

Review of Project Pacific

A Qualitative Assessment of a Market Survey on the Potential of the Nigerian Market for Norwegian Stockfish

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Origin of the Project

In the summer of 2004 the Norwegian Seafood Export Council (NSEC) first contacted Axel Klein with a request to conduct a 'qualitative' analysis of research data from a Nigerian market research study. Delays in the completion of that study because of strikes in Nigeria pushed the project back to May 2005. The Nigerian study generated data sets about the distribution of stockfish, levels of consumption, attitudes towards and so on. What the NSEC required was a culturally informed interpretation with reference to the Nigerian background. In particular the report should cover,

1. Social structure: A discussion of issues like class, ethnicity, regional differences, the consolidation of the state, traditional institutions, implications of religious beliefs and other relevant issues that provide an overall understanding of the Nigerian society.
2. Culinary traditions: A discussion of the culinary traditions of Nigeria and how this relates to stockfish. An assessment of social status of food and implications for stockfish. An assessment of the modernization of cooking and how this might impact the utilization of stockfish in the diet. An assessment of whether stockfish is considered convenient in the modern Nigerian diet – or if there is a need for product or recipe development to ensure a future position within Nigerian cooking.
3. Retailing: Impact of the modernization of the retail sector. An assessment of the trends for the modern Nigerian consumer: will they continue to go to market or is the modernization of retailing changing the purchasing habits?
4. Implications of unofficial border trade: Stockfish is expected to be traded illegally across the borders, making the overall market assessment uncertain. Based on previous experiences and other secondary sources some indicators of this trade are to be provided.
5. Qualitative assessment of the results from the consumer study: The consumer study provides information about the consumption patterns and perceptions of stockfish. These results are to be analysed in light of the

ethnic, traditional, social and cultural information available. A detailed list of issues is to be agreed upon after review of findings from the consumer study. Included in this are areas like: the preference of cod heads in the East and round cod in the north, perceptions of the value of stockfish and the position of stockfish as “an expensive product”, the ethnical and regional differences in stockfish consumption, food trends and the position of stockfish in these.

6. Finally, the report is to provide some pointers for marketing.

Methodology

The point of departure for this report was a market research exercise undertaken in Nigeria by a market research company. This provided headline figures on consumption patterns and attitudes. In this report that piece of work is referred to as the survey. This report seeks to first of all to place the data within a historical and cultural context. It then provides information about Nigerian cooking and eating habits, on the domestic set up and household formation drawn largely on the authors fieldwork experience and secondary literature. In order to better understand how stockfish figures in national cuisine a number of in depth interviews with key informants were conducted in the Nigerian community in London. These are referred to as informants. In addition, typical qualitative research methods were employed, including participant observation in Nigerian restaurants and shops in the London community. The recipe section in the annex has been selected by the London based Nigerian gastronomist Maureen Fischer.

Background

In 70s Nigeria constituted the most important export market for Norwegian stockfish, importing some 30,000 tons per annum. By 2004 the total stockfish imports were 20,000 tons, of which 16,000 tons are supplied by Iceland alone, with Norway and the Faroe Islands accounting for the remainder. Several external reasons account for the difference including an import ban on imported stockfish by the Nigerian

government that was only lifted in 1999 and of course, the collapse of the Nigerian naira¹ and the importing capacity of Nigeria.

Other reasons are internal to the product – Norwegian shipments are made up of low grade fish, sorted and classed as ‘African’ by the exporters. Moreover, they are more expensive than the Icelandic product due to different curing techniques. While Norwegian stockfish is wind dried, Icelandic stockfish is dried in drying tunnels.

It is felt, however, that there is potential for an expansion of the market for Norwegian stockfish exports. There is certainly strong demand for stock fish products, but the Nigerian market is riddled with complexities. This report traces the unfolding story of Nigeria and offers information on eating, cooking and marketing patterns to assist with the marketing of stockfish produce and with the development of suitable stockfish exports.

Background to Nigeria

	1999	2002	2003
Population, total	123.9 million	133.2 million	136.5 million
Population growth (annual %)	2.5	2.4	2.4
Life expectancy (years)	47.5	45.3	44.9
Child malnutrition, weight for age (% of under 5)	30.7	..	28.7
Child immunization, measles (% of under 12 mos)	35.0	35.0	35.0
Prevalence of HIV, total (% of population aged 15-49)	5.4
Literacy rate, adult male (% of males ages 15 and above)	71.0	74.4	..
Literacy rate, adult female (% of females ages 15 and above)	54.3	59.4	..
Primary completion rate, total (% age group)	..	82.0	..

¹ By the late 1970s the Naira reached parity with Pound Sterling. In 2005 it took Naira 330 to purchase £ 1.00.

36 states + Federal Capital at Abuja			
Oil Production per barrel			

Corruption and Crime

Nigeria is for many a byword for systemic corruption and a persistent low scorer in the Transparency International Index of the perception of corruption. In southern Nigeria corruption is known as *egunje*, and an established part of running transactions. Much of what visitors and businessmen come across is passive corruption – the request by officeholders for financial inducements to carry out the function of their office. Less widespread but more disturbing is active corruption, the perversion of office and its function at the behest of a bribe giver. Many of the offices of state, particularly so called ‘gate keeper’ positions at critical points in the chain, are used by the holders as ‘rents’ collected on the one hand from the states, in the form of salaries, and on the other from the public, in the form of bribes. Given that many public officials, including law enforcement offices are paid irregularly and inadequately the routine request for bribes should be seen as a necessary income raising mechanism, not a quest for personal enrichment. Foreigners wishing to operate successfully in Nigeria are advised to factor in gifts and payments, and to rationalise these as bridging the shortfall between salaries and living expenses endured by government employees.

The impact can be crippling and is in evidence all around Lagos port. At the entrance of the harbour the grey naval vessels with the letters ‘Anti Crime Patrol’ daubed over the sides are lying in wait. When the fishing trawlers operating out of Apapa return the patrol boats run up alongside them. Boxes of frozen fish are lifted overboard, and the boats disappear. By coincidence, of the women selling fish in the markets of Lagos Island are married to police officers.

The berthing facilities at Apapa and Tin Can Island are also infested with corrupt practices. For importers of perishable goods these can be tricky waters to navigate. According to one fish product importer, failure by the Port Authority to control rogue elements among the workforce has forced them to take drastic measures. Unloading fish has not only proven expensive, as a large number of people had to be ‘settled’, but also wasteful as many fish consignments were spoilt after delays. The company

therefore moved to Cotonou, the principle port of the neighbouring Republic of Benin², and sends it by truck to Lagos. It is easier to market a product by crossing a land border and add an additional 100 km journey than to negotiate the pitfalls of Lagos port.

Corruption Perception Index 2004 (total 144 countries)			
Number	Country	Score	Range
1	Finland	9.7	9.5-9.8
8	Norway	8.9	8.6-9.1
143	Nigeria	1.6	1.4-1.8

Transparency International

Systematic corruption is marching in lockstep with high levels of crime, most notoriously in the form of armed banditry. Gangs of armed men are on the prowl on the motorways and sometimes attain legendary status. In urban areas the exploits of 'armed robbers' are the stuff of everyday conversation, and rural areas also suffer from periodic raids. Governments have introduced draconian punishments, employed vigilante groups and set up various taskforces. Unfortunately the very men and women drafted in to tackle the problem only too often turn from crime fighters to criminals themselves.

Moreover, the prevailing methodologies prioritise the employment of violence over forensics. Nigerian analysts attribute this respectively to the legacy of colonial rule and decades of military government, as a consequence of which the Nigerian police officer has "internalised only the word force". Poor results in investigation minimize the risk of apprehension and have therefore replaced the most effective form of deterrence with a general and often indiscriminate terror. Nigerians and foreign residents therefore have to take elaborate protection measures, and build these into their daily routine.

In spite of all this, during daylight hours at least an adequate level of public safety prevails in Lagos and other cities with regard to violent and property crime. A harsh lynch mob justice keeps thieves on their guard. The vibrancy of Nigerian street life

² Benin – both the name of a Nigerian city and capital of Edo state in what used to be known as the Nigerian Midwest but is now the South-South, and that of a neighbouring country, the former French colony of Dahomey.

appears chaotic and alarming, but guarantees a level of safety against the worst kinds of excesses. The exception to this are those parts of the country where regional and ethnic grievances mingle political demands with criminal action. Militias and vigilante groups have appeared in the Niger delta and in parts of the East, well armed and ready to use violence. Future developments will depend on the diplomatic skills of federal politicians, local leadership and the delivery of development benefits by the oil industry and national government.

United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index 2004

Least Liveable Countries

1 Sierra Leone 27 Nigeria

Most Liveable Countries

1 Norway 2 Sweden 3 Australia 4 Canada

Military rule and the state as 'Lame Leviathan'

The failure of law enforcement is an extension of the overall failure of the Nigerian state. There are few areas in administration, service delivery, or governance where the state is 'delivering'. Schools and hospitals are understaffed, ill equipped, under-resourced and morale is low. Many government departments operate as shells, where employees draw a salary without knowing what their actual task is. The allocation of jobs is highly politicised and the subject of patronage. Many office holder owe their position to networks and personal connections rather than qualification or merit. The civilian governments of 1960-1966, 1979 – 1983 known in Nigeria as the First and Second Republics were initially held responsible for this perversion of probity and governance. Yet, successive military governments, most notoriously under General Ibrahim Babangida (1984-1994) and Sani Abacha (1994-1998) demonstrated even greater levels of venality. While civilian governments, however, corrupt were still working within the confines of the electoral process and the law, military governments, once in power, were beyond account and recall. Government decisions were arrived at by small groups of officers on the Supreme Military Council and imposed on the population by 'decree'. By cutting out due process and curtailing national debate, Nigeria's military rulers were creating a state wherein executive officers often did not know the object, much less the letter of the law. Without

feedback loops of their own and depending on a media fettered by censorship they were unable to monitor the implementation of their own decisions. Measures taken to rectify salient problems through the creation of new agencies only add layers of governments to further confuse competencies and capacities.

The paradoxical result of this process inherited by the civilian legislators of the Third Republic in 1999, then, was a state that was both bloated and ineffective. There were large numbers of employees on the government payroll, but few who could actually survive on their salaries without additional sources of income. Many government officers did not know the ostensible purpose of their work or were not qualified for them. At the same time government office was highly prized as a platform for career development.

One of the advantages of government office lies in the ability to extract benefits, often from private businesses seeking licenses or permits to operate. The powers imbued in the state continue to hamper the development of a market economy, acting as a drag on national development even after two decades of structural reform. Political scientists have labelled state formation such as the Nigerian one, the lame leviathan: large and unwieldy, but unable to deliver.

However unsatisfactory from an economic development perspective, the expansiveness of the state proffers a bulwark against some of the secessionary tendencies that continue to stress the Nigerian federation. The exact delineation of Nigeria's national boundaries has little to do with the dispersal of ethnic groups or the configuration of pre-colonial states, and everything with the arbitrary hazard of the 19th century scramble for empire. Between 1860, when the crown colony of Lagos was first established and 1914, when the two administrative units covering the south and the north of the country were amalgamated into a single unit Nigeria, the contours and contents of the future country were defined by convenience and chance. In this contracted history of state formation, over 250 ethnic groups with distinct languages, social systems and religious beliefs were incorporated into a single unit.

Ethnicity and religion

Important distinctions between ethnic groups and cultures include their adaptation to the environment and their linkages to the wider world. Three geographically distinct

regions stretch from the rain forest along the coastal zone in the south, before giving way to savannah and ending eventually in the deserts of the north. The ecology of the forest zone has produced different tree crop farming and creek fishing cultures that are very different to the nomadic cattle herding systems found in the north. While the south has been engaging in the trans-Atlantic trading system since the 16th century, and is strongly influenced by European culture and Christianity, the northern areas orient towards the Arabic civilisation and Islamic religion across the Sahara. In the late 18th century Usman dan Fodio, a charismatic spiritual and military leader, subjugated the northern region in a series of *jihads* culminating in the establishment of the caliphate of Sokoto.

In the western region, the 19th century marked a period of bitter warfare between culturally related kingdoms such as Ibadan, Oyo, Abeokuta and Ekiti. The people of the Eastern region, by contrast, eschewed developing states preferring to live in acephalous (no formal leadership) societies instead.

British rule impacted differently on these distinct regions. First of all the south proved much more promising for commercial development with its long established production of tropical commodities such as palm oil, cocoa and palm kernels. Secondly, the colonial governor Lord Lugard, sought to prevent religious strife by restricting missionary activity to the 'pagan' south. This decision was of momentous consequence, as the missionaries were the main, if not single, providers of education. While the first students, just as the first converts, were recruited from lower social classes, education soon became popular in the south. European enterprises and the colonial administration were able to recruit clerks, secretaries and assistants from the growing numbers of educated Nigerians. Not only were these in a position to lay the foundations for the formation of a new elite. They were also able to establish their dominance in office over people and regions with no equivalent talent pool. In the 1950s, therefore, when southern leaders were agitating against British rule and demanding independence, the Northern leaders were hoping to slow down the process to allow for time to catch up. Northern cities were being transformed by the establishment of the 'Sabon Gari', quarters for so called 'native strangers'. Mainly southerners and often Ibo, who moved north to take up employment in the administration or to trade.

Concepts like Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo were also formed in the process of colonial penetration. Ethnic identity in Nigeria is far more fluid than is commonly supposed.

During the 19th century groups like the Aworri, the Ekiti, and the Oyo were fighting vicious wars against one another. Within a generation they came to see themselves as a single people (Yoruba) with a common ancestry, a shared language and similar systems of belief. The reason behind this ethnic consolidation can largely be seen in terms of cosmology and pragmatics. The world grew larger under colonial rule, and petty differences between small scale communities became subsumed under the larger and more defining contrasts with novel groups that were coming into contact. New opportunities and new challenges required realignments of identity and alliance. The categories we use as given today largely came to the fore during the 19th century, in a process known as ethnogenesis. Some groups grow by absorbing surrounding entities, who begin to adapt dress, dances, even language, and use the flexibility inhering in an oral tradition to adjust their history where necessary.

The importance of ethnic affiliation is not a throwback of the past, or a legacy of the primordial in African politics. The failure of the state, and the absence of reliable institutional mechanisms has left people to depend on personal networks. Ethnicity, which employs the idiom of kinship and levies the moral demands of family, is a primary marker of self, rights and obligations. The appeal to ethnic solidarity is often made by migrants, typically country folk coming to town, to get shelter, food or employment. Though more flexible than often assumed, ethnicity sets strict barriers to personal development.

Other networks allow for greater individual agility – religious affiliation or education for example. In Nigeria there is lively traffick in ideas and congregations between the different denominations. Religion, even the world religion as interpreted by their Nigerian adherents are markedly ‘this worldly’ - concerned with achieving material as well as spiritual goals. But they also provide a valuable space of individual safety, furnish an identity and act as a check on the rich and powerful.

Religion, it must be realised, does not overlap with ethnicity. Islam is well established among the Yoruba in the southwest, while evangelist Christian missionaries are proselytising in northern cities. Many Nigerians will combine the practices and the beliefs of different religions with no regard to orthodoxy. Pious Catholics will believe in the danger of curses, the ability of witches to transfigure into animals and the power of charms and amulets. Interestingly, such beliefs cut across the range of classes and educational qualifications. In southern Nigeria class differences have few material markers, and even the experience of acute poverty fails to dampen the

aspirations of many. Yet, a process of class formation is shaping an elite with clear features, including strong external links, cosmopolitan lifestyles, and high educational attainments. Northerners in particular will also have military links, as the army has always been the primary vehicle for advancement for northerners.

The role of the elite, remains controversial. Many Nigerians will squarely blame the country's arrested development on their leaders. On the other hand, the deeply entrenched practice of clientelism leaves most people looking for patrons. This has two consequences –discontent is not politicised and social tension is channelled across ethnic lines of division. Social protest is mute and inarticulate. Secondly, patrons borrow the trappings of traditional institutions, of *bales*, *obas*³ and emirs for authenticity and legitimacy. The resurgence of traditional institutions under the military regime provided aspirants with a platform, though not necessarily a ladder. Traditional leaders gained status mainly because of the erosion of the local administration of the state, and the military's inability to connect with local communities in the absence of a party machine. What power was devolved was strictly local and severely circumscribed.

Demographics

There are prevailing assumptions that Nigeria is a rural country, but the rapid drift away from the rural areas over the last century has created a mega city (Lagos), several large cities, (Kano, Ibadan, Onitsha) and a large number of mid size towns and urban clusters. Given the paucity of data⁴ it is not possible to specify the percentage of urban/rural populations, but suffice is to say that a large number, perhaps half live in cities. The exact population size is not known and highly contentious as the allocation of funds is related to stipulated populations. No national census has been held in over two decades and remains a potentially explosive exercise.

³ Yoruba chieftaincy titles

⁴ There is only limited data on Nigerian populations because the last census was held in 1990 under controversial conditions. As resources and votes are allocated in accordance with population distribution this is a highly politicised process.

Recent developments

The current regime of Olugben Obasanjo was inaugurated with great fanfare in 1999. The return to democratic government has provided a new opportunity for improving the country's system of governance and for realising development goals. While the pace of reform has disappointed some expectations there have been definite gains, aided by stronger than expected oil revenues.

Some power and resources has been devolved to the 36 states, plus the federal territory. Problems remain, with the registration of voters in the absence of census information; there is no marked perception of improvement in the economy; public safety continues to deteriorate; former military leaders remain deeply involved in the political process. But there is a widespread perception that these problems, at least, are resolvable, which is in itself a massive improvement on the pessimism and looming state decay prevailing under the Abacha regime of the mid 1990s.

Even if root problems remain to be tackled there is a process of reform under way. According to the World Bank there have been significant improvements in "voice and accountability." This means that critics of government and policy are free to state their case, which is the first stage of reform. And secondly, that government officials and politicians have to explain themselves to the public. Against the backdrop of Nigeria's tenacious and vibrant media this is the foundation for good governance.

Section 2 – Fish, food and cooking in Nigeria

2.1 Fish in the Nigerian food supply

There are marked regional differences in Nigerian cooking, with fish much more popular in the south than in northern parts of the country. The national average masks a vast disparity between regions, with fish consumption in parts of Eastern Nigeria and the Niger Delta closer to Ghanaian and levels.

Fish supply per head/kg

Nigeria	7.6	Ethiopia	0.2
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Benin	8.8	Somalia	2.1
Ghana	29.7	Zimbabwe	1.7
Gambia	23.5		
Sierra Leone	14.6		
Senegal	29.2		
Cameroon	13.2		

Source: Food and Agricultural Organisation

Domestic production running at an annual average of 473,668 tonnes (1999-2001) is meeting just above 50% of the estimated supply. Official import figures for imported fish were:

Nigerian fish imports in US\$ 1,000

2002	213,357
2001	197,446
2000	181,952
1999	178,124

Source: Food and Agricultural Organisation

The discrepancy is in part explained by a massive under counting of fish imports into Nigeria, much of it through ports in neighbouring Benin. Efforts by government initiatives and private sector enterprise to expand industrial fishing fleets beginning in the 1970s have had some impact, but the bulk of domestically produced fish goes to the account of the artisanal sector. These are small scale in shore fisheries (lakes, rivers, creeks and lagoons), fisheries in the Niger Delta, and along the coastal shelf between Lagos and Badagry.

Food security and national development plans have often been at odds with each other, and stockfish has at times been caught right in the middle. Under the military regime of General Gowon the Finance Commissioner Awolowo, a Yoruba and the foremost politician of the Western Region and presidential candidate, banned stock fish imports on the grounds of preserving foreign exchange. This made him highly unpopular in the Eastern part of the country, and is said to have cost him the election when he stood for president in 1978. This election was won by a northern candidate, Shagari, with Eastern votes tipping the balance. The new government lifted the ban on stockfish shortly after coming into power.

Fish preservation and marketing

According to one authority most of the catch from industrial fisheries is either chilled with ice or frozen. Frozen fish was introduced in the 1970s and quickly found a market in urban areas. The catch from artisanal fisheries is marketed as:

- (i) live fish 7%⁵
- (ii) fresh but unchilled 27%
- (iii) smoke dried 45%
- (iv) sun dried 20%
- (v) salted and sun dried 10%

In the south some of the catch is kept in large cages known as *akana* in Urhobo and submerged in water. Fish are kept 3-6 months and taken to market in kerosine tanks or pots.

Fresh unchilled fish can only be sold within a short radius from where it is landed, typically some 5- 15 km depending on road transport. High rates of spoilage occur.

Smoke dried fish is cut into pieces and spread on mats to dry in sun before smoking over fire for 2-4 days, then dried in the sun. Increasingly smoking is carried out in kilns of clay bricks with a wire gauze placed at the top. Often fish that has been out of the water for 8-12 hours is treated this way resulting in a poor product. They differ greatly, with fish with low moisture content suffering from heavy insect infestation, while fish with medium to high moisture content suffer from bacterial attack and mould contamination. The shelf life of smoked dried fish extends from 5-20 days, but can be extended with good packaging and storage techniques.

Sun drying is mainly practised in northern parts where ambient temperatures are high (32-33 Centigrade) and low humidity. Fish is gutted and beheaded and dried for 5-7 days. It is heavily infested with sand and micro organisms after exposure in the open field.

⁵ Indicative only J.G. Tobor, A Review of the Fishing Industry in Nigeria and Status of Fish Preservation Methods, Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research, Technical Paper 17, Lagos, 1984.

Salt accounts for about a quarter of the weight in salted and sun dried fish. They are pressed down with weights for 24 hours and then sun dried for 3-8 days. Well prepared and packaged they can have a shelf life for 2 years, but poorly prepared products suffer from insect infestation.

2.2 Food preparation in Nigeria today

Food in Nigeria

Nigerian cuisine varies between ecological zones, but there are similarities shared with other parts of Africa. Traditional Nigerian cuisine is prepared over an open fire by frying, roasting, and boiling. The main meal of the day is served in the evening and centres on a large pulpy dish of carbohydrate combined with a stew. In southern Nigerian cooking fish and meat are happily combined in a single dish. In southern Nigeria, the staple are roots and tubers, particularly yam and cassava. In the savannah region guinea corn and maize (tuo) are staples. Both yam and cassava are subject to complex processing, particularly cassava, which in its raw form contains traces of cyanide that need to be removed by soaking and drying.

Once cooked, the yam/cassava is pounded into a mash, thicker than mashed potato but lighter than dumpling so that it can serve as a scoop for the stew. The staple being bland and soft relies on this accompaniment for flavour and texture. Ingredients vary, but include spices, melon kernels (*egusi*) and vegetables, depending on availability. Fish, meat, and snail are part of the stew, and often left until the end of the meal. There is no wastage in Nigerian food processing, and every part of the animal is used: cow foot, fish heads, and organ meat like tripe may swim together in a single dish. The meat may be beef, goat or mutton, or the product of the forest. Bushmeat, especially the rodent '*grasscutter*' and more rarely antelope, remains popular. Stockfish is there among these ingredients, cut into pieces and appreciated for flavour and texture.

The assortment depends in quantity and quality on availability and cost. In commercial establishments fish and meat is cut into pieces and ordered and priced separately to a dish of stew and staple. In private homes they are reserved for elders

and favourites. As yam and cassava are heavy, office workers often prefer a lighter lunch, say of roasted plantain (*boli*) and peanuts, or pepper soup. Pepper soup is hotly spiced, as the name suggests, and serves as a remedy to different diseases. It is also popular with young people out for the night, or conscious of their weight.

Yam and cassava are at the centre of the Nigerian kitchen and the staples of the nation. Traditionally, much of the time of Nigerian women was accounted for by the preparation of food. In rural areas girls and women can still be seen spending long hours pounding yam with spear long pestles in bucket sized mortars. While the junior women undertake the strenuous work, older women apply themselves to the stew, selecting spices and other ingredients. Cooking slowly, the open fire gives time to extract flavour and to soften the food. This is an ideal setting for stockfish preparation, as it can suffuse the stew with its aroma while softening up.

In southern Nigerian cooking the stockfish has found a firm place in the repertoire of ingredients. While everybody knows that is imported, and the foreign provenance may be an important part of the cachet, little is known about where exactly it comes from. Yet for the moment, and among the better off, it has a well established place in the traditional kitchen.

Cooking in different settings

It is important to realise the gender dynamics underlying the cooking process. In international restaurants and the private house of the rich male chefs may well be encountered. There are also particular forms of cooking – such as the grilling of meat known as '*suya*' and a speciality of the Hausa – where men predominate. College students, farmers out in the bush, or men travelling may also cook for each other. Rarely, if ever, however will men cook for women or children.

In traditional households the larger, possibly polygamous family will share a single compound. A number of brothers may also live together with their respective families. The compound comprises a walled enclosure with living quarters along the perimeter and the big house at the centre for the head of the family. The wives will cook for themselves and their children at a fire place each, and in addition tend to the junior men – their brothers and distant relatives, or other workers and friends.

In polygamous households a visit by the husband can be regarded as a privilege, and explains the expression heard among Nigerian women “thank you for eating my food”. While the actual cooking duties are separated and the responsibilities differentiated many tasks are shared, and a happy compound is characterised by cooperation among the co-wives. One such task is keeping an eye on fireplaces. Most fireplaces are out in the open to reduce the inconvenience from smoke and the fire hazard, and members of the residential unit will maintain a close guard on fires

In most rural households the cooking area is in a shaded location outside and sheltered against pests and dust. Facilities range from the most basic stove made of three triangular stones upwards. There is usually a hearth or some hanging basket over the cooking area, for drying and preserving foods. In rural areas these fires are fuelled with wood or the shaft from the palm kernel, which is typically collected by young children and therefore no charge on the domestic budget. With urbanisation and deforestation charcoal is gaining in importance.

A typical assortment of cooking utensils includes knives and machetes, wooden spoons, Calabash scoops, iron and clay pots, enamel basins, wooden bowls, calabashes, woven baskets, miscellaneous bottles and storage tins including vessels (usually of clay) for storing water. Food cooked in earthenware vessels tastes different than when aluminium pots are used. A mortar and pestle are used for softening tubers and grains, while grinding stones are used for mashing vegetables and grinding spices. Increasingly, spices can be ground by specialists using power driven tools at markets, while the elite will use electric coffee bean grinders. There are also specialist traditional equipment's such as ovens made out of mud or metal drums.

Urban settings

In urban areas the compound is often recreated, though polygamy is far less common. The process of cooking is markedly different, however, first of all in the sense of locale. Many compounds will have shared kitchens with fireplaces and cookers, and these will at least be covered if not totally enclosed. Others have private kitchens which are often small and dark. Moreover, in urban areas firewood has to be purchased, and has widely been replaced by kerosene and butane gas. Cooking with fire wood and kerosene is dangerous and affects the quality of the food, as the smell and the taste of kerosene can infiltrate the food. Accidents are all too common, and

in one notorious kerosene explosion in Lagos in October 2001 over 125 burn patients were admitted to Lagos State University Teaching.

The cumulative effect of fuel costs, time efforts and opportunity costs, impacts on the way food is prepared. Women in urban areas are more likely to engage in some form of income generating activity – trading or in the labour market. The net results of these three trends have been to contract the time cooking and to switch to convenience foods.

These include most significantly rice, which has now become firmly established in the Nigerian kitchen. There is also bread, and the rapid construction of wheat mills, the expansion of acreage dedicated to grains, and the importation of wheat (often subsidized exports from Europe or the US) supplies a growing market of bread. Bread can be bought at markets and is brought into residential areas by an army of peddlers, many of them children. Eaten on its own or with canned fish it provides a nutritious if entirely untraditional alternative.

Serving food

Traditionally, all dishes can be served on plates (ceramic, plastics, clay or banana leaves – which are also used for cooking and wrapping food mixtures) and individual clay pots. The food is usually served on two plates separating the sauce from the solids, It can also be served using a single plate i.e. rice and stew with salad and some times solids and sauces can be on the same plate, solids on the plates and sauce. (This is practice more amongst the Yoruba– Amala with Ila and obe ata- Jedi – (Amala (yam bark in powder form – cooked for 20mins) Ila (Okra - chopped or grated) and Obe ata- Jedi (Red peppery stew with fish).

2.3 Eating and cooking in Nigeria today: trends and developments

Eating Out in Nigeria

Eating out in Nigeria is functional and aspirational, rather than a custom embedded in tradition. It needs to be remembered that Nigerian culture has been formed in the rural past, centred on the joint family compounds as the basic building bloc. Even agglomerations like Ibadan and Lagos were rural in character with households self

sufficient for most goods and services. The primary urban experience, the coming together of large numbers of people unrelated and unknown to each other in pre-colonial Nigeria, was the market fair. It is recorded that prepared food was offered on these occasions, and to this day markets provide both locales for food outlets and a model for eating.

The quintessential food serving establishment is the *buka* offering a choice of stews and staples cooked in large pots on an open fire to the back of the serving area. A *buka* may be inside a building with several dining rooms, or comprise just a few benches under a makeshift roof to keep the sun out. Food is ordered by naming the stew or soup and then the staple. A typical menu may include: red stew, egusi and bitter leaf, and the staples eba (cassava), amala (yam with ground bark) and rice. Each will be costed separately. Next the customer will be asked how many pieces of the choice ingredients he wants, that is of fish, meat, and the stockfish, which are again costed separately.

Bukas are located in the markets, alongside the roads, and in clusters convenient to reach for office and other urban workers. They are almost entirely feminized and open only for lunch. It is assumed that the clientele is eating at home at night and on weekends, and in any case, the *buka* owners and staff have to attend to their domestic duties. They vary from large operations with a large crew and a division of labour to simple grills offering grilled plantain (*boli*) and groundnuts. Nigerians eat most meals with their fingers and every *buka* will provide bowls with water and soap for people to wash before a meal. Not many, however, provide toilet facilities.

In a Lagos *buka* one can find senior civil servants, medical doctors and research scientists next to taxi drivers and security guards eating the same kind of food with their fingers. In traditional Nigerian culture there is no culinary stratification, food does not serve as a status marker and no 'haute cuisine' has developed around royal courts. In contemporary Nigeria, however, rich and poor are divided by a vast material gulf. The *buka* is therefore an important Nigerian institution offering the elite the chance to revisit their roots by joining their less fortunate kinsmen in a meal from the same communal cooking pot.

While the mid range and the low end of the food market are contested, there are no indigenous restaurants catering for the upper market segment, which is dominated by foreign competition, such as Chinese, Indian, Lebanese and Italian restaurants.

Nigerian food is served, however, in the international hotels, and in niches, such as *suya* grills attached to sports clubs.

The combination of elite fashions and foreign exposure contribute to changing patterns of socialising and to eating out. As most foreign restaurants are too expensive, and the traditional *buka* closed out of office hours, punters have to turn to alternatives. These are now being provided by a type of establishment that is loosely modelled on western fast food outlets – which happen to be popular with Nigerians when travelling in Europe or North America.

Fast Food

The expansion of fast food in Nigeria has been held in check by the reluctance of foreign operators to enter the Nigerian market. With the rapid depreciation of the Naira and low levels of public safety the competition has stayed away, leaving the sector in the hands of Nigerian conglomerations like the United Africa Company (UAC) which opened a chain of Mr. Biggs outlets in 1986. It now has 86 outlets, 42 of which in Lagos. A second domestic chain operating under the name Tantalizers has set up in the last few years. The majority of outlets, however, are small operations – often financed, managed and even operated by men. In many cases owners and staff have honed their skills by working for fast food restaurants in Europe or North America. In urban Nigeria there have been large numbers of these including , Tastees Fried Chicken (TFC), Sweet Sensation, Big Treat, Favorites, Kas Chicken, Frenchies, Chiquita, Gina's Fast Food Delite, Kingstine Jo Snacks & Burger, Friends, The Kitchen, Charlies and new entrants like Quarter Jack in Ogunlana Drive, Surulere, The Triangle along Kodesho Street, Ikeja, Trendy's and Domino Dina both in Sabo, Yaba, Choppies in Ojuelegba

Yet, these food outlets are 'fast' in name only. Waiting times can be considerable because of slow service and the unavailability of ordered items. And the competition from traditional food vendors providing low cost, ready to eat meals is stiff. These include the *buka* type establishment, which is essentially a restaurant offering traditional food – yam, cassava, *tuo* with a range of soups and stews, at reasonable prices ready to eat. In addition there is a range of stalls serving traditional snacks: *boli* and *epa* (roasted yam and ground nuts) *isu esun* (roasted yam), *dundun* (fried yam), *dodo* (fried plantain), boiled and roasted corn, *eko* (congealed, unflavoured

custard) & *akara* (beans cake), *ogi* (unflavoured custard) & *moin moin* (fried beans), *asun* (barbecued goat meat), and *suya* (grilled beef).

Many of the 'fast food' outlets have responded by including dishes like pounded yam, *Amala*, *moin moin*, *eba*, and *fufu*. This trend is more noticeable in the new entrants to the sector. One example, the Triangle in Ikeja, has three tiers of service which includes fast food, African cuisines and Continental cuisine. Fast food outlets should therefore be regarded as restaurants opening up a new market for eating out by introducing a new restaurant layout and décor, conveniences like toilets and air condition and by using new technologies like deep fryers and micro waves. Very importantly price and setting – with doors closed to keep the place cool and uniformed security guards to keep out trouble makers - establish new forms of exclusion and differentiation, and are therefore instrumental in the formation of a Nigerian elite.

Much of this relates to the composition of the Nigerian elite and their 'extraversion'. This means, that the link abroad – through an education, training, income source – is essential for social advance and attaining elite status. Yet when in Europe or America, many Nigerians lose their elite status and are economically disadvantaged and often victims of racial discrimination. Conforming with their social status their culinary experience is determined by low cost and convenience. And what is taken home is the fast food experience, which upon return is transformed into an elite product.

The shifting pattern of tradition

Many respondents in the qualitative study when asked about food habits replied that Nigerians are very conservative and resistant to change. Yet stockfish itself is the best example how open tradition is to innovation. Over the course of a century stockfish has evolved from an import to a regular feature of the Nigerian kitchen. The survey established that 11% of respondents used stockfish every day. Few Nigerians have any knowledge or any interest of its origins.

The success of stockfish is in parts explained functionally. It is a low weight/ high nutritional value food product with extremely good storage qualities. It is therefore ideally suited for a tropical country with poor communications and high wastage.

Moreover, it could replace an indigenous product – preserved fish. But more importantly than function for the continued popularity of stockfish have been the appeal of its flavour. It has come to be greatly appreciated and is now an intrinsic ingredient of many local recipes.

There are other examples of imports becoming included in the national diet. Maggi stock cubes for example, are used with the same regularity and are sold by traders all over the country. Nobody knows or cares that this is a product by the Swiss food combine Nestle and produced by the local factory.

And within Nigeria dishes like *egusi*, *edikang ikong* and pepper soup have dropped their regional specificity and are now cooked and appreciated as part of the national cuisine. More dramatic still have been the additions to traditional dishes, like the use of pasta noodles in pepper soup. Mushrooms are now added to traditional soups and stews, and aubergines, broccoli, cauliflower and salads are eaten as side dishes or complements. And entirely new dishes such as fried rice and shawama are enjoying increasing popularity.

Section 3: Stockfish in Nigeria Today

In Nigeria Stockfish is known by different names including “Kpanla” (Yoruba) or “Opukroko” (Eastern Nigeria). Opugkroko” is derived from “pgka-pgkara –pgka, which simply means hard dried fish.

Patterns and preferences

The survey⁶ confirms that fish (84% had it on the previous day) is the most widely used source of protein, far more popular than meat (64%). The fact that there is a wide overlap with a number of people having consumed both fish and meat on the previous day is due to the way in which food is cooked in Nigeria – the stew or soup to accompany the starch staple of cassava, yam, rice or grain. In the stew fish and meat are regularly combined.

⁶ The market research study conducted in Nigeria – any reference to informants is to the people interviewed as part of the qualitative study in London

Fish is recognised for its nutritional value. This is in part due to the sheer availability of fish in the creeks and rivers of southern Nigeria, but also making virtue of necessity. Fish is far cheaper than meat, and the tough conditions suffered by most Nigerians have made price an important factor in food choice. Interestingly, most respondents do not rate stockfish highly for its nutritional benefits. This is largely because stockfish is too costly to be eaten in large quantities and its main contribution is to give flavour to the food.

There is an association of stockfish and wealth, with informants saying it is food for the rich. In part this is due to price, but also to the fact that it is a prestigious import that compares favourably with locally processed fish, which is often spoilt or infested with parasites by the time it reaches the market. In some cases wealth is one of several factors rolled into an explanation. Old people, for instance, were identified as one consumer group because they had reached a stage in life where they could afford it and they also had to watch their food more carefully.

While stockfish was good for the rich the respondents in the survey feel themselves to be good enough to enjoy stockfish. Again we have to bear in mind the peculiarity of Nigerian social stratification. There is a strong sense of social mobility and potential for achievement. Many Nigerians believe they can achieve higher social status. Moreover, there is no sense of social inferiority preventing people from partaking. Stockfish may be expensive but it is not exclusive.

Another group of stockfish eaters appreciating that it was fat free were elite women. This was a group that had the financial means to choose their own menu without too much regard to price and had the education to understand the nutritional and other health benefits. Stockfish allowed them to eat healthy and tasty food without putting on weight.

Regional variations

Nigerian cooking is based on stews that incorporate a complex mix of ingredients, which is why 11% of survey respondents report eating stockfish daily. Not as a main course but as an ingredient among several in a stew, and 80% of respondents said they combined stockfish with other ingredients. The popularity of the flavour requires commentary, as it is not shared universally. The most enthusiastic stockfish eaters are in the southern and eastern parts of the country. One informant from Benin said:

"I love it so much I sometimes take it and tear it up to put in my stew just to have the taste."

Even small bits of stockfish were added to give flavour and aroma. The rising costs of stockfish has led to desperate measures, including the use of bony parts like the tail and in recent years, the head. There are several reasons for the popularity of cod heads, but one was price. The survey offers some support in as much head is most popular with the lowest income group (66%), and least with the highest (40%), but the size of the sample of top earners is very low. In any case, costs combine with culture to explain particular patterns of purchase.

According to one of the qualitative research informants:

"The Ibo like it so much they will even have the head and the tail even though there is nothing on it, just to have a flavour and the sense of well being that comes from knowing that you are eating stockfish."

The peculiar preference for cod heads in Eastern Nigeria ties in with the traditional belief that the consumption of the head of animals is good for promoting intelligence. Among the Ibo the heads are conventionally reserved for the 'head' of the Family. Girls, it is believed, will become too intelligent and boys too unruly. One particular Ibo dish is *Ise-ewu* - goat skull cracked into small pieces, and cooked in its brains. It is now available in restaurants all over Nigeria and typically eaten by a group of kinsmen or friends. Cod heads then continue the tradition of 'brain foods' among Eastern customers, while at the same time offering a perceived value for money.

A different reason for the popularity of cod heads was suggested by one informant who said that on special occasions she would add heads to add flavour. They contained little meat and had low nutritional value but were valued for their aromatic properties. This enthusiasm was not universal, however. Some people, and particularly Westerners, have reservations. One informant from Lagos said:

"I don't like to put it into stews the taste is too strong."

Another complained about the smell. In Western Nigeria stockfish was used particularly for special dishes and special occasions. Hence it was used regularly, but not daily or even weekly.

Different fish types

Informants of the qualitative research were clear that tusk was more popular among the Yoruba because it is softer. The fish is called *tofa* and also appreciated for the clear fresher looking colour. Cod, it was said, had black spots, which was off putting.

Ibo informants said they preferred cod for several reasons because it was regarded as a better fish and more tasty. People also enjoyed that it was chewy. This may also relate to the fact that there is less meat available in eastern parts while in western Nigeria cowfoot for instance is enjoyed for precisely its chewy-ness.

Convenience plays another part in the expression of preference for the softer fish. Soaked cod was reported to take 90 minutes cooking time, but tusk could be cooked in 30 minutes. This was an important factor for professional housewives with jobs, multiple responsibilities and limited access to cooking facilities. It also meant lower fuel costs.

Cooking preparations

Informants from the West and the South admitted to finding it difficult in being able to tell how long a stockfish would need to be cooked from sight, smell and feel. Nigerian chefs are rarely rigid with the time allowed for each ingredient, but the uncertainty can be inhibiting inexperienced cooks.

One cook said she prefers to add the stockfish halfway through the cooking process, but if it is hard she adds it at the beginning. If she is not sure then she will err on the side of caution and add it from the beginning even though the taste then is too strong for her liking.

Most informants soaked the stockfish, but this was not always easy. In urban Nigeria living quarters are extremely crowded with occupancy rates of 8 people to a room not uncommon. Finding a place to soak a bowl of stockfish can be fraught with difficulties. There simply may not be the space, other inhabitants may complain about

the pungent smell, and unsupervised for a long time it may get stolen. Even among the elite the soaking was regarded as a nuisance as it required mealtime planning days in advance. One informant therefore said she would soak the stockfish for several hours and then microwave it. Another said she would soak and boil an entire fish then cut it into three pieces, one for immediate use the other two for the freezer.

Only the very rich can truly rely upon this method. Fridges are luxury items in Nigeria and freezers even more so. But even where people have got access to them, power failures are so frequent and so long that cooked fish is liable to spoil. The elite relies on private generators to provide electricity during the blackouts. For everybody else stockfish remains attractive for precisely the reason why it first came to be introduced – its longevity.

Traditions and myths

There is a strong association of stockfish with special occasions. As the survey established, food served at weddings and naming ceremonies is expected to include stockfish. The main reason for this is that stockfish is a primary object of conspicuous consumption. Its price and foreign provenance make it a prestige good bestowing dignity and importance to the occasion.

The relationship with fertility, as in the New Yam Festival – a thanks giving – and weddings is more difficult to interpret, and the explanation offered somewhat tenuous. There is a strong identification of stockfish and the mermaid known in Nigeria as Mami Wata. In southern Nigeria there are many cults to this deity and analogous forms are found in Haiti and Brazil. Mami Wata is not only linked with the sea itself but the world that lies beyond the ocean, and can be traced to the inclusion of West Africa in the Atlantic trading system in the 16th century. The deity, just like the ships offshore, bears mixed blessings. She is dangerous and needs to be placated but also offers riches. Riches in traditional Nigerian culture translates into people – wives, children and followers. Stockfish as a product of both the sea and the Atlantic trade then is associated with Mami Wata, and her involvement, in turn, spells fecundity.

A different twist to the mermaid's tale was given by a story circulating in the 1960s. The reason why stockfish had their heads sliced off before being shipped from the

exporting country was to conceal the fact that they had the heads of human beings. This was illustrated by a postcard of what was claimed to be a live Stockfish with its head intact, right down to its blond Nordic hair. The effect on the cod trade was so potentially damaging that importers went to great lengths to reassure consumers of Stockfish. Like many urban myths this story came and went and is hardly remembered today.

Purchasing and Distribution

The Nigerian retail market is dominated by a series of markets ranging from the extensive, covered urban markets in all major urban neighbourhoods to roadside stall that line almost every Nigerian road. Prices and products seem to be highly standardised, more determined by season, availability and unspoken collusion than the laws of supply and demand.

Central Lagos boasts a few western style supermarkets run by the conglomerates. Foreign chains have not dared to open branches in Nigeria. This means that most families obtain their provisions from traditional markets at varying distances from their homes. Some foodstuffs, notably bread, is sold by hawkers at traffic junctions and in residential areas. Bread is perishable, and the bakeries can organise this operation to cut out the wholesaler.

The retail system in Nigeria presents several difficulties. Markets can be inconveniently far from the home. Parking is often inadequate and poor. The range of goods offered in many food markets is narrow, which means that shoppers have to make multiple stops. Most importantly, venturing into the market place is as hazardous as any journey in Lagos, with its demonic traffick system. One informant said that she used to send her maid out to do the shopping for her, but that this was unsatisfactory:

“because she has a different taste from me and will buy what she thinks is good.”

The fact that stockfish is not packaged and labelled makes it difficult to buy without a visual inspection. Hence this informant would always buy stockfish in England and bring it back. It is cleaner, better packaged, and the shopping much easier.

In the UK, Stockfish is either sold whole or in pieces packed into bags and priced according to weight. Typical bags offered in retail outlets are 500 g or 1 Kg. Prices range from £4.99 to £ 18-20 for a whole fish with the head included. In one shop Norwegian tusk was selling for at £6.99 for 500 grams and £13.99 for 1 kg.

There is no packing of stockfish in Nigeria where the fish is sold in pieces, singly or in bundles of two or three according to size. According to one informant, the categories were 20 – 40 cm; 30-50 cm; 40-60cm; 50-60cm; 50-70cm; 60-80cm. With 80cm fish costing between N2,500 – 5,000 for one of 80cm these fish were reserved even for middle class families for big occasions. The bundling of similar sized fish is an inexact science, hence prices are set within ranges and shoppers arrive at a purchase price by haggling. Most of the survey respondents (67%) bought their stockfish in pieces, suggesting that cooking an entire fish is a luxury. Fish traders have saws with which they cut the stockfish for customers. A further indication of how precious the commodity has become is that even the flaky leftovers in the carton are sold.

An inside into the trade was given by this informant whose mother had traded stockfish in Lagos markets until recently. She would buy the entire cargo of up to 200 bales of 45kgs from an importer. The down payment was collected from different retailers and used to release part of the cargo. The profits were then used to release the next part until the entire cargo was cleared. Purchasers further up the queue who had forwarded money would get better prices than those down the line. While here mother, a Yoruba, was handling these large import shipments most of her clients were Ibo men who shipped their bales out to Eastern Nigeria.

The Significance of the London Community

Nigerians are a nations of great travellers and can be found in every country in the world. In many professions there are more qualified Nigerians working in Europe, North America and the Middle East than in Nigeria. One of the largest communities is settled in London, which is also the first port of call for many Nigerians leaving the country. While in the early aftermath of independence a Nigerian community emerged there are now a large number of specific community organisations reflecting the ethnic diversity of Nigeria. Equally, many of the services and facilities are designed for particular ethnic groups and cultures. It is possible to speak of Yoruba

churches and Ibo restaurants. Yet, the very diversity of London and the overwhelming 'otherness' of the traditional host culture, provoke different sets of identity according to context and situation: as Nigerians, African or as Black.

This is also reflected in the food culture where there has been a slow trend in 'African' restaurants and cooking. To some degree there is a politicised African identity, with people of African origin or extraction embracing cultural symbols regardless of ethnic background. Restaurants with a pan continental theme and appeal, such as 'Calabash', therefore offer a range of dishes from Ethiopia to Sierra Leone. These restaurants are even more vibrant in the US where they cater for the politicised and culturally assertive segment of the Afro-American population.

In the UK, where the Afro-Caribbean community comprises first and second generation immigrants, the restaurant scene is primarily community based and in keeping with a particular set of traditions. In contrast to the US, this is not about identity creation and self discovery, but about continuity and pragmatics. Catering is a skill many Nigerian migrants have already, and they adapt easily to the UK environment. In Peckham, Brixton, Finsbury Park and many other London neighbourhoods, Nigerian restaurants have sprung out of the ground, offering a menu and employing management techniques that could equally well be found in Lagos, Onitsha or Port Harcourt. These restaurants are similar to the Nigerian *buka* in that they provide a midday meal for workers in surrounding offices and shops. Many are closed in the evening, but the ones that open have to adapt their style. Either they offer fast food for a young, mainly male clientele eating on the move, or they offer sit down meals.

The success of the London *buka* demonstrates the hold eating cultures have over people, with Nigerian professionals choosing traditional meals over a range of competitors entirely because of food preference. Nigerian restaurants are not cheap – though not expensive either. What they demonstrate to young people growing up in the UK, is that Nigerian food is a commercial product with a monetary value. Only rarely have they succeeded so far in winning over customers from outside the community.

For second generation Nigerian, or British of Nigerian extraction the restaurant scene is an important public extension of the home cooking tradition. Many Nigerian continue cooking traditional dishes, almost exclusively. A number of adjustments are made such as powder form of cassava and yam, which is stirred into water to make

up the main staple of *gari* or pounded yam. There are canned sauces, and stockfish is already cut into pieces and vacuum packed into weight denominated bags, labelled and priced.

The fidelity to traditional cooking is driven by women, one of whom, a professional physicist, saying that:

"I just love gari so much I could not think of ever giving it up."

For second generation Nigerians the food has become an important part of their sense of being Nigerian. The dishes, so different from standard British cooking, define a cultural tradition that is different and developed. Moreover, it is associated with festivals and gatherings where the community comes into being. The community is active in celebrating individual rites of passage – naming ceremonies, graduation celebration – as well as communal events, like independence day, with large gatherings where food prepared by different women is served. These events give life and meaning to communal identity and are important in forming the identity and the palate of young Britons of Nigerian extraction. It is beyond the scope of this paper to look into food preparation patterns among second generation UK- Nigerian mothers. It is not clear to what extent these adhere to Nigerian menus. But up to now the stream of visitors from Nigeria has meant that there are always new people arriving willing to work in the kitchen and with an appetite for traditional cooking.

The circulation of people, goods and ideas between Nigeria and the UK has produced a lively dynamic, already touched upon in the section on restaurants. It is important to underline that the flow goes two ways. First, the hazards of Nigeria's political history have ejected scores of dissidents at different points in time. As things become more open and embracing many of these political aspirants return. Equally, the volatile economy based on oil prices and oil income distribution, in turn forces people to look for their fortune elsewhere, and in turn creates opportunities, within. Many Nigerians are educated and trained in the UK but find work or business opportunities in Nigeria.

Across this complex process of interaction food provides a constant that is important in terms of identity. Nigerians living and working in London continue eating Nigerian dishes bought in markets and shops in different neighbourhoods. But there are also changes – the ingredients may all be available, but back in the kitchen the

atmosphere of a Nigerian home can not so easily be recreated. Labour intense tasks, which in Nigeria can be shared across members of a family or contracted out to domestic staff, need to be managed carefully by the lady of the house. The powder form of cassava and yam has already been mentioned and reference has also been made to the yam pounding machine. Many Nigerian cooks will prepare large quantities of a particular soup or stew and store it in the deep freeze. Shopping behaviour has also become influenced by standard UK practices with greater demands on hygiene, quality, labelling and clarity of price. One issue that remains ambiguous is the attitude to retail structure. Nigerians in London do not differ from other groups in purchasing their provisions in one stop shops from supermarkets. For traditional foods they need, however, to visit special shops run typically by Nigerians, other West Africans and Asians. On the one hand, this return to a more traditional mode of shopping is enjoyed for the social occasions it affords. On the other, it is a difficult and inconvenient add on to the ordinary shopping duties.

The UK – Nigeria relationship also brings up issues of practice and opportunity. London remains an entrepot form where many Nigerian imports are sourced, both personal and commercial. It is also the base for many Nigerian professionals and entrepreneurs. Businessmen have operations in both countries often in the same market segment. The food business is a case in point, where enterprises have built up in exporting Nigerian produce to London for the Nigerian and West African community. Value has been added by repackaging the goods in accordance with UK standards. Next, these businesses are seeking to use the UK as a platform for importing foods to Nigeria, using their expertise, finances and contacts.

For Stock Fish exporters there is an opportunity in exploring the opportunities in London to find

- (i) food importers that buy SF in bulk and organise the importation to Nigeria and distribution within
- (ii) sell quality products to the Nigerian community in London, which is sizeable and wealthy
- (iii) to test different products

Border trade

During early discussions it was considered giving an estimate of the unofficial border trade. It was not possible to get any data on this without a field visit and conducting

interviews inside Nigeria. There was interest in the extent to which Nigeria serves as a point of entry for stockfish cargo destined for Cameroon particularly. No information has been found on this.

One interesting point has been the diversion of interests to Benin Republic. Some food importers find it easier to land their cargo in Benin Republic and ship overland and past the Badagry customs post to Nigeria than circumvent the Nigerian authorities. Once again, exporters may think about the options of finding an importer based at Cotonou.

Discussion

Stockfish is clearly a firm part of the Nigerian culinary repertoire and is found in many recipes and dishes. It does have a traditional image and festive association that are both a strength and a weakness. Popularity varies between regions, and is much greater in the South and the East. Yet right across the southern belt stockfish is widely eaten and appreciated.

Two points should give cause for pause, however. Cultures are dynamic, and just as a feature can be absorbed into a tradition so it can be secreted. There are trends in Nigeria towards convenience foods and stockfish has not adapted well to the new need for speed and convenience. It requires long preparation and cooking time and the available short cuts – micro wave, freezer – are out of the reach of the majority. The other is price, as stockfish remains well out of reach for many customers. The danger here is that stockfish becomes an elite food and no longer part of the typical cuisine. Without demands from ordinary customers it will disappear from the *buka*, the popular restaurant, and only found in elite households. Elite consumers are notoriously fickle however, and far more open to changing fashions. Relegating stockfish to the higher end of the market does not bode well for its long term future as a regular ingredient of the Nigerian cuisine.

In order to ensure that stockfish retains its appeal across the social spectrum it has to remain 'popular' in the sense of forming part of the regular diet of ordinary Nigerians.

This is particularly important with regard to the next generation, as palates are trained in early years. For this to happen stockfish needs to be more accessible in terms of price, and if overall prices cannot be reduced, then it should be sold in quantities small enough for modest household budget. As many Nigerian consumers treasure stockfish for its flavour even small 200g or 100g packets may find a market.

Women in such households are also likely to be most committed with family duties and work. Labour saving techniques will be the key to win over this customer base, which means principally cutting back the soaking and cooking time of stockfish. This will not be easy as the parallel with yam powder illustrates. In the UK Nigerians buy yam powder to prepare pounded yam by adding water. In Nigeria this has never achieved acceptance, as the taste is considered inferior to hand pounded yam. Elite Nigerians, use yam pounding machines, a typical electric labour saving device. Most Nigerians carry on pounding yam or switching to cassava, which is easier to prepare.

Exploring ways of reducing the labour input is essential for the future development of the stockfish market. The options for this are to pre-cook stockfish in Nigeria, possibly in the markets and sell it pre-cooked. This is appealing in that it could build up a base of Nigerian tradesmen with an active interest in promoting the use of stockfish and will ensure that the market is broadened out. On the other, the cooking of stockfish removes the very quality that makes it such a successful commodity in the first place, its shelf life. As one of the informant mentioned, electricity supply is precarious in Nigeria and power cuts frequent and prolonged. Cooked fish will spoil in no time.

If stockfish were prepared in a way that made it soft for cutting and dramatically reduced the cooking time then it would meet both the labour saving requirements and the repackaging into smaller portions.

Recommendations:

1. Develop easy to cook form of stockfish
2. Sell and package in small portions
3. Change name of the category of fish now called 'African'

4. Address diaspora by targeting marketing campaigns at Nigerians in London and the US
5. Standardize packaging – either in Norway or in Nigeria – but plastic wrapping with coding
6. Advertising – introduce stockfish in the soap operas – most people in survey watch tv; soap operas very popular, thriving Nigerian film industry
7. Marketing – target the Ibo marriage market – say that nobody is properly married unless stockfish was given as bridewealth
8. Set up direct relationships with chains of restaurants such as UAC – Mr Biggs to offer stockfish as ingredient in some of their 'traditional' dishes
9. Set up direct relationships with restaurant owners and with *buka* women to sell directly to them and to see what they want
10. Target young women – as a diet fish weight conscious
11. Launch information campaign that stockfish import is now legal
12. clear brand names and standardisation of fish by name, weight and body part so that shopping instructions can be given

Annex 1 Feedback from London Market Testing

Samples of cod pressed 'mashed' were supplied to a number of Nigerian restaurants and private households. The results were mixed, but pointing towards future product development.

One restaurant said that this was cods and that they normally bought tulse but tested it anyway. It did not take long to cook but the taste was not good and she did not want to serve it up, but kept pieces to add to her *egussi* and *efo* soups. She and many of her customers are Yoruba.

In the second restaurant the feedback was very positive – the fish was cooked in 20 minutes and then added to the stews. Customers enjoyed it, though some said they would prefer something chewier. There was a further request to have the fish cut up into pieces. This is what their suppliers do for them, and it makes it very convenient both for commercial and domestic use. The exception are ceremonial occasions when an entire stockfish is presented.

The way forward for a systematic product development would now require that different fish types and classes are tested across London. What is suggested that different grades of cod and tulse are prepared or 'mashed' as above and then tested.

It needs to be understood that the main factor for consideration is price – price of the fish and of cooking. By mashing the preparation costs are reduced which needs to be put across in advertising. In addition the purchasing costs have to be reduced which can only be achieved if the most economic category of fish is provided, and crucially, the fish is cut into smaller portions of 250, 500, 1,000 gram. If the is weighed up and packaged in Norway – or en route – this would potentially open an entirely new mass market.

Annex 2

A selection of Nigerian dishes using Stockfish as an ingredient

By Maureen Fischer

West African soups follow the same cooking principles. The stews are heavy and starchy, light on meat, generous on fat and commonly cooked in one pot. This means that all the ingredients – meat and fish – are cooked together. Here are a few soups using different ingredients.

1. Palava Soup

Ingredients

250 ml (8 fl oz) palm oil

4 medium onions, finely chopped

4 large tomatoes, blanched, peeled and mashed

Salt and pepper to taste

2-4 red chillies, finely chopped (optional)

250 g (1/2 lb) diced cooked meat or leftovers

250 g (1/2 lb) fish e.g. snapper, tuna,

125 g (1/4 lb) smoked herring, boned (optional)

200 g (6-1/2 oz) dried prawns (shrimp)

250 g Stockfish

3 bunches of spinach (silver beet) or 750 g (1-1/2 lb) frozen spinach (silver beet), washed and chopped

100 g (3-1/2 oz) egusi (shelled pumpkin seeds or pepitas), ground in a mortar and pestle or a coffee grinder

Instructions

Heat the oil in a saucepan and fry the onions until golden. Add the blended tomatoes and pepper (hot chillies peppers - to taste). If you are using corn oil, add turmeric here

Cook for 10-15 minutes on low heat, stirring regularly. Add salt to taste with your choice of diced or little chunks of well seasoned cooked Meat, Seafood and Stockfish.

Stir in the smoked herring with the dried prawns. Simmer on very low heat, stirring regularly to prevent burning. Add the spinach (silver beet) or (Bitter leaves - Nigerian or a mixture of both) to the meat mixture. Cover and simmer on low heat for 10-15 minutes or until the spinach (silver beet) is soft and cooked. Stir regularly, taking care not to break up the fish too much. Add the egusi and stir them into the sauce. Cook for a further 10-15 minutes on low heat. Serve hot with boiled rice, yams, plantains, gari (coarse cassava flour), Banku (cornmeal dumplings) or any root vegetable, roasted, boiled or grilled.

2. Obe Efo

A Western Nigerian name derived from the Yoruba land i.e. Lagos. The word Obe simply means soup or sauce and Efo - Africa greens like spinach or Bitter leaf as the name implies but washed several times until all the bitterness is completely washed out (some people prefers the washed up leaves to be slightly bitter, thus it gives it a different kind of flavour) or in some cases, both the spinach like leaves of bitter leaves can be added to the sauce

Ingredients

750 g Efo (or bitter leaf, silver beet spinach or any other green)

250 ml Palm oil

4 Finely chopped medium onions

Tomatoes - (Fresh 20-25) (Canned 2-4)

5-6 Red Chillies Pepper whole or finely chopped

2 Sweet hot pepper - (optional)

250 g Diced or Chunky Cooked beef, goat, mutton, chicken or duck- or leftovers

200g dried prawns or crayfish or fresh snapper

125g smoked herring or boned tilapia

250 g Stockfish

100 g egusi ground

Salt, pepper and magi seasoning cubes to taste

Cooking Instructions

Preparation:

- Plucked Efo - Africa greens like spinach from stem and rinse thoroughly (making sure that it is free of sand) and chop roughly into bite size.
- Bitter leaf - Plucked Bitter leaves, washed until foam and chlorophyll free.

- Put Stockfish into a bowl of hot water with salt and Soak over night. If time is against you then bring to boil until soft, add salt to taste.
- Heat the oil in a saucepan and fry the onions until golden. Add the blended tomatoes and pepper (hot chillies peppers - to taste). Cook for 10-15 minutes on low heat, stirring regularly (not continuously) until liquid is reduced . Add salt and maggi seasoning cubes to taste with your choice of diced or little chunks of well seasoned cooked Meat, Seafood and Stockfish if tough .If Stockfish is soft add last together with crayfish)
- 10 minutes before cooking is completed stir in the smoked herring (optional) with the dried prawns (shrimp – optional). Simmer on very low heat, stirring regularly to prevent burning.
- Add the spinach (silver beet) or (Bitter leaves - or a mixture of both) to the meaty sauce mix. Cover and simmer on low heat for 10-15 minutes at this stage (Add - smoke herring, dried prawns or crayfish and Stockfish (if soft, or over cooked) mix well with spinach and when the spinach (silver beet) is soft and cooked. Stir regularly, taking care not to break up the fish too much

3. Obe Egusi or Egusi Soup

This humble melon seed soup is quite popular all over Nigeria. Although cooking techniques and the kind of vegetables used might differ from region to region it is still absolutely delicious when properly cooked.

Ingredients (serves 4-6)

250g 8oz fresh beef chucks

500g / 1lb bushmeat

500g / 1lb Stockfish (pre-soaked)

500g / 1lb smoked dry fish

250g / 8oz oxtail

250g / 8oz cleaned tripe

2pt stock or water

300g / 10oz ground egusi

500g 1lb fresh tomatoes

250g / 8oz fresh peppers

2 large onion

teaspoons iru

4 tablespoon ground crayfish
500g.1lb fresh bitter leaf (washed to remove excessive bitterness)
salt to taste

Cooking Instructions

Wash thoroughly the beef oxtail bushmeat and tripe. Place a large pot with sliced onions season with salt add a drop of water or stock and cook for 30 minutes or until tender.

Add the washed dry fish and Stockfish and cook for another 10 minutes. When cooked mm into a large clean bowl. Wipe out the pot and place back on heat. Pour the oil into the pot when hot add the ground tomatoes onions and peppers and fry for 10 minutes. Add the ground egusi and iru stirring thoroughly and cook for 5 minutes. Finally add cooked meats washed bitter leaf Crayfish and the stock. Allow to boil then simmer for 15 minutes. Serve hot with any of the stiff puddings.

Variations

Others green leaf vegetables such as fresh waterleaf Soko Tete. Igbo ugwu and Uzouza leaves can also be used on their own or as a combination m the above recipe using the same methods.

Serve with yams, gari, plantains banku (corn meal dumplings) or boiled rice

4.Okra and Bitterleaf Soup

Ingredients

500g/1lb assorted parts of meat (washed)
1 medium smoked fish (washed)
225g / 8oz Stockfish (pre- soaked)
22 5g / 8oz bushmeat (washed)
500g/ 1lb fresh okra
225g / 8oz bitter leaf (washed)
150ml / 5/7 oz palm-oil
3pt stock or water
100g / 4oz ground crayfish
25g / 1oz iru (locust bean)
100g / 4oz ground pepper

Cooking Instructions

Place the washed meats in a large pot, add a drop of water or stock, season with salt and ground pepper and boil for 30 minutes or until tender. Add the smoked fish and stock fish, cook for another 10 minutes. Add the rest of the stock. Prepare the okra by washing thoroughly in cold water. Divide into two, finely chop one half and cut the rest into small rounds. Add the prepared okra together with the washed bitterleaf to the boiling soup and stir. Add the palm-oil and *iru*, allow to bubble and simmer for 5 minutes, sprinkle in ground crayfish and stir. Simmer for another 10 minutes. Check seasoning and serve hot with pounded yam.

Variations

Fresh Pumpkin leaves (Ugwu), waterleaf or uzoza leaves can be substituted for bitterleaf in this recipe. It can also be cooked plain without using any of the vegetables. This is better known as Ila Alasepo. OBE EJA TUTU

5. Obe Eja Tutu or Fresh fish stew

This simple and delicious dish is a favourite amongst the Westerners particularly the Lagos Islanders. The legendary Obokun fish is usually used although any other large fresh fish will produce the same results but not in taste.

Ingredients (serves 4)

1 large fish (preferably Obokun)
450g/1 lb fresh tomatoes
22 5g / 8oz fresh chillies

3 tablespoon tomatoes puree
1 large Onions
2 lemons
190ml / 6fl oz groundnut-oil
pinch of thyme and curry
salt to taste

Cooking Instructions

Clean and cut the fish into medium size pieces and wash thoroughly with the lemons. Place in a bowl and season with salt, thyme and curry. Leave aside for 15-20minutes to absorb seasoning. Grind the tomatoes, onions and peppers. Heat oil in a pot, pour in the ground ingredients and cook for 20 minutes until fairly reduced. Blend in the tomato puree, add the marinated pieces of fish, season and cook for 20minutes stirring gently to avoid breaking up the fish. Check seasoning and serve.

6. Otong Soup

Very rich okro and vegetable soup from the South East region of Nigeria (Calabar)

Ingredients

1Kg / 2lbs assorted meat (beef, oxtail, tripe, ponmo, bokoto & bushmeat)
225g / 8oz Stockfish (pre-soaked)
500g / 1lb dry fish (thoroughly washed)
450g/1lb periwinkles
225g / 8oz whole dry prawns (cleaned)
225g / 8oz ground crayfish
225g / 8oz ground pepper
1 medium onion
1kg/21b ugu/pumpkin leaves (washed & shredded)
450g / 1lb fresh okro (sliced and pounded)
6oz Etinkirin / Uzouza leaves (shredded optional)
200ml palm oil
2pt stock
salt to taste

Cooking Instructions

Wash the meat thoroughly and place in a large pot. Add some sliced onions, ground chillies and some stock. Place on heat and cook for 30 minutes. Wash the smoked

dry fish with salt and soak in boiling salted water for 5 minutes to kill any insect and loosen any sand or girt. Rinse thorough with lots of cold water. Add the Stockfish, dry fish, dry prawns and periwinkles to the meat and cook for a further 10minutes add more stock and bring to the boil. Finally add the shredded ugwu/pumpkin leave and pounded okro. Mix in properly. Allow to simmer for 15minutes, add the crayfish, palm-oil and etinkirin leaves.

Give it a good stir and allow the soup to bubble for another 10 minutes until well blended and the aroma fills the kitchen. Remove from heat and serve hot with fufu or Anyang Ekpang.

7. Okro and Bitter leaf Soup

Ingredients

500g/1lb assorted parts of meat (washed)

1 medium smoked fish (washed)

225g / 8oz Stockfish (pre- soaked)

22 5g / 8oz bushmeat (washed)

500g/ 1lb fresh okro

225g / 8oz bitter leaf (washed)

150ml / 5/7 oz palm-oil

3pt stock or water

100g / 4oz ground crayfish

25g / loz iru (locust bean)

100g / 4oz ground pepper

Cooking Instructions

Place the washed meats in a large pot, add a drop of water or stock, season with salt and ground pepper and boil for 30 minutes or until tender. Add the smoked fish and Stockfish, cook for another 10 minutes. Add the rest of the stock. Prepare the okra by washing thoroughly in cold water. Divide into two, finely chop one half and cut the rest into small rounds. Add the prepared okra together with the washed bitter leaf to the boiling soup and stir. Add the palm-oil and *iru*, allow to bubble and simmer for 5 minutes, sprinkle in ground crayfish and stir. Simmer for another 10minutes. Check seasoning and serve hot with pounded yam.

Variations

Fresh Pumpkin leaves (Ugwu), waterleaf or uzoza leaves can be substituted for

bitterleaf in this recipe. It can also be cooked plain without using any of the vegetables. This is better known as Ila Alasepo or Green Stew

Ingredients

1kg/2lbs beef

2 onions

6 green tomatoes

10 green chillies

6 tablespoons palm-oil

6 green pepper

Salt to Taste

Cooking Instructions

Wash the beef, cut into medium cubes. Place into a clean pot season with salt and onions, add some water and cook for 30 minutes or until tender. Heat the oil in a pan, coarsely rough pound the tomatoes, peppers, chillies and onions in mortar, add to the heated oil and fry for 15 minutes. Add the cooked meat and stock stir through and simmer for another 10 minutes, remove from heat and serve with boiled rice.

8. Groundnut Soup

Ingredients serves 4

500g / 1lb assorted parts of meat (washed)

1 medium smoked fish (washed)

225g / 8oz Stockfish

225g / 8oz bushmeat (washed)

500g / 8oz roasted groundnuts

1pt stock or water

100g / 4oz ground crayfish

25g / 1oz iru (locust bean)

2 medium fresh tomatoes

100g / 4oz ground pepper

1 onion

3 large peppers (tatase)

salt to taste

Cooking Instructions

Place the washed meats in a large pot, add a drop of water or stock, season with salt and ground pepper and boil for 30 minutes or until tender. Add the smoked fish and Stockfish, cook for another 10 minutes. Add the rest of the stock. Bring to the boil and add the ground fresh tomatoes, onions, pepper, iru and groundnut. Cook for 20 minutes until the soup thickens. Sprinkle in ground crayfish and stir. Simmer for another 10 minutes. Check seasoning and serve hot with boiled rice.

9 Ibaba Soup

This is a slightly thickened and aromatic soup made by using thickening Ibaba seeds and Etinkirin / Uzouza leaves. It originates with the Efik people from the Calabar region.

Ingredients

1 kg / 2lb assorted meats (Beef, oxtail, trip, ponmo, bokoto & bushmeat)
4 snails (washed with lemon or limes)
450g / 1lb Stockfish (pre soaked)
450g / 1lb dryfish (thoroughly washed)
100g / 4oz ground ibaba seeds
225g/8oz ground crayfish
225g/8oz ground pepper
1 medium onion
450g / 1lb shredded Etinkirin leaves
200ml palm-oil
1 lit / 2pt stock
salt to taste

Cooking Instructions

Wash the meat thoroughly and place in a large pot. Add some sliced onions, ground chillies and stock. Place on heat and cook for 30 minutes or until tender. Meanwhile wash the smoked dry fish with salt and soak in boiling water for 5 to 10 minutes to loosen any sand or grit and kill any insect present. Rinse thoroughly with lots of cold water.

Add the stock fish, dry fish and snails to the pot of meat and cook for 10 minutes. Add the rest of the stock, bring to the boil, add the oil and ground Ibaba seeds. Stir thoroughly to slightly thicken. Finally add the shredded Etinkirin leaves and crayfish. Leave to simmer for 15 minutes. If too thick, adjust consistency by adding more stock

as required. It should lightly coat the back of a spoon.

10 Ogbono Soup

Just like the egusi, ogbono soup is thoroughly enjoyed by all Nigerians. It is a particular favourite amongst the Ibos in the east to whom this superb soup is deemed incomplete without the addition Stockfish.

Ingredients

1kg/ 2 lbs assorted meats (oxtail, tripe, ponmo & bushmeat)

450g/1lb stock fish(pre-soaked)

450g / 1lb dried fish (washed)

225g / 8oz whole dry prawns (cleaned)

225g / 8oz ground ogbono seeds

225g/8oz ground crayfish

25g / 8oz ground pepper

25g / 1oz iru

1 medium onion

290ml / 10fl oz palmoil

3pt stock or water

salt to taste

Cooking Instructions

Washed the assorted meats thoroughly and place in a pot. Add the sliced onions, ground chillies and some stock or water. Cooked for 30 minutes. Add the washed smoked fish and Stockfish, cook for a further 10-15 minutes adding a drop of water or stock as needed to stop it from burning. In another pot, heat the oil and fry the ground seeds for 3 minutes to bring out the nutty flavour.

Gradually add the stock and whisk until it draws and bubbles. Add the cooked meats peppers and crayfish.

Dissolve the locust bean in a little stock and add to the soup. Allow to simmer for another 10 minutes, check seasoning and serve hot with pounded yam.

Variations

Ogbono Soup with bitterleaf

225g / 8oz washed bitter leaf added to main recipe

Ogbono Soup with Ugwu

500g / 1lb shredded ugwu leaves added to main recipe.

Ogbono Soup with igbo

225g/8oz washed igbo leaves added to main recipe

Ogbono Soup with water leaf

500g/1lb washed water leaf added to main recipe.

11 Edikang Ikong Soup

Well famous Nigerian soup, particularly indigenous to the Efik people of the Calabar region and thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated amongst connoisseurs and lovers of good food all over the country. There are many myths attached to this superb soup but as you can see from the recipe given, it is only a simple vegetable soup.

Ingredients (serves 4)

1 kg / 2lb assorted meats (beef, oxtail, tripe, ponmo, bokoto & bushmeat)

4 snails (washed with lemon and limes)

450g / 1lb Stockfish (pre-soaked)

450g / 1lb dry fish (thoroughly washed)

450g/ 1lb periwinkles (top & tail)

225g / 8oz whole dry prawns (cleaned)

225g / 8oz ground crayfish

1 medium onion

1.35kg/3 lb fresh ugwu/pumpkin leaves (washed & shredded)

1 kg /2lb fresh waterleaf (prepared and washed)

200ml palmoil

600ml / 1pt stock

salt to taste

Cooking Instructions

Wash the meat thoroughly and place in a large pot. Add some sliced onions, ground chillies and some stock. Place on heat and cook for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, remove the snail from shells and wash, rubbing with lime or lemon juice to remove slime.

Wash the smoked dry fish with salt and soak in slightly salted water for 5 minutes to kill any insect and loosen any sand or grit.

Rinse thoroughly with lots of cold water. Top and tail the periwinkles and wash thoroughly. Add the snails, Stockfish, dry fish, dry prawns and periwinkles to the pot of meat and cook for a further 10 minutes, adding more stock if required. Finally add the shredded uguwu / pumpkin leaves and waterleaf, mix in properly. Allow to simmer for 15 minutes and add the crayfish and palmoil.

Give it a good stir and gently simmer for another 10 minutes until well blended and the aroma fills the kitchen. Remove from heat and serve hot with Fufu or pounded yam.

