

Harley Street



Update from Matthew & Rachel Harley in Jos, Nigeria - Issue 22 - Jan 2014

The Abuja Carnival

- Rachel

To what extent are traditional cultures dying out? What cultural values and traditions are being passed on to the next generation? As grinding stones are replaced by grinding machines, what becomes of the songs that once accompanied the grinding? The youth often pass over their traditional drums in favour of the guitar or keyboard, and yet when the traditional music is played, everyone, both young and old, comes out to dance. How important is it to people here that they keep at least some of their unique cultural identity?



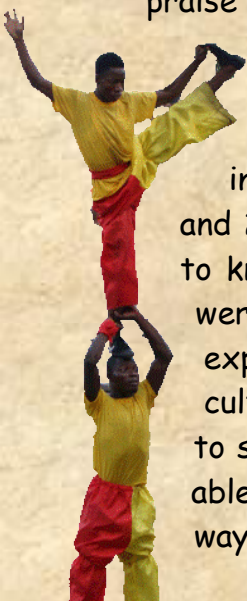
The Arts team: Rachel N, Peter, Rachel and Janet



Mixing the old with the new

Attending cultural events gives us insights into understanding the role that traditional cultures still play in society and how they are viewed by people in both urban and rural settings. This is why the Arts team headed off to the annual Abuja Carnival in November. This year's motto was: '**A people for a century, a people forever**', commemorating Nigeria's 100 years of existence. Each state was invited to compete in various competitions including; dancing, masquerade, carnival floats, a boat regatta, and cooking! Prizes were awarded at the closing ceremony, where performances were also given by guest teams from China, Egypt and Namibia.

We witnessed an array of colourful and creative groups dancing, marching, drumming and cartwheeling their way across the performance area. On several occasions we were heralded by praise singers who were apparently pouring all kinds of compliments and blessings on us in song, but as we couldn't understand the languages, they could have been singing anything! Backstage, we were able to interview various directors of Arts & Culture along with the performers themselves. Several radio and TV stations also wanted to interview *us*, as we attracted quite a lot of attention, 2 Nigerians and 2 foreigners all wearing the same cloth. They wanted to know what we thought of the carnival and why we were there, which was a great opportunity to express our appreciation of the diversity of cultures and God-given creativity in Nigeria and to speak about the importance of people being able to understand the Bible expressed in a way that is meaningful to them.



Last semester at TCNN was probably my busiest in our 8 years in Nigeria. With four key staff members away, I ended up teaching phonetics, phonology, grammar, semantics and anthropology for most of the 15 weeks. I thank the Lord for the strength he gave me, and for the good times with the students, who mostly did better than expected in the exams.

Now I know that to many of you, grammar excites you only a little more than ironing, but at the risk of putting you off linguistics for life, let me give you a linguistic puzzle that just may revive the linguist buried deep inside of you. The problem (www.harleysinafrica.org.uk/linguistic-puzzles) comes from the Linguistics Olympics a few years ago (there is such a thing), an annual competition for budding linguists in secondary schools around the world. It requires no specialist linguistic knowledge, just a general linguistic intuition and a hefty dose of lateral thinking. But be warned, you'll need more than a coffee break to do it!

Fishing with hippos

- Matthew

'One of the wildest and remotest parts of West Africa' is how our guidebook described the wonderfully named Gashaka-Gumti National Park. It is definitely off the beaten track; in 2003, the park had a total of 12 visitors, mostly wildlife researchers. This is where we, our neighbours Tom and Robyn, and two other friends, Bill and Stephen, spent a memorable few days' camping over the Christmas break. Having driven for two long, hot days to get there, we were more than ready to plunge in to the river near our campsite to cool off. Only afterwards did we notice the crocodile marks in the sand on the opposite bank, although Bill



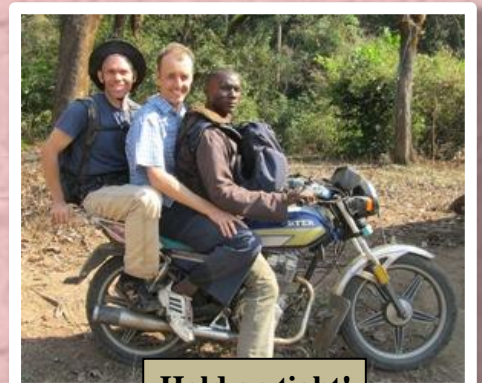
Driving off the end of the bridge

assured us that these crocs were not aggressive, like the Nile crocodiles. The river was also home to a hippo and plenty of Nile perch and tiger fish, which could have been named equally for their stripes, or their piranha-like jaws. Stephen caught a whopping metre-long 22lb perch, Bill a 15lb one, and Tom a 6lb Tiger fish (left) which we cooked for dinner the following night. I not only failed to catch anything, but nearly hit Stephen twice while casting my lure and spent a fair bit of time untangling my line. I'm pretty sure I almost hit the hippo too, as we were fishing at night under a moonless sky with the hippo splashing about only yards away, snorting like a wild horse at this rude interruption of his peaceful evening swim. It doesn't bear thinking about what would have happened if I'd tried to reel in Africa's most dangerous animal (not counting the mosquito).



Tiger jaws

This turned out to be only our first near death experience of the trip. The second came during a 45-minute, high-speed motorbike ride through the forest, which felt like the speeder bike chase scene from The Return of the Jedi. (To see a video I took during the ride, see: www.harleysinafrica.org.uk/videos). I was only able to take a video at all because I was wedged firmly in between Stephen and our teenage driver, who seemed thoroughly relaxed throughout, often putting up his hand to shield his face from the elephant grass, or turning his head through 180° to see if the other bikes were keeping up. Afterwards I suggested they apply for a job on Top Gear.



Hold on tight!

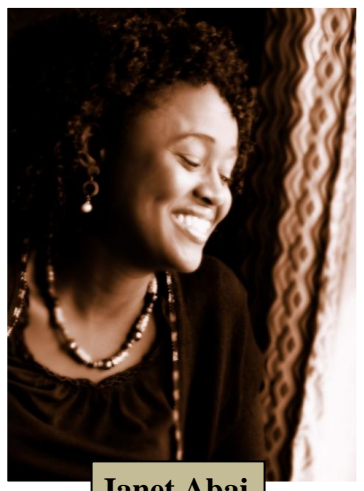
Our whole trip was a time when we really could take in the full beauty of God's creation - beautiful black and white colobus monkeys, hoards of brilliantly coloured butterflies, giant kingfishers, Hadada ibis and herons flying majestically along the river, not to mention the myriad stars lighting up the night sky.

Introducing the newest member of the Arts team...

- Rachel

Last November, we were delighted to welcome Janet Abai into the ethno-arts department. Janet is a lovely, godly lady who speaks good Hausa which will be extremely useful when working with the many language groups in the north. She has a beautiful voice and is a talented worship leader and wants to put her creative talents to use for the Lord in her work. I asked her if she would mind writing a little introduction about how she came to join us:

"My name is Janet Williams Abai. I am from the middle-belt area of Nigeria, from Plateau State. I joined Nigeria Group in 2011 and worked as the finance assistant for two and a half years. I enjoyed serving God in that capacity and was able to live an independent life because it was a salaried position which took care of my needs and the needs of many dependents."



Janet Abai

"A few months ago, I felt the Lord saying to me, 'Do you want to just keep receiving from me or do you want to give out of my deposits in you?' It was a moment of conflict in my spirit because I thought if I said yes to the Lord, I would lose my financial security and my self dependency. I also wondered what I would tell the people who depended on me for financial assistance. I tried acting adamant to this call but I had no peace until I took an Abrahamic step. I had so many questions without answers going through my mind! I see my move as a sacrificial seed, some day to be harvested in a large quantity to the Glory of God my father."

We thank God for Janet, for the work that he is doing in her life and for her faithfulness in following his lead. Please pray for her as she continues to adjust to her new role as an ethno-artist and begins raising her own support.

*'...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal'.
Matthew 6:20*

"We learned that we can link our local stories to Scripture"

- Rachel

...said one of the participants on our five-day ethno-arts workshop back in October. The course gave training on how to create and use tools to help people engage with Scripture in their language. There were 29 participants from 11 different languages: *Bwatiye, C'lela, Gamai, Jju, Kabinda, Kamwe, Lokaa, Maya, Mwaghavul, Okphela, and Tula*. Each language project was asked to send a translator, a pastor/teacher, and an artist. Topics covered included: 'Barriers to using mother tongue Scripture', 'Matching musical genres to Scripture', 'Steps for writing Scripture songs', and 'Multilingual church'. We discussed ways of using traditional storytelling techniques, dance, drama and visual arts and there was plenty of time for creative performances from the participants (my favourite part). Although Janet hadn't officially started working with us, she was able to help facilitate at the workshop, and so it was the perfect opportunity for her to gain experience and training. We thank the Lord for all who attended. Please pray for each language group as their vision grows and they share what they learned with their churches and language committees. The next workshop will be 10-14th Feb, with possibly a Scripture & Arts presentation day in April/May. Woohoooo!



Rachel and the Tula team

Baby David

In our last newsletter, we mentioned that we were waiting to see if we would be selected as foster parents for a baby whose birth was imminent. Sadly for us, that baby was given to another couple. Since we were planning to return to the U.K. for furlough in February anyway, we decided that we would turn our attention to adopting in the U.K., as adopting in Nigeria was looking increasingly unlikely. Recent events however, have given us reason to reconsider. In December, a work colleague of ours, Grace, suddenly found herself looking after a newborn baby whose mother died shortly after childbirth and whose father had died in a road accident some months before. Since then, Grace has been struggling to look after the baby, whose name is David, since she already shares her tiny 2-room apartment with her four children, one grandchild, her sister & her sister's two children. Last week, she asked us if we would consider adopting him! We are still not sure if it's really possible for us to adopt here and yet this seems like it might be something God is leading us into, so we feel we should go for it!

The message in church two Sundays ago was about Joshua waiting to cross the River Jordan to enter the Promised Land. The pastor asked us if we would risk crossing the Jordan, trusting God to deal with all the obstacles and claim the Promised Land or would we prefer to stay where we are? The Lord has also used similar passages to speak to us individually. Rachel particularly enjoyed hearing the church choir singing a song about the walls of Jericho coming tumbling down! The first step in the process is to get more legal advice about baby David's situation and how to go about applying for guardianship, which if granted should enable us to visit the U.K. with baby David for up to 6 months. We are due to meet with a lawyer from our church on Monday (27th Jan), so please join with us in prayer as we prepare to take our first steps into the Promised Land!



Baby David, 2 months old

'This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "what's next Papa?". God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are....If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!' Rom.8:15-17.

(The Message)

Prayer points

- ❖ That we would get good legal advice about baby David.
- ❖ For the 12 Bible translation students on fieldwork this semester, that their communities would encourage them.
- ❖ For the next ethno-arts workshop in Feb.
- ❖ Give thanks that Peter's church has recently decided to support him in his ministry.
- ❖ For Janet and the growing ethno-arts department.

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SUPPORT: Thanks to all who support us, and enable us to be here in Nigeria. Please note that the address to send cheques to has recently changed to: Wycliffe UK Ltd, The Clare Charity Centre, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4BF.

