



**MIDWESTERN  
NIGERIA  
AT A GLANCE**



# **MIDWESTERN NIGERIA AT A GLANCE**

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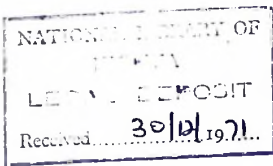
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## FOREWORD

In a world of change as well as of continuity, information is a useful tool for explaining the hopes and aspirations of a people. Citizens will support a government if it supplies them with adequate information on which to base their decision.

Midwestern Nigeria is often referred to as a miniature Nigeria or a meeting point of all the tribes in the country. Although the people of the State speak diverse tongues, they have a common ancestry. This publication offers well-wishers and visitors a firsthand information compiled in this form to enable them understand and appreciate the nature of our people, culture and social activities.

It is also a first bold attempt to capture the mood of the people, their urge for change, and the determination to develop their resources and skills. Some of the changes which are taking place in Midwestern Nigeria may not be new elsewhere, but to us they are both challenging and exciting. For this reason, we derive joyful satisfaction from recording them in word and picture. Midwestern Nigeria is a State in a hurry and this guide-book is a picturescope of its progress, culture and heritage.

Colonel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia  
*Military Governor*

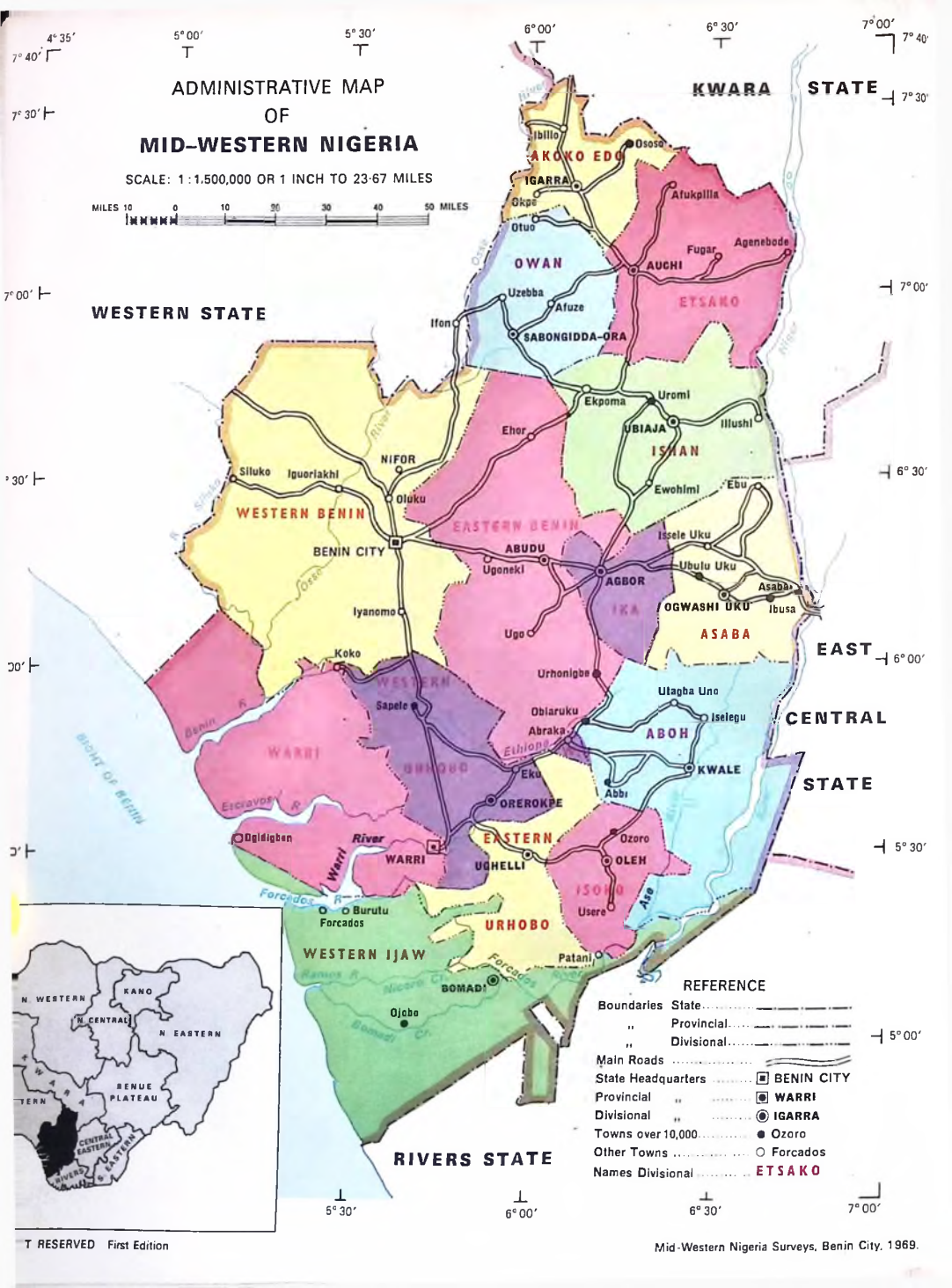


# CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	
Geography	7
History	8
2. AGRICULTURE	
Yams, Cassava, Rice, Maize	11
Rubber, Palm Produce, Cocoa, Cotton	
3. ANIMAL HUSBANDRY	
Poultry, Piggery, Cattle Rearing	36
4. FISHERIES	
Fishing	40
5. FORESTRY	
Forest Resources	44
Forest Management	45
Sawmilling	46
6. INDUSTRIAL GROWTH	
Oil Production	53
Carpet Factory	56
Cement Industry	58
Glass Factory	60
Textile Mill	62
Foam Factory	64
Printing	68
Furniture Industry	70
Tourism	73
7. RETAIL TRADE	
Open market Sale	79
Shop-keeping	79
Distributive trade	80
8. SOCIAL SERVICES	
Health	83
Education	88
9. CULTURE	
Art	96
Crafts	101
Traditional Costumes	106
Headgear	111
Music & Dances	116
Beauty	122
Igue Festival	125
Other Festivals	130
Regatta	136
Sports	138

# ADMINISTRATIVE MAP OF MID-WESTERN NIGERIA

SCALE: 1:1,500,000 OR 1 INCH TO 23.67 MILES



**REFERENCE**

- Boundaries State ..... ————
- Provincial ..... - - - - -
- Divisional ..... — · — · — · — · —
- Main Roads ..... ————
- State Headquarters .....   BENIN CITY
- Provincial " .....   WARRI
- Divisional " .....   IGARRA
- Towns over 10,000 ..... ● Ozooro
- Other Towns ..... ○ Forcados
- Names Divisional ..... **ETS AKO**



# INTRODUCTION

## GEOGRAPHY

The Midwestern State of Nigeria lies approximately between longitudes 5° 00'E and 6° 45'E and between latitudes 4° 45'N and 7° 30'N. It covers an area of 14,922 square miles, and is the eighth largest of the 12 States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It shares common boundaries with Kwara, Western, East Central and Rivers States. In the southwest and south, it has an 80-mile coast-line bounded by the Bight of Benin on the Atlantic Ocean.

Its population is 2.5 million and ranks ninth in the Federation. The people live in the following 14 administrative divisions of the State:

<i>Division</i>	<i>Population</i>
Aboh ... ..	178,154
Akoko-Edo ... ..	112,186
Asaba ... ..	180,144
Eastern Benin ... ..	177,417
Western Benin ... ..	252,490
Etsako ... ..	135,135
Ika ... ..	135,854
Ishan ... ..	270,903
Isoko ... ..	134,157
Owan ... ..	90,857
Eastern Urhobo ... ..	223,294
Western Urhobo ... ..	268,442
Warri ... ..	145,060
Western Ijaw ... ..	231,746

Generally the State is in a low-lying area except in the north where it is marked by undulating hills rising to a peak of about 2,202 ft. above sea level. The lordly River Niger, which is the key to the Nigerian hinterland, flows along its eastern boundary. It provides river transport facilities enhanced by the Kainji Dam in Kwara State. It has four good ports at Sapele, Warri, Koko and Burutu. The coastal belt has rivulets and channels which form part of the extensive Niger Delta basin.

The State has a tropical climate characterised by two seasons, namely, a dry season and a rainy season. November to April is dry, December to February is usually marked by the dry winds of the harmattan caused by the northeast trade winds. The rainy season commences about late March or early April to October, chequered by a brief dry period in August. Rainfall is heaviest in July. The average annual rainfall ranges from 100 inches in the coastal areas to 60 inches in the extreme north. The temperature is high having an annual average of 80°F.

The vegetation presents varying belts from the coast northwards. Along the coast are the impenetrable mangrove forests. These are



terminated by a broad zone of deciduous and evergreen forests. The zone is followed by savannah forests with medium-sized trees and grasslands in the north.

The State is endowed with forest resources. It has many forest reserves with various species of trees. The State supplies about 80% of Nigeria's export timber.

In addition, the State is abundantly rich in mineral and other natural resources such as crude petroleum oil, gas, limestone, lignite, rubber, palm produce, cocoa and of late gypsum was found. **Capital.** The State capital is Benin City with a population of over 100,694. It is neat and well developed. It has many good roads, and its town planning and general view are among the best in the country. Educational, medical, transport, telecommunication and catering facilities are available. There are primary and secondary schools in the town, a newly established Institute of Technology, two daily newspapers, a general hospital, five commercial banks and a branch of the Central Bank of Nigeria, ample hotel and motel services. A master-plan for transforming Benin into a modern city has been drawn up by Government.

Historically, Benin City, the heart of the ancient Benin Empire, is a centre of arts and culture. Benin brassworks, carvings and terra cottas enjoy world-wide acclaim. There is a museum, a Midwest crafts shop and also an arts and crafts school in Benin City. In some other areas of the State artists and craftsmen can be found as blacksmiths, cloth-weavers, basket-makers and potters.

From Benin City, roads fan out to the remotest town and village. Road development is one of the activities to which the State Government attaches great importance. Transportation is effected by motor vehicles, trucks, bicycles and canoes. The Government has introduced bus transport service in Benin, Sapele and Warri and plans to extend it to other towns. Motor boats have been provided for the Delta areas.

## HISTORY

The Midwest State is part of the Benin Empire from where most of the component parts derived their origin. The various ethnic communities of Owan, Etsako, Ishan, Akoko-Edo, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Isoko, Asaba, Ika, Aboh and Ijaw all migrated from Benin, even though several now speak a number of different languages. They practically have identical customs, beliefs and culture. This cultural identity is manifest in their festivals, religious beliefs, marriage ceremonies, traditions of kinship and chieftaincy titles. Even certain words have similar pronunciation and meaning in several areas.

The Benin kingdom existed about the Ninth century. The progenitors of the Bini people were said to have moved from Egypt southwards through the Sudan in search of fertile land, until they settled in an area of the Benin Kingdom which they called Igodomigodo. The early people practised oligarchy and later evolved a system of monarchy based on the organic law of primogeniture. A proud, dignified and patriotic people, the Binis paid homage to their king, who ruled through a well-organised hierarchy of warlords, counsellors, civil governors, jurists, noble men, diviners and town criers.



Benin City



Before the advent of European explorers on the Guinea Coast, the Bini people had no written language or record of their civilization. None the less, they developed an artistic system of recording significant events by producing relief impressions in bronze, ivory, clay and wood. These functional art forms were later valued by Western nations as priceless works of art.

The Benin Empire emerged as a civilising force in the 15th and 16th Centuries during the reigns of the great warrior-kings such as Ewuare (1440) Ozolua (1481) Esigie (1504) Orhogbua (1550) and Ehengbuda (1578) and attained the greatest expansion during those periods, spanning its influence as far west into present Ghana and beyond the river Niger to the east. The rise and expansion of the Empire were marked by the external trade—the production and exchange of goods—with neighbouring states.

The splendour of Benin attracted both missionaries and merchants. The Papal Bull of 1493 divided the undeveloped parts of the earth between Spain and Portugal for propagating Christianity. A greater part of Africa was allotted to the Portuguese. At the close of the 15th Century the Catholic faith was established in Benin City; churches and monasteries were built. A few thousands were converted and baptised. The first European, Ruy de Sequeira, visited Benin in 1472, and a Portuguese merchant, John Affonso d' Aveiro, with other missionaries visited Benin in 1485. The Catholic mission made efforts to spread the faith, but the project did not appear to have proved lasting, and was abandoned during the reign of Esigie.

The recession and fall of the Benin Empire began towards the end of the reign of Ehengbuda when European rivalries for the monopoly of slave trade on the West African Coast became reckless and bitter. The Portuguese were no longer permitted to dominate the West African trade. In 1553, the first English ships reached the Benin river, and the long British connection with Nigeria began. Other merchants of French, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Spanish origin traded at different times along the coast in slaves. Though cruel but profitable business, this new commerce with Europe stimulated the economic, political and social life of the people, and new city-states emerged in the Niger delta, to cope with the malignant prosperity. But it also generated internal ambitions and strife. The Empire began to disintegrate.

The final blow on the Empire was struck in 1897 when a British punitive force, following the massacre of seven Englishmen, led to the capture of Benin. Oba Ovonramwen at the time had warned the visitors that it was contrary to the customs and traditions of the people for strangers to witness the Igue festival. But the British adventurers insisted on entering Benin and they were subsequently massacred.

Oba Ovonramwen was later deported to Calabar in 1898 where he died in 1914. He was succeeded by his son, Eweka II, who was forced to submit to British rule in colonial Nigeria. It was during the interregnum between the exile of Ovonramwen and the accession of Eweka II, that schools, churches, local administration and all the other paraphernalia of imperial power were introduced to Benin.





## AGRICULTURE

### CASH AND FOOD CROPS

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy. In terms of export products, the State supplies 85% of Nigeria's rubber or £12.2 million; cocoa 3.2% or £40 million; palm oil and palm kernel, 19% or £31.8 million annually. Cotton is still produced on a small scale. About 80% of the working population are engaged in agriculture.

However, efforts are being stepped up for greater productivity and increased efficiency, with emphasis on the rehabilitation of cocoa, palm groves and rubber by the use of better seedlings, more fertilizers and mechanised farming methods. Some of the limiting factors include ignorance in the application of scientific agricultural equipment and methods. The old system of shifting cultivation, bush burning, fallowing and the use of crude hoes and machetes persists. Lack of capital, problems of land tenure, fragmented holdings, storage, marketing and distribution also militate against maximum production.

The Government has embarked on a programme of improvement and development of agriculture by providing credit facilities and advisory services to farmers. To control plant diseases and pests, pesticides and other chemicals are introduced to farmers just as fertilizers are also made available to them for better yields. Furthermore, farmers are advised to form co-operative societies in order to attract Government loans. Through the Marketing Board prices of cash crops like rubber, cocoa, palm produce, are subsidized by the Government to protect farmers against unfavourable fluctuations in the world market.

Major efforts are also directed to encourage school leavers to go into agriculture so as to check the drift to urban centres where employment opportunities are slim. In 1968 the Farmers Crusade Project was formed to activate agricultural development generally, reduce unemployment, rehabilitate persons displaced and re-orientate the outlook of young people to improved farming. The Government has introduced a modified system of farm settlement whereby each settler is allowed to own 2 acres of rubber, 5 acres of oil palm and 3 acres of arable land. There are now

four farm settlements in the State at Ekpoma (Ishan Division); Mbiri (Ika Division); Utagba—Uno (Aboh Division) and Iguoriakhi (Western Benin Division).

The cultivation of the major food crops, such as yams, cassava, maize and rice, is favoured by climatic conditions. Guinea-corn requiring less rainfall for good performance is grown in Akoko-Edo and Etsako Divisions, in the northern zone of the State. The swamps of the Niger Delta and the flood plains of the River Niger have been found to be good for rice and yams. The high forest lands of Eastern and Western Benin Divisions are also suitable for plantains, yams, and cassava.

Almost every family, especially in the rural areas, is engaged in food crop production. In spite of this fact, the food supply in the State is not adequate to satisfy the local needs. Consequently, some food-stuffs such as rice, beans and maize are brought in from neighbouring states to supplement the quantities produced by local farmers. In the farming districts, it is not the number of families or persons engaged in food crop production that determines how much food is ultimately produced, but the size of land each farmer can effectively cultivate with the type of working tools employed. The quality of the seedling used is also of importance.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources is concerned about improving the farming organisation in the State. A new Food Production Division has been created in the Ministry to tackle the problem. A branch of the Food Production Division deals with the multiplication and supply of improved seeds. A seed multiplication programme has been started to provide improved rice and maize seeds sufficient to plant 9,500 and 8,000 acres respectively of farms by 1971.

The Ministry proposes to establish a number of tractor-hiring units to provide mechanical services to farmers at subsidised rates. For this purpose food-producing farmers will be organised into groups to farm large acreages which will make mechanisation worthwhile.

As a means of solving the food storage and marketing problem which will unavoidably follow increased food production, the Government will increase the number of existing silos (where grains are preserved from insect and climatic damage) and will buy grains (rice and maize) from farmers at harvest seasons for storage. Thus the farmers will find a ready market for their grain crops and will be saved from the problem of storage. These measures will no doubt hasten an agricultural revolution in the State.

## YAMS

Yams are a major source of staple food of the people and they are grown in small holdings. They are available throughout the year because farmers have developed storage techniques of preserving them in barns. Yams are sold almost everywhere, in open-air markets, on village routes, along major roads and even in private premises.

The time of planting and harvesting differs from one vegetation zone of the State to another. In the wetter coastal areas planting takes place from November to January when the land is not too flooded. Harvesting takes place in the months of June and July. The yam tubers harvested from these areas are usually large. Some species measure three or more feet long and weigh between 20 lbs and 25 lbs a tuber. In the relatively drier hinterland, planting takes place from March to April while harvesting is done in the months of September, October and November.

Yams are planted in six-inch deep holes made in ridges or heaps at three to four feet apart along the ridges. Just after planting, a thick capping of old leaves or grass is placed over each planting position.

This measure is carried out to protect the young shoots from being scorched by the sun. As the vines appear, long stakes or bamboo poles (six to eight feet long) are placed in the furrow beside each yam plant and the vine is trailed round it. The vines are never allowed to trail on the bare ground because they will be scorched by heat. Four stakes may be tied together for extra strength but a bamboo stick can stand quite firm.

Harvesting is usually done when the vines are dried up, showing that the tubers have matured. If however, the farmer intends to raise yam "seeds", he harvests the tubers for consumption when the vines are still green. In this case, he re-buries the tops of the tubers, left attached to the vines, to produce yam "seeds".

The State produces large quantities of yams to feed its population and also to sell elsewhere. Lorries and canoes loaded with yams could be seen moving out in different directions on market days.

The Government helps farmers to improve the quantity and quality of yam production.

*A yam farm showing thriving vines*





*Planting the yam tubers*

*Storing yam in a barn*



*A village yam market*



## CASSAVA

The Midwest is one of the leading cassava-producing states in the Federation. The crop is grown by farmers all over the State by both men and women. It is a root crop generally planted among other crops like yams, maize and beans. Planting takes place during the rainy season, April to September. It is planted three feet apart in ridges or heaps made for other crops. To plant, a foot-long cassava cutting is pushed into the ground at an angle leaving only the top showing. Compared with other food crops, it has a considerable resistance to pests and diseases and can withstand all types of weather.

The farmer applies fertilizer three months after planting when the plants are about 18 inches high. He puts the fertilizer in a shallow 3-inch deep trench about 6 inches away from the stand and covers with soil. The farm is weeded when the plants are young. Later, the shade from the foliage prevents weeds from growing between the plants.

Cassava is a staple food that can be prepared in different forms. The commonest of them all is *gari*

(farina). *Gari* is prepared by women who grate the cassava roots into dough, press out the water and fry the meal until it turns into dry, fine farina grains. Cassava can also be made into other types of food such as cassava soft chips, flour and pounded cassava. Farmers also use cassava peels to feed their cattle, goats, sheep and pigs. On the average, a farmer grows about 3 to 5 acres of the crop.

The production of cassava is largely carried on by individual farmers. To step up production, fertilizer distribution has been organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Fertilizers are being subsidised at 50% to farmers in order to encourage them to use fertilizers. It is estimated that at the end of the 1970-74 Development Plan, a total acreage of 4,500 will have been put to cassava. Also, the Ministry provides several varieties of high-yielding cassava cuttings to farmers as a means of increasing yields per acre. The recommended variety of cassava currently being distributed is "60447".

*A cassava farm*







*Fresh cassava tubers*



*Peeled cassava tubers prepared for grating*





*Swamp rice planting at Illushi*

## RICE

Rice production is of two geographical types—the upland and the lowland or swamp rice. The upland rice is cultivated in the hilly, savannah areas of the State such as can be found in Ekpoma (Ishan Division) and Agbede (Etsako Division) where the soil is well drained. In these areas the average annual rainfall ranges between 40 and 60 inches, spreading through the months of April to October. The upland rice is harvested late in the year in August and September, when there is sufficient rainfall followed by a period of dry season with enough sunlight to ripen the rice grains. Hitherto the commonest species planted was the Agbede type but recently, the "OS6" species has been introduced, resulting in 25 per cent more yield.

Under the Farmers Crusade Project, the State is currently cultivating thousands of acres of lowland or swamp or floating rice at Illushi (Ishan Division) and Alegbette (Etsako Division) in the Niger flood plains. The cultivation involves land preparation, planting, harvesting and threshing done by machine. A modern rice mill has been installed at Illushi, and at present there are tractors and equipment available for rice cultivation in the State.

Rice usually germinates after four or five days of planting, and is transplanted to the field after six to eight weeks in the nursery. With swamp rice, the time of flood is very vital and determines the planting season. It is important to plant in the months of May and June and transplant between July and August.

The flowering period occurs between 12 to 18 weeks from sowing, and the rice matures between four and eight months. It is harvested as soon as the heads are mature which for upland rice usually takes place in August, and for floating rice between November and January.

Rice is processed in two ways, by hand or machine. After processing, further drying of the rice grain may be necessary before storing. Thoroughly dried rice can be stored in jute sacks, on slatted wooden stands about three inches above the ground level to prevent it from being dampened.

The rice crop is susceptible to diseases and pests, such as blast, smut and stem borers. To help combat these diseases, the Government has come to the assistance of the farmers by providing them with insecticides and other chemicals, at subsidised prices. Also, the State's Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources provides farmers with rice seeds of the "OS6" variety at the low price of 4d per pound, and mechanical support to increase individual acreages cultivated. It also supplies fertilizers at subsidised rates, as well as general advisory services.

Although rice is a subsistence crop, it is one of the main staples in the diet of the people. A bag of rice weighing about 2 cwt costs between £4 and £6.

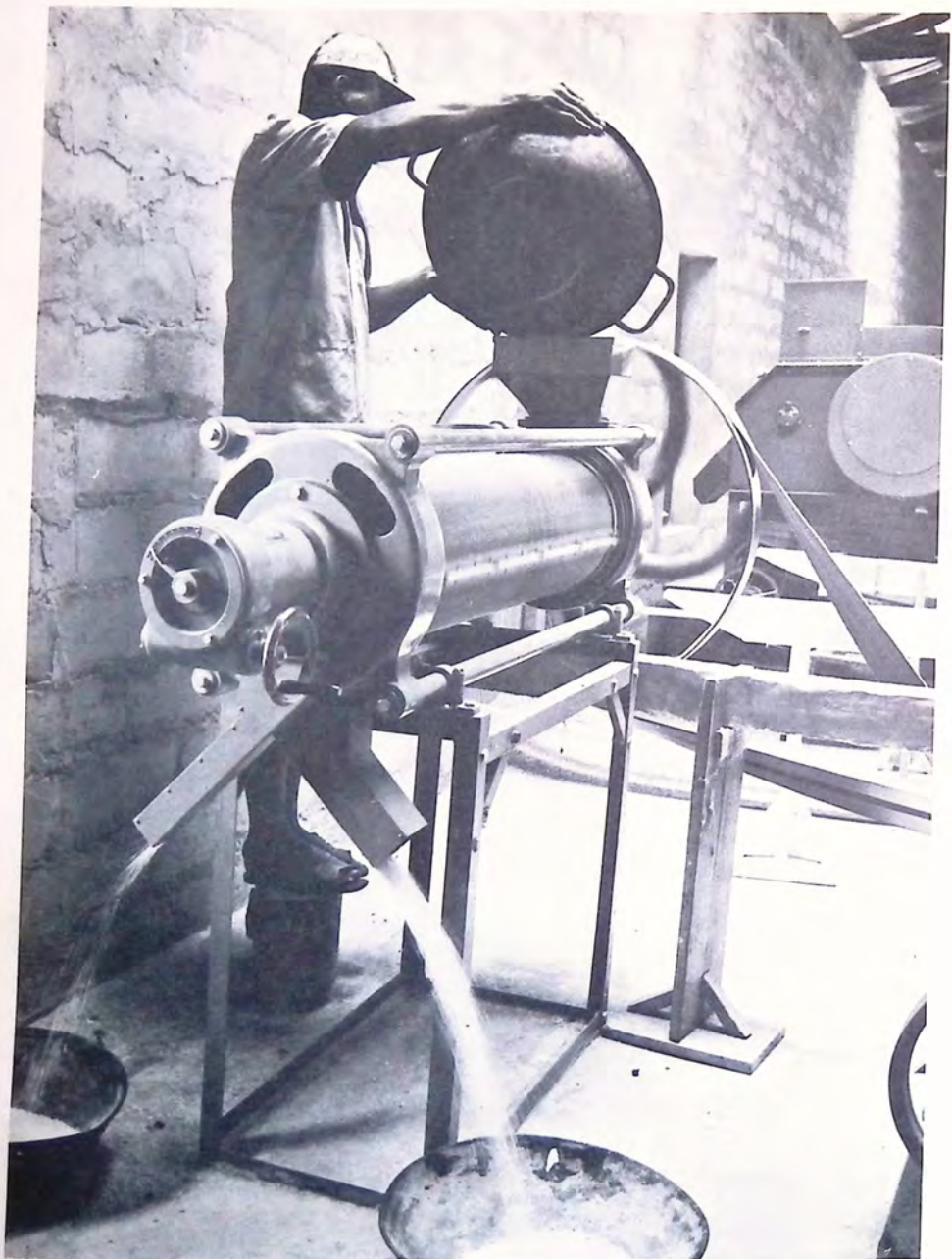
Rice is eaten in a variety of ways; some people boil and eat the cooked rice grains with stew, while others pound the cooked rice into dough. More demand for rice is made during festival periods.

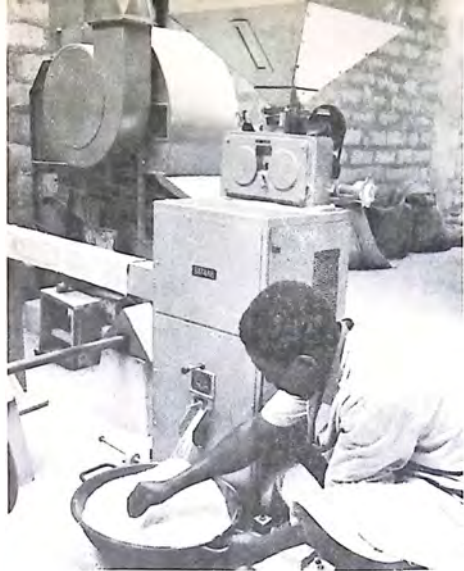


*A family team at work in a rice field*

*Species of rice grains*







*Rice processing by use of modern equipment*

*Rice storage before distribution*



*New rice processing machines*





*Maize plants with fresh cobs*

## MAIZE

Maize is a very important staple food in the State. The people eat it in different forms. It can be roasted, fried, boiled or even pounded like yams for *foo-foo*. Also some food-stuffs like *eko* (corn meal) and *akamu* (maize drink) are prepared from dry maize grains. Roasted, fried or boiled, maize is very sweet when eaten with pear, cocoa-nut or groundnut. The State is in the forefront in the production of maize in Nigeria. The crop grows very well in all the 14 administrative divisions of the State and all farmers are engaged in its cultivation.

About 75% of the maize in the State is consumed locally. The remaining 25% is sold to people in other parts of the Federation. Dry maize grains are often sold in bags and about ten bags weigh a ton. A ton of dry grains, of maize, as at August 1970, costs £50.

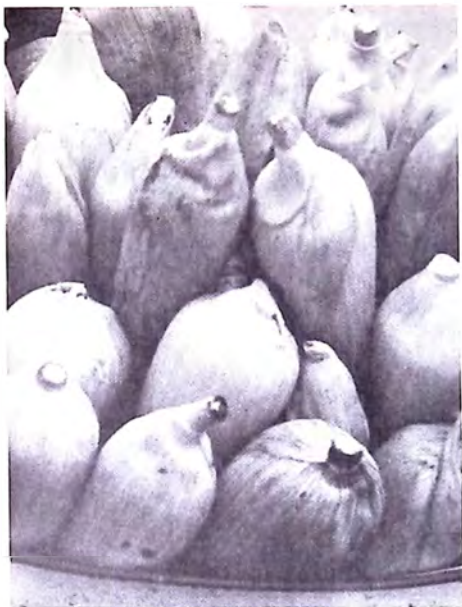
Maize provides food not only for humans, but also for animals such as poultry, cattle, pigs and horses. The Government has three feedmills for preparing maize for animal consumption. The mills are situated at Benin City, Agbor and Irrua. The feeds prepared in these mills are sold to farmers all over the State at subsidised prices. A bag of poultry feed is sold at £1: 5/-

Maize or corn is generally planted among other crops such as yams, cassava, groundnuts and beans in the farm. The modern practice, however, is to set aside a part of the farm for the planting of corn only. This allows for maximum yield.

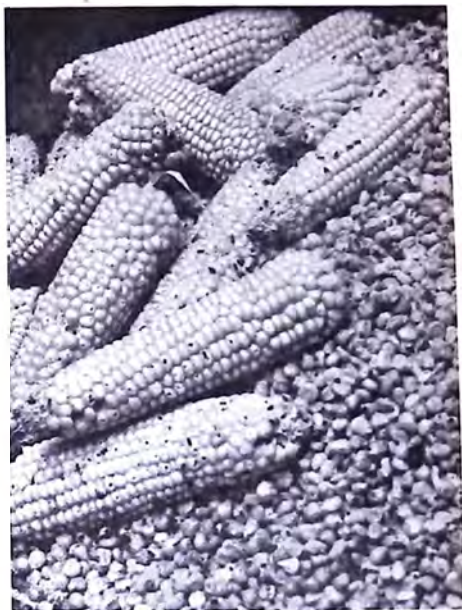
The time of planting depends on the wetness or dryness of the area concerned. In the delta areas planting takes place from November to January, whilst in the relatively drier areas of the State, planting takes place between February and March. In the savannah areas a second crop known as late maize, is usually planted in August.

Farmers in the State use mostly two high-yielding varieties. These are the yellow variety, *NS1* and the white variety *Diacol*. The two varieties are believed to yield twice as much as the local varieties which they have replaced. The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources sells the *NS1* and *Diacol* to farmers at a very cheap price of 2d per lb.

The crop is planted 3-4 seeds per hole, 2-3 inches deep and one foot apart, in ridges three feet apart. Replanting of seedlings takes place two or three weeks after planting. This normally takes place on a wet day and the seedlings are left one per hole. The first weeding takes place five weeks after planting. Thereafter one or two other weedings may be necessary.



*Fresh maize usually displayed for sale*



*Maize cobs and grains*

Maize farmers apply fertilizer during the fourth week of planting. The fertilizer is placed in a trench 2-3 inches deep and 2-3 inches away from the plants and covered. If however, the maize is planted on newly cleared and burnt farms, it does not require fertilizers. It is also not necessary to use fertilizer on late maize planted in August. The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources sells fertilizers to farmers at subsidised prices.

Maize can be harvested green or dry depending on the farmer's choice. In the urban areas where there is great demand for green maize, it pays to harvest when the tassels on the cobs are dry. A dry tassel signifies that the grains are ripe for eating. Generally however, the crop is harvested when the sheaths are thoroughly dry.

Dry cobs of maize used to be stored in the open space in the farm or at home. But today, dry cobs or grains are stored in dry, clean and well ventilated stores. Farmers usually sprinkle *Gammalin 'A'* dust over stored cobs to protect them from weevils.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources ensures that farmers in the State plant good quality seeds to enable them increase maize production with minimum effort and at minimum cost. In 1969 the Ministry produced and distributed about 79 tons of

dry maize seeds to farmers at a subsidised price of less than 50% of the cost of production. In 1970, about 100 tons of maize seeds were distributed to farmers. It is believed that that enabled them to establish about 8,000 acres of maize farms. These farms are expected to yield over 4,000 tons of maize.

The Farmers' Crusade Project, launched in February 1968, has greatly increased the production of maize in the State. Under the project, an appeal is made to various communities, at the beginning of the planting season, to provide a large, suitable and continuous piece of farmland and to clear same by communal labour.

At the end of clearing, able-bodied farmers from the communities, which have provided communal labour for clearing, are selected to cultivate the land. The selected farmers are called Crusaders and they receive a subsistence allowance of £5 per month for the period they are without any harvest. A minimum unit Crusade farm is 600 acres and this is shared among 240 Crusade workers for the planting of maize and other crops.

By early 1970, Crusade farmers had planted 1,500 acres of maize. It is estimated that by 1974, about 10,000 Crusaders will be engaged in the production of maize and their total production will be up to 10,000 tons.

## RUBBER

The State produces about 90 per cent of Nigeria's total rubber export, and an average of £10 million is realised yearly from the crop. Rubber occupies a second place as a major foreign exchange earner, only superseded by crude oil production.

Rubber is grown widely and it thrives in nine out of the fourteen administrative divisions of the State. Rubber groves stretch from the wetter parts of Urhobo Division in the south to the relatively drier Ishan and Owan Divisions in the north. It is estimated that about  $\frac{1}{2}$  million acres are at present under cultivation with the crop.

Rubber is grown mainly in small holdings of 2 acres to 5 acres in size. About 100,000 persons are engaged in the production of the crop. These small holdings together produce about 86 per cent of the total rubber. There are however a few large estates of between 2,000 to 5,000 acres each. Prominent among these are the Urhonigbe Rubber Estate, the Utagba-

Uno Rubber Estate, the Ose River Rubber Estate, the PAMOL Rubber Estate and the James Thomas Rubber Estate.

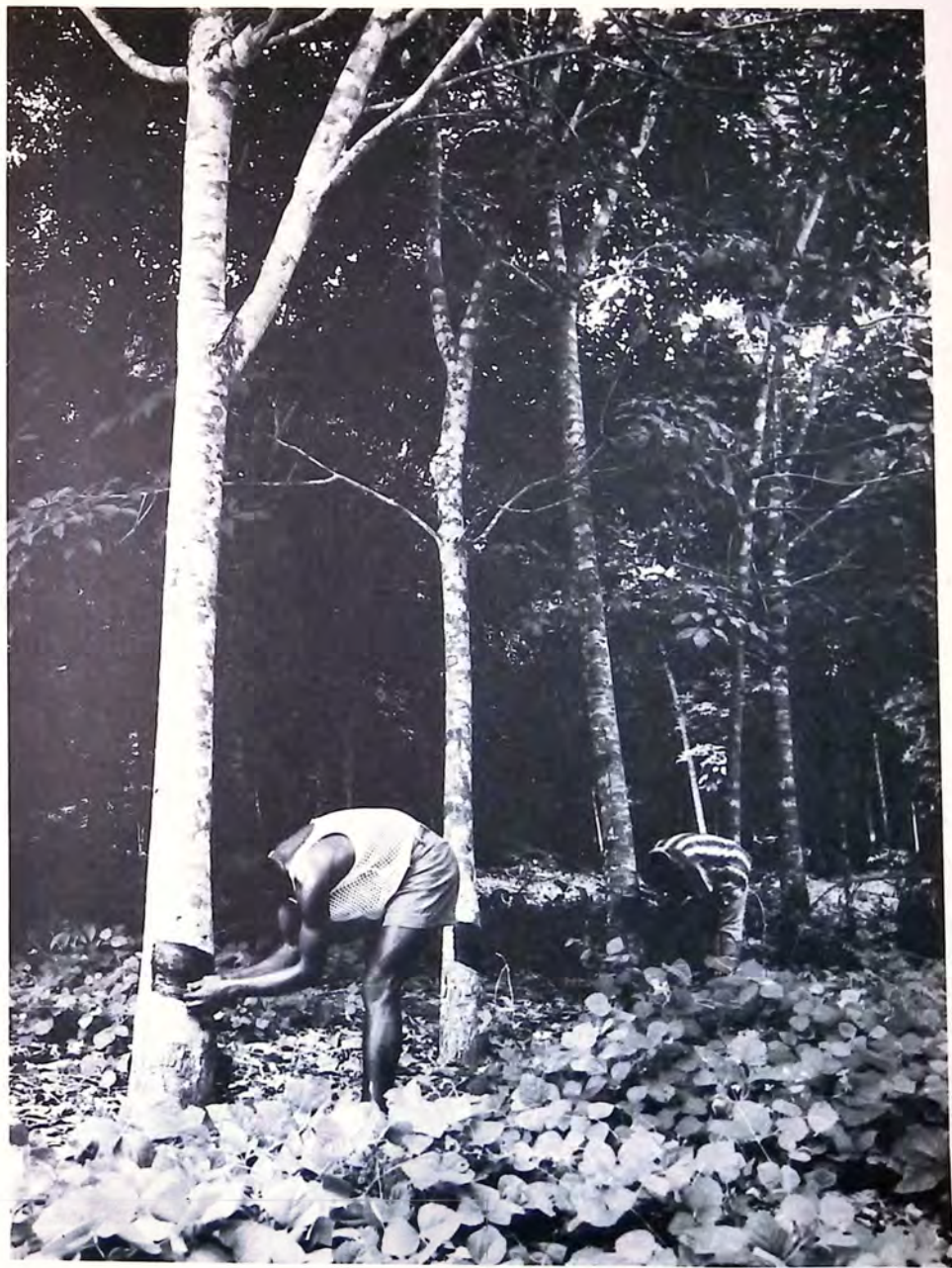
Rubber is exported either as smoked sheet or as crepe. The latter forms about 70 per cent of the production. Although majority of farmers sell their rubber latex production in the form of rubber coagulum to crepe factories, some farmers process their own latex in their own small smoke-houses to produce smoked sheets. About 700 of these privately owned smoked houses can be seen dotted all over the rubber growing areas.

The crop is developed and catered for by the Rubber Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Ministry produces and distributes improved planting materials such as rubber seedlings, budded stumps and fertilizers. It also provides technical assistance and advice to farmers and conduct training schools in modern

*Improved rubber seedlings*







*Rubber tapping*



*Drops of Latex*

tapping and processing methods for farmers and their workers in the rural areas.

Rubber planting usually takes place from July to August when the rain is heavy. At this time rubber seeds are planted in beds and after a fortnight the germinated seeds are transplanted into the nursery. In the nursery the seedlings are planted one foot apart in beds. They are then raised till May or June the following year before they are transplanted into the field. Counting from the date of field planting, it takes a rubber tree six years to mature. At maturity, a tree is generally about 20 feet tall. As the trees grow older some of them grow as tall as 25 to 30 feet. Mature trees can be tapped for latex for a period of 15-20 years

Government operates a scheme designed to replace low-yielding rubber on private small holdings with high-yielding varieties. This vigorous replanting programme is aimed at the total renewal of all existing small holdings. To enable farmers replant

*Collecting latex after tapping*



their holdings within a reasonable space of time, Government provides them not only with seedlings and fertilizers but also with technical and financial assistance. For example, a grant of about £30 per acre is given to a farmer who has satisfactorily replanted his holdings with high-yielding rubber.

A Rubber Development Agency has been set up in an effort to revive the dwindling output of rubber in the State. The Agency is an autonomous body run purely as a commercial concern competent to establish and operate rubber estates and rubber-based industries. There is also a Rubber Advisory Board consisting of members drawn from all facets of the industry. The Board advises the Government on suitable policies and programmes for developing the crop.

The Government has tackled to a great extent certain problems affecting maximum production. For example, the introduction of supervised co-operative plantations is designed to combat the problem of ignorance of scientific agriculture (on the part of farmers) traditional land tenure and fragmentary holdings. The provision of supervised credit facilities by the Government has relieved the farmers of inadequate capital for expansion and introduction of modern scientific techniques. Of crucial importance is the dissemination of agricultural information through publications and other mass media.

*Latex supply*





*Crepe from a factory in Benin City*

*Rubber sheets processed from latex*





*Rubber coagulum*



*Crepe rubber for export*

*Crepe sheets in storage*



## PALM PRODUCE

An average of 7,450 tons of palm oil and 40,000 tons of palm kernel is exported annually from the Midwest. These figures represent a value of about £31.8 million. Its revenue earning capacity apart, palm oil is essential to the life of the people, as a food constituent rich in vitamin A. As a matter of fact 86% of the total production is consumed locally.

In the world market, the demand for oil palm produce is rising steadily because of its industrial importance especially in the manufacture of soap and margarine.

For years, oil palm production in the State was in the hands of small-scale producers and the extraction process was crude. The farmers depended largely on the two types of wild species in the State—the grove *Dura* palms which have thick shell, thin fibre and more kernel than oil, and the *Pisifera* palms which although almost shell-less and possessing more oil than kernel bear a small fruit. Consequently the yield was very low.

In order to tackle these problems the Nigerian Institute for Oil Palm Research (NIFOR) in co-operation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources has evolved a scheme based on modern techniques. This scheme has three major aspects. The first aspect is the introduction of mechanized system so as to reduce the farmers' dependence on primitive hand tools. The second is the development of breeding techniques, and improved planting material which has the potential to produce vigorous and high-yielding palms. This includes the development of effective methods of crop husbandry and protection at all phases of management thereby ensuring the palm's early fruition and sustained high yield under varying conditions of soil and climate. The third aspect is the development of quality control in large and small-scale processing.

Located at Evboneka, 18 miles north-west of Benin City, on the old Lagos road, NIFOR occupies 4,285 acres of land, and has a labour force of 1,300. It is not a commercial concern but is charged with the general duty of research and advice for high quality palm oil and palm kernel production.

Research into coconut, raffia and date palms is in the experimental stages. NIFOR is also studying other palm products such as palm wine and its potential uses in industry. The main areas of research include the problems of long dry season, infertile sandy soil, sporadic attacks of diseases and pests, oil palm breeding, raising of breeding and field management.

Results of research show that oil palms grow well in flat and fertile soil under sufficient rainfall (80

inches or more) and constant sunshine throughout the year. By cross breeding between the *Dura* and *Pisifera* the hybrid, *Tenera*, produces better and increased palm oil and palm kernel. Palm seeds which used to take one year to germinate, now take only three months. There is less fatty acid and foreign matter like water in the bunch. Death rate in oil palms has been reduced. As a result palm produce has been on the increase. The bunch refuse is a source of potassium and is used in replenishing the nutrient level of land.

Besides, NIFOR can now produce up to 10 million seeds stored in cool rooms where they remain viable for at least a year. These seeds can be planted in over 100,000 acres of land. Some of them are sprouted and seedlings raised therefrom, for use by extension services, co-operatives, settlement schemes and plantations both in the Midwest and other States.

Following the great strides in nursery experiments, over 80% of seeds put into a germinator can now be guaranteed to grow into adult palms. Proper transplanting and maintenance technique has been evolved whereby palm bunches can be produced in less than four years as against 15 years or more under the primitive oil palm groves. It has also become possible to diagnose effectively the various oil palm diseases, their causal organisms and how to control and prevent them.

The method of climbing with rope can now be avoided in harvesting, by adopting hook or pole-knife system. The hydraulic hand press designed by a Dutch firm in 1959 specifically for handling extraction efficiency has been introduced to replace the use of ordinary hands. Large pioneer oil mills are now in operation in plantations at Ewohimi, Igueben and in NIFOR as well.

NIFOR has created new divisions for providing advisory services and training courses for agricultural personnel with audio-visual aid. The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources has established 26 process demonstration centres for oil palm, and 64,000 oil palm seedlings were distributed to farmers throughout the State during 1969/70 financial year. The agricultural projects of the farm settlements have expanded to 2,600 acres of oil palm.

The Ministry also gives loans to plantation holders through their co-operative societies as an incentive. Furthermore, the Marketing Board stabilizes the prices of palm produce locally as protection of farmers against world price fluctuations. In addition, inexpensive equipment has been designed for small-scale units and work is in progress on the problem of poor bleaching associated with the production of premium grade oil for export.



*An oil palm nursery*

*An oil palm plantation*





*Hacking palm nut bunches*

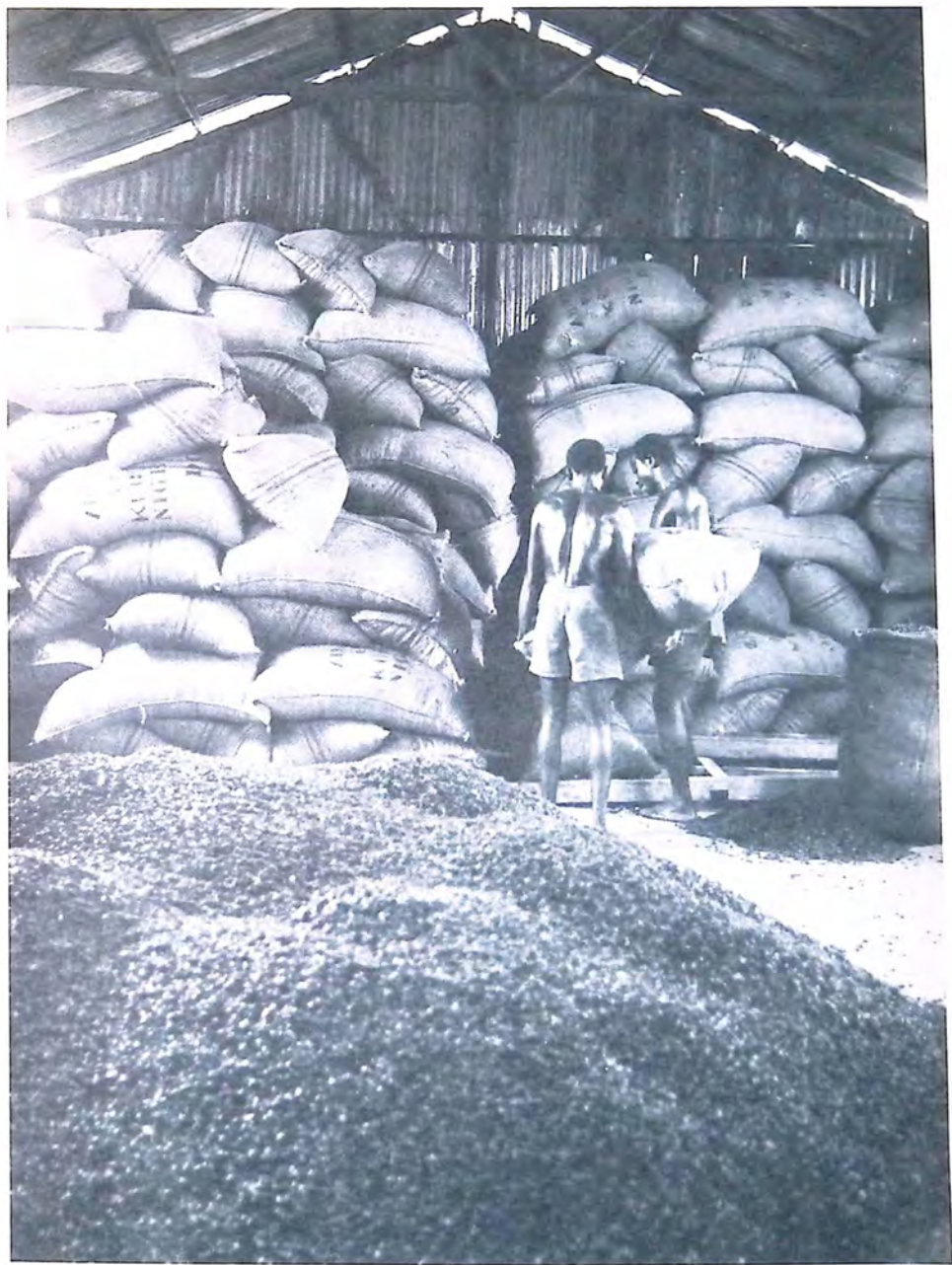


*Bunches of oil palm nuts*



*Palm oil in barrels for export*





*Bags of kernels for shipment*



## COCOA

Cocoa is one of the principal cash crops. It is estimated that about 15,000 tons valued at £40 million are produced annually in the State. Production is restricted mainly to Akoko-Edo, Owan, Etsako, Western Benin Divisions and the western part of Ishan Division where there are undulating areas of high forest shaded by tall trees and best suited for cocoa farming. These areas have rich and well drained soil as well as favourable rainfall. Too much moisture affects soil fertility adversely and encourages cocoa diseases like the swollen shoot.

Cocoa thrives mainly in clay, red, deep and drained soils with the top layer rich in organic matter as well as on fallowed land. It is planted at 10 feet by 10 feet spacing in May or early June when the rains are regular, using vigorous five-month-old seedlings sown in December to early January. The planting positions are marked out, and if necessary the planting lines are weeded in April. Clean-weeded traces, three feet wide, are required.

For planting, seedlings are transported to the farm with the polythene bags intact; these bags are stripped off just before planting, but retaining ball of earth. The seedlings are planted in holes two to three inches larger than the balls of earth round them. To harvest, sharp knives are required to pick the ripe pods at intervals of three weeks. The pods turn from green to yellow when ripe. Unripe pods are never harvested.

Hitherto, a large proportion of the cocoa output was not properly organised. The result had been falling standard of yield. Added to this, lack of capital to purchase the essential materials and equipment was a major obstacle to the attainment of better yields and greater production.

The Government has therefore stepped up its efforts to improve and maintain a high level of production as a vital source of national income. The Government assists small-scale farmers with cash credits as well as chemicals and fertilizers, and also offers professional extension services. In four years, for example, over 2 million improved cocoa seedlings were distributed to farmers.

Furthermore, the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources operates a revolving fund for cocoa chemicals. It purchases the necessary chemicals and spraying pumps, which are resold to the farmers at subsidised price. These schemes are designed to encourage farmers in cocoa growing areas to increase planting and production.



*Ripping cocoa pods open for the beans*

*Crisp cocoa beans*



## COTTON

With the establishment of textile factories in the several states of the Federation the need for producing more cotton locally becomes urgent and necessary to stave off increasing import costs. At the moment, the production of cotton in the State is on a very small scale. This nominal effort is attributable in part to unfavourable climate and poor soil. As a variable crop, cotton requires good heavy loam soil, steady rainfall and considerable sunshine throughout the growing season. Above all, it requires dry weather to ripen. Unlike the climate of the northern part of Nigeria, the intense humidity, violent rain storms and water-logging in the south are some of the factors working against substantial production.

Unlike the fine *G. hirsutum* species planted in the northern states of Nigeria which flowers over a relatively short period, the species (*G. vitifolium*) popularly known as Ishan cotton takes a longer period to flower and produces a hard and coarse fibre. However, the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources has embarked on buying the Allen 26J Cotton which belongs to the species *G. hirsutum*. The growing of cotton is being expanded generally.

At present there are cotton projects at Ekperi and Aviele in Etsako Division and at Warrake in Owan Division. In the two-year Programme (1968-70) it was expected that a total of 2,000 acres would be planted, at the rate of 1,000 acres annually with the high-yielding Allen 26J. Whilst the Ishan cotton yields about 250 lbs seed cotton per acre, the Allen 26J yields about 1,200 lbs seed cotton if plant diseases are effectively controlled in each case. Some of these diseases are called the leaf curl, grey midew, boll worms and cotton stainers. In order to reduce the incidence of these diseases and pests, the crop is usually sprayed during the growing season with insecticides. Also, farmers are advised to remove and destroy all cotton stands after harvest by burying or burning.

The government is subsidising the farmers at 50% of the costs for the purchase of spraying equipment and chemicals. The campaign for early planting, good tending and spraying has been very useful as they are likely to yield high results. There is no doubt that with the growing of the Allen 26J cotton production in the State will be increased.

*Cotton picking*





*Cotton spinning*



*Cottage weaving industry*

*Hand weaving with loom*



## ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

### POULTRY

Poultry husbandry is receiving considerable attention. Chickens, ducks, turkeys and other birds are reared to yield revenue and more especially to provide a vital source of animal protein.

Poultry production has been intensified to meet the increasing needs of the people and with a view to minimizing the importation of poultry products. To this end, improved techniques and new equipment are introduced from time to time. The State's Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources has been increasing the number of its hatcheries. Recently, two new of 20,000-capacity incubators were installed in addition to existing ones with capacities for 18,000, 20,000 and 26,000 eggs respectively.

Seven brooder houses have been constructed in Benin City, Asaba, Ubiaja, Irrua and Kwale. Each brooder house has a capacity for 1,000 chicks. In May 1970, the Ministry had in stock a total of 25,000 chicks in the various poultry farms in the State and over 10,000 eggs were produced daily in these farms.

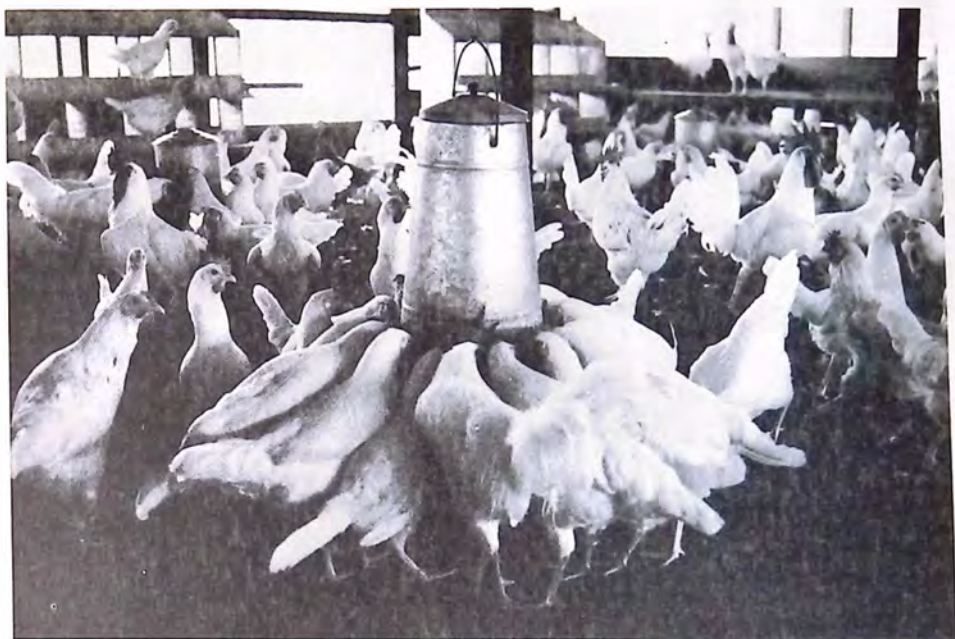
Broiler birds have been produced for those interested in poultry meat trade. Laying hens are also provided to farmers and, for economic reasons, each farmer is advised to keep about 96 layers.

Closely linked up with poultry rearing is the feeding stuff production. In this regard, improved seeds are issued to farmers for planting and after harvesting, are dried and stored in silos. From these silos the feed mills produce the poultry mash. Two of such mills have been established in Benin City. There are two others at Agbor and Irrua to cater for the needs of farmers in those areas.

The Livestock Division of the Ministry carries out experiments and research for increased productivity in quality and quantity. As an incentive, farmers are assisted with cash loans, grants and livestock.

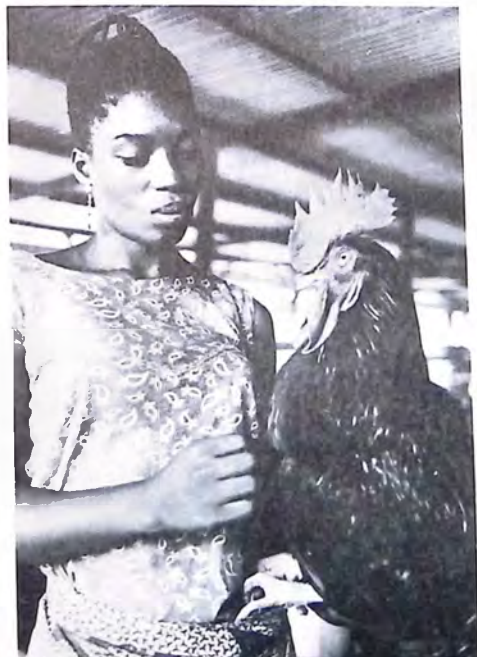
*One day-old chicks*





*Feeding white leghorn breeders*

*Examining Rhode Island Reds for culling*



*Collection of eggs from a battery cage*



## PIGGERY

The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources operates a pig breeding centre for the distribution of fatteners and other stock to farmers to enable them manage the breeding of pigs from their own private resources. Moreover, the Ministry raises weaners (six to eight weeks old pigs) and sells to farmers who in turn fatten them to market weight for sale.

Up to 1968 the State was served by only one piggery at Agbadu Farm Institute, half way between Warri and Ugbelli. Initially, the piggery had a 12-sow unit capable of supplying only 200 weaners a year. The capacity of the piggery has now been doubled. In addition, two new 25-sow-unit piggeries costing £12,000 have been established at Ogwashi-Uku and Ogba, near Benin City.

Early in 1970, the Government purchased 30 pedigree pigs from the United Kingdom at a cost of £6,000 (including air freight). The pigs were at first herded at the Ogba piggery centre. Some of them were later transferred to the Ogwashi-Uku and Agbadu piggeries.



*Large white boar*

*Weaners feeding*







*Ndamma cow (long horned)*

*A herd of Ndamma cattle and cross breeds*

## CATTLE REARING

The availability of grazing ground almost throughout the year coupled with the climatic conditions in certain parts favours cattle ranching. One of such places is at Igarra in Akoko-Edo Division on the northern border. The ranch which occupies a 4,000 acre of land is owned by the Government.

*Zebu* cattle and *Ndamma* heifers noted for their high quality breed are reared in the pastures and paddocks of the ranch. The *Ndamma* cattle are foreign but they are used by the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources to up-grade the local *Muturu* breed. Other breeds—the *Santa Getruids* and *Hereford*—are being introduced. The ranch is already producing up to 100 calves annually.

It has been realized that the source of meat in the State is inadequate and requires to be augmented. To this end the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in the 1969/70 financial year provided £59,300 with the hope of producing 2,000 beef animals for slaughter annually.

The opening of a second ranch at Irrua in Ishan Division offers such bright prospects that in the near future all the beef and cattle needs of the State can be supplied from the two ranches. The Ministry aims at meeting its target of buying 500 breeding animals by the end of 1970/71 financial year.



## FISHERIES

### FISHING

The Niger Delta area occupies the greater south-eastern portion of the State where fishing is the main occupation of the riverine people. Just as the inhabitants of the hinterland depend on farming for their livelihood, the riverine dwellers earn their living by fishing. The numerous creeks, the tributaries of the River Niger and the 80-mile coastline of the State offer a tremendous opportunity for the development of fishing. In these waters, especially in the brackish areas and mangrove swamps, are found abundant shrimps and prawns, and their number increases in the areas nearer to the sea. Crabs, oysters and other species like the *sesarma* are also found in abundance in those habitats. Small snails are mainly found in the mud areas.

Different methods and types of fishing gears are in vogue. These include the use of hooks, harpoons, traps and net. Some of these gears are still in their crude stage while some have developed in line with modern techniques, resulting in increased catch. Most of the people with their boats confine their fishing activities to the coastal waters. Only the big fishing companies, which own a large fleet of boats with modern equipment for storing and freezing can carry out fishing in the deep seas.

The Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources has shown concern for increased production of fish. The huge stock of *dernersal* species along the coast, sardine and 'Borga' in the Gulf of Guinea, Tuna in the Bight of Benin and shrimp off the Escravos and Dodo Rivers have encouraged the establishment of fish farming.

In order to increase production, a pilot fish farm has been established at Ogba river, Benin City. The Ogba fish farm will also serve as a nursery and experimental station for the study of physical and chemical properties of soil and water, selective breeding and transportation techniques. Other fields of study include feeding and breeding habits, growth and mortality rate.



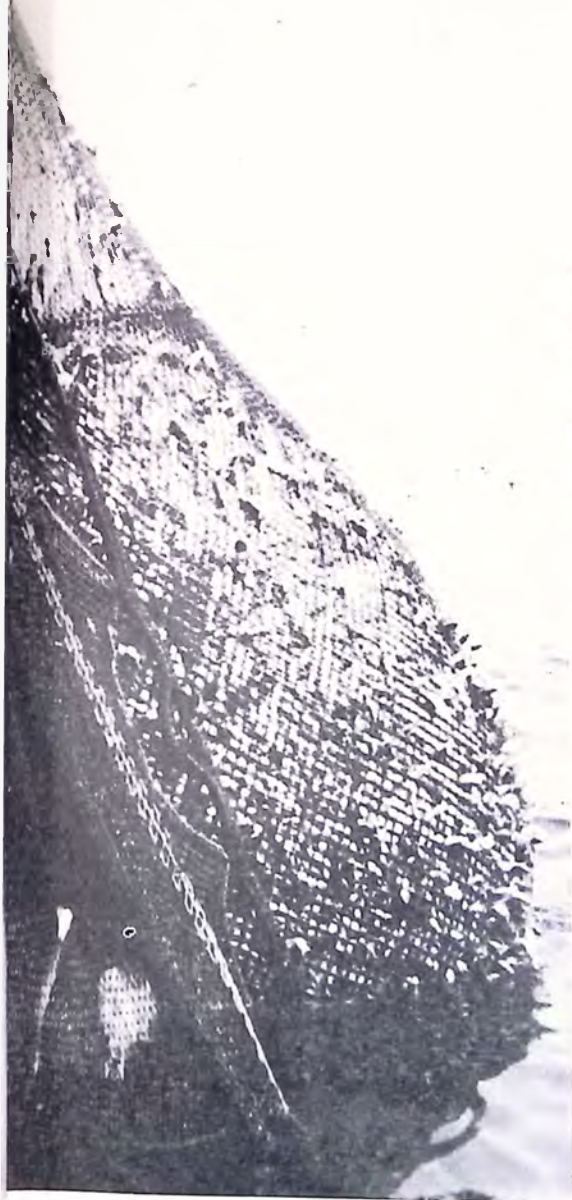
*Trawling—  
a fish netting device  
with lead and corks*

In addition to the pilot fish farm, practical steps have been taken to improve fishing techniques by the provision of motorised canoes and synthetic fibre fishing nets. Consequently, there are fish farming units at Ogbeze in Warri Division and Beniboye and Bilabiri in Western Ijaw Division.

Advisory services are provided for fish pond entrepreneurs in Aboh, Warri and Western Ijaw Divisions to enable them select suitable sites, ensure viability and improve on management and marketing.

A Fisheries Co-operative Training School has been proposed. When established, the school will teach fishermen to use heavier and larger fishing crafts to enable them venture the sea for greater catches, after studying compass usage, navigational techniques, construction and elementary engine maintenance. Thus, the fishermen will be given the opportunity of side-tracking the traditional fishing by hooks, traps and harpoons and take to the economically viable deep sea fishing.

*Fishing with a basket trap*





*A shoal of fish*

*Fishing weir or fence*



*Line fishing*

*Fishing with a spear*





*A fishing trawler*



*Shrimps and prawns*

*Net fishing*



# FORESTRY

## FOREST RESOURCES

Early European interests in the Guinea Coast were as much in the forest produce, such as timber as they were in slaves. The first Portuguese visitors must have been impressed by the density of the forests and the large sizes of the trees. But for over 200 years their primary concern was in slaves.

Positive interest began to be taken in the forest wealth only in the 19th century and this State was one of the regions on the coast to which attention was turned. Before the close of the century the first timber to be exported from Nigeria was cut at Siluko, some 44 miles from Benin City. The timber was floated to Lagos and shipped from that port. Testimonies of Midwestern Nigeria's early forestry history are the commercial names of the various species of timber derived from either the names of Midwestern towns or from the local languages. Thus there are Sapele Mahogany, Bini Wood and Obeche. Apart from the natural stocking of timber trees, the flat terrain and the presence of several deep all-season rivers, free from rocks and useful for rafting made the exploitation of timber in the State right from the inception of the industry a profitable venture.

The State has not only led the way in the exploitation and export of timber, but also is in the forefront in the establishment of forest industries in an attempt to utilise the raw material within the country. At Koko a sawmill was built as early as 1912 by Messrs. Miller Brothers of Liverpool. The first and still the only plywood factory so far in the country is situated at Sapele. The factory is one of the largest of its kind in the world.

An area of over 2,000 square miles of forest land has been set aside permanently as the forest reserve primarily for production of commercial timber, but it is also to act as a bulwark against adverse climatic conditions, prevent erosion, protect water resources and wild life. One of the indications of the importance of forestry is shown by the fact that more than 70 per cent of the forest products in the whole country is concentrated in the State. About 12 million cubic feet of timber are produced from the forests of Midwestern Nigeria annually. This represents a sum of about £1 million in fees and royalties at the stumps. The actual value of the timber itself runs into several millions of pounds.

In the past 15 years there has been a steep rise in world demand for forest products, the rise in consumption in Europe being reported to be more than twice as great as the whole expansion that had taken place in the previous years. It is known that the pattern of consumption of timber has greatly changed from its traditional use for constructional purposes to that of reconstituted wood in the form of pulp and paper and the wood based panel products.

Midwestern Nigeria is in a position to take advantage of the immense economic possibilities with its potential forest resources. It is essential, therefore, that forest is capable of conferring benefits on agriculture and rural enterprises. Apart from much of the raw materials needed for agricultural purposes, the forests have a stabilisation effect on the soil. Even though the material gain from soil conservation may not be directly measurable, its role in safeguarding future yields and productivity of future investment in agriculture is immense.

The non-tangible benefits of forests are yet not as fully recognised in some developing countries as they are in the more developed ones. Some of these benefits include wild life conservation, recreation, protection of the soil, tourism, amelioration of the climate and scientific studies.

The various forestry operations consisting of ground preparation, planting, weeding, cleaning, nursery, construction of firebreaks, thinning, exploitation and logging, transportation, milling and conversion in the factories, all taken together, are labour intensive, thus checking a general drift from rural areas to urban centres.

*Timber felling in the Midwest*





## FOREST MANAGEMENT

Formerly Government forest reserves in the Midwest State were few and the productive areas were less than 5% of the total area of the State. But today the forest estate constitutes about 16% of the total land area of the State. The forestry law, however, recognises the general land tenure system whereby land is owned communally. Thus in the reservation programme a machinery for obtaining the consent of the owners and regularising rights is normally set in motion to make for expansion. There are two forms of ownership: one is the State-owned, controlled and managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the other is by the local government councils, in which case, it is under dual control and management by both the Councils and the State.

Forestry plays a crucial role in the State's economic development. The Government has embarked on the regeneration and reforestation of certain areas. In its regeneration programme the State has planted young economic forest trees in about 56,000 acres of land in Benin, Ishan, Western Urhobo, Etsako, Akoko-Edo and Aboh Divisions. In addition to this about 192,000 acres have been naturally regenerated.

Forest exploitation is undertaken by timber merchants approved by the State. To ensure that the forest concessions go to the right persons the Government has enacted appropriate laws and appointed an allocation Committee to take charge of allocating forest areas to contractors. The law stipulates that contractors given new concessions have to pay development levies. Any contractor offered a specified number of trees in Government forest reserves pays £100.

Another important development is the introduction of the area system of collection of revenue per unit area of forest. This system ensures that the much desired utilization of the lesser known species of trees is maximized. Further, the Government has introduced a rigorous inspection administration to check illegal felling of trees in the forest reserves.

The old method of felling and cross-cutting with axe and handsaw has been replaced by one-man power saw. Forest exploitation supports the forest product industry which consists of logging, sawmilling and plywood production.

*Cutting timber into logs*

## SAWMILLING

Sawmilling is a big business in the State because of the great timber resources. Scattered all over the forests are giant commercially-useful trees with long clean boles and great crowns. This is why, in addition to leading the country in the export of timber, the State is in the forefront in the establishment of forest industry.

The industry produces some of the world's finest cresta plywood for local consumption and for export. Cresta plywood is made of thin sheets of wood called veneers. These veneers, cut from a steamed softened log, are bonded together in a steam-heated hydraulic press. The cresta plywood so formed is removed from the press, trimmed and cut into the required sizes before being packed into cartons ready for dispatch, either to Nigerian customers or abroad.

Other forest products include logs which are usually sawn into purlins, rafters, wall plates, beams, planks and boards of various sizes according to need. Purlins and rafters are sawn from hardwoods like iroko (*Chlorophora excelsa*), opepe (*Naudea diderrichii*) and ekhimi (*Piptadeniastrium africanum*) for roofing houses. Iroko and opepe are also good for window and door frames. Species like obobo (*Guarea sp.*) apopo (*Lovoa trichiliodes*) and the mahoganies are

sawn into planks and boards of various sizes for making doors, windows and furniture. A much softer wood, obeche (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*) is generally used for temporary structures and package boxes.

Before the industry was mechanised, teams of powerful men were required to drag logs out of the forest. Today, massive tractors haul giant tree trunks out of the forest into the gantry, a cleared loading yard. At the gantry, the logs are collected together and cross-cut into the required lengths usually about 16 feet.

These are loaded by a winch onto trailers of logging lorries capable of carrying 25 tons of timber. The lorries sometimes travel as far as 90 miles to the riverside.

At the riverside, the logs are off-loaded by crane and sorted into *sinkers* and *floaters*. The logs are tied into rafts, with two *floaters* supporting a *sinker*, and drifted down the river. The journey usually takes a long time and logs sometimes deteriorate or are lost. However, sawmill companies have lighters capable of taking 200 tons of logs. They also have powerful 150 h.p. diesel engine tugs which are used to pull rafts of even greater tonnage.

*Log dressing*





At the A.T. & P. sawmill and plywood factory at Sapele, for example, the logs are sorted into plymill and sawmill logs. The sawmill logs are loaded onto a band-mill carriage which, while in operation, rolls forwards and backwards past a vertical band saw. Slabs of wood are cut from the logs each time the machine moves forward. These slabs fall direct onto a powered transfer system which conveys them to other machines for edging and trimming.

The A.T. & P. factory is the second biggest of its kind in the world. The company employs management and labour staff of about 3,300 and has invested, over the years, more than £5 million in the factory. The smaller sawmill companies in the State, however employ an average of 200 persons and invest between £½ and £1 million.

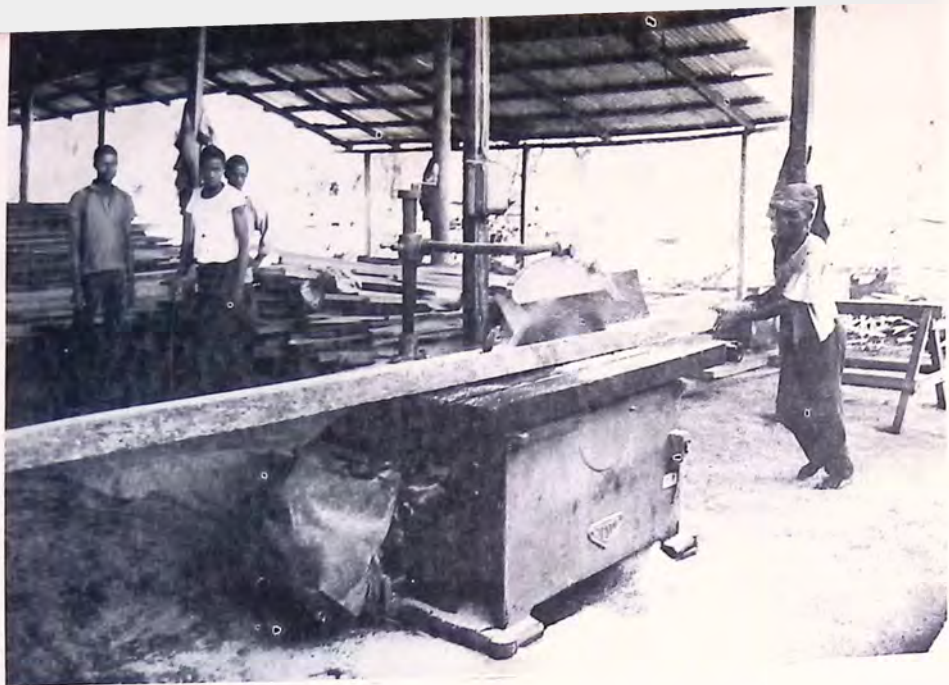
There are several other sawmill companies in the State. They include Agbontaen Brothers, J. I. Idehen & Sons Ltd., I. Obaseki & Sons, A. O. Obasuyi & Sons, Agidigbi Uwagboe and Sons, and A. J. Aroko & Sons, A. I. W. Morgan, Edo Forest and Plantation and Hoxel Sawmills, all in Benin City: a U.A.C. subsidiary at Ughareti near Sapele; J. A. Thomas Rubber Estate Ltd., Sapele; Niger Delta Timber, Sapele; Nigeria Hardwoods Company, Abraka; New Independent Trading Company, Sapele; F. A. Paul & Company, Sapele; Ame Works, Warri; Central, Warri; Etikerentse Urummatsena & Company, Warri and Midwest Industrial Company, Irrua.



*Floating logs for export*

*Trucking logs from forest areas*





*A sawmill factory*

*Stacking logs for sale*





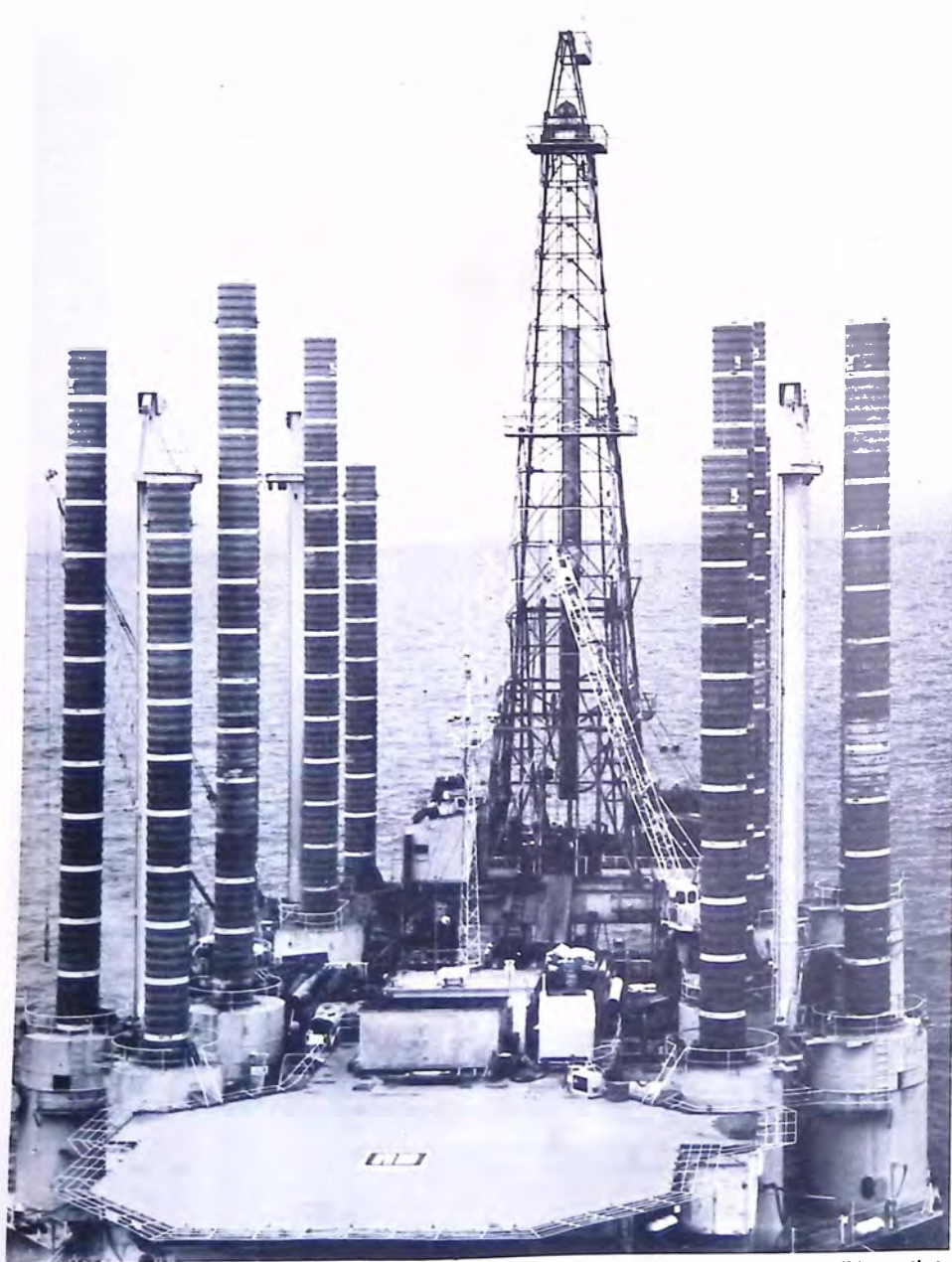
*A giant tree*



*Preparing fertilizer for forest regeneration*

*A seedling plantation*





*An offshore oil rig*

## INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

Government has focussed attention on industrialization not only to provide employment opportunities for its citizens but also to diversify the economy. Apart from the rich agricultural resources, the State is endowed with abundant mineral potentialities. There are, for instance, mineral oil and natural gas produced in commercial quantities in Eriemu, Agbarha, Ughelli East, Afesere, Ewvreni and Utorogu in Eastern Urhobo Division; Kokori in Western Urhobo Division; Olomoro, Uzere and Oweh in Isoko Division; Delta fields, Okan, Meji and Meren in Warri Division; Forcados in Western Ijaw Division as well as limestone and clay at Ukpilla in Etsako Division; lignite and silica in Asaba and Ogwashi-Uku in Asaba Division.

Government industrial policy aims at promoting small-scale industries including those connected with the processing and utilization of agricultural products. Initially, the processing industrial projects underscore the need for foreign assistance in view of the lack of trained indigenous man-power and technical know-how. Government has an open-door policy to attract overseas business concerns to invest in the State using local resources and labour thus providing the indigenes opportunities to acquire technical and managerial skill.

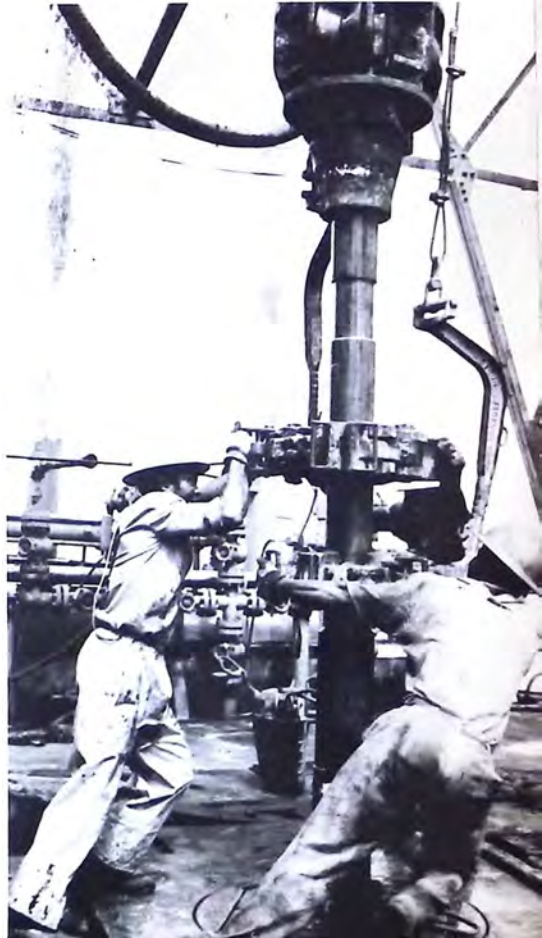
As an incentive, the Federal Government offers favourable business conditions by granting capital allowances, tax holiday, import duty relief and tariff protection in accordance with the Income Tax Relief Act 1958. These conditions also include guarantees that the Federal Government will not nationalise any foreign company arbitrarily without fair compensation.

In the siting of industries the Government is guided by a number of criteria, including the availability of raw materials, water, power, nearness of the area to roads and/or ports for the supply of other raw material and the distribution of the finished products. Another criterion ensures that, at least, one industry is established in each administrative division. Areas with no industrial potentials or with very few industries are given first consideration provided they have the raw materials locally or they can be easily supplied to such areas. Government policy to establish an industry in each Division makes for equitable distribution of wealth and amenities.

At present, there are three major factories in the State, namely, the Asaba Textile Mill, the Ukpilla Cement Factory and the Ughelli Glass Factory.

With the discovery of mineral oil and natural gas, oil industry in the State has become a very significant source of revenue. Government has stepped up its participation in other industries. These include a multi-purpose industrial project for the manufacture of bicycle tyres, cars, and lorry batteries. The State is also interested in palm kernel crushing, distillation of gin, hotel development, commercial banks, breweries, razor blade, starch, soap and tomato industries. Each of these industries is to be established either by the Government itself, or by encouraging private entrepreneurs or in partnership with foreign or indigenous investors.

*Oil drilling on shore*





*Laying oil pipelines*

## OIL PRODUCTION

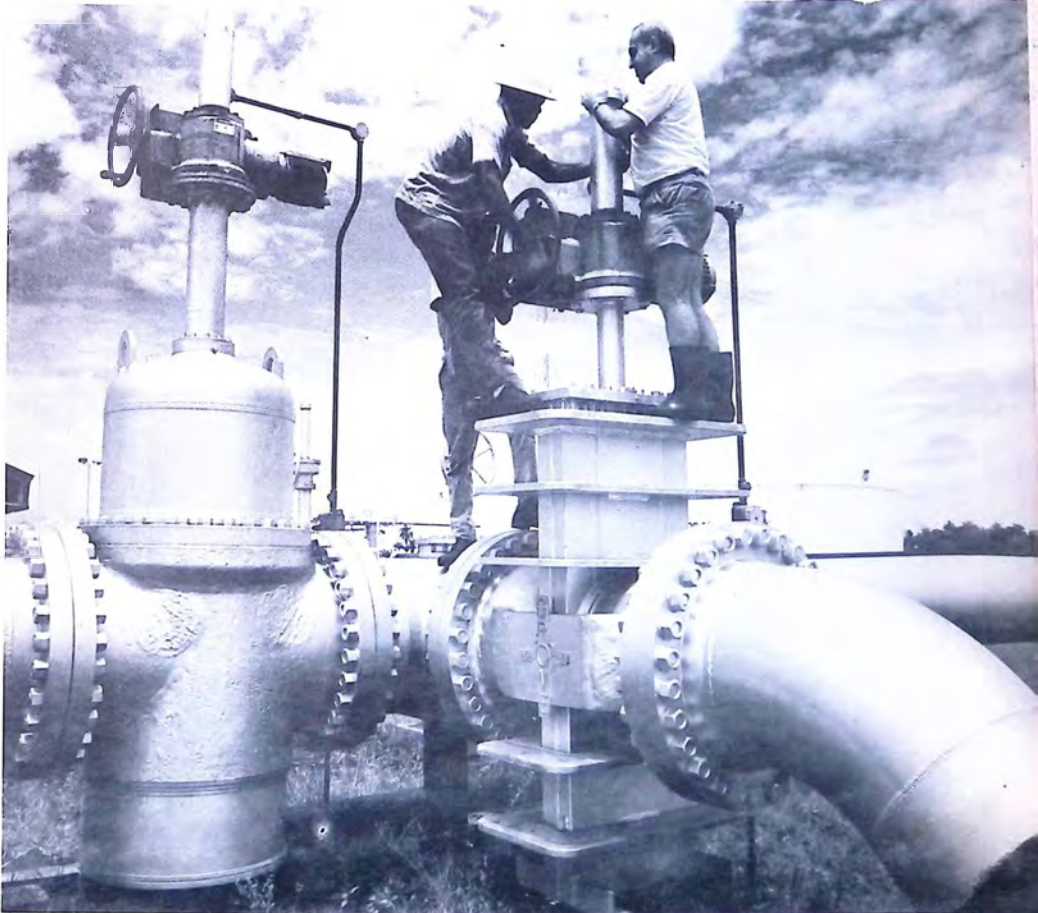
The history of mineral oil exploration in Nigeria is quite recent. It started in the late 1930's when a British Company, Shell-D'Arcy obtained prospecting rights from Nigeria's Colonial Government. No discovery of mineral oil was made before 1939, the year of the outbreak of the Second World War, when the activities of the company were suspended.

At the end of the war in 1945, the company resumed its search for oil, having been incorporated in Nigeria under a new name Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited, a partnership between

the Royal Dutch Shell Company and the British Petroleum Company, solely to prospect for and mine mineral oil in the areas where the Company had sought for and was granted concessions. Consequently, the Shell-BP undertook an extensive geological and geophysical survey of the area south of latitude 7° covering over 50,000 square miles.

It was not until 1956 that Shell-BP struck its first commercial oil well at Oloibiri now in the Rivers State and, three years later in 1958, 1.8 million barrels of Nigerian crude oil were exported. In that same year, petroleum accounted for 1.1% of the total value of Nigeria's exports and 1.9% in 1959.

*An oil flow station*



Shell-BP was then the only oil-prospecting Company. But after 1960, the number of oil-prospecting companies increased rapidly rising to a total of eleven oil companies in the country, in 1970. These are: Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited; Delta Oil (Nigeria) Limited; Mobil Exploration Nigeria Incorporated; American Overseas Petroleum Company Limited; Gulf Oil (Nigeria) Limited; Philips Oil Company (Nigeria) Limited; Safrap (Nigeria) Limited; Tenneco Oil Company of Nigeria; Union Oil Company; Great Basins Petroleum Company (Nigeria) Limited, and Nigerian Agip Oil Company Limited.

Of the eleven companies, only four are not prospecting in the State. Six of the seven others have discovered oil. Although the area of concession of 50,000 square miles has always included the State, emphasis was initially given to the Eastern States

oil area by the premier Company, the Shell-BP.

Gulf oil and Shell-BP, the only companies currently engaged in off-shore oil production in the Midwest, have built oil Tank Farms at the Escravos and Ughelli, respectively to facilitate the handling of crude oil for export.

Before 1967, Midwest oil fields accounted for  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Nigeria's crude oil production. In August 1969, the Midwestern oil wells produced 9,143,109 barrels, or 66% of oil production in Nigeria.

As a result of the mining of its oil fields the Midwest has become a source of natural gas supply. The Ughelli gas, for example, is being used to generate electricity which is distributed to many parts of the country by grid system.

*Oil dumps*







*A petrol tanker*

*A petrol filling station*



## CARPET FACTORY

The Carpet Factory in the State, Nigerian Carpet Manufacturing Company Limited, is a private indigenous enterprise. Established in 1966 at Benin City at a cost of £1.5 million, the factory occupies an area of about 51,350 square feet. It manufactures a high multi-coloured range of carpets popularly known as Riblon carpets, and has a production capacity of 800,000 square yards of nylon carpets annually.

The processes by which the factory produces its carpet are basically simple. Carpet production begins with the fixing of numerous yarn cones into the creel, a revolving gadget. The yarns are blown through a series of tubes to a tufting machine where they are threaded to a jute fabric. The tufting machine is capable of producing a 50-yard long and 50-yard wide fabric at three feet per minute. Then a coating of latex is applied to the underside to bond the individual tuft of yarn to the jute fabric and also to increase the carpet's general stability.

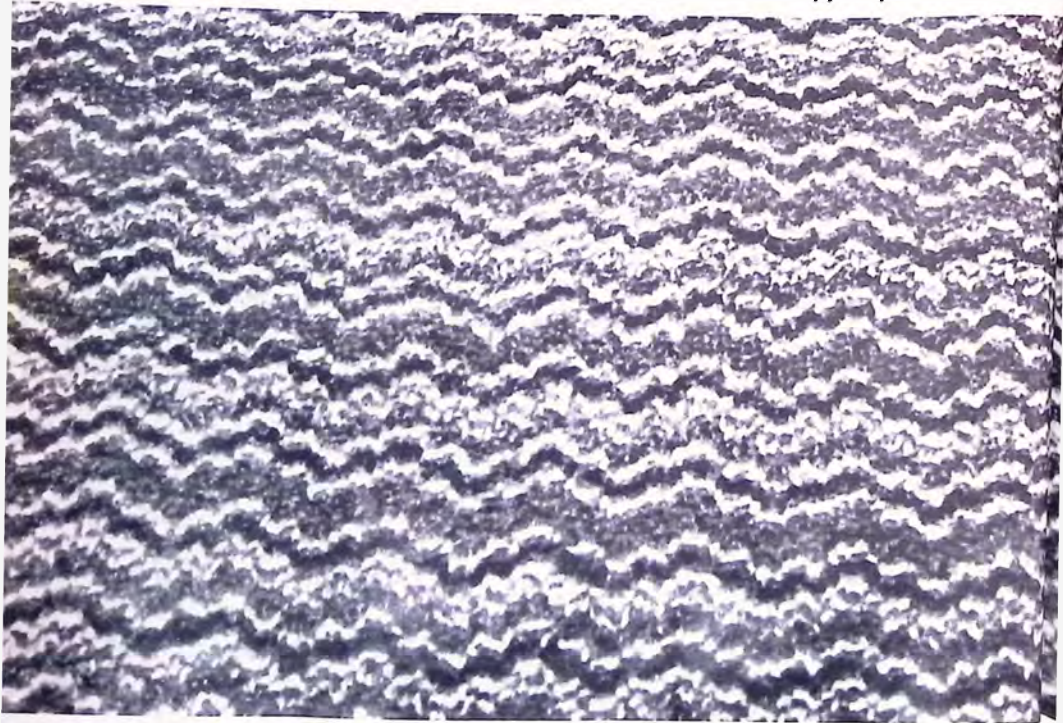
For the carpet with secondary backing there is an additional unit which carries the jute to be laminated to the latex-backed carpet. The carpet is further

processed until it reaches the drying machine. From there, it is passed to the trimming machine, then to the cooling frame. The frame is designed to carry the carpet to a roller where it is rolled into 25-yard lengths and transferred to the store. It is in this rolled form that the carpets are supplied to distributors and customers. Where any carpet is cut, it is mechanically stitched up to prevent fraying.

The factory produces two grades of carpets, the loop-pile and the cut-pile, all in assorted colours and available either in primary or secondary backing. The products are marketed throughout Nigeria, and the Company has a wide range of customers, including private and government establishments as well as individuals. The carpets are also exported to some African countries.

The factory at present offers employment to over 100 persons, including one expatriate, directors and management staff. With its expansion programme, the factory hopes to train more Nigerians for higher responsibilities in both management and technical fields.

*Carpet from the Ribway factory in Benin City*





*Stitching carpet edges*



*Carpets in storage before despatch*



## CEMENT INDUSTRY

A cement industry has become an important consideration in the building of the State. The demand for cement for industrial projects and private construction continues without decline, in spite of the fact that there are already five cement factories in the country.

A Portland Cement Factory is located in Lagos. There is the Ewekoro Portland Cement Factory, near Abeokuta in the Western State, with an annual out-put of about 200,000 tons. At Calabar, one cement factory serves the South eastern and Benue-Plateau States. In the East Central State, there is the Nkalagu Cement Factory. There is yet another at Sokoto in the North-Western State. Yet, the factories are inadequate to serve the increasing needs of the nation.

Ukpilla Cement Factory has therefore become a significant attempt to help solve the problem of shortage by increasing the market supply and consequently reducing importation. The factory is also sponsored by the State in partnership with Coutinho, Caro and Company. The Government has 90 per cent of the total share while the company has 10 per cent. The cost of establishment is estimated at £4.3 million.

Located at Ukpilla, 23 miles north-west of Auchi in Etsako Division, it occupies an area of about 108 acres of land. The industry is enhanced by the fact that most of the essential materials for the cement manufacture are available within or around the area. For instance, the feasibility studies carried out to ascertain the best location revealed that in Ukpilla there are substantial deposits of limestone, gypsum and abundant clay in the neighbouring areas. This has the effect of reducing the cost of production especially in terms of cost in the importation of raw materials.

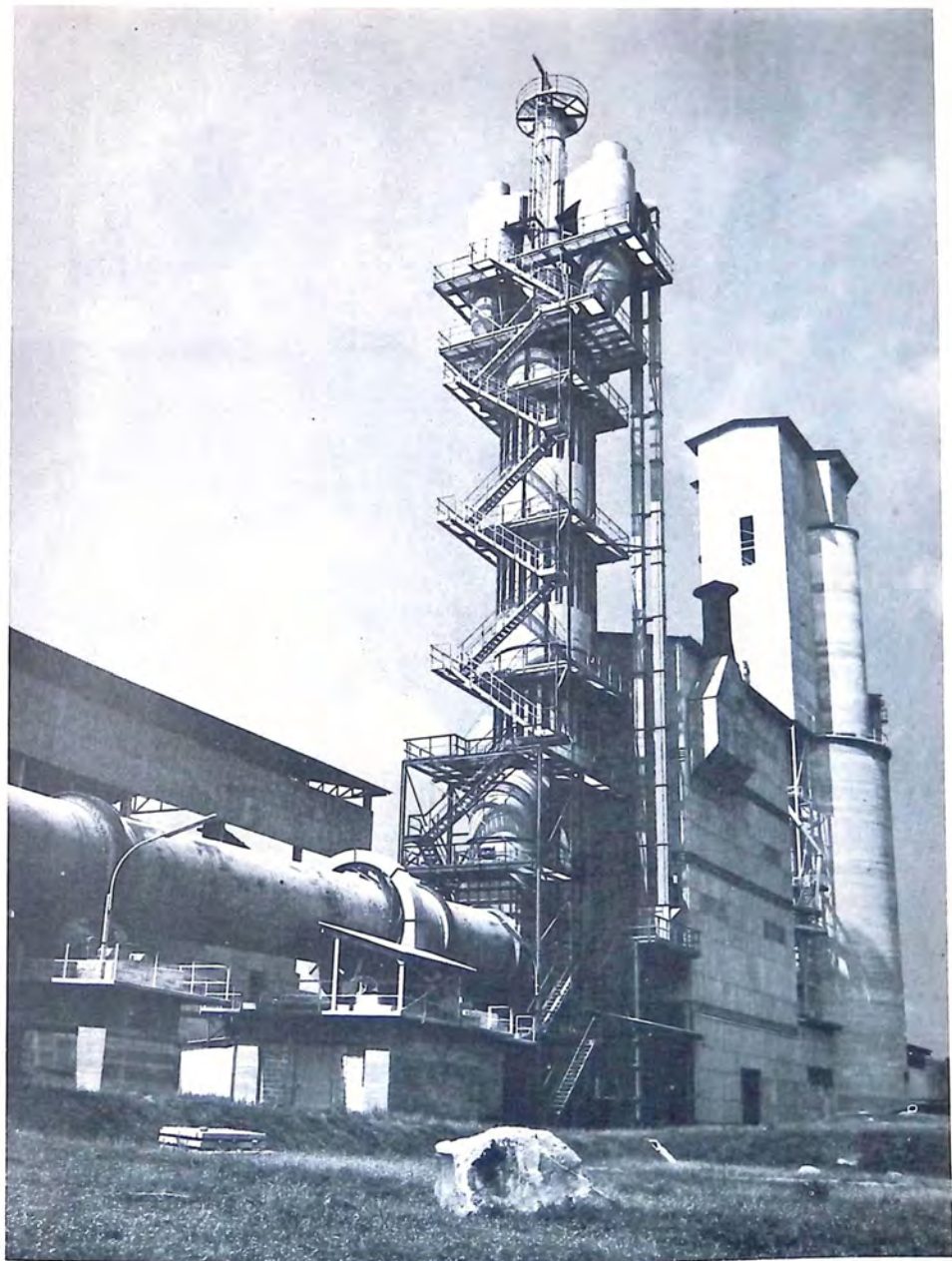
In addition, Ukpilla is at such a nodal point that the cement production there can easily serve the needs of both the State and parts of the northern states. It is near Igarra which is the gateway to the North. Southward, it is linked by roads to many towns in the Midwest including the capital.

In full operation, the factory has an annual production capacity of 150,000 tons out of which 100,000 are portland cement, while the remaining 50,000 are cement clinker. Portland cement is produced in wet-process while the production of the cement clinker is as a result of hard burning. Again, the production of cement clinker places the Ukpilla factory at an advantage. Some of the Nigerian cement factories which import clinker from overseas can now turn to the Ukpilla factory for their supply at a relatively cheaper rate.

The factory creates employment opportunities for over 300 workers including managers, technicians, skilled and unskilled labour.



*The cement factory at Ukpilla*



*A kiln*

## GLASS FACTORY

The Midwest Glass Factory is a pioneer enterprise sponsored by the State Government to produce sheet glass. Like the textile and the cement factories, it was established in partnership with the West German firm, Coutinho, Caro and Company Limited, with a working capital of £1.8 million. The Government holds 90% of the total investment and Coutinho, Caro and Company, the technical partner, 10%. The contract was signed in 1964 and actual production started two years later.

The project, including the factory, administrative blocks and access roads, occupies about 11.1 acres at Ekakpamre, a favourable and strategic village near the industrial town of Ughelli in Eastern Urhobo Division. The factory is accessible from all parts of the State through well-built roads, and the port of Warri is near. The industry is enhanced by the comparatively cheap and abundant supply of fuel from natural gas in the Ughelli area. Ughelli is in the heart of a network of crude oil and natural gas fields.

Significantly too, Ekakpamre is not only near a river, Obanegbe, it is also surrounded by several streams from where silica, an important raw material for glass production, is obtained. In fact, 98.8% of the silica used in the factory is obtained from these sources. Culletts, pieces of broken glass, previously imported are now available at the factory. Limestone used for debiteuse block for 'drawing up' the

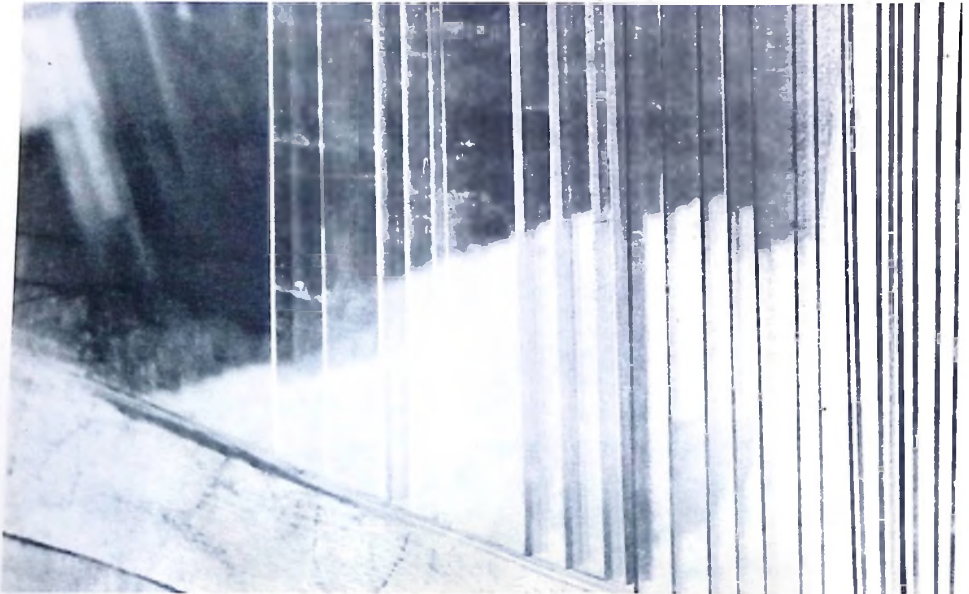
manufactured glass, is obtained from Ukpilla in Etsako Division. But other raw materials like dolomite, feldspar, salt cake, sodium carbonate and sodium sulphate are imported.

The manufacturing process starts from the batch house, the laboratory where the chemicals and other elements are measured and mixed before they are passed to the silico. From the silico they are discharged into a furnace where the chemicals and the other elements are melted. Through the debiteuse block, which is 8' 3" by 14" by 10", the drawing masters wearing gloves and helmets, "draw out" the glass sheets. The glass sheets are later cut into sizes according to the customers' tastes, and encased.

The output of the furnace when in full production is estimated at 7,500 tons of sheet glass, annually. Out of these 6,750 tons are saleable. In addition to the sheet glass, the factory is now producing window glass of various thickness, bottles, mirrors, tumblers, bowls and ash-trays. It has a maximum labour force of about 250 Nigerian workers mostly trained there.

The glass enterprise has a growing viable market in view of the increasing demand for sheet glass. Some of the products are exported to other African countries.

*Glass sheets*





*Glass factory at Ughelli*



*Creels of bales*

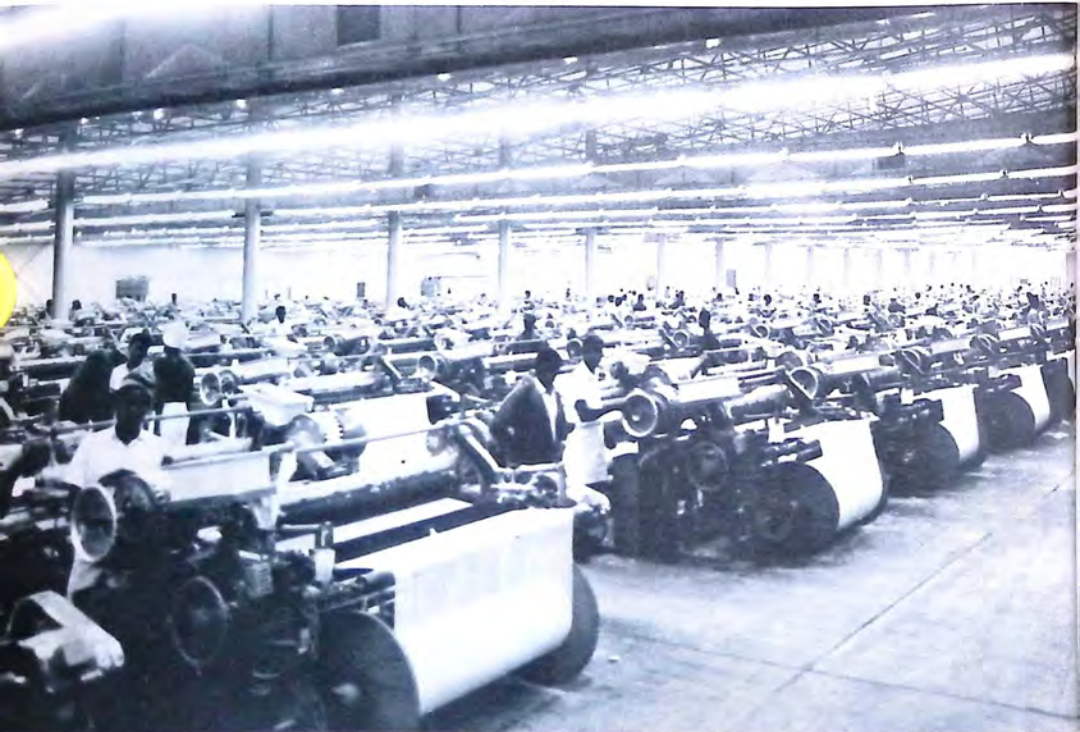
## TEXTILE MILL

The establishment of the Textile Mill is one of the practical steps by the State to generate capital formation and cut down importation of textile materials. The Mill is set up in partnership with the West German firm of Coutinho, Caro and Company at a cost of £4 million. Ninety per cent of the total investment is controlled by the Government.

The factory which started production in 1966 is well-located. It occupies about 32 acres of land, a mile south-east of Asaba by the River Niger, and about 2 miles across the Niger Bridge from Onitsha, the biggest commercial centre in the East Central State. On the Southern side, it is about 88 miles from Benin City, the two towns being linked by a direct, wide and well tarred major road.

The Mill is installed with full facilities so that the production processes of spinning, carding, weaving, bleaching and finishing can be accomplished within the premises. It has 20,000 spindles and 500 automatic looms and consumes 16,000 bales of cotton per annum,

*Set of looms*



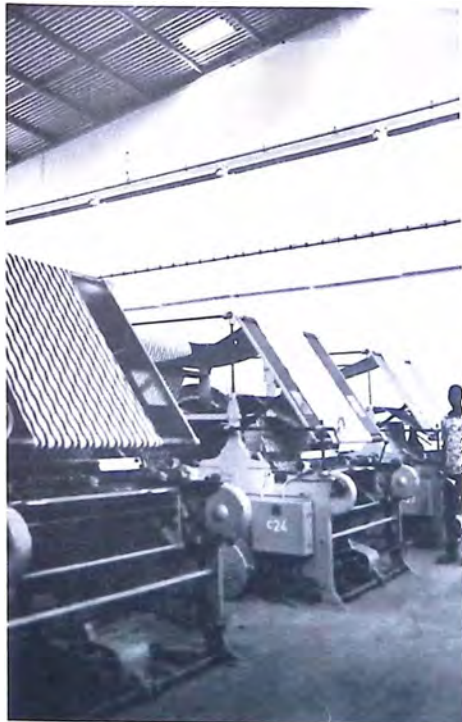


amounting to about 6.5 million pound weight, supplied partly from the Midwest and the northern states of Nigeria, and partly by imports. The Electricity Corporation of Nigeria supplies the Mill with power.

The full functional labour capacity is 60 technical officers including expatriates and 1,600 other workers. Initially, the Mill produced 32,000 yards of cloth daily in the weaving section; 600 lbs yarn per hour in the spinning section and 40,000 yards of cloth per day in the printing section. It broke even in the third year when production was 5,200,000 square yards of printed cloth.

At full production with three shifts of eight hours each for 300 days, the yearly production of the Mill is over 21 million square yards of printed cotton. The finished products which are in great demand include poplin, tussore, shirting and various prints designed to satisfy the desires and other miscellaneous tastes of consumers.

*A mechanically operated loom*



*Cones for weaving*

*Bales of textile materials*



## FOAM FACTORY

Many business enterprises now depend on foam products, especially in the manufacture of sophisticated cushions, mattresses, pillows, upholstery sheets, sponges and carpet underlays.

Until recently, all these items were imported, but they are now manufactured locally notably by the Nigerian Urethane Company Limited in Benin City. A subsidiary of the Ribway Group of Companies, the Urethane Company was established as a small-scale industry in 1965, at an estimated cost of £200,000. It was then about the only major industry privately owned by an indigenous company.

The synthetic rubber (foam) is manufactured by the mixture of certain imported chemical elements including those known as TDI, polyethylene and silicon. These are passed through some activators to foam up. They are left to solidify into slabs or blocks. Forty slabs are manufactured at a time and the process takes only fifteen minutes. The slabs are then allowed to remain for a day before they are cut into mattresses, upholstery sheets, cushions, carpet underlays, pillows and sponges. Forty slabs can be cut into over two thousand cushions.

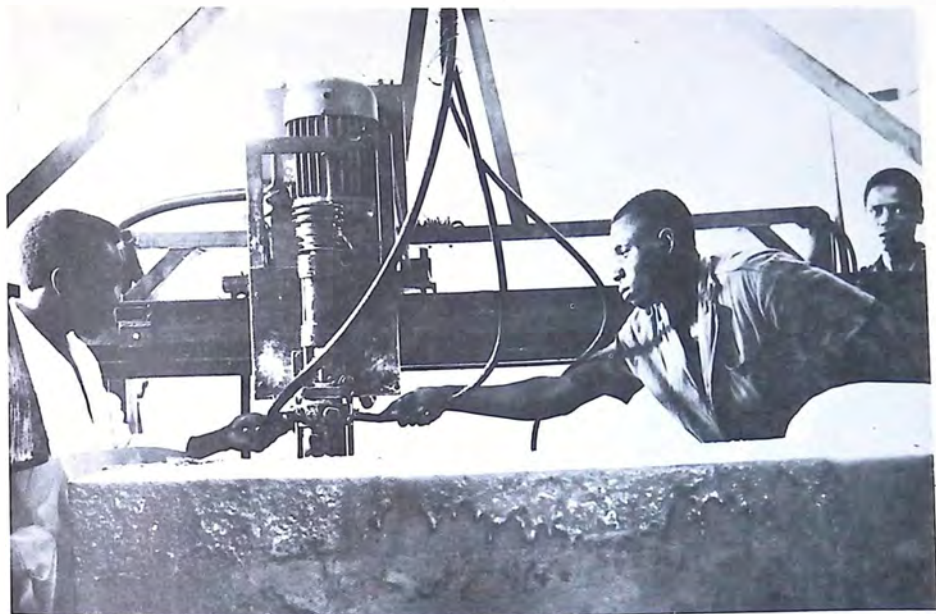
No wastage is allowed in the factory. The crumbs known as the off-cuts are poured into the grinding machines where they are beaten and packed together by adding some chemicals. Thereafter, they are passed to some other machines which slice and trim them into "ribloned" perforated mattresses and cushions.

Apart from the production, slicing and trimming sections, there are also the tailoring and storing departments. The tailoring department sews the covers from the textile materials which are obtained locally. Plans are under way to establish an ancillary textile factory. The cellophane for the overall cover is manufactured by the Poly-Ribway Industry within the premises. The perforated foam is a welcome innovation in the foam factory. Because it is perforated, fresh air can permeate. As a result, it produces wonderfully soft and cooling effects especially during hot weather.

The factory at present employs about 85 workers. All are Nigerians including three in managerial posts. It was only in the earlier years of the factory that production was handled by an expatriate, who was later replaced by a Nigerian trained in West Germany under the company's in-service training programme.



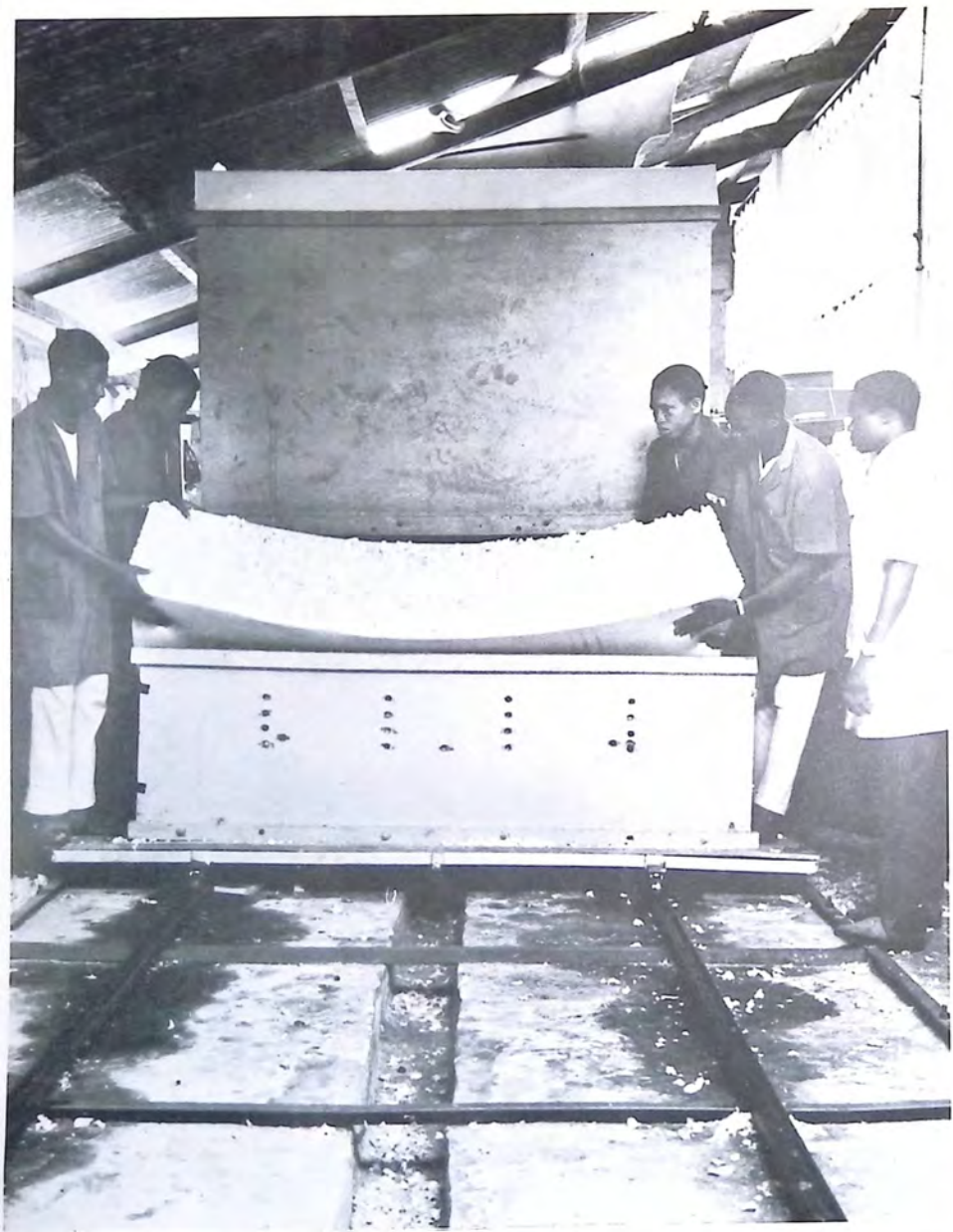
*Foam cushions taken out of the machine*



*Rubber foamed-up with chemicals*

*Foam rubber slabs or blocks*





*Ribloned perforated mattress*



*Finished foam mattresses*

*Upholstered couch with foam base and cushions*



## PRINTING

Before 1963 there was no standard printing press in the Midwest. As a result, the Government and the general public were immediately faced with printing problems when the area was carved out of the former Western Region in August 1963. To save the situation, the Government went into the printing business and the example was quickly followed by private companies and individuals.

Government owns a printing press in Benin City. The press employs over 100 printers and printing assistants. Its main job is to print government publications such as the Official Gazette, the Annual Estimates, the General Orders, the Financial Instructions and annual reports by Ministries, Departments and Statutory Corporations, booklets, pamphlets and publicity matter for the Information Department.

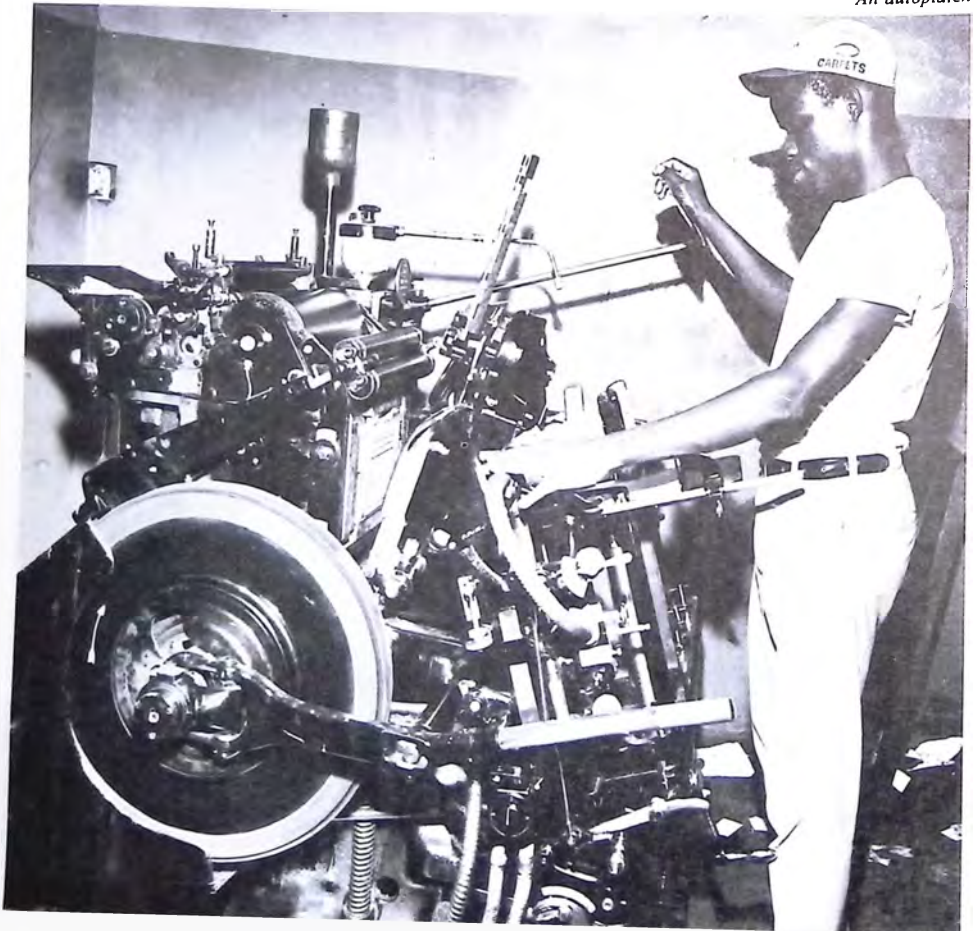
A government-sponsored printing and publishing

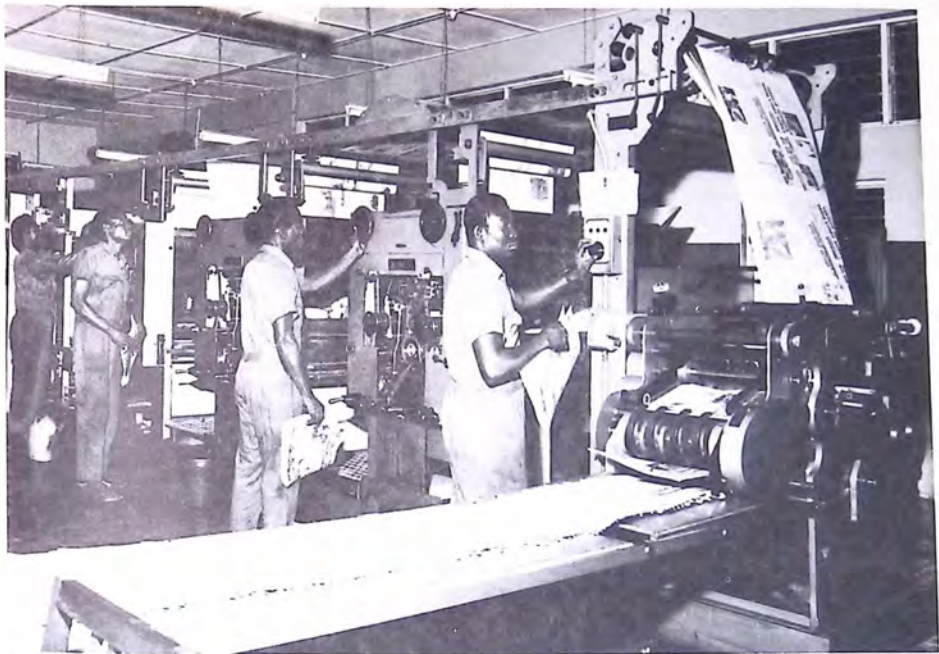
establishment, the Midwest Newspapers Corporation, in Benin City also handles an increasing small volume of jobs from government departments, statutory corporations and the general public. The Corporation prints and publishes the *Nigerian Observer*, a national daily, and the *Sunday Observer*, a national weekly paper. The newspapers are printed on a web off-set press, the first of its kind in the State.

In the private sector, there are several printing establishments especially in Benin City, Warri, Sapele, Agbor and Asaba. Some of those in Benin City are the Ribway Printing Press, the Western Printing Press, the Industrial Printing Press and Destiny Printing Press.

Others are the Unity Press and Stationery Stores at Warri, Otowan Printing Press at Sapele, Nicho Printing Work at Agbor and Nnebisi Printing Press at Asaba.

*An autoplaten*

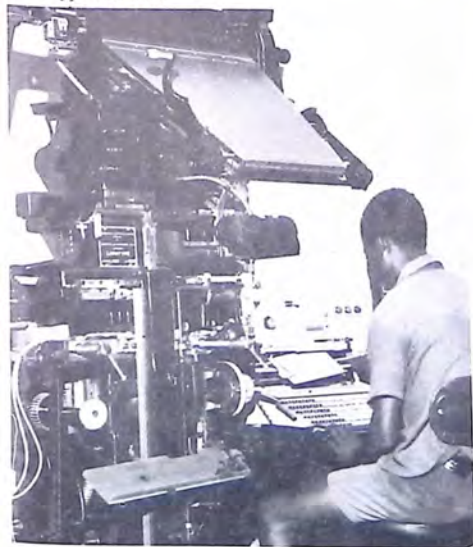




*A web-offset at the Midwest Newspapers Corporation*

*A stitching machine*

*A linotype machine*



## FURNITURE INDUSTRY

The current style of furniture in Nigeria is towards beauty and comfort. About two decades ago emphasis was placed on utility and durability. The factors responsible for this shift are birth of the furniture industry and of the foam rubber. Moreover, a fine set of furniture in the home has become veritable status symbol, a reflection of a high standard of living and sophistication.

Furniture is a viable business in Nigeria in general, and in the Midwest in particular. Modern taste apart, the basic raw materials for furniture, wood and foam rubber especially, are available locally; moreover indigenous skilled manpower is also available.

To furnish a flat comprehensively with upholstered furniture costs from £400 to £600. The items are made up as follows: *living room*—a set of chairs comprising 4 single sitters and one settee, a coffee table and 4 stools; *dining hall*—a table with 6 chairs, a chest of drawers and a side cupboard; *bedroom*—3 beds for 3 bedrooms, 2 wardrobes and 3 dressing tables; *reading room*—a small writing desk and a book case; *kitchen*: a meat safe, kitchen table, kitchen cupboard

and pantry table; *bathroom*—bathroom cabinet, bathroom gratings, soap rack, towel rack.

About a decade ago, domestic furniture was large in size, heavy and cumbersome. It lacked good finish and polish. The wood was iroko, mahogany, walnut or guarea, and the design was essentially functional. The articles of furniture comprised arm chairs, a cabinet, occasional or centre table, drinking stools and a book case. To use a wooden bed then was considered low taste, so imported iron or brass beds were provided in the bedroom. The mattress locally produced was cotton-filled. Cotton mattress was expensive and those who could not afford it used grass-filled mattress. Wardrobes were not very common.

Until about fifty years ago, the people used carved chairs, stools and tables in their homes. Beautiful pieces of furniture and other articles were produced by the carvers (Binis especially) who worked into them images of their *obas* (kings), heroes, warriors carrying spears, bows and arrows, gods and goddesses, elephants and leopards and the proverbial tortoise, the hero of many a folk tale. Today articles of antique furniture may only be found in palaces and homes of chiefs or people who keep relics.

*A furniture machine workshop*





Besides furniture, the carvers produced wooden bowls for kola-nuts, wooden plates and chests for keeping their clothes and treasures. Some of these old-fashioned articles can be seen at the Museum in Benin City. The craftsmen were more of carvers than carpenters. Woodwork was in rather crude form then, compared with its present standard. Cabinet-making or joinery was unknown. More of wooden nails than the rough and crude metal ones made by blacksmiths were used.

Modern furnishing is now in vogue. There are good carpenters around making a good living from their trade. Though they produce *cut and nail* (foldable) chairs, door shutters, door and window frames, yet they are mainly engaged in house building (ceiling) and bridge building.

It is the cabinet-makers or joiners that normally make articles of furniture including cabinet beds, cabinet radiograms, stools, show cases, wardrobes, dining tables, dining chairs, pouffes, occasional tables and writing desks in various designs and materials. The different kinds of wood used are: *guarea, iroko, Sapele mahogany, Lagos mahogany, walnut and teak*

for all kinds of furniture; all hard and *afara* and *obeche* skeletal furniture, that is, the inside of an upholstered piece of furniture.

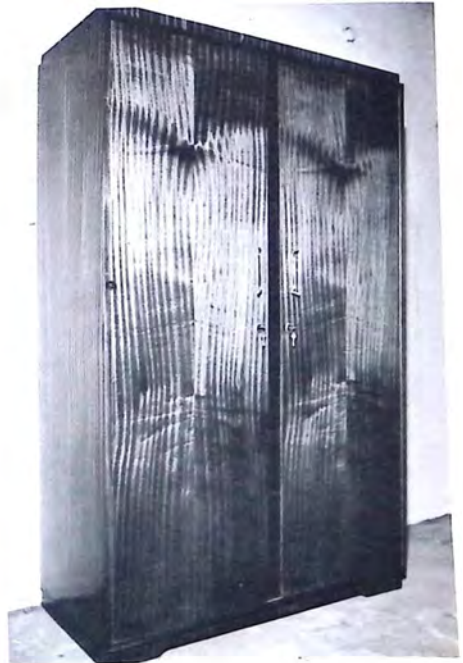
The main types of furniture are: plain, with no covering, and upholstered. In the upholstered class there are two kinds; the one with cotton and cloth cover and metal springs; and the other with leather, rubber foam, and webbing (elastic rubber inside the cushion serving as springs). Trends in taste are swinging in favour of leather upholstery. For such articles as dining tables and arm chairs, the preference is for a formica surface, whilst for cabinets it is for wood surface, sprayed and made sleek. The choice is even for wardrobes. Metal chairs, now produced locally, are used mostly by educational institutions, local councils and hotels in their halls. Costly imported metal desks and cabinets are generally seen in offices and business houses.

Since the late 1960's, the standard of furniture production in the State has improved considerably in both quality and quantity. Nearly all sophisticated types of furniture only obtainable previously from abroad are now made locally.

*A dressing table manufactured from local timber*



*A wardrobe made in a furniture factory*



Wood, the basic raw material for furniture production, abounds in the Midwest, one of the leading timber-producing areas of the world. There are many sawmills located in Benin and Delta Provinces of the State producing and selling sawn timber. Plywood is obtainable from the factory of the African Timber and Plywood Company at Sapele. Foam rubber used in upholstery is available in Benin City where there is a factory producing it.

Behind the growing standards of furniture production are improved skill on the part of cabinet-makers and better organised and equipped workshops. Some of these tradesmen are products of trade schools in the country and abroad. They have in their workshops such implements as the CD4 high-powered handsaw machine, sophisticated planing machine, automatic lathes capable of producing 400 stool or table legs a day, as against 20 produced by manual method. Kilns with capacities of up to 500 cubic feet of timber and capable of reducing seasoning time from six months (by ordinary method) to six days, are also installed in some work shops. Other implements include a machine for spraying chemicals on furniture for the purpose of preservation, or spraying paint for decoration, and pressure-treating cylinders used in wood preservation process.

Furniture manufacturing has grown into a gainful industry in the Midwest, as the products are distributed not only in the State but also in other parts of Nigeria.



*A chest of drawers*



*A furniture showroom*

## TOURISM

Since independence in 1960, the number of visitors to the country has been increasing steadily. According to the figures published by the Nigerian Tourist Association, about 6,120 tourists visited the country in 1962. In 1963, the figures rose to 12,158 and in 1964 and 1965, the figures were 18,197 and 136,000 respectively. The spectacular increase reflects the growing importance and influence of Nigeria in international relations.

The increase is also true of the State because tourists are eager to see this historic part of Africa famed for its art, crafts, rich forests, beautiful landscape, potential holiday resorts and warm climate. Its rapid expansion in industrial, economic and social life has attracted industrialists and entrepreneurs to explore the possibility of investments. There are some visitors who are merely curious to find new spots for holiday, excursion or sightseeing, while there are still others who visit the State seriously to assess the progress made so far since independence.

Tourist attractions in the State include:

*The Oba of Benin's Palace* is situated in the heart of Benin City, a hundred yards away from King's Square.

The Palace buildings and grounds cover about sixteen acres. The Palace is famous for its historic walls, shrines and collections of traditional works of art.

*The moat* which surrounds Benin City was dug about 1280 A.D. by Oba Oguola to ward off invaders. He did a second one in 1290 A.D. Two centuries later, Oba Ewuare dug another in 1460 A.D. to prevent mass exodus of Binis in times of strife.

*Asoro Tomb* is on Sakpoba Road, Benin City at the spot where a Bini hero, Chief Asoro, is said to have died after fighting bravely during the British Expedition against the city in 1897. He defended the spot saying, "No other person dare pass this road except the Oba" (So Kpon Oba). This statement which was corrupted to Sakpoba provided a name for Sakpoba Road and Sakpoba Village, near Benin City. *Emotan Statue*, sited between the Oba Market and the (church and school supplies) Bookshop, in Benin City is a six-foot bronze statue commemorating a 15th century Bini woman, Emotan who saved Oba Ewuare's life and throne. The statue was executed by a former British Council Representative in Nigeria, Mr. J. A. Danford. It replaces the Irughe memorial tree planted (on the spot where it stands) by Oba Ewuare in 1445 A.D.

*Ogiamien House* at Sakpoba Road, Benin City, is reputed to be one of the oldest houses in Benin City. It is the home of the Ogiamien family regarded as the original owners of Benin land. Before any new Oba



*Statue of Emotan, a Benin heroine*

ascends the throne, he must, according to custom, visit Ogiamien house to pay his respects. The house was declared a historical monument by the Federal Department of Antiquities in 1959. It contains shrines, carvings and bronze sculptures and has old Bini architecture.

*The Museum, Benin City.* The Museum is situated in the King's Square. In it are works of art in wood, cast iron, bronze, brass and terra-cotta which recapture the story of ancient Benin Kingdom.

*Bronze Casters and Blacksmiths.* Families of traditional Bini bronze-casters can be found at Idumwun-Eronmwon Street, Benin City which dates to very early times. Blacksmiths are at Igun Street. *Somorika Hill* which is about 105 miles from Benin has a height of about 2,202 feet and is one of the beautiful sceneries in the State. The hill which takes some three hours to climb is situated on the northeast of Igarra just about three miles from that town in Akoko-Edo Division. The area has a savannah-type vegetation with trees of very low heights scattered here and there. The climate is quite cool and windy. Oso, a town also in Akoko-Edo Division has a similar climate and is a health resort centre.

*Usen*, about 34 miles from Benin City is a typical old village noted for its various shrines. It has many streams chief among which are Eri-Ode (Erede), Oliha, Orofelu and Arhewen. On the banks of these streams can be found chalk and clay of various colours, white, yellow, blue and black.

*Ughoton and Ugbine* villages are of historical importance, both being connected with the Benin Massacre of 1897. Ughoton is 26 miles south-west of Benin City and Ugbine is situated between Benin City and Ughoton. Ughoton has a significant place in the Edo cosmogony. It is believed that in Ughoton there is a river, Ezenimimikpo, from where the dead sail away to the other world, after climbing the Alubode hill (Okenalubode). It is also believed that there is a white lion in this deep valley that comes out to roar when the gods are angry. Furthermore, if someone collapses and dies as he climbs the hill, he will not arrive safely and happily in heaven. Also at Ughoton is the shrine of Olokun (god of the sea and the rivers) whose priest was sent to Portugal as an ambassador by Oba Esigie in the 16th century.

*Motel Plaza, Benin City*



*Sakpoba River* is clean and good for swimming. Canoe men are available for short and exciting cruises on the river. There is a non-catering rest house there.

*Abraka.* The town of Abraka, about 32 miles from Sapele, has a natural swimming pool which is the main attraction to visitors. There is a college of Education in the town.

*Ode Itsekeri (Big Warri).* Ode Itsekeri is the ancestral home of the Itsekeris. It is where the Olu (king) of Warri is crowned. In the Olu's palace there are ceremonial stools, shrines and collections of antiquities which recall the Itsekiri people's connection with the early Portuguese who traded in that part of the country during the 16th century.

*The Escravos Bar* is made up three old fishing villages—Ugborodo, Ogidigben and Madangho all inhabited by Itsekeris whose main occupation is fishing. Because of the oil discovered off-shore, there is a conglomeration of oil tanks, and life there is bustling. What is of great interest is the sandy beach which stretches up to five miles before entering the open sea. One can walk along the banks from Ugborodo to Benin River, a distance of about 20 miles, without any hindrance.

*Hotel Bendel, Benin City*



From Ogidigben and along the sandy beaches, it is possible to walk to Forcados which is not far away. The small fishing canoes that ply the tidal sea make a pleasant sight.

*The Palace of Obi of Agbor* is the seat of one of the most important rulers in Ika Division. In the place can be seen traditional stools, wood carvings and other works of art which are of historical and cultural importance.

*Iyada Valley* is in Ogwashi-Uku town, 71 miles from Benin City, and 15 miles from Asaba. From the top of Iyada hill one can view the River Niger in the direction of Onitsha. The valley flanks a stream, Iyada.

The resulting effects of tourist attractions and investment opportunities have made the provision of more and improved hotel and accommodation facilities imperative and a vital source of foreign exchange. Aware of this, the Government has embarked on a programme of developing hotel industry in the State. Already, the existing Government-owned Catering Rest Houses at Benin, Warri, Uromi, Auchi and Asaba are being expanded and remodelled. Two new ones at Agbor and Ughelli are now completed.

*Catering Rest House, Benin City*



In the expansion programme, spacious dome-shaped air-conditioned restaurants and lounges, with beautiful upholstered furniture and tapestry have been added to the Catering Rest Houses. In the chalets, telephone services, wardrobes or chest of drawers, additional single and double bed-rooms have been provided. Bedroom services have also been introduced. Nigerian and foreign menu are served. The charges are moderate ranging from 10/6d to £1 per plate.

In addition to the Catering Rest Houses, new hotels of international standard are being built. In Benin City, the Government has completed a five-storey ultra-modern hotel, *Hotel Bendel* at an estimated cost of £212,000. Located in Benin/Sapele Road, the hotel occupies 7.3 acres of land, and provides a wide range of facilities for the comfort and luxury of visitors or tourists. Its 48 bedrooms, single and double, with palladiano ground floor and mosaic wall, are furnished with wardrobes, private baths, toilets, beautiful saloons, scintillating upholstered furniture, laundry, telephone services and barber's shops. Each floor has a VIP suite and is linked to the other floors with inter-communication facilities. In addition to central air-conditioning, there is an air-conditioner in each room. The hotel is the first in the State to have an automatic lift. Other comforts

include a spacious lounge and a bar-restaurant capable of accommodating 180 guests. The banquet hall has a capacity for 600. Swimming pools, tennis courts golf courses and art shops are also being constructed.

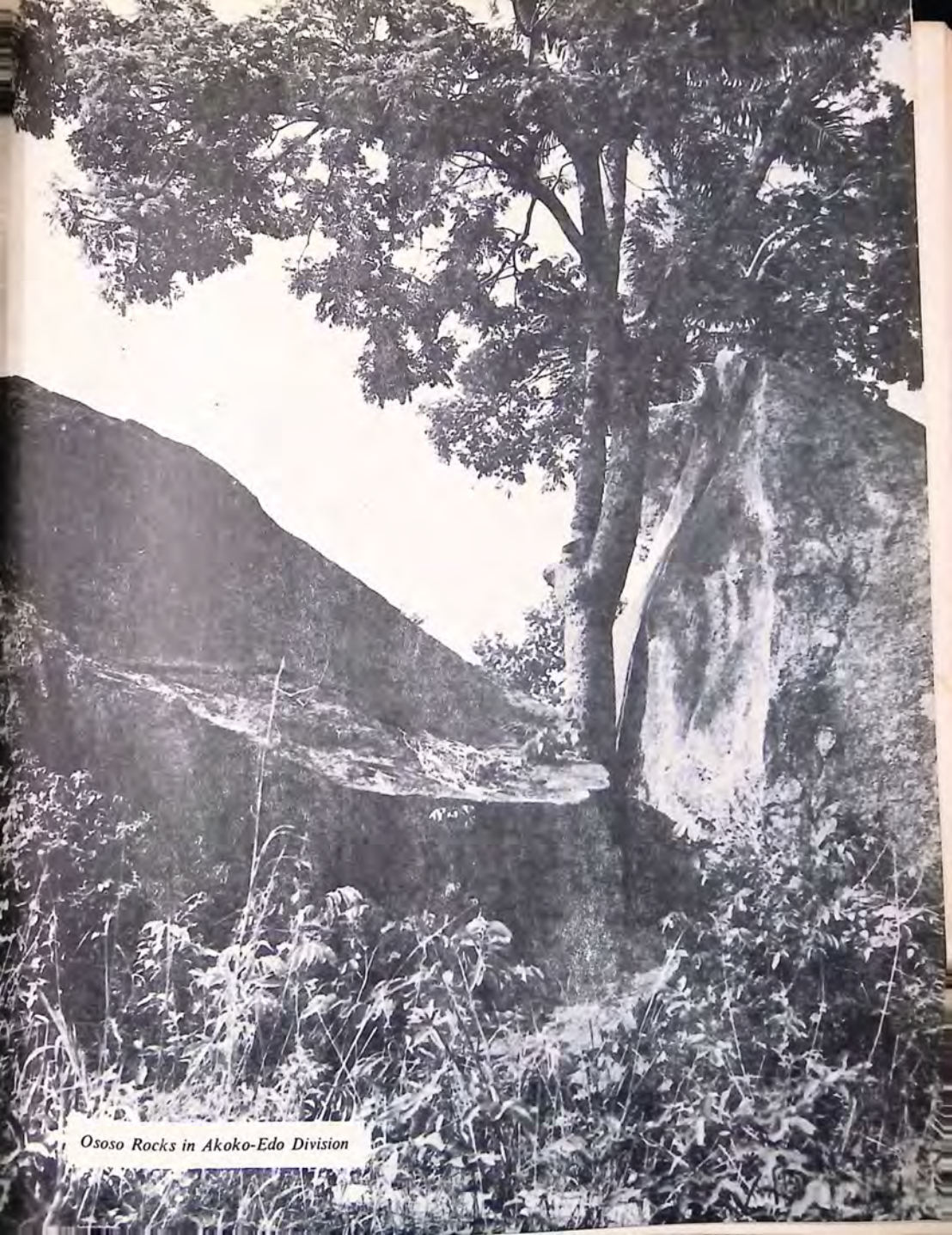
On Reservation Road Benin City is a motel, the £100,000 *Motel Benin Plaza* owned by a Nigerian businessman. It has 20 chalets comprising 12 suites, eight double rooms and eight single rooms. All are equipped with air-conditioners and telephones. The "Emotan Room" for conferences, receptions and parties, has a capacity for 60 persons. Other facilities in the motel are a swimming pool, pool bar and tennis court, contiguous to the Benin Golf Course.

Nigerian, Italian and oriental dishes, exquisitely prepared, are served in the centrally air-conditioned bar-restaurant, "The Greedy Hunter."

There are other privately owned hotels of good standard in the principal towns of the State. Among them are *Edo Guest House*, *Green Gardens*, *Central Hotel*, and *Airport Inn*, in Benin City; *International Hotel*, and *Peju Guest House*, in Warri; *River Valley Hotel*, *Palm Grove Hotel*, and *Midwest Inn* at Effurun, near Warri, *Uviesa Inn* in Ughelli, and *Eluko Lodge* in Sapele.

*River Valley Hotel, Warri*





*Ososo Rocks in Akoko-Edo Division*



*Retail trade in miscellaneous goods*



## RETAIL TRADE

Early retail trade was by barter with neighbouring districts and foreign merchants. In the 15th century, when the Portuguese came to the Bight of Benin, the people exchanged spices and ivory tusks for imported coral beads and other ornaments. Later, trade by barter was superseded by a cash economy, though money took different forms over the years. At one time, cowries *ikpigho* (Bini), *ego ayaka* (Ibo), *okubotoru* (Ijaw) were used and later it was the manilla.

Today, retail trade falls under three categories: open market sale, shop-keeping and distributive trade.

### OPEN MARKET SALE

Those engaged in open market sale (women mostly) own sheds and pay rents to the local councils or to the owners of the land where the market is situated. In major towns like Benin City, Warri, Sapele and Agbor markets are held daily in a particular place. In rural areas, markets are usually held once in every four days.

The open market is essentially a foodstuffs market and is divided up into sections for different food items: yams, rice, cassava or gari, earthenware cooking pots, soup ingredients such as meat, fish and snails, and vegetables like melon, okra and tomatoes. Textiles and medical herbs and roots are also sold. In these markets, no single item has a fixed price but goods are bought by haggling.



The market women get their articles of trade from the farmers. Two or three times a week, they travel to the villages and farms to buy the foodstuffs which are eventually retailed to house-wives.

The following articles are usually obtained in the areas shown: plaintain from Benin and Ishan Divisions; yams from Ishan, Aboh, Ika, Akoko-Edo, Etsako and Asaba Divisions; oranges, pawpaw and vegetables from Ishan Division; rice from Ishan and Etsako Divisions; maize from all the Divisions; cassava from practically all the Divisions but especially from Aboh and Urhobo Divisions; palm fruits, palm oil and palm kernels from Isoko, Urhobo, Asaba and Aboh Divisions; and fish from Western Ijaw, Warri and Isoko Divisions.

Home-made cloths are produced and distributed from Akoko-Edo, Asaba and Ishan Divisions; mats and baskets from Urhobo, Western Ijaw, Warri and Aboh Divisions; and pots and jugs from Owan Division. To buy or sell these articles, traders may travel long distances, on foot, bicycle or by lorry or by boat or canoe. One sometimes comes across a woman cyclist with a child strapped to her back and a heavy load on the bicycle carrier returning from a distant market.

### SHOP-KEEPING

Shop-keeping used to be almost exclusively for men who engaged in petty trading, but today more and more women are getting involved in it. Shops are opening practically everywhere including living houses and kiosks, where articles like cigarettes, biscuits, bread, milk, soft drinks and stationery may be obtained. *Self-service* shops or *super-markets*, as they are sometimes called, are springing up in the major towns. They are mostly owned by the big firms. They stock various imported consumer goods bought on wholesale basis from the manufacturers or their agents. The goods include groceries, textiles, cutlery, patent medicine, bicycles, cooking utensils and cold stores.

Shop-keepers buy from the big shops like John Holt and G. B. Ollivant either in cash or credit at a fair price to enable the retailers to whom they sell make some profit.

Since the past decade or so, a different type of shop has been springing up all over the State. It is the chemist's shop or the patent medicine shop. The chemist's shop is owned or managed by a qualified chemist and druggist who has business relations with pharmaceutical companies, their agents or local representatives. Owners of patent medicine shops can be any duly licensed stockists. Unlike dealers in

*A trader in plates*

patent medicines, chemists are licensed to stock and sell poisonous drugs.

A recent development in shopping facilities is the provision either by Government or local councils of modern markets with open and lock-up stalls, loading and off-loading facilities, electricity, drainage and conveniences. Examples are the new Agbado Market in Benin City, Waterside Market at Sapele, Ogbе-Ijaw Market at Warri, Baleke Market at Agbor and Ogbе-Olia Market at Asaba.

### DISTRIBUTIVE TRADE

Distributors are principally importers or agents to manufacturers. They deposit huge sums of money with the manufacturers and buy wholesale. In addition, they are suppliers to the shop-keepers and retailers.

One of the major distributive trade agencies is the Midwestern Distributive Service (M.D.S.), an arm of the United Africa Company of Nigeria, Limited (U.A.C.). Included in the U.A.C. group of Companies are G. B. Ollivant, Kingsway Stores, Lever Brothers, Kingsway Chemists, A.J. Seward and G. Gottschalk. Another big trading company is John Holt Limited which has West Africa Drug Co. as a subsidiary in the Midwest. These Companies in turn distribute, wholesale, various items of building and other materials such as cement, iron rods, soft drinks, toilet soap

rials such as cement, iron rods, soft drinks, toilet soap and detergents to shop-keepers and retailers.

The Kingsway Chemists, the West African Drug Company, the Continental Chemists, and the Karo Chemists which are among the leading pharmaceutical companies, distribute drugs and dispense them to their customers and the general public.

Indigenous Co-operative societies are being formed all over the State as a result of Government efforts. The societies enjoy credit facilities and buy and sell in bulk at an advantage. Moreover, the Government has an agency, the Midwestern Nigeria Marketing Board established in 1964 with powers to secure the most favourable marketing arrangements for the purchase, storage and evacuation to port of the State's palm kernels, palm oil and cocoa. The Board handles seasonally an average of 40,000 tons of palm kernels, 9,000 tons of cocoa and 7,000 tons of palm oil, yielding a turnover of about £4 million each season.

Its policy of producer price guarantees for the farmer a stable price throughout the season irrespective of fluctuations in the world market. In a lean year, for instance, the Board supports its producer price by a release from its stabilisation fund accumulated over the period of boom. At the beginning of each crop season, the Board announces the producer price it intends to maintain throughout the crop year.

*An open market*





*Wholesale stores*

*A supermarket*





## SOCIAL SERVICES

### HEALTH

Health and medical services constitute one of the four priority areas of national development. In the 1970/71 financial year, for instance, £1.8 million, representing 14% of the total recurrent expenditure was earmarked for health facilities and services. An additional £1.3 million has been budgeted for the building of new hospitals, the general improvement of old ones and purchase of medical equipment. Medical treatment is free to all children up to the age of 18 years.

The existing eighteen General hospitals at Agbor, Asaba, Kwale, Auchi, Igarra, Sabongidda-Ora, Uzebba, Uromi, Benin City, Warri, Sapele, Forcados, Oleh, Ughelli, Ojobo, Patani, Bomadi and Orerokpe are being expanded. In addition, new hospitals are being built at Ashaka, Agenebode, Afuze.

All the General hospitals in the State have maternity wards. However, twelve new maternity hospitals have

been built at a cost of £30,000 each at Akwukwu, Umunede, Obiaruku, Ubiaja, Igueben, Ibillo, Gbokoda, Koko, Oweh, Iguobazuwa, Effurun and Igbanke.

Under the State health programme, every one of the fourteen administrative divisions has been provided with some form of medical service and efforts are made to provide adequate staff. In the State Civil Service, there are at present 90 doctors including 28 specialists in the various fields, 137 nursing sisters and health superintendents and 1,210 other medical staff including midwives, staff nurses, student nurses, health workers and community nurses.

The medical staff is hardly enough for the health needs of the entire population and for this reason the Government gives priority attention to the training of doctors, nurses and auxiliaries. The State sponsors medical students at universities and encourages secondary school leavers to take up the study of medicine and allied studies such as pharmacy, laboratory technology and radiography.

The Government has embarked on the building of a £1.6 million 340-bed specialist hospital. This hospital will also serve as a Medical Centre for special cases. The Government has also allocated a sum of £20,000 for the building of a school clinic in Benin

*Male ward in a hospital*



City. The clinic is intended to ease the congestion in the Out-Patients Department of the General Hospital.

The Health Division of the Ministry of Health organises the training of Field Staff and Health Officers to educate the people on the essence of clean surroundings, good homes with adequate ventilation and good water supply. The State has 'Infectious Diseases Hospitals for the treatment of patients suffering from small-pox and other infectious diseases.

To ensure the complete eradication of small-pox and to avoid any outbreak of the disease, the number of people vaccinated against the attack has also increased from 616,283 in 1963 to 2,373,956 by December, 1968. The incidence of measles has also been reduced from 7,000 cases in 1963 to 2,152 by December, 1969.

The new services of the Health Division include the establishment of 40 Village Health Committees and a Mobile Seminar. The Committees help with the implementation of the Ministry's local health and sanitation programmes. The Seminar staff provide refresher courses for field staff such as community nurses, sanitary overseers and dispensary attendants.

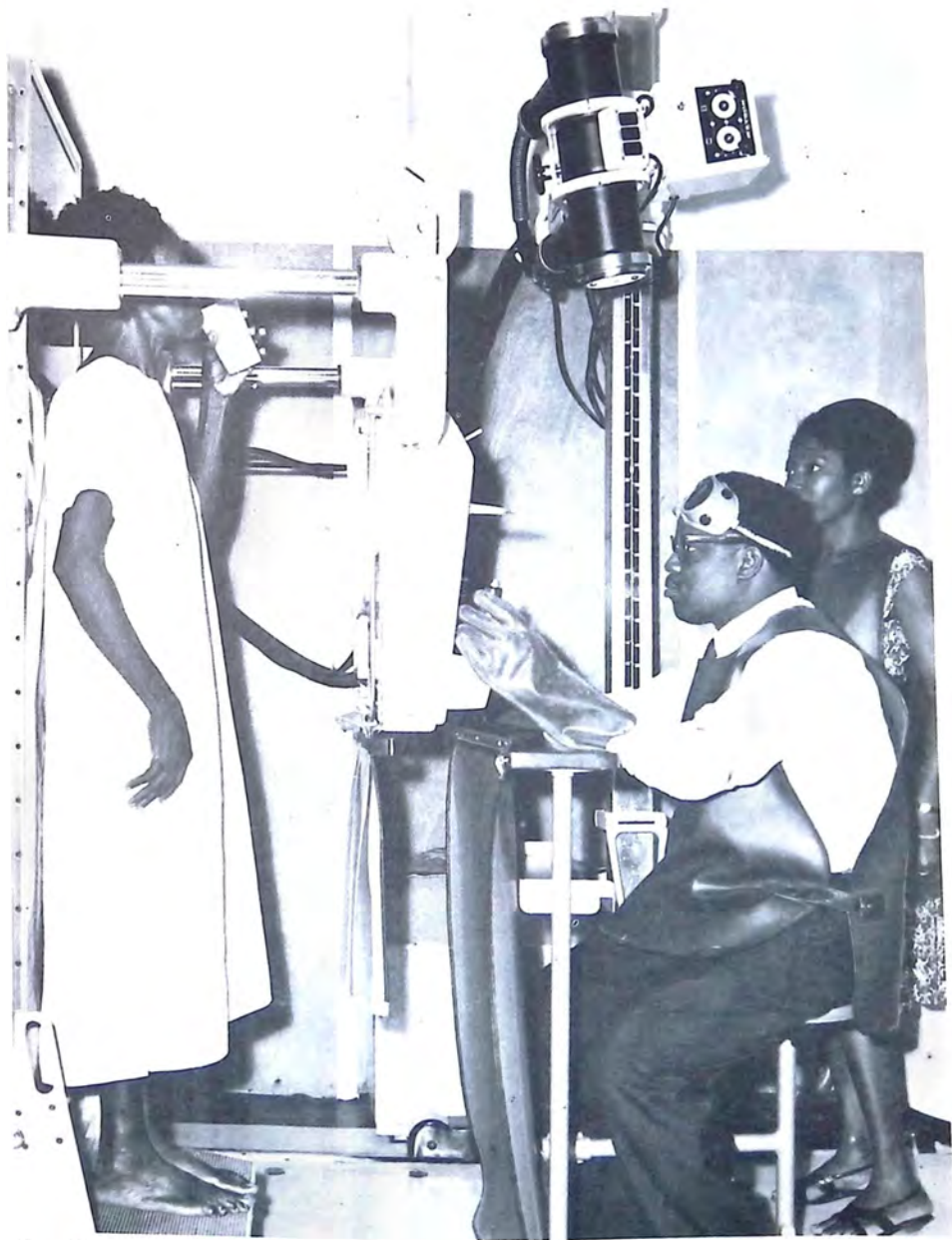
A total sum of about £236,700 has been provided for the purchase of several items of equipment including automatic X-ray processing unit, ambulances, a floating dispensary, standby generating sets, speed boats and drug manufacturing, laundry and dental equipment.

As more people avail themselves of the services of government hospitals the expenditure on drugs incurred by the Government grows bigger. In 1970/71 for instance, Government expects to spend over £365,000 to purchase drugs. To solve the problem of shortage of drugs and provide for the fast increasing number of persons who have realised the advantages of hospital treatment, the Government has established a Pharmaceutical Corporation in Benin City to ensure the steady availability of drugs and reduce costs.

The Corporation will manufacture and dispense drugs, and engage in retail and wholesale pharmacy. Other pharmacies or drug stores will be sited at Agbor, Warri and Auchi. Already, a new Medical Stores is being built in Benin City at a cost of £62,000.

*Child care instruction at a hospital*





*A specialist Consultant in radiology at work*



*Nurses in training*





*A new baby and nurse*



*Health education in schools*

*An eye Specialist in a State hospital*



## EDUCATION

Education is a priority in the Government's development programme. It claims the highest single allocation in the State's annual budget. In the 1970-71 Estimates, for instance, the recurrent expenditure was £4.9 million, representing 38% of the year's total budget.

The educational structure in the State is at three principal levels: primary, secondary and post-secondary or higher education. Most of the schools, primary as well as secondary grammar schools and teacher training colleges are owned by the Government, local government Councils, missionaries and muslim organisations. Others are owned by private individuals or communities.

*Primary education:* In the Midwest, primary education has been free since 1955 when it was part of the former Western Region of Nigeria. This measure has enabled more children of school age to attend school. Six-year-old children duly registered as such are eligible for admission. There are however nursery and primary schools run by some missionaries and other private agencies for children under six years and over.

Primary schools run a six-year course leading to the First School Leaving Certificate issued by the State's Ministry of Education. The total number of schools increased from 253 in 1964 to 1,831 in 1970. The number of pupils in attendance in all the schools at the beginning of 1970 was more than 385,000 representing approximately 78% of the school age population, and the teachers numbered well over 12,000.

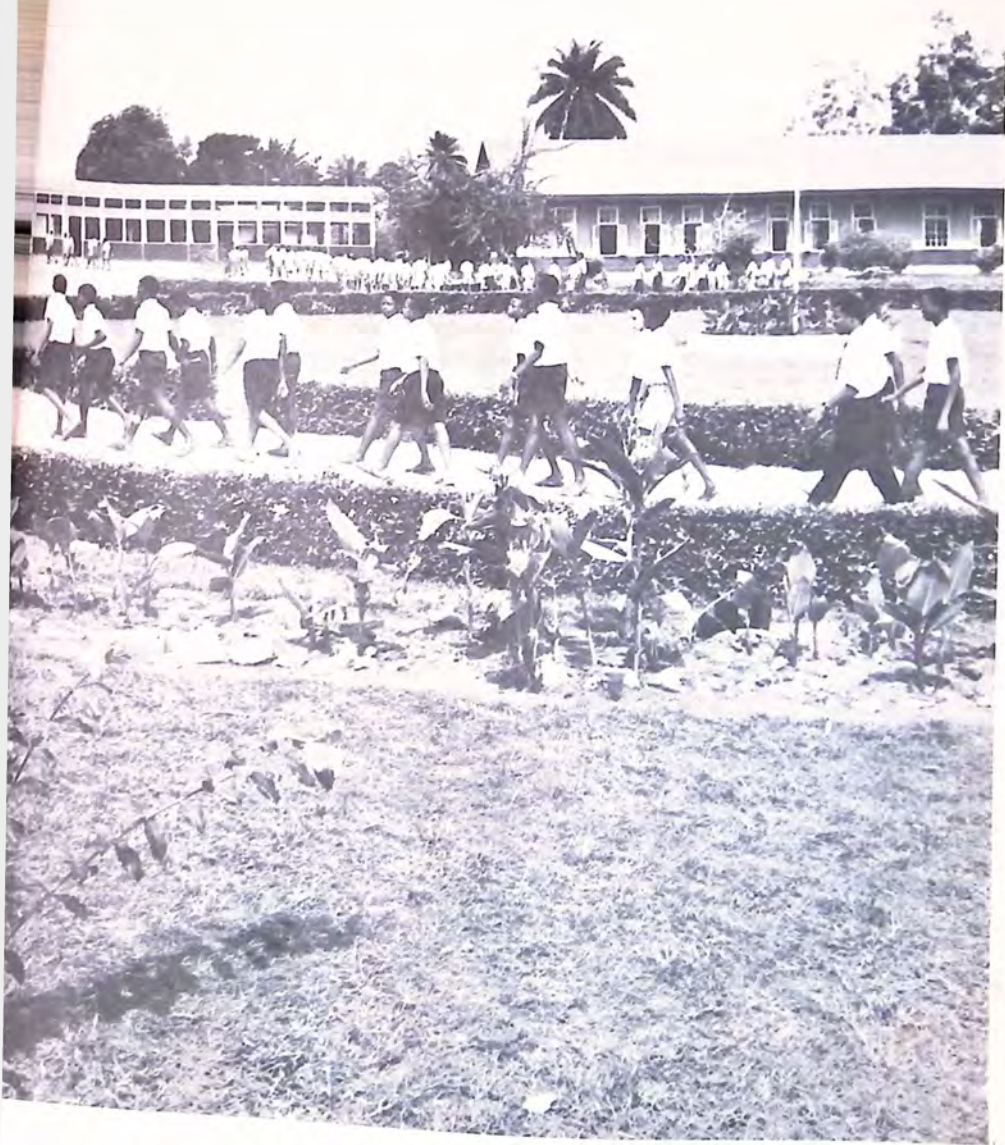
In order to raise the standard of primary education, the Government has embarked on a number of bold measures, including a new programme for the production of the right calibre of teachers. Elementary mathematics, general science, home economics, art and crafts have been introduced in the revised syllabus.

The most important aspect of the primary school development programme is the building of model primary schools with permanent materials and modern sanitary facilities. The schools are well furnished and equipped with up-to-date teaching aids. The construction of about 270 of such schools in the 14 administrative divisions of the State is the immediate goal. Each school building is estimated to cost £13,000 (£10,000 for building, £2,500 for furniture and £500 for science equipment). The building programme will cost £3.5 million.

To provide healthy surroundings and better atmosphere for studies, small school and those on



*Edo College, Benin City*



congested premises in urban areas have been merged into larger units of 1,400 pupils each with adequate playing grounds.

**Grammar School Education:** The secondary grammar schools offer five to six-year courses. Admission is by competitive common entrance examination for primary school children between the ages of 11 and 14. The basic grammar school subjects consist of English language, English literature, elementary mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, history, geography, art and religious knowledge. The curriculum has been broadened to include agricultural science for boys, home economics and needle work for girls. At the end of the grammar school course, qualified pupils sit for the West African School Certificate Examination conducted by the West African Examinations Council. It is compulsory for all candidates to offer mathematics and a science subject at the examination.

Many of the grammar schools also run a two-year Higher School Certificate (H.S.C.) courses in arts and science subjects. These courses are designed to prepare students for university education. Candidates who obtain good results from the H.S.C. Examination may be admitted by *direct entry* to a university. Others with outstanding results at the West African School Certificate Examination may be permitted to sit for a Concessional Entrance Examination before admission. The undergraduate who is offered



*A pupil at a free primary school*

admission by direct entry may pursue an arts or social studies or science course in 3 years, while the concessional entrant covers a similar programme in 4 years.

In 1961, there were 40 secondary grammar schools in the State and the number rose to 87 in 1966. Between 1968 and 1969, nineteen more such schools were opened.

**Technical Education:** The number of trades schools rose from four in 1964 to 23 in 1970. Three of these—the Midwest Technical College, Auchi in Etsako Division, the Government Trade Centre, Sapele in Western Urhobo Division and the Government Handicraft Centre in Warri Division—are State-owned. The length of courses varies from school to school. The reason is partly due to the differences in entry requirements. While some of the trades schools admit primary school leavers, others, such as the Government Trades Centre, Sapele, admit only post-primary school leavers. On the average the courses last from two to five years. Carpentry and joinery, brick-laying and masonry, general welding, wood machining, fitting, motor mechanics, electrical installations, sheet metal work, building construction, telecommunications, draughtsmanship, radio servicing, and commercial work are some of the courses offered in these schools.

The Midwest Technical College, Auchi which was built with a grant of £525,000 from the British Government, is of a higher technical standard. It



*Grammar School pupils*

offers three-year diploma courses in all branches of engineering and commerce.

**Higher Education:** Significantly, the State established in October 1970 an institution of higher learning with a technological bias and of university status known as the Midwest Institute of Technology, (M.I.T.) at Benin City. It offers, among others, courses in (1) petro-chemical and industrial engineering, (2) automotive engineering, (3) materials technology, (4) geophysical and agricultural sciences and (5) medicine.

**Teacher training:** The new education programme provides for the recruitment and training of personnel of the right calibre at the primary and grammar school levels. All Grade III teacher training colleges were abolished in 1965. Grade III teachers are encouraged to pursue the Grade II training course which for new entrants has been extended from four to five years. The curriculum has been expanded to include science and mathematics which the trainee teachers must study up to the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) Ordinary Level.

It is now compulsory for all the headmasters of primary schools to be either graduates or experienced teachers possessing the Nigerian Certificate in

Education (N.C.E.) or Grade I Teachers Certificate. A post-Grade II teacher training college, under a special relationship with the University of Ibadan, and known as Headmasters Institute, was opened in Benin City in 1969 for the training of headmasters and headmistresses on a special course which lasts for one year. Another cognate institution designed to produce qualified teachers and headmasters for primary and secondary grammar schools is the College of Education, Abraka which offers courses leading to the Nigerian Certificate in Education (N.C.E.).

**Adult Education:** There is a Government adult education college in Benin City which provides education to adults through evening class. Other courses, similar to those for primary education are also organized by the various local government authorities in the Divisions.

**Grants, Loans and Scholarships:** The Government is pursuing a deliberate policy of encouraging female education by grants to girls' institutions for courses leading to Higher School Certificate. To attract more female graduates into the teaching profession, scholarship awards are made to those of them who

*A Mission Preparatory School*



gain university admission and wish to pursue teaching as a career. Also, any male or female student who scores an aggregate of between 5 and 15 in the West African School Certificate Examination is entitled automatically to a scholarship award to institutions of higher learning.

Further, a revolving loan scheme has been introduced. It offers many more students the opportunity to benefit from higher education. Eligible candidates must have completed the H.S.C. or the University Preliminary Courses and are in their second year at a university, pursuing science studies. Under the scheme, students who graduate with First Class Honours or Second Class Upper in their final examinations are exempted from refunding the loans. A medical student is eligible for exemption from refund of the loan, provided he has a distinction in any of his subjects.

Apart from the awards based on academic merit, the Government makes post-primary scholarship awards to indigent students.

*Allowances:* Since 1968, graduate teachers in rural areas have been receiving special allowances, and

secondary school teachers in such areas are paid special inducement allowances, whilst their schools are provided with buses or vans and electricity supply—a move to check drift to urban areas. Science teachers are also paid special allowances.

*Schools Boards:* The Government in 1968 established a State Schools Board and seven Local Schools Boards to improve and stabilise the conditions of service of voluntary agency teachers and thereby ensure that its educational development programmes can be successfully carried out by devoted and loyal teachers. The Boards are charged with the responsibility for the appointment, promotion, discipline and posting of teachers in non-government, grant-aided institutions. The State Schools Board takes charge of the non-government, grant-aided secondary grammar schools and teacher training colleges, while the seven Local Schools Boards are in charge of voluntary agency primary schools in the seven local schools board zones into which the State has been divided.

*Science instruction in a grammar school*



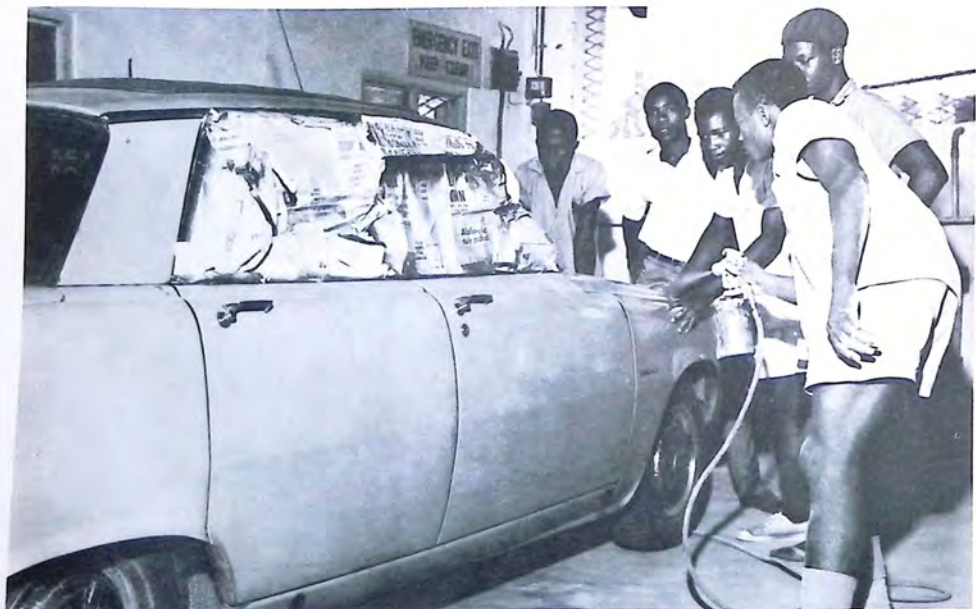


*A modern primary school*



*Electronics class at Technical College, Auchi*

*Car spraying at the Government Trade Centre, Sapele*







*A course in automobile repairs*



*A class in mechanical workshop*



*A bricklaying class at the Government Trade Centre,  
Sapele*

## CULTURE

### ART

Nigeria's enviable position in the realm of culture is accounted for by her art heritage from Benin, Ife and Nok, the leading centres. The popularity of Benin art, in particular, extends beyond Africa to the outside world, and its art treasures are till today objects of study by scholars. Unfortunately, very little is known about the history of this art, the main form of which is bronze-work said to have been introduced around 1280 A.D. by Oba Oguola.

According to tradition, Obas of Benin were usually patrons of the arts or were themselves artists in their own right. They maintained a group of bronze sculptors, brass casters and wood carvers within the palace. The purpose was to record memorable events, or produce memorial effigies of dead Obas, heroes and heroines or figures representing the spirits of dead ancestors, household gods and goddesses which were worshipped. Among the latter, the tutelary deities are *Ogun*, god of iron; *Ake*, guardian of women; and *Iye*, patroness of mothers. Other craftsmen and artists worked outside the palace, and art families are still to be found at Igun Street, Benin City.

Too well-known are the famous bronzes of Benin (plaques, busts, royal figures and animals) some of which found their way abroad, to European and American museums and auction marts. The expropriation was during the British invasion of 1897. The bronzes are universally classified as some of the finest bronze heads and statues in the world, and they are the best known of Nigerian art specimens. Benin brass-casting is another art form with which Europe and America have become too familiar, for centuries now. Midwest artists also express themselves in mud (terra-cottas and statues); wood (ebony, thorns and mask sculptures) and ivory (ornaments).

The casting process for brass or bronze is the same and the articles used are beeswax, mud, charcoal for fire, and the appropriate scrap metal. Wax which is indispensable in modelling is obtained from honeycomb. The honey is manually expressed leaving the comb fairly dry. The latter is washed clean and boiled until it becomes fluid. It is filtered with a cloth and the filtrate is collected in a pot or some other



*Decorative elephant tusks mounted on bronze heads of kings*

vessel and allowed to coagulate. This coagulated substance is the wax and looks like melted candle. The craftsman moulds with mud the shape of the object, for example, bust of an Oba or a tortoise he wants to produce.

The mud object is baked in a blacksmith's forge and after cooling it is covered all over with the soft wax which is also used in moulding physical features like eyes, ears, fingers or details like a sword held in the hand or the folds of a garment. When the waxed figure is dry, it is covered up tenderly with mud from the top to its base. After drying, molten brass, or bronze as the case may be, is poured right into the figure from the base. The hot metal melts up the wax and replaces its position all over, thus forming the required profile.

The outer mud layer is later removed with the help of water. The solid mud inside is carefully knocked out and replaced with a molten mass of metal, if so desired.

Among a host of art objects produced in the State are: animals such as tortoise, lion, leopard, elephant, figures of Obas and their consorts, heroes and heroines, gods and goddesses, and royal paraphernalia such as *Ada* and *Eben* swords, stools, anklets and bells.

Specimens of antique mud-sculpture have been preserved in Benin City and Lagos by a handful of antiquarians and ethnographers. The array of traditional works features masks, busts, figures and



*Triple sword in sheath*

figurines in terra-cotta. Local shrines house some of the specimens which represent deities, like Olokun (Bini god of the sea and rivers). Mud-sculpture was done by the Urhobo, Ika, Asaba and Aboh people.

Among the famous shrines are *Olokun*, containing exceptionally beautiful pieces of mud-sculpture, at Urhonigbe (Eastern Benin Division); *Agberegbesa*, memorial of a war hero, at Agbere (Western Ijaw); *Tuomoru*, god of fertility, at Tuomo (Western Ijaw); *Eze Chime*, memorial of a local ancestor, at Obior (Asaba Division); *Oraekpen*, ancestral warrior shrine, at Sabongidda-Ora, Owan Division; *Osedua*, ancestral warrior shrine, at Ewu (Ishan Division) and *Adofi*, a god of defence, at Utagba-Uno (Aboh Division). At Otujeremi (Eastern Urhobo Division) there is the shrine of *Ogbarurie*, god of the river, and at Okere (Warri Division) there is *Umale-Okere* shrine where Umale, a god, is worshipped for protection against evil spirits.

Artistic carving areas are Benin, Ishan, Owan and Ijaw. Carving in the first three localities is three-dimensional, in contrast with Ijaw mask carving which has highly abstract and cubist forms. Ebony carving is exclusive to the Binis. The Ishan, Ijaw and Owan and Bini people, as well, produce carvings in other types of wood including thorns from the cotton tree. Binis also carve art objects in ivory obtained from elephant tusks.



*A plaque of a Bini king and his chiefs*

At the Benin Museum the following can be seen: the head of Iyoba Eson, the mother of Oba Ahenzae, being a cast copy in plaster of the bronze original, now in the British Museum, London; a bronze replica of a wooden stool presented to the King of Portugal by Oba Esigie; a terra-cotta head lent by Chief Innenigun.

Other famous art works include: *Freedom of the Press* bronze sculpture in front of the *Nigerian Observer* buildings in Benin City by Felix Idubor; a bronze statue of *Emotan* in Benin City by J. A. Danford and carved doors at the Benin Divisional Council Secretariat, Benin City by O. Idah.

Some of the well-known artists of Midwest origin are: *Festus Idehen*, painter, cement sculptor and ebony carver; *Demas Nwoko*, painter and stage-designer who teaches at the School of Drama, University of Ibadan; and *Solomon Irein Wangboje* who holds a Ed.D. in art, teaches at the University of Ife and specialises in graphics, fabric designs, woodcuts, etchings and paintings.

Among the painters are: *Colette Omogbai Omoregie* an art teacher at Edo College, Benin City; *Alfred Osakue*, (also a carver) who works in his own studio in Benin City and *Erhabor Emokpae* who is in addition a commercial artist and sculptor. Some of the graphic artists are *Bruce Onobrakpeya*, also a painter, teaching at St. Gregory's College, Lagos and *Peter Omo-Erese* of the Niger Pools, Lagos.

*Ivory carved sistrum*



*Bronze figure of Oba in ceremonial regalia*



*A bangle*



*A traditional key*

*Benin carver at work*





## CRAFTS

As in other parts of Nigeria, various handiworks are produced in the Midwest essentially for their utility. Some of the articles however, possess artistic qualities which enhance their attraction and market value. The local craftsmanship includes cloth-weaving, mat-making, pottery, basketry, utility carving, smithery and jewellery.

Cloth-weaving centres are Somorika and Igarra in Akoko-Edo Division; Auchi in Etsako Division; Ubulu-Uku in Asaba Division and Ubiaja in Ishan Division. All the cloths are hand-woven by women who employ the same technique. Weaving is done on a simple loom installed in a corner of the room. The loom consists of two wooden poles each about six feet long planted on the floor, side by side with each other in a slanting position and at a distance of about three feet apart. Two other poles are tied across the standing ones, the first about eighteen inches from the ground and the other about four feet away from the first. This constitutes the basic framework.

The yarn is produced by ginning raw cotton on a special type of bow. A mass of cotton is placed over the bow and as the string is pulled in a speedy manner at rapid intervals, the seeds are wrenched from the cotton wool. With a wooden spindle consisting of a long pin and a knob at the base, the wool is spun into a yarn or thread. Lengthy coils of thread are fixed on to the loom and swung round the cross poles to

form the base fabric. They are held in required positions by carved sticks designed for the purpose.

Weaving is carried out with the help of a wooden shuttle, with two pointed ends. The shuttle is used to shoot the yarn across the warp or fabric to form a weft or web. Patterns are effected by the use of large needles. Coloured threads are obtained by dyeing plain threads with dyes obtained from camwood and kola-nuts.

The clothes produced are of various colours and patterns, mostly from Somorika and Igarra, Auchi and Ubiaja. Stars, lines and fancy symbols are featured in them. Immaculate white cloths are produced mainly at Ubulu-Uku. Most of them are plain. Others carry little decorations in red featuring geometrical figures such as simple and interlocked triangles. Generally, the clothes are thick and rather coarse in texture, but lighter and smoother ones are also made. The finished clothes are used for dresses, door and window blinds and bedding. Besides the traditional toga-style wear for men and the two-piece wrapper outfit for women, the clothes are now used in Western styles of dress: trousers, gowns and skirts.

Mats are produced at many places in Ijaw, Urhobo and Asaba Divisions. The centres include Patani (Ijaw), Okwagbe (Urhobo) and Igboho (Asaba). There are two main types, the thick and coarse fabric made from the fronds of the raffia palm or the soft, tender and glossy kind made from rushes. Plaiting is done mostly on the floor where the mat-maker squats, and on the lap when certain decorative patterns are to be plaited. Some mats are used as bedding, some as table mats and others as wall mats. Mat-making is traditionally a woman's occupation.

*A basket handbag*



*Basket weaving*









*Pot making*

Ordinary fans are produced by mat-makers from rushes, whilst the gorgeous chief's fan with woolen frills and leather embroidery is made by special craftsmen in Warri, Urhobo and Ijaw Divisions.

Pottery is another occupation for women. Beautiful specimens are obtainable from Uhonmora-Ora in Owan Division and Udo in Ishan Division. Clay is obtained from river banks. It is mixed with water and kneaded sufficiently to enable the potter mould whatever object is required. The moulded object is allowed to dry in the sun for three or more days. It is then sprinkled with water and scraped to become smooth. It is dried in the sun again, before being finally baked over an open fire. The potters produce a wide variety of earthen-ware including cooking-pots, bowls, mugs and the traditional *Ukoko* pipes with a six-foot-long bamboo mouth-piece which ancient Edo elders smoke while relaxing or settling domestic quarrels in the evenings.

Owan and Benin Divisions specialise in mud-sculpture. They mould the famous *Olokun* (god of the sea and rivers) as well as statues of other gods and goddesses.

Baskets are made extensively in the riverine areas (Ijaw, Aboh and Warri Divisions) and also in Ishan Division. The basic raw material is obtained from palm fronds and canes. Products include fishing baskets, farmers' wicker baskets, shopping and waste-paper baskets, and cane-chairs.



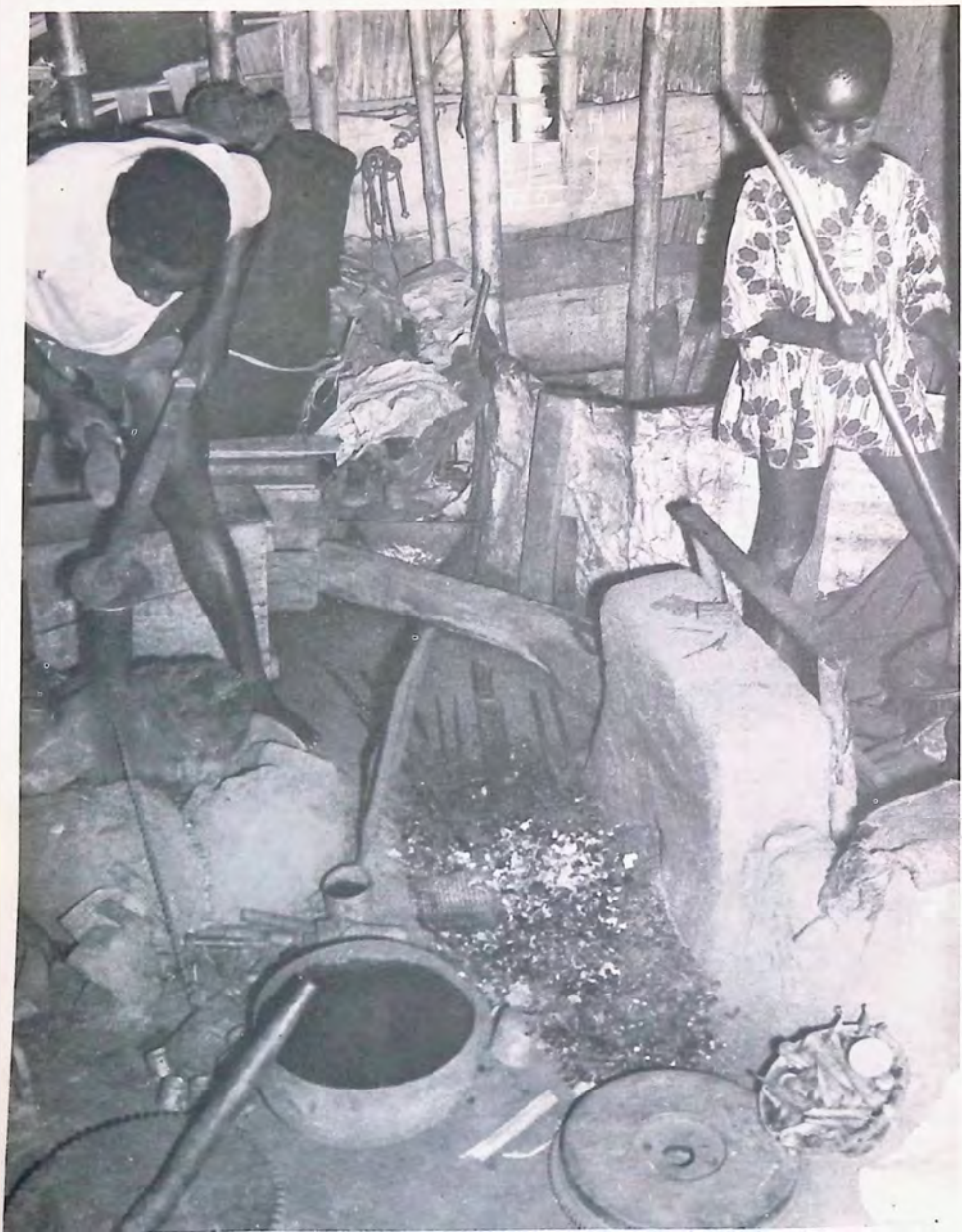
*A stewing pot*

Carving has its seat in Benin City where the finest quality and largest number of carved objects are produced. Among them are wooden ash-trays, stools, chests, walking-sticks, candle-holders, canoe-paddles, ebony rings, ear-rings and carved iroko panelled doors which can be seen in some public buildings in Benin City and elsewhere in Nigeria. Besides carvers who work for the Oba of Benin, there are families of traditional carvers living in Benin City at Owina Street.

Good blacksmiths are found in Benin, Urhobo, Aboh and Akoko-Edo Divisions. A typical blacksmith's workshop consists of a shed in front of or behind his dwelling where his tools are arranged and stored. They include bellows, anvil, hammer, vessels and heaps of charcoal and iron scraps. The blacksmiths provide farmers with cutlasses, housewives with such articles as kitchen knives and hair-pins, and rich customers with wrought iron gates and window grills.

There are goldsmiths and silversmiths in Benin City, and in the principal towns of the State. They make trinkets, rings and exotic silver jewellery incorporating Nigerian amethyst and other stones.

Aware of the worth and immense possibilities of the people's heritage in crafts, the Government takes practical steps to encourage and promote their study. A Midwest Crafts Shop has been opened in the heart of the famous old city, on King's Square and mid-way between the Oba's Palace and the Museum. Specimens of crafts are obtainable from the Shop which offers the tourist, businessman or visitor a wide range of choice.



*Blacksmith's workshop*



*Decorative leather fan*



*Polishing jewellery (gold)*



*Smelting gold*



*Trinkets in Midwest Crafts shop in Benin City*

## TRADITIONAL COSTUMES

Traditional costumes have a general basic pattern quite recognisable from local variations in style or detail. Today, they are still in vogue, and natural rulers in particular being custodians of indigenous culture and custom, don the traditional attire on formal occasions.

The Oba of Benin, for instance, invariably appears in full regalia during certain festivals like the *Igue*. The costume is elaborate. From head to feet and with the exception of the *Iyeruan* and *Akhuankhuan* made of *Ukponmwianido* (local cloth) every other thing he wears is either red coral or ivory beads. The *Iyeruan*, a large item of regalia, is a peculiar type of hand-woven white cloth by the Royal guild, *Owinanido*. The *Akhuankhuan*, a white band around the waist is also made of local cloth. The crown, *Ede* and the shirt *Ikekeze* are made of tiny coral beads woven into a mesh.

*Ikiro*, hand bangles, *Ukugbo-Olila*, a band around the chest and *Eguen*, a ring around the ankle, are all made of coral beads. *Udahae*, which is tied around the forehead is also made of coral beads. It was introduced as part of the royal regalia after the assassination of Oba Ezoti about 1473. There is a set of about a dozen beaded necklaces, *otigba*, dropping some inches below the chest. There are also the side robes, *egbele* and the *ugogoro*, a device to rest the

*Yoruba dress style (male)*



hand. The *Ada* (sceptre) features in Benin armorial bearings. The sandals are made of leather.

In contrast with this ceremonial attire, the Oba on other occasions wears a simple flowing, white gown with a cape and a white, plain cap. Some of his chiefs wear a similar gown, but not the cap. In their case, the gown may be one of coloured material, and long coral necklaces and wristlets may also be worn.

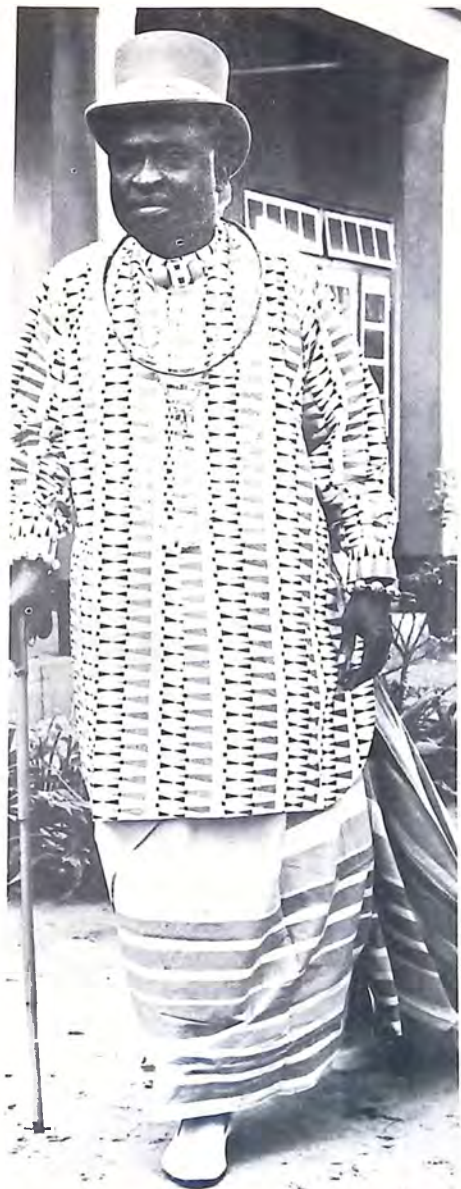
Some natural rulers in the State also have beaded crowns, as well as those made of other materials like cloth or brass. The most common is the cloth type, either plain or adorned, and golden in colour. They wear robes and coral beads in one style or the other.

On important occasions, a well-to-do Urhobo or Itsekiri man wears a long-sleeved shirt over a loin cloth, puts on a straw hat with a plume, wears a gold chain and sandals, and holds a walking stick. A well-dressed man in Aboh, Ika, Ishan and Asaba Divisions wears a two-piece wrapper, the one is for the lower part of the body, and the other is worn like the Roman toga. There is a headgear usually made of cloth. A pair of sandals completes the dress. If he is a titled man he carries a symbol of his authority, a leather fan or a small ivory trumpet; or he wears coral-bead anklets.

Traditionally, the womenfolk tie their wrappers full length, down to the ankles and covering the bust.

*Yoruba attire (female)*





*Itsekiri costume*



*Ijaw costume*



*Asaba damsels*



*Edo traditional costume*



*Ishan man*



*Urhobo chieftaincy regalia*



*Edo Chief in traditional attire*



## HEADGEAR

In Nigeria generally, a headgear may be a symbol of royalty, title, authority or an ordinary head-dress. It may otherwise be a type used at a festival or ceremonial occasion. Natural rulers, traditional chiefs and the common people have different kinds of headgears made in different styles.

In Akoko-Edo Division, a chief either wears a red woollen cap with blue tassel or a calico or coloured cotton cap folded down to the left side of the head, which ordinary men as well put on. Muslims among them wear turbans. Women there use the *head-tie* like women in other parts of Nigeria.

An *Odionrukpa* (traditional chief or village head) of Ora (Owan Division) wears a leather skull-cap to which a bunch of long beautiful feathers are fastened. In the same Division, the *Ovie* (traditional chief) of Otuo wears a plain white cylindrical cap. Non-titled chiefs have the same head-dress as their counterparts in Akoko-Edo Division.

In Etsako Division where the Muslim religion has to a great extent influenced custom and behaviour, the turban headgear is common. The *Otaru* (natural ruler) of Auchi wears it.

The crowns of the *Enigie* (natural rulers) of Ishan Division vary in design and detail. The material is cloth, white or coloured, thick or light. The *Onogie* of Irrua, for instance, wears a golden-cloth crown in the form of a biretta.

The crown which *Oba* of Benin wears on formal occasions is made of tiny coral beads woven into a mesh and is conical in shape. It is topped with a long cylindrical piece, and on the left and right sides are two structures, also in beads, in the form of *eben* (scimitar). On ordinary occasions the Oba uses a white cap with a crescent-shaped frontal panel folded backwards. The consorts of the Oba wear the *Okuku* head-dress which by tradition is meant only for them. This headgear is a dome-shaped wig of natural hair artistically decorated with red coral beads. When put on, it looks a delightful hair-do befitting queens and princesses.

The *Ivie* (natural rulers) of the Urhobo Divisions, the *Olu* (natural ruler) of Warri, the *Obis* (natural rulers) of Agbor and Owa (Ika Division) and the *Obis* of Ogwashi-Uku and of Issele-Uku (Asaba Division) have coral-bead crowns, not shaped like that of the Oba of Benin, but close-fitting, with two pendants hanging down to the shoulders on both sides of the



*His Highness Erejuwa II, Olu of Warri*



*His Highness Ikenchukwu I, Obi of Agbor*

temple. These rulers have other forms of headgears made of cloth.

The Olu of Warri also has a brass crown long and cylindrical in shape. The Obi of Aboh (Aboh Division) like the Obis of several towns in Asaba Division has a red woollen cap with a tassel on top, feathers at the sides, and a straw band which belts it at the middle. *Asagbas* (presidents) in Asaba Division wear it as well. Ijaw natural rulers wear the tasselled woollen cap, but without a belt.

Among the Urhobos and Itsekiris the gentry and elders at a function wear a white straw hat decorated with tall, coloured ostrich plume. Throughout the State, men do not commonly cover their heads, in contrast with women who always do, because their dress is incomplete without a headgear. In their case, the headgear is the head-tie worn in different styles—flat, conical or cylindrical.

*An Odionrukpa of Ora (traditional Chief)*





*His Highness Okpara I, Ovie of Agbon*



*Ogie Aviaun, Chief John Alao*



*His Highness Idogu II, Olokpe of Okpe*



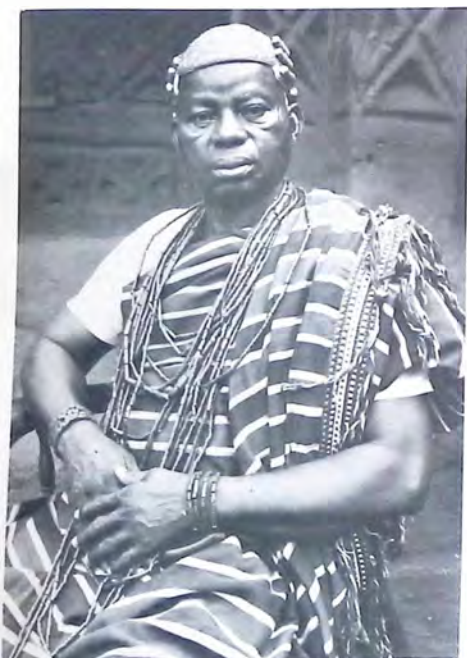
*His Highness Obi Onyetenu, Asagba of Asaba*



*His Highness Oharisi II, Ovie of Ughelli*



*His Highness Sapere Obi, Pere of Kabowei*



*His Highness Okojie II, Onogie of Uromi*



*Chief Omo-Osagie, Iyase of Benin*



*The Oliha of Benin*

## MUSIC AND DANCES

Midwestern Nigerians love music and dances. Their festivals, social and religious ceremonies feature songs and dances, as well as musical instruments which are traditional or contemporary. Among a host of traditional dances are: *Emá* (Urhobo) *Iyoko* (Owan) *Esakpaide* (Benin) *Idegbeani* (Asaba) and *Ulu-Omi* (Itsekiri). They are special dances.

*Emá* is for entertaining an *Ovic* (natural ruler) or some other distinguished persons. Participants are mainly chiefs, dancing with the upper part of the body bare, but wearing a big loin cloth, a straw hat with a plume, and holding a fly-whisk. Dancing majestically, they step forward and back wards, move sideways and raise both arms alternately, to the beat of *igede* drums.

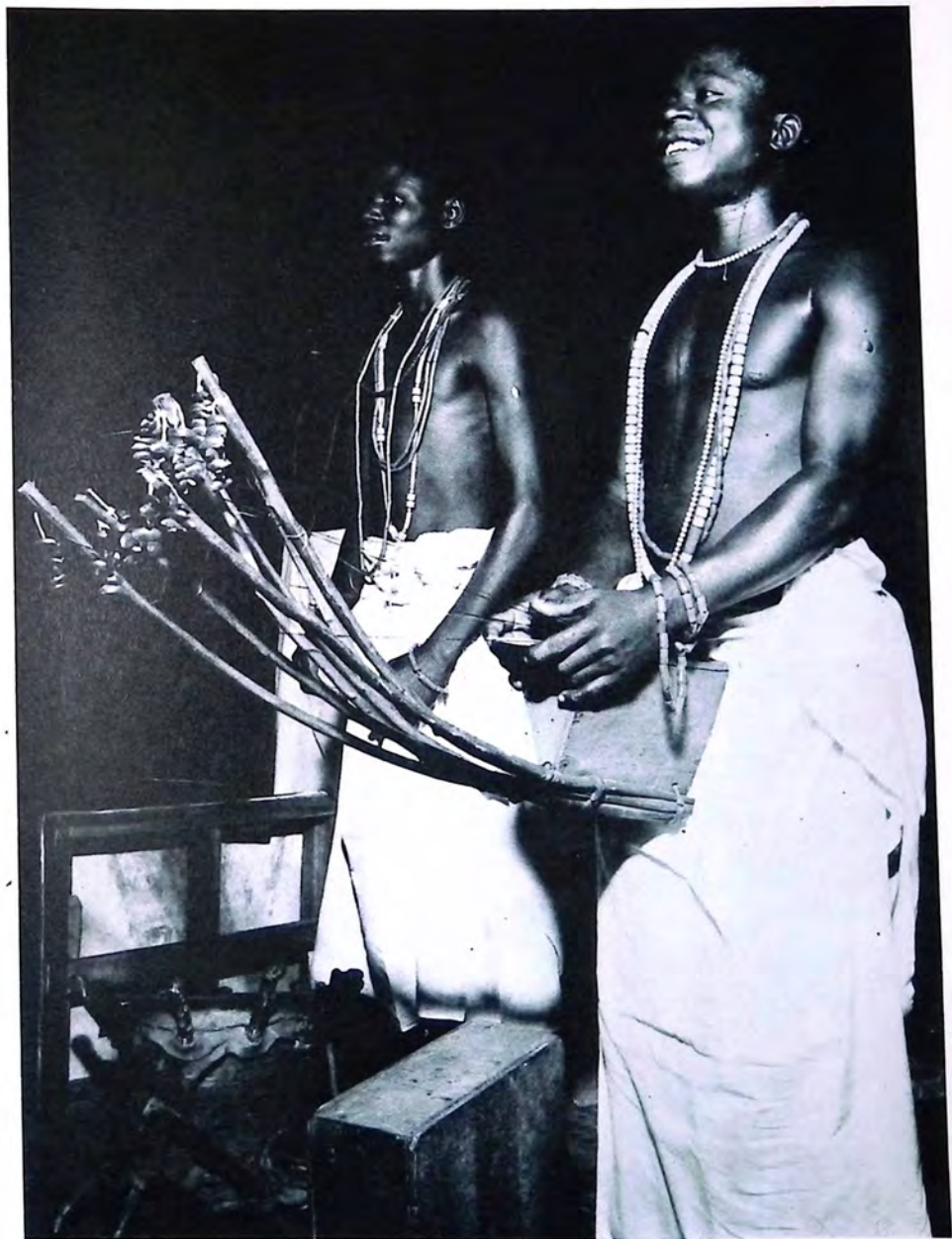
The Owan dance, *Iyoko* is staged by hunters for hunters or prominent persons or for a natural ruler. When, for instance, a hunter dies, or kills a fierce wild animal, such as an elephant, the hunters' society

celebrate the event. They sing soul-stirring songs and dance with home-made guns, displaying their hunting technique. Two musical instruments used on the occasion are *obisa* (a calabash cymbal) and *ibe* (a tabor), beaten with both hands.

*Esakpaide* is danced only by male chiefs during an annual Benin royal festival, like *Ugiewere* or *Igue*. Two small drums each about the size of a two gallon metal container are used. The *egogo*, an iron gong, is also used. One end of it is broad and open, whilst the other end is sealed and tapers to a point. Two to four chiefs dance at a time, while the others accompany with songs and musical instruments. Stepping out gently, each dancer raises his arm gracefully and alternately or passes it across his chest.

About thirty men in white loin cloth dance *Idegbeani*, some holding an *azuzu*, a status-symbol leather fan. A two-faced bass drum (*ozi*) beaten with a leather pad bellows out the beat for the dancers





*Benin strings*

to raise a hand in greeting and to advance slowly to the guest-of-honour.

In the Ika folk dance (*egwu-agbala*) men and women, boys and girls take part. The dancers are dressed in the traditional white loincloth. The boys and girls wear the traditional tartan and jingling anklets (*ikpiri*). About ten women give the beats on calabash cymbals and are accompanied by a trumpeter blowing the *akpele*.

Aboh women have a type of formal dance generally described as graceful and classical. It is a canoe paddle dance (*Egwu-amala-buyo*). The dancers are tall, slim and elegant and their bodies flexible. They have costly and colourful costume. The leading dancer wears a white-laced blouse, gold rings, necklaces and wristlets, coral beads and a two-piece loincloth with silk girdle holding it in position. She holds

a small, artistically carved imitation paddle with which she demonstrates paddling as she dances, barefoot. She has 20 to 30 companions with whom she forms a troupe.

The Itsekiri of Warri Division dance *Ulu-omi* which is similar to the Aboh *Egwu-amala-buyo* in technique and costume. The accompanying musicians are all male in both cases and the instruments are the same, drums and cymbals. But the songs differ. The *Ulu-omi* dancers are gorgeously dressed in their costume and lavishly adorned with gold necklaces, rings and bangles. To the music of an orchestra they weave different patterns as they dance, forming two or more rows, circles, V shape and so on.

At times the leader of the troupe moves nearer to the spectators to give a special performance. Her

*Boy beating a clay made drum*





example is later imitated by some of her companions. Each dancer holds an handkerchief and a V.I.P. fan shaped like a monstrance. The fabric of such fan consists of leather, the embroidery wool, in different colours. At the centre is a mirror and at the edges a woollen frill.

*Opiri* dance by the Isoko and Urhobo people highlights drum and vocal music. It is danced by young men and women, singing the exploits of their heroes, heroines, the deeds of their Ovies, or recounting human experiences in love, war and peace. The master drummer sits astride three drums which he has to beat. About seven other drummers have one drum each of various sizes and shapes. The leader of the troupe, a male, controls the dance with a whistle. The rhythm of the drums is captivating.

*Ikede*, a popular dance in Akoko-Edo is staged during festivals and such important occasions as the ceremony for naming a new-born baby. It is a free-style dance as the *high life*. Men and women, boys and girls dance it and a variety of musical instruments are used. They include drums, cymbals and *agidigbo*, resembling a guitar in its body-work, but with little strips of metal instead of strings.

In Etsako Division *Enuwalele* dance is popular. Girls dance it and youngmen supply music with drums, rattling calabash, gong and whistle. The girls hold a fan each and dance two by two in turns within a wide circle formed by them.

The Ijaw dance *Agene* involves a lot of foot movement, hops and steps. It is danced by both men



*Asaba girls dancing Ulogobi*

and women especially on funeral occasions. A big drum and two smaller ones provide instrumental music.

A typical traditional dance in which several home-made musical instruments are used is the *Ishan Ikpuema*. The dance takes its name from one of the drums said to have its origins from Benin. Long and cylindrical, it is covered up at both ends with antelope leather. Another drum called *ube* is almost the size of an oil barrel, and is mounted on a four-legged stool. The two drums are more or less the main types used all over the Midwest. They have local names and variations in design.

The gong, *egogo*, in Benin *Ishan* and *Ika*, and *agogo* in *Owan* and *Asaba*, is another common instrument. Another is the ivory flute called *ufere* in Benin, *Otueka* in *Ika*.

A trumpet sized flute is known in *Ishan* as *iziken*, in Benin as *eziken*, in *Ika* and *Asaba* as *odu*. In addition, there are home-made guitars and xylophones. *Ikpuema* is usually danced at the *Ewohimi* royal festival of *Ukpèze*. Its characteristic feature is bodily movement corresponding to the drum rhythm.

The following dances *Ikenike* (*Urhobo*), *Egbabonelimin* (*Ishan*) and *Ifiteju* (*Asaba*) seem to command unusual interest and attract large crowds.



*Aghada drum*



The *ikenike* (stilt—dance) performer dances about six feet above the ground, with each leg strapped to two long wooden poles with footrests. The poles are his only props. He trots, jumps, strides, dances and twists his legs, to perform some acrobatics.

*Egbanelimin* (spirit dance) performers appear in masquerade and jump and somersault in all directions to prove to the spectators that they are indeed spirits in conformity with traditional belief. Their display is highly acrobatic.

In *Ifiteju* (wonder dance) a masquerade dancer apparently locked up in a large box with scarcely any ventilation slowly emerges from it when the drums begin to sound and the box is opened. He lies flat on the ground only to get up later in stages, according to the numerous segments of which his round body is composed. He eventually attains a maximum height of about 20 feet. At the end of the show and in reverse movement, he retires into the box measuring about five feet long, three feet wide and four feet high.

Every ethnic group in the State has a war-dance. A common feature among the war dances is that the participants, men only, carry sticks, boughs, guns and

swords. They brandish them in symbolic gestures which strike terror into the hearts of women and children. At burial ceremonies in any part of the State, the gaiety which accompanies festivals, marriage and other happy occasions is remarkably absent. Large, deep-sounding drums beat out mournful rhythm and the wording and melody from male and female voices convey deep emotion.

Apart from festivals, another occasion during which much vocal music can be heard is story time in the evenings after supper. Children gather around their homes, usually under moonlight, for play or folk tales punctuated with choruses.

Today, contemporary music and dance are mixed. The mixed type is one where foreign musical instruments, melody, harmony, wording or rhythm are combined with traditional material. Some examples are *highlife*, *akwete*, *aduko* and *achipi*.



*Aboh acrobatic dancers*

## BEAUTY

Midwestern Nigerian women are among the prettiest in the Federation. In the annual national beauty contests organised since 1957, six girls of Midwestern origin have won first place in twelve contests. Five of them were crowned "Miss Nigeria" and the sixth "Miss Independence" in 1960, the year of Nigerian Independence.

Midwest women are generally of average height, and on the whole, they are neither too plump nor too slender. This may be accounted for by the tradition of feeding well and working hard enough. The complexion varies from very light to ebony black. The teeth are almost as white as white fresh maize.

The women usually wear the wrapper, the most common type of clothing. The *wrapper wear* is a three-piece dress, consisting of a blouse, an upper and a lower wrapper. On important occasions, like festivals, parties and funeral ceremonies, the women are gorgeously dressed. They wear ornaments including

bracelets and necklaces of gold or coral beads.

Variations in style of dress and colour may give rough indications as to which community the beauty belongs. Gay, colourful attire, for instance, suggests Urhobo or Itsekiri, whilst plain white suggests Ika or Midwest Ibo. Styles of hair-do also give similar indications. The *Okuku* dome-shaped wig is recognisable as Bini. Midwest women pay good attention to hair-health and hair-do.

Modern ideas of fashion are affecting the traditional pattern. In spite of the encroachment, the traditional styles exist comfortably with the new. In the rural areas especially, one comes across simple, unsophisticated girls without any make-ups, but none the less attractive. Among them are potential beauty queens, specimens of womanhood with elegance, grace, accentuated feminine features or the universally acceptable vital statistics.



*Itsekiri lady*



*Bini lady with a decorated wig and coral beads*



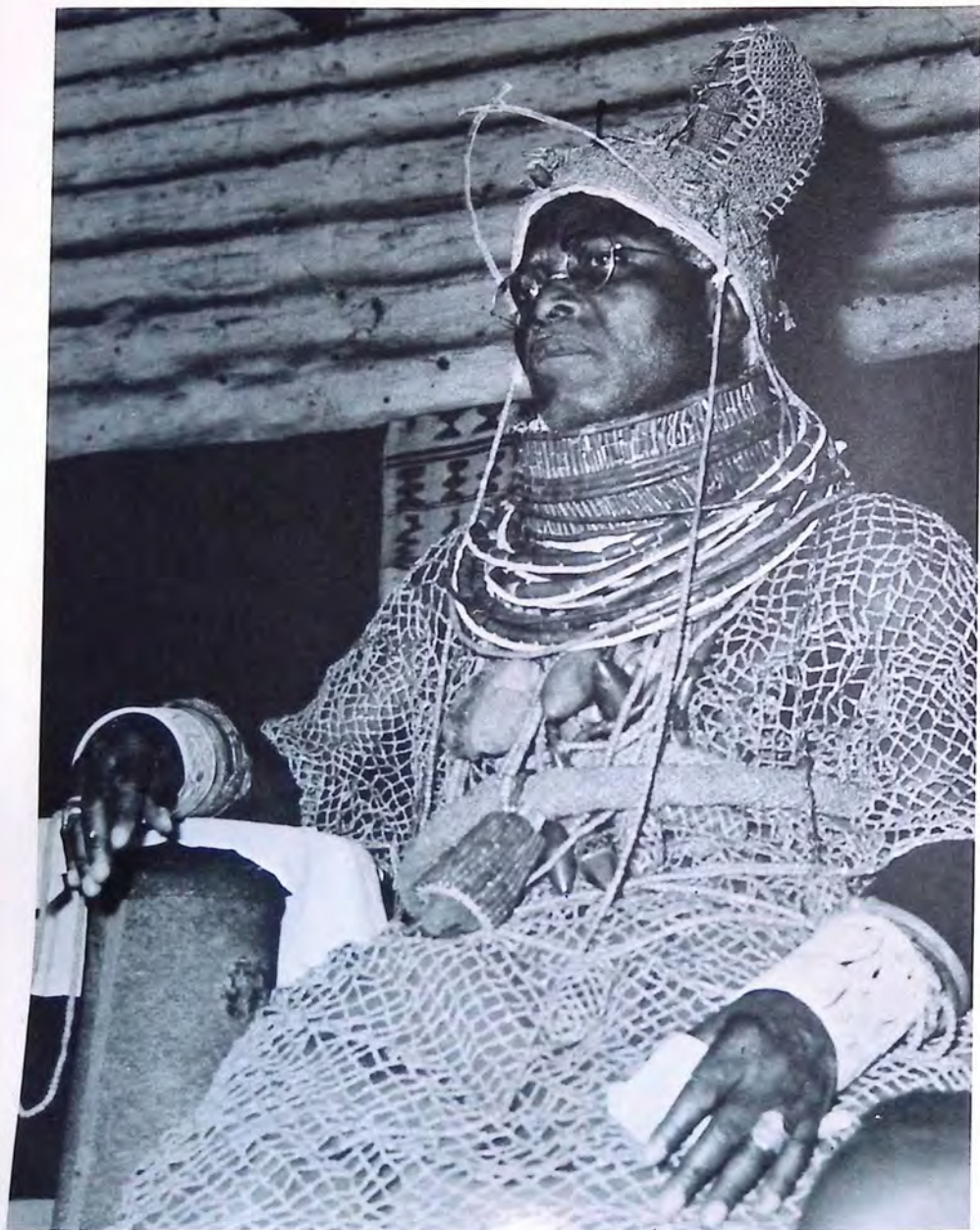
*Urhobo lady with coral pendant and necklaces*



*Etsako school girl with artistically, plaited hair-style*



*A Midwest lady with sophisticated hair-do*



## IGUE FESTIVAL

*Igue* is one of the most important festivals in the State. It takes place during the last two weeks of every year at the Palace in Benin City, famous for its tradition, history and culture.

The festival attracts thousands of people. Those who watch it are taken back some hundreds of years into Benin history. Oral history supports the theory that the festival was first celebrated during the reign of Oba (king) Ewuare (1440).

Benin has a long lineage of Obas and *Igue* is the occasion during which the anniversary of their death is celebrated by the Binis and their Oba. At the celebration which lasts for seven days propitiations are made to the spirits of the dead Obas to invoke their

blessing on the reigning monarch and his family.

On the first day, members of *Ihogbe*, a palace society, together with important Edo chiefs pay homage to the Oba who presents them with a bowl of kolanuts. With the kolanuts, the chiefs bless the Oba and his family. At night, members of the various palace societies and the general public entertain the Oba with dances. The Oba himself takes part in the dances and entertains his guests lavishly.

On the second day, the Oba, in ceremonial attire, together with his wives, also in ceremonial dress, and his young children assemble at the *Ogiukpo* (altar) for the *Igu-oba* sacrifice to the Oba's spiritual self, for his welfare and protection. At this ceremony,

*The Oba at "Iron" ceremony*



Chief Ehondor slaughters the animals—cows, goats, rams and fowls—while chiefs Esekhurhe and Ihama perform the sacrifice in the presence of the other chiefs and members of the various palace societies. After the sacrifice, the chiefs entertain the Oba and his family with songs and dances.

The third day's ceremony which is performed inside the Oba's harem, is open only to some important chiefs and members of the palace societies.

The fourth day's ceremony which is usually marked by traditional music is held in the festival courtyard in front of the palace. Chiefs Ihaza and Esogban declare the ceremony open by dancing round. Then, the Oba, carrying an ivory bell, and Chief Esekhurhe, carrying *Ukhurhe*, a shrine-stick, both dance round the courtyard before walking in for the ritual. At the end of the ceremony, the Oba and Chief Esekhurhe dance right from the courtyard into the palace. In the night of the same day, the Oba's grown-up children offer the *Igu-ivbioba* sacrifice for their protection.

On the fifth day, the Edo citizens make the *Igu-edohia* sacrifice with cows, goats and fowls. This is usually followed by singing and dancing in individual homes and in the streets.

On the sixth day, the citizens "drive" away evil spirits from the city with fire-brands. They sing and dance to the nearest shrubland to collect *ebe ewerewere* (holy leaves) for later presentation to the Oba.

The festival ends on the seventh day. On this day Chief Osuma collects the holy leaves from members of *Emehe*, another palace society, and sends them to Chief Esekhurhe, patron of *Ihogbe*. Chief Esekhurhe, with some other chiefs, sends the holy leaves to the Oba. On reaching the palace, the chiefs, dressed in gorgeous robes, dance one after the other for the Oba's pleasure and the enjoyment of the general public.

*The Oba being anointed at the festival*







*The Oba dancing with scimitar*



*The Oba playing a sistrum*



*The Iyase of Benin dancing during the festival  
Bini chiefs in conventional costumes*





*The Ifietos (palace stalwarts)*

*The Oba surrounded by his consorts and children*



## OTHER FESTIVALS

Festivals reflect the rich traditions and culture of the Midwest people, and they also portray their beliefs and customs. Festivals are celebrated periodically to mark certain historical events or seasons. The New Yam festival, for instance, which is celebrated annually in many parts of the State heralds harvesting and eating of the new yam. It is also an occasion for appeasing the god of the land and praying for a better harvest in the coming year. The celebration lasts about a week. It is a period of merry-making featuring eating of specially prepared yam.

Like the other ethnic groups in the State, the Urhobos have many festivals, some of which are celebrated annually while others are celebrated once in ten or more years. One of such annual festival is *Iyeri* celebrated by the people of Ughelli. It is usually marked by dances and sacrifices to the ancestors for protecting the people during the past year. For the same reason *Ore Ughievben* is celebrated annually in some parts of Eastern Urhobo division. Effurun people in Western Urhobo division celebrate the *Ohworu* festival every year to appease their ancestral gods who are believed to protect the people from evil.

The people of Okpara in Agbon clan, Western Urhobo division, celebrate *Edjenu* every 30 years in honour of the god of protection and also to usher in peace and prosperity. *Edjenu* means sky masquerade. The occasion is therefore marked with masquerade dances and the chief masquerader usually attains a colossal height of 70 feet.



*Urhobo stilt dancers*



*Urhobo masquerades*

*Awerewere* is a festival celebrated every January by the Itsekiris to mark the beginning of a new year and to "drive" away evil spirits. A night to the festival, women carry fire-brands and chant purification songs around the town. The fire-brands are later thrown into the river, signifying that evil spirits have been driven away from the land. Similarly, the Kabowei clan in Ijaw division celebrate *Seigbein* every year to purge the area of evil spirits and to pay homage to the gods of the land. The people also slaughter cows, goats and fowls in memory of their departed ancestors who are believed to protect the living.

The people of Ishan celebrate *Ighele* about June or July to appease their ancestors in order to bring peace and prosperity to the area.

*Ivbiame* is celebrated at Ozalla in Owan division every year in March or May to initiate young men into manhood. The people worship the goddess of Orhuen

River. The river is believed to be the water that flowed from the corpse of an Ozalla princess, who died in privation in a neighbouring village and decided to return home in the form of a river. The celebrants fetch water from the river for drinking. This is usually followed by wrestling.

The people of Ogwashi-Uku and Ibusa in Asaba division celebrate *Iwu* every July to honour the goddess of their streams for protecting the citizens from evil during the year.

*Nduku* is celebrated every November at Ogume in Aboh Division to pay homage to parents-in-law who are presented with gifts of yams and fish.

In Akoko-Edo division *Osarhe* is celebrated at Somorika in June every year. It is an occasion when young men choose their wives, after they have been subjected to torture to test their manhood and maturity.

A festival, *Agiele* believed to make the barren fruitful is celebrated annually in January at Uzairue in Etsako division.

#### *Otuo (Owan) masquerades*





*Ishe masquerades*



*A traditional ruler at Ukpoze festival*





*Asaba masquerades*



*Obi of Agbor dancing at Osiezi festival*

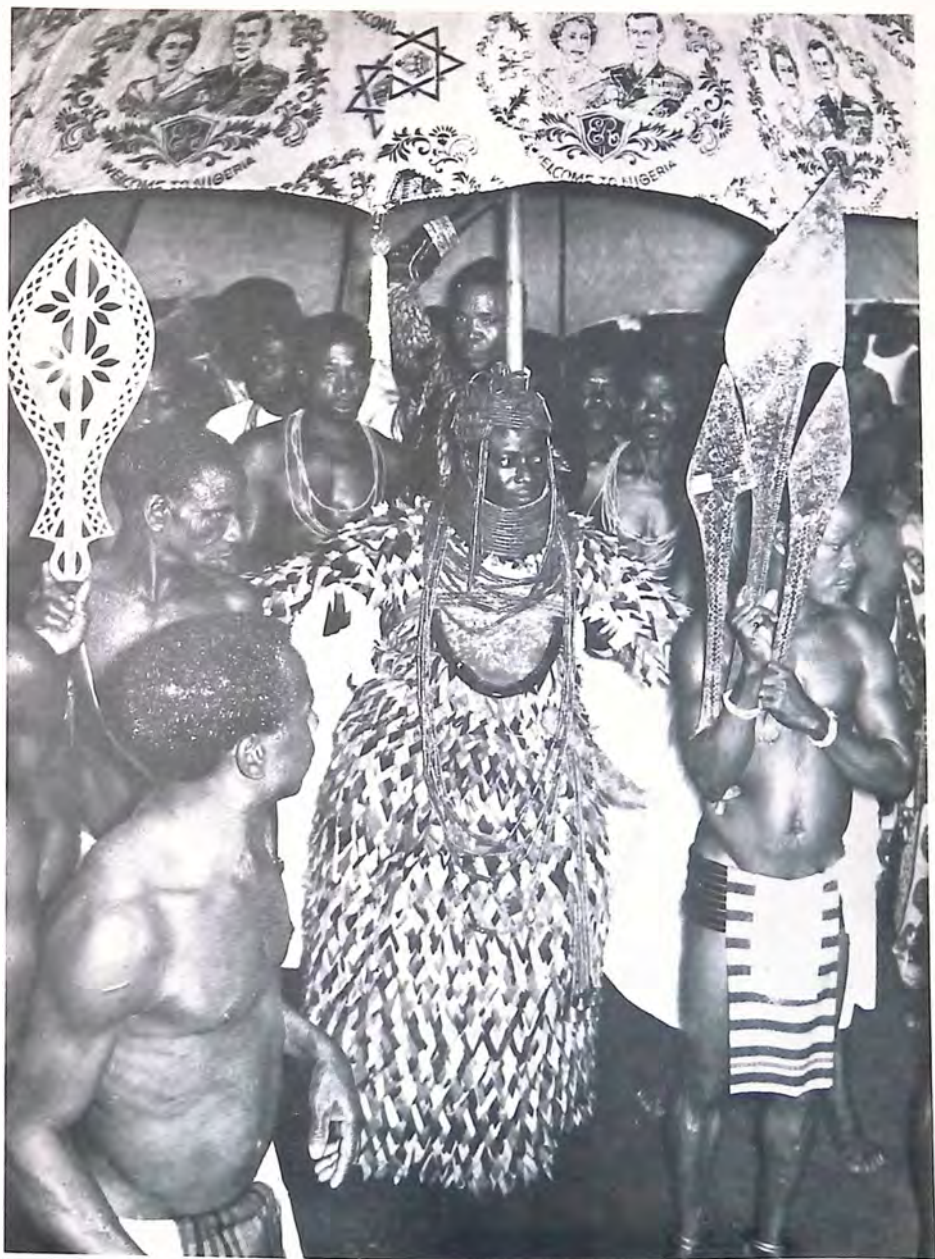


*A woman drumming during the festival*

*Newly installed chiefs doing the owowo dance steps*







*Obi of Agbor in full traditional regalia*

## REGATTA

A most picturesque and colourful entertainment with which the people inhabiting the delta and riverine areas of Nigeria receive an august visitor or mark an annual festival is the regatta show. It is popular in parts of the Rivers, South Eastern and Midwestern States.

Among the people of the Midwest, the regatta is an exclusive traditional show of the Ijaws, Itsekiris, Isokos, Abohs and Urhobos. Originally, it was employed for offensive or defence purposes against invaders in the days of inter-tribal wars, or meant for fishing expeditions. But today, it has developed into a show, a sporting competition, or generally, as an annual event or a piece of entertainment for distinguished visitors.

In a typical regatta, a large fleet of canoes colourfully painted and decorated with flags and bunting span the river rather like swans on a fishing spree, the difference being that there is orderliness or artistic formation. The canoes are ingeniously roofed and adorned with symbolic emblems and inscriptions. They are segmented and the apartments are occupied by different groups of participants. Right in the middle of each canoe, the leader or a chief and his entourage are seated. Drummers, singers and dancers occupy the bow and the stern. Flanking the canoe on both sides are the paddlers armed with tastefully designed and painted paddles. The cockswain sits or stands at the stem to give orders.

A canoe-load of the regatta group may comprise either men or women exclusively, or both men and women. They are dressed in traditional costume like

ancestral warriors, according to the type of display, or as gay merry-makers. The men wear loin cloth of variegated colours with golden, scarlet or yellow tassels. The upper part of the body is left bare, exhibiting a tattoo, if any. Some wear vests made of a mesh of beads, tiny shells, twine or leather and others wear shirts, beautiful wrappers and white straw hats. The leader of the group is no less gorgeously dressed. The women also are daintily attired. They don a two-piece, brightly-coloured wrapper, and wear fetish bracelets, ear-rings and necklaces of cowries and coral beads.

A regatta affords a thrilling spectacle. There are competitive races. The paddlers row vigorously, dexterously and rhythmically to the beat of drums. The pattern of the performance varies according to the music from the accompanying orchestra. Sometimes the canoes line up in a number of rows, or form a circle or a V shape. All the time, the men and women dance gleefully brandishing paddles, fans or waving handkerchiefs.

Some of the songs recall the exploits for ancestral heroes and heroines or praise the distinguished visitor. A natural ruler who takes part in the regatta comes with his own canoe or boat, a special type with two or more decks. His courtiers, chiefs and folk-singers accompany him.

Before embarking on a regatta display, a traditional consultation of an oracle is carried out to ascertain the mood of the river goddess and placate her, if need be.





*Regatta formation*

## SPORTS

Most Nigerians have a natural aptitude for sports and enjoy them as a form of recreation and entertainment or for promoting physical fitness and the spirit of competition. For generations, wrestling and swimming have been the two principal traditional sporting activities.

Track events, for instance, seem to have been considered naive. There is a Bini proverb: *Ogie rule*, meaning a king never runs. He walks majestically, like a horse (*Esin gologolo*). The Ibo equivalent is *Okei a di awu nwuwu* (a man does not jump). Nigerian children a century ago, romped, jumped and ran in competition with one another; but it was all play. The art of running or jumping was never formally taught or developed.

Wrestling as a sport has been with the people of the Midwest all the time. It is organised during special occasions, notably the New Yam Festival, anniversaries of ancient wars or commemoration of local heroes. Towns and villages or sections of the same town compete with one another in wrestling

contests. No trophies or prizes are given to winners. The honour of being a champion is the reward. Good wrestlers are held in high esteem in their communities.

There are good wrestlers especially in Ijawland where wrestling is a festival in its own right organised during the harvest season which coincides with the flood season. Since there is not much work to do on the land then, the menfolk take to recreational activities, notably wrestling and swimming. A typical Ijaw wrestler or swimmer is sturdily built and broad-shouldered, as a result of the two sporting activities.

Swimming is another sport for which other communities like the Itsekiris, Abohs and Urhobos who live in the riverine areas are noted. In some parts where there is neither river nor stream, children swim in ponds.

Apart from wrestling and swimming, foreign sporting activities in the State include soccer, net-ball, basket-ball, lawn tennis, table tennis, boxing, hockey and cricket. Organised games or athletics are also

*Ogbe Stadium, Benin City*



foreign. They are all contemporary. Football is the most popular. It is played by clubs and local teams and by boys in schools, colleges and at home.

The State Government has launched a programme for the promotion of sports. It has built a £111,000 modern sports arena, Ogebe Stadium, in Benin City capable of accommodating 10,000 spectators at a time. The stadium has a £50,000 Olympic-standard swimming pool.

A quasi-government body, the Midwest Sports Council, is charged with the responsibility for organising all forms of amateur sports. The Council, which enjoys annual subvention from the Government for the purchase of equipment, training and camping of athletes, has divided up the State into 14 sports zones. Each zone has an organising coach. The aim of the council is to create more interest in sports, develop training facilities and improve standards.

The State has produced a good number of Nigerian athletes. The first Nigerian to clear a height of over 6ft. in high jump is George Garrick who in 1938 jumped 6ft. 3½in. Other Midwesterners later improved

on Garrick's record in the same event. They are Boniface Guobadia and Nafiu Osagie, both of whom jumped 6 ft. 6in. in 1952. Later in 1956, Julius Chigbolu set another record with 6ft. 8½in. It was broken by Sam Igun with a jump of 6ft. 10in. Igun who has several times captained Nigeria's teams in international sports meetings also holds the national record (53ft. 2½in.) in the triple jump.

In 1944, Joseph Adeola became the first Nigerian to run the 440 yards race in 51.1 seconds. Abdul Karimu Amu did that distance in 47.5 seconds in 1960. Adeola also set the pace in the 100 yards and the 220 yards races. But Jimmy Omagbemi later clocked 9.6 seconds consistently in the 100 yards, followed by David Ejoke in 1967 with a record of 9.5 seconds. Record holder Ejoke has clocked 21.5 seconds several times in the 220 yards.

Violet Odogwu set a record of 20ft. 4½in. in the women's long jump in 1968. Victoria Emenahor has done the women's hurdles in 15.9 seconds. Kingsley Agbabokhai has held since 1966 the national record in 440 yards hurdles with a time of 51.5 seconds.

*Netball game at school*



*High jumping*

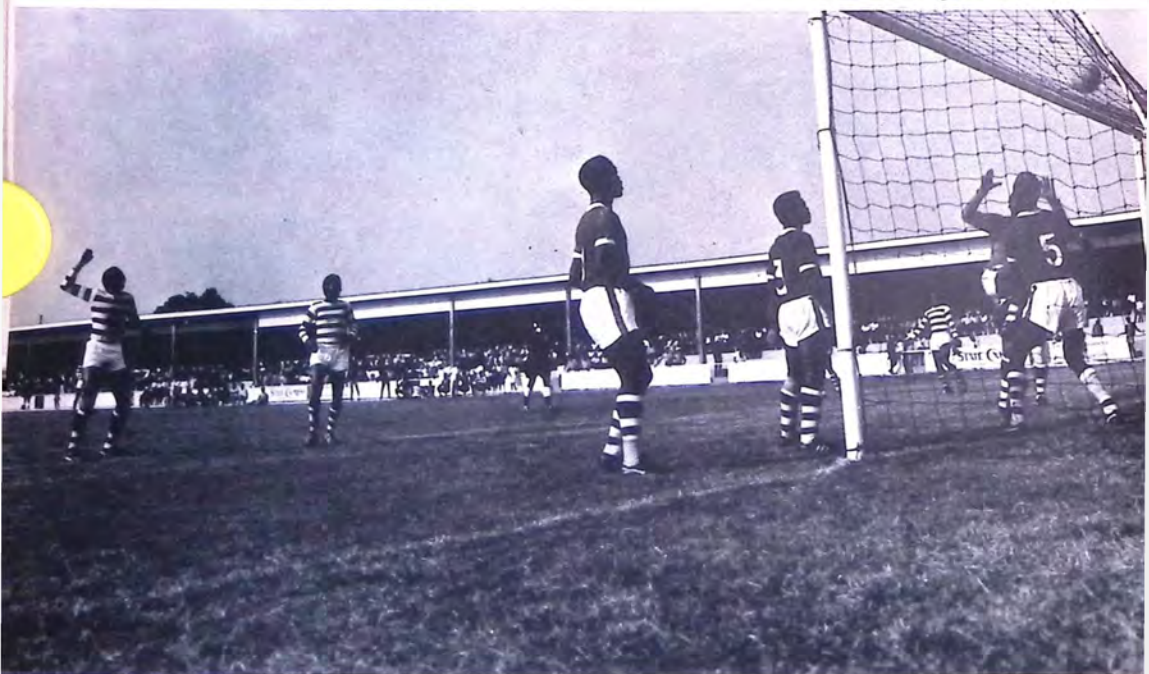




*Table tennis match*  
*A football match*



*A cricket champion in action*





100 yards race at finishing point

Swimming practice





*Wrestling contest*





*A prize winning day  
Boxing promotion*



*Trophies donated to Midwest Sports Council*



