

Nigeria prospers in oil boom

by Greg Morgan

Professor Barkow of Dalhousie's Department of Anthropology spent the winter break completing a field work project in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a massive African nation awash in petro-dollars and plagued with growing problems of all descriptions. Its people are flocking to chaotic, burgeoning cities, where freshly wrecked cars can be as common as billboards.

But it is also incredibly rich from an ethnic point of view: over 150 languages, far more ethnic groups, and 80 million people, in an area the size of a large Canadian province. Social science remains ignorant of many of these groups. Twice in the past three years, Barkow has gone to study one, the Migili.

The Migili, living in their "orchard bush country", are far from the maddening cities. But Duduguru, the town studied, owes its state of preservation to having been virtually inaccessible until the road in was recently improved.

The Migili have prospered in the oil-boom by doing what they have always done: growing yams. Because of the exodus of youth from the rural parts of Nigeria, the yam has become a profitable crop for those who are willing to grow them.

Nigili farming is the slash-and-burn sort: you clear and

raze your land, exhaust the soil with farming, leave it fallow so nature can restore fertility, and begin all over again. In proportion to the amount of food produced, this requires a vast amount of land. Agriculture has turned most of the old rain forest into bush country.

The oil-boom has primarily benefited middle-men and local entrepreneurs. Previously, Barkow learned, outside truckers bought the Migili's yams at low prices, carried them a few miles to the roadside, and resold them for a handsome profit. Now the Migili, having bought their own trucks, haul their own crops, and have taken much of the profit for themselves.

The government's plans to spend here \$85 million borrowed from the World Bank has given these people additional cause for optimism. The Bank itself, in its infinite wisdom and mercy, has sponsored a demonstration yam plot nearby. The American technicians show what Western technology can do for a field of yams, and are, according to Barkow, unaware that the Migili have any social structure at all. The Migili, for their part, cannot understand why the American's crops are so much smaller than their own.

Another foreign presence in the locality is a contingent of Italians who are building high-

ways. All Nigeria, in fact, is in a frenzy of construction.

Modernity has advanced unevenly on life in this region.

The Migili cultivate yams with hand tools, but they ride motorcycles to their distant fields. They use primitive matchlocks to hunt what game is left in the receding patches of jungle, but they spread their fields with chemical fertilizers supplied by the federal government.

One day Barkow seemed a little listless, so a villager asked if he were bored. Then the man produced a portable TV and hooked it up to the battery of Barkow's car.

He would not be doing this if he did not enjoy it, but field work is not always a bed of roses. For Barkow in Duduguru, it was a rat-gnawed mattress and an out-house shared with an irate bat. He slept in the decaying house of a departed missionary, an experience he compares to camping out.

Strong preferences in beer are a handicap in rural Nigeria.

While brew is a pillar of the local diet, and very nutritious, it takes the form of a sour, yeasty, semi-solid mash. Getting drunk Migili-style involves as much chewing as drinking. Those who over-indulge never get "drunk and disorderly". They just fall asleep.

The professor found the food rather uninteresting, and excused himself by saying that too much would make him throw up.

The thatched out-house, the work of solicitous converts, was unique in the village. The Migili prefer a deep hole which some, under the influence of the new prosperity, have lined with cement.

Field work in Nigeria is not lightly undertaken. It was essential that Barkow greet and obtain permission from six or seven rungs of government, starting with the state governor and ending with the chief of Duduguru and the head of the security branch of the local police.

Scores of introductory letters proceeded him. These for-

malities are the rule in West Africa, a place where high levels of government sometimes make many minor decisions: in the course of previous research, Barkow idled two weeks while he waited for the president of the Niger Republic to grant his permission.

The red tape cut, however, things went very smoothly. The Migili were flattered by the attention, and most of them answered questions and spoke freely. Although they were uncomfortably aware that the neighbouring peoples considered them ignorant, dirty, and backward, they took pride in having been the first population in the region, and frequently alluded to the fact.

The Migili, perhaps 50,000 today, were once a populous and far-ranging nation.

This is only a very superficial review of Jerome Barkow's study. For more detailed information, get *A Preliminary Sketch of the Migili (Koro) of Nigeria's Plateau State*.

Watch in trouble

by Paul Creelman

The Kings Watch, the student newspaper of the only school of journalism in the Maritimes, has ceased publication due to financial problems.

"We've spent two student council allotments of 500 dollars of each, all our advertising revenue and an additional 700 dollars which we've run up in debt.

"Unless we get more money from some sources or another, the Watch has bit the biscuit for this year," said Brian Underhill news editor of the Watch.

When asked to comment on the future of the Watch, Underhill replied that he was optimistic about the outlook for

the paper next year, but "unless there's a lot more student support, it won't be worth it."

"Seven people have carried the whole work load this year."

George Bain, director of the School of Journalism at King's college, said the School of Journalism had not yet faced the problem of the King's Watch because he had only become aware that the Watch was having difficulties in the past week or so.

When asked if the School of Journalism would consider aiding the watch, Mr. Bain repeated his statement that the problem had not even been considered yet, but given a situation where the administration did provide funds for the Watch, Bain said that the School of Journalism, as publisher, would want to maintain some control of the newspaper, possibly tying in story assignment to the academic assignments in the School, but leaving editorial policy strictly with the students.

In any case, emphasized Bain, the question is purely hypothetical until a careful look is taken at the way the Watch has been administered, especially in regard to advertising revenues.

Our mistake

In last week's issue of the *Gazette*, we reported on the actions students at the School of Architecture were thinking of taking because Professor Larry Richards was denied tenure and promotion. The article said the School of Architecture was in the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology. The architecture school is actually in the Nova Scotia Technical College. Our apologies to everyone at the Technical College.

The advertisement features a dark background with a bottle of beer on the left, a glass of beer with a thick head of foam in the center, and two packs of Colts Mild cigarettes. One pack is standing upright, showing the brand name and '8 LITTLE CIGARS'. The other pack is lying flat in front of it, also showing the brand name and '8 LITTLE CIGARS'. The text 'Rum flavoured. Wine dipped.' is repeated twice, once near the top right and once near the bottom right.

**Crack a pack of Colts
along with the beer.**