

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

- 1. Please provide any information about the Abakaya Secret Society in Nigeria.**
- 2. Please provide any information about a group named ‘Capol’?**
- 3. Please provide information on student cult groups in Lagos State Polytechnic and in Nigeria generally.**

RESPONSE

1. Please provide any information about the Abakaya Secret Society in Nigeria.

No information was found in the sources consulted regarding the Abakaya secret society. A search was also conducted using alternative spellings including: ‘Abakay’, ‘Abakays’, ‘Abakaya’ and ‘Abakhaya’.

An online discussion forum titled ‘Nigerian Student Cults Confraternities’ contains a few blogs which use the term ‘Abakaya’. However, the use of ‘Abakaya’ does not appear to be in reference to the Abakaya secret society. It appears to be used instead as a greeting or form of address. The following blogs use the term ‘Abakaya’:

- **shereef2813** 07-28-2007,
07:30 PM

abakayah to all rugged there....hw are ou doing...make you na do gentle for
school.....who be aye whey de, dey fumble say them be something.....dont mind
them.....

shereef2813 07-29-2007,
01:01 PM

abrakaya.....i be your papa theremeet me on my yahoo
shereef2813@yahoo.com ('Nigerian Student Cults Confraternities Nigerian
 Student Cults Confraternities: Cultism' 2007, Fight Against Coercive Tactics
 Network (F.A.C.T.net) website
<http://www.factnet.org/vbforum/showthread.php?t=3103> – Accessed 29 August 2008
 – Attachment 1).

- abrakaya to all rugged and world rugged birds i just say make i hail una big time but my advice for u guys in schools is to let let peace reign and pls it will be at ur own interest to renounce and if u can,t do it pls try to avoid anything that will debar ur academics progress .a word is enough 4 a wise.atta ('Nigerian Student Cults Confraternities Nigerian Student Cults Confraternities: abrakaya to all rugged and wor' 2005, Fight Against Coercive Tactics Network (F.A.C.T.net) website, 23 January <http://www.factnet.org/vbforum/showthread.php?t=3103> – Accessed 29 August 2008 – Attachment 2).

2. Please provide any information about a group named 'Capol'?

No reference was found in the sources consulted of 'Capol' in association with any student group or cult in Ikeja or wider Nigeria.

3. Please provide information on student cult groups in Lagos State Polytechnic and in Nigeria generally.

Additional information has been provided on student cults at Lagos State Polytechnic and on the problem of student cults in Nigeria generally.

Lagos State Polytechnic

Recent reports quoted below indicate that the Lagos State Polytechnic has experienced problems with student cult groups operating on campus including reports of violent assaults on students, kidnapping and forced initiation. A 2004 report indicates that following a violent attack on a teacher and students the Lagos State Polytechnic decided to establish "an anti-cultism bureau" and an armed police post on campus. However, no other reports were found of an anti-cult bureau or armed police post at Lagos State Polytechnic. The website for the Lagos State Polytechnic does not provide information on an anti-cult bureau or police post on campus ('Laspotech News Flash' 2008, Lagos State Polytechnic website, 23 May http://mylaspotech.net/newsflash/newsflash_2008_05_23.pdf – Accessed 29 August 2008 – Attachment 3; 'Laspotech News Flash' 2008, Lagos State Polytechnic website, 25 April http://mylaspotech.net/newsflash/NewsFlash_2008_04_25.pdf – Accessed 29 August 2008 – Attachment 4; 'Police Nab Notorious Cultist in Lagos' 2007, *Daily Champion*, 16 July, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 5; Adenipekun, O. 2004 'Lagos Poly Establishes Anti-Cultism Bureau' *Vanguard*, 13 May allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 6).

Newsletters from the Lagos State Polytechnic website which were issued by the Information and Public Relations Unit of the Rectors Office, indicate recent problems with student cult gangs on campus. The following extract from a newsletter dated 23 May 2008 reports that three students were placed on probation "for engaging in cult-related activities":

Management has placed three students of the School of Part-Time Studies (Evening), SPTS(E): Sokunbi Babatunde Johnson(ND2 Computer Science), Ogunsanmi Olakunle

Samuel(ND2 Computer Science) and Unokeniegben Gabriel(ND2 Accountancy) on immediate probation for engaging in cult-related activities.

The trio have been identified as the king-pins of a cult group in the SPTS(E) carrying out relentless terrorism on innocent students through forceful initiation, snatching of GSM hand sets and extortion of money.

The activities of these suspects have resulted into many innocent students being lured out of the campus during lecture hours and taken across the Shagamu Road for initiation into cult groups. They have also been found to close late for lectures and loiter under the cover of darkness around the 1st gate to dispossess students on their way home.

The Rector has reiterated the purpose for which the SPTS(E) was created, “to afford students who could not gain admission through the Joint Admission and Matriculation Examination Board (JAMB) an opportunity to enjoy polytechnic education as well as meet the Lagos states’s education policy of Education for all”.

He has therefore declared a total war on all forms of anti-social activities in the Polytechnic, emphasizing that “there is no hiding place for cultists” (‘Laspotech News Flash’ 2008, Lagos State Polytechnic website, 23 May

http://mylaspotech.net/newsflash/newsflash_2008_05_23.pdf – Accessed 29 August 2008 – Attachment 3).

A 25 April 2008 newsletter from the Lagos State Polytechnic website also reports on a cult related incident on campus. The newsletter states that:

The Polytechnic has placed four students of the School of Part-time Studies (SPTS) on probation for engaging in cult related activities.

The suspected cultists Agbomabiwon Olukayode Adetayo-Reg no066191168, Akinrinola Samuel-Reg no 06619114, Akinmade Benjamin and Adeyemi Oluseun Michael (all NDII students of Business Studies Department) were found to have ganged-up to assault one Mr. Bamidele Matthew Adebayo (also an NDII Business Studies student in the SPTS).

It was discovered upon investigations that Mr. Agbamabiwon Tayo masterminded the attack on Bamidele.

Management in pursuant of a cultist-free environment considers mob-action as one of the characteristics of cult operation and consequently put the gang on probation pending conclusion of the ongoing investigations, after which further action will be taken (‘Laspotech News Flash’ 2008, Lagos State Polytechnic website, 25 April

http://mylaspotech.net/newsflash/NewsFlash_2008_04_25.pdf- Accessed 29 August 2008 – Attachment 4).

On 16 July 2007 the *Daily Champion*, a Lagos based news organisation, reported on the arrest of a “notorious cultist” who kidnapped two students from Lagos State Polytechnic and threatened to murder them unless they joined a student cult. The report states that:

Police in Lagos have arrested a notorious cultist, who allegedly specialises in kidnapping students and forcing them to join secret cults against their wish.

The suspect identified as Ibrahim Musa was said to have kidnapped two students of Lagos State Polytechnic Ikorodu at the weekend and threatened to kill them if they decline to join one of the cults in the school.

Daily Champion learnt that luck ran against Musa, when the students declined to enlist as members of Eiye fraternity insisting that they promised their parents not to join secret cults before enrolling in the school.

A witness noted that Musa and four others took the students inside a thick bush at Ikorodu to coerce them to join the cult or face undisclosed punishment.

...Ojajuni, who is a Superintendent of Police (SP) said two students (names withheld) overheard the discussions of the cultists and reported to the police at Ikorodu who immediately raced to the scene.

He stated that Musa has confessed his serial roles in kidnapping and recruiting members for Eiye fraternity and other cults in several higher institutions in the state ('Police Nab Notorious Cultist in Lagos' 2007, *Daily Champion*, 16 July, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 5).

In February 2007 the *Daily Champion* interviewed Mr Mudatir Ganiyu, the former Head of the Mass Communication Department at Lagos State Polytechnic. In the interview Mudatir Ganiyu talks briefly about possible actions which could be undertaken to combat student cults and his view on the ineffective role of Nigerian police in assisting this process:

What do you think is the solution to the problem of cultism in the nation tertiary institutions?

The first thing is that parents should monitor their children, check them at the appropriate time in school check their rooms, know their friends, check their pockets sometime while on campus and the school authorities should as well conduct a thorough screening before given admission to any student, so that cultism can be checked and scraped out of the system.

Sir can building of police posts on campuses solve the problem of cultism?

It can never solve it but add more to the problems, because our police don't want that kind of job. The experience on how to handle students is not there.

In advanced countries, police can demonstrate the skill but over the years what we hear from Nigeria police was students killed, murder by the police (Ikugbayigbe, F & Akinyemi, R. 2006 'The HND BSC Disparity Has Not Been Resolved – Ganiyu', *Daily Champion*, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 7).

On 13 May 2004 *Vanguard*, a Nigerian news source, reported that a student cult group had attacked a teacher and several students with machetes at Lagos State Polytechnic. A decapitated human head was also reported to have been left at the main gate of the Isolo campus on 1 May 2004. This incident resulted in a decision by the Lagos State Polytechnic to establish "an anti-cultism bureau" and an armed police post on campus. It is unclear whether the police post or the anti cult bureau were actually created or whether they are still in operation. The *Vanguard* reported that:

The decision to establish an anti-cultism bureau at the Lagos State Polytechnic (LASPOTECH) has come as a big relief to staff, students and parents who are just smarting from an attack suspected to have been launched by cultists on the Isolo campus of the institution on Friday, April 30 during students' union elections for the 2003/2004 academic session.

...The anti-cultism bureau which would be established by the management of the Polytechnic with the support of Lagos state government, is to be headed by a police officer. The task of the bureau is to eradicate all cult activities and other related vices in the school. Its terms of reference are as follow: to investigate, document and take appropriate actions on cultists based on complaints of threat and harassment by students; to appraise cult situations every six months, and to determine the extent of the membership of students in cult-activities in the polytechnic.

The Governing Council of the Polytechnic further approved for immediate implementation the establishment of a police post with armed policemen at the Isolo and Ikorodu campuses of the institution, raising of the wall fence at Isolo campus, to be reinforced with American security spiral fence wire as well as the introduction of personal accident insurance scheme for all staff and students.

These measures aimed at beefing up security in the institution became necessary after the suspected cultists beat all security arrangements and forced their way into the auditorium arena of the Isolo campus in a convoy of three vehicles. The invaders consequently disrupted the hitherto peaceful students' union elections by shooting sporadically into the air.

Investigations revealed that the attackers, putting on black caps and armed with machets, had stormed the campus to disorganise the elections after realising that one of their members was clearly losing the election. At the same time, the suspected cultists had an axe to grind with a teacher at the Polytechnic, Ahmed Omotola Ojodu of the department of Business Administration, who was at the voting exercise as one of the returning officers.

Ojodu had allegedly stepped on their toes by exposing an HND 1 Business Administration student, while cheating during the first semester examination of the 2001/2002 academic session. With dismissal hanging on the student's neck, he allegedly led the April 30 attack, identified Ojodu as the lecturer who caught him cheating and ordered that he be attacked by the dare-devil gang that came with him.

Accordingly, several machet cuts were inflicted on Ojodu, but the one that nearly terminated his life had landed on his head which affected the veins supplying blood to his system. Taking him for dead after falling, his assailants had left him to attack students who were opposed to their activities. It was during this time that Ojodu managed to crawl to a safe point where he was rushed to the nearest hospital. His life was saved after transfusing him with ten pints of blood.

No fewer than eight students received serious machet wounds from the attackers (Adenipekun, O. 2004 'Lagos Poly Establishes Anti-Cultism Bureau' *Vanguard*, 13 May allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 6).

A 2003 article from *PM News*, a Lagos news agency, reports that the rector of the Lagos State Polytechnic described the institution as "in the grip of suspected cult groups". The article reports on the cult murder of a student at Lagos State University and the fear within Lagos institutions, including the Lagos State Polytechnic, of infiltration by cult groups:

Following cult attacks leading to the brutal killing of a 400L Economics student at the Lagos State University (LASU) recently, palpable fear has gripped the state's tertiary institutions, including Lagos State Polytechnic and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education.

P.M. News investigations in these institutions indicate that students, teaching and non-teaching staff, now watch their movements, especially at night.

The situation at LASU, the theatre of rival cult clashes involving Black Axe and Eye

fraternity, is particularly worse, as students have begun staying away from the Ojo main campus.

Already, security has been beefed up at the Ojo main campus of the school, as security guards and policemen maintain vigil at both the Iyana-Ipaja and main entrances to the campus.

At both the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, a few Kilometres from LASU and Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikosi-Ketu and Isolo campuses, fear of infiltration of cult groups is also rife.

Only recently, the Rector of LASPOTEC, Engineer Olawunmi Gasper, admitted rather regretfully that the institution was in the grip of suspected cult groups.

A cross section of students and other members of the academic community in the institutions deplored the resurgence of cultism on the campuses and expressed fear of a greater bloodbath unless something is done urgently to redress the situation.

“Tell me,” one of them, queried. “How can cultists drag a student out of an examination hall and murder him without any security man threatening them?” Meanwhile, the Lagos State House Committee on Education, led by its Chairman, Honourable Abdulteef Abdul Hakeem has made known its plan to make a law against cultism (Obaro, G 2003 ‘Fear of Cultists Grips Lagos Tertiary Institutions’, *P.M. News*, 4 September, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 8).

Student cults in Nigeria

A July 2007 article in the *Terrorism Monitor*, a Jamestown Foundation publication, provides a brief overview and description of student cults in Nigeria. The article describes their emergence in the 1950’s, their increasing criminal behaviour and lists many prominent student cult groups (Wellington, B. 2007 ‘Nigeria’s Cults and their Role in the Niger Delta Insurgency’, *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation website, vol.5, issue 13, 6 July, pp. 8-10 <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373530> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 9).

A March 2006 report by The Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo) provides information on asylum claims based on student cults in Nigeria. Landinfo is an independent body which provides advice to Norwegian immigration and governmental organisations on “human rights situations and issues in foreign countries”. The report provides the following relevant information on student cults in Nigeria and asylum claims:

Fraternity cults are a widespread phenomenon on university, polytechnic and college campuses in Nigeria, and their activities receive considerable media attention. Fear of persecution from such cults is a common asylum claim submitted by Nigerians in Europe and North America. Such claims refer to persecution in the form of extortion for money or services, pressure to join cults, threats to former cult members who have left the cult, sexual harassment (especially of female students), etc.

In media reports and other studies, names such as the Vikings, the Buccaneers (Sea Lords), the Amazons, the National Association of Seadogs, the Black Axe/Neo- Black Movement, the KKK Confraternity [sic], the Eiye or Air Lords Fraternity, the National Association of Adventurers and the Icelanders feature regularly. These names and similar ones are regularly evoked in Nigerian asylum applications submitted in Norway and elsewhere (Skogseth, G. 2006 ‘Fact-finding trip to Nigeria (Abuja, Lagos and Benin City) 12-26 March 2006’, August,

Landinfo website http://www.landinfo.no/asset/491/1/491_1.pdf – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 10).

The Landinfo report also provides the following external advice on the issue of student cults gained largely from the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria (NHRC):

Bukhari Bello (NHRC) confirmed the claim that university cults commit murders on university campuses. However, he informed us that his information on the subject came mostly from press reports about the phenomenon: «When I was in university, there were no such cults there.» In his opinion, «universities in the south are more prone to this problem.» Tony Ojukwu (NHRC) stated that university cults operate very differently from other secret societies, i.e. the secret brotherhoods of the elite, etc.

Cult groups, with names like the ones mentioned above, sometimes operate in several universities, but it is very difficult to tell whether groups with similar or identical names in different universities are actually connected, and feel obliged to assist each other. According to Tony Ojukwu (NHRC), university cults have powerful networks, and can use these to find and persecute people also outside their own university campus – in the local area, but also elsewhere in the country through links to similar groups operating in other universities. Ojukwu stressed that although there is a certain risk of persecution outside university campus for someone who has angered student cultists, it only happens in very few cases.

Bukhari Bello (NHRC) showed considerably more scepticism towards university cults' abilities to persecute people outside of their university campus, and stressed that only a small minority of university students are involved in cult activities. He explained the cultists' behaviour and lack of inhibitions as a consequence of drug abuse.

In this respect, it is useful to point out that Nigerian criminal networks are notoriously loosely organised:

Nigerian organised criminals are a prime example of organising according to a network model. This distinguishes them from e.g. hierarchical organisational models common among e.g. Chinese or Italian groups. (...)

Short term alliances are formed for specific projects, and the network as such is in constant change. (Carling 2006)

There is reason to believe that this also applies to university cults. In loose networks such as these, the members feel little or no *formal* obligation to assist other affiliated groups, unlike in hierarchical systems like the Italian mafia. Accordingly, the question remains whether a cult group in a university in, say, Lagos would really feel obliged to persecute someone simply because a similar cult group in, say, the University of Port Harcourt asks them to do so – i.e. would the Black Axe group active on the Unilag campus feel compelled to do the dirty work of the Black Axe operating in Uniport in a case which does not concern them?

Tony Ojukwu (NHRC) stated that the influence of university cults is linked to the influential positions held by the cultists' parents. This is a common viewpoint, and is echoed in an interview with a Nigerian sociologist:

Taiwo Adepoju, a sociologist, believes it will be hard to eliminate campus

cults without addressing the root causes of the problems that make students to join the group in the first place. "The nature of the Nigerian society is such that most people want to get power at all cost for their economic benefits," he says. Sowore says the cult students, who are mainly the children of Nigeria's ruling class, seek to

control the universities in the manner their parents control the country. "The cultists are the youth wing of the ruling class. Most of them are the children of military officers, chiefs and influential Nigerians who were responsible for the rot in the larger society," he says. (Olukoya 2004)

The Nigerian researcher Adewale Rotimi points out that not all cult members necessarily have this background, but that students with influential parents are indeed actively recruited:

Students who are sought after by secret cults vary in social backgrounds. They might be children of professors, judges, politicians, senior police officers and so on. The status of their parents in society guarantees them some protection from the claws of law enforcement agents in the event that they get into trouble. (Rotimi 2005:84)

Misty Bastian, an anthropologist who has published a number of articles on this issue, links student cults with general ideas about secret societies in Nigeria:

Rumours about campus occultism are directly tied to ideas about the magical activities of Nigerian politicians, military and businessmen. Cult violence at the universities does not occur only in the Nigerian imaginary, but has exploded into an all too real epidemic of rape, physical (as well as psychological) wounds and death on campus during the past decade. (Bastian 2001:80)

Another source stated that children of university staff who are themselves students in the same university may be threatened by cult members, for these students to try to influence their parents to improve the grades of the cult members. University lecturers are also targets for such threats directly from cult members, and violence against faculty members does take place – sometimes even resulting in deaths. According to Tony Ojukwu (NHRC), the staff in most universities is generally aware of which of their students are involved in cult activities, at least the leaders. In his opinion, it is often possible to verify asylum claims related to university cults with university administrative staff. He also stressed that it is always possible to verify whether an asylum seeker has actually been a student of a certain university (Skogseth, G. 2006 'Fact-finding trip to Nigeria (Abuja, Lagos and Benin City) 12-26 March 2006', August, Landinfo website http://www.landinfo.no/asset/491/1/491_1.pdf – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 10).

A February 2005 research report by the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) provides information on Nigerian government and university initiatives to curb student cults. According to reports cited by the IRB these initiatives have been largely ineffective. The report also provides the following information on the policing of student cults and the reported reasons why attempts to eradicate student cults have been unsuccessful:

Action by the Police

A number of media reports tell of the police arresting suspected cult members; for example, in 2003, nine suspects were arrested in Rivers state in connection with the murder of a University of Port Harcourt student (Vanguard 17 July 2003). In 2004, three Ilorin State Polytechnic students and one other woman were arrested for their alleged involvement in campus cult activities and on suspicion of murder (Daily Champion 31 Jan. 2004; This Day 16 Feb. 2004); thirteen suspected cult members were arrested in Enugu while at the scene of an initiation (Vanguard 26 Oct. 2004); twenty-nine students of Moshood Abiola Polytechnic were arrested as state police renewed efforts to curb cult activity (This Day 13 Dec. 2004); and at least 17 suspected cult members were arrested by townspeople of Onicha Local Government Area and handed over to the Ebonyi state police (This Day 6 Jan. 2005).

Police activity was also subject to calls for improvement (Odili 11 Aug. 2004; Vanguard 18 Aug. 2004). The Vanguard lauded Oyo State High Court for sentencing three students to four-year prison terms for beating a rival cult member to death and recommended police ensure investigations of cult-related complaints are effective enough to be brought to court (ibid.). In 2002, the combined ACCORD and UNHCR report predicted that police protection is likely incomplete because of the attempts of influential relatives of cult members to thwart police action (28-29 June 2002). In his speech to the summit on security issues, Odili, while calling for adequate equipment and funds with which to carry out their task, also admitted that police needed to do more to implement existing laws against cult activity (11 Aug. 2004).

Failure to Eradicate Cults

Media, academics and others provide a number of reasons explaining why it is that state and federal laws and the actions of university authorities appear to have been unsuccessful in curtailing cult activity (African Affairs 2003, 237; Smah May 2001, 20; Odili 11 Aug. 2004; Vanguard 18 Feb. 2004; Daily Champion 3 Sept. 2004; ibid. 15 Sept. 2004; Daily Trust 6 Aug. 2002; This Day 17 Aug. 2004; ibid. 24 Jan. 2005). For example, some suggest that the parents of cult members are senior military and political figures (African Affairs 2003, 237), or wealthy and influential individuals (Odili 11 Aug. 2004; Vanguard 18 Feb. 2004) who supply the cults with weapons (Daily Champion 3 Sept. 2004). Government and other high-ranking individuals have been accused of either belonging to cults or supporting them for their own gain (ibid.; ibid. 15 Sept. 2004; Daily Trust 6 Aug. 2002; Odili 11 Aug. 2004; This Day 17 Aug. 2004); NANS has charged politicians with providing cult members with their arms and ammunition (ibid.). Soyinka argues that traditional rulers sometimes protect students caught in cult activities from justice (Vanguard 18 Feb. 2004). Others have taken the courts to task for failing or refusing to convict students alleged to be guilty of cult activity (This Day 24 Jan. 2005). Law courts are apparently unable to enforce penalties because the law does not clearly define the nature of a secret cult (Smah May 2001, 20). Finally poor funding, exploding university enrolment, inadequate building and equipment (ibid., 46) and poor living conditions plague universities and fuel students' anger and discontent (ibid., 48; Daily Champion 5 Aug. 2004) (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2005, NGA43278.E – *Nigeria: Societal and government reaction to student cult activities (2002 – 2004)*, 23 February – <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=433932> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 11).

A November 2007 operational guidance note by the UK Home Office, Border and Immigration Agency provides information and advice on asylum claims based on Nigerian student cults. The following is the relevant extract from the guidance note:

Fear of secret cults, juju or student confraternities

3.12.1 Some applicants will make asylum and/or human rights claims on the grounds that they fear ill-treatment amounting to persecution at the hands of secret cults or those involved with conducting rituals or fetish magic, known as juju [the African phrase for *Voodoo*]. Other applicants may express a fear of ill-treatment at the hands of student confraternities, often referred to as student cults.

3.12.2 Treatment. Secret societies or cults exist in Nigeria but, by their nature, very little is known about them. The most widely reported and studied is the Ogboni cult, though many Ogboni members reportedly self-identify the group as a social club rather than a cult or a secret society. Ordinary Nigerians are reportedly afraid of the society, believing that its members are capable of using sorcery in order to get their way. However, there is no corroborated evidence of the society using violence or recent examples of persons being forced to join.

3.12.3 So called ‘student cults’ are more correctly known as ‘confraternities’, they are closer to the American idea of college fraternities than religious cults. The origin of these secret confraternities can be traced back to the *Pyrates* confraternity (also known as *National Association of Sea Dogs*) which was formed by the first African Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka at the University of Ibadan in 1953. Confraternities were originally intended to be a forum for like minded students to meet, network and assist each other in later life. They were generally seen to be a force for good and performed some significantly useful services on the university campuses. However, from the beginning of the 1980’s, the activities of confraternities became violent and secretive. It has been reported that their activities include ‘dealing’ with any non-members who snatched a member’s girl friend or ‘sugar daddy’ (in case of female members). Their activities also reportedly included ‘settling’ lecturers in cash or kind and female members of confraternities began to operate prostitution rings. Since the 1980’s, these so called student cults have reportedly become more widespread. In media reports and other studies, names such as the Vikings, the Buccaneers (Sea Lords), the Amazons, the National Association of Seadogs, the Black Axe/Neo-Black Movement, the KKK Confraternity, the Eiye or Air Lords Fraternity, the National Association of Adventurers and the Icelanders feature regularly.

3.12.4 Reliable statistics about the on-campus human toll of Nigeria’s cult violence epidemic do not exist, but former Minister of Education Obiageli Ezekwesili estimated that some 200 students and teachers lost their lives to cult-related violence between 1996 and 2005. Cult-related clashes on university campuses continue to be reported, especially in southern Nigeria and cult groups have been implicated in other abuses including extortion, rape and violent assaults. It has been reported that the reach of many cults has, on occasion, spread beyond university campuses, with groups involved in drug trafficking, armed robbery, extortion, and various forms of street crime.

3.12.5 Sufficiency of protection. Membership or association with a secret cult or a student confraternity is not of itself illegal but any illegal acts those involved might commit (such as threatening behaviour or murder) are criminal offences and will be treated as such by the Nigerian authorities. As described above, the evidence shows that the Nigerian Police Force take appropriate action in such cases.

3.12.6 Internal relocation. The Nigerian constitution provides for the right to travel within the country and the Federal Government generally respects this right in practise. Although law enforcement agencies regularly use roadblocks and checkpoints to search for criminals, there are no reports that government officials restrict movements of individuals.

3.12.7 Internal relocation to escape any ill-treatment from non-state agents is almost always an option. As would be expected, some individuals may encounter a normal level of lack of acceptance by others in the new environment as well as lack of accommodation, land etc, and the situation would be considerably easier if the individual concerned has family or other ties in the new location.⁵⁵ In the absence of exceptional circumstances, it would nevertheless not be unduly harsh for any individual, whether or not they have family or other ties in any new location, to internally relocate to escape this threat.

3.12.8 Caselaw.

BL [2002] UKIAT 01708 (CG). The claimant who feared being initiated into a cult called Osugbo which was described as a demonic cult which uses ritual sacrifice, cannibalism and other rituals. The Tribunal found that there was no Convention reason for the alleged persecution; and that the published background objective material does not support the conclusion that the police or authorities in Nigeria failed to act against traditional religious cults, or support the proposition that cults are non-state agents of persecution in that the police or authorities will not or cannot exercise

control and/or refuse to investigate or deal with satanic/ritualistic ceremonies which include cannibalism. The Tribunal found that there is not a real risk of mistreatment were the claimant to return to Nigeria where he could safely remain.

WO [2004] UKIAT 00277 (CG). The Tribunal found itself in agreement with the conclusions of Akinremi (OO/TH/01318), which found that the power of the Ogboni had been curtailed and that it had a restricted ambit. It also found the Ogboni to be an exclusively Yoruba cult and that should an appellant be fearful of local police who were members, there would clearly be some who were non-members.

EE [2005] UKIAT 00058. The Tribunal found that the appellant's problems were only of a local nature and that there were no facts before the Tribunal which indicated that 'it was unduly harsh to expect a resourceful widowed single woman (who has been capable of coming to the other side of the world and beginning her life again) to take the much smaller step of relocating internally within Nigeria to an area where she will be out of range of the snake worshippers in her own village'.

3.12.9 Conclusion. The human rights situation has improved since the return to civilian rule in 1999. The Federal Government is clearly determined to tackle the problems of vigilantes, various warlords, militias and cult gangs. For applicants who fear, or who have experienced, ill-treatment at the hands of these groups, there is a general sufficiency of protection and they are generally able to safely relocate within the country. General lawlessness, poverty or a lack of access to resources will not, in themselves, be sufficient to warrant the grant of asylum or humanitarian protection. Applications under this category therefore are likely to be clearly unfounded and as such should be certified (UK Home Office, Border & Immigration Agency 2007 'Operational Guidance Note: Nigeria' UK Border Agency website, 26 November <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/countryspecificasylumpolicyogns/nigeriaogn?view=binary> – Accessed 5 September 2008 - Attachment 12).

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United Nations (UN)

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/>

Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

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