



Nigeria

COUNTRY

Formal Name: Federal Republic of Nigeria

Short Form: Nigeria

Term for Citizens: Nigerian

Capital: Abuja (formerly Lagos)

Independence: October 1, 1960 (from United Kingdom)

GEOGRAPHY

Size: 356,669 square miles (923,770 km²)

Boundaries: Bordered to the north by Niger, northeast by Chad, east by Cameroon, south by the Gulf of Guinea, Bight of Benin, and the Atlantic Ocean, and west by Benin

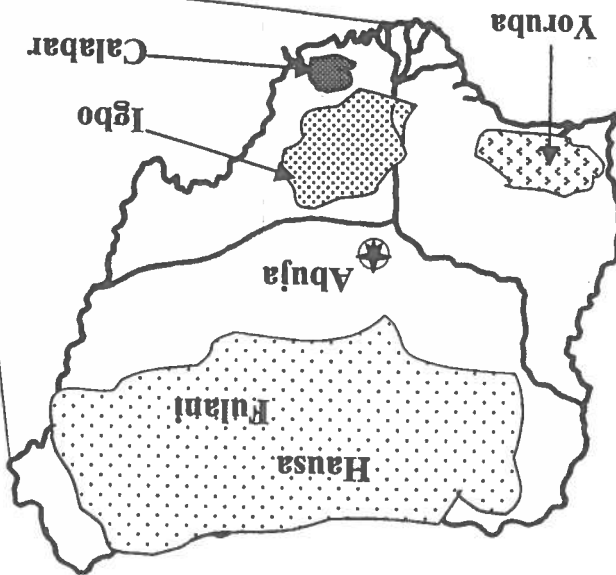
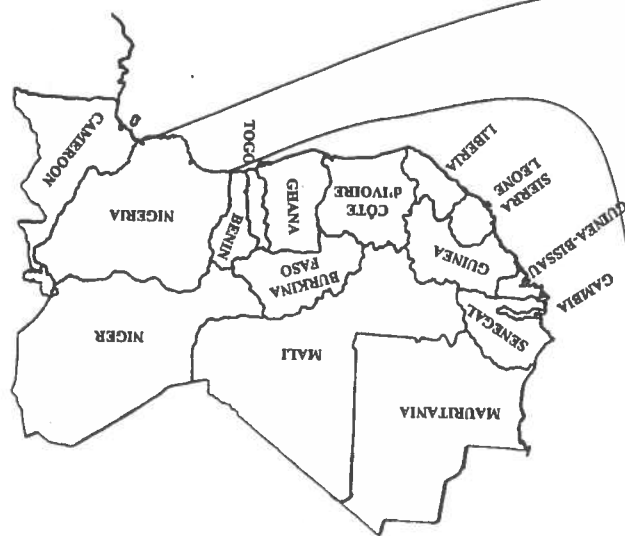
SOCIETY

Population: 113.8 million

Ethnic Groups: There are several recognized ethnic groups, but the most populous are the Hausa and Fulani in the north, Yoruba in the southwest, and Igbo in the southeast. Others include Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, and Ijaw.

Languages: There are as many languages as there are ethnic groups. The most widely spoken are Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Fulani. English is the official language and language of instruction in educational institutions.

Religion: 50% Islam; 40% Christianity; 10% local religions



THE ORPHAN GIRL

Chika was an orphan girl left to the care of a cruel stepmother. Her stepmother made her do all the work while her own daughter, Enuma, did little or nothing. In their Igbo village, the villagers drew their water from the river on only three of four market days. The fourth market day, Eke, was reserved for the ghosts, who lived on the other side of the river. A disagreement between Chika and Enuma on the eve of Eke market day resulted in their spilling the last water in the house. First thing in the morning, Chika was made to go and fetch water from the river, amid all the dangers of the ghosts and their antics.

There once lived a man and his two wives and two daughters. In time one of his wives died, leaving her daughter, named Chika, to be raised by her co-wife. This co-wife was very wicked to Chika. She never loved her. She treated her worse than she would a servant. She was partial toward her own daughter, Enuma, whom she seldom allowed to do anything. And so, Enuma was spoiled rotten, a braggart with no respect for anyone.

Chika was made to do most of the work in the house, though the work should have been divided equally between the two girls. She did all the work with grace, however, never complaining. When they ate, she was given mostly the leftovers.

"If I ever hear this from anyone," her stepmother warned, "I will kill you." So Chika never complained. She was just content that she even had something to eat.

Now, it was the custom in this village that no one could go to the river for water on Eke market days. The river was just at the border between the lands of the humans and of the ghosts. Through the diviners, the people knew that the ghosts went to the river for water on Eke market days only. The other three market days belonged to the humans.

On one Nkwo market day when the family came back late from the farms, Chika discovered that they were low on water. Since the next day was Eke, she decanted a sizable portion of water and saved it for the Eke day. After dinner, Enuma wanted to take the water for

a bath. But Chika refused and told her that it was the last water in the house.

"What is left is barely enough for tomorrow," she warned, "and you want to take it for a bath?"

"I need to take a bath," said Enuma.

"But you and I took a bath at the farm this afternoon," reasoned Chika.

The two girls tugged on the gourd of water back and forth with all their might. As if her life depended on it, Chika wrapped both her arms around the gourd as Enuma tried to wrestle it from her. As they argued and tugged on the gourd back and forth and spilled much of its contents, Enuma's mother came to intervene. When the girls heard the door, Chika reluctantly released her grip on the gourd. This sent Enuma flying backward until she landed on her bottom, breaking the gourd and spilling what was left of the water. "Tahel! Tahel! Tahel!" Chika chuckled nervously like any average child.

"You found that funny?" screamed her stepmother.

"No ma," pleaded Chika, trying very hard to hold back her laughter.

"What is going on here?" her stepmother inquired.

Then the two girls explained their sides of the matter, which to an observer were surprisingly corroborative testimonies. But Chika was not surprised that Enuma did not lie about the incident. Enuma always told the truth about matters concerning the two of them. She had no reason to lie, especially if her mother was the judge. Enuma knew that no matter what, her mother would rule in her favor.

"I knew it must be you," Chika's stepmother said, pointing at her. "So you mean you did not make sure there was enough water in the house? And you want to deprive her of taking her bath? Make sure that your father does not wake up to look for his bath water, nor me wake up to look for water to cook his meal."

"But tomorrow is Eke market day," pleaded Chika.

"That's news to me," said her stepmother. "It's your problem, isn't it? Just mark what I told you. Otherwise I will spread your meat to the vultures." Then, she turned around and went back into the house.

Meanwhile, Enuma tried to squeeze and wring the water off her clothes. She slapped the sand off her bottom and followed her mother to the house. Just as she was about to enter the house, she stuck her tongue out at Chika, saying, "Now whose turn is it to laugh and whose is it to cry?"

The next morning Chika was up before the second cock crowed. She picked up the largest water gourd she could carry and started to the river. As she went she trembled and prayed to her *chi* for protection. "If this is what a mother would wish for her child, then I deserve whatever bad that comes my way. But if this is not what a mother would wish for her child, my *chi* will protect me from all evils."

As she walked, she cringed at every step she took. All the grasses seemed to have eyes staring at her. The cries of the cricket sounded more like the roar of a lion. Soon she came upon what looked like a host of scorpions covering the road. She held on to the gourd as tightly as she could with her left hand. Then, she ran the back of her right hand over her eyes to be sure she was not dreaming.

When she realized that what she saw was real she begged the scorpions to let her by. She told them her life story and sung:

Mr. Scorpion, gentle scorpion,
Have mercy on a poor little orphan
It wasn't by my own will that I am here
It was my stepmother who sent me here
Although diviners said no one should,
But disobey my mother the gods also forbid

On hearing her story, the scorpions disappeared from the path and she continued on her way. Not much farther, she came upon a cluster of snakes. They were entangled with each other in a massive heap. Chika was petrified. She screamed and jumped as the leaf of an elephant grass touched her bare legs. When she regained her composure, she pleaded with the snakes. She told her story and sang to them. On hearing her story, the snakes also disappeared and she continued on her journey.

Relieved that the snakes were out of her way, she went on with renewed determination. Just as she was counting the different types of snakes she had seen in that heap, her concentration was broken by the roars of a pride of overgrown lions. As a lioness trudged

toward her, the stories about how the lioness is the real killer in the pride flashed through Chika's mind. Just then, her song came to her. Soon after she sang, the pride disappeared.

Chika continued on her way, meeting all sorts of weird looking things. She met an old woman who walked on her head, two coconuts that tried to crack each other open, and several pieces of clothes that washed themselves at the riverbank. When she stepped into the river to fetch her water a nasally voice asked, "What are you doing here child?"

Chika looked up. But she couldn't see anyone about. Before she could respond, the voice continued. "No need to look," it said. "You will not like what you see."

But Chika was more determined to see the owner of the voice than she was afraid. All this while she had encountered only dangerous animals and weird things. Finally, a human being who spoke—or so she thought.

"*Iputago ulà?*" Chika greeted the voice, asking whether it slept well.

"*Eh, Nwam! Iputago,*" the voice replied in the affirmative. "This is not a place for a sweet girl like you to be on a day like this. Doesn't your mother know better than to send you here to die?"

Then Chika turned to the direction she was sure the voice came from. To her amazement, she was facing a very scraggy old woman with one eye, one hand, and one leg. Much of her nose had been eaten up by leprosy, which made her sound nasal. She had a gourd that was about four times smaller than Chika's. Chika took pity on the old woman and helped her fill her gourd. Then Chika offered to carry the water for her. As she hopped and Chika followed her to her home, Chika became more comfortable with her and told her all about herself. She told her how her mother died, and her stepmother was raising her. How she did all the work and about the incident with the broken gourd of water, which brought her to the river on an Eke market day.

When they got to the old woman's home, she gave Chika a stone for yam and tree barks for fish and asked her to cook them for food. Chika took these items and put them in a gourd the old woman gave her and lit a fire under it. Moments later, she went to examine the pot and found it filled with delicious fish and the tastiest yams.

She served it and she and the old woman ate. After they had eaten, Chika realized that she had lost quite some time and begged her leave of the old woman.

"I am sorry," she said. "But I have to go now, lest my mother think that I am lagging in my chores. I hope you will be fine. I will come again to see you."

"Before you go," said the old woman, "take one of these gourds for yourself. It is a token of my gratitude for all your help." Then she presented Chika with two gourds. One was bigger with beautiful natural designs on it. The other was smaller and seemed to have been harvested out of season from an untended farm. Chika reached out and took the smaller gourd and thanked the old woman.

"Then go well my child, and peace be with you. When you get home, call your parents together. Tell them to clear a spot for you. When they have done so, break the gourd. But first—on your way home, you will hear 'Doom! Doom! Doom!' and 'Cham! Cham! Cham!' At the first sound, run into the bush and let the evil spirit pass. At the second, run back out and continue on your way."

Just as predicted, on her way Chika heard "Doom! Doom! Doom!" and "Cham! Cham! Cham!" She did exactly as she was instructed. Finally she got home and told her parents to clear a spot for her. Just as her stepmother was about to scold her for being tardy, she broke the gourd. Immediately the house was filled with all sorts of beautiful things like gold, silver, foods, herds of cattle, and so on. Her father was overjoyed. First, that his daughter came back home safely, and second, that she came with all sorts of riches. His love for Chika was now stronger than ever.

But Chika's stepmother was not happy. She wished that her own daughter had brought home the riches. So to remedy the situation, she waited until the next Nkwo market day. When everyone went to bed, she went to the back of the house and turned over all the pots of water.

Before the first cock crowed on the next day, which was Eke market day, Chika's stepmother woke up her own daughter, Enuma, and sent her to the river.

"You good for nothing," she abused her. "You want to stay here and sleep yourself to death while this other girl gets all of your

father's affection. Go and get your own gourd right now and make your father proud. Make sure that you come home with a much bigger one."

On her way, Enuma met all the dangers and weird things just like Chika. Unlike Chika, Enuma was very rude and nasty to them.

"Get out of my way," she told the scorpions, snakes, and lions. She found the incidents of the coconuts and the clothes rather amusing. She laughed at them and the old woman who walked on her head. When the old woman at the river accosted her, she covered her nose in disgust. She never offered to help her with her water. When the old woman invited her to her house, she went only because she expected to get the magic gourds. She never offered to carry the old woman's gourd for her. When the old woman gave her the stone and tree barks, she fretted:

"How can someone live like this? Don't you know that gourds burn and should not be used as cooking pots? Who ever heard of eating stones and tree barks anyway? I don't do my own cooking, why should I cook for you?"

Enuma complained about everything. She did only things that were easy and beneficial to her. Finally, when she was about to leave, the old woman presented two gourds to her.

"Take one of these gourds. When you hear 'Doom! Doom! Doom!' on your way run into the bushes. But when you hear 'Cham! Cham! Cham!' come back out and continue on your way. When you get home ask your mother..."

"I know what to do," interrupted Enuma. She looked at the gourds, sized them up, and snatched the bigger and better-looking one. "I will take it from here."

"Go in peace my child," said the old woman, her voice trembling. "But I am afraid for you."

Enuma went home. On her way she heard "Doom! Doom! Doom!" and continued on. Then she heard "Cham! Cham! Cham!" and ran into the bush. When she got home, she asked her mother to clear her house and lock her doors and windows so that they could keep all the riches to themselves.

"Clear it mother," she said, "for I have got the big one."

Her mother quickly cleared her house. Then she locked the doors

and windows and asked Enuma to break the gourd. But, instead of the riches they expected, they were overcome with smallpox, leprosy, and other diseases in epidemic proportions. When the woman's husband could not find her and Enuma, he went to her room. When he opened her door, all the diseases escaped into the world. That was how diseases, which are still with us today, came to be spread all over the world.

Meanwhile, Chika remained an industrious and well-mannered young girl and when she became of age, she was married to a very handsome and wealthy prince and they lived happily ever after.

THE POWER OF ONE

According to a popular proverb, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. In this tale by the Calabar people, the Tortoise took advantage of this idea to become rich. While every other creature, when given the choice of how much gold and silver coin he wanted from the King, chose hundreds or thousands of coins, the Tortoise simply chose the number "one."

Many, many years ago in Africa there lived a King named Erukudo. He had everything that a King could have: yams, cattle, goats, sheep, silver coins, and gold coins. He also had thousands of acres of farmland and hundreds of farmhands that helped him tend his farms.

King Erukudo was also very generous and known to often reward his workers for more than their daily wages. One year after a bountiful harvest and triumph over his foes, he wanted to reward everyone for their hard work.

"Akpan," he called his head servant.

"Yes Sir, my King," answered his head servant.

"Go to the vault and bring those things you counted up last night. I hope that nobody tampered with them."

"No one, my King. I made sure of that," the servant said and disappeared into the back room.

Several moments later, the servant returned with an entourage of about twelve other servants, each carrying a basketful of coins.

"Here are the coins, my King," said the head servant.

"Go to the village square and distribute them to all the inhabitants of my village, for they have worked very hard this year. They deserve to share in the fruits of their labor. As our people say, 'When good fortune befalls a medicine man, it trickles down to his medicine bag.'"

"My King is a wise and generous king," echoed the head servant.

The head servant, with the help of other servants, loaded up the baskets of money on their donkeys. Then, they set out to the village square. By the time they arrived at the village square, everyone,

including the animals, was already assembled and waited anxiously.

For previous gifts, the King had rewarded individuals according to their performance. This time, he decided to give anyone whatever amount he asked for. So when the caravan of donkeys arrived, the head servant made the announcement to the crowd.

"The King has decreed that everyone should be given whatever amount he asks."

"Wow!" exclaimed the Elephant. "I think I will ask for an uncountable number of gold coins. You know—a number so large that your jaws would break before you could count to it."

"That figures," said the Rabbit. "You are going to need that much to be able to feed that tummy. I just need one hundred silver coins."

"I want two hundred silver coins," said the Lion.

"I think that five hundred gold coins will be alright for me," said the Monkey.

"How about two thousand silver coins?" said the Gorilla.

"You've got it," said the head servant as he made marks on the ground at the foot of each person or creature to identify their request.

Finally he came to the Tortoise. "How many do you want, old man?"

"One!"

"One what? Thousand? Hundred? What?"

"Just the number one."

"Alright, Mr. Know It All. Whatever you say."

The rest of the crowd couldn't contain themselves laughing. For once, they thought the Tortoise was modest and contented, or outright crazy.

"We shall see who gets the last laugh," the Tortoise said to himself.

"Wait a moment!" said the Leopard. "You mean with all this money here you just want one coin?"

"Yes. Just ONE," answered the Tortoise rather emphatically.

"Okay! Okay!" agreed the Leopard. "This I've got to see. You are not up to something again, are you? What..."

"Ahem!" the head servant cleared his throat to get everyone's attention. "I will now distribute the monies according to your wishes."

As he went back to the beginning of the line, the Tortoise followed him with his basket. When the head servant got to the Elephant, he reached into the basket of gold coins and started counting.

"One, ..."

"That's me," the Tortoise said and took the money from the head servant and put it inside his basket.

"One, ..." the head servant started again to count out gold coins for the Elephant.

"That's me again," said the Tortoise. He took the money from the servant and put it in his basket.

"One, ..."

"Mine again."

The crowd was by now impatient. Some of the bigger animals were closing in on the head servant and the Tortoise, nudging the latter to give everyone else a turn.

"When he calls out two thousand," the Tortoise said to the Gorilla, "then you can have a turn. Right now he is calling out 'one' and it is still my turn."

"One," said the servant.

"Here sir," the Tortoise answered, stretching out his hand for the coin.

By now the crowd understood the game and was beginning to disperse. The Tortoise collected all the coins one by one and when he could not carry them all, he borrowed the King's donkeys to haul them to his house.