

Review of Project Pacific

A qualitative interpretation by Dr. Axel Klein

Is Nigeria a Country ?

- Geographically determined culture zones: forest, savannah, desert
- 250 + distinct ethnic groups with separate language
- External influences – Christianity and Atlantic world from the south – Islam and Arab civilisation from the north

History

- 1861 - First British colony established in Lagos
- 1914 – amalgamation of different possessions into Crown Colony of Nigeria
- 1960 - Independence

Up to Today

- Domination of civil service by southern Christians, esp. Ibo
- Secession of Biafra and Civil war
- Oil boom of 70s and Structural Adjustment of 80s
- Military rule until 1999

State as Lame Leviathan

- State dominates but is ineffective, inefficient and fails to deliver
- Personal connections essential to obtain goods and services
- Networks on basis of ethnicity, religion, school
- Continuous investment in social ties and contacts

Examining Ethnicity

- Yoruba in the west – kingdoms in forest zones – bitter wars in mid 19th century
- Hausa-Fulani in north – empire founded by Islamic jihad early 19th century
- Ibo in east – no high political office, no urbanisation
- Cluster of tribes in Delta and Middle Belt

Elite and People

- Patrimonial systems – patron / client relationships
- Enormous discrepancy between rich and poor – weak middle class
- No politicisation of poor, no class consciousness – protest is formulated in terms of ethnicity and social difference

Food

- No history of an elite cuisine separate from that for the poor
- Distinction between amounts and ingredients – not different recipes or cooking techniques

The Nigerian Meal

1. A bowl of starch – yam, cassava, rice
2. A stew with spices, vegetables, fish and meat
3. Choice cuts will be reserved for seniors – in restaurants paid for separately
4. Meat usually left until end

Stockfish in Nigerian Cuisine

- Indiginized (like rice)
- Ingredient in complex sauces
- Not cooked on its own or as main ingredient
- Valued for flavour, texture, and protein

Residential Arrangements

- Rural compound – living quarters of extended family – cooking shared and individual wives/mothers
- Urban compound – living quarters of ‘big man/woman’ – cooking in units
- Urban flat – shared accommodation, cooking on individual basis

Challenges to Cooking with Stockfish

- High fuel prices - price of gas, fire wood and charcoal
- working women spend less time at home
- in urban areas fire needs to be supervised – no outdoor fireplaces

Diaspora

- Large Nigerian population in UK and US, London is the first stop
- Two way traffick between diaspora and the old country
- Loyalty to Nigerian cooking among Nigerians abroad
- Link between food and identity

Shopping in Nigeria

- Retail sector dominated by street markets
- Time consuming and irregular
- Different perceptions of stockfish quality
- Lack of standardization

My Part

- In-depth interviews with key informants on cooking, eating, shopping behaviour
- Observation in Nigerian kitchens
- Interviews in stockfish retail outlets
- Report by mid June