

**THE LEGEND OF AJALA'S TRAVELS AND TRANSNATIONAL BACKPACKING
IN AFRICA**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This work sets out to contend that the emergence of critical studies on the shades and shapes of backpacking provides a significant springboard to engage the legend of Ajala's travels which has been within the domain of popular travel recitals in Nigeria for a while. The legend of Ajala, the traveller, and his transnational backpacking movements is a canonical urban legend. He has been encountered mainly in songs, folktales and stories describing him as the world's greatest traveller. Memories of childhood tales, often erroneously expressed in mythical sentiments, are witty caveat informed by his legend to teach several morals and call attention to norms and ethos. Olabisi Ajala, a veteran journalist of his days, is an embodiment of 20th-century Yoruba modernity whose legend represents a critical springboard to engage in any imagining of 20th-century Nigerian cosmopolitanism. This work concerns itself primarily with how the memory of his legend has been preserved by the song of Ebenezer Obey and how his book, *An African Abroad*, provides intervention on the research documentation of backpacking culture by an African. This, in the words of Richards and Wilson, is the hallmark of "widening perspectives in backpacking research" (2004: 253)

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The widening discussions on transnational migrations have become defined sites of engaging the backpacking phenomenon. The emergence and growth of backpacking practice increasingly speaks to its social, cultural and economic importance in the global dialogue about tourism and travels. Backpackers have now over the years remained a modern representation of the ancient definition of the nomad. It was Kaplan (1996: 66) who explains the nomad as the one who can track a path through a seemingly illogical space without succumbing to nation-state and/or bourgeois organisation and mastery. The desert symbolises the site of critical and individual emancipation in Euro-American modernity; the nomad represents a subject position that offers an idealized model of movement based on perpetual displacement.

One of the important areas of discussion in terms of the driving forces behind the rise of backpacking revolves around the issue of the socio-psychological function that it fulfils.

Because the original drifter was conceived of as a lone outsider (Cohen, 1973), alienation was also often assumed to be a major driving force for backpacking. People travelled to seek out experiences and values that they felt to be missing in their own (modern) society. This idea chimes with Turner's (1973) idea of a *rite de passage*. Just as Turner sees the *rite de passage* as involving a reversal of the everyday, many commentators hold that tourists essentially seek out difference or even a different reality through travel (Lengkeek, 1996; Urry, 1990). In practice, however, many tourism experiences tend to be extensions of what people do in their everyday lives (Richards, 2001; Thrane, 2000). The ideology of consuming difference has to be maintained in order to justify travel, but the practice of travel is often a 'home plus' experience. With the increase in the number of backpackers and growth in the range of facilities available in backpacker's enclaves, it has been increasingly difficult to assert that backpacking is driven by alienation, and that backpacker travel necessarily involves reversal. One might argue that for many modern backpackers the experience has become more akin to an extension of their everyday lives.

However, there is a point in which the discussions on backpacking stretched farther in time to the 1960s and 70s. The practice of modern backpacking is traced to the Hippie trail of the 1960s and '70s, which in turn followed sections of the old Silk Road. In fact, some backpackers today seek to recreate that journey, although in a more comfortable manner (Cohen, 2003; Conlin, 2007). The timing is somewhat significant too because the travels which Ajala undertook - the concern of this study - equally spanned around this time, albeit there were initial travels of his which predated the 1960s. The question that effortlessly agitates the mind is if Olabisi Ajala was influenced by the old Silk Road culture of the time. This therefore provides the background with which Ajala's travels is examined. What exactly were the motivations of Ajala's backpacking travels, considering the spatio-temporal realities of the time? It is known that backpacking is a form of low-cost, independent international travel and it is against this backdrop that the concept has become embracing to tourists in modern times with the popularity in countries like Australia, New Zealand and India.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent transnational research studies, scholars have become increasingly enchanted with, and understandably interrogated, the theory and practice of backpacking. This is informed by the wave of global discussions on how the world is categorized as a shrinking space with

debates on globalization, multiculturalism, transnationalism and other co-extensive concepts depicting the intersection and interconnectedness of human experiences. Hence, society as a whole is becoming more restless, fast-paced and mobile, in contrast to the relatively rigid patterns of modernity. Backpackers have therefore situated their practices within this notion, generating scholarly interests and studies into the growing popularity of this travel choice possibly because of its low-cost and independent features. According to Greg Richards and Julie Wilson (2004)

Backpackers are to be found in every corner of the globe, from remote villages in the Hindu Kush to the centres of London or Paris. They carry with them not only the emblematic physical baggage that gives them their name, but their cultural baggage as well. Their path is scattered with the trappings of the backpacker culture – banana pancakes, bars with ‘video nights’ and cheap hostels (Iyer, 1988).

This intervention therefore informs a curious examination of the “trappings of the backpacker culture” which define the travel narratives of Olabisi Ajala in his book, *An African Abroad*. Aside the ‘banana pancakes’ which is only a part of the subjective features, the other features are obvious markers of the backpacking culture depicted in Ajala’s book and his travels. Ajala traversed many borders, in fact over 87 countries in six years - and mostly on a scooter, not just for the fun of ‘bars with ‘video nights’ and cheap hostels’ but for his attractions toward the marginalized, oppressed and the poor or other fellow Africans in all of his travels- an inclination shaped by an ideology that postures as Marxist and Afrocentric at different times. This is a fascinating detail. First, the legend of Ajala’s travels and his work should have been an epochal research interests in backpacking considering that the backpacking culture he epitomizes happened at a time when the concept was hardly articulated, and more so since as an African he engaged in the backpacking culture which has remained elusive and impracticable by Africans in Africa in its recent soaring popularity.

This study therefore seeks to fill that gap of scholarship by analyzing Ajala’s travels in the same vein that backpacking culture has been fronted as an exclusive western practice. It is therefore compelling not to whisk away the daring details of Ajala’s travel experiences in his book, *An African Abroad*. It is clear that Ajala’s backpacking adventures had long subsisted before the current fashionable western practice. Pius Adesanmi might have been alluding to this omission of research recognition by titling his piece about Ajala on his Facebook wall, “Olabisi Ajala: A Nigerian Ancestor of Today's Western Backpacker”. This study will

therefore examine how Olabisi Ajala embodies this African archetype of backpacking, and many like him, whose transnational backpacking have not received much research attention. By locating this practice within Ajala's transnational movements, there is a way it reconnects and re-presents what Darya Moaz (2004) captures in her study of the two groups of Israeli backpackers in India.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This dissertation is engaged with the hope that this study will add to the discussions on Ajala and engagement of backpacking in Africa. This work will contribute not just to the memory preservation of Ajala within academic research, but also the debates on backpacking in Africa. The theorization of the concept of backpacking has been within western designations, somewhat privileging the narrative of the "Other". Ajala's transnational movements however rupture the parochial, singular hold of this concept as a western phenomenon with exclusive western practice. This study should therefore be a springboard for further study and evaluation of the same prognosis within Africa's backpacking history. It is also hoped that a study like this into Ajala's travels, the period in the observance of his travels, the personalities he met, and the folklore built around him by equally vintage crooners can further stretch discussions about this iconic figure both in the field of transnational studies and in the way such investigation can facilitate an understanding of how legends become part of national consciousness through performative symbols.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Besides the general enquiry of this research effort, the study will seek to engage the following questions:

- i) How does "Ajala's travels" articulate the ideological temperaments and defining elements of backpacking long before critical appraisal of the concept?
- ii) Why is the practice of backpacking elusive in Africa despite Ajala's travels?
- iii) In what specific ways have Chief Ebenezer Obey and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister attempted to back up human memory as regards Mr. Ajala in their songs?

- iv) How did the legend of Ajala travels survive generations to become not just a memory of tales but also a metaphor of travels within national context?

1.6 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The following are the objectives defined for the study:

- i) To examine how Ajala's brand of backpacking is reflected in his cultural expressions and Afrocentric solidarity.
- ii) To use the Ajala example to evolve an African definition of backpacking.
- iii) To examine the legends of Ajala's travel in the music of Ebenezer Obey in the early 70's and Sikiru Ayinde.
- iv) To examine the symbolic role that the Ajala myth has assumed in more general debates about travels, tourism and culture in Nigeria.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

This work is partly ethnographic and partly library-based; ethnographic in order to test the currency and vitality of the Ajala legend in national memory across generations; and library-based because it will also do a close reading of *An African Abroad*. Data was therefore sourced from respondents who grew up with the legend and tales of Ajala's travels in the 60s and 70s. This was done by adopting key informant interview (KII) and informal interview techniques. The major respondent was Dr. Ebenezer Obey. He was interviewed to find out what kind of relationship existed between him and Ajala and what informed his song which praised Ajala's travels. Dr. Ebenezer's perspective on the study was crucial in mapping how the legend of Ajala was sustained thereafter, first as a local iconic figure and then further etched in the national and global travel discourse. Complementing the ethnography with close reading of *An African Abroad* facilitated adequate engagement with and interrogation of the concept and practice of backpacking within the context of transnationalism in order to reinforce the African slant of the concept and practice as embodied in the experience of Ajala.

1.8 SCOPE OF STUDY

While this study was expected to evaluate the broad, global discussion on backpacking and its extended delineated practice by Africans and within Africa, this research focused primarily on the travels of Olabisi Ajala and the myths and legend generated around it in the 1950s -70s by principally using his text, *An African Abroad* and Dr. Ebenezer Obey's praise-song which eulogised his travels. The study engaged an alternate perceptive discourse to his travels by using the song of Sikiru Ayinde Barrister who expresses a disapproval of Ajala's backpacking travels using a materialist slant of interpretation.

1.9 BACKPACKING IN AFRICA

The debate about backpacking practice in Africa is largely viewed as a recent transnational phenomenon. This claim that is somewhat true considering the social, political and economic circumstances that accommodate the effective engagement of backpacking; circumstances which were, and to a large degree are still, not adequately positioned to absorb such a travel form. Backpacking by its conceptual construct is seen more as a form of travel rather than tourism (Hannam and Ateljevic 2008:1). This could be informed by certain characteristics of backpackers who are generally flexible in their itineraries, extending their holiday travels longer than the brief timing associated with tourists and the age factor of most backpackers who are often under forty years of age. This flexibility, independence, social and participatory holiday activities of backpackers could pose a unique challenge in Africa especially if the topography, rigid regulatory policies and porous border spaces in Africa are considered. It becomes more increasingly problematic to attract backpackers considering the bureaucratic and corruption dents that form the prejudicial notions some foreign tourists, who had visited Africa, have held about the continent. This is further compounded by recent spate of security challenges in the continent, from Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria to the Al shabab scare in Kenya, the collapse of political authority in Libya which opened the social and political space for chaos and disorder, and the like. Nevertheless, Africa is not a country or a fossilised entity. Neither are spaces where backpacking is attractive and practiced totally free of continental challenges like it is inherent in Africa. Backpacking in Africa, except in few countries like South Africa, graces few and passionate observers. However, what the idea of backpacking in Africa portends is to both explore the practice of backpacking by Africans and also engage Africa as a designated site of transnational backpacking.

Niggel and Benson (2008: 144) have explored the motivations of backpackers using the case of South Africa as a national model of analysis. They profiled the backpackers' responses by factoring their motivations within a tripartite basis: the push factors, pull factors and 'other' motivations. The push factors were given as: 'discovering new places and things', 'to broaden knowledge about the world', 'escape from everyday work', 'home and leisure scene/monotony of the daily routine', 'to have a good time with friends, preference of travelling lifestyle', 'to relax physically and mentally', 'to challenge abilities, self-testing', 'to make new friends', 'confusion about future plans', 'advice of friends and relatives', 'to gain a feeling of belonging', 'the completion of study commitments', 'to improve status', 'to postpone current commitments', 'the completion of work commitments', 'in search of employment' and 'in search of the right partner'.

The most important pull factor to go backpacking in South Africa was a 'unique mix of adventure, cultural and wildlife attractions'. However, there were other factors which include: 'to get to know native cultures', 'to see the big five (elephant, rhino, leopard, lion, buffalo) and wild animals', 'in South Africa there are lots of facilities for backpackers', 'the climate of South Africa', 'friendly people', 'the history of the place', 'the beaches of South Africa', 'positive word of mouth', 'wide range of adventure and outdoor sports' and 'to visit a National Park' were also quite significant motivations, 'the vastness of the place', 'to go on safari' and 'value for money' were also quite significant motivations. The 'other' motivation, according to the authors, "were 'to learn more about myself, to find myself, to educate myself about the world', 'shark diving' and 'to experience Nelson Mandela and the post-apartheid South Africa, white versus black'. The motivation 'to learn about myself, to find myself' can explain the backpacking trip as a 'rite de passage', a motivation that has been identified by Sørensen (2003). 'Shark diving' was one example of backpackers seeking adventure in exotic or at least different settings (Richards and Wilson, 2004a; Riley, 1988). 'To experience Nelson Mandela and the post-apartheid South Africa,' as well as the high scores of 'to get to know native cultures'...and 'the history of the place'...confirms the argument by Riley (1988) that backpackers show an interest in the culture and history of the country they are visiting."

There is the amazing blog narrative of Dapo Osinaike and another backpacker who simply blogs as Sarah. Both narratives present how Africans are committed to backpacking across the globe in contemporary times and how Africa is equally a designated place for backpacking. Dapo Osinaike is a Nigerian-American who went backpacking in Thailand. He

is attracted to many other nations and has travelled to them but guest writes about his backpacking experience to Thailand on a travel blog. Dapo relives some of the fascinating encounters Olabisi Ajala writes about in his text, *An African Abroad*. Sarah, on the other hand, revels in her backpacking adventures to over 73 countries. She is of particular significance because she garners a wide range of continental-crossing followership on her blog that has rather warped judgements about the practice of backpacking in Africa but has been jolted by her peculiar, experiential travel tales in Africa. Sarah argues that certain markers of concerns can be used to justify any backpacker's chosen countries of visit in Africa. By factoring such concerns about the political stability of the nation, array of travel possibilities, transportation modalities, accommodation and the like, she warmly recommends countries like Ghana, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Gambia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Botswana, Tanzania and South Africa as good places for backpacking.

1.10 CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

This section has been an attempt to provide how Backpacking has evolved over time, and insisting that within its fold, there exists a tradition of its practice by Olabisi Ajala whose engagement of it seeks to re-capture an African cultural imaginary. This chapter, besides clearly articulating the problematic of this study and research questions and objectives, equally provides a clarification of the major concept, and its practice in Africa, which dominates the discussion in this work.

The second chapter of the work is a review of relevant literature on the subject of the Transnationalism and Backpacking, and its engagement around the globe. Data and methods of data collection, as well as the rationale for choice of Olabisi Ajala's book, *An African Abroad*, and the songs by Ebenezer Obey and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister as texts are the focus of the third chapter. The fourth chapter focuses on data analyses, while the concluding chapter is a summary of the research scope which ends with findings and recommendation.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 TRANSNATIONALISM AND MIGRATORY TRENDS IN AFRICA

It is our contention that migrants remain understood as individual actors in the migration development debate. They may be approached as individuals of particular sexes, colors and classes, but seldom as relational subjects embedded in larger social structures. (Sørensen and Vammen, 2014)

Transnationalism has an absorbing conceptual grip on the scholarly parlance of migratory discourses. It is somewhat co-extensive with other concepts which suggest the various flows, exchanges, connections, practices and movements across several spaces. The question of conceptual inter-relatedness explains why concepts like globalisation, migration, nomadism, exile, backpacking, diaspora, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and others are deployed so as to interface, if not intersect, many times with that of transnationalism. Transnationalism is central to how migration patterns are shaped and what informs its trends and practices across global spaces. At the turn of the 21st century, several spaces have shrunk to accommodate the trending rhetoric of globalization which is the order of the day. With international migration bringing, what Steven Vertovec (2001) calls, ‘the alien “other” from third world to first,’ Africa and Africans have been part of these flows which speak to both the human and non-human agencies that often catalyzes these movements into and outside the continent. These agencies are conceived in the technological attractions and/or social, political and economic challenges that the continent faces.

Vertovec (1999) again, in his paper, *Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism*, provides a useful methodological outline on how transnationalism can be conceived. He affirms that Transnationalism can be viewed in five critical ways. He speaks of it, first, as a “social morphology” which has to do with a kind of social formation that spans borders. Transnationalism, he argues, can also be viewed as a “type of consciousness” which informs the considerable discussion surrounding a kind of ‘diaspora consciousness’ marked by dual or multiple identifications. He also conceives transnationalism as a “mode of cultural

reproduction”, depicted in a sense as shorthand for several processes of cultural interpenetration and blending, associating it with a fluidity of constructed styles, social institutions and everyday practices. The fourth perception is as an “avenue of capital” which many economists, sociologists and geographers, hitting at this mode, have argued how transnational corporations (TNCs) serve as the major institutional form of transnational practices and the key to understanding globalisation; as a “site of political engagement” which, quoting Ulrich Beck (1998: 29), is construed as ‘...a new dialectic of global and local questions which do not fit into national politics...but only in a transnational framework that can they be properly posed, debated and resolved.’ The final conception of transnationalism is as a “(re)construction of ‘place’ or locality” to foreground practices and meanings derived from specific geographical and historical points of origin that have always been transferred and regrouped. It is important to note that the issue of social morphology is quite symptomatic of the diaspora formations that often engender what Paul Zeleza (2009:33) refers to as

complex social and cultural communities which are created out of imagined genealogies and geographies (cultural, racial, ethnic, national, continental, transnational) of belonging, displacement, and recreation, constructed and conceived at multiple temporal and spatial scales, at different moments and distances from the putative homeland.

There is a diasporic identity that these transnationals form to deliberately articulate a consciousness that speaks to their shared and mobilized resources from the "imaginaries of both the old and new worlds.” This leads to how transnationalism is viewed as a type of consciousness with the question of identity at the heart of such debate. Within the constitutive interpretation of African travel order, so many postulations agitate mapping this identity crisis; either in echoing Okpewho’s sentiment of ambivalence and dilemma of self-assertion (2009:4), or Zeleza’s more poignant confrontation of this question of identity and representation. Zeleza enquires, “...who are the Africans that constitute, when dispersed and reconstituted, African diasporas?” He equally stretches the idea and definition of “Africa” to account its complex and multiple genealogies and meanings which unquestionably provide vast valid voices on its definition since any singular or plural attempt at extrapolating “African” culture, identity and “authenticity”, in his words, is “quite slippery”. This provides an interesting background while shaping a critical perspective as to why Olabisi Ajala’s

choice of the word “African” to represent his identity and situate his brand of backpacking travel, considering how his book speaks to the question of transnationalism and identity.

Pius Adesanmi (2014) had made a fascinating remark on his Facebook wall in the wake of the discussion that brought the legend of Ajala back to national consciousness via the cyberspace. Adesanmi retorts:

“I am pleased to discover that the book's introduction was written by Tom Mboya! A Nigerian born in Ghana has his book introduced by a Kenyan. This is cosmopolitanism on a foundation of Pan-Africanism.”

The next issue therefore is the consideration of cosmopolitanism as a key strand of transnational evolution on migratory trends in Africa. Cosmopolitanism in its theoretical understanding projects tripartite typology; moral cosmopolitanism, political cosmopolitanism and cultural cosmopolitanism (Delanty, 2006). In the narrative of travels, to a large extent, backpackers echo major tenets of cosmopolitanism in theory and praxis. Cosmopolitanism reflects a transnational temperament that is not fossilised with the suggestive movement of people and materials alone but that which equally accommodates a wide range of tastes of commodities, and other forms of socialisation. This sense of voluntariness and restlessness, elitism and independence, cultural and ideological transmission, is equally accounted for in the transnational baggages of the backpacker. There's an imaginative rebellion against the constitutive order of border-spaces and the seeming closed, restrictive tendencies of nation's migration policies. Olabisi Ajala's revolts in some of his border-encounter narratives in certain Arab nations come to mind. This speaks largely to the etymological impression the concept of cosmopolitanism evokes. Cosmopolitanism assumes its etymology to the rhetoric of Diogenes of Sinope (c. 412 B.C.) who when asked where he came from had famously answered: “I am a citizen of the world” (Laertius, 63). It was quite novel and ground breaking then considering the fact that the broadest basis of social identity in Greece at that point was either the individual city-state or the Greeks (Hellenes) as a group.

However, the conceptual framing of cosmopolitanism is fraught with Eurocentric labelling. Olaoluwa (2013) argues on the need to extend the frontiers of this conceptual debate which documents the “...reflection on African cosmopolitanism as one which does not necessarily feed into the conceptual assumptions of the West” (3). His intervention indicates, first, a critical departure from the normative conceptions of cosmopolitanism as evinced by Kant and

Habermas which “necessarily constructs cosmopolitanism in elitism and voluntarism (Beck 18-19).” He therefore creates a critical basis to challenge defining Kant’s brand and theorization of cosmopolitanism as serving the exclusive interest of the highly educated, rich and the pleasure-seeking individuals. So, by invoking a re-reading of such postulations, Olaoluwa (2013) disentangles the concept from its spatial domain of Euro-American epistemic and cultural confines, validating the view that postcolonial realities in the “South” institutes a “...methodological review of the rendition and practice of cosmopolitanism (Beck 28).” In Africa, therefore, for some, poverty not elitism, can serve as the economic motivation for engaging in cosmopolitanism. Olaoluwa further justifies his stance using the cosmopolitan ambitions reflected in Mac Collins Chidebe’s *Across the Desert* to advance that postulation.

As it is evident among self-professed backpackers also, the historical basis of cosmopolitanism shares an ideological testament with the individual whose loyalty is to the universal human community. Although many cosmopolitan claims have been made without a loss of self-defining nationalistic pride,¹ [Olaoluwa (2013) makes a valid point on Obama’s visit to Germany where he proudly declared himself an American and a citizen of the world at the same time], one of the widely accepted consequences of globalization is the development of individual outlooks, behaviours and feelings that transcend local and national boundaries. This has encouraged a re-assessment of critical assumptions about the nature of community, personal attachment and belonging in the face of unprecedented opportunities for culture, identities and politics to shape, and be shaped by, global events and processes. The upsurge of interest in the concept of cosmopolitanism, undoubtedly, has provided a promising new framework for understanding the nexus between cosmopolitan dispositions and global interconnectedness across cultural, political and economic realms. It affirms the power of our interrelated and shared destiny and how people around the world, Africans largely inclusive, join the global trend of flows across continents.

Africans move for many reasons. There is a conscious deployment of the word “move” to perhaps suggest the historical and recent trends of migration in and from Africa. When, for example, the migratory discourse in Africa is being advanced, attempt is often made to relay

¹ Backpackers are generally unfazed by issue of roots and homeland. The question of identity will always be at the fore, either for the backpacker, cosmopolitan or Afropolitan, but it doesn’t discard the fact that the desire to travel often make the tourist open to several cultures and an identity definition beyond his own nation or state.

the *mayflower* narrative and project it as a defining phase, if not the very start of the diasporic formation elsewhere and how that has subsequently shaped how forced and voluntary migrations are discussed in Africa. Although Ivan Sertima's *They Came before Columbus* comes as a handy disprove of Africa's migratory misrepresentations, that there had equally been a stretched history of migratory tendencies, for trade, long before the Atlantic Slavery. There is however no pretentious claim to map the trajectory of migration trends in Africa in its vast and broad narratives here; rather, the effort here is to mildly state and reflect how engaging transnationalism as part of a global travel move has accommodated Africans in whatever brand of travel, flows and tourism they engage in within the travel discourse, modes and motivations. The familiar background to the migratory trends and patterns of international migration is to weigh in on the markers of contradictions within the continent: rapid population growth, unstable politics, escalating ethnic conflict, persistent economic decline, poverty, and environmental deterioration. Broader international trends also affect the region – globalisation, regional integration, network formation, political transformation, and the entry of multinational corporations in search of cheap labour (Adepoju, 2004).

Hence, the movements are not squarely predicated on escapist routes from the negativities that seem to have become the projection of the continent. Many also move in realisations of cosmopolitan ambitions or personal dreams of self-validation and socio-economic well-being. Okpewho (2009) captures this sentiment while speaking of the African Diaspora in America and what provoked their movements out of the continent.

Whether we arrived here [America] as highly skilled professionals or struggling students, many of us have been able to realize the goals of our voluntary expatriation in ways that have both benefited the host society – in arts and sciences, technology, sports and so forth – and improved the fate of relatives we left back home in our native lands. (9)

However, the concern here is to establish how voluntary patterns of migratory tendencies have evolved exclusive tourist and travel expressions. This is where the backpacker is situated. The discussion on backpacking therefore assumes its thrust as an extension of the contemporaneous representation of the ideas of transnationalism. In other words, backpacking can only be subsumed under the nuances of transnationalism without strapping it with the usual interchange transnationalism shares. For example, with the concept of diaspora, however intricate or extensive, in the broadest discussion on the concepts, theories

or practice, transnationalism and backpacking stretch the borders of debate between the two not to articulate much of a shared discourse. For while backpacking fixates its agency mainly around the backpacker, transnationalism is not solely understood in the nominal language of the transnational. To that extent, transnationalism cannot be said to be limited to the movement of people, as such human movement at every point is co-extensive with the movement of other things which at the center of human agency is identified to be equally critical.

The backpacker is a fun lover and so not necessarily seeking to escape a 'space' as he would the trappings that inhibit his independence and freedom. Adler and Adler (1999: 381) in their study of resort workers in Hawaii, talk of 'seekers [who] sought to maximize their immediate life satisfaction' and of 'escapists' whose desire was to 'rid themselves of the routine, scripted monotony of the everyday world' (also Cohen and Taylor, 1976; Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995). It becomes critical therefore to engage the backpacker phenomenon within this space.

2.1.2 TRANSNATIONALISM AND THE BACKPACKER

Transnationalism speaks of the multiplicity of involvements, ties and interactions which the people involved in various movements sustain in multiple societies, communities or nation-states, invariably encompassing not only the movement of people, but also of notions of citizenship, technology, forms of multinational governance, and the mechanisms of global market (Mitchell, 2000; Vertovec, 1999; Quayson and Daswani, 2014). Transnationalism demystifies the orthodox avowal of the sentiments of nation-states to interrogate the modern detachment and how several complex varieties are differing from methodological nationalism. Duncan (2008:85) argues that the last decade has seen a profound movement away from seeing the world 'as a cultural mosaic, of separate pieces with hard, well-defined edges' (Hannerz, 1992: 218) towards a world which is concerned with 'the diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and wastes: and of the complex interdependencies between, and social consequences of, these diverse mobilities.' (Urry, 2000: 185; also Hall, 2005b)

The need, desire and motivation of the backpacker in engaging such travel is somewhat captured in this trajectory of travel discourse. The backpacker phenomenon is consequently

viewed in terms of its conceptual definition, the backpacker's motivation and his destination. In the previous chapter, an attempt at the confluence of scholarly projection of what backpacking could connote has been made, both in theory and practice. Simply put, therefore, the backpacker is the traveller, often youthful, who has appropriated the distinct features of backpacking as his travel or tourist identity. The features that define backpacking include: a preference for budget accommodation, an emphasis on meeting with locals and other travellers, an independently organised and flexible travel schedule, longer rather than brief holidays, an emphasis on informal and participatory holiday activities mostly young, a predominance of those in the 20-35 age group, large number of 40-49 age group, strong interest in adventure and eco-tourist activities, well-educated persons, use of coach and bus travel more than any other form of travel, may work for some part of their stay and some others. Backpackers, therefore, are generally characterised by their independent style and extensive range of travel, coupled with their ability to extend their length of stay through prudent budgeting (Pearce, 1990).

Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995: 830-831) offer, what Duncan (2008) calls, "one of the earliest academic definitions", when they say,

Backpackers are travellers who exhibit a preference for budget accommodation; an emphasis on meeting other people (locals and travellers); an independently organized and flexible travel schedule; longer rather than brief holidays; and an emphasis on informal and participatory recreational activities.

While Ateljevic and Doorne (2004: 60) say that the term 'backpacker' 'has over the last decade become synonymous with a travel style that emphasises freedom and mobility,' Murphy (2001: 50-51) expanded this definition slightly by adding that backpackers are 'young and budget-minded tourists'. Sørensen (2003: 851) says,

Both popularly and in the research literature, backpackers are most often characterized as self-organized pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple destination journey with a flexible itinerary, extended beyond that which is usually possible to fit into a cyclical holiday pattern.

It is obvious that the shifting ground for all these multiple definitions and positions is the critical rendezvous on the matter of independence and organised activities. It is important to

point out also that the image of the backpacker has also long been popularised in cinematic and literary worlds (Richards and Wilson, 2004). Alex Garland’s (1996) novel, *The Beach*, the film version starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Jack Kerouac’s (1957) ‘On the Road’, and as an addendum to their list, Brown Sue’s *The Backpack* and John Harris’ *The Backpacker*-trending popular novel texts on the subject of backpacking, to name but a few, have all influenced how the backpacker is perceived and defined by those ‘on the road’, by other tourists and by the rest of society. Other literary works such as those by Michael Palin (1999, 2004), Bill Bryson (1996, 2001) and Alain de Botton (2002) have also influenced backpacker culture as those who read them or see the various television series also perhaps image exploring these places and peoples (Duncan, 2008).

Different scholars (Niggel and Benson, 2006; Richards and Wilson, 2004; Cohen, 2004;) have researched into the motivations and behaviours of independent travellers. Nigel and Benson’s research attracts some fascination since their designated space of backpacking research is South Africa. Generally, the debate of motivations of backpackers can be predicated upon certain theories of motivations. Cooper (2005) suggests that differences in attitudes, perceptions, images and motivation have an important influence on travel decisions. A critical approach to this is exploring these motivations using the Maslow’s (1970) theory of motivation, which suggests that there is a hierarchy of needs through which people move.

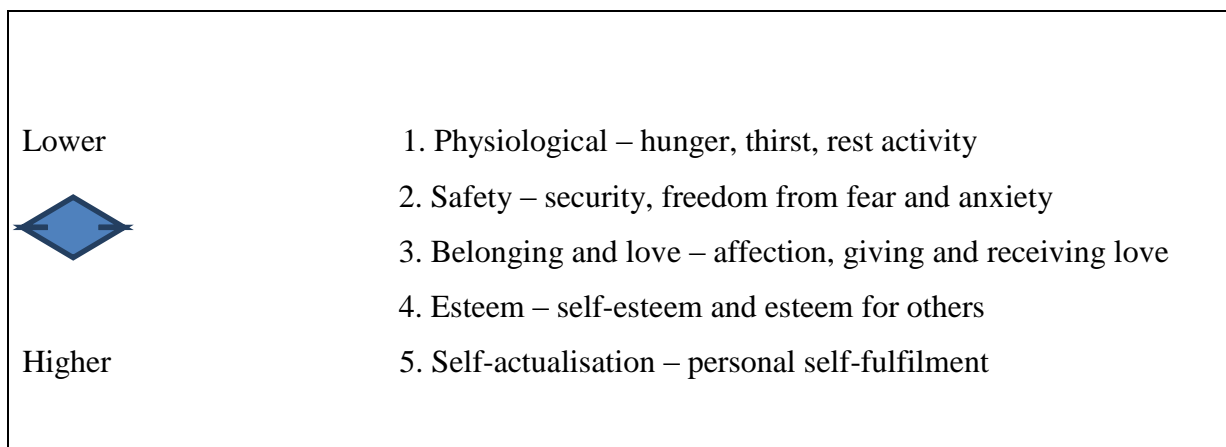


Figure 2.1 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (cited in Cooper, 2005: 54)

This model suggests that as needs are satisfied, so individuals aim for the next level. Thus, self-actualisation remains at the higher end of the hierarchy and is a ‘need’ to be aspired to. Cooper (2005: 54) maintains that Maslow’s hierarchy is holistic and dynamic and can be applied both to work and non-work spheres of life. He also suggests that these levels of needs

are of 'such instinctual weakness' (Cooper, 2005:54) that they can be modified, accelerated or inhibited by the surrounding environment (Duncan, 2008).

Duncan (2008) equally claims that although this model provides a premise on which to suppose that, given the right circumstances people will grow out of a concern for the materialistic, it seems rather too simplistic. Cooper (2005) discusses two other key approaches to the study of tourism motivation which speaks more in applicability when engaging the issue of young budget travellers.

Dann 1981

1. Travel is a response to what is lacking yet desired. This approach suggests that tourists are motivated by the desire to experience phenomena that are different from those available in their home environments.

2. Destination pull in response into motivational push. This distinguishes between the motivation of the individual tourist in terms of the level of desire (push) and the pull of the destination or attraction.

3. Motivation as fantasy. This is a subset of the first two factors and suggests that tourists travel in order to undertake behaviour that may not be culturally sanctioned in their home setting.

4. Motivation as classified purpose. A broad category which invokes the main purpose of a trip as a motivator for travel. Purpose may include visiting friends and relatives, enjoying leisure activities, or study.

5. Motivational typologies. This approach is internally divided into:

a. Behavioural typologies such as the motivators 'sunlust' (search for better set of amenities that are available at home) and 'wanderlust' (curiosity to experience the strange and unfamiliar) as proposed by Gray (1970); and

b. Typologies that focus on dimensions of the tourist role.

6. Motivations and tourist experiences. This approach is characterised by the debate regarding the authenticity of tourist experiences and depends upon beliefs about types of tourist experience.

7. Motivation as auto-definition and meaning. This suggests that the way in which tourists define their situations will provide a greater understanding of tourist motivation than simply observing their behaviour.

McIntosh, Goeldner and Ritchie 1995

1. Physical motivators: those related to refreshment of body and mind, health purposes, sport and pleasure. This group of motivators are seen to be linked to those activities which will reduce tension.

2. Cultural motivators: those identified by the desire to see and know more about other cultures, to find out about the natives of a country, their lifestyle, music, art, folklore, dance, etc.

3. Interpersonal motivators: this group includes a desire to meet new people, visit friends or relatives, and to seek new and different experiences. Travel is an escape from routine relationships with friends or neighbours or the home environment or is used for spiritual reasons.

4. Status and prestige motivators: these include a desire for continuation of education (i.e. personal development, ego enhancement and sensual indulgence). Such motivators are seen to be concerned with the desire for recognition and attention from others, in order to boost the personal ego. This category also includes personal development in relations to the pursuit of hobbies and educations.

Figure 2.2 Categories of Motivation, after Dann (1981) and McIntosh, Goeldner and Ritchie (1995) (Source: Cooper, 2005: 55-56)².

² Duncan (2008) equally quotes Cooper in her work, using the same diagram to explain the motivations for backpacking.

By approaching motivation as a series of factors (as in Figure 2.2 above) rather than as a ranking system (as in Figure 2.1 above), a much wider range of motivators can be employed. Unlike Maslow's (1970) hierarchical model, the other two approaches suggest that the various elements can act in conjunction with each, thus blurring Maslow's needs into a larger, more flexible motive. These categories then link closely to other literature on tourism motivation which suggests that recurrent themes emerge. The need to escape the everyday for purposes of relaxation (physical motivators), the ability to discern new places, exotic peoples, authentic nature (cultural motivators) and the discovery of self (interpersonal/status motivators) are all cited as reasons for travelling (see Baranowski and Furlough, 2001; Boissavain, 2002; Ryan, 1997a). MacLeod (1997:136) in his work on alternative tourists in the Canary Isles says that '[e]xperiment, experience, excitement, change: all of these become part of many holiday experiences.' Richards and Wilson's (2003:17) recent report on independent youth and student travel suggests that for young people, a mixture of exploration, excitement and increasing knowledge are the main motivational factors for travel.

Nonetheless, Duncan (2008) insists that for some young people, their motivation will border less on skills as they could learn whilst away and much more about escaping 'the dullness and monotony of everyday life, including decisions pertaining to their careers and marriage' (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995: 825, Adler and Adler, 1999; Cohen and Taylor, 1976). They equally assert that as suggested earlier, young people often now face uncertain career choices and demands upon leaving education (Wyn and Willis, 2001) and one of the responses to this uncertainty has been the increase in youth tourism. The year out can be seen as a time to relax mentally and find oneself (Richards and Wilson, 2003). The transition from school/college/university life to professional life with all of its associated responsibilities, which can seem daunting and difficult (see Keane and Brown, 2003), is therefore put on hold by taking time out for a year (or more).

For Duncan (2008), the motivations of young people who decide to travel are a complex amalgam of many of these factors. Re-echoing Jones (2003:2), there is the suggestion that young people today are more '[s]avvy... and motivated to equip themselves for life in a global society' and see travel as one way in which to do this. Travelling then, for many young people, has become a self-imposed 'rite of passage' (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995; Sørensen, 2003); one which they take part in specifically to gain diverse experiences whereupon they enrich their sense of self. They see travel as giving them a type of 'informal

qualification' which they can use upon their return home to further their personal and professional careers (Desforges, 1997a; Munt, 1994). Thus, the informal qualifications which they hope to gain anticipate some amount of self-development.

One can infer from these multiple models and motivations of travelling, especially for young travellers generally to situate the motivation behind the praxis of backpacking. It's been established in this study that the postmodern quest for self-validation equally has a way the need and interest of a backpacker is effortlessly expressed. So whether the motivations are physical, cultural, interpersonal, or based on status and prestige, they are predicated upon the general terms of self or professional development or both. In chapter one, extensive quotations from Niggel and Benson (2008) have been informed by these motivation markers called the pull and push factors, whilst engaging other factors too.

On the issue of destination, backpackers generally find some spaces more suitable to their travel obligations and expectations. These spaces are designated as "backpackers enclaves". Certain markers of interest often dictate choices of destination. The easiest and most basic reason will be where the preponderance of backpacking activities and facilities are best domesticated. Other certain reasons like employment opportunities, physical (geographical) and cultural attraction, the flexibility and safety of travels, and the like are also critical motivations for the choice of "enclaves" which help to support the realisation of the backpacker's ambitions of travel. However many studies have been pointing to the growing gap between the ideology and practice of backpacking (Wilson and Richards; 2005), which indicates that the utopian expectations of a backpacker are often at variance with the realities of travels. It is critical to point out that the expectations of backpackers vary over choices of "sites" or "scenes" for travels.

Duncan (2008), for example, mentions that backpacker enclaves are distinctive because of their diversity. This diversity, they add, "can include rural paradises such as Ubud in Bali, chaotic commercial districts such as Banglamphu (Khao San Road area) in Bangkok, temporary enclaves such as the Glastonbury Festival or Oktoberfest in Munich or city localities such as King's Cross or Bondi Beach in Sydney" (see Wilson and Richards, 2005; Wilson et al, forthcoming). Hence, like Wilson and Richards (2005) argue, for backpacker enclaves to be seen as sites of production, reproduction and consumption of backpacker travel, one must come to terms with the spatial consequences and social reproduction of the phenomenon. These enclaves could be spaces of suspension in a way that it absorbs this

question of variety and diversity. Inevitably, enclaves could be located at “crossroads or intersections; meeting points where backpackers rub shoulders with locals...they can be found in chaotic commercial districts” and many other fluid scenes like Duncan (2008) referenced.

To conclude thoughts here, it is useful to reference a novel term taking over the popular and virtual space on dialogues about backpacking. There is an emerging new backpacker market known as the *Flashpacker* that could be described as the affluent backpacker. Not much critical attention has been beamed on this yet. However, part of the jump-start guide to tourism businesses gives a useful hint to the formation of the Flashpacker. It states that flashpackers share many of the characteristics of backpackers but are associated with greater disposable income and tend to mix low cost and luxury travel, still travelling independently, but with greater comfort. They also tend to travel with gadgets such as laptops, music/video players, digital cameras, mobile phones or GPS devices. Like a sentiment echoed elsewhere, this could be the evolving face of backpacking in another era and timing and those engaging it. It could also suggest the shifting phases in the diverse manifestation of the backpacking culture. (Cohen, 2003: 106/2004: 57) has warned that:

...future research should desist from referring to backpacking as if it were a homogenous phenomenon, and should pay attention to its diverse manifestations, in terms of difference in age, gender, origins and particular subcultures. The complex relationship between the domestic, class, ethnic, national and cultural backgrounds of the backpackers and their trip should be given much more systematic attention than it has received up to now.

Hence, like Duncan (2008) suggests, perhaps, the use of the terms ‘gap year’ and ‘flashpackers’ (Bleach and Schofield, 2004; Sawers, 2005) is “one way in which the UK media has differentiated between the twenty something budget travellers and the thirty something budget travellers”³.

³ The “twenty something budget travellers and the thirty something budget travellers” is used as the designated label to cover age groups that travel within certain age brackets.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work uses the backpacking theory as the basis for engaging Ajala's travels. The critical attention the concept of backpacking has attracted in travel research has been largely undermined by the inability of scholars to advance a clear definition of what backpacking truly means. Rather, what has shaped the response to this dilemma is how researchers have engaged the formation, motivation and destination of backpackers. The aggregate impression that multiple scholarly perceptions about the concept of backpacking informs is that of a subculture of youth travellers who, driven by an appropriated sense of independence and peculiar motivational markers, explore the world on a limited budget. The travellers engaged in backpacking are largely referred to as backpackers. Hence, they are defined by their travel preferences for a rucksack (a large backpack) to a suitcase, free or low cost options in accommodation and social services, slim wallet, interest in exotic places, intermingling with locals and subsumed in their cultural realities, and the like (ref. O'Reilly, 1999; Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 2004; Pearce, 1990; Richards and Wilson, 2004; Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Wilson et al, 2004).

2.2.1 BACKPACKING AND POSTMODERN IDENTITY

On a general note, the question of flows, migration, movements and associated instigators of the idea of travel are central to the debate of identity. Many critics, for example, have insisted that the increasing freedom of trade and of movement is why we are currently witnessing a "net loss of identity, of difference and variation, and that that loss represents a net loss of value to humanity" (Palmer 2003:2). This has helped perpetuate various anti-cosmopolitan, anti-liberal, and anti-globalization agenda by a wide variety of political philosophers and theorists. This idea has not been left to fester within travel discourse, as Palmer's essay was purely a candid rebuff of such insinuations. He argues that there should be an alternative understanding of the issue of personal identity itself and how consistent he suspects it is with the lived experiences of many millions of people (2003:2). This study takes a cue from that intervention by mapping how the issue of identity is constructed too when viewing the transnational evolution of a backpacker.

It was Cohen (2004: 49) who harped on how several researchers (Ritzer and Liska, 1997; Rojek, 1993; Urry, 1990) from the 1990s have begun to identify a 'postmodern' trend in tourism to somewhat reflect the broader transformative tendencies in contemporary Western society. In expanding his debate on the postmodern texture of the backpacking phenomenon,

he explains that the “most important of these tendencies are: the devaluation of ‘origins’, the alleged disappearance of ‘originals’, the concomitant growing salience of ‘surface’ experiences, the growing legitimation of the quest for ‘fun’ and of a ludic (playful) attitude to the world.” Since in the postmodern world there are allegedly no genuine ‘primitives’ any more (MacCannell, 1992b), nor ‘untouched’ cultures or environments, it follows that a quest for authenticity would be a futile enterprise.

Cohen (2004) recounts in detail the diversity and changes in the backpacker market since his own earlier pioneering studies in the 1970s. He suggests that the quest for authenticity which characterised much of the early writing and experience of backpackers has given way to a simpler search for ‘hedonistic enjoyment and fun’ (2004:50). This has several implications. First, backpacker travellers may only occasionally be interested in experiencing the lives, cultures and living conditions of exotic others and may prefer for most parts of their trip to seek familiar experiences, albeit in a different country with some minor stylistic variations. Second, Cohen suggests that many backpackers talk and speak as if they value true discoveries and challenging situations (like budget travellers from earlier eras) but the close studies of what they actually do and how they travel suggest a growing trend towards living in a sub-culture with plenty of familiar partying. A third implication is that if backpackers are postmodern tourists (cf. Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004)—that is travellers who adapt and change to maximise their experience in each situation rather than display a consistent focus—then there is likely to be a future where backpackers shift and change activities and types of activities much more than in previous years. The implication here for the present research is that it would be a mistake to describe backpacker interests or market segments as set or limited: a more likely scenario is multiple interests in different places on varying occasions.

Catherine and Duncan (2008:85) equally observe this trend, insisting that:

...as the independent travel sector continues to grow, with the help of low-cost airlines, competitive pricing and easier access (through on-line booking for instance) and with the commercialisation of many traditional backpacker destinations (for example, Thailand, see Braddock, 2005; Rojek, 1998), so the ability to distinguish between backpackers and other tourists becomes more difficult. The lines between the backpacker and ordinary tourist become fuzzy (O’Reilly, 2004c).

What this says therefore is that there is a level of diversity and change, fluidity and alteration that the practice of backpacking assumes over time within certain spaces and motivations.

This influences what sort of identity is associated with “the backpacker” at a point in time. This pattern of thought is critical for this work, especially by the time an attempt is made in subsequent chapters of this study to illustrate why Olabisi Ajala’s brand of backpacking largely speaks to what seems like his subjective backpacking identity. He was shaped by the realities of his own time and the ideology of his own travelogues. Backpacking itself is fraught with multiple perceptions that make it popular and hated within certain spheres. Like the Rastafarian, a backpacker can project an identity that is at variance with the spirit of his travel, especially for those whose appearances betray that spirit. There are many backpackers who are condemned for their “appearances and conduct – especially sexual freedom and use of drugs – superficiality, stinginess and seclusion in backpacker enclaves” (Cohen 2004:56). There are also those seen as exploiters of the locals where they stay, an erroneous basis to label the backpacker whilst ignoring the economic contribution to marginal communities in less developed parts of the world (Scheyvens, 2002). It is critical to note therefore why it might be safe to identify a ground, first historically, of how the modern backpacker must be seen and applauded.

Cohen’s attempt to map the trajectory of backpacker’s identity evolution is instructive here. He projects how the backpacker is an extension of the drifter and the latter from tramping.

While some degree of historical continuity thus apparently exists between the ‘tramping’ of the past and contemporary backpacking, the emergence of the latter as a large-scale touristic phenomenon is, in my view, related to some distinctive traits of modern Western societies (Cohen, 1973) and the position of youth within them. These traits in turn may have engendered the desire to adopt ‘tramping’ as a model for this mode of travelling, which in its aims, style and consequences differs markedly from all Western precedents. Chief among these traits was the widespread alienation of Western youths from their societies of origin, especially in the United States and Western Europe; which culminated during the 1960s, and led to the (failed) ‘student revolution’ and the various attempts to create alternative lifestyles. (Cohen 2004: 57)

It is clear Cohen is talking about alienation and deliberate choice of oddity when he speaks of creating “alternative lifestyles.” This sentiment is grounded in his projection of the motivations of backpackers in modern times. However, alienation in (post)modern times is far from merely a fashionable revolt to normative rigidities, but also to the stresses and uncertainties of “late modern life” which constitute a disorientating factor that induces young

men and women to take time out (Elsrud, 1998). Cohen had used this historical basis, complemented with a personal encounter with a German student while on fieldwork in Peru who had asked to lodge in his flat for a day or two, to conceptualise the idea of a “drifter”. For him, this self-reliant individual served as the prototype of the ‘original drifter’ which speaks to their apparent lack of itinerary or timetable, without a destination or even a well-defined purpose (Cohen 1973: 176). Cohen’s article is driven therefore by the intention to show, just like Elsrud (2001) claims, that the contemporary backpackers tend to embrace the ideology of drifting, imitating the style or form of travel characteristic of the drifter. Cohen adds however that, “the mode or type of experience they pursue varies widely, with only a minority travelling in an existential or experimental mode” (2004:59).

Hence, we speak of backpackers in the contemporary sense as a set of people whose itinerary or timetable is not as lacking in substance as the initial drifter. Not in an age and time where the commercialisation of its practice is at the core of some nation’s tourist attraction. Backpacking magazines litter the internet where basics about planning, preparing and packing take the centre of backpacking interests, not to mention books and guides on backpacking tips for backpacker sojourners on their preferred “enclaves” or destinations. This raises with it critical questions about the changing face of tourism. As evinced on the subject of drifters to backpackers, the general circumstances associated with the legitimising principle of tourism itself have evolved from the quest for authenticity and the like to that of apparent exhibition of hedonistic tendencies. Enjoyment, fun, glitz and glamorous interest seem to be the major attraction for many postmodern tourists or ‘post-tourists’ (Ritzer and Liska, 1997). And like Cohen rightly asked, “Are backpackers immune to the transformations of postmodern tourism, or are they amenable to their influence? In other words, are the backpackers the ‘rear guard’ of modern tourism, attached to its ideals in opposition to the postmodern trend in tourism? Or are they, contrariwise, the trendsetters of postmodern tourism, creating a mode of travelling to be followed by more conventional tourism, just as the drifters have served as the spearhead of penetration into new and hitherto marginal ‘authentic’ destinations?”

2.2.2 BACKPACKING SINGLE NARRATIVE

Backpacking research has been dominated by narratives within countries outside Africa. This exclusion is apparent in the book, *The Global Nomad*, co-edited by Richards and Wilson

(2004) who, maybe out of scholarly limitations or sincere oversight, ignore any attribution to Africa in a seminal work on the critical intervention on backpacking aimed at further shaping a “relatively new area of tourism research.” This research programme of backpacking developed by the Backpacker Research Group (BRG) of the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) must have realised the lacuna in the edition and widened its critical tentacles to accommodate an African space for a subsequent edition, which was its second volume. In this edition, *Backpacker Tourism Concepts and Profile*, co-edited by Hannam and Ateljevic (2008), one of the major contributions in the publications, "Exploring the Motivations of Backpackers: The Case of South Africa", by Christine Niggel and Angela Benson, there is what seems like a lamentation on this omission in the backpacking research and slanted prejudices towards certain parts of the world. They affirm that studies have tended to relate to destinations such as Australia (Mohsin and Ryan, 2003; Riley, 1988) and South-East Asia (Hampton, 1998; Spreitzhofer, 1998), which have been fashionable backpacker destinations both in the past and the present. They go ahead to do an extensive study on backpacking in South Africa.

Ken Newlands' (2004) study, for instance, is on backpacker travels in New Zealand. He views the market backpacking as created in its social context as it affects the tourism industry in New Zealand. Paul Vance (2004) equally engages backpacker transport choice by applying his conceptual framework as it is in New Zealand. Clare Speed and Tony Harrison examine the same phenomenon and how formal public sectors in Scotland respond to it. In other words, research works on backpacking are more restrained to countries like Australia where its contemporaneous practices are more seen (scholars like Malcolm Cooper, 2004; Kieran O'Mahony, 2004; Patricia Erfort, 2004; Denise Kain, 2004; Brian King, 2004; Lee Slaughter, 2004;), and countries like Scotland, New Zealand, India, Israel, and other European countries. Julie Wilson and Greg Richards also relay influential literatures and literary 'nomads' that have assisted in the overall formation of backpacker identities. However, Julie Wilson and Greg Richards could be fingered for being too slanted as to the basic sources of their identity formations. Generally, backpacking research has revolved around a space unfamiliar to the African continent.

It's clear that not only were the scholars fixated on their subjective designation and definition of who the 'Backpacker Icons' are, they equally looked at iconic 'Travel writers' within that same lens. The scope wasn't 'global' as intended, neither was any of the extolled characters or literary nomads an African. There might be a Bruce Chatwin, Jack Kerouac and Hunter S.

Thompson, etc, whose names resonate with the western audience, but there is also an experiential tourist tales of a curious character by the name Olabisi Ajala who wrote a book on his travelogues. It might be too tendentious to accuse the scholars of deliberate omission of Ajala's iconic travel account since his achievement isn't a concealed fact of history, but what is quite astounding is why the frontiers of this research discourse hasn't been extended to Africa, just in partial reference to either Ajala's travels and mode of backpacking or how it is shaping up within the continent. It is important to note that while we may owe some mild historical pride to the practice of backpacking to Ajala, the contemporaneous realities of this travel mode suggest that not only have many Africans absorb backpacking but many African nations have become destinations for its practice too.

2.2.3 IS BACKPACKING PRACTICE DEAD?

Ketcham (2014) reflects on the contemporary arguments that seem to suggest that the culture of backpacking practices might be dying. He is quick to attribute such argument to:

older person(s) with the tone of the gentle curmudgeon who can't understand why the damn kids aren't interested in hauling 40 pounds into wilderness on a forced march day after day over rough earth, under rain and sun, in order to drink unbottled water of unknown provenance, with a slimy helping of beaver piss and dirt, eat gruel at dusk, be attacked from ankle to earlobe by insects, be watched by carnivores with eyes gleaming in the dark and by mice scheming for gorp only to crash exhausted to the ground in a sleeping bag...with the cruel lash of sun-up and the birdsong bouncing on your tympanum like a pogo stick.

This sounds more about the question of "times" and "age" that seeks to recognise the changing face about backpacking. What Ketcham didn't mean to say but which his contributions advocate is how he introduces the wider issues surrounding tourist practices like camping, hiking and the like and how, like some scholars believe, backpacking is subsumed under them. Generally, the history of camping practice right from the 20th Century when it began to gain much popularity espouses the need to spend time outdoors in more natural ones in pursuit of activities that engender some flashes of enjoyment. This practice is sustained to a great extent even in recent times but modern camping participants have sought

to recreate this kind of experience by frequenting publicly owned natural resources such as national and state parks, wilderness areas, and commercial campgrounds.

So yes, the camping or hiking exercises are done in a way to relive the backpacking experiences but that really isn't what backpacking is all about, as has been affirmed so far in this chapter. It is such a narrow definition and perception of backpacking, and just because a tourist has a bag pack on his back, climbs gruesome mountain slopes, wades into the wilderness, "enduring cruel lash of sun-up" as Ketcham calls it, does not presuppose that, that's what must be at the heart of true, traditional backpacking. One can go camping and not avow backpacking and vice versa, although these terms have often been used interchangeably. Camping can be performed in different ways; as: adventure camping, dry camping, backpacking, canoe camping, bicycle camping, social camping, car camping and the like. Backpacking can't be said to be dying because camping and hiking are becoming less fashionable, and that in itself is not equally an entirely valid point.

In fact, Hider (2015) affirms that the culture of backpacking, which in her argument she denotes as a constitutive element of camping, seems to be growing more fashionable among youths whose restlessness and penchant for the dramatic seem to speak largely to their imaginations of backpacking practices. By engaging the growing fascination of backpacking practices through camping expeditions, she speaks highly of Bodhi Bennett who she calls her "hero". According to her, Bennett has visited more than forty states in America, backpacked most of the National Parks, (Yosemite National Park is a favourite, since it's near Bennett's home in California), hiked hundreds of miles, and climbed to the top of some of the country's toughest mountains. Bennett started his backpacking experiences as a toddler. "He took his first camping trip when he was five days old, and has been going pretty much nonstop since then." (1). Like Bennett, there are bloggers within and outside of America, like the story of Dipo and Sarah shared in Chapter One, who are determined to continuously share their backpacking experiences around the world. This does not speak of the death of backpacking practices. If at all, there has rather been preponderance in the practice of backpacking with unique signatures.

It is important to mention here also that part of such unique signatures is in how the popularity of backpacking experiences has been sustained in a way the spiritual practice of it has also gained much scholarship. Lane (2014), for example, draws on his years of solo backpacking (hiking with the saints along Missouri trails) to suggest a pattern of Wilderness

Spirituality that can be lived in everyday life. He talks about what draws him to wild places, what the ancient Desert Christians can teach us, and how he might one day set off—and never come back. Against this backdrop, it is useful to quickly recall here Matt's (2009) groupings of backpackers. He groups backpackers into eight types:

- The Spiritual Traveller; who is often a white, western, and sometimes young traveller desperate to “find himself.” Exploring local religions and customs, because of his exhaustion of the materialism of his homeland, he spends his time reading books on different religions or Yoga and talking about how connected life is. All in a quest to find inner peace, and learn some tantra among the tourist centers of perhaps the religious nations like India, the hill tribes or Asia, or the shamans of the world. They are usually found in South America and Southeast Asia.
- The Hippie; who are often perceived as the radical faces of the backpacking culture. Hippie travellers use local transportation, eat local food, and talk about cultural imperialism while having fun or probably “watching the latest Hollywood movies.” Matts argues that they usually avoid most tourist destinations or areas “because of its commercial” aura. They are keen on reactivity to social injustices, etc. They are mostly found in developing countries.
- The Gap yearer; they are the set of backpackers that take advantage of a year gap to learn the world before or after their university. According to Matt, “Gap Year travellers like to have a good time, see the main sights, sleep in dorms, and tend to stick to the beaten path. They also drink a lot.”
- The Partier; who from their name are given to too much partying and seek ventilation of such merriments in their destinations. Matt describes such class of backpackers as “*partyoholic*” in an attempt to capture their addiction for such partying notoriety from one party destination to the other. Female backpackers of this type are often expected to wear lots of make-up and revealing necklines. Mostly found in “party destinations” like Amsterdam, Thailand, Barcelona, and Prague.
- The Couple; who are backpackers couple who travel the world together. There are two types of couple backpackers which sort of captures Duncan's (2008) referenced “twenty something and thirty something” backpacker travellers. The backpackers couple who are in their thirties are probably taking a career break to explore the world and are therefore interested more in sightseeing, touring, and doing activities. Whereas the younger version, in their twenties, will preferably indulge in every

activities opposite to that. Their backpacking experiences will share affinity more with that of The Partier.

- The Better Traveller; he is more interested in the valuation of himself and what should be the real definition of backpacking travel ideologies. Matt opines that The Better Traveller is more concerned about, “how insincere and hypocritical all other travellers are and how they really are just tourists and not trying to find the local culture.” He will therefore speak about his experience, deliberately taking local transportation and living in a village for one day. He waxes on “about the death of local cultures and how he’s really out there traveling to be part of the world and not force his culture down other people’s throats.” There is a way his actions re-echo the image of the biblical Pharisees.
- The “Remember When” Backpacker; they are the backpackers that Matt explains in the image of the nostalgic aged. They are the experiential backpackers who reel about their destinations with so much knowledge and complain about how many things have changed. But they are always attached to the same destination.
- The Flashpacker; they are often spotted by their electronics and attire. As earlier referenced, in so many ways, they are the like the ‘modern’ face of backpacking. They are often identified with their defining gadgets like: laptops, cameras, video cameras, and iPods. They always wear “nice watches and branded clothes” and like Duncan (2008) says, they often set out to see the world on a budget but Matt equally adds having “no plans to eat pasta in hostels or sleep in 20 bed dorms.” Their destinations are often where they can get internet access.

Therefore, Lane’s (2014) interventions on the spiritual and soul searching experience of a backpacker somewhat falls under Matt’s attempt at classification of the backpacker he calls “The Spiritual Traveller.” Lane’s book is a useful writ that combines several lessons from his spiritual trail whose retreating offers him opportunities for various types of wilderness wandering, exercises in meditation, small group work, storytelling, and rituals drawn from the natural world. It is a kind of going out into nature, and “going out” into nature, as John Muir⁴ says, is really a way of “going in” to the heart of things. Also, Zink (2014) seeks

⁴ John Muir (1838-1914) was a Scottish-American naturalist, author, environmental philosopher and an early advocate of preservation of Wilderness in the United States. Backpackers on a spiritual mission often find him as an inspiration as his conservation pleas of the wilderness has been affirmed to speak to the significance of nature in man’s quest to connect with his inner tranquillity and mission to self-discovery.

answers to a question others have addressed juridically and theologically, that is: “What unites the Anglican Communion?”. He does that by traversing certain places and spaces as a backpacker. His odyssey of enquiry is facilitated by his appropriation of religious curiosity and the flexibility of travel of a backpacker. This is just how people of several races and continents have been redefining the practice of backpacking to evolve various slants that set and express their narratives better. What is becoming increasingly clear therefore about backpacking and backpackers is the concept’s inherent ability to produce different strands to suit the demands and tastes of a time. Inevitably, backpacking is now deployed by many, by taking advantage of its liminality and dynamism, to evoke and serve emotional, social, political and ideological agenda.

CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research was conducted between 2014 and 2015. The work examines Olabisi Ajala's *An African Abroad* as the principal text in locating the travel as a framework for articulating the practice by an African. This is complemented by interrogating Ebenezer Obey's famed song about the legendary travels of Ajala and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister's intervention too. Both songs are critical extension of the demystification of the Olabisi Ajala's character within certain praxis of transnational backpacking. Field activities included informal interviews, and key informant interviews (KII). The work, besides engaging the main textual sources, also involves the consultation of existing essays and monographs not only on the selected texts and character but also on the broader issues of transnationalism and migration trends and flows.

3.2 STUDY POPULATION

Backpacking practice in Africa is fast becoming a huge tourist plus for certain nations, with countries like South Africa taking advantage of it. This study takes into account this widened gap of research relevance, paying important references to certain bloggers who have moved the boundaries of the practice even further. So, by giving more attention to its historic practice before it became even fashionable, this study therefore concerns itself with the backpacking adventures of Olabisi Ajala using his text, *An African Abroad*, with the songs of Ebenezer Obey and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister as its study population.

3.3 RATIONALE FOR THE CHOICE OF STUDY POPULATION

This study interrogates the normative conception of backpacking and its designated western practices. In lieu of the critical theorisation of the concept and its practice, from Cohen (1979) to Julie and Wilson (2004), there is a gap they sponsor with their obvious exclusion of African spaces. Whilst the argument of the unpopularity of backpacking in Africa is fast becoming irrelevant and inadmissible in postmodern terms, critical measures ought to be taken also to rescue Africa's omission even in the historical antecedents of its practice.

The choice of Olabisi Ajala is therefore central to challenging this and re-interpreting the space and place of African historicity in mapping the practice, valuation and development of transnational backpacking. His text, *An African Abroad*, remains the best textual evidence of his backpacking activities and the associated ‘baggages’ that accompany his travels. Also, in advancing the debate on backpacking, the songs of Ebenezer Obey and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister are consciously selected to represent the possible plurality or multiplicity of discursive plains of analyses that equally dominate tourism and travel research on backpacking. Their divergent impressions of his personality and brand of travel provide a vista into that research advantage.

3.4 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The research employed a mixture of Formal and Informal Interviews, Key Informant Interview and a close reading of the texts used for the study.

3.4.1 FORMAL AND INFORMAL INTERVIEWS

The categories of participants featured for both formal and informal interviews were groups of people who had grown with the legend of Ajala either as a mythical rendition or as merely lyrical content for songs of popular artistes years back. Those interviewed were ten in number including males and females. Two groups of interviewees were engaged. There was a group of discussants whose discussions with the researcher were not structured but rather conversationally informal. They were eight respondents. They cut across different generations of people: teenagers, youths and older respondents. This was deliberately done to test how the currency of Ajala’s myth has survived various generations and if there were variations in generational perceptions. The other group includes those who were asked to respond to structured questions as they relate to how they see the legendary evolution of Ajala from a more academic viewpoint. The number of respondents for this is two.

Some of the (un)structured issues and questions raised at various platforms of discussions on the general views and particular issues reflecting the thrust of this study include:

- issues of legends and myths
- music and its role in the preservation of memory
- perception of Ajala within travel discourse

3.4.2. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

An individual interview was conducted with Chief Ebenezer Obey. This was necessary to determine the mood that engendered his artistic appraisal of Ajala's travels and interrogate his avowal of Ajala's travel. The interview was structured in a way to accommodate the respondent's beliefs and individual opinions about such issues as

- the role of music in preserving memory
- the place of music in cultural production
- issues around Ajala's praise-song and the question of perception

3.5 PROBLEMS OF DATA COLLECTION

The major challenge encountered in the field was getting Ebenezer Obey for an in-depth interview. This was due to his busy official engagements and schedules. I made the trip to his house in Lagos thrice until I was finally able to track him for an interview. After the interview was scheduled eventually, transcriptions were done with respect to critical aspect of the interview which suits the expectation and timeline of this project. Also, it was quite difficult locating enough scholarly works on backpacking in Africa aside recent suggestive records by backpacker bloggers who have taken the advantage provided by the internet.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts a reading of the three texts adopted for analysis in the course of this study: Olabisi Ajala's *An African Abroad* by paying attention to the ideological disposition his brand of backpacking travel engendered, and the lyrical contents of both Ebenezer Obey's and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister's songs which largely speak to the substitutionary yet distinctive perception of Olabisi Ajala's travels. The parallel engagement of Ajala's travel by both artistes expresses the multiple layers of perception and interpretation that Ajala's backpacking offers, even for this study. Both interpretative approaches are critical to the study to justify how both songs are somewhat constitutive of the changing and alternative debates on backpacking discourse itself. Ajala himself, by the spatial realities surrounding his personal narratives, reflects a transnational identity. He was born in Ghana, returned to Nigeria for his schooling and went to America at 18 to further his studies where his travel tales began. The chapter, however, begins by briefly looking at the cultural milieu in which Ajala grew up in. He is a Yoruba, and in stretching a hint from a respondent, perhaps that cultural atmosphere could indicate why he was so adventurous, so passionate about travelling the world.

For the purpose of this study, a correspondent alluded to the legend of Esu within the Yoruba belief system which speaks to the cultural milieu that shaped Olabisi Ajala to resonate with the idea being communicated here. The correspondent argues that, "certain myths prepared me to be better informed of Ajala's character, most especially the peripatetic Esu or any other story, or character in the Ifa corpus that privileges Journey... in fact, the primordial account of the ontology of the Yoruba begins with a journey. You remember the drunken Obatala? The foul that scattered the sand...?" This correspondent's words were echoed by another correspondent, in relation to Esu. In Yoruba philosophy, Esu emerges as a divine trickster, a disguise-artist, a mischief-maker, a rebel, a challenger of orthodoxy, a shape-shifter, and an enforcer deity. The burden of responsibility depicts Esu as the restless trotter across the globe seeking to achieve balance; an imagination, the correspondent adds, might have been captured in the same vein as is "from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and

down in it” in the biblical Job⁵. Although he equally conceded to the fact that Esu is not synonymous with the biblical Satan. The character of Esu in Yoruba cosmology is probably the most misrepresented and highly prejudiced legend in the contemporary religious explanations of the Yoruba people who practice Judeo-Christianity, possibly owing to the translator’s inability to locate Satan within Yoruba pantheons. However, within the purview of the correspondent’s explanation, it is somewhat clear that while Ajala’s travel is transnational, Esu’s is transcendental. So, there has been this recurrent motif of journey captured in Yoruba cultural narratives, which also finds its way into the textual narratives that capture this critical thrust of its folkloric imagination.

A critical example is the popular Yoruba novelist, D.O Fagunwa. He is the author of such classics as *Ogboju Ode ninu Igbo Irunmole* which has been published in English translation by Wole Soyinka as *A Forest of a Thousand Daemons* and *Àdiütu Olodumare (The Mysterious Plan of the Almighty)*, etc. Fagunwa, in his novels, borrows heavily from traditional Yoruba folktales which he extends into longer narrative structures in which adventure is always at the core of such accounts. His novels reflect a sense of quest or travels which Lindfors (1979) has indicted as showing parallel plots with such classics like *The Odyssey*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and certain episodes in the *Arabian Nights*. He equally acknowledges Bamgbose's assertion that Aesop's *Fables*, classical Greek mythology, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and scenes from Shakespeare, Milton and Chaucer also served as sources of inspiration for Fagunwa. A central motif across these influences is the journey motif, which speaks to Fagunwa’s folkloric sentiments since it resonates with his cultural background.

Olabisi Ajala, a highly renowned globe-trotter, socialite and freelance journalist of his time, engages a brand of travel in a way that it perhaps captures his cultural ontology and a global phenomenon in the rarest form. His travels represent a shift; it invokes the need and importance of examining his person as an agency, an agency of re-interpretation, of the theoretical construction, representation and accommodation of backpacking.

⁵ The correspondent’s sentiment syncs with two other respondents who equally alluded to the Esu myth in one of the informal discussions on the issue of the journey motif in Yoruba worldview and belief system and if Ajala’s globetrotting is culturally influenced. Such expression of similar ideas is quite fascinating.

4.2. AN AFRICAN ABROAD: AJALA AS A BACKPACKER

As an initial critical concession, theorising the legend of Ajala's travels within the conceptual frame of backpacking is fraught with its peculiar challenges. First, Olabisi Ajala never admitted his brand of travelling as an extension of backpacking; neither did he call himself a backpacker at any point. This could be largely attributive to how unpopular the phenomenon was during the era of his travels. As interventions from scholars have equally shown, and as discussed in the second chapter of this research, backpacking evolved as a modernist travel term, an extension of certain erstwhile travel cultures and practices. So, Ajala was embarking on countless adventures and travels before such theories of backpacking, migrancy, movement, errantry, deracination, cosmopolitanism, diaspora, transnationalism, borderlands, contact zones, globalization, and flows began influencing scholarship on researches in travels and tourism.

Olabisi Ajala's *The African Abroad* is perhaps the clearest pointer to his brand of backpacking and the text is a gripping narration of travels from the eye of the author, providing fascinating and thrilling encounters across several cultures and societies with mild details about the socio-economic and political realities of these spaces. It also provides a critical window to the private struggles of major world leaders of his time and the dynamics of international politics and relations across several nations. Providing pithy details, the author records his impression of leaders and controversial statesmen like GamalAdul Nasser of Egypt, Pandit Nehru of India, the Shah of Iran, Nikita Khrushchev of Russia, Golda Meir of Israel, and the feud between Israel and Palestine, and by extension the tempered ill-feeling of the Arab nations. It becomes clear that the author wasn't just motivated by the usual fun of, possibly, an average transnational backpacker. There was something humane about his travels, something political and deeply ideological. His curiosity made him sojourn through nations like India, Russia, Iran, in the Middle East, Israel, Egypt and Australia. He encountered leaders, ordinary citizens, the rich, poor, every people strapped in the existential exploration of the unravelling of life's meaning and self-definition, fulfilment and validation.

This study has attempted to establish the definition, motivations and destinations for backpackers in a previous chapter. A little rehash is necessary here to provide a background to further examine Ajala's brand of travels. Part of the argument earlier affirmed is that backpacking, as a form of travel, incorporates long-term exploration of global destinations,

low-budget accommodation, 'local' transport and a flexible itinerary, as well as discourses of adventure and cultural exploration (Hannam and Ateljevic, 2008; Richards and Wilson, 2004). Drawing on the works of Cohen from the 1970s, Uriely et al. (2002), it was equally noted that backpacking has conventionally been seen as a non-institutionalised contrast to the 'environmental bubble' of the mass tourist industry; the existing body of research suggests that 'non-institutionalised tourists tend to travel for long periods, have no rigid plans, and have a vague notion regarding their return' (p. 522). Uriely et al. further refer to the low-budget tendencies of backpackers, who often use public transport and stay in inexpensive accommodation. The roles of backpacking and mass tourists have become less distinct with the breakdown of tourist typologies (Edensor, 2001), and thus characterising backpacking travel has become more difficult.

Pearce (1990) attempts a social definition of backpacking as reflective of critical markers that must shape the practice of backpacking. In his argument, a number of key social and behavioural characteristics of budget-based youth travel were identified in an attempt to capture the essence of the emerging backpacker phenomenon. In this socially based definition five criteria are used: the first as a necessary condition and the remaining four as strong indicators of the backpacker phenomenon. The five criteria are:

- a preference for budget accommodation;
- an emphasis on meeting other travellers;
- an independently organised and flexible travel schedule;
- longer rather than very brief holidays; and
- an emphasis on informal and participatory holiday activities

(Pearce, 1990)

This conventional appreciation and interpretation of the theoretical assumptions of backpacking do however evolve in sync with certain variables associated with its successful practices in chosen destinations or enclaves. Hence, several scholars agree that the early definitions of backpacking as a loosely organised, low-budget and temporally extended practice still remain pertinent. However, the motivations, expectations and experiences of backpacking tourist baggages and what, where and how they eat, go, move, engage, etc., are therefore significantly shaped by this form of mobility (Falconer, 2013; Cichock, 2002; Hottola, 2005; O' Reilly 2006; Teo and Leong; 2006). In other words, there are always

underlying abstract indicators of backpacking practices, but the manner and signifiers of practices vary. This argument inflects for Ajala's brand of travel.

Ajala's backpacking adventures, first from a general point of motivation, accommodated the hedonistic interest associated with backpacking. He was a fun lover. Whether he was drinking away at cheap bars, courageously and unorthodoxly breaking border protocols or meeting several world leaders, the seriousness of his engagements were not lost in the fun-filled attractions he sought from the experiences. For Ajala, the question of enclave affections brings with it certain inclinations that challenge this associated indictment of hedonism with backpacking. His was quite different. Enclaves are in themselves denoted by definite classifications and distinctions, namely the urban and rural enclaves. Cohen (2004) extensively discusses the apparent and significant differences between urban and rural enclaves in the degree of their demarcation, the kinds and quality of services provided, and their role and function in the backpackers' trip. He argues for example that urban enclaves such locations as Khao San in Bangkok are less demarcated than rural ones such as Pai in the north of Thailand (Emmons, 2000), and are much more commercialised (Maneerungsee, 2001, Spreitzhofer, 1998). They are central nodes via which backpackers arrive in the country, or through which they are forced to pass, rather than overt destinations of choice (as are remote rural enclaves). Urban enclaves therefore, Cohen (2004) claims, serve instrumental purposes: within them, the new arrivals orient themselves, organise their travels and make purchases, activities that are less important in rural enclaves. Both kinds of enclaves, however, also serve as meeting places and provide for the hedonistic desires of backpackers for food, drink, drugs, rest and 'having a good time'. Although the rural enclaves appear to be preferred to the urban ones for these purposes some like KoPangan in southern part of Thailand, have acquired a worldwide reputation as sites of virtually unrestrained hedonism; epitomised in the Full Moon Party (Jidvijak, 1994).

Ajala equally travelled alone in an independently organised, flexible travel itineraries and schedules. Maoz (1999) creates a dichotomy for how old and young travellers practice backpacking where he indicates the important differences between younger backpackers and those in older age groups. While the former tend to stay in backpacker enclaves for relatively short periods of time and use them as a basis for short excursions and longer tours, the older ones appear to settle down for prolonged periods of time – up to several months – in local communities that may not be particularly popular with young backpackers. Now, it has been expressed earlier that the question of enclaves didn't necessarily shape Ajala's brand of

backpacking. It appears his was marked by some form of elitism. Despite his obvious restlessness in being fixated in just an area, like he was reactionary to the border restriction from crossing to Jerusalem from Jordan (*An African Abroad, 142-145*), he was willing to stay at Australia for a longer period of time. This could be due to the warmth and love he found and enjoyed among the locals there, although he complains about the brutish social relations at some point and the viciousness with which the press pressed their press freedom, the ultimate conclusion is that he found love in Australia, or maybe love found him. But he chose to stay a long while in Australia; in fact, his travelogue narratives ended there. He also wrote the forward to the text from there.

Ajala was therefore a unique, flexible backpacker who, in his dynamism, can't be clipped to the convenience of differentiation that separates what the older backpacker typifies compared to the younger ones. There is an irony in his dynamism which somewhat is a reflection of the free spiritedness of an average backpacker. It's captured in the same vein as in Cohen's (2004) thought:

There is an irony inherent in the backpacker's quest for freedom: while each might seek to do 'his or her own thing', most do very similar things; like the conventional tourists, from whom they desire to distinguish themselves, most backpackers pursue highly conventional lifestyles, characteristic of their subculture; following similar itineraries, staying in the same currently-popular enclaves, and participating in similar sightseeing, vacationing and partying activities – though the places that are currently 'in' may change over time (Teas, 1988). The 'freedom' pursued by backpackers does not lead to the personal individuation of travelling styles that marked the earlier drifter. Rather, the freedom that most backpackers desire is that of unrestrained permissiveness found in the enclaves, which enables them to pursue similar hedonistic enjoyment, experimentation and self-fulfilment under relatively simple (and affordable) circumstances. The state of liminality, facilitated by their 'out-there-ness' (Lengkeek, 2001: 179–180), enables backpackers to gain a novel perspective on their own society and to reflect upon their own identity. Several researchers therefore approach backpacking as a contemporary rite de passage (Teas, 1988; Mevorach, 1997)

There is another interesting feature of the backpacker which possibly relates with what can be referred to as tourists' nationalistic solidarity; an attribute not necessarily absolute with backpacking practices. There are often clear eyed differences between backpackers from

different countries in the scope of their interactions with other backpackers. While most interact with members of all countries with whom they have a common language, others tend to restrict interaction to their co-nationals; this is particularly the case with Israeli backpackers, as several studies have shown, who equally tend to conduct their tourism as a neo-colonialist activity of conquest (Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Said, 1978; Stockwell, 1993). Ajala was easily attracted to Africans, and Nigerians in particular, in every nation he visited. At that moment of philosophical imaginations, they appear to him as the collection of people who can recognise, appreciate and relate with his travel experiences and fill his travel curiosity. They were like ‘travellers’ in a similar vortex of adventure, with different motivations and defined timeline of stay, but shared sense of nationalism or continental connectedness. Like the classic backpacker, he ‘prowls’ in search of them and engage them in discussions and interactions of filialness. Olabisi Ajala’s travels was therefore a reflection of what critical features and motivations of backpacking like independence, fun, adventure, interaction with locals, show of interest in local affairs and other markers depict for its practice.

4. 2.1 SYNOPSIS OF AN AFRICAN ABROAD

Olabisi Ajala’s *An Africa Abroad* is a chronicle of Ajala’s travel experiences across several countries and continents, by detailing his experiences, encounters, perceptions and impressions of the psychology and sociology of people he met, places he visited and temperaments of the socio-political realities he encountered. He has himself described the text as a “work about Man, his culture and traditions, failures and achievements, love or hatred for his fellow man, and, above all, the ignorance of society” (13). In the course of his travels, the highlight of his travelogues revolves primarily around the set of global personages he interacted with. He met several world leaders and controversial statesmen. He probes into the core of their individual peculiarities, engaging the humanity in them all, their emotions; to check if they are indeed men who are ‘sensitive, sympathetic or gregarious’ (15). His book is therefore a compendium of those connections of interrogations and answers he found to douse his curiosity.

The text opens with his travel to India where he was particularly fascinated by the enviable traditions and culture in the land. Ajala fondly extols the homogeneity of classes, religions and cultures in India but spares no thought in identifying the dehumanising colour-complex

and colour-consciousness in the Indian society. The major highlight of his visit to India was his meeting with Pandit Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister of that time, a man he describes as one of the greatest statesmen in the world. From his travelogue experiences to India, Ajala speaks next of his visit to Russia. It is significant to intervene here that the recount of his travels is not projected as a chronological travel thread as it sparsely occurred throughout his engagement of his “six year jaunt around the world.” So his visit to the Soviet Union opens him to some remarkable ignorance of colour dynamics. He recounts, “I did not for one moment think that a black-skinned person could be asked, out of pure ignorance, whether in Africa black people drink black milk instead of white” (39).

While in Russia, Ajala was particular about the welfare of Afro-Asian students and he spares some thoughts on the drama that plays out in meeting Khrushchev. Nikita Khrushchev was the premier of the defunct USSR. The larger parts of the book are dedicated to his travel experiences in the Middle East, straddling his journey through Iran as a link to the Arab World; he was in Egypt, Jordan, Israel, and finally ends his book with his visit to Australia. Ajala travels by scooter in the Middle East, the journey he starts and ends in Beirut. He recounts experiences in such nations as Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan where people were murdered for flimsy reasons and ordinary misdemeanours as drunkenness and misbehaviour in the streets.

Ajala’s journey to Israel is perhaps an important part in the plot of the text where the audacity of his courage is beautifully crafted and expressed. His journey to Israel was by road where he continued from Damascus to Amman and Jericho, in the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan. First, his travel reveals an assassination attempt in Jordan. There had been a time-bomb explosion at the office of the Prime Minister that took the life of three innocent people at that time; an act Ajala claims was attributed to ‘terrorist activities of Nasser’s agents.’ It’s his arrival in Israel’s Jerusalem that projects the kind of traveller Ajala was. He himself terms that entry “suicidal”. Ajala decides to enter Israel through the Jordan border, what he calls “the forbidden Israeli-Arab frontier at the Mandelbaum Gate.” He meets the border guards who were deeply unwilling to grant him access to Israel. The conversation is quite interesting:

... ‘Please, gentlemen, don’t mind me. Kindly get on with your reading. I was just passing by and thought I should stop to say hello to you.’

Both showed frowning and unfriendly faces on hearing what I said. The one with the thick moustache spoke.
‘If I may ask you, passing by to where, sir?’
I pointed towards Israel.
‘Just across there, if you don’t mind, sir.’
‘Not in your life, mister. If you want to go to the Jews across there you must get on your motor-scooter and return to Amman, then Damascus and across to Beirut. From Beirut you catch a boat or plane to Cyprus. I believe there is a ship going from Limassol to Haifa.’
‘But, my brother, you are asking me to travel almost one thousand miles in order to get into Israel when I can do it from here less than a minute. All I need to do is to walk or ride on my scooter across no-man’s-land and I am in Israel. Please be reasonable with me, my good brothers.’
Both of them looked disgusted with me. They were not impressed by my pleas....(*An African Abroad*, 144).

Few minutes later, Ajala returns to ‘gate crash’ into Israel. He captures that final quest this way: “I clamped my right hand on the throttle of the scooter. It jerked briefly and raced forward. Soon it was picking up speed I steered it towards no-man’s-land and across to the Israeli’s post.... I heard the impact of shots as successive bullets zoomed past my head and went left and right to me. One of the bullets burst the tyre of my wheel.” (*An African Abroad*, 146). He made through the border where he was helped by Israeli soldiers. Although a mild tussle occurred between the Arab and Israeli soldiers over who takes custody of him, the Israeli soldiers were unwilling to hand him over. With a phone call made to Ben-Hurin at the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Ajala was able to get his Ghanaian passport stamped, and his heroism reported in *Jerusalem Post* the next Monday morning. In Israel, he was able to interview Golda Meir and explored the geography of the land. He explains his view of who a Jew is and why for him, there are two distinct classes of Jews: the poverty-stricken, dark skinned Jews, whose slum-like residential quarters can be found on the fringe of every city in Israel and the European immigrant Jews who live in comfortable houses and are given loans of large sums of money by the government to build homes and start private business (Pg. 163).

The book concludes with his visit to Australia where he wrote the text. Ajala opens this chapter with the following statement, “If there is one truly politically democratic country out of the eighty-seven I have seen so far it is Australia. Even compared with the United States and the Philippines, Australia is second to none where freedom of the Press and open criticism of the government are concerned, despite occasional abuse of this freedom by Press

itself” (215). The highlight of his experience in Australia isn’t much in his interview with Sir Garfield or his reference to his love affair with Joane, his Australian wife or the biased reportage of his encounter with the Duke of Edinburgh in Sydney’s *Daily Mirror* but his impression of the socio-economic welfare of the Aborigines. He dedicates the last chapter of his book to the Aborigines whom he described as Australia’s disappearing race. He details their history, their experiences and his recommendations for their total absorption into the Australia economic mainstream.

Through his narratives, meeting such leaders as HazanMajali, Jordan premier; President Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt; Iraqi Prime Minister, Abdul KarimKassem; Pandit Nehru of India; Mrs Gold Meir of Israel; Sir Garfield Barwick of Australia and many more, Ajala proved to be a courageous adventurer whose knack for finesse in a rather unorthodox, and perhaps suicidal manner, which he equally agrees to, is a legendary insight to the uniqueness of his travels and encounters.

4.2.2 IDEOLOGICAL TEMPERAMENTS IN AN AFRICAN ABROAD

In engaging Ajala’s *An African Abroad*, there are obvious markers of ideological inclinations that, maybe not totally but, somehow contribute to the basis for his travels. There are apparent backpacking factors like love for fun, adventure, self-alienation, interaction with locals, etc., that were earlier discussed; however, beyond these associated features, Olabisi Ajala, in the view of this study, was somewhat shaped by Pan-African and Marxist orientations. It is important to point out that the practice of Ajala’s backpacking is disentangled from the bare theoretical engagements of these ideologies. However, his actions reflect the spirit of these ideologies.

Pan-Africanism, from a philosophical posturing, represents the aggregation of the historical, cultural, spiritual, artistic, scientific and philosophical legacies of Africans from past times to the present. Historically, there was a wave of the pan-African movement in the 19th century which sought to promote the values that are the product of the African civilisation and the struggles against slavery, racism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. In other words, pan-Africanism in its ethical, historical and philosophical imagination is at the heart of a continental avowal of pride and which in the spirit of Negritude celebrates ‘Africaness’, and is effectively deployed to challenge the exploitation and oppression of African descents, even

in the continued opposition to the ideologies of racism or racial profiling. Pan-Africanism is to some extent associated with the ideological postures of Afrocentrism too. Like several scholars have opined, pan-Africanism is a driving force behind the work of eminent African and African-American personalities like George Padmore, Isaac Wallace-Johnson, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, Aimé Césaire and Walter Rodney. The same can be said of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Kambarage Nyerere and Sékou Touré, just to name a few, who dedicated their lives to the unity of African people (Adi and Sherwood, 2003; Badejo 2008; Amate, 1986; Shivji, 2008; Harris, 2003). For Chinweizu (2004) therefore,

Pan-Africanism is an ideology made up of the most important ideas that have brought the Black race thus far in our quest for liberation from imperialism and racism, and for the amelioration of our condition in the world; it continues to be the vehicle for Black African hopes and aspirations for autonomy, respect, power and dignity.

Marxism, on the other hand, employs a methodology of socioeconomic analysis that engages class relations and societal conflict from the lenses of a materialist interpretation of historical development, and a dialectical view of social transformation. Marxism encompasses an economic theory, a sociological theory, a philosophical method, and a revolutionary view of social change (Katz, 2013; Marx Dobie, 1990; Gimenez, 2001). It's been engaged across several spheres and disciplines to interrogate issues of capital and capitalism, exploitation and surplus value, imperialism and globalisation, class solidarity and class struggle, racism and oppressed nations, dialectical and historical materialism. Marxism is also fronted in every space that threaten the issues of freedom, equality, equity, self-determination and expression; on the subject of private property, women's oppression, lesbian, bi, gay, trans and queer oppression, culture, democracy, fascism, socialism, communism, etc. Marxist ideology has therefore been deployed to confront spaces of socio-economic gaps.

Marxism is associated with the German scholar, Karl Marx, but Marx's postulations were not originally deployed the way it has been applied and fronted in various fields and disciplines. However, many do agree with the notions of his thoughts; albeit in many ways, misconceived and modified: "The workers have nothing to lose but their chains." "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." "Workers [and oppressed] of the world unite!" These are just a few of the slogans still in use today that Karl Marx and Frederick Engels first popularized in 1848 when they wrote their quite famous *The Communist Manifesto*. It is critical to point out that Karl Marx wasn't just a thinker or an

academic in the strictest perception of his role to the academia as a philosopher or sociologist or historian or economist or a political scientist, he was an activist. He interrogated and confronted the society in a way to expand its dynamics of operation and understanding from a working-class perspective. It's always about the polarities of classes, of the bourgeois and the proletariat; of the tiny ruling class and majority of the governed; of the gap that exists between these divides; of the labour of human beings that sustains the society and creates wealth and how shamefully the oppressed, the disadvantaged, the dehumanised, the suppressed and the other associated terms of the deprived, are regarded, treated or respected. For the Marxists therefore, it is always and only about their articulation for, sympathy, association and defence of, those at the weaker sides of the class divide.

Ajala's narratives come into these perspectives with how he demonstrated continental solidarity with Africans everywhere he went and how his concerns often gravitated towards the socio-economic conditions of the poor and dispossessed in the societies of his visits. He makes long social commentaries on these experiences, and even where it seems he agrees with governments' interventions in ridding off what seems like environmental eyesores, he quickly makes a case for institutional repositioning to limit the wide economic gaps in these nations. One is quickly drawn to Ajala's perceptions in his first account of his visit to India. He admits that,

...many people besides myself have commented on the hordes of prostitutes and beggars, who have become a terrible source of embarrassment for the government and public, and who are being discouraged from following their profession.... The Indian government is to be credited for its endeavour to rid the streets of these poverty-stricken and underprivileged people, but I believe that it can succeed in suppressing these debased institutions only when adequate provision has been made to provide for economic and social needs of these dejected and unhappy people. It is not enough to say the streets should be cleansed of beggar and prostitutes without actually doing something to satisfy their needs, including hygienic living quarters and employment (*An African Abroad*, 24-25).

He also speaks about the educational experiences of Africans in India, much as he did in his visit to Russia, where he complains quite bitterly about the intimidations of many Africans on account of skin colour, many of which he revolts against and gets arrested for on several occasions. He complains thus: "The African students in India, like the writer, found it unbelievable that because of their black skins they were not only despised, ignored and

discriminated against, but were often subjected to ridicule, insult and assault by their Indian school-mates” (*An African Abroad*, 28). He was particularly critical about the caste system in India too and how it helps entrench a pathetic avowal of inequity and crass injustice. In engaging and confronting these issues, he often challenges the security establishments handling of these issues in a way to draw public attention to the gross treatment of others. Ajala’s militant approaches to any form of suppression or dehumanisation often land him in trouble but he blazes with his radicalism which he often attempts to equally temper with the political and socio-cultural inclinations of his immediate hosts, either locals or countries.

This pattern of concerns, both for Africans and the perceived poor, rings throughout the text, *An African Abroad*. In Russia, he exudes much delight at his rendezvous with African students there. He retorts,

...the first part of our talk, as we ate a breakfast consisting of steak, poached eggs, yoghurt and black Russian bread, was devoted to African resurgence, nationalism and particularly the events going on in the Congo. I asked them some questions on their stay in Soviet Russia. Were they experiencing racial discrimination in public places or streets? Was there any truth in the reports that African students were being systematically indoctrinated and taught communist ideologies? How are they received generally by the Russians?” (*An African Abroad*, 81).

This particular quote provides an important window to the argument on Ajala’s ideological posturing. It’s clear these aren’t just litany of instinctual questions of an investigative journalist. It shows where the heart of his travel concerns lie. He is interested both in the welfare of Africans abroad and the socio-political realities back in Africa. The connection he sustains with the happenings in Africa and the immediate interest of their welfare in Russia reveals his pan-African and Marxist projections and dispositions.

While in Israel, his philosophical musings and interrogations of the classes of Jews which he discusses in his “What is a Jew?” chapter are predicated upon his economic interpretation of their social realities. He explains in stark pictures his classification as representative of poverty-stricken, dark-skinned Jews who live in much squalor and slum-like residential quarters as opposed to the European immigrant Jews who live in more comfortable homes (*An African Abroad*, Pg. 163). In Jordan, Egypt, Iran, and also in Australia where the sharp contrasts in the social and economic welfare of the Aborigines whom he declares “are still

living very much in Stone Age conditions through no fault of their own” with that of the white Australians, Ajala consciously deploys narratives, descriptions and commentaries that point to his desire to effectively communicate the various economic gulfs he sees in every society. He was also bold about his admiration of his African root and solidarity with his African brothers.

4.2.3 THE LEGEND IN AN AFRICAN ABROAD

In the course of any casual online research interest into ‘Ajala’s life and times’, there’s the certainty of encountering various online platforms where snippets of Olabisi Ajala’s life narratives are hanged at the center of public debates and interrogations. The questions often thrown at those who berate or lament in pure affectionate sentiments the obscurity he suffers towards his late life are: What is legendary about a man who dies in penury? How did he spend his money and life? Despite travelling round the world, why would he die almost alone? Such list of moralist, subjective interrogations cannot however obscure the “legend” that shapes Ajala’s travelogues. What is clear though is that legends are not made by the sanctimonious avowals of selected voices. Rather, legends often recognise a personality or human being who happens to often reside at the center of an uncommon feat. Legends, like other mythological markers and ritual, are used by humans to establish a sense of community, identity, and an understanding of their place in the universe. These tools maintain the traditions of a culture and reflect what is most important in people’s lives (Lynch, 2010).

Bascom (1976) attempts a definition of legend which he describes as:

Prose narratives which, like myths, are regarded as true by the narrator and his audience, but they are set in a period considered less remote, when the world was much as it is today. Legends are more often secular than sacred, and their principal characters are human. They tell of migrations, wars and victories, deeds of past heroes, chiefs, and kings and succession in ruling dynasties. [4]

Legends in their historical intimations, as Bascom suggests here, are basically situated within the temporal realm of antiquity. However, there is a dynamic signet associated with legends and cannot therefore be relegated or consigned exclusively to the past. This is precisely because the iconic feat associated with legend instigates and inspires recollection in the performance of the everyday. Such quotidian value therefore invests legend with enduring

relevance in the present. Besides the inspirational values of legends, there are also prohibitive and forbidding dimensions to the understanding of legends. This means that a legend that inspires may also serve as a deterrent to both narrators and listeners. This is precisely because a great legendary performance associated with a historical figure might also contain a flip side. So when an inspirational legend is considered from its flip side, the forbidding dimension is activated. This helps humanise legendary narratives in a way that it excuses absolute perfectionism. There are numerous instances of legends across cultures. In other words, cultures are invented and sustained through frames of legends that inspire various individuals, people and groups into the attainment of great feats. It's quite easy to cite such legends as Oya, Sango, Orunmila and the like which form part of the cosmological narrative of the Yoruba people, the culture which shaped Olabisi Ajala.

Contemporary legends have however been shaped by the globalised results of modified and extended narratives. In practice, for example, modern-day storytellers may use microphones to reach their audiences, but their myths and folk tales remain faithful to tribal history and religion (Lynch, 2010; Mayor, 2000). Contemporary legends are largely referred to as urban legend. Some scholars prefer the term contemporary legend to urban legend to highlight those tales with relatively recent or modern origins. The term "urban legend," as used by folklorists, has appeared in print since at least 1968. Jan Harold Brunvand, professor of English at the University of Utah, introduced the term to the general public in a series of popular books published beginning in 1981. Brunvand used his collection of legends, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends & Their Meanings* (1981) to make two points: first, that legends and folklore do not occur exclusively in so-called primitive or traditional societies, and second, that one could learn much about urban and modern culture by studying such tales.

The statement being made here therefore is that Ajala embodies the depiction of a legend in all dimensions. First, *An African Abroad* is a tale of travels, of courage, of valour; of the daringness of a man and his empathy for humanity, his appreciation of people and view about world's history, culture and intricate realities. Also, just because his travels occur in the recent past is not in any way indicative of the invisibility of his legendary status; neither do the realities that define his later years place a diminishing value on the importance of the travelogues captured in his text, *An African Abroad*. In fact, Ajala's personality has equally gained a quotidian value itself as it has assumed a symbol for everything associated with travels. In Nigeria today, there are travel and tour agencies named after Ajala who is probably

seen as a brand because it's an established shared knowledge that his name speaks to the collective sense of travel and journey. Ajala's travels and the legend it has generated do not only represent the history of the nation, they are also in many ways, a sense and worth of the nation

4.3 "OLABISI AJALA: MYTHS, MEMORY (-IES) AND AN AFRICAN ABROAD"

As an introduction, a lay way to advance this argument of memory is to consider how we preserve information. For example, if one is forgetful and one desires to protect the details of any information, one can do so by writing it down. This links with the role written texts facilitate in canonising memory and cultural templates. One could also preserve that information by telling another person through the agency of lips, and this inevitably speaks to the preservation of a culture's ethos, values and worldview through orality, whether it is primary or secondary. Memory, therefore, is conserved through the textual preservation it enjoys. Text, in this sense, goes beyond the traditional perception of it as every utterance or set of utterances fixed by writing; it represents also every resource that legitimises memory conservation and a people's identity. It can therefore include every signifier of the oral tradition. Dickson (1995) says this:

In her essay, *Transmitting our Identity as Indian Writers*, Beth Cuthand writes:

We come from a tradition of storytelling, and as storytellers we have a responsibility to be honest, to transmit our understanding of the world to other people....In this process, there is something more than information being transmitted: there's energy, there's strength being transmitted from the storyteller to the listener and that is what's important in teaching young people about their identity. What we're doing as Indian writers is taking that tradition and putting it physically onto paper and getting a broader distribution of those stories, because it's really important for us, in terms of our continuing existence, that we transmit our identity and strength from one generation to another (1985:54; my emphasis). Cuthand's words would certainly seem to apply to Annharte Baker, a poet for whom

Writing is

oral tradition... (1995: 328-329)

This therefore can include, within the argument of this study, songs. A correspondent insisted that, “songs are key; since like every other cultural texts, they are a storehouse of a people’s ontology, epistemology and their cultural wealth. Songs help us to both record and deal with the monumental and momentary, and with memory therefore.”⁶ That memory can also be transferred as passed information, the same principle that applies to the subject of orality, is a valuation of the sustenance of the Ajala’s travel narratives. Olabisi Ajala’s *An African Abroad* effortlessly relays Rigney’s (2004) sentiments about how literary texts can function as a social framework for memory, while Ebenezer Obey and Sikiru Ayinde’s songs provide the resource on how Ajala’s travel legend became an important cultural recital. Engaging songs therefore, as veritable source of memory preservation, is a reflection of the centrality of music to cultural definitions. In all societies of the world, musical practices, like other forms of artistic expression, represent an integral part of the total culture. Songs have always been part of the Yoruba cultural identity and belief system. Omojola (2006) has also reflected on this reality:

Among the Yoruba, music is integral to an elaborate religious belief system which is characterised by a musico-ritual interaction between the ancestral, the divine and mortals.... Yoruba gods like Sango, the god of thunder, Oya, the goddess of river, Orunmila, the god of divination, Ogun, the god of iron implement, creativity and war... Each of these gods is appeased through festivals that abound in music. For example, rituals in honour of Sango are accompanied by *bata* ensemble – a group of animal skin covered, double-headed, cyclical drums. Obatala on the other hand is worshipped through the music played on another membrane cylindrical ensemble known as *igbin* ensemble... (2006: 19)

So, there’s a sense in which songs help shape and facilitate myths that instigate certain codes of behaviour. Myths, by conception, are accounts of the origin of societies and institutions not subject to rationalization but often used by historians and philosophers in their quest to study history of a people; for it is only thus that we can comprehend the various aspects of the people’s history and culture. Alagoa (1978) argued that they are historical information transmitted orally by processes peculiar to each community.

Within African cosmological and ontological context, myths often assume the role of invented man-made stories that play explanatory functions in the African understanding of

⁶ The correspondent was responding to why he considers songs as critical to the preservation of memory.

reality. Myths consequently play a very vital role in the African understanding of reality. African philosophy cannot operate in a vacuum; therefore myths provide the necessary analytic and conceptual framework for an authentic African philosophy. They provide the solid foundation on which African philosophy hinges. One must note that they are the fertile ground for African philosophizing. They constitute expressions of the inner side of individuals and their relationship with others, nature and with the supernatural. It is the philosophical reflections of the people in past, preserved and handed down to society through myths; if indeed the past is unintelligible and conveys meaning only in the light of the present, then myths convey meaning only when they establish a coherent relationship between the past and the present. The reason is quite simple. A people's world view cannot be studied in isolation of their past and the past is as important as the present in deciding the future. Given this scenario, we can deduce that Myths bring to light the past experiences of the people and from there the present African philosophy sees an avenue for philosophizing.

Uduigwomen (1995:40) observes that in African epistemology, myths serve as a means of acquiring and transmitting knowledge, for knowledge has a prominent place in the African mind. It enables the African to recollect past activities of men and societies which make it possible for the individual or societies to orientate themselves about bewildering and perceptive currents of the society. There have been disputes and disagreements as to the role and place of myths in African philosophy. Some have argued that myths cannot be regarded as philosophy because they obviously fall short of empirical verifiability and logical consistency, but Horton, (1987:100) debunks this and admits myths and rituals into the general corpus of experience which is capable of exhibiting a logical and consistent structure.

There's the temptation to however ask how the Ajala tales temper mythological quotes that became part of the philosophical and moral ethos of the Yoruba people in recent past. How Obey and Ayinde's songs about Ajala help facilitate this is worthy of a note. However, in quoting Ajagunna (2014), there's a window given to advance this argument. To many, who were already of age in the 1960s when Olabisi Ajala travelled the world, he was the best synonym for globetrotting. Unfortunately, over the years, his adventure became something of a faraway "non-existent" myth. This is further evinced by the data generated from respondents⁷. Many of those born after the times the narratives of his travels were popular didn't even know that Ajala wrote a book. They claim that all they know about him are

⁷ Most of the young respondents didn't know there was a real face behind the Ajala name.

largely tales they grew up to know about him. Ajagunna (2014) further argues that we can safely conclude that in the memory of millions of Nigerians born in the 1980's and below, the legend of Olabisi Ajala's travels was simply another "confirmed" Ijapa-story, i.e. a fairy-tale that eventually engendered negative perception of his personality and travels⁸. He goes on to list some of "these pejorative expressions" that have become associated with Olabisi Ajala's adventure:

'(1) "Lai kii se Ajala!" "But you are not Mr. Ajala!" (2) "Ajala ni!" "(S)he is Mr. Ajala!" (3) "O fe di Ajala ni." "(S)he wants to become Mr. Ajala." (4) "O nbimokiri bi Ajala." "(S)he makes babies everywhere like Mr. Ajala".'

He argues further that:

I understand the danger of hasty generalization in this regard and I am aware context matters, but the truth is, many times these expressions are used, they are contextually used to joke or chide the individual concerned. There are questions to ask: (1) Why is Mr. Ajala's name often used in connection to negative comparison? (2) Why do these expressions carry in them implicit admonitions to shun the Mr. Ajala's type of adventure? (3) How and why did we let this happen?

The answer(s) is/are definitely multifarious, but not untraceable to our perception of indigenous memory, be it communicative, collective or cultural. Simply put, we tend to look our own achievements with scorn, so much so that we are quick to single out or project only the dirty or bad sides/images/figures of these achievements. We sometimes go as far as "creating" a badness for the achievement if we could not originally find one. Mr. Ajala's character/image, I suppose, was a victim of negative narratives, which overtime seem to be the overarching/prevalent narratives as reflected in the pejoratives" (Ajagunna 2014: 1)

The position evinced by Ajagunna's personages of recollections here foregrounds negative implication of Ajala's memory. It appears to suggest that when proper and valid canonisations of facts of history are not engaged, the gap created by such omissions sponsor all sorts of narratives that overwhelm that fact of history. This was Ajagunna's submission

⁸ Ajagunna is a blogger. He argued in his write-up that the preservation of memory in texts- primarily in books and songs- is the only anathema to negative peddling of imagined myths around cotemporary African legends.

in his own bit and effort at proper re-narration of the Ajala phenomenon⁹. It is important to project this because there are positive incarnations of his legend. Sometimes when certain people are referred to as Ajala, it is out of admiration for their frequent local or international travels. This is how Obey's praise-song also contributes in rescuing the Ajala image and legend from purely negative colourations perpetuated by sustained myths. While responding to the one of the questions on the field, a respondent shared his view of the Ajala legend as a way "popular culture postures itself as a mediator of indigenous values, an urban legend that chronicles our worldview." He chose to advance what he calls *Migritude*, which he affirmed can be understood in this sense:

as the migration of cultural texts across borders. We are constantly moving, so are our cultural texts and the memory everybody embodies. For example, Fuji and other music forms in Yoruba land travel with us, and we are able to relate with a song that is a *text* on the idea of our own sense of movement: we move. The song talks about movement. So, we relate.¹⁰

Before digging into this debate further, it is important to crystallise the role memory plays in the discourse ensuing here. How does language equally help construct the longevity of memory preservation in the legend of Ajala? On a general note though, memory represents a collection of systems for the storage and recall of information that borders on personal experiences, emotions, facts, procedures, skills and habits. However, within the parlance of scholarly discourse on the concept of memory, 'cultural memory' has emerged, over the last decade, as a useful umbrella term to describe the complex ways in which societies remember their past using a variety of media. Where earlier discussions of collective memory had a thematic focus and were concerned above all with identifying the 'sites of memory' that act as placeholders for the memories of particular groups, attention has been shifting in recent years to the cultural processes by which memories become shared in the first place. Rigney (2004) provides a critical intervention in this regard when he opines that:

Memory, of course, refers in the first instance to the ways in which individuals recall their own experience, and as such it cannot be automatically or easily transferred to the social

⁹ Ajgunna's ultimate argument is that the legend of Ajala must be sustained in positive light since the negative prerogatives were product of people's imaginations and ignorance of the life and times of Olabisi Ajala.

¹⁰ The respondent was responding to how the Ajala legend has long survived and become popular through the praise-song.

domain. Now that the dust thrown up in the first oppositional wave has begun to settle, however, a more nuanced and usable concept of cultural memory is beginning to emerge, one which is better able to account for the variety of memorial forms and for the transformations of experience which all forms of remembrance entail. Let me note in passing that I use the term cultural memory in preference to its close relative collective memory because it avoids the suggestion that there is some unified collective entity or super individual which does the remembering. I also use cultural memory in preference to social memory (Burke 1989) because it foregrounds what Paul Connerton (1989: 39) has called “those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible” and thus opens the way for an analysis of the artifacts and cultural processes through which shared memories are shaped and disseminated in the modern age. (2004: 365)

So we see Chief Ebenezer Obey attempting to backup human memory as regards Mr. Ajala which ultimately became a cultural one that started reflecting our travel aspirations. His popular song-lines that preserved the adventure of Olabisi Ajala go thus:

Ajala travelled all over the world

Ajala travelled all over the world

Ajala travelled, Ajala travelled

Ajala travelled allover the world

When Chief Ebenezer Obey blared Ajala’s fame in this song, it wasn’t just an attempt at praise-singing but it equally showed a deliberate deployment of English language as a tool to sing this worthy socialite into national conscience. Obey himself believes in the power of music as a veritable tool of communication. It can communicate an ideology, (re)write a n history, stir emotions, teach a morel, and many more. For Obey, “music is a form of communication. As such, good music must inform, teach and enlighten people about wisdom, morals, philosophy, etc. Good music must also include performance of melody and orchestration that can move people to respond.”¹¹ Perhaps, Obey’s deliberate use of English was his own deliberate orchestration of eliciting a wider, popular response. Like Adesanmi (2014) argues elsewhere, Ebenezer Obey was wise to sing his praise in English, thus ensuring

¹¹ Every quoted views of Chief Ebenezer Obey are his answers to the interview granted in the course of this research work.

that Ajala's legend became nationally embraceable. It was a lyric that was as short as it could be but was absolutely enough to impress him in collective memory. It didn't talk about his travel adventure; neither did it capture any of the personal and interesting details revealed in Ajala's text, *An African Abroad*.

Obey conceded that their closeness was a major factor for the praise. Olabisi Ajala, a freelance journalist, was Obey's publicity agent was centrally involved in Obey's charity works. Dwelling on these factors that engendered his praise-song of Ajala, Obey revealed that his closeness with Ajala "was a factor. Secondly, he was a freelance journalist who also worked as my publicity agent in 1974. He was in charge of my charity drive for the orphanage and old people where I distributed gifts." However, beyond these personal markers of inspired fondness, Obey's respect for Ajala was deepened by Ajala's travel merit and global relevance.

Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, on the other hand, provides an alternative evaluation of the narrative of Ajala's legend. Ajala was a socialite and good public relation consultant to a good number of musicians and artistes of his days. It seems, perhaps, that his relationship with Ayinde flowed from that. Ayinde slams Ajala's form of backpacking as a representation of poverty. The song, "Fine Barra", was a punch at Ajala's travels using a bicycle. His line: "E ripeise lo mu omode gun keke" (Can you see that it's penury that would make a child ride a bicycle?) is targeted at Ajala's way of engaging his form of backpacking.

However, Ajala's 'keke' (bicycle) goes beyond the economics of it; it has become an image, a being, a symbol of self-announcement of some sort. It justifies his presence and expresses his oddity. In the picture shared earlier, Figure 1.1, part of the details given about Ajala's travels within America states that he "bicycled 2,280 miles from Chicago to Los Angeles." That was the beginning of his travel experiences that would go across several countries. Later, there was a transition in what he used to transverse several spaces and borders. He started using a scooter. This is shown in Figure 4.1 In the book, *An African Abroad*, Ajala was greeted with questions about his scooter in some of the nations he visited. It explains that the fascination many hold for Ajala's travels transcend just going to these states and countries. How he went to these countries also contribute to the charm of his backpacking practice. And he did on a scooter!

There is a narrative behind Ajala and Ayinde's fall out. Based on a respondent's faint recollection of their feud; Olabisi Ajala was alleged to have tortured Sikiru Ayinde Barrister

with unreasonable requests. The story says Ajala maligned him on pages of newspapers, and pronto, Barrister Sikiru Ayinde replied him with the unforgettable ‘Fine Bara Decent Bara’ jab. Ajala, it is claimed, never recovered from the lyrical salvo. So, just as the Obey praise-song etched him in a lofty height and recognition, Ayinde’s song succeeded in placing him in a rather ridiculous light. Funnily enough, it appears the negative connotation of his travel sustained the imaginations of people’s perception of Ajala. This could be responsible for the quotes earlier referenced by Ajagunna (2014). The song which was featured in his album, *OkeAgba*, provided a background to the altercations to what could have transpired between both Ajala and Ayinde. An excerpt from the song is provided below:

<i>Oni lagbajakisoro</i>	<i>(today, Lagbaja won't talk)</i>
<i>Ola lagbajakisoro</i>	<i>(tomorrow, Lagbaja won't talk)</i>
<i>Otunlalagbajakisoro</i>	<i>(the day after tomorrow, Lagbaja won't talk)</i>
<i>s'ebinitiorukoni....</i>	<i>(is it not because of name?)</i>
<i>ebagbape</i>	<i>(else you'd have known that)</i>
<i>Olorun to da suurusinuomoaraye</i>	<i>(the God who created patience in mankind)</i>
<i>ohunnaa lo sedaibinu</i>	<i>(is the same one who created anger)</i>
<i>kokanyek'opo la poju...</i>	<i>(it just mustn't be uncontrollable)</i>
<i>ohun to fadi'ija,</i>	<i>(the real cause of the disagreement)</i>
<i>mi o le se lai ma so fun araye</i>	<i>(I'd not but explain to everyone)</i>
<i>oni o gbe bukata wa</i>	<i>(Today, you bring financial responsibilities)</i>
<i>Ayinde mo n gbo bukata re</i>	<i>(I, Ayinde, bear your financial responsibilities)</i>
<i>ola o gbe bukata wa</i>	<i>(tomorrow, you bring financial responsibilities)</i>
<i>Ayinde mo n gbo bukata re</i>	<i>(I, Ayinde, bear your financial responsibilities)</i>
<i>otunla o gbe bukata</i>	<i>(the day after tomorrow, you bring financial responsibilities)</i>
<i>Ayinde mo n gbo bukata re</i>	<i>(I, Ayinde, bear your financial responsibilities)</i>
<i>ojojumo lo gbe bukata wa</i>	<i>(Everyday, you bring financial responsibilities)</i>
<i>Ayinde o ngbe bukata re.</i>	<i>(I, Ayinde, bear your financial responsibilities)</i>
<i>To ba di niijokan</i>	<i>(one day)</i>
<i>Wanieminimo je o lowo...</i>	<i>(people will say I am the one who spoilt you and didn't allow you to make your money...)</i>
<i>Ole, wa se kun ise re</i>	<i>(lazy man, go and find an additional work)</i>
<i>Kowainkan se....</i>	<i>(find something to do...)</i>

<i>Ti o ba se ti Ebenezer to n be mi...</i>	<i>(if not for Ebenezer's plea...)</i>
<i>Mibanikonitohun</i>	<i>(I'd have asked the person)</i>
<i>fikeke re mole</i>	<i>(to leave behind the bicycle)</i>
<i>to fi popular around the world</i>	<i>(with which he became popular around the world)</i>
<i>totun fi dari to fi loworepete</i>	<i>(which he returns with in huge wealth)</i>
<i>eyinoripe</i>	<i>(can't you see that)</i>
<i>ise lo mu omode gun keke</i>	<i>(penury is responsible for a child's riding of bicycle)</i>
<i>latieko lo si America..</i>	<i>(from Lagos to America)</i>
<i>to gun lo Germany..</i>	<i>(rides it to Germany)</i>
<i>to gun lo Canada...</i>	<i>(rides it to Canada)</i>
<i>to gun lo London...</i>	<i>(rides it to London)</i>
<i>toba fi travel around the world,</i>	<i>(which he travels with around the world)</i>
<i>nibiti Concordi gbewa...</i>	<i>(where there is Concord plane)</i>
<i>jumbo jet wal'oke</i>	<i>(Jumbo jet flies in the air)</i>
<i>first class lo yemiomoAyinda,</i>	<i>(For me, Ayinde, I only deserve first class)</i>
<i>jumbo jet lo ye emiomoAgbaje...</i>	<i>(For me, Ayinde, I only deserve jumbo jet)</i>
<i>Ema se ba won wi o...</i>	<i>(don't restrain the naysayers)</i>
<i>Fine barra, decent barrani</i>	<i>(It's fine barra, it's decent barra)</i>

It appears from the opening lines that Sikiru Ayinde had maintained calm and silence to the barrage of request onslaughts from Ajala. He had first established how different folks had somewhat tried to taint his character with different accusations, one of which alleged he stole another man's wife. He replied with the famous line: "o ti e niyawotimo le gba" (You don't even have a wife I can poach). It was within that background that the narrative of his feud with Ajala is projected in the song. He accused Ajala of badgering him with his needs. The traditional implicative interpretation of the idea of "bukata" to the Yoruba people is that of financial demands. It perhaps resonates with Ayinde's conclusion that "ise lo mu omode gun keke". This can only suggest that Olabisi Ajala's acclaimed fame and accompanied wealth have slid into some kind of oblivion, leaving him poor, turning him to a perpetrator of some sort of "fine barra, decent barra", a phrase Ayinde uses to capture Ajala's exotic hold to sophisticated begging.

Therefore, Sikiru Ayinde creates a necessary foundation in the opening lines to vent his anger on Ajala. Towards the end of the song therefore, he could allude to how far and how well

Ajala has travelled, but poorly on a bicycle, when the likes of him (Ayinde) travel in Concord of Jumbo jets, even on a first class. It was a classic announcement of his superior class to Ajala. Besides, by highlighting Ajala's mode of travel, Ayinde's critique serves as a counterpoise to the celebratory lyrics of Obey, which leaves audiences in awe of Ajala's travels. However by stressing that much of the travel was done on a bicycle, Ayinde invites us to reconsider Ajala's heroism. The value of such critical affirmation is that Ajala's legend, just like any other such cultural category, is not without its flipside. A conclusion to be deduced is that the issue is not really about the “keke” conundrum or the poverty depiction of Ajala’s backpacking, but the opportunity afforded by their feud to make personal statements of angst. It is important to note that Sikiru Ayinde had subsequently sung Ajala’s praise in his album, *Iwa*, where Sikiru Ayinde had appreciated Obey, perhaps in his effort to advance a truce between them much after their face-off. That is quite fascinating and possibly suggests two things. Obey’s mentoring role was an important interventionist opportunity to influence the eventual reaction of Ayinde to Olabisi Ajala and so is his person highly extolled by both Ajala and Ayinde. The song goes thus:

<i>Olabisi ebony... omo Ajala</i>	<i>(Olabisi ebony... Ajala’s child)</i>
<i>Advertisement pelu bureaucracy</i>	<i>(Advertisement with bureaucracy)</i>
<i>Eyinleni....</i>	<i>(you own it...)</i>
<i>E ma b'okunrin je...</i>	<i>(don't taint the man...)</i>
<i>Sa ma je aye ori e</i>	<i>(just keep enjoying yourself)</i>
<i>Bisi ebony... omo Ajala...</i>	<i>(Bisi ebony.... Ajala’s child)</i>
<i>Obey commander, mo dupe.</i>	<i>(Obey commander, I am grateful)</i>

Obey’s role in this narrative is quite instructive. Chief Ebenezer obey had a close relationship with Olabisi Ajala and equally provided mentorship to Sikiru Ayinde who called Obey “his adviser”. Obey, speaking on his relationship with Ajala, said that “late Olabisi Ajala was a lover of my music and a regular guest at my shows at the Miliki Spot and other places I performed. Naturally, we became close. Miliki spot was a night club then.” In a way, his intervention on truce inspired Sikiru to later temper his evaluation of Ajala.

The divergent view that Ebenezer Obey’s extolling of Ajala’s travels - backpacking practice - project to that of Ayinde Barrister perhaps could equally shape the continual debate of how backpacking is received and perceived. This brings to mind the questions that instigate backpacking researches and backpackers affection for this brand of travel. From the lenses of

Ajala's practice therefore, could it be truly said that the attraction is plainly because backpacking practice is fashionable and independent, or does the inexpensiveness it affords equally, if not wholly, necessitate the growing hold of it on backpackers; a consideration that is very significant to what Clifford (1997) explains in how backpacking is eventually theorized, practised and accepted?

It is the position of this work that by introducing Ajala's *An African Abroad* with Obey and Ayinde's songs into backpacking discourse, a significant attempt to rethink the backpacking practice is achieved. With the complementary interventions sourced from respondents, it is clear that Ajala's cultural and ideological based travel is a fresh approach to debating issues around transnational backpacking. The analysis engaged in this chapter therefore presents how the transnational and intermixed experiences or realities of a backpacker can shape and reshape backpacking practices. Ajala's travels which is somewhat archetypal of the traditional mode of backpackers was generally characterised by his independent style and extensive range of travel. But it's also a reminder that just as a backpacker is a cultural observer and researcher in his own right, Ajala, by traversing several spaces with documentation of his experiences, adds more depth to the growing debate on backpacking

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study begins with the hypothesis that Ajala's backpacking adventures had long subsisted before the current fashionable western practice and moves methodically to concretise the assumption citing various propositions and gathered data. This interrogation of the omission follows the words of Pius Adesanmi (2014) in his article, "Olabisi Ajala: A Nigerian Ancestor of Today's Western Backpacker". Olabisi Ajala embodies this African archetype of backpacking, and many like him, whose transnational backpacking has not received much research attention. By locating the modern evolution of backpacking within Ajala's transnational movements, there is a way it reconnects with and re-presents what scholars have studied about other enclaves, spaces and backpackers (Maoz, 2004; Kain and King, 2004; Ian and Musa; 2006; Cave, Thyne and Ryan, 2006).

Although one is poised to ask why the practice of backpacking has become and remained elusive in Africa, the study argues otherwise by showing countries that have embraced backpacking in contemporary terms, and historicising Ajala's travel to further extend the debate on the continent's space in the postmodern new world order of mobility (Clifford, 1997). Ajala's travels, the period in the observance of his travels, the personalities he met, and the folklore built around him by equally vintage artistes can further stretch discussions about this iconic figure both in the field of transnational studies and in the way such investigation can facilitate an understanding of how legends become part of national consciousness through certain and peculiar performative symbols.

The first chapter **introduced** the significant thoughts that dominated the thrust of this study, which is how the legend of Ajala's travels provides a critical attraction in re-conceptualising transnational backpacking in Africa. It argued that aside the contemporaneous evidences that suggest the practice of backpacking in Africa and by Africans too, there is a need to stretch the understanding and engagement of backpacking in Africa. That through the narratives Ajala's travels engender, there is a critical leeway in historicizing the practice of backpacking as practised by an African. This position helped mobilise a critical interrogation of obvious gaps in backpacking research and how this study can serve as an important intervention in filling that gap. This chapter therefore, besides clearly articulating statement of the problem, as well as the research questions and objectives, equally provided a working definition for the concept of backing as operationalized in this study and its practice in Africa.

The second chapter reviewed relevant literatures on the subject of transnationalism and migratory trends, and how this ultimately intertwines and interfaces with backpacking. It not only established why transnationalism is central to the postmodern drive of mobility and flows, it examined the place of backpacking as a core- a major hub- in that overview and perception. The chapter further engaged the concept of backpacking, its motivations and the enclaves that serve as backpackers destinations. The chapter also pointed to why it was necessary to apprehend backpacking as the theoretical roadmap for critical explications of Olabisi Ajala's travelogue narratives in his text, *An African Abroad*. Data and methods of data collection, as well as the rationale for choice of the texts are the focus of the third chapter. The fourth chapter focused on data analyses. From this chapter, it was obvious that the place of memory through the preservations by "text" plays a most crucial role in framing the legend of Ajala's travels, and when these textual interventions are critically examined, they provide a theoretical basis to further widen backpacking research to historicise it in the context of Ajala's travels long before it became fashionable and popular in practice, and discourse savvy in its critical understanding.

This study has also pointed to ways Chief Ebenezer Obey and Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde Barrister had attempted to backup human memory as regards Mr. Ajala in their famed songs and how it ultimately engendered altered perceptions about his personality. By placing this narrative within national and global consciousness, it becomes clear why the legend of Ajala travels survived generations to become not just a memory of tales but also a metaphor of travels within national context. The name of Ajala has evidently grown to become a national metaphor, and the symbolic role that the Ajala myth has assumed has fronted it in a more general debate about travels, tourism and culture in Nigeria.

It was therefore important to place this within the theorization and praxis of transnational backpacking, especially how the concept of backpacking has become an unfolding critical subject in transnational studies. Ajala took the fun of backpacking literally but interpreted it within personal interests, shaped by ideologies that effortlessly reflected in how he engaged his travels and interaction with those he met. That's the slanted position of an African to this debate which ought to stretch the discussions on backpacking. It is therefore compelling not to fluff up the daring details of Ajala's travel experiences in his book, *An African Abroad*. This has been deliberately engaged to widen perspectives on backpacking research as the goal earlier established in the introductory statements to this work.

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Appendix I

21 September, 2015.

Chief Ebenezer Obey,
9, Akeredele Street,
Ikeja,
Lagos.

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

I write to introduce Mr Oluwaseun Adeniyi Abimbola (Matric No: 132119), an M.A student in the Diaspora and Transnational Unit of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. Mr. Abimbola is carrying out a research work on “The Legend of Ajala Travels and Transnational Backpacking in Africa”. He is therefore seeking to conduct an interview with you for this purpose. Be assured that his interaction with you and the information he may gather in the process are exclusively for academic purposes. He has no intention of blackmailing or bringing your person into disrepute.

While counting on your cooperation, I would like to assure you once again that any information given to him will be treated with utmost confidence and will not expose your person or built image to public scrutiny. I would therefore be grateful of your assistance to him.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Professor O.O. Layiwola.
Director, Institute of African Studies

Structured Interview Questions

- 1) What is your view of a good music?

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2) Do you think music has a place in how culture and cultural personages are appreciated and preserved?

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3) How far do you think your songs have assisted in canonising cultural templates?

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4) What was your relationship with the late Olabisi Ajala like?

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5) What were the factors that gave rise to your praise-song of him?

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6) What are your fond memories of Olabisi Ajala?

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7) In recent times, some scholars have viewed your choice of English to sing Ajala's praises as a deliberate attempt to reach a wider audience in singing his fame to national conscience. How would you respond to that?

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8) What was your fans reception of your song for him that time?

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9) Those who belong to the generation after those of the 70's and the much younger ones grew up to view the legendary tales of Ajala's travels as mere myth. Not until recently was his narratives brought back into public recitals as real, especially on the internet and it was met with much shock and surprises. What do you think could have been responsible for this?

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10) In your own view, would you also consider Ajala a national legend? If yes, how would you want his legend and memory to be preserved as a nation?

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Appendix II

Formal Interview questions

Dear respondents,

My name is Oluwaseun Abimbola, an M.A student of the Diaspora and Transnational unit at the Institute of African Studies. I am currently undergoing a research work on “The Legend of Ajala Travels and Transnational Backpacking in Africa”. The project mainly interrogates the legend that gave rise to the Ajala phenomenon which curiously has survived many generations to become a brand for travels and associated instigations. It’s the interest of this research to therefore map how these issues have played out over time and engage how speaks, in its extended sense, to a theory of travels and transnational discourse in our field of study. I expect that your cooperation in genuinely responding to the questions raised will help shape the eventual findings of this research.

Thanks.

Sincerely yours,

Oluwaseun Abimbola

Structured Questions

1. How critical do you think songs are to the preservation of memory?

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2. What myth informs your childhood awareness of Ajala’s character?

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3. How do you see the legend of Ajala?

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4. What do you think is responsible for the survival of that legend over generations to become a metaphor of travels for many?

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5. What's your take on Chief Ebenezer Obey's attempt to backup human memory as regards Mr Ajala through his song?

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6. Are you familiar with Sikiru Ayinde Barrister's song about Olabisi Ajala?

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7. What's your impression of the distinction of the perception of Ajala by both artistes?

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Appendix III

Cross-Country African Cyclist Gets Movie Role

Mashood Olabisi Ajala, a 23-year-old African student, who bicycled 2,280 miles from Chicago to Los Angeles last summer, was cast as the second male lead in 20th Century-Fox's technicolor adventure movie, *White Witch Doctor*, joining a cast headed by Susan Hayward and Robert Mitchum. Under contract at \$300 a week, Ajala will play the role of Ola, a companion to Loni (Mitchum), a famous African hunter. Born in Lagos, Nigeria, one of 24 children, Ajala came to the United States to study, attended Roosevelt College in Chicago last year. He was given a screen test at 20th Century-Fox last on the suggestion of actor Ronald Reagan, whom he met in London three years ago.



Mashood Olabisi Ajala



Mashood Olabisi

African Student Begins First Leg Of Bike Tour

African student Mashood Adisi Olabisi Ajala, 22, arrived in St. Louis on the first leg of his Chicago-to-Los Angeles "safari" by bicycle and delivered the first in a series of lectures on "Present Day Africa." The bespectacled psychology junior at Chicago's Roosevelt College proposes in his 30-day tour to prove to the American public that Africa has made progress in recent years. He wore the shroud-like costume of his native Nigeria, West Africa, and rode a radio-equipped English-style bicycle. His total cash assets: \$62. Ajala expects to cover 100 miles a day, plans lecture stops at 10 other major cities along the way. Film stars have arranged a Hollywood reception for him, and he will be the houseguest of movie actor Ronald Reagan.



Cyclist Ajala in native garb.



A chat with Mrs. Golda Meir of Israel



Figure 4.4 (Picture taken with Chief Dr. Ebenezer Obey)