THE CHALLENGES OF SAFEGUARDING AND SECURING CULTURAL HERITAGE MATERIALS DURING VIOLENT CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

Retos en la salvaguarda y seguridad del Patrimonio Cultural en los conflictos violentos en Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Almost every community, country and continent is experiencing a form of conflict, war or disaster. These wars have claimed lives, antiquities, heritage materials, contemporary Arts, Galleries, Museums, Archives, Monuments and Heritage sites. The aim of this study is to explore the challenges of safeguarding cultural heritage material during violent conflict in Nigeria bearing in mind the two UNESCO world heritage sites in Nigeria: Sukur kingdom and Osun Oshogbo sacred Grove. The outcome of this study will help the policy makers to address the challenges of safeguarding cultural heritage materials in times of conflicts, bridge the gap on the existing literature concerning the safeguarding of cultural heritage materials in times of conflict and to make a modest contribution to the existing body of knowledge on cultural heritage protection in Nigeria in particular and other parts of the world in general.

This study relies on both primary and secondary sources using questionnaire and oral interview to elicit information from selected relevant cultural agencies, journalists and scholars in the field of art and culture. Relevant literature and documents on the challenges of safeguarding and securing of cultural heritage materials during conflicts were reviewed. The data gathered from the questionnaires and the oral interview is presented in frequency tabular form to give precise and comprehensive insight into the study findings.

Notable among the challenges were insecurity and lack of professionalism in the field of cultural heritage profession. The study also revealed that governments are not enforcing the global laws and conventions for the protection of cultural heritage materials in times of violent conflict. The communities where these materials are located have little or no knowledge about the import of these materials and do not take part in securing them in the event of conflict.

It is crucial that we place high value on heritage materials since they are inextricably linked with our identity and where we come from. It is strongly recommended that Cultural Heritage Institutions should involve as much as possible the local communities living around the sites by creating awareness educating and encouraging them to take ownership of the Sites located within their communities. They must ensure that the site is safeguarded against all forms of threat. Items of heritage value are not often considered in most disaster management plans therefore there is the need to consider heritage as priority just as the protection of lives and property.

Key words: Cultural Heritage, conflict, protection, Heritage materials, challenges, Safeguarding, identity.

RESUMEN

Casi cada comunidad, país y continente está experimentando alguna forma de conflicto, guerra o desastre. Estas guerras han demandado vidas, antigüedades, materiales patrimoniales, Artes contemporáneas, galerías, museos, archivos, monumentos y lugares patrimoniales. El objetivo de este estudio es explorar los desafíos de la salvaguarda del material del patrimonio cultural durante un conflicto violento en Nigeria, manteniendo en mente los dos lugares Patrimonio Mundial de la UNESCO en Nigeria: Sukur Kingdom y la cueva sagrada de Osun Oshogbo. El resultado de este estudio ayudará a los legisladores a abordar los desafíos de la conservación de los materiales del patrimonio cultural en tiempo de conflicto, establecerá puentes sobre la literatura existente en relación a la salvaguarda de los materiales del patrimonio cultural en tiempos de conflicto y proporcionará una contribución modesta al cuerpo existente de conocimiento sobre la protección del patrimonio cultural en Nigeria en particular, y en otras partes del mundo en general.

Este estudio se apoya tanto en fuentes primarias como secundarias de información utilizando cuestionarios y entrevistas orales para recoger información de las agencias culturales relevantes seleccionadas, periodistas y académicos en el campo del arte y la cultura. La literatura y los documentos relevantes sobre los desafíos en la preservación y la seguridad de materiales de patrimonio mundial durante los conflictos fueron revisados. Los datos recogidos de los cuestionarios y las entrevistas orales se presentan en forma de tablas de frecuencia para dar una visión precisa y detallada de los descubrimientos del estudio.

Es crucial que otorguemos un alto valor a los materiales patrimoniales ya que están vinculados inextricablemente con nuestra identidad y del lugar del que procedemos. Se recomienda encarecidamente que las instituciones de Patrimonio involucraran todo lo que fuese posible a las comunidades viviendo alrededor de los sitios mediante la creación de conciencia educando y animándoles para convertirse en propietarios

de los lugares localizados dentro de sus comunidades. Deben asegurarse que el lugar está protegido frente a todas formas de amenaza. Los objetos de valor patrimonial no están a menudo considerados en la mayoría de los planes de gestión de riesgo, por lo que es necesario considerar al patrimonio como prioridad tanto como lo es la protección de las vidas y los bienes.

Palabras clave: *Patrimonio Cultural, conflicto, protección, materiales patrimoniales, desafíos, salvaguarda, identidad.*

1. INTRODUCTION

During any form of conflict or war, a lot happen. People die, houses destroyed and every other thing in the society suffers. Wars in various countries have claimed antiquities, heritage materials, contemporary Arts, Galleries, Museums, Archives and very important Monuments and Heritage sites. My Paper deals with the effects of war and conflict on cultural heritage and tourism industries in Nigeria and how they can be protected and restored so as to yield the desirable economic gains. Preceding from the premise that conflict of any type puts our cultural heritage at risk; this paper also explores the practical challenges and opportunities available to us in the face of incessant ethnic and Boko Haram (western education is abomination) insurgencies and their wanton destructions of lives and properties. There will be reviews of relevant literature and documents on the effects of war on heritage materials and tourism industries in Nigeria particularly and other parts of the world in generally .*My paper also highlights the activities the National Council for Arts and Culture as well as other Cultural Agencies in Nigeria have employed to sensitize the stakeholders, the youth, the elderly, and the community at large on the need for peaceful co-existence so as to collectively strive to safeguard and secure our cultural heritage before, during and after any form of conflict for posterity and desirable economic gains.* In conclusion, the paper recommends that Cultural industries, Materials and properties must be protected properly by all in times of risk because destroying and losing them means destroying people's memories about their past.

1.1 Background to the Study

The protection of cultural heritage in war zones is a subject that has attracted much attention in recent years, largely because of recent conflicts in the Middle East and the Balkans. It is a regrettable fact, however, that war and the destruction of cultural heritage have almost always gone hand-in-hand. For example, classical authors describe how Alexander burnt Persepolis in 330 BC, but not before his soldiers had removed vast amounts of booty. In medieval times, the destructive powers of the Mongols and the disastrous effects on the cultural heritage of many parts of Central Asia and the Middle East have been well-documented. Throughout history, but particularly from World War One onwards, archaeological

sites and monuments have been badly affected by military activities (Curtis, 2011:56).

Through cultural heritage materials, nations witness significant boom in the world of art and tourism as well as attract foreign investors and tourists to the benefit of the regions and countries where they are located. There are notable heritage sites which record visits by tourists in their thousands annually. According to UNESCO the cultural heritage reflects the life of the community, its history and its identity. Its preservation helps to rebuild broken communities, re-establish their identities, and link their past with their present and future.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Struggles over how we remember and represent the past are inextricably linked to struggles over representation and resources in the present. Managers of heritage sites will never be able to isolate themselves from conflicts with and among their communities – but they do have a choice of how to relate to the issues underlying these conflicts (International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, undated). According to Curtis (2011) the widespread destruction of cultural property in World War Two, of which Monte Casino and Dresden are but two examples, led directly to the 1954 Hague convention on the *"The Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*

Heritage is related to the concept of territory as both a geographical and cultural entity (Barillet, Joffroy and Longuet, 200611). Zaid, Abioye and Olatise (2012:3) recorded that in Nigeria, the need to preserve our heritage materials was recognized by librarians, archivists and museum curators as early as the earliest institutions such as libraries, archives and museums established in the early 50's; though these institutions have it as their main objective to preserve the heritage materials, they have not been able to concretely do much because of the myriad of problems encountered particularly in the area of skilled manpower requirements for preservation and conservation work. But the issue of manpower problem is not just the only problem. Instability and poor awareness on the values of heritage materials are among the challenges.

One of the UNESCO world heritage sites located on the hills above the village of Sukur in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State in north eastern Nigeria. It is situated in the Mandara Mountains close to Nigeria border with Cameroon. It's inscription is based on the cultural heritage, material culture, and the Naturally terraced fields. It is the first African cultural Landscape to be inscribed in the world heritage list. Sukur heritage site is endangered considering the activities of Boko Haram insurgents in the area who always have free ride on a daily basis. During armed conflicts, heritage sites often become potential hideouts for criminals or dissidents whose goals are mainly to violate public order and cause social instability.

Nigeria has had her fair share of cultural heritage pillaging and loss. Communal and ethnic conflicts continue to create havoc on Nigerian's cultural heritage. Also, religious fundamentalism have taken their toll, with deliberate burning and destruction of monuments, shrines and sacred places considered offensive and heretical to the new belief systems of the resurgent religions. Some of these conflicts are the Nigeria Civil War 1967 – 1970, Niger Delta Crisis, Jos religious crisis, and the continued Boko-Haram crisis in recent times. The effects of these crises have brought stories of woes to both the tangible and intangible aspects of Nigeria cultural heritage.
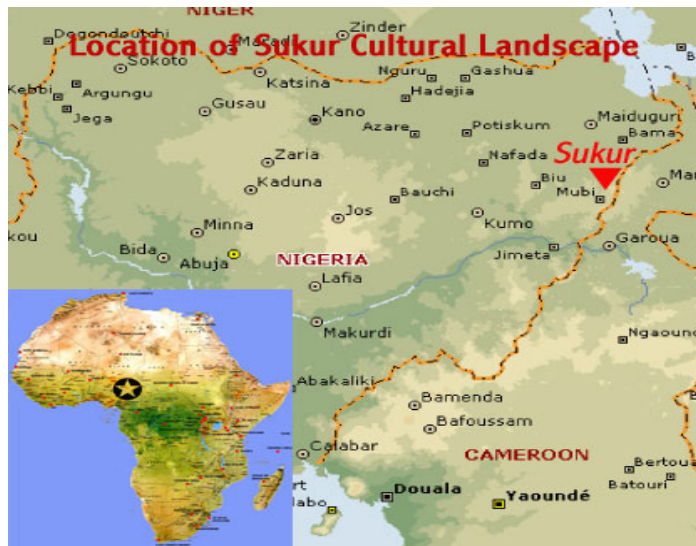

Fig. 1. Sukur cultural landscape located at the heart of Boko Haram insurgency and menace (Northeast of Nigeria)

Fig. 2. *One of the UNESCO Heritage sites, Sukur Kingdom in Adamawa State*

Fig. 3. This box, which is now in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum, was used to hold kola nuts presented to visitors in the royal court of Benin. Leopards are one of the most commonly portrayed animals in African art. Intelligent and courageous, they often serve as metaphors for powerful individuals or associations.

1.3 Research Questions

i. How do we guarantee the safety of such materials during conflicts in communities where they are located?

ii. Which institutions are responsible for protecting cultural heritage materials and some of the challenges facing them?

iii. What are the effects of these insurgencies on the tourism development and heritage industries in Nigeria?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Discourse

For the purpose of clarity, we need to briefly define the key terms in this discourse.

2.1.2 Cultural Heritage

The term culture is a universal phenomenon, with multifarious meanings, interpretations and applications. In simple terms, it aggregates the totality of a people's way of life. This includes history, religion, morality, economics, politics,

social life (marriage, leisure, rites of passage, behavioral traits and patterns), literature, music, and folklore and belief systems.

The Nigerian Cultural Policy document of 1988 described 'Culture' as:

> *"...the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their Environment, which gives order and meaning to their Social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious Norms and modes of organization thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours".*

It goes further to articulate that Culture comprises material, institutional, sites, monuments, philosophical and creative aspects.

Culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects and behaviour. It includes the ideas, value, customs and artefacts of a group of people. (Schaefer 2002). Culture is a pattern of human activities and the symbols that give these activities significance. It is what people eat, how they dress, beliefs they hold and activities they engage in. It is the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization thus distinguishing people from their neighbours.

According to Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwoma (2011), protecting cultural heritage is economical, cultural and historical process, because cultural heritage is based on the aspects of our past that we cherish, want to keep and pass on to future generations and outside world. The fact remains that intrinsic value of every heritage is paramount and is critical to the extent that economic benefits of preserving them are secondary.

Culture and heritage are often considered as the fundamental aspects underpinning a country's national identity and sovereignty. Cultural heritage including historic buildings, sites, cultures and other invaluable assets are the distinguished elements that encapsulate a nation's soul and spirit. Ogundele (1988) opines that many archaeologists in Nigeria for instance are said to have not properly appreciated the fact that taking special care of sites of archaeological discoveries with a view to preserving them for visitors and posterity is part of heritage management that cannot be neglected. Stakeholders appreciating and valuing of heritage resources is critical to their safety.

The cultural heritage of Nigeria and those of other African countries are unique as they portray the vibrant, largely traditional communities thriving in a culture of tolerance, peace, unity, diversity and continuity in the midst of modernization and social change.

Cultural heritage resources include interactions with, and interpretations of, the beliefs, practices, and cultural expressions of existing social groups and their inheritances from the past through their tangible and intangible expressions. The prominence of intangible cultural resources was advanced significantly by UNESCO starting in 2003. UNESCO then issued the "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," which seeks to protect and conserve the diversity of cultural traditions worldwide. The Convention was ratified and took effect in 2006 (UNESCO, 2006). Earlier efforts to protect the cultural heritage of societies across the globe had focused primarily on material (tangible) expressions, such as monuments, the built environment, architecture, and smaller-scale art works (Ahmad, 2006). As items of national pride, the Nigeria cultural heritage has been promoted as tourism products to generate income.

Cultural heritage enhances tourism development which has placed various nations on global tourism map. Tourism development according to Ramukumba et al, (2011) should show that tourism is a socio-cultural event for both the traveler and the host. Cultural tourism should be promoted for the sustainability of the industry. Cultural tourism broadens the scope of the industry, promotes appreciation among the locals and thus ensures a greater community involvement and a more equitable share of the prosperity brought about by tourism. On the positive note, tourism can contribute to the revitalization of arts, crafts and local culture and to the realization of cultural identity and heritage. Archaeology and cultural heritage management are neutral capacity-building strategies which can contribute to the development of trust, build confidence among communities and create conditions for sustainable peace (Suhrke et al. 2002: xii cited in Rogers, undated). Reynolds (2011) also identifies the need to appreciate non-economic value of heritage, with the assertion that tourism must be acknowledged for its social and cultural value, and the contribution it makes to our collective wellbeing, as well as its economic might.

In their study on tourism attractions, Ye and Sun (2012) examined the protection, management and tourism development of cultural heritage in China, and also identified the risk of loss of unique and non-renewable cultural heritage assets, and community benefits and discussed all the stakeholders' interest associated with the cultural heritage tourism. Ho and McKercher (2004:255) stated that in theory, treating cultural heritage assets as products for tourism consumption is reasonable and logical, but argued that in practice, though, it is much harder to achieve, for tourism and cultural heritage management embrace different management mandates and focuses. Ho and McKercher, (2004:255) maintain that heritage is far more complex than that of most goods and services, and that it is believed that exploiting heritage for tourism consumption, if not properly managed and cautiously, may commercialize, trivialize and standardize the intangible cultural meanings born by the physical manifestations.

Mawere, Mubaya and Sagiya (2013:191) discussed the challenge facing Chibvumani heritage site in Zimbabwe (Chibvumani heritage site is located in Bikita district in Masvingo Province at the southern eastern edge of the Zimbabwean plateau, about 128km from Masvingo city along Masvingo-Mutare highway) considering *w*hat emerged in a situation whereby the different stakeholders have different interests on the site; as the community (traditional leadership) want cultural and spiritual fulfillment from the sites which they value, while the school wants to derive educational and economic benefits from Chibvumani, and NMMZ is looking at the overall protection and management of the heritage site for posterity thereby being submerged in a dilemma on whether it should relinquish management and conservational powers to traditional leadership/local communities or use legal instruments to deter potential offenders at the site. However, such clash of interest should not be allowed to endanger the heritage resources.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher sampled about 60 heritage and culture workers from agencies under the Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation to elicit authentic information on their challenges in safeguarding and securing heritage material in times of conflict or emergency. Their responses and findings are analyzed in the following chapter using percentages and degrees to indicate the frequencies of the responses of the respondents.

3.1 Research Findings and analysis

Oral interview (60 respondents) drawn from across the country.

What are the likely challenges you think the cultural Heritage workers may face in case of an outbreak of war or conflict in Nigeria today?

The table below shows the distribution of the responses elicited from oral interview conducted randomly by the researcher on the question what are the likely challenges the cultural workers may encounter in case of a sudden outbreak of war or conflict in Nigeria today as regard safeguarding and security our cultural heritage materials.

From the distribution table below, Lack of professionalism and insecurity top the table with 13 respondents each representing 21.67% of the total respondents of 60 samples. This is followed by lack of basic infrastructure with 9 respondents representing 15% Lack of awareness for the need to secure and protect our cultural heritage as a total frequency of 7 respondents representing 11.67%. Inadequate support by the public and misconception of the Cultural heritage materials by the public has a total frequency of 5 respondents each with 8.33% each, while poor funding has the least respondents of 3 representing 5% of the total sample.

From the table below, we can impute that lack of professionalism and insecurity has the highest frequency. Therefore Government should embark on training and retraining of staff in the areas of preservation and emergency bearing in mind that the world is being torn apart by various shades of conflict. Nigeria is also having a fair share of ethnic and Boko Haram insurgencies. Insecurity of life is another concern.

Government should also put in place adequate facilities for the workers to thrive, life insurance cover for culture workers should also be put in place because of the impending risk and casualties associated with violent conflict.

It was also noted that Lack of basic infrastructure for storage is also a cause of concern for the respondents representing 15% of the sample. Therefore culture Administrators should go back to the drawing board to make adequate provisions for the storage during emergency situation in all our Museums and Cultural Agencies.

S/N	Responses	Frequency of Response	% of Response	Degree of Response 360^0
i	Lack of Basic infrastructure for storage by Government	9	15%	60^0
ii.	Inadequate Support by the public	5	8.33%	30^0
iii	Poor funding of the sector	3	5%	15^0
iv.	Lack of awareness and publicity for the need for protection	7	11.57%	45^0
v.	Misconception of the Heritage Materials by the Public	5	8.33%	30^0
vi.	Lack of professionalism	13	21.67%	75^0
vii.	Lack of commitment for the protection of the heritage materials	5	8.33%	30^0
viii.	Insecurity	13	21.67%	75^0
	TOTAL	**60**	**100%**	**360^0**

4. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Currently, cultural heritage is still not given sufficient consideration in disaster risk management strategies. However, few countries have appropriate disaster risk management plans and procedure for their countries' cultural heritage. Nigeria should therefore wake up to the present challenge staring on our faces.

Bonnie Burnham, president of the World Monuments Fund, has weighed in on "Protecting Cultural Heritage: Lessons from the Syrian Conflict." She pointed out that the international community must do more to address the issue of protecting cultural patrimony during conflicts

Boutard, Guastavino, and Turner (2013) noted that the preservation of artistic works with technological components involves issues of readability, authenticity and intelligibility. But what is to be adopted here is that commitment and enthusiasm remain the ingredients required for successful heritage management and preservation as well as early response to threats at heritage sites.

In their study on disaster management for cultural heritage resources, Graham and Spennemann (2006) observed that cultural heritage resources, which are mostly vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters, are inherently linked with our identity and can assist the community in achieving some sense of normalcy after a disaster. According to the scholars, while protection of life and property will always be priority, items of heritage value are not even considered in most disaster management plans, hence, they suggested the need to consider heritage materials as priority in as much as lives are also protected. This is because such material also express who we are and where we come from. It is crucial, that we place high value on heritage materials since they are inextricably linked with our identity. Cultural Heritage workers should continue receiving training in disaster reduction planning and strategies so as to achieve desired result in times of emergencies.

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