

Haruna and Imade of Ibadan: Love Made in Heaven, Enjoyed in Captivity, and immortalized in the Museum (Posted on Facebook on 08/13/2019)

I truly don't intend to embarrass anyone today. However, if you were born and raised in southwestern Nigeria between 1964 and 2009, but didn't see Haruna and Imade at the University of Ibadan Zoological Garden, please ask your family and school teachers some serious questions. They must apologize for ruining your childhood. Na joke o!

For over 40 years, generation after generation of school children encountered wildlife and reprocessed their own humanity through Haruna and Imade, two western lowland gorillas who exemplified what evolutionists have argued for a long time—the developmental affinity between humans and apes. Yet, it was the performance of humanity through wildlife, more than the problematic theories of evolution, that amazed everyone who met them. At the peak of their productivity, Haruna and Imade, smoked cigarette, obeyed commands in Yoruba and English, and expressed contrasting emotions that challenged humans to rethink their alleged superiority to animals. With time, they became a barometer for measuring anatomical difference. A guy even set his parents' house on fire because he was called, Haruna!

Yet, the stardom the gorillas attained was aided by a public school curriculum that conceived animal exhibition in modern zoos as part of childhood socialization. Animals had a place in indigenous African folktales told to children, orally. However, the expansion of Western education, print technology, radio, and television took them to a bigger space. After reading and listening to stories about animals, school children wanted to encounter the wild in a safe space. About quarter of a million people (mostly children) visited the Ibadan zoo in 1979—"more than any other public attraction of any kind in Nigeria."

But, Haruna and Imade's story did not begin in captivity. In December 1964, they were captured in the forest of Cameroon by Asian animal traffickers, smuggled into Nigeria, and offered for sale at the Ibadan zoo. Instead of buying the animals, zoo curators Niels Bolwing and Bob Golding called the police on their captors. Ole gbe, Ole gba! Beyond the spectacle of exhibition, caging wild animals because of the notion that they are best protected from "extinction" in captivity is as problematic as embalming them. Haruna died in 1995, followed by Imade in 2009.

Golding who worked at the zoo between 1963 and 1979 has created a blog, featuring photos of life with Haruna and Imade. <https://www.bobgolding.co.uk/.../the-story-of-the-gorillas/>



Informational Card

Species: *Gorilla*

Classification: Kingdom: Animalia, Phylum: Chordata, Class: Mammalia, Order: Primates, Family: Hominidae, Genus: *Gorilla*, Species: *Gorilla*

Characteristics: Large body, long arms, and a prominent brow ridge.

Behavior: Social animals living in groups called troops.

Conservation: Classified as Endangered.

Geography: Found in the mountains of Central Africa.

Size: Males: 1.7-2.0 m (5'6"-6'6"), Females: 1.4-1.7 m (4'6"-5'6")

Weight: Males: 130-200 kg (287-441 lbs), Females: 70-110 kg (154-242 lbs)

Lifespan: 35-45 years

Reproduction: Gestation period is 8.5 months. Females give birth to one offspring at a time.

Feeding: Herbivorous, eating leaves, stems, and fruit.

Communication: Uses a variety of sounds including roars, wails, and grunts.

Threats: Habitat loss and poaching.

IMAD

HARUNA

