DAWN TRAVEL FEATURE:

A visit to Togo, West Africa

Weaving is one of the skills taught at the Kloto Crafts Center. This youngster is weaving some of the world-famous Kente cloth.

Togo is a vacation retreat long discovered by Europeans. The American traveller can find everything they expect to in this African country where friendliness is everywhere, especially for black Americans.

By Bob Matthews

Whenever black Americans learn that you have visited Africa, the immediate question is: "How did you feel?" Seldom are you asked, "what did you see?"

At first, there is really no feeling at all—a rather numbness as the realization dawns that you have really arrived in the "mother country," so called.

First order of business is to dispel the many myths and beliefs you have heard about Africa, especially the debunking of the "Tarzan" image—it doesn't exist,

By the second or third day, the feeling overcomes you that for years in America, you have belonged to the minority. In Africa, you are a member of the majority—this is your country. But...lets start at the beginning.

The invitation read: "We hope you will join a small group of travel writers invited to the West African nation of Togo for a week's adventure in this lovely country."

We accepted with alacrity.

Once all the arrangement were in place, we presented ourself at Kennedy airport in N.Y. at the Air Afrique counter. Flights to W. Africa leave each Saturday night at 10:30 p.m.

Upon boarding the flight, noted an immediate difference. Besides the fact that the hostesses were stunning African women, some wearing tightly braided hair styles, the passengers are treated as adults.

Champagne is served immediately, even while preparations are being made for departure. First stop is Dakar, Senegal. about a six-hour flight.

It passes painlessly, since you are regaled with a seven-course meal, replete with appropriate wines. The movie is in French, but has an English translation available. In fact, everything is in French, for this is the official language of the W. Africa regions searved by Air Afrique.

After stops in Dakar, Senegal; Monrovia, Liberia; Abijan, Ivory Coast, you finally arrive at Lome, Togo, where the time is six hours ahead of EST.

A tip for the traveller, since you must change planes in Abijan, make sure you have your toilet articles in your carry-on luggage, for sometimes your main luggage will be delayed arriving.

Drummers play for dancing in Lama-Kara. Percussion is the only music used in many instances.

It is night when we left the airport, yet the streets are as alive as though it were noon. Street stands and vendors abound, everywhere you look, people are gathered, some just standing around chatting, some swaying to the beat of music which wafts over the area from some strolling musicians.

Facilities await us at the Hotel de la Paix, which turns out to be a 250-room installation with excellent cuisine—in the French manner. It was here that we decided to change some American money into CFA's, or W. Africa francs. The current rate was $1 American equals 280 CFAs.

After getting esconced in a

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Youngster trudges home on paved road, carrying parcels on her head. This standard in the area. Note poles carrying electricy to up-country regions.

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