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Travelogue: Of Abacha, Okpa & Other Things I Saw On A Road Trip From Anambra To Enugu

I believe two things give people great exposure- reading and travelling. I love both. Anytime I get into a new or unfamiliar environment, I like to explore the place.

I make friends with people in that environment- especially cab drivers. I met Somto and he was just perfect for me. He knows the road but even more, he knows the interesting places and is a good conversationalist.

I jumped into his vehicle and off we went from Agulu where I stayed. Agulu has the best hotel I have stayed so far in this country. I'm not saying this lightly at all. The Golden Tulip Hotel in Agulu owned by the Anambra State Government is a masterpiece of hospitality.



Located on the banks of Agulu Lake, the landscape is a beauty to behold. If you love nature like me, you don't need to go any further. Just looking at the hills and the lake will give you immense pleasure. The view from my room was simply breathtaking.



That hotel is a piece of hidden treasure. It's a beautiful getaway from the hustle and bustle of Lagos. The hotel was formally commissioned in January this year though operations started last September.



With a few additions such as a spa and a more varied menu, you have a perfect spot for a holiday. Agulu is the hometown of Peter Obi and the late Dora Akunyili.

As Somto drove away from Agulu, I pointed out how beautiful it will be for the hotel to get a few speedboats for lodgers and revellers to explore Agulu Lake. It was then he told me about the crocodiles in the lake. "Agu" actually means crocodile in Igbo.

He told me how a crocodile usually comes out and people park their cars to watch it. The Agulu people worship crocodiles so they don't kill it. I believe there should be a way to explore that Lake while still respecting age-old traditions. That lake should be a money-spinner.

Somto told me about the traditions of various communities in Anambra. As we passed through Nise, he said the people there worship snakes just like the natives of Amawbia. They don't kill snakes even if they find them in their homes.

They can gently pick them with sticks or even beg them 'biko, go away'. Snakes don't attack people there also. In Nimo, it's the python that is worshipped. In Awka, it's the monkey.

As we drove into Awka, I observed it's actually a small town. We passed in front of the Governor's Lodge at Amawbia Awka- a very expansive piece of real estate with walls painted white. A part of the road was demarcated and devoted solely to

vehicles going to the Governor's Lodge

We followed the old Ring Road and soon we were at Agu Awka. A short while after, we got to Amansea- a boundary town between Anambra and Enugu. It's at this place where you will see a huge signage "Goodbye From Anambra State". Anambra has a good network of roads.



Somto spoke very highly of Peter Obi and credited him with linking all the towns and communities. In his words, "Peter Obi did everything". I saw an abandoned mall which he told me Peter Obi started. He said a new one was built in Onitsha. I think that project should be completed

Awka can take a befitting mall too as the State Capital. Unizik is on that Amansea road.

We saw an accident immediately after the bridge coming into Enugu. It happened shortly before we got there. It seemed there were no casualties. Ugwuoba is the first town in Enugu. It's part of Oji River LG. We passed the old road because the new road is bad.



I understand the new road is a Federal Road and it was Gburugburu, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, the Governor of Enugu State that repaired the old road. I learnt it used to take up to 3 hours to drive from Enugu to Anambra before because of the bad road.

Almost everywhere you turned, there is a signage "Gburugburu is working". I wonder when we will get rid of these primitive concepts. I observed Abacha sold on the road side as we drove on that express.



Abacha is from cassava and is mixed with oil and pepper to make a delicacy that the Igbos love. I also saw people selling okpa. I understand that Enugu's okpa is the sweetest.



As we approached Oji River, I saw the Leprosy Settlement Centre to the left. I also saw the power station and was told that the electricity in Anambra is powered by Oji River.



As we drove a bit further and got to Naachi, Somto told me about a healing stream sometime ago on that road and how people travelled from far to fetch the water, thereby causing great traffic on that road.

The story was that a nomadic herdsman who was partially blind came across a stream and was healed immediately he drank the water. Trust people to spin a business around it as the water was sold in gallons on that road. This just reinforces how we are superstitious as Africans.

One of the questions someone asked me in Anambra was how true the issue of using pants for ritual is. I was embarassed to say the least. As we drove, Somto blasted a mixtape that featured Olamide, Phyno, Wizkid, Davido and others. He seemed to like Olamide's "Poverty die die".

I asked him who he thought was better: Wizkid or Davido? His answer was Wizkid. But he said each Davido song is always a hit.

We saw another accident at Naachi- a lone one. From Naachi, we got to Udi. Sullivan Chime, a former governor, is from Udi. Udi is famous for its bush meat. Somto told me the story of Sullivan's deputy that was impeached for raising fowls at the Deputy Governor's lodge.



We laughed as I remembered that incident. Somto believes that Sullivan also performed well as Governor. I saw the Road Safety Academy at Udi. A short while after, we got to the road that led to 9th Mile- a major road which further leads to Nsukka and onwards to Abuja.

We took the detour that led to Enugu.

We passed through Agbudu Kingdom and got to Udi hills - a road that is very slopy and windy. One had to slow down on this portion of the road. Udi hills road is risky at night.



Robberies and accidents take place regularly due to the topography. However, the view is beautiful as you look at the surrounding mountains and hills. We got to the 4-Corner road which leads to PH.

Somto showed me the road that led to Agbani where Chimaroke Nnamani, a former governor, is from. The Law School is around there. Esut (Enugu State University) is also at Agbani.



I was told that Enugu actually means "on top of hill". Water is difficult to get in Enugu due to its topography. Enugu is known for its coal. Water tankers make money due to the scarcity as only the area around 9th mile has sufficient water.

We travelled on the Enugu- Abakaliki express. Out of all the South East States, I think it is only Ebonyi I've not been to. I've been to Imo, Abia, Anambra and Enugu. I observed that Enugu has good roads also. We saw the Independence Layout along our way.

As we approached the airport, I saw Anammco again. The last time I was in Enugu, I remember asking if nothing could be done to resuscitate what used to be the pride of the East. It still looks like it's dead.

That factory was famous for producing motor parts. I saw the international airport under construction. We finally arrived at Akanu Ibiam Airport and I had to disembark.

Somto was a very good guide. He even helped me with my luggage. His fee was very reasonable. I told him I will always call him when I'm in town. I had a great time.

(All pictures taken by me)
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