dahomey*. By the late 18th century, however, Oyo, suffering from internal rivalries, began to disintegrate. During the early 19th century Dahomey won its independence in a war that further weakened Oyo.

During the 1830s Muslim Fulani from the Sokoto Caliphate conquered northern regions of Oyo and cut off its access to trade with the Hausa. By 1840 the Oyo kingdom had completely collapsed. Wars among Yoruba groups and city-states raged for much of the rest of the 19th century. The protracted warfare left many Yoruba vulnerable to enslavement. Large numbers were sold to traders who brought them to Latin America. To this day, Yoruba culture remains influential in Brazil and Cuba, where *Santería* religious practices carry on Yoruba traditions.

Yoruba society has a special place for twins as twins are considered as spiritual beings and are often believed to bring good fortune to their parents. Since twins are considered sacred and are thought to be protected by a special god, the Yoruba believe that they have one indivisible soul. If one or both die, surrogate images (*Ere Ibeji*) are carved in wood and these become the focus of frequent rituals and sacrifices. The wooden images are washed, dressed and fed every four days, (i.e. during market days) and their parents may dance around in the market places asking for alms. It is important to note that the figures do not represent gods (*Orisa*) although they are often referred to as such. There are two reasons for the ritual treatment of *Ere Ibeji*: (a) The spirit of the dead must be appeased so that it will not harm the remaining twin or any child born after the twin and (b) it is also hoped that if the *Ere Ibeji* is well treated its spirit will return to earth. *Ere Ibeji* are carved in all parts of Yorubaland. There are many styles of carving so that they provide an excellent record of the Yoruba carvers and carving styles.

The Yoruba comprise one of the West African people who practice female circumcision. Persons from societies that practice this ritual complain that westerners do not appreciate the full meaning of the rite. Those who support the practice claim it has a positive meaning. After all is said and none, the fact remains that a major purpose of this ritual is controlling female sexuality and making the woman less likely to stray sexually after marriage. In societies that practice the ritual, marriage is often difficult to arrange for a young woman who has not experienced female circumcision.

As the capital of British Nigeria, Lagos, dominated by Yoruba, became the center of Nigerian political and economic life. Colonial authorities introduced cocoa as a cash crop in Yorubaland and developed a modern infrastructure of railroads, highways, and schools in the region. As a result large numbers of Yoruba earned substantial cash incomes, became literate in English, and gained positions in the colonial civil service. By the time of independence, Yoruba speakers occupied a dominant position in Nigeria's economy

and government. Since independence, however, the more numerous northern Hausa have dominated the elected and military governments that have ruled Nigeria, and the relatively prosperous Yoruba have tended to remain political outsiders, often subject to repression.

<http://members.aol.com/porchfour/religion/afr.hmt>.

### **The Igbo People**

*Igboland* is the home of the *Igbo* people (19.9 million) and it covers most of Southeast Nigeria. This area is divided by the Niger River into two unequal sections – the eastern region (which is the largest) and the midwestern region. The river, however, has not acted as a barrier to cultural unity; rather it has provided an easy means of communication in an area where many settlements claim different origins. The *Igbos* are also surrounded on all sides by other tribes (the *Bini*, *Warri*, *Ijaw*, *Ogoni*, *Igala*, *Tiv*, *Yako* and *Ibibio*).

The origins of the Igbo people has been the subject of much speculation, and it is only in the last fifty years that any real work has been carried out in this subject. Like any group of people, the Igbo are anxious to discover their origin and reconstruct how they came to be how they have descended. Their experiences under colonialism and since Nigeria's Independence have emphasized for them the reality of their group identity which they want to anchor into authenticated history. (Afigbo, A.E.. 'Prolegomena to the study of the culture history of the Igbo-Speaking Peoples of Nigeria', *Igbo Language and Culture*, Oxford University Press, 1975. 28.)

Analysis of the sources that are available (fragmentary oral traditions and correlation of cultural traits) have led to the belief that there exists a core area of *Igboland*, and that waves of immigrant communities from the north and west planted themselves on the border of this core area as early as the ninth century. This core area – *Owerri*, *Orlu* and *Okigwi* – forms a belt, and the people in this area have no tradition of coming from anywhere else. Migration from this area in the recent past tended to be in all directions, and in this way the Igbo culture gradually became homogenized.

In addition to this pattern of migration from this core area, other people also entered the Igbo territory in about the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. Many of these people still exhibit different characteristics from that of the traditional Igbos – for example geographical marginality, the institution of kingship, a hierarchical title system and the *amosu* tradition (witchcraft). For some time some Igbo-speaking peoples claimed that they were not Igbo. This disclaimer was perhaps caused since the word was used as a term of abuse for "less cultured" neighbors. The word is now used in three senses, to describe Igbo territory, domestic speakers of the language, and the language spoken by them. (see A.E. Afigbo, 1981: *Ropes of Sand*, Caxton Press, Ibadan. and T. Shaw; "Igbo Ukwu: An Account of Archaeological Discoveries in Eastern Nigeria", Faber and Faber, 1970.)

The first contact between *Igboland* and Europe came in the mid-fifteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese. From 1482-1807 the Niger coast acted as a contact point between African and European traders, beginning with the Portuguese, the Dutch, and finally the English. At this stage there was an emphasis on trade rather than empire building, in this case the trade consisting primarily of Igbo slaves.

With the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 came a new trading era, concentrating on industry (palm products, timber, elephant tusks, and spices). At this point the British began to combine aggressive trading with aggressive imperialism. They saw the hinterland as productive, and refused to be confined to the coast. In 1900 the area that had been administered by the British Niger Company became the Protectorate of Southern



Nigeria, also incorporating what had been called the Niger Coast Protectorate. Control of this area then passed from the British Foreign Office to the Colonial Office. Long before it had officially been conquered, Igboland was being treated as a British colony. Between 1900 and 1914 (when Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated) there had been twenty-one British military expeditions into Igboland. In 1928 for the first time in their history, Igbo men were made to pay tax – they were a subject people.

This attempt to take over political control of Igboland met with resistance and cultural protest in the early decades of the twentieth century. A nativistic religious movement sprang up (the *ekumeku*) which inspired short-lived but feverish messianic enthusiasm. The rumors that the Igbo women were being assessed for taxation, sparked off the 1929 *Aba Riots*, a massive revolt of women never encountered before in Igbo history.

However, the engine of imperialism could not be stopped, and once it had begun, Igbo culture would never be the same again.

### **Urhobo People**

The 546,000 Urhobo people live in Southern Nigeria near the Ibo, Izon, Isoko, and Ukwani peoples with whom they are closely related in language and other cultural features. They speak the *Edo (Kwa)* language. Their oral tradition connects the Urhobo with the *Bimi* people but at the same time denies they come from the Bimi people. The Urhobo also connect themselves to the Igbo and Ijaw peoples, an impossible claim in that all three of these peoples are distinct from one another.

The Urhobo live in tropical rain forests and practice slash and burn farming. Fishing and hunting also occupy important place in their subsistence. Of particular importance to the Urhobo economy is the business of gathering, processing, and selling the oil from palm nuts for the international markets.

Political power among the Urhobo is based on kinship groups, age-grades, and title associations. In the past, Urhobo leaders (*ivie*) were officially installed by the *Oba* of Benin. The Oba would bestow upon these Urhobo leaders ceremonial swords and insignia that would substantiate their authority among other Urhobo.

The Urhobo religion recognizes a dual cosmological system—the spirit world and the physical world. They believe that everyone in the physical world has a replica in the spiritual world and that the two worlds have great influence on each other. Power, however, lies in the spirits who make demands on the people and cause problems for the living if not appeased through sacrifice. Every ten years the Urhobo hold a large masquerade ceremony at which the entire community honors the spirits (*edjo*).

Urhobo people are known for their art forms that include freestanding sculptures (*Ivwri*) that are wooden sculptures associated with the cult of the hand, and masks for the masquerading.

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Urhobo.html>

### **The Ijaw People**

The Ijaws are made up of 40 clans or *Ibes* that correspond respectively to dialects of the main language. Ethnologically they are referred to as ethnic *Ijaw, Ijon, Izon, Uzo of Ezon*. They engage mainly in fishing and are found along the coast of Nigeria, which is the third largest delta in the world. Ijaws are found in the following states in Nigeria:

*Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers, Edo, Ondo, Lagos, Cross River and Akwa Ibom*

There are also Ijaw settlements in *Gabon, and Liberia*. The Ijaw land is a very difficult terrain, with a lot of creeks and rivers. The islands are swampy and are the most

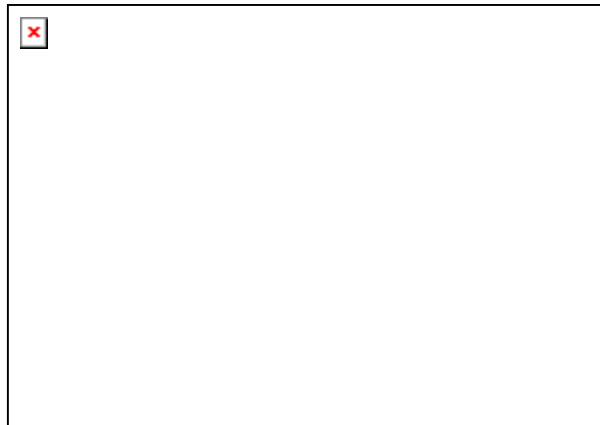
undeveloped in Nigeria. Yet over seventy per cent of Nigeria's crude oil comes from Ijaw land. Very few social infrastructures exist in a few places. This has alienated the majority of the people from western civilization, keeping them illiterate, rural and essentially traditional in their lifestyle. Very few schools exist among the people.

Idol worship, Polygamy, Intra and Inter Ijaws conflicts are regular features of the people. Recent aspirations of the Ijaw to attain a befitting development of their area (the Niger Delta) have resulted in massive riots and disruptions of economic life without a positive response from government

Every research into unreached people groups has always listed the Ijaws. Yet very little if any missionary effort has been expended in this regard. This is said to be due to the difficult terrain and harsh environment in which the Ijaws live. This compounds transportation problems, and wherever transportation is difficult the gospel is scarce. This should not be so.

Around 500 *Ijaw amas* have churches but there exists several entire *amas* without a single Bible-believing church. The need for church planting remains intense. Most villages and towns do not have a single Born-Again believer. The Church Missionary Society of the Church of England passed through Ijaw land over a hundred years ago in its missionary activity. First arriving in *Akassa*, the mission moved to *Nembe* and only succeeded in translating the Bible into the *Nember* dialect of the Ijaw in 1956. The other 39 dialects have no Bible in their language to date.

A brand of indigenous, white garment wearing 'Church' group is spreading among the Ijaws currently. This group is not different from the traditional and fetish beliefs of the people. It is not a Christian group. It permits and engages in polygamy, soothsaying, and divination, idol worship and several other unbiblical practices. The presence and work of this group is becoming a stumbling block to the evangelization of the Ijaws today.



### **Ibibio**

Over 1 million *Ibibio* people reside the Cross River area of modern day Nigeria (southeastern Nigeria where they have lived in for several hundred years. While little written material about them exists, they have a rich oral tradition. The Ibibio strongly resisted colonization, until after World War when the British gained control in the area. Even then they managed to have some autonomy over their own land.

The main economic staple in the region is the palm tree, the oil of which is extracted and sold to external markets. *Amama*, the people with highest rank in the Ibibio culture, control the majority of the community wealth. Individual villages are ruled by a group of village elders.

Ibibio religion is based on paying tribute to the village ancestors.

### **The Oron People**

*Oron* people are closely related to the neighboring *Ibibio* peoples. Both groups have lived in the Cross River area of modern day Nigeria for several hundreds of years, and while written information about them only exists in colonial records from the late 1800s on, oral traditions have them in the region much earlier than this. The peoples in the Cross River delta area were very resistant to colonial invasions, and it was not until after the end of World War I that the British were able to gain a strong foothold in the region. Even at this time, however, the British found it necessary to incorporate local traditions in order to impose indirect rule in the region.

The main economic staple in the region is the palm tree, the oil of which is extracted and exported. Among *Oron*, those of the highest rank in the *Ekpo* society (*Amama*) often control the majority of the community wealth. The *Amama* often appropriate hundreds of acres of palm trees for their own use and, with the profits they earn, ensure that their sons achieve comparable rank, effectively limiting access to economic gain for most members of the community. The *Ekpo* society requires that its initiates sponsor feasts for the town, which fosters the appearance of the redistribution of wealth by providing the poor with food and drink. In effect, this allows a disparity in wealth to be perpetuated in *Oron* society.

Individual villages are ruled by a group of village elders (*Ekpo Ndem Isong*) and the heads of extended families. Their decisions are enforced by members of the *Ekpo* society who act as messengers of the ancestors (*ikan*). *Ekpo* members are always masked when performing their policing duties, and although their identities are almost always known, fear of retribution from the ancestors prevents most people from accusing those members who overstep their social boundaries, effectively committing police brutality. Membership is open to all males, but one must have access to wealth to move into the politically influential grades.

*Oron* religion is based on paying tribute to the village ancestors. Failing to appease these ancestors brings the wrath of the *Ekpo* society. The most important ancestors are those who achieved high rank while living, usually the house heads. They may control the fortunes of the descendants and are free to afflict those who fail to make the proper offering or those who fail to observe kinship norms. *Ala* is the earth deity and is appeased through *Ogbom* ceremony, which is believed to make children plentiful and to increase the harvest. It is performed in the middle of the year, every eighth day for eight weeks by each section of the village in turn.

### **Ogoni People**

The *Ogoni* who number around 500,000 people are a distinct ethnic group within Nigeria. They inhabit a territory that forms part of the eastern-most extension of the mainland fringe bordering the eastern Niger Delta. *Ogoniland* covers a total area of approximately 404 square miles (appr. 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>) as a part of the coastal plain terraces. is among the highest in any rural area of the world.

Before the advent of colonialism, there was a very well established social system and with its rich plateau soil, fresh water streams, and the surrounding seas brimmed with fish. The forests of *Ogoniland* had an abundance of animals and hard wood preserved by the environmentally conscious *Ogoni*. The *Ogoni* who are known to be very hard working and fiercely independent were competent farmers and fishermen, producing food not only for their subsistence but for most of the Niger Delta and its northern neighbours.

The *Royal Dutch Shell Company*, known as Shell Oil, had been extracting oil from the fertile, swampy lowlands of the Ogoni's 400-sq-mi homeland in southeastern Nigeria since 1958. The company offered few benefits to local communities, and their sloppy practices contaminated the water and land, reducing fish and crop yields. In 1990 a group of Ogoni traditional leaders formed the *Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MSOP)*. They listed among their primary goals, not only better environmental protection, but also Ogoni statehood.

The group appointed *Saro-Wiwa* as spokesman. *Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa* assumed leadership of the Ogoni quest for justice. On May 21, 1994, Saro-Wiwa was arrested along with 14 colleagues, allegedly for involvement in the murder of four pro-government Ogoni chiefs. In 1995 the imprisoned Saro-Wiwa won a Goldman Environmental Prize, a prestigious award given annually to one environmental activist on each continent. Despite such publicity and lobbying efforts by numerous foreign parties, however, Saro-Wiwa was hanged on November 10, 1995.

Many Ogoni devotees and foreign activists consider Saro-Wiwa a martyr. Some observers, however, noting his political ambitions and his followers' violent vigilantism, have questioned the purity of his motives. Nonetheless, his imprisonment and execution reflected the injustice and intransigence of the Nigerian military dictatorship.

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### **Peoples of Central Nigeria**

Some 20 million people reside in the Central Region of Nigeria but authorities designate no dominant people group or groups. Actually, over 230 different language groups exist, most using the Hausa language for trade purposes. Religiously, the Central region reveals a religious mixture of Christianity 55%, Islam 30%, and Traditional at least 15%. Among the people groups inhabiting this central zone are the *Edo*, *Idoma*, *Nupe*, and *Tiv*.

### **The Niger & Benue River Peoples**

The people living on the banks of the *Niger* and *Benue Rivers* share many social and artistic traditions. They are thought to have common ancestors known as the *Akpoko* people. Traditionally, they principally make their money by acting as trade intermediaries between the inland people and the people who inhabit the Niger River Delta.

### **The Idoma People**

The *Idoma* people (Population 250,000) who are part of the Idoma Language Cluster are predominantly farmers and traders. Linguistic evidence suggests that the Idoma have lived in their present day region for at least four to five thousand years. They probably moved into the area from the north along with the forbearers of Yoruba, Bini, and Igbo peoples. All of these peoples belong to the *Kwa* family of languages, and linguists are able to estimate how long they have been separate from the differences in their individual languages. The Idoma broke off of one of the larger ethnic groups in the area at some point in the distant past and began developing their own culture in relative isolation from their parent group.

The Idoma live in compact villages or in relatively dispersed family homesteads. Political ties exist primarily on the community level with a headman, or chief, who inherits his position along patrilineal lines. Royal succession among the Idoma often alternates between two patrilineal lines, to some extent weakening the power of the ruler. The chief

usually consults a council of elders before making any important decisions. In the past, age-grade societies and the related masking traditions contributed to social control.

Idoma religion focuses on honoring lineage ancestors. Funeral ceremonies among the Idoma are often quite dramatic, with greater attention afforded to members of the community who have reached a combination of advanced age and prestige. Extensive funerals are held for both women and men in preparation for sending them on their final journey away from the village to the spirit world across the river. A memorial service, or second burial, is held for the deceased some time after the original burial in order to ensure that the dead pass on to the ancestor world in proper style.

Artistically, they have achieved a reputation for their female fecundity figures showing an open mouth with carved teeth and vertical keloids on the temples. The face is usually painted with white pigments - a stylistic characteristic also shared with the Igbo people. Idoma artists produce at least two types of female figures. The first, known as *Anjenu*, is used during fertility cults and is revered in small shrines. Once a year they are worn by dancers and paraded through the village. The second type, called *Ekwotame*, is carved as a seated woman and may be painted with black pigments. These figures represent ancestors and thus the idea of lineage, so they are set near the body of the deceased. Headdresses with a conical base supporting a round human head and helmet masks belong to the *Oglinye* society which was originally a warrior society. Nowadays, however, it retains only the idea that its members are strong and courageous. *Janus* or multi-headed headdresses also exist and are used during entertainment festivities and funerals. Face masks, called *Okua*, are generally found among the southern Idoma people. They are worn by dancers during funerals and display typical keloids, an open mouth, and a smooth coiffure.

### **The Afo People**

The *Afo* people settled north of the junction of the Niger and the Benue Rivers. Their *Okeshi fi* are used by members of the *Alanya Beshi* s during annual festivities related to fertility rites. are carved as seated or standing female figures with overall linear body and face scarification. Caryatid stools were also made. Recent studies have suggested that these sculptures, attributed to the Afo, may, in fact, have been by northern Nigerian tribes, themselves influenced by the Fulani people.

The *Igala* people live near the end of the Niger. Every year they participate in important ceremony celebrating the power of their king. During these festivities, nine types of royal helrne '*Agba*' appear. They display typical facial scarification and slanted eyes. Non-royal helmet masks covered with linear scarifications and are used in festivals related to the *Egu* cult, which celebrate the spirit of the dead, and during the Yam festival when *Igala* ancestors are evoked. Their features are also found on staffs. Headdresses and statues carved in the Akpa area show a typical flattened face with two oblique scarifications on each cheek topped by a crested coiffure.

### **The Tiv People**

The 2,200,000 *Tiv* people live from farming fields on the left bank of the Benue River and take their name from their eponymous ancestor. They carve figures which are either large and elongated or naturally proportioned with round heads and occasionally scarification at the corners of the mouth and a crested coiffure. Some of these figures were used as posts for reception huts, while others, called *Ihambe*, are linked to the concept of fecundity and marriage. Tiv blacksmiths have achieved notoriety for their

'prestige' adzes in which the handle ends in a stylized human head with a blade sprouting from it. These are used during festivities and important meetings. Their metal output also includes small copper figures.

### **The Nupe**

The *Nupe* people (over 1,100,000 strong) have lived along the banks of the Niger River since the 15th century and were conquered in around 1830s by the Muslim Fulani people. Their art is therefore non figurative and mostly decorative.

Nupe houses are decorated with doors and posts carved with geometric designs, although there are some rare examples of animal designs. Circular stools, supported by varying numbers of feet, are presented by grooms to their brides. Traditionally they are used as 'prestige' objects on market days and during important meetings.

### **Peoples of Northern Nigeria**

Nearly 39 million people reside in the northern sections of Nigeria. Among the people groups are the *Fulani (Fulbe)*, The *Hausa*, the *Kanuri*, and the *Kaduna*. The peoples in this region are strongly Islamic (50-60% Muslim), and Traditional Religion (20-30%), and Christian (13-20%). The *Bura* people in this region demonstrate a strongly Christian stance among the predominant Muslim populations. Important for missionary consideration are the largely unreached peoples in the *Gwoza Hills* region and the *Taraba* and *Adamawa* States in northern Nigeria.

### **The Fulani People**

The *Fulani*, sometimes called *Fulbe*, have traditionally lived in the northern areas, have had relationships with the Hausa, many Fulani speak the Hausa language. Fulani mostly follow the Islamic religion to some degree—perhaps less intensely than most of the Hausa. This people actually exist in seven groups with a total population of over 12,300,000.

The Fulani, a nomadic people who emphasize cattle raising, have influenced regional politics, economics, and history through western Africa for over a thousand years. They played significant roles in population movements, in the spread of Islam, and in the general situation throughout western Africa. The high point of the Fulani Empire was between the early 1800s and early 1900s.

This power was consolidated under *Usman dan Fodio* and was centered in northern Nigeria. Dan Fodio, a devout Muslim, used religious fervor to ignite his troops to undertake a series of holy wars. Following the early success of Islamic warriors, non-Islamic Fulani joined ranks with their fellows to form an extensive and powerful empire. Fulani are mainly nomadic herders and traders. The routes they established in western Africa provided extensive links throughout the region that fostered economic and political ties between otherwise isolated ethnic groups. Dairy products produced from Fulani cattle were traded to sedentary farmers for agricultural products and luxury items. Fulani traders then traded these luxury items between various groups along their nomadic routes. Members of individual Fulani clans often settled down among their sedentary neighbors, intermarrying and establishing trading contacts for future business transactions. The two most significant factors in Fulani political systems are clientage and competition. In order to gain political office a Fulani man would have to compete among his fellows for the right to rule. He could show his political favor by demonstrating that he had a large following in the form of individuals and families. By agreeing to become the client of a powerful man or family, a subject would offer tribute in the form of gifts

and political support in exchange for the security of knowing that a person with political power would be looking out for the interests of the subject.

Fulani religion is largely, if not wholly, Islamic. Although there are varying degrees of orthodoxy exhibited throughout Fulani society, most adhere to at least some of the basic requirements of the religion. It is usually the case that the wealthy and powerful are among the most religious, while those who have fewer resources are less likely to observe their religion so strictly. Islam has been used to justify the holy jihads that brought the northern territories of modern day Nigeria under Fulani leadership. It was not unusual that such political and economic gains would be made for the Fulani Empire in the name of Islam.

### **The Hausa of Nigeria**

Over 22.1 million of the 111,560,000 people belong to one of the groups of the *Hausa* (sometimes known as the *Hausa-Chadic* group). They are the largest ethnic group in all of West Africa. Thirty percent of all Hausa can be found in the north and northwest regions of Nigeria, an area known as "Hausaland." Hausa communities can also be found in other West African nations such as Chad, Ghana, and the Ivory Coast because Hausa peoples have been heavily involved in long distance trading for many centuries.

Earlier, in the historical section, this profile mentioned the legend that holds that *Bayajidda*, a traveler from the Middle East, married the *queen of Daura*, with whom he produced seven sons. Each son is reputed to have founded one of the seven Hausa kingdoms: *Kano*, *Rano*, *Katsina*, *Zazzau (Zaria)*, *Gobir*, *Kebbi*, and *Auyo*. The likely truth of this legend may help explain the strong attachment of the Hausa peoples to Islam although some Hausas do not follow the Muslim religion.

Although English is recognized as the country's official language, Hausa, the native language of the Hausa people, is rapidly becoming the chief language of northern Nigeria. The Hausa are very influential in West Africa, both culturally and politically. God's heart is to see them become a strong Christian influence as well.

The Hausa have been well established in northern Nigeria for more than a thousand years. Their history is one of immigration and conquest, having been influenced by Fulani rulers since the early nineteenth century. Islamic practices are tightly woven into their culture.

Seventy percent of the Hausa live in rural farm villages with populations that may range from 2,000 to 12,000. Their homes are generally made of grass or dried mud with thatched roofs. Only the "well-to-do" can be found living in modern homes or apartment buildings in the city. Most of the Hausa are farmers, herdsman, or traders. Cocoa, peanuts, palm oil, cotton, and rubber are grown for sell or trade; while corn, rice, beans, and yams are grown for consumption. The farmers depend heavily on nearby cities for trade opportunities. Most of the villagers cannot survive solely as farmers or herdsman, but must also hold factory jobs to adequately provide for their families.

In comparison to some other African tribes, the Hausa have reasonable standards of health care, diet, shelter, electricity, and education. However, life for the Hausa is still very difficult. For example, nearly one-third of the people are unemployed, and only about half of the population can read and write. The average life expectancy of a Nigerian is only 56 years.

Hausa's social structure, individuals are classified as either being commoners or chiefs, depending on which profession they hold and the amount of wealth they possess. In

marriage relationships, close relatives, preferably cousins, are chosen as partners. In Nigerian terms, a woman is almost always defined as someone's daughter, wife, mother, or widow, and is given less educational opportunities than men. In fact, they are often confined to the home, except for visits to relatives, ceremonies, and the workplace. For the most part, they do not work in the fields, but are responsible for preparing meals in the homes. There is a large population of single women, especially in the cities, due to the high divorce rate.

The Hausa commonly practice polygamy—allowing multiple wives to most men. A Hausa proverb states, “never trust a man with only one wife.” In Hausa thinking, such a man has not totally proved his adulthood and his ability to oversee a family.

By 1500 AD, Islam had been introduced to the Hausa by northern traders. Many of the urban Hausa embraced it right away, in hopes of enhancing their businesses. However, the villagers were not as receptive to this new religion.

In the "holy wars" of 1804 and 1808, the Hausa were conquered by the Fulani, their strongly Islamic neighbors. At that time, many of the villagers were either forced or bribed into becoming Muslim. They adopted some of Islam's basic outward behaviors and rituals, but did not "sell out" as many of the urban Hausa did. For that reason, many of the rural Hausa today are only superficially Muslim.

The Hausa culture is strongly linked to Islam, which makes it difficult to penetrate this people group with the Gospel. They are very prejudice against the Christians of southern Nigeria, and there is intense persecution of the Hausa who have become Christians.

<http://www.motherlandnigeria.com/people.htm>.

### **The Kanuri People**

The Kanuri People in northern Nigeria divide into several internal groups including the Manga Kanuri, Yerwa Kanuri, . The *Kanuri* People, who number about 4.5 million, live in the *Lake Chad* and *Sahel desert* region of *Niger, Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon*.

The Kanuri tribes have practiced Islam for more than 1,000 years.

The Kanem-Borno Empire, located in the western Chad Basin - nowadays the modern states of Nigeria and Niger, was one of Africa's most powerful and enduring empires. Its roots go back beyond the 11th century A.D. when the *Seyfuwa* dynasty emerged and adopted Islam into their government principles. The political system of Kanem-Borno resembled a state society with aspects of a feudal system. Administration was complex and highly hierarchical, concentrating around an absolute ruler, the *mai*.

In 1472 Seyfuwa founded their capital *Birni Gazargamo* after having moved from the west of Lake Chad. At this point of time the ethnogenesis of the Kanuri people began. Until the present, the Kanuri remain the dominant ethnic group in the western Chad Basin.

From the 15th century onwards the sphere of influence of the empire gradually widened as far north as the *Fezzan*, to *Haussaland* in the West, the *Mandara* Mountains in the South, and *Kanem* and *Bagirmi* in the East. The empire reached its heydays under *Mai Idris Alauma* during the 16th century. Alauma was able to pacify interior ethnic groups and stabilize the government. After those years of expansion the empire became consolidated, yet being constantly challenged by internal and external threats, the major one being the Fulani jihad under *Usuman dan Fodio* who finally destroyed the capital in 1808.



In 1900 the lands were divided among the Germans and English. afterwards the *al-Kanemi* dynasty was reinstalled under both colonial powers resulting in two Emirates which today form Borno State of the Republic of Nigeria.

The economic basis of Kanem-Borno was the trans-Saharan trade which was controlled by the state. Hereby its representatives obtained items which enabled them to secure their position and subsequently expand their power. The most valuable commodity that Borno was able to offer in exchange were slaves. Slavery had been practiced in the area around Lake Chad since times immemorial and even the earliest written sources dating from the 9th century speak of rulers enslaving their own people or surrounding groups and selling them to North Africa. Slaves, like in other Sudanic states, played an important role on all political and economical levels of the Kanem-Borno state.

The Kanuri, a group of some 4 million Nigerian Muslims, practice a very strict form of *purdah*. In the cities, some Kanuri women basically never leave their homes. Others leave only with male chaperones.

The Manga Kanuri form one sub-group of the Kanuri people. They are a tall, very dark, and a stately, dignified people. Manga are proud of their history as the rulers of the powerful Borno Empire that once surrounded Lake Chad in northwest Africa. Today about 200,000 Manga live in Nigeria. Most of them are subsistence farmers. During the region's three months of rain, these proud people struggle to raise enough food—mostly millet, sorghum, and peanuts—to feed their family and animals for the entire year. Flocks of sheep and goats supplement the Manga's meager existence. Some Manga Kanuri also raise cattle and camels

Many observers say the Kanuri people are closed to outside influences, especially the gospel. However, Christian workers trying to reach the Manga Kanuri report they are friendly, helpful and open, particularly to those who show respect for their language. The Manga have little access to the gospel. No Manga Christians are known in Nigeria, about 15 in Niger. Nigeria has no Manga churches but portions of the Old Testament have been translated into the Manga language. The New Testament is available in the *Yerwa Kanuri* dialect, which is understood by some Mangas. Christian workers also are beginning to translate Bible stories into Manga for use in chronological storying of the Bible. The Manga Kanuri, former guardians of an empire, strongly guard their Muslim faith. In fact, the Manga are considered “0 percent evangelized,” by many evangelical missions. These facts may indicate the main reasons why the Hausa remain so resistant to the Gospel.

The JESUS film is available in the *Yerwa Kanuri* dialect but not yet translated into Manga Kanuri. There are no Christian broadcasts in Manga but two in *Yerwa Kanuri*. The Manga Kanuri are avid horsemen. Those who can afford a horse own one, because it is a sign of Manga prestige. Horsemen, often in special dress and carrying swords or spears, display their abilities on their colorfully-decorated horses at any major Manga celebration.

The cornerstone of Kanuri society is the household. Besides blood relatives, sometimes that household consists of one or two young bachelors who help with farming and defending the family. The male head of the household, in return for these young men's help, will feed and clothe them and often will secure brides for them. After marriage these young men form their own families.

## **The Bura People**

The *Bura* People (250,000) follow their folk customs as to ways of life, traditional practices and behavior patterns which include rites of passage, festivals, calendar customs, drama, occupational life, material culture, belief and etiquette. It is evident that cultures which are not indigenous to Bura society have come into contact with and have influenced Bura folk customs in various ways. Among the foreign cultural institutions introduced to Bura society and subsequently emulated and adapted by the Bura people include Kanuri, Fulani, and Hausa cultures.

Christianity and Western education which were introduced in Bura society around the 1930s has had a strong influence on Bura culture. As British colonial legacy, today most Bura people are Christians. Christianity was first introduced in Bura land in the 1930s by the Church of the Brethren Mission. The missionaries first established their headquarters in *Garkida* town where they built a church, a dispensary, and a missionary primary school for Bura people. Later, the missionaries built more churches, schools, and dispensaries in other Bura communities including a dispensary and a primary school in *Marama*, and a secondary school in *Waka*. As a result, most Bura people are now Christians, and many Bura have acquired Western education.

Although Islam was introduced in northern Nigeria before the turn of the twentieth century, it had an impact on the Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri and other tribal groups in the north but it had little impact on Bura people.

The Bura resisted the Fulani jihad which was fought in the nineteenth century led by Usman Dan Fodio. At the time, most Bura maintained their indigenous religion which was *nua haptu* (the worship of ancestors and natural phenomena) until the coming of the European Christian missionaries to Bura land in the 1930s when many Bura people accepted Christianity, a foreign religion. The Bura conversion can be partly attributed to the fact that the missionaries did not fight the Bura or forcefully seize their lands and partly because the missionaries provided them with health care. Today, about sixty percent of Bura people identify themselves as Christians while the remaining are either Muslims or *mjir nuwa habtu*. The *mjir nuwa habtu* worship Bura ancestors and natural phenomena such as hills, stones, and sacred groves.

The attitudes of many Bura Christians and Bura Muslims towards *nua haptu* are ambivalent. Although they consider *nua haptu* to be idol worship or "paganism," some of them either keep idols in their homes for protection or consult secretly *haptuayeri* (idols) or their mediators such as *haptu* priests, for physical and spiritual healing. For these groups therefore, the phrase "nua haptu" often carry a negative image.

The blending of foreign cultures into indigenous Bura culture represents neither a slavish imitation of glamorous but foreign popular culture nor the unthinking rejection of Bura heritage. Rather, like the blending of American influence into African culture in general, it is the result of a creative syncretism in which innovative performers combine materials from cultures in contact into qualitatively new forms in response to changing conditions, needs, self-image, and aspirations. Generally, Bura Christians prefer to observe and celebrate Christmas and Easter than to observe and celebrate Bura traditional festivals such as *Mbal Angiramta* (a reunion of the Bura living with their ancestors), *Mbal Tsuwaha Laku* (Road Clearing Festival), *Mbal Sadaka* (Thanksgiving), and *Janguli Sadaka* (Thanksgiving). *Mbal* is a locally brewed beer which is sometimes used for offering thanksgiving to Bura gods and ancestors. *Janguli* is a cooked mixture of seeds (beans, peanuts, corn, and millet), and it is also sometimes used as items of offering to Bura gods

and ancestors. Both the Mbal and the Janguli food items are also given to family members, neighbours and friends to eat. Many Bura Christians consider the observance and the celebration of the Bura traditional festivals as well as the practice of the Bura indigenous religions as "sinful" or "idolatry." However, during Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter, Bura Christians, either consciously or unconsciously, incorporate Bura traditional concepts of festivities and celebrations. For instance, syncretic activities on Christmas Day include performances of Bura folk music accompanied with singing, dancing, and feasting. The music performed include Christian music and secular music. The non-religious folk music is performed mainly for entertainment purposes. There are other social activities during Christmas celebrations that blend Christian, Western and Bura cultural traits such as fanfares, soccer, and folk drama. Also, meals such as cooked rice and beef stew are sent to neighbors and given to visitors. Generally, the participants dress in new clothes and make house visits in their village and in neighboring villages and they will be given foods, sweets (candies), kola nuts, or money as Christmas gifts. Christmas season is also a season for making new friends, for courtship, and for weddings, especially Christian church weddings.

Usually, church weddings are not allowed on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day, but Christian weddings may take place on the other days in December. Like Bura Christians, most Bura Muslims now prefer to observe and celebrate Muslim rituals, festivals and other ceremonial activities such as the *Ramadan*, *Eid-El-Kabir* and *Eid-El-Fitr* than to observe and celebrate the indigenous Bura traditional rituals, festivals and other ceremonial activities. Nevertheless, syncretism is widespread. Muslim festivals such as *Eid-El-Fitr* and *Eid-El-Kabir* incorporate Bura traditional ways of celebrating festivals and other ceremonial activities. Bura traditional dances and Bura folk music and *durbar* (a colourful horse riding parade) are performed during Muslim festivals and other Muslim ceremonial activities. There are also house visits and the exchange of gifts in the form of money, kola nuts, and *depino* (dates). Meals are prepared in large quantities by each Muslim family and distributed to neighbours and individuals or groups who pay them house visits.

Bura individuals or families who are neither Christians nor Muslims still celebrate the now unpopular but indigenous Bura traditional festivals. Some Bura Christians as well as some Bura Muslims continue to participate in the Bura traditional festivals, but usually as passive participants. Apparently they do not take an active role in the traditional festivals because of the fear that their fellow Christians and Muslims will regard them as idol worshippers or "sinners."

Today, many aspects of indigenous Bura rites of passage, just like the case of the indigenous Bura traditional festivals, have been changed, influenced, or altered by Christianity and Islam. For instance, most contemporary Bura Christians have church weddings while most Bura Muslims perform Muslim weddings. However, during Christian wedding ceremonies, there are juxtapositions and blendings of Bura folk music and folk dance with Christian music and European music and dance. In like manner, during Muslim wedding ceremonies, there are syncretic and complementary performances of Bura traditional music and dance and Islamic music.

Christian and Muslim forms of rites of passage such as birth rites, naming ceremonies, circumcision rites, burial rites and funeral ceremonies have been adopted by Bura Christians and Bura Muslims, respectively. However, during Christian and Muslim rites

and ceremonial activities, Bura traditional dances and songs are performed in addition to Christian and Muslim songs. Thus, in many instances, there is a mixture or intermingling of indigenous Bura traditional festivals, rites of passage and non-indigenous cultures such as Christianity and Islam. However, it is evident that Christian festivals and ways of performing rites of passage and other ceremonial activities are increasingly becoming more valuable and more dominant in the lives of most Bura Christians than the indigenous Bura traditions. Bura Muslims also prefer to observe and perform the Muslim festivals and Muslim ways of performing rites of passage and other ceremonial activities more than the indigenous Bura traditional rites of passage and other ceremonies. During Bura traditional festivals and rites of passage which have resisted influence by Christianity and Islam - especially the rituals of ancestor worship and the worship of natural phenomena such as hills and sacred groves. The songs that are performed are neither Muslim songs nor Christian songs but Bura songs about Bura deities and Bura ancestors.

Obviously, many aspects of Bura indigenous culture such as wedding custom, funeral, religious belief, festival, music, and dance have undergone acculturation as a result of the introduction and establishment of foreign and other non-Bura indigenous cultural institutions in Bura society such as Christianity, Islam, Western education and Hausa culture.

[www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com), <http://www.kda.kabissa.org/who.php.htm>, [www.onlinenigeria.com](http://www.onlinenigeria.com)

### **Northern Peoples in the Taraba and Adamawa States**

The area lying to the north of the *Niger* and *Benue Rivers* includes a range of mountains covered by a savannah. Archaeological excavations have revealed traces of human activity on the Jos plateau and in the Benue River valley dating from the Stone Age. Over time, the indigenous *Benue-Kongo* and *Adamawa-speaking people* of this area were infiltrated by Chad-speaking tribes who migrated from the east and north. This situation created a mosaic of people with different social and religious traditions. Nevertheless, common artistic conventions can be found among the majority of the people who live in this area. Some 50 people groups inhabit the mountainous terrain in these states. These people have limited contact with the outside world and are considered unreached. Peoples living in the region that include the Mumuye (500,000), *Chambia* (150,000), the *Bata* (50,000), and the *Koma* (37,000). Other group such as the *Jukun*, the *Wurkun*, the *Coemai* and the *Montol* live along the Benue River in eastern Nigeria, while the *Waja*, the *Mama*, the *Koro* and the *Dakakari* people settled in the northern part of the country. These peoples are considered unreached.

### **The Mumuye People**

The Mumuye number around 500,000 and reside in the mountain regions in the east along the Cameroon border in the states of *Taraba* and *Adamawa*. Living on the left bank of the Benue River, the Mumuye people intensively farm an area of plains. Socially, they are divided into small family groups called *Dola*, which are headed by a council of elders with an elected leader. The *Vabong* secret society, of which there are seven grades, regulates Mumuye religious life. Entry into the society is achieved through initiation ceremonies which include flagellation, ritual masks, and other magical objects. Mumuye artists are famous for their wooden statues known as *Iagalagana*. These figures vary from 30 to 160 cm in height and display elongated features and exaggerated ear lobes. Carved by blacksmiths or weavers, they are kept in a separate hut located on a

family compound, and are entrusted to the family member who has magical powers. The *Iagalagana* have significance to the Mumuye in divination, apotropaic, and rainmaking functions, and serve as prestige objects.

Two principal types of mask are found among the Mumuye. The first is a face mask displaying two large hollowed eye sockets which may have been used during initiation rites. The second type is a shoulder mask, known as *Sukwava*, which displays an elongated neck set under a diminutive head with large ears. Traditionally, they were used during pre-war ceremonies, but in the present they are worn during rain-making and healing practices.

Until the 1970s most Mumuye sculpture was misattributed to their neighbors the Chamba. Their style is distinctive, assuming a long narrow pole-like style. They also use bush cow masks like those of their neighbors.

The Mumuye were pushed into their current locale during the Fulani holy wars, which extended from the 17th century into the early 19th century. Along with their neighbors, with whom they have much in common, they fled southwards into the hills of eastern Nigeria where they divided into small communities that remained relatively isolated from one another.

The Benue River Valley had very little to offer to Europeans in terms of natural resources, and so they remained relatively isolated from colonialist enterprise.

Mumuye are farmers, although the soil in this area is not exceptionally fertile. During the dry season from October to March nothing can be grown on the desolate scrub-like land. Millet is the staple crop in the region and is used to make flour and beer. The uncertainty of harvests in this region have led to the development of various prayers and offerings that are made during both planting and harvesting cycles in hopes of increasing the annual yield.

Hunting is widely practiced to augment the local diet, and game is generally abundant. Each village has its own hunting lands, and permission is required for an outsider to hunt on these lands.

The relative isolation of individual communities remains today. For the most part, small villages are made up of one or two extended families and the spouses who have married into those families. Individual lineages identify with a totemic spirit that is metaphorically embodied in certain animals. Families that might otherwise be unrelated may develop political ties because they both belong to the same spirit. The result of this sort of relationship is a somewhat decentralized power structure that permits the members of each totem group to retain a degree of power.

The totemic groups mentioned above are of primary importance in their religion, for a lineage's membership in a certain group is defined by the group to which their ancestors belonged. Offerings and sacrifices are made to the family ancestors to appease them and to thank them, especially during harvest times. The dancing of bush cow masks is known to be a part of a secret society whose main purpose is to ask the ancestors who are associated with the bush cow for abundance and agricultural fertility.

The skulls of ancestors are considered the resting place of their souls. Wooden statues that are carved to represent the dead are placed near the skull of the deceased person. It is believed that the spirit is then able to enter the statue which can be transported into the house where it is involved in the daily lives of the living.

### **The Koma People**

For *Koma People*, a peculiar tribe in *Adamawa State*, still live in the “morning of creation.” They live in mud shacks, roofed with palm fronds. For clothing, they use sparse green leaves from trees. For food, the Koma use Goat feaces as their seasoning and smoke wild grasses for relaxation.. They live on the hill tops, far away from civilization—a six hour, arduous climb from the foot of the hill to reach their homes. Koma people live on the *Koma Hills*, which is a part of the *Cameroon* mountain range running right from across the Nigeria/Cameroon border and falls within *Jada Local Government Area* of Adamawa State in North Eastern region of Nigeria.

The existence of the Koma people only came fully to light several years ago, during the *Ibrahim Babangida* administration. The report of their culture and living conditions were widely reported in the Nigerian mass media. When the news was first reported many Nigerians were amazed to know that such people still exist in Nigeria. Many more would even be shocked to know that after several years of their discovery, and in spite of the related media attention, nothing has changed. They live a life that echoes the "early man of the old stone age."

The Koma people have been neglected without education or any form of enlightenment. They have not received any form of help from the government except that coming from private voluntary organizations. It is quite amazing that these people are still living in darkness after the considerable publicity that trailed their first discovery.

They borrow wives among themselves, and many would be alarmed to know that although the killing of twins was stopped several decades ago in most of Nigeria, this act of barbarism is still being practiced by the Koma people. The Koma people are mostly farmers and because of this, they give as a reason for their customs the hardship of twins on their way of life. Carrying for twins does not give the mother enough time for farming. The choice is placed before the mother to take one and expose the other one. Koma people who are mainly idol worshippers and who use their children for rituals are only beginning to acquaint themselves with modern civilization. Slowly the people have begun to open up to educational and evangelical work done by a handful of churches and missionary groups.

Physically, the Koma people may not win prizes at beauty contests, but what little convention appeal they might have had at birth is destroyed with what they do to themselves. They extract their teeth with sharp crude objects all in the name of tradition, they give themselves marks that are largely disfiguring. Their women do not keep themselves neat, but wear toe nails that are long and dirty-one is tempted to ask, that why are these people so backward without any visible improvement in their way of life? The Koma do engage in the primitive form of trade such as trade by barter? Basically, however, they live by subsistence farming. They only vaguely understand the concepts of a money economy.

The Koma are not fully aware of Christianity or Islam. They have started receiving recently what some Christian missionaries just started imparting a few years back. They are regarded as a part and parcel of Nigeria but really, are they, so far? The story of Koma is indeed a pathetic one, and a metaphor of the decay in a society whose leaders have so much to throw around, but if well invested could open the gates to a whole new world for the Koma people.

Many believe that it is indeed a big irony that the Koma people are in Nigeria. The fact that remains despite this irony, is that though the Koma people up in the hill are used to

the life of the hills, if real development work must start in their area, then the people bearing the torchlights of development must go up while the ones that need the development must come down. Each party must look beyond the hills as the missionary agencies have done, or real development work will not start.

Anthropologists who are interested in carrying out a real life study of the early man should visit the Koma people. They appear excellent for such a study or research. With little question, the Koma people are indeed living in pre-civilization in a relatively modernized world. Theirs is not a myth neither is it fictional. It is real. Many observers believe that these folks need real development, urgently, before the pace at which the world is going becomes too fast for them to catch up with.

While some mission work is beginning among the Koma, they remain an unreached people greatly in need of the gospel. The encouragement that some evangelistic groups begin church starting work in these hills is well taken.

### **The Chamba People**

The 150,000 *Chamba* people live south of the Benue River, near the *Jukun* people. They are socially divided into small kingdoms, each headed by a king assisted by a council of elders whose powers are regulated by male and female secret societies. The Chamba use a type of mask that symbolizes a bush spirit. It has a rounded head with a flattened open mouth and two large backward-sloping horns. It is worn during funerals, circumcisions, and inauguration ceremonies.

Chamba figures are rare and their function uncertain. They are usually covered with an encrusted patina. Another type of Chamba figure is thought to be a medium for communication with the spirit world. Small figures were used to protect an individual from snake bites and were attached to iron spikes and inserted into the grounds.

The king of the Jukun, known as the Aka Uku, lives in the town of Wukari from where he rules his 30,000 people. He leads the cult of the ancestors who are in turn responsible for the welfare of the tribe. Statues are found predominantly among the Jukun people in the north west and represent ancestor, as well as wives and slaves. They are displayed during funerals, agricultural ceremonies, and in times of danger. During these rites, the figure, serve as an intermediary between the priest the ancestor's world.

In the south-western part of the Jukun territory, the role of intermediary is held by male dancers who wear shoulder masks that have a round head, a flattened face and a smooth coiffure.

### **The Wurkun People**

The *Wurkun* people live on the right bank of the Benue River, between the Jukun and the Mumuye people, in an area of mountains and hills. Their artistic reputation rests on their columnar figures which tend to be covered in a thick encrusted patina and have a rounded head, often with a crested coiffure. These figures are usually pierced with an iron spike, allowing them to be inserted into the ground. Known as Wundul, these statues have apotropaic functions and are often seen in pairs, protecting field crops, or in house shrines. A group of other statues with highly stylized bodies supporting round heads have been found, although their purpose is still unknown.

The *Waja* people settled on the northern part of the Benue River and carve large shoulder masks with a columnar neck set under a small head. Little is known about them.

The Goemai and Montol people live on the right bank of the Benue River and are known for their small figures with splayed legs and hands. Members of the Komtin male secret society employ these ancestor representations in divination and curative ceremonies.

The *Mama* people, also known as the *Kantana*, live north of the *Jos* plateau and carve headdresses in the form of highly stylized animal beads. They are worn with a thick fiber costume and symbolize a bush spirit. Worn by energetic dancers, they are thought to bring prosperity to the tribe. There are a number of rare *Mama* sculptures carved in a rough style with a red weathered patina.

The *Koro* people settled north of the junction of the Niger and Benue Rivers. They carve abstract headdresses embellished with red seeds, which are thought to symbolize ancestor spirits and are used during agricultural rites and important social or family events.

Anthropomorphic cups are used for drinking and pouring beer or palm wine during ritual sacrifices or secondary funerals.

The *Dakakari* people inhabit part of north-west Nigeria and produce terracotta grave markers with a standing human or animal figure set on top of a sphere. Graves of important *Dakakari* men are surrounded by low stone walls and then filled with earth. Every year, the family of the deceased honor the dead by pouring libations onto these grave markers or into nearby vessels.

### **Northern Peoples in the Gwoza Hills Area**

#### **Guduf People Group**

The *Guduf*, who are situated east of *Gwoza Town*, in the mountain saddle between *Zelidva* in the north and *Dughwede* in the south of the *Gwoza Hills*, may number as many as 36,000 people. Overall, the *Guduf* consist of *Guduf Bubayagwa* (*Guduf B*) in the south, and *Guduf Nagadiye* (*Guduf A*) in the north. Many groups in this general area share ancestral ties to the *Guduf*.

The *Guduf* dialect of *Gava* is known as *Yawotataxa*, sometimes spelled *Yaghwatadaxa*. *Yaghwatadaxa* means the mountain of Tada. The possibility exists that the *Guduf* and the *Gava* peoples share the story of ancestors—that being the families of two brothers of the same father and different mothers. Many of the *Guduf* people (as well as the *Gava*) have been forced out of their original areas.

#### **The Gamergu People**

The *Gamergu* are linked to the *Malgwe* by the *Mandara* or *Wandala* peoples. Many students are of the opinion that ‘*Amalguwa*’ refers to *Malgwe*. The *Gamergu* trace an ancestral link to a place called *Malgwe* which locates them close to the *Margi* of *Malgwe*. The *Gamergu* probably are both culturally and linguistically linked with the *Wandala*. *Dughwede* tradition says that *Gamergu* means ‘*margi* people’ (*ga* = people or group, and *mergu*=*Margi*). The language of *Malgwa* (*Malgwe*, *Gamergu*) is classified as a dialect of *wandala* and some list *malgwe* only under *wandala*. There is still uncertainty about how *Gamergu* ethnicity needs to be constructed. What seems to be clear is that the *Gamergu* are closer to the *Mandara* than to the *Margi*, although *Dughwede* traditions suggest the *Gamergu* to be *Margi*. However, the *Dughwede* suggest at the same time that the *Mandara* originated from the *Gwoza Hills*.

The *Gamergu* live in Nigeria, mainly between the middle *Ngada* and *Yedseram* River and the sandy plains north and northeast of the *Gwoza Hills*. A region on the river *Yedseram* is considered as the ancestral home of both, the *Gamergu* and the *Wandala*. Today the speakers of the *Malgwe* language live in *Cameroon* but majority are found in *Nigeria*.



## Peoples in the Rivers State Region

The Rivers State is currently made up of 22 local government areas. These government areas, *Ogba/Egbema, Ndoni, Ahoada, Ikwerre, Etche, Andoni/Opobo, Bonny, Okrika, Iyigbo, Ehana, Gokana Tai/Elemé, Obio/Akpor, Emohua, Degema, Aseri Toru, Akuku, Abua/Odial, Omumma, Opobo/Nkoro, Ogu/ Bolo, Ahaoda West and Elemé,*

Rivers State is bounded by Delta State, Imo State, Akwa Ibom State and Bayelsa State also contains peoples that go by names very much like the names of the areas.

Rivers State is a multi-linguistic state. Some of these include *Ekpeye, Ibami, Ikwerre, Kalabari, Okrika, Kolokuma, Nembe* etc. However, English remains the official language while pidgin is also widely spoken. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Rivers State and the agricultural policy of the state government is anchored on food production. This provides employment for young school leavers and university graduates. River State is also one of the industrial states of Nigeria. Among the industries involved with the manufacture of various products are West African Glass Industries Limited, *Pabod Breweries, Eastern Wrought Iron Ltd, Engineering Works Limited, Metalloplastic* and other industries.

However, it is the production of oil and gas that Rivers State is most famous. With enormous reserves of crude oil and natural gas, Rivers State account for more than 40% of Nigeria crude oil production. Apart from this, there are many petrochemical related industries in the state which also harbors the first petroleum refinery in Nigeria.

The culture of the peoples of Rivers State is distinctive. *Masquerades*, mostly colorful and artistic in their make-up and paraphernalia, are a common sight during festive occasions. Masquerades are either religious or historical personifications of the rich legends of the people.

The *Iria* (puberty and marriage ceremony) of the *Kalabaris*, the fishing festivals in *Kaiama* and *Amassaona*, the yam festivals in *Ikwerre* and *Ogba*, the burial rites and wrestling. ceremonies in *Degema* and the war canoe displays or boat regattas in *Bonny* are among the major cultural activities of the people as well as the main tourist attractions.

## Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians should consider Nigeria as a nation of great importance in world evangelization. The Muslim Religion claims at least 41% of the people while at least 6% and more likely 13% of the people adhere to Traditional Religion. While the estimate of 52.61% of the population as Christian sounds encouraging, the fact that Roman Catholic, Independent churches (Indigenous, spiritual, often syncretistic), and marginal groups inflate this percentage. The presence of numerous unreached groups adds to the judgment of Nigeria as a prominent mission field.
2. Evangelical Christians should redouble efforts to reach the unreached peoples of Nigeria. Johnstone reports that some 168 peoples are inadequately evangelized. Of these some 45 have no church and 34 no known believers among them.
3. Evangelical Christians should increase support for those groups attempting to reach the unreached of Nigeria. Such support is especially needed for those attempting to reach the Muslim populations of Nigeria.

4. Evangelical Christians should seek relationship with and ministry to the African Independent Churches—some of which show serious signs of syncretism or doctrinal drift. While exercising care not to paternalistically influence these church groups, specialists in church renewal might significantly minister to these churches and their leaders in the sense of helping them discover more biblical approaches to African Christianity and spirituality.
5. Evangelical Christians should seek ways and means of contributing to wholesome and biblical leadership training on all levels in Nigeria. In many cases this ministry will involve placing missionary resources at the disposal of national church leadership and engaging in a servant ministry.
6. Evangelical Christians should lovingly seek to assist Nigeria (and other African nations) in the struggle against AIDS and other diseases that beset the continent. Christians should support any acceptable health ministries that could reduce the tragedies of these plagues in Africa.
7. Evangelical Christians should support intensive efforts to augment community social services among the peoples of Africa. Agricultural, educational, developmental, medical, and humanitarian avenues for Christian ministry should be seized.