

**Museums, Monuments and the Reconstruction of the Socio-Cultural
Historiography of Nigeria: A Study of the National Museum, Lagos.**

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Abstract

Recent studies indicate that the relevance of museums cannot be disconnected from the socio-cultural historiography of global development. Thus, museums and monuments have evolved into organised institutions saddled with the responsibility of preserving our heritage from one generation to the other. Available records indicate that the origin of museum can be traced to the Greek and Roman centres for the accommodation of the goddesses of art and sciences; however, the idea of organized museum became popularised with the activities of the Alexandrian Museum in 200BC in Egypt. This development is unrelated to the high-level civilisation that has been the hallmark of Africa, especially in Egypt. This museum advancement continued to blossom in Egypt, and by the 18th and 19th centuries, it had taken root in other parts of the globe. Thus, with the sweeping wave of colonialism, especially in Africa, several organised museums were established in Africa and Nigeria. Extant body of knowledge on the historiography of museum in Nigeria seems to have dwelt more on the ethnographic and archaeological perspective, almost neglecting the historical dimension. Thus, this research examines the historical development of museums in Nigeria within the context of the National Museum in Lagos. It also looks at the development of museums and monuments from Nigeria's pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. This is to demonstrate the relevance of museums and monuments in the reconstruction of the socio-cultural history of the country. Data collection was based on oral interviews, articles in learned journals and books, newspapers, as well as scholarly works on the internet. The study adopts the historical analytical method in interpreting these documents. Findings from this research, apart from contributing to the existing body of literature on the history of museums in Nigeria, it demonstrates the importance of museums and monuments in the reconstruction of Nigerian history, using the case of the National Museum in Lagos.

Keywords: Museum, Monument, National Museum, Lagos, Nigeria.

Introduction.

The role of museums and monuments in the socio-cultural development of society cannot be over emphasised. Recent studies indicate that the relevance of



museums cannot be disconnected from the socio-cultural historiography of global development. Thus, museums and monuments have evolved into organised institutions saddled with the responsibility of preserving our heritage from one generation to the other. It is equally integral to point out that the historical antecedents of museums go beyond the physical structures. It is more of the content and collections preserved within a structure to uphold the cultural posterity of a people. Be it prehistoric or contemporary fragments of technological wonder, the museum remains the centre of living history. The formal establishment of museums started in ancient Rome during the Renaissance, and by the 18th C, during the Enlightenment Age, it had spread to other parts of Europe. It is on record that the oldest public collection of artworks in the world was established in 1471 in Rome. It was known as the Capitoline Museum¹.

As indicated above, there is no doubt that the etymology of the word museum can be traced to the Greek and Roman centres for the accommodation of the goddesses of art and sciences²; however, the word or idea of museum became popularised with the activities of the Alexandrian Museum in 200BC in Egypt. This development is unrelated to the high-level civilisation that has been the hallmark of Africa, especially in Egypt. This museum advancement continued to blossom in Egypt, and by the 18th and 19th centuries, it had taken root in other parts of the globe³. For example, in 1731, 1750, 1753, and 1759, museums were established in Ireland, France, America, and Britain, respectively⁴. Thus, with the sweeping wave of colonialism, especially in Africa, several organised museums were established in Africa and Nigeria. Against this background, this research examines the historical development of museums in Nigeria within the context of the National Museum in Lagos.

Early Beginnings of Museums and Monuments in Lagos and Nigeria

The National Museum in Lagos was established in March 1957⁵, about three years before Nigeria's independence from the British colonialists. The museum is reputed to have one of the best ethnographic materials and the finest collection of works of Nigerian Antiquities worldwide. Its collection is a deliberate strategy to preserve Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage, crafts and artworks, especially in Lagos⁶. Indeed, it is a repository of some aspects of the material culture of Nigeria and an ethnographic archive for the reconstruction

¹M. Abadom, 'The Complementarity of Museums and Tourism', in Nigerian Heritage. Journal of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, vol. 3, 1994.

²Bankole Oladumaye, E., Bolajoko, Esther Adiji and Olabiyi A. Tolulope. 2013. "Nigerian Museum and Art Preservation: A Repository of Cultural Heritage", The International Journal of the Inclusive Museum Volume 6, 93-107. onmuseums.com, ISSN: 1835-2014. See also: Okpoko, Paul. 1992. "The State of Cultural Resource management in Nigeria". Nigeria Heritage 1: 89-93.; Oruche, Timothy N. 1992. "On Developing and Managing Natural Heritage" Tell Nigeria: 108-117

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Y. Omosa, "National Museum Lagos", Nigeria Online Tourism Magazine 2006. www.goodlife.com.ng [Retrieved on 8th March, 2012].

⁶ Ibid.

of the socio-cultural history of the country. The Museum is located in Onikan in Lagos State, Southwestern Nigeria. However, a clear picture of the historical antecedents of the National Museum in Lagos cannot be captured without flashing back to the historical development of museums and monuments in Nigeria. Additionally, a sojourn into the historical background of Museums and Monuments in the country unveils some of the theoretical underpinnings within and beyond. Against this backdrop, this research looks at the development of museums and monuments right from Nigeria's pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods.

Before the introduction of British colonialism in Nigeria, no central or "official" bodies took custody of the material culture or remains of her cultural artefacts. What existed then could be described as local institutions such as community and, in some cases, family shrines and palaces with sizeable collections of cultural artefacts. Shrines were so prevalent in traditional society, and religion was the overriding concern of the community⁷. Secluded areas of the family compound and sacred grooves were typically the abode for the shrines. The custodianship of the shrines was the duty of family or community elders, who also took the role of priests for each of the various divinities. The items of veneration were intermittently brought out and used at some point in festivals as part of sophisticated traditions that included singing, drumming, dancing, masquerading and other traditional socio-cultural activities⁸.

However, the formal establishment of the public museum started during the colonial era. Several people played a significant role in establishing museums in Nigeria, prominent among whom were K. C., Murray-regarded as the father of the Nigerian Museum, J.D. Clarke, S. Milburn, Hunt Cooke, H. E. Duckworth, and the distinguished Antiquities Survey/Archaeologist, Bernard B. Fagg⁹.

The first decade of the 20th century witnessed a massive export of invaluable cultural artefacts from Nigeria by the colonialists to the Western world; in fact, there were instances where these artworks were erroneously destroyed under the guise of religious cleansing. As a result of this, the first cultural heritage legislation was introduced in 1924¹⁰; it was referred to as the 1924 Ordinance, which was aimed at prohibiting the unauthorised exportation of Nigerian artworks¹¹.

⁷ K. Filane. "Museums in Nigeria: Historical Antecedents and Current Practice", International Press of the Association of Arts Critics Vol ii, No. 7. Dakar: AICA Press et l'auteur. Pp. 1-2.

⁸ M. Abadom, 'The Complementarity of Museums and Tourism', ... Pp. 75-80

⁹ Omotoso, Eluyemi. "Historical Antecedents and Future Development of Museums in Nigeria" in 'Demola Jolayemi (Ed.) Art, Heritage and Humanity as Bases for Vibrant Socio-Economic Future: The Esie National Museum. Ilorin: Esie Monument Festival Committee, 2010. P. 3

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ S. A. Liasu. "Historical Development of Nigerian Museums." National Commission for Museums and monuments. Newsletter 1(16), 1994; See also: G. Afolabi-Ojo. 'Yoruba Palaces as an embodiment of Antiquity' African Notes, Bulletin of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. Special Number, Nigerian Antiquities. 1972.

Notably, the first museum in Nigeria is located at Esie, where some soapstone sculptures numbering about 1,500, were discovered in 1945¹². The discovery of these cultural artefacts led to the establishment of a formal museum that same year in Esie; however, it was not immediately opened to the general public. This initial restriction must have been connected to the indigenes' religious inclination attached to the soapstone images. The Esie Museum became the precursor for the foundation of other national museums and monuments to emerge later in the 1950s and 60s¹³. It is significant to note that when the British colonialists established the first museum in Esie, there were no clear and comprehensive rules and regulations to monitor the centre's activities. This created a situation whereby most of the collections were illegally removed by unknown people. In 1953, the colonial government took a more concrete step by promulgating the Antiquities Ordinance No. 17; the Ordinance seeks majorly for the creation of an Antiquity Commission responsible for the making of policy and the establishment of the Department of Antiquity empowered to 'collect, preserve and study the traditional material culture of Nigeria and above all to regulate the unnecessary export of cultural artefacts. This Ordinance marked a turning point in the history of public museums in Nigeria¹⁴.

Aside from the Esie Museum, which was established in 1945, there were other national museums established across Nigeria¹⁵, they include: National Museum, Jos (1952), National Museum, Ife (1954), National Museum, Lagos (1957), National Museum, Oron (1958), National Museum, Benin, National Museum, Kano (1960) and National Museum, Owo in 1968¹⁶ (Eluyemi, 2010). These sets of museums formed what can be aptly regarded as the first generation of museums in Nigeria. The objects for these museums were acquired mainly from traditional rulers and donations from individuals and corporate bodies¹⁷.

In 1974, concrete steps were taken by the Federal government to establish museum centres in each State capital of the country. This was geared towards integrating the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. On this note, in 1975, national museum centres were set up in Sokoto, Enugu and Ibadan. The year 1979 marked a turning point in the development of museums in Nigeria. Decree No. 77 of 1979¹⁸ (National Commission for Museums and Monuments, 1979) was

¹²Omotoso, Eluyemi. "Historical Antecedents and Future Development of Museums in Nigeria" ...P. 5

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ P. Stevens, *The Stone Images of Esie, Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press and the Nigerian Federal Department of Antiquities, 1978. P. 34.; D. A. Aremu, "The Archaeology of Esie: From an Industrial Archaeological Development Perspective. Being a paper delivered at a Seminar with the theme; "Cultural investments and Tourism in Nigeria" on the occasion of Esie Monument Festival 2005 and 60th Anniversary of Esie Museum, in Kwara Hotel, Ilorin, Kwara State, 1st – 3rd December, 2005.

¹⁵Aremu, "The Archaeology of Esie: From an Industrial Archaeological Development Perspective. Being a paper delivered at a Seminar with the theme; "Cultural investments and Tourism in Nigeria" on the occasion of Esie Monument Festival 2005 and 60th Anniversary of Esie Museum, in Kwara Hotel, Ilorin, Kwara State, 1st – 3rd December, 2005.

¹⁶Omotoso, Eluyemi. "Historical Antecedents and Future Development of Museums in Nigeria" ...P. 5

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸National Commission for Museums and Monuments. Decree No. 77 of 1979 in Federal Government of Nigeria Official Gazette, 66 (48), 510. 1979.

formally introduced; it led to the creation of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments that took over from the Federal Department of Antiquities. It also gave room for the set up of various museums such as; Contemporary Art Museums (Lagos), Natural History Museums (Abuja), Colonial History Museums (Lagos), Science and Technology Museums (Lagos), as well as the Warfare Museums (Umuahia). In addition, decree No. 77 of 1979 resulted in the foundation of other national museums which sprang up within the country in the 1980s. They include Aba (1985), Calabar (1986); Osogbo (1988); Lokoja, Umuahia, Uyo, Minna, Makurdi and Maiduguri, all in 1989¹⁹.

Presently, apart from specialised museums, we have 36 National Museums, the latest being Igbo-Ukwu, Nok and Oyo Museums, all established in 2004; there are also 63 National Monuments and two UNESCO World Heritage Centres distributed across Nigeria²⁰, and are opened to the public. However, several State, institutional and private Museums are not included in this paper. All these museums and monuments are directly under the supervision of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, a body responsible for managing and monitoring all the museums in Nigeria.

Theoretical Analyses and Review of Relevant Literature

There are several theoretical and philosophical postulations of museums across the globe²¹. However, this research dwells on social system theory²² as well as some major explanations and historical arguments that shaped the study of museums in the 20th and 21st centuries. Peter Vergo, in his edited work *The New Museology*, which was published in 1989, opined that the “old” body of knowledge on museum studies is centred on methods, as against the “new”, which investigated the essence of museums²³. Thus, the latter is a departure from the mean stream questions of what and how to an advanced level of ‘why’ and for what purpose museums are established. Similarly, Janet Marstine’s

¹⁹Omotoso, Eluyemi. “Historical Antecedents and Future Development of Museums in Nigeria” ...P. 5

²⁰National Commission for Museums and Monuments. “Nigerian Museums and Monuments”. www.ncmm.ng.org, 2010a. [Retrieved on 20th September, 2021].

²¹Murawska-Muthesius, Katarzyna and Piotr Piotrowski. *From museum critique to the critical museum* London: Routledge, 2015; Etges, Andreas and David Dean, “The International Council of Museums and the Controversy about a New Museum Definition – A Conversation with Laurant Bonilla-Merchav, Bruno BrulonSoares, Lonnie G. Bunch III, Bernice Murphy, and Michèle Rivet”, *International Public History*; 5(1): 19–27, 2022; Olivares, A. and Piatak, J., *Exhibiting inclusion: An examination of race, ethnicity, and museum participation*. VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 33(1), 2022. pp.121-133.

²²The Social System Theory as propounded by Luhmann is anchored on the argument that all set of relations arises from the general communicative utterances. Thus, a social system is autopoietic and autonomous, which is realised by its own procedure. For further information, see: N. Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. DOI : 10.1515/9781503618763.

²³Peter, Vergo. (ed.). *New museology*. Reaktion books. 1997. <https://www.perlego.com/book/2854470/new-museology-pdf>. (Accessed: 27 September, 2022)

explanation in *New Museum Theory and Practice*²⁴ brings to the fore more recent developments on the pragmatic nature of museums within the context of their ideologies, typologies and politics. Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Piotr Piotrowski explain the importance of museums and assess the methods of increasing their significance²⁵. On the other, *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century*, an edited work by Hugh H. Genoways, underscores the "comprising contributions from scholars trained both outside and within museum disciplines as well as museum professionals"²⁶. It equally investigates some of the 21st-century challenges of museums at the global level.

Tony Bennett, in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, interrogates the role played by museums in Victorian society and, from a broader perspective, the historical narratives of internal regulations and exhibitions²⁷. He sees the museum as an avenue for regulating and reconstructing human knowledge. Also valuable for locating museums within the background of historic sites, national parks, and memorials is the fundamental argument of Rodney Harrison's *Heritage: Critical Approaches*²⁸. He put forward models and theoretical approaches for policy-making and its processes as well as the importance of temporal, spatial and official concerns.

There are several studies on museums in Africa, and Nigeria in particular. The development of museums and monuments in Nigeria is one aspect of life that has attracted several scholars to carry out rigorous research and study into this area, which obviously cannot be relegated to the background. This is because of the increasing awareness of the significance of cultural heritage and tourism to national development.

K. C. Murray (1938)²⁹, a renowned Surveyor of Antiquities, in his pioneering work, *Museums: An Urgent Need in Nigeria*, did pontificate that there was an immediate need for the colonial administration to establish a museum centre to house Nigeria's cultural artefacts, and to prevent it from pilferage. He argued further that such museums should be located close to where most of the collections were acquired; and called for what could be regarded as Tripartite Integrated Cooperation- an idea involving the museums, the schools, and the local industries³⁰. However, Murray's work was rather general and not specific; hence he did not focus on a particular region of the country. This project, therefore, is focused on a specific museum centre- located at Onikan, in Lagos State, thereby allowing for an in-depth study.

In the same vein, S. A. Liasu (1994), in his article titled "Historical Development of Nigerian Museums", focuses on the historical antecedents of the Nigerian

²⁴Marstine, Janet (ed.) 2006. *New museum theory and practice: An introduction*. Carlton: Blackwell Publishers.

²⁵Murawska-Muthesius, Katarzyna and Piotr Piotrowski. *From museum critique to the critical museum* ... 2015

²⁶ Hugh H. Genoways, *Museum philosophy for the twenty-first century*. Oxford: AltaMira Press. 2006.

²⁷Tony Bennett, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*. London: Routledge. 1995

²⁸Harrison, Rodney. *Heritage: critical approaches*. London: Routledge. 2013.

²⁹ K. C. Murray, 1938. "Museums: An Urgent Need in Nigeria". *Nigeria Magazine* 14, 271. 1938.

³⁰ Ibid.

Museums as a whole³¹. He traced the genesis of museums and monuments in Nigeria from its early days down to contemporary times. However, his period of study terminates in the early 90s³². His work is of great significance to this project because it serves as a springboard for writing the history of the earlier part of museums development in Nigeria. Still, substantial developments in the industry a decade after that require urgent study, as this one intends to do.

Similarly, Omotoso Eluyemi (2010), in his scholarly article, *Historical Antecedents and Future Development of Museums in Nigeria*³³, emphasise the importance of preserving our cultural heritage by tactically flashing back with significant details to the early beginnings of museums and monuments in Nigeria; he carefully itemised the various Acts and Ordinances that led to the establishment of museums. For instance, he carefully analysed the 1924 Ordinance, the 1953 Act of the Antiquities Ordinance No. 17, and Decree No. 77 of 1979 etc. Furthermore, he commented on the contributions of some notable Nigerians in the development of museums as well as attempted a conceptual clarification of the word 'museum' while looking at the challenges of its development in Nigeria. Though the work is informative and educative in the realm of museums, much is needed to be done on monuments and tourism as an industry.

On the other hand, Professor K. O. Dike (1982)³⁴, in his work entitled *The Nigerian Museums Movement*, critically examined the organisation of museums' movement in Nigeria. He argued that the improvement of museums in the country should first and foremost come from an inward restructuring of the system. Nevertheless, Dike's work focused on the internal re-organisation of the museums' movement; this study will not only look at the internal perspective alone but will also integrate it into the external development of the tourism industry.

Equally integral is J. B. Yussuf's (2010) work entitled *The Promotion of Arts and Culture for Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria*³⁵. He categorically asserts that the availability of many cultural and traditional artefacts in Nigeria had made her what scholars describe as the 'Greece of Africa'³⁶; thus, assuming the front role in the African culture and arts. He explained that for over 2000 years, Nigeria had experienced invaluable developments in artistry, such as Benin, Ife and Igbo-Ukwu cultures, as well as the Esie soapstone carvings. Yussuf further states that Esie, the first established museum in the country, was an embodiment of the art of culture and the hub of cultural heritage in the Yoruba race. In addition, he queried the apparent neglect of the promotion of cultural development in Nigeria by the policymakers at the helm of affairs; and

³¹ S. A. Liasu. "Historical Development of Nigerian Museums."...

³² Ibid.

³³ Omotoso, Eluyemi. "Historical Antecedents and Future Development of Museums in Nigeria"...

³⁴ K. O. Dike, *The Nigerian Museum Movement*. Lagos: Government Press. 1982.

³⁵ J. B. Yussuf, "The Promotion of Arts and Culture for the Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria" in 'DemolaJolayemi (Ed.) Art, Heritage and Humanity as Bases for Vibrant Socio-Economic Future: The Esie National Museum. Ilorin: Esie Monument Festival Committee. 2010.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 45.

finally called for a public and private partnership to pursue sustainable cultural advancement. However, his work lacked an appropriate conceptual framework for arts and culture that constitute monuments for our museums. Besides, he ought to have drawn inferences from developed societies on how arts and culture promote the tourism industry and, thus, their economic development.

Zawiyah Baba (2005), in his paper titled "Networking cultural heritage: an overview of initiating for collaboration among national libraries, museums and archives in Asia and Oceanis"³⁷ stressed the accessibility of museums and monuments. He explained further that, with present-day digital and multimedia know-how, libraries, archives and museums could make a catalogue of their holding accessible and their collections available in text, images, and sound should the need arise if well conserved. There is every reason for effective and efficient collaboration among the world's heritage institutions to work together to promote even development.

The above literature reviews are by no means exhaustive; the few ones highlighted above are some of the few instances to demonstrate the available scholarly works that have been carried out in this area and are related to this study. Indeed, most of these works serve as a soft-landing ground for theoretical expositions of museums in Nigeria and the world.

Growth and Development of National Museum, Onikan, Lagos

As indicated earlier, the National Museum, Onikan, Lagos, was established in 1957³⁸ with the mission statement of 'collecting, preserving, conserving, researching and exhibiting' the cultural and natural heritage of Nigeria for the information and enjoyment of the public³⁹. The museum was established as the headquarters of the Federal Department of Antiquities, a nucleus of what later transformed into the present National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) in 1979⁴⁰. However, in 1998, the headquarters was moved from Lagos to Abuja, the country's new capital.

The museum is reputed for its collection of valuable heirlooms, including ancestral figures' headdresses and facemasks, 'door panels and house posts, stools, musical instruments, household utensils, and shrine objects'⁴¹. These artefacts have become a primary tourist attraction and a significant aspect of reconstructing Nigeria's historical antecedents right from the pre-colonial era

³⁷Zawiyah Baba Dato. "Networking cultural heritage: an overview of initiating for collaboration among national libraries, museums and archives in Asia and Oceanis". Being a paper presented at the World Library and Information Congress: 71st IFLA General conference and council on 14th -18th August, 2005 held in Oslo, Norway, 2005.

³⁸Omotoso, Eluyemi. "Historical Antecedents and Future Development of Museums in Nigeria" ...p.6.

³⁹National Commission for Museums and Monuments, 'Museums in Nigeria,' www.nigerianmuseums.org2010a.[Accessed: on 20th September, 2021].

⁴⁰National Commission for Museums and Monuments. Decree No. 77 of 1979 in Federal Government of Nigeria Official Gazette, 66 (48), 510. 1979; National Commission for Museums and Monuments, 2010c. 'Lagos Museum,' www.nigerianmuseums.org/Lagos.htm 2010c [Accessed on 20-09-2021].

⁴¹ Ibid

through the post-colonial period. The museum also has material artefacts made of pottery, ivory, calabashes and gourds, bronze carvings and sculptures, terracotta, wrought iron and wood. There are many artefacts and objects in the museum's preservation facilities, among which are archaeological discoveries that show the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria and display the uniqueness of our cultural heritage. The museum also has in its collections four monuments that have been confirmed national monuments, namely Ilojo Bar, Water House, Igaldugaran, and the Oba's Palace, all located in Lagos⁴².

For over six decades, the National Museum, Lagos, still stands out amongst pre-independence national monuments. The complex is presently a combination of two periods in historical development⁴³ that can be argued to have stood the test of time as a source of preserving our cultural heritage.

Structures and Functions of the National Museum in Lagos.

The National Museum, Lagos, is a branch of the 36 museums under the National Commission for Museums and Monuments. It has four galleries: the Open Gallery, Benin Gallery, Ethnographic Gallery and the present-day Gallery⁴⁴. At the helm of affairs is the Chief Curator, assisted by other staff members in the day-to-day administration of the museum. Currently, about ten structures on the ground make up the museum. They include the following: Conservation Laboratory, Craft Village; Museum Shop; Museum Kitchen; Traditional Tie and Dye/Batik Workshop; Photographic Archives, Pre-printing Press, Research Library, Exhibition Hall; and the Open Garden⁴⁵

The Conservation Laboratory, one of the museum's key sectors, is a specialised section responsible for the preservation of the collections in the various galleries. It is more of the engine room of the museum. Usually, artefacts and other collections are made to undergo compulsory preservative techniques within the Conservation Laboratory before being taken to the open gallery for public consumption and exhibition.

The Craft Village is another section within the premises of the National Museum. It has a craft production workshop where traditional craftsmen and women demonstrate and displays their works to visitor/tourist. It is also a centre for the training and development of entrepreneurial skills. It is sometimes referred to as the 'practical gallery' of the museum. Under this section, interested members of the public are allowed to physically see the processes and methods of how artworks are produced. Closely related to the Craft Village is the Tie and Dye/Batik Workshop, which is more of professional. It is a unit where traditional clothes are made and displayed to the public. Additionally, occasional workshops are organised to teach the public and

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³Eyo, E. 1977. Two Thousand Years of Nigerian Art. Lagos: Federal Department of Antiquities.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

tourists the production of traditional Nigerian attires, particularly the *adire* cloth that is common among the Yoruba people⁴⁶.

Museum Shop

In this unit of the museum, the public can purchase some of the artworks that are on sale. A fundamental aspect of this unit is that it serves as a source of income for the museum.

Museum Kitchen

Also located inside the compound of the National Museum is the Museum Kitchen. A section where traditional Nigerian delicacies are being prepared and sold at an affordable price to the tourists/public.

Photographic Archives

The production/processing, developing and storage of any form of photographic material are usually handled by this section. Collections losing their originality are commonly converted into photographic formats for posterity. Microfilms slides, digital soft copies of photos etc. are being taken care of under this structure.

Pre-printing Press

Closely related to the photographic Archives is the Pre-printing press. Specialised functions like printing, photocopying, lamination, binding etc. that are not done in the photographic archives are directed to the pre-printing arm of the museum. This unit works hand-in-hand with the photographic archives as well as the conservatory laboratory wing of the museum⁴⁷.

Research Library

This is a significant museum unit where research works and studies are being conducted. It has a collection of educational materials that are majorly concerned with Nigeria's cultural heritage and, to a more considerable extent, the African continent. In this wing are functional materials pertaining not only to the museum, but to the entire country at large are being consulted. In other words, it also serves as a research room for researchers and scholars interested in consulting some of the materials within the library.

Exhibition Hall

This is a temporary hall within the museum's premises that is set aside to display collections from the museum on special occasions for public viewing.

Open Garden

Lastly is the Open Garden, designed initially for parking space for vehicle; however, it is being used occasionally as a picnic centre for the public.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ National Commission for Museums and Monuments. Decree No. 77 of 1979 in Federal Government of Nigeria Official Gazette, 66 (48), 510. 1979; National Commission for Museums and Monuments, 2010c. 'Lagos Museum,' www.nigerianmuseums.org/Lagos.htm 2010c [Accessed on 20-09-2021].

Impact and Challenges of the National Museum, Onikan, Lagos.

The National Museum, Onikan, Lagos, in its fifty-five years of existence, despite several challenges confronting it, still stands tall among the museums that were established shortly before Nigeria's independence in 1960. The museum still assumes a central place among the current 34 museums spread across the nation⁴⁸. This is because of the importance attached to the unique collections in the museum complex, which includes highly valued crafts of Benin, Nok, Owo, Fulani, Ife and a host of ancient remains of Nigeria's pre-colonial civilisation.

Interestingly, the museum may not have some of the sophisticated technology obtainable in the developed countries of the world; nevertheless, it continues to attract patronage and great interest from people of diverse backgrounds, who have come to realise the benefit of the centre as an important place for research or to behold Nigeria's rich cultural documentation of history.

Like other museums in Nigeria, it is noteworthy that the National Museum, Lagos has had problems and challenges that negatively affected its historical development. However, the museum has continued receiving assistance from local and international bodies. Prominent among such corporate bodies is the Ford Foundation and British Museum, which have played a very important role in the current rescue mission in the National Museum, Lagos.

As stated in the previous paragraph, regardless of the various impacts and relevance of the museums and monuments towards the nation's development, and Lagos State, in particular, has not been smooth sailing. Several problems and challenges confront museums and monuments development in Lagos State and Nigeria. Prominent among these challenges is inadequate funding. This seems to be the greatest challenge facing the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), an umbrella body for all the museums and monuments in Nigeria. This body depends majorly on the government to approve and finance its projects. Unfortunately, it is grossly inadequately funded, which has attendant effects on the performance and efficiency of the Commission⁴⁹. Therefore, whatever affects the national body also affects its branches.

Another concern is the apathy of the government and its citizens. Most people, including so-called educated individuals, have yet to realise the significance of museums and monuments. While some are ignorant of other religious biases and attach fetish connotations to the historical artefacts and collections.

The theft of materials is another fundamental challenge of the museums and monuments centres not only in Lagos but the country at large. Since the theft of museum's collections is minimal to an extent, cases of antiquities trafficking, shrine plundering etc. have continued to blossom even under the watchful eyes

⁴⁸Omotoso, Eluyemi. "Historical Antecedents and Future Development of Museums in Nigeria" ...p.15.

⁴⁹ P. Ojo, An interview conducted with Mr. Ojo, a retired staff of the National Museum, Lagos. (Male; 72 years), on the 25th of June. 2012.

of the national regulatory body. For instance, in 2001, the terracotta head deposited in the University of Ibadan museum was reportedly stolen, only to be discovered in Belgium⁵⁰.

On the other hand, is alack of trained personnel. The people who played an active role during the early beginnings of establishing museums and monuments in Nigeria were skilled professionals in their callings. For instance, K. C.Murray and B. Fagg, founders of Nigeria's museums and monuments, were qualified and highly trained curators in various capacities⁵¹. The trend these days is the reverse. Most of the workers in the various museums in Nigeria are not trained curators; even those trained lack modern knowledge on the management of museums and monuments. Closely related to the above is the poor welfare package for the staff. The poor salaries of the staff affect their productivity output. Some staff even see their job as less important because of the low incentive from the government. Another major problem confronting the development of museums and monuments in Nigeria is the lack of sub-standard infrastructural facilities. Most of the even available facilities are not being adequately maintained. For instance, in the National Museum, Lagos, most of the facilities in the laboratories used for preservation are not functioning properly; some of the functioning machines are outdated and limited in functions compared to recent models.

Conclusion

The National Museum in Onikan, Lagos, established in 1957⁵², is one of Nigeria's most valued historical centres that have, over the ages, preserved the nation's cultural heritage and its historical development. As noted earlier, the museum is reputed to have the largest museum collections in Nigeria, with about fifty per cent of the total museum content in the country. The museum, due to its significance, was made the headquarters of the Federal Department of Antiquities, a department that later transformed into the present National Commission for Museum and Monuments (NCMM) in 1979. However, the Commission's headquarters was moved from Lagos to Abuja, the new seat of government of the federation. Despite the above arrangement, the National Museum, Onikan, Lagos, still stands out as one of the leading historical centres of national development.

Though written sources have always been the source of historical reconstruction, it has not been easy to write a comprehensive story of a country based on strictly written documents. In pursuit of a complete grasp of events, archaeologists, historians, sociologists, ethnographers, and even scientists all over have fallen back to the study of antiquities which over the years have

⁵⁰ A. Adejuwon, An interview conducted with Mr. Adejuwon, a former Curator with the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. (Male; 67 years), on 27th June, 2012.; Omotoso, Eluyemi. "Historical Antecedents and Future Development of Museums in Nigeria" ...p.3.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵²Y. Omosa, "National Museum Lagos", Nigeria Online Tourism Magazine 2006. www.goodlife.com.ng [Retrieved on 8th March, 2012]; Omotoso, Eluyemi. "Historical Antecedents and Future Development of Museums in Nigeria" ...p.15.

become the major, if not the only, concrete and genuine evidence of the achievement of man in the society⁵³. Indeed, the antiquities at National Museum, Onikan in Lagos, have become the raw materials for extracting cultural and historical facts.

From the socio-cultural point of view, the relevance of museums and monuments in developing and preserving our cultural heritage and uplifting societal values is unquantifiable. The cardinal focus of setting up museums and monuments is to preserve people's socio-cultural history jealously. Therefore, the collections in most of the museums in Nigeria depict the historical antecedents of the various ethnic groups as well as their robust cultural heritage⁵⁴. It is against this background that museums, in most cases, are referred to as the 'central bank' of cultural heritage; they serve as custody for many works of art for posterity.

In light of education, museums and monuments have become a knowledge repository. Infact, the collection of museums and other monuments is a practical demonstration of what is being taught in schools. In addition, museums, right from time, have been an extremely valuable means of creativity and inspiration to the general society. Many researchers and scholars have found museums and monuments a veritable source of knowledge. On the other hand, museums and monuments play a significant role in the tourism industry. The various museums and monuments across Nigeria have continued attracting tourists to the country, which is instrumental in enhancing local economic development. For the past three decades, tourism as a sector of the economy has gained significant awareness locally and internationally⁵⁵.

Nigeria has developed an enviable cultural heritage over the years as one of the world's most populous black nations. However, in the past, Nigeria did not realise or take tourism as a significant source of economic transformation compared to some advanced countries where tourism serves as the bane of income generation. Undisputedly, museums' role as tourist attraction sources cannot be relegated to the background. Museum has been a formidable force for promoting and developing eco-tourism and cultural tourism in Nigeria and the entire world. For instance, the World Heritage Sites are important research and educational centres which attract about 80% of visitors coming to the country⁵⁶.

The National Museum, Lagos and all other museums in Nigeria will thrive better if more funds are allocated to this ailing economic sector. The Nigerian governments at the Federal, State and local levels should try as much as possible to allocate development funds to the museums and monuments programmes to preserve its cultural heritage. Similarly, the government should

⁵³ S. O. Biobaku, "First Opening Address", African Notes, Bulletin of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. Special Number, Nigerian Antiquities, 1972. P. 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 15.

⁵⁵ E. Imoukhuede, "What is an Antiquity", African Notes, Bulletin of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. Special Number, Nigerian Antiquities, 1974. P. 24.

⁵⁶ Okey, O. O. 2003. "Tourism and Economic Development in Nigeria: An Empirical Investigation." Global Journal of Social Service. 2 (1).

also endeavour to modernise and rejuvenate most of her monuments and museums in dilapidated state. The security of the collections in the various museums and monuments should be a source of national interest. This is because the cases of theft or missing objects at the museums is not portraying a good image of the richness of our cultural development. Hence, the government should come out with a clear blueprint on how to tackle this ugly trend. The present tendency of globalisation in one way or another, affects all sectors of the economy. As such, for improved performance and efficiency, the nation's museums and monuments should be overhauled to blend into this wave of global dynamism. It is painful to note that the National Museum, Lagos's official website, for a very long period has been epileptic. Government and private individuals should set out strategies to check such lapses and make a substantial effort at properly digitalising all her museums and monuments for posterity's sake.

Above all, the museums and monument centres should seek more collaboration and partnership with international organisations and influential private bodies for the purposeful development of the tourism industry. In addition, the citizens should endeavour to withdraw from the lukewarm attitude towards the development of the museums and monuments, which is a repository of our national heritage. It is an understatement to assert that museums and monuments keep the memory alive, preserve and provide insights and understanding about our environment, show our origins, identity, and future. A people without evidence of history is a lost generation. Therefore, museums and monuments play a fundamental role in reconstructing our socio-cultural history.

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