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NIGERIAN ARTS AND CULTURE DIRECTORY PROJECT



# Newsletter



# NACD Project Storms



# Bayelsa State

# BAYELSA- THE GLORY OF ALL LANDS

Captivating and Exotic waterways of Bayelsa

On initially hearing such a grand appellation, the average person who never had any cause to step onto the shores of Bayelsa State is bound to wonder what all the fuss is about. In other words, it takes a visit and tour of both its Mainland and its Islands for anyone to really appreciate its endowments.

To the Nigerian Arts and Culture Directory (NACD) Project research team, who were recently in the State to catalogue its Arts, Culture and Tourism potentials, the opportunity to see firsthand, the wonders of nature called Bayelsa was invaluable. The feeling of wholesomeness and the rightness of everything is indescribable. One cannot help but exclaim; "Indeed this land is Glorious"!



## THE WATERS OF BAYELSA

Bordered by the Atlantic and criss-crossed by Creeks, Rivers and Lakes, the State is a converging point of Natural and Man-made tourism endowments. Besides producing 30% of Nigeria's crude oil and therefore, the bedrock of its economic buoyancy, the state boasts of some extremely thick mangrove forests to rival any other, in the world.

The natural wonders of Bayelsa State derive from its amalgam of water bodies. As already mentioned, the waters of Bayelsa State, overtime is anticipated to become the backbone of its tourism development. It is such a marvel that a commodity so scarce and in short supply across many lands is so

Boat ride across River Nun

## THE WATERS OF BAYELSA (continued)

abundant elsewhere, yet it is simply taken for granted. To the Ijaws, there can simply be no life without water, their trade, festivals, agriculture, way of life and every other aspect of societal living, depends on the water. Watching an Ijaw kid take off in a canoe or boat on a day of adventure without fear or undue attention always comes as a surprise to strangers. It is said in this part of the world, drowning in water among the Ijaws is simply "impossible". Whether swimming, traveling or racing on Lakes, Rivers, or the Atlantic, a 'Bayelsan' is at home. Water is to Bayelsans as road is to people living in the mainland communities of the country. A visit to Bayelsa State without venturing into its waters would be quite like the birthday cake without icing.



HOTEL DE VILLE ABA



Passenger ferry on the waterways



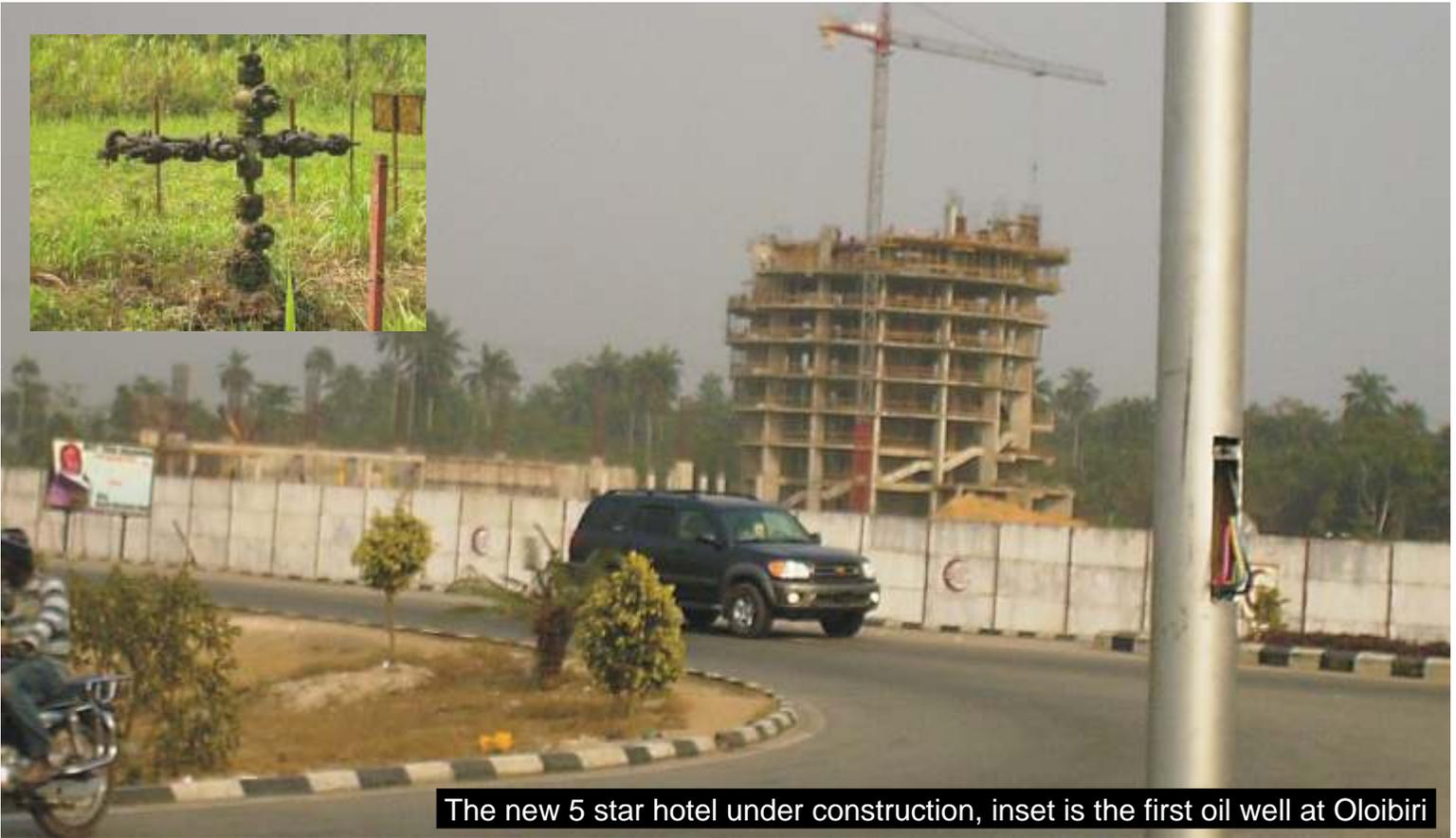
The areas referred to as the mainlands, include those areas from Yenagoa that can be accessed by road or on foot. From Rivers to Delta States that border the State, Bayelsa can be approached by road.

Other areas in Bayelsa that can be accessed by road include Ogbia, through Kolo Creek Local Government Area and Oloibiri where

topography might be misled into imagining a linear settlement, where all buildings are within a hundred meters of the major road, but the truth is, a journey from Yenagoa to Ogbia town (the last port of call from the mainland to the Amassoma waterways and onward to the sea) lasts 45 minutes. One may equally be surprised to discover large expanses of land to the left

and to the right, with thick vegetation.

Some of the tourist sites visited by the research team on mainland towns include the beautiful Kaiama Bridge and the Kaiama market, an offshoot of the flourishing trading port under the bridge; Isaac Boro Memorial and family house, which significance is already



The new 5 star hotel under construction, inset is the first oil well at Oloibiri

Nigeria's first crude oil well is sited in commercial quantity. Kaiama, the birth place of Isaac Boro, famous for pioneering the struggle for environmental and economic emancipation in the Niger Delta, as well as Elebele – site of the Bayelsa Oil Palm Company Ltd.

To anyone uninformed, studying the state's

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explained; Nigeria's first crude oil well at Oloibiri; the newly developed Ox-bow Lake and Recreational Park, in Yenagoa, and a 5-Star Hotel still under construction, whose Tower is expected to be "Tallest Structure in the Niger Delta"

Beside the Ox-bow Lake, There are developmental projects for a new business



and residential district embarked upon by the Bayelsa State government in a bid to make the state one of Nigeria's best, in terms of infrastructure and preservation of nature's gifts. So beautiful is the lay-out that one wonders what it would be like on completion.

## THE ISLANDS

Nembe, Okpoama, Brass and Akassa are some of the more obvious Island towns that make up the State. The fact that they are accessed through the creeks makes them high points of interest to visitors. The journey across the "tranquil" waters is both an adventure and a challenge to the tourist. The boat ride from Ogbia to Nembe or Okpoama is an experience of a life time for many as they feel curves, twists and bouncing of the boat as it tries to cut-corners to avoid the waves. The more daring tourist may reach



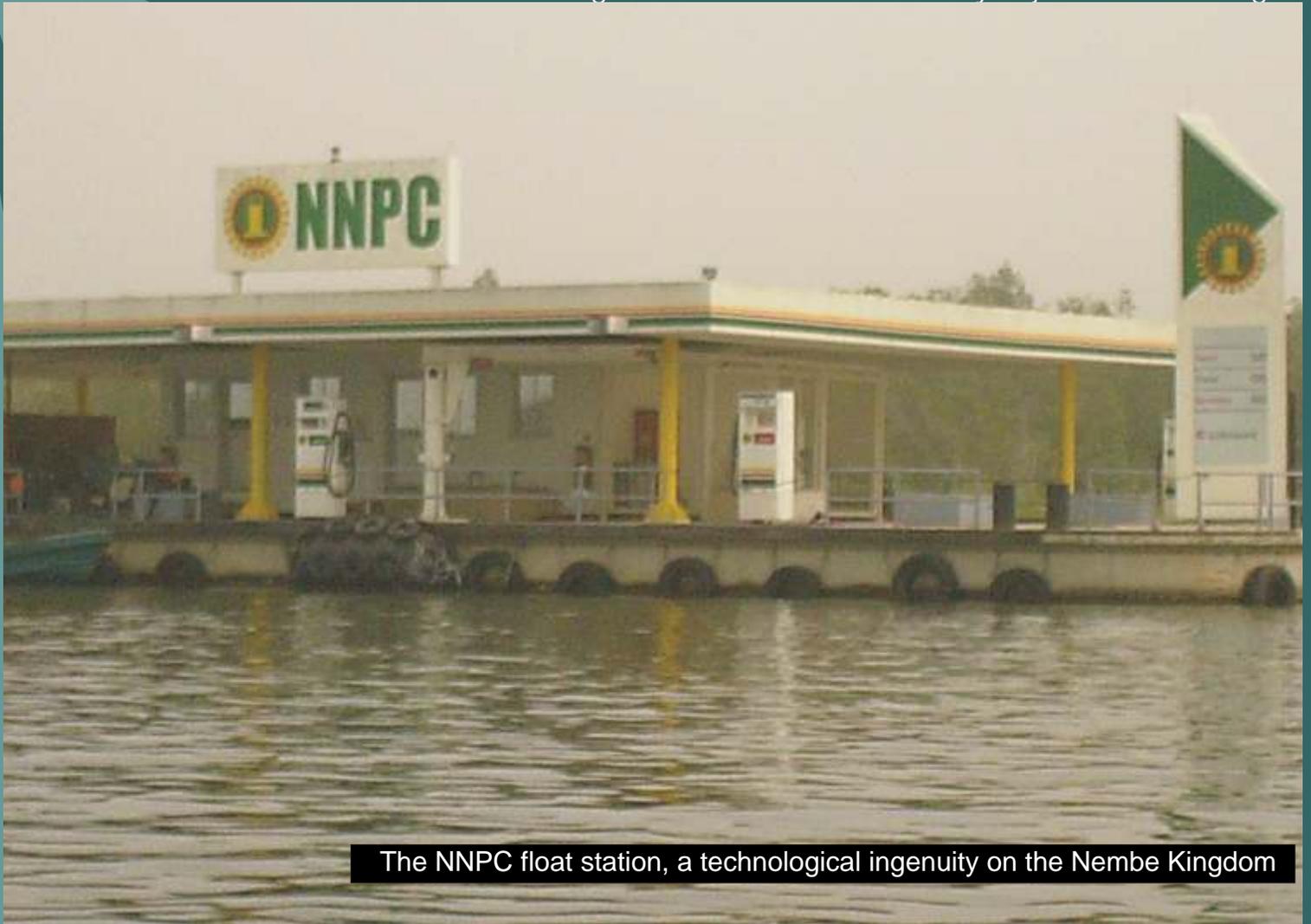
Buildings along the water side of Nembe.

out and touch water creatures and plants, to show how close nature is at that moment. Other beautiful surprises are the sight of floating fuel stations at the side of the creeks built by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). It is also amazing to find sign posts at major junctions in the middle of the water indicating directions to different towns and bypasses.

The journey to Okpoama from Ogbia took the NACD Project team about 70 minutes. Getting to Nembe from Okpoama took about 30 minutes, while Akassa, the farthest island took as long as 3 hours by speed boat. There are however, other minor fishing villages on the routes in between these major towns. To develop this natural tourism routes, the Bayelsa State government has

perfected plans to turn these floating villages into modern tourist villages serving both the entertainment, refreshment and relaxation needs of tourists. There are also plans to acquire cruise ships to provide visitors and tourists' pleasure rides and adventure.

Some of the tourist sites, a visitor to the exotic Islands should look out for include the 'Mungo Park House' on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean, in Twon-Brass, which was the British Consulate Headquarters during Colonial Administration; the "White Man's grave yard" in Twon-Brass, where European soldiers and colonial officials were buried, most of whom died in the Akassa war of 1895. There is also the Okpoama Beach, one of the longest and most beautiful in the country, now famous



The NNPC float station, a technological ingenuity on the Nembe Kingdom

for the yearly Christmas parties, which are hosted on its shore line, among friends, families and the community. The beach provides out-door games such as beach volleyball, football, surfing, dancing and other forms of entertainment. The beauty of the beach is augmented by an airstrip running through the dense foliage at the inland entrance, which serves the needs of tourists preferring to arrive and depart by air.

The ancient town of Nembe is in itself a tourist attraction. With its narrow cobbled walkways, passable only on foot or by bikes, the decked buildings so close to each other with narrow iron bridges running across streams, which bring to mind, the ancient city of Venice, Italy. Equally notable is the Nembe town hall and cultural arena, a two-in-one site that serves as the venue for traditional and cultural events of all kinds. The old palace

of King Josiah Ockiya, who ruled Brass between 1863 and 1879, has been preserved by local authorities as a historical monument. He is remembered for bringing the gospel into the Brass country and for the prosperity that was enjoyed by his subjects during his reign. A mausoleum built in his honour within the premises tells the whole story.



The Exotic Okpoama Tourist Beach.



Colourful display by the Bayelsa Cultural Troupe at the Gloryland Cultural Centre.

## THE GLORYLAND CULTURAL CENTRE

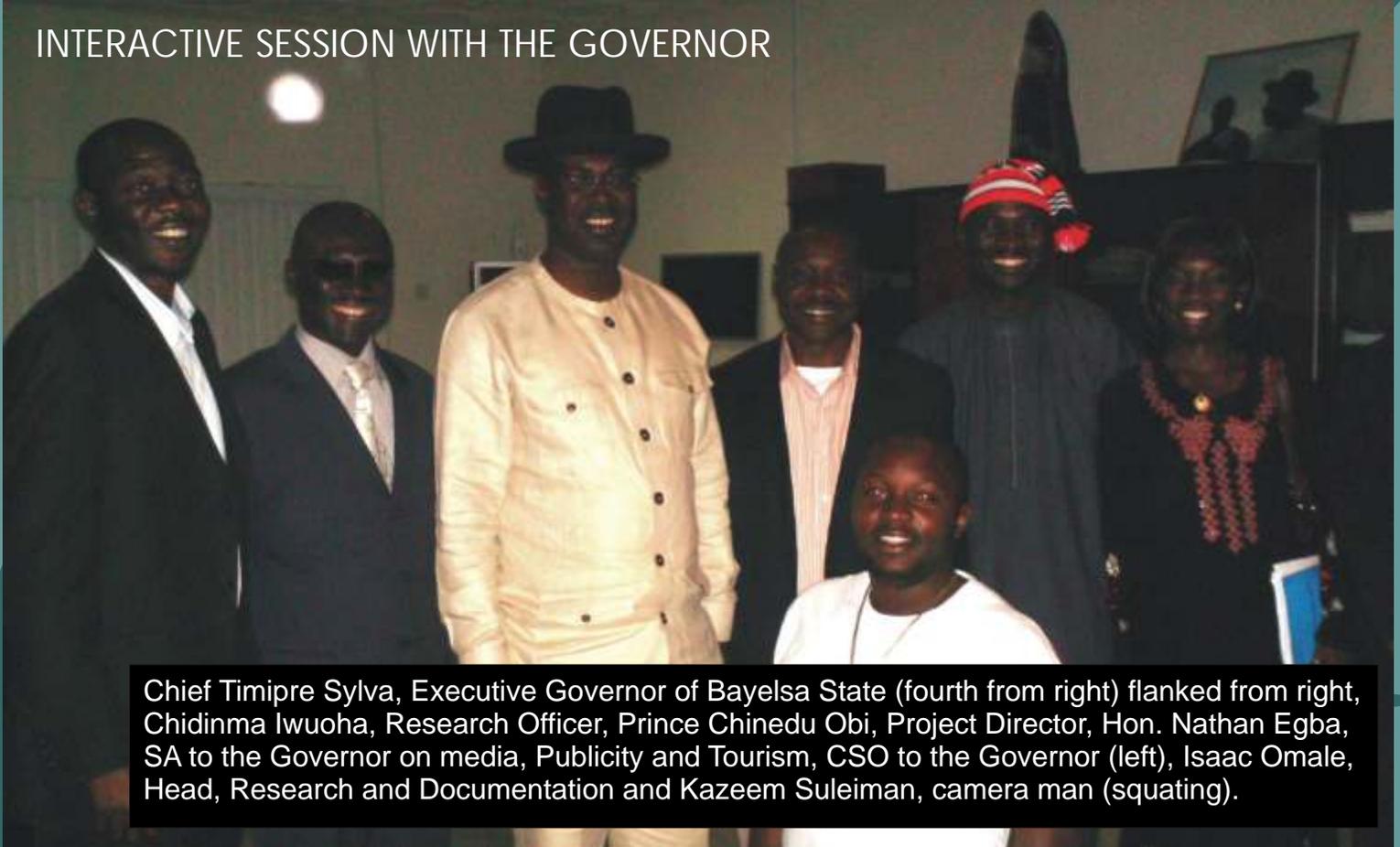
The Bayelsa State Council for Arts and Culture is the body vested with the responsibility of preserving the art and cultural heritage of the State. Its secretariat is housed in The Gloryland Cultural Centre in the heart of Yenagoa, the State Capital. It is headed by an Executive Director, Dr. Barclays Ayakoroma, under whose leadership the council has recorded many successes as evidenced by the array of trophies on display in the office of the Executive Director.

The complex, housing the council is an architectural delight and a must-see to all visitors. Made up of a studio, galleries, and alcoves for display of finished works of art. Embedded into the massive structure is a 1000-seater auditorium, where the rich culture and tradition of the people are

always on display. The famous African Movie Academy Awards (AMAA) takes place at the centre on a yearly basis. The State's dance, drama, choral and musical band are constantly on hand to put up a performance worthy of its name to the delight of tourists and visitors. The drama pieces range from comedy to tragedy and melodrama, while the music and dances depict the people's way of life – occupation, belief systems, mode of dressing and traditional institutions.

As a tourist destination, Bayelsa State surely stands tall among its counterparts in other parts of the world. However, it has an edge because of its abundant marine life, which stands it in good stead on its journey towards a tourism wonderland.

## INTERACTIVE SESSION WITH THE GOVERNOR



Chief Timipre Sylva, Executive Governor of Bayelsa State (fourth from right) flanked from right, Chidinma Iwuoha, Research Officer, Prince Chinedu Obi, Project Director, Hon. Nathan Egba, SA to the Governor on media, Publicity and Tourism, CSO to the Governor (left), Isaac Omale, Head, Research and Documentation and Kazeem Suleiman, camera man (squating).

On conclusion of the one-week working visit to the State, the NACD Project Research Team, led by its Director, Prince Chinedu Obi, paid a courtesy call on the State Governor, His Excellency Chief Timipre Sylva, at the Governors Office in company of the Special Adviser on Media, Publicity and Tourism to the Governor, Hon. Nathan Egba. The Project Director intimated His Excellency on the reasons behind the setting up of the Project, which was meant to expose and promote the rich cultural, arts and tourism potentials of all the 36 States and FCT, through a private-public sector partnership. The Project Director posited that with the abundant arts, culture and tourism potentials of Bayelsa, the State stands to reap bountifully from Tourism if the potentials are harnessed and exposed to the global community through the instrumentality of the NACD website.

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Using pictorial presentations, the Project Director explained to the Governor the works that has been done in other States and explained the need for Bayelsa State to be partners in this direction. Responding, the Governor commended the NACD Project for the good works it is carrying out and the desire of Bayelsa State to become one of the best tourism destinations in the nearest future hoping that the State will achieve this through the tourism development projects and infrastructure being embarked upon by the State. The Governor, took the team round to see the State's tourism development master plan, which include the architectural models of the new-look Bayelsa State city gate, the 18-storey 5-star hotel and towers billed to become the tallest in the Niger Delta among others. After a brief interview session, the team discussed areas of collaboration with

the state whereby a synergy of efforts will ensure a faster and better realization of the set goals for the benefit of all stakeholders. Shortly after bidding His Excellency goodbye, the NACD Project Research team took leave of the state's capital on its journey back to its headquarters in Abuja, quite fulfilled on accomplishing another successful assignment, a part of its mandate and mission.

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