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Tradition and Art Appreciation: A Boost to Cultural Tourism in Nigeria (Pp. 506-520)

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Abstract

It is abysmal and disheartening to observe that Nigeria is depleted of parts of its cultural treasury to looters. It is delighted to deduce that these assets (tradition and art) are indispensable to our cultural pride and are potential assets to tourism, which has recently become world's "gold mine". The paper examines the implications of non-challant attitudes of Nigerians toward cultural preservation which adversely perch on our cultural bearing and disposition. It suggests solutions to some upheavals been faced by cultural tourism in Nigeria. It further unveils the deception and antics used by foreigners to dispossess us of our cultural heritage, which is consequently repackaged and sold back to us at extortionate prices. This study endeavors to document the inventory of some museums in Nigeria. In essence, the earlier Nigerians realize this, the better for us to start to reap the unflinching prospects inherent in our cultural heritage and endowment. The paper recommends that there is need for individual citizens to develop profound interest in Nigeria's cultural heritage for development of tourism industry

via cultural assets, so as to generate substantial foreign exchange earnings, accelerate rural urban development, generate employment and promote local cultural exchange for national unity and identity.

Keywords: Tradition, Art, Tourism, Antiquities, Appreciation, Culture

Introduction

The tradition and art of a nation reveal to an extent its wealth, heritage, achievement and can enable one to postulate its future. Nigeria, in view of her distinctive geographical location on the African Continent has very rich cultural diversities with over 150 odd languages and almost unlimited mineral wealth with very hospitable people (Metilelu, 2005: 117). Art is the product of thought provoking creative human activity in which materials are shaped or selected to convey ideas, emotion, or visually interesting forms (Encarta 2004& 2009). Art can be in material form (tangible) or otherwise a product while it can also be immaterial (intangible) in form of ideas, beliefs, feelings, and others, but significantly passes through some processes to give a substantial creation . Hornby (2001:53) defines art as the use of mind's eye to express ideas or feelings, reduce the reckless and violent life of man. This portends that art has emotional and psychological qualities. Art can also be seen as the expression, quality of what is ideal, beautiful or of more than ordinary significance. Makanju (2006) supports that art conjures images that affect the viewer's psyche making art a medium of transmitting religion. Adejumo (2006:22) alludes that history has shown that our artistic heritage (our traditional art) in Nigeria is one of the most creative and effective modes of communication in the world. He further explained the creative force in human culture. Peoples, empires and administrations often pass away in the holocaust of time and ages, however art works survive and linger as relics of ages past. This explains the link that exists between traditional art and the achievement made by subsequent generations in terms of ideas, fears, glories, victories and defeats. An attempt to trawl through the meanings and idea of art, tradition and culture would reveal a similarity and relationship between the three concepts.

Tradition refers to the customs, habits, ideas that have passed from one generation to another. Tradition is also a belief, and ways of doing things for a long period of time. It is a style or mode that has been sustained from one generation to another. Tradition is other wisely referred to as modes, indigenous, peculiar and significant to the people living in it. Longman (2003:1059) defines tradition as a belief, custom, or way of doing something

that has existed for a long time. It has been in the tradition of various African tribes to produce art objects that glorify their kings and gods. These artworks were often depicted with representational images that have symbolic meanings.

Ogunbameru (2000:50) defines culture as a complex whole which encompasses knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom and any other habits and potentials acquired by a group of people. Culture is concisely described as the road map to any societal development (Alonge, 2003:88). Culture represents the compass that shows the bearing of a people, its past, present and future. Emifoniye (2003:147) posits that culture is the center of man's existence. However, cultural tourism is simply any movement or travel that results from intuition of exploring and exploiting the intrigues, funs, recreation, amusements, adventure, excitement and passively historical documentation of indigenous assets and heritage of a people.

Tourism is defined in different ways but nearly all amount to movement of people from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar area on purpose of adventure, recreation, business, sports, meetings etc. Before now, foreign travel had been confined to the affluent and articulates in the society, today, because of government policy aimed at encouraging tourism, tourists come from a wide social background with varied tastes, desires and aspirations. This makes tourism to be multi-disciplinary by nature as it reaches into every avenue of man and society and tends to touch and affect the daily life of almost everybody.

Nigeria has varied physical tourist resources, so also is the country diverse in its ethnic and cultural composition despite the main tribal groupings of Hausa – Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba. There are also other important large tribes such as Kanuri, the Nupe, Urhobo, Ijaw, Efik, Edo, Ibibio, with other hundreds of smaller tribes. It is amusing to observe that each has its peculiar cultural attractions that are capable of attracting visitors within (inbound tourism) and outside the country (outbound tourism). Modupe and Giwa (1999:45) posit that even though the country does not possess large or high mountains; it is nevertheless rich in cultural attractions. It is likely that cultural resources will be the most important tourist selling point in Nigeria. The cultural dimension in tourism was awakened mainly since Nigeria hosted the Festival of Arts and Culture (Festac) in 1977, which brings the rich cultures of different people and tribes together with unique displays of their cultural heritages.

In the course of cultural tourism so many things come into play; relationship, exchange of ideas and offer of artifacts (tools, clothing, food, medicine, utensils, housing etc).

The country, Nigeria, is blessed with people of diverse culture and background. This affords her a great endowment of cultural tourists' attractions, which range from festivals such as "Egungun" masquerades of the Yoruba, chieftaincy / coronation; festivals, such as new yam festival of the Igbo, argungu fishing festival; age group / grade initiations; naming, marriage, and burial ceremonies among others. The art forms and symbols accompanying the celebrations such as clothing and dress items, carved sculptures, calabashes, gongs and even the shrines are enough to captivate the interest of tourists.

Indeed, Nigeria has much to offer to the world through its culture than any other resource. Shyllon (2003:176) corroborates that the influence of Nigerian art with other African nations has been so strong that it has caused impression of a cultural upheaval.

Concept of Cultural Tourism in Nigeria

Nigerian people are no doubt one nation but heterogeneous in ethnic and cultural composition which inversely turns out to be an asset for cultural tourism. Thousands of cultural sites and products abound in Nigeria; in fact seventy tourist sites have been identified in Nigeria (Online Nigeria Portal, www.onlinenigeria.com). It is a pity to note that due to lack of pride and appreciation, the so called custodians of such cultural assets are yet to realize the importance. In Nigeria today, the institutions of Museum remains a riddle, unappreciated and misunderstood. Some people see it as a place where antiquities or old abandoned things are kept. Another group of people perceive it as deity especially religious fanatics while others, very few, see it as the evidence of life in the past.

In essence museums reveal how man has lived and developed over time through his mastery of environment. Museums also foreshadow the background, beliefs, norms, values, adventure, achievement and set backs of man over ages. Modupe and Giwa (1999:45) posit that museums have the universal characteristics of service as gathering places; places of discovery, places to find quiet to contemplate and to be inspired and they can also serve as our collective memory, our chronicle of human creativity, our window on the natural and physical world. Museums represent, certainty in uncertain

times, they provide a link between the past, the present and sheds light on the future. Evidence of museum corroborates the fact that our history started before colonialism as against the ethnocentric theory of western scholars that we had no history as a people. Museums help to season our cultural identity and, harmonize our heterogeneity thus strengthening our unity under same governance and one voice. This significance of museums has made the Federal and State government of Nigeria to show keen interest in the development of arts and crafts, though recently.

The Nigerian Antiquities service was inaugurated in 1943. In 1953 the antiquities ordinance, No 17, became law. strategy to ensure high preservation of Nigerian Antiquities brought about the building of museums in Owo , Esie (1945); Jos (1952); Ife (1954); Lagos (1957); Oron (1958); Kano (1960); Kaduna (1972); Benin (1973) . Modupe and Giwa (1999:48) substantiate that, museums are liable for discovering, preserving and studying the traditional material and culture of the various peoples of Nigeria past and present. They carry out archaeological, ethnographic and architectural researches. It was established that Ife bronze has attained significance, the Opa Oranmiyan also at Ile-Ife is an intrigue as it is impressive; the famous Nok Terracotta are ancient vestiges containing interesting antiquities ; the Emotan statue in Benin City is a 1.8 meter bronze statue in memory of a 15th century Benin woman by name Emotan. She saved Oba Ewuare's life and the throne. This statue compares favourably with the Moremi statue placed at the Ooni's palace, in Ile-Ife (Akinbileje and Igbaro 2010). Moremi also made her only son a votive sacrifice (ebo èjé) for her god who placed the secret of their enemy (the Igbo) into her hands and thus caused the defeat of the Igbos. Opa Oranmiyan at Ile – Ife which is a stone obelisk of about 4 metres high is also another example of Ile-Ife memorable antiquity. The different cultural richness of the nation's artifacts, which are innumerable, is now kept in museums at strategic locations in different parts of the country and outside the country.

Inventory of Selected Museums in Nigeria

1. National Museum – This is situated in the heart of Lagos. It has the finest collection of Nigerian richness in cultural heritage.
2. Owo Museum – Shelters the arts and crafts of the Eastern district of Yorubaland. It contains masks of various types, instrument of Ogboni cult, Ifa divination, shrines, mud sculptures and masquerades.

3. Ife Museum – Contains famous bronze and terracotta heads and stone sculptures. Ife is the ancient sacred city of the Yoruba.
4. Esie Museum – Houses stone figures of astounding intrigues in Africa, numbering about a thousand human figures.
5. Benin Museum – Contains partly finest and earliest pieces of bronze for which they are noted, it is one of the richest in Africa despite the large number carted away by the British government during Benin Massacre of 1897
6. Ikoni Monoliths – These are group of stones carved to represent human beings.
7. Jos Museum – Contains the prehistoric findings of the Plateau mines field. Most notable of these are the two thousand year old terracotta of the Nok culture, earliest plastic art in Africa.
8. Oron Museum – Houses, hundreds of hard-wood figure carvings depicting the ancestors of the Oron.

Influence of Festivals on Cultural Tourism

Festivals, no doubt are a footstool of culture, it acts as a channel through which the wealth, beliefs, customs, language, and dialects are transferred and showcased in their originality and entity. Festivals are special events organized and observed by people to commemorate certain aspect of the culture of a community, with friends and well wishers of the community and often enjoy mass participation of all and sundry. Festivals often create visual images, pleasantries, funs, that stay and create impact in the viewers' mind. Act of showcasing cultural activities is a means of communication to the young folk, the neighboring community and the world at large, the work of nature, the richness of nature and appreciation of the people to nature. The display of the full culture and heritage of the people of Nigeria is usually colorful, exciting and memorable especially during festivals. Periodic festivals of the people include eyo festival, the durbar, argungu fishing festival, new yam festival of the Igbos and a host of others (The Embassy of Nigeria, Newsletter, 5/26/2010).The purpose of festival is to create an opportunity for people to celebrate, worship as well as perform different cultural rights of the society. Unigbe (2003:102) opines that it is apparent that visual images stay and create an impression in the viewers' minds; it is faster than any other form of communication. Festivals are celebrated to confirm its

relevance to the people concerned and to keep the people abreast of their inception, origin, achievement and propagate their cultural pride (religion, beliefs, values and norms) to the outside world in the progression of tourism activities. The traditional Africans believe that there is life in everything the Supreme Being creates on earth. Hence there is a spirit in the tree, the river, the mountains or hills, the stone, leaves and, all other works of divine creation. Festivals are often celebrated to commemorate and pacify the spirit attributed to the different works of nature. Examples of such river spirits could be found in Osun Osogbo and Olokun of the Edos among others. Another category of festival may develop from religion purposes which are other wisely called ritual festivals. Ritual festivals could be perceived as the occasions of the highest manifestation of creativity in traditional, African visual performing arts. In wide range of Nigerian cultures, festivals center round the appearance of elaborate masquerade figures in which the creative genius of the masquerades designer, the dancer and the drummer are manifested during the performance.

The Egungun festivals (masquerades) of the Yoruba, the Ekine of the Kalabari, Mmom of the Igbos, Kwaghir of the Benue, Ekpo of the Calabar are all entertaining and intriguing to tourists delight both local and international. Another group of festivals are tagged with season of the year; agricultural products found in bumper harvest during such season e.g. new yam festival of the Igbos and Orisa-Oko festival of the Yoruba are often celebrated at the onset of harvest.

<i>Olosunta festival</i>	-	<i>Ikere Ekiti</i>
<i>Ikosun festival</i>	-	<i>Ikosin</i>
<i>Olokun festival</i>	-	<i>Akure</i>
<i>Argungun festival</i>	-	<i>Sokoto</i>
<i>Obitun dances festival</i>	-	<i>Ondo</i>
<i>Ado masquerade festival</i>	-	<i>Ado – Ekiti</i>
<i>Igogo festival</i> <i>(Bauchi state)</i>	-	<i>Owo / Ogani festivsl in umaish</i>
<i>Aringiya festival</i>	-	<i>Ikare</i>
<i>Igwe festival</i>	-	<i>Benin</i>

<i>Kunshu festival</i>	-	<i>Bauchi</i>
<i>Gelawon festival of the</i>	-	<i>Fulanis</i>
<i>Eyo festival</i>	-	<i>Lagos</i>
<i>Njuwa Fishing Festival of Bwatiye people of Gongola</i>		
<i>Afan festival of Kgoro people of Kaduna</i>		
<i>Ovie – Osese festival of Ogori people (Kwara)</i>		
<i>Oke Maidens' festivals</i>	-	<i>Kwara state (Epe-Opin)</i>
<i>Ogun festival</i>	-	<i>Ondo</i>
<i>Lisabi festival</i>	-	<i>Abeokuta</i>
<i>Shaw shadi festival</i>	-	<i>Among the Fulani</i>
<i>Exorcism (Bori)</i>	-	<i>Kano</i>
<i>Nkpu festival of the Awka</i>	-	<i>Anambra state.</i>
<i>Iria festival of the Kalaban</i>	-	<i>Niger Delta</i>
<i>Igogo festival</i>	-	<i>Owo</i>
<i>Mbopo festival</i>	-	<i>Cross River State</i>
<i>Gelede festival</i>	-	<i>Egbado (Ogun state)</i>

It is necessary to emphasize that the essence of most of these festivals are no more for fetish purpose precisely again. Festivals are often accompanied by funfair as they employ dramatic method and conventions which include rehearsals, use of costumes and props dances, stylized movement, rituals, gestures, dialect, music, displays and they are often crowd pullers. Festivals are adaptable to convey people of common identity and lineage to celebrate and worship as well as perform different cultural traits of the society. In addition, it embraces friends, relations and non indigenes to partake in the funs and blessings that may be draw able from the attendance and participations.

Shortfalls of Cultural Tourism in Nigeria

Nigeria as a multi ethnic nation is endowed with varied language, dialect, vegetation, culture, arts, tradition, dress items and so on. In the like vein there is no doubt that Nigeria has great tourist assets fetch able

from its diverse cultural backgrounds, the cyclical nature of celebrations characterizes Nigerian culture, thereby emphasizing the importance of continuity of creativity and tradition. In Nigeria, culture is manifested in art, dance, language, literature, folklore, mores, music, governance, and even the environment. According to archeological findings, Nigeria's artifacts depicting the early life of the people date back to 2000 years (The Embassy of Nigeria, Newsletter 2010). These ceremonies illustrate component of cultural practices among the people and more importantly, the artist who was to create materials of use for festivals generate new art forms and symbols as can be found in the masks of Egungun, and the costumes worn by the performers (Alonge, 2003:90). In addition to this, various forms of arts recovered from past ages, which mirrored to the present / subsequent generations of their ways of life, aspirations, strengths and weaknesses are on offer for scenery, adventure, and research via inbound and outbound tourism. In short, cultural tourism exploits the wealth of the museums and assets of festivals in Nigeria. These two facilities (museums and festivals) are not limited in Nigeria; therefore Nigeria is a fertile land for cultural tourism to thrive if devoid of confronting short comings which include

- Accessibility dearth
- Restrictions
- Looting of cultural assets
- Accommodation dearth
- Lack of awareness / ignorance
- Improper orientation

1. **Lack of accessibility** – It is a fact that most of the roads in the rural areas where these cultural assets abound are bad and not accessible. The roads are often very bad and risky. A bad road poses a threat to the access of these unbeatable assets by tourists who may want to exploit the scenery.
2. **Restrictions** – Cultural tourism presents certain folks and fads of preventing people from reaching certain point at the site or hindering record taking through videoing and photography. Most times non natives are forbidden from exploring the resources, for example

strangers are not allowed to explore Ososo caves in Edo state while women are barred from most Oro festivals in Yoruba land. Photography is constitutionally prohibited in all museums.

3. **Lack of proper orientation** – Nigerians need to be educated on the importance of tourism. An average Nigerian believes in social outings than tourism. They have a general belief that tourism is a waste of time and money.
4. **Ignorance** - Most Nigerians are not positively disposed to travel and tourism. In the first instance, some do not think of the phenomenon “tourism”. In addition, engaging in cultural tourism means idolatry to some people.
5. **Lack of preservation** – Colonization by the Europeans has eaten so much into our cultural wealth and heritage and has consequently subjected us to a second- class race. Trowell (1970:16) affirms that African himself did not regard art preservation for any aesthetic or historic value; a mask or carving would receive great religious veneration in its time but when the day came the it rotted away or was eaten by ants, a fresh piece could be carved and consecrated, with the correct observances, so that the spirit might enter in. Later when contact with western belief or unbelief caused him to despise his old ways of life the mask or ancestor carving could only be regarded as an unfortunate reminder of his ‘primitive’ past and if not actually destroyed, hidden away in some groove or cranny where it would soon disintegrate Shyllon (2003:176) made a clarion call that, we should spare no effort, time and resources to preserve the great works. To preserve art work is to preserve for humanity the manifestations of some of the spiritual values and essence of the human spirit.
6. **Looting of cultural assets** – It is rare to find woodcarvings of antiquity in Africa, nonetheless Nigeria instead they can be sited in European and American museums in lieu of their native origin. It is equally unfortunate to report that the early explorers, slavers, traders, missionaries, sailors and other aliens who visited the country could not regard with any respect the idols (arts) of the primitive peoples with who they dealt, they only collected those arts and used them as shelf item offered for gift and junk (curio) in casual collection. The diary of theft of the treasures of Nigeria is not only long but saddening and

pernicious. On March 10, 1973 sixteen carved wooden house posts were stolen from the University of Ibadan; on October 23, of the same year Gelede Mask, Ijaw Mask, Ako Ancestral figure, five pairs of "Ibeji "sigidi", Apa face mask and four rams head (Osamasinmi) were stolen from Owo Museum; on March 29, 1987, a wooden palace post was stolen at Esie Museum, on January 14, 1987, theft of a bronze leopard, carved ivory horn: Igbo – Ukwu luit; Igbo – Ukwu bronze pendant; Igbo – Ukwu Altar stand; Benin terra-cotta head; Ife bronze human head; Benin memorial head and Ife terra-cottas representation of a head were stolen from Jos museum; on August; 21 1989, theft of one Ogboni Drum, two Osanyin staff, one wooden Sango Bowl with lid, one carved Oro case with lid; one Otin ritual pot, one set of Osun pot and a set four skin covered pot drums occurred at the Obafemi Awolowo University; on May 2, 1990 theft of two pieces of "Ere – Ibeji" took place at the Lagos museum, on April 20, 1991, theft of Ogono antiquities, made up of ancestral materials took place at chief M. A. Tornire III of Ogboni, Rivers state, and as recently as November 2, 1994, thirty – four pieces of antiquities, made up of three bronze heads, twenty five terracotta figures and six elephant tusks were stolen from Ife Museum. Actually, the list is not exhaustive. One method used by looters is to drug security staff in the museums with mineral drinks. In spite of investigations and interrogations, the law enforcement agents have neither made any arrest nor recoveries (the Guardian, 1995:20).

- 7. Accommodation and lodging spaces -** These are limited to the main towns and cities with high tariff. At times the distance from the cultural site and where accommodation is obtainable may not be reasonable. Very often people on outbound tourism are scared of cultural tourism due to these shortfalls.

Influence of Tradition and Art Appreciation on Cultural Tourism

"No Nile no Egypt" this is exactly the tie that exists between art and tradition appreciation and cultural tourism. Tradition and arts are on offer in the process of cultural tourism. Summarily, art and tradition are elements (product) of cultural tourism, so, "no art no cultural tourism". Art and tradition have multi functional value in tourism context, works of art and tradition exert on the observer the author or custodian's opinion, which is both sensed and realized. The sensation is the first feeling at sight of any art

and the emotion may well be both spontaneous and considerable. It comes like a current of electricity which is somehow uncontrollable and unstoppable.

Appreciation of art and tradition can be in two fold; aesthetic and symbolic. The aesthetic reveals the visual gratification and delight which must be complemented by our intellect and emotion. Our intellect in this sense refers to the inquisitive explanation of why art has developed its idiom in different areas and our impression to be left in the psychology of the author of the art and those of the audience for whom they were made. The symbolic on the other hand means the spiritual significance behind the art and tradition, that is, the consecration bestowed on the art; for worship, ritual or sacrificial purposes.

The abundance of cultural features in Nigeria makes it a prospective tourism destination. Despite its status as a developing country, Nigeria is blessed with uncountable varied cultural traits that are capable of turning its vision of tourism destination to reality. Modupe and Giwa (1998:7) opine that there is no doubt that Nigeria has great tourist wealth and its cultural tourism products are capable of attracting all categories of tourists thus, the potential is great for tourism development in Nigeria. It will be of great influence on cultural tourism if now; there can be re-orientation of ideology toward cultural assets.

Conclusion

Tourism involves movement, traveling away from usual residence to other places far or near in essence of any phenomenon of motivations physical, cultural, interpersonal, status and prestige. It is always in interest of any tourist to enjoy a degree of adventure and intrigues in the course of any purpose for tourism. This reason places cultural tourism on all other forms of tourism; ecotourism, bird viewing, physical tourism etc. It is a clear cut fact that cultural tourism is full of amusement, intrigues, fun, fair, and adventure. The clamor for cultural tourism and its consequent benefits is not behind its product (material and indefinable), art and traditions which are unique and always found distinguished from others even in the same geographical area or location.

However the trend of cultural tourism is being hampered by certain unscrupulous factors; looting, restrictions, lack of befitting accommodation in the host circuit, lack of good access roads, poor infrastructure in the host

communities and lack of proper orientation and publicity by the affected government tiers. Among the reasons for these hindrances is poverty, high level of ignorance and to cork it all, lack of appreciation of indigenous art among Nigerian. This study foresees total extinction of art and tradition in the nearest future if citizens and government refuse to attend to these critical issues. The implication therein would be that we have no origin, no history and no past.

In addition it would be difficult for Nigeria to tap into tourism as a resource like other countries of the world are doing. With its status and endowment, it would be for Nigeria to meet up with its global counterparts in the new economic search through tourism without regarding its cultural heritage. With all indications, it would be unrealistic for Nigeria to start to open new ground for tourism development when it has all that it takes to flow on cultural tourism with less expense especially if the remaining cultural relics and traditions are salvaged from looting.

An adage says ‘Charity begins at home’, if the owners or custodians of cultural assets can be awoken to the realization of the values and importance of the assets it will portray the heritage a high accolades in the world tourism market. It will enable Nigeria as a country to manage the assets for the benefit of its economy thereby improving the livelihood of citizens through employment creation. Shyllon, (2003:186) queries “why can’t Nigeria promote its own art and culture outside Nigeria’s shores by setting up Nigerian cultural centers manned by competent, vibrant and committed cultural Nigerian officers to promote Nigerian art and culture in important countries around the world? is a question that needs thorough scrutiny before being answered.

In any event, there is need for every citizen to show high grade of appreciation and profound interest toward cultural heritage (tradition and art) for development of cultural tourism products so as to generate substantial foreign exchange, accelerate rural urban development and interaction, generate employment and promote cultural exchange for national unity and identity.

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