

## Nigeria's heritage: Yesterday, today and tomorrow

Pat Uche Okpoko<sup>1</sup>, \*Obinna F. Emeafor<sup>2</sup>, J. Kelechi Ugwuanyi<sup>3</sup>

& Chidinma C. Oguamanam<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2&4</sup>Department of Hospitality and Tourism Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

<sup>3</sup>Department of Archaeology & Heritage Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

<sup>3</sup>School of Humanities, University of Glasgow

\*Corresponding author: obinna.emeafor@unn.edu.ng

### Abstract

This paper discusses Nigeria's heritage across the past and present, and explores considerations for achieving viable heritage management in the future. The study was prompted by the fact that many of the benefits of Nigeria's rich and diverse heritage remain untapped. It therefore seeks to understand the reasons behind this and to offer solutions through a critical analysis of heritage management in the past and present, while proposing a sustainable blueprint for the future. The specific objectives of the study were to: (i) analyze heritage management in pre-colonial and contemporary Nigeria; (ii) discuss critical factors that can help reposition Nigeria's heritage in the future. Literature analysis was employed as the data collection technique, and the data were presented using an interpretative-descriptive narrative method. The thematic analytical technique was used to interpret the data. A key argument of the paper is that proper management of Nigeria's heritage in the future should take into account the best approaches for preserving and promoting heritage. These include: emphasis on heritage digitization, a regulatory system for heritage preservation, application of innovative methods in conserving architectural heritage and other cultural objects, use of GIS in

managing archaeological sites, and a good understanding of heritage as an enabler of social capital. The study also argues that every effort made towards repositioning Nigeria's heritage must be backed by the political will to do so. Therefore, policymakers must understand the centrality of heritage in the advancement of societies. It is believed that the outcome of the study will bolster current efforts being made to revitalize aspects of Nigeria's heritage and propel it to a wider global visibility.

**Keywords:** Heritage, heritage management, best practices, Nigeria

## Introduction

The idea of inheritance, something handed down from one generation to another, is at the centre of various definitions of heritage. In a broader sense, heritage is viewed as something which relates to the past and which is, in some way, given special value as 'treasure' or 'legacy', thus, necessitating attention, protection and preservation (Hitchcock et al., 2010). Heritage is often classified as cultural and natural. Cultural heritage, which is subdivided into tangible and intangible heritage, may include customs, traditions, belief systems, norms, values, monuments, buildings, archaeological sites and sites of significant events, various aspects of arts (music, dance, sculpture, and fine art), traditional festivals and native craft. While tangible cultural heritage is concrete, intangible cultural heritage refers to aspects of culture expressed through behaviour, action and performance. Natural heritage, on the

other hand, refers to "landscapes in which pristine wilderness (unlogged forests, undammed rivers, unfarmed mountains) predominate" (Ashworth, 2000, p.275).

As a multicultural nation, "with a landmass of approximately 357,000 square miles, including variable climatic conditions ranging from sparsely populated Sahelian and savannah conditions in the north, to densely populated rain forest in the south" (Wright, 1998, p.103), Nigeria is a country endowed with a rich cultural and natural heritage. However, many of the benefits of Nigeria's heritage – spanning political, economic, socio-cultural, educational and tourism dimensions – have remained elusive due to an uncoordinated and unsustainable heritage management approach. This scenario has become worrisome and demands urgent attention. As a first step, there is a need to conduct a

comprehensive analysis of heritage management in Nigeria in the past and present, to plan an ideal heritage management approach for the future. The result of the analysis will no doubt contribute immensely towards repositioning heritage as a key factor in Nigeria's sustainable development agenda. Building on the foregoing, the specific objectives of the study were to: (i) analyze heritage management in pre-colonial and contemporary Nigeria; and (ii) discuss critical factors that can help reposition Nigeria's heritage in the future.

### **Review of related literature**

As already noted, cultural heritage connotes the tangible and intangible aspects of a people's culture, which they cherish and would want to protect and preserve for posterity. Cultural heritage management involves the care of cultural resources, to maintain their intrinsic characteristics, as well as their long-term value for the benefit of society (Jureniene & Radzevicius, 2014). Cultural heritage is of paramount importance to the survival of cultural groups, in that it is what provides a sustainable framework for people to explore their environment and survive in it.

A primary objective for managing heritage is to communicate its significance and the need for its

conservation to its host community and visitors. Management of cultural heritage is very important for the survival of cultures, nation-building and sustainable development. It is also important as it helps in the preservation of cultural resources for the development of tourism. Indeed, cultural heritage plays an important role in tourism development for the fact that millions of people travel across the globe just to experience different types of heritage (Dallen, 2006, in Lo et al., 2017).

Furthermore, heritage resources are also used to gain insight into cultural evolution. Aremu (2014) notes that indigenous and foreign archaeologists have relied on findings from heritage resources to expand the boundary of knowledge on human and cultural evolution in Nigeria and Africa by extension. To buttress this assertion, Aremu cites examples with the unique bronze artworks of Igbo Ukwu (South-East), Benin (Mid-West), Ile Ife (South-West) and the Nok Terracotta (North-Central), which testify that Africa had some form of civilization indigenous to it.

On the global scene, significant efforts have been made and are still ongoing towards the protection and preservation of heritage. One such example is the *Convention Concerning the Protection of*

the *World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, established in Paris, November 16, 1972. This international agreement enables nations to work together to conserve some of the world's most treasured cultural and natural sites (Perdesen, 2002). The belief that World Heritage sites belong to everyone and should be preserved for future generations is the very principle on which the World Heritage Convention is based (Perdesen, 2002). Aremu (2014) reports that 190 countries have ratified the treaty, and at present 981 properties are inscribed on the list - 759 of which are cultural, 193 are natural and 29 are mixed. Nigeria is home to two of the world's heritage sites - Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove in Osun State and Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa State. Ogbunike Cave in Anambra State, is currently under consideration for inscription as a World Heritage site.

As more and more countries continue to search for sustainable paths towards development, it is increasingly being realized that cultural heritage has a central role to play in this regard. However, in Africa - particularly sub-Saharan Africa - it is evident that various aspects of both tangible and intangible heritage have suffered serious neglect, with some on the brink of total disappearance. The Global Heritage Fund

in 2010 reported that many of the most threatened historic sites are in the Third World nations, with special reference to Black African nations. A research by Global Heritage Fund (2010) - *Saving Our Vanishing Heritage* - revealed that out of 500 global heritage sites found in the lowest-income countries, about 200 are irreversibly damaged. As noted by Endong (2019), such colossal damage to heritage sites, resulting from a myriad of anthropogenic factors including: looting, faulty government policies, irresponsible tourism, pressure of development, poor heritage management, and internal and cross-border conflicts, among others appears to intensify over the years. These anomalies cannot be discussed without referring to issues such as modernization and cultural globalization.

Modernization and globalization have a serious impact on the socio-cultural fabrics of most Third-World nations. This scenario, according to Endong (2018), is connected to the fact that the two paradigms (modernization and globalization) are mostly associated with some socio-cultural and political forces that are visibly inimical to the preservation of cultural diversity, particularly in Third World countries. As argued by Endong (2018), modernization, for instance, is arguably equated to a pro-westernization force, and is therefore

viewed as one of the phenomena responsible for cultural erosion in Third World countries. Related to modernization is cultural globalization, of which some critics argue entails inevitable cultural erosion and cultural mutations/acculturation (Endong, 2018). As remarked by Griesbrecht (2011) in Endong (2018), cultural globalization is paradoxical. On one hand, it permits cultural empowerment of society and enhances the construction of collective or shared identity, while also having the tendency to disempower the same people by enhancing misrepresentation; neo-colonization and loss of individualism and group identity. In all these, some writers have argued that the media have an enormous role to play in tackling the challenges posed by modernization and cultural globalization in the context of heritage preservation.

Several studies have been conducted on the role of the media in the preservation of indigenous cultures and heritage. The empirical study by Romanova et al. (2013) indicated that the media, through their information and entertainment functions, preserve the memories of the past, the roots of a culture, the nature, and the real shape of the objects of cultural heritage. Rukya (2016) also observed that indigenous cultures are promoted through public and privately

owned mass media outlets, as well as the social media. The study recommended that more efforts should be made to prevent indigenous cultural values from being swallowed by Western pop culture which largely controls the media.

In a similar vein, Simon and Ndoma (2016) studied the impact of Nigerian media on the transformation of indigenous cultures. The study observed that the Nigerian media have focused on promoting, developing and advertising western culture in its entirety, while relegating and dabbing the Nigerian culture. From the perspective of indigenous film productions such as the Nollywood, Danbello and Dakogol (2016) found that the Nigerian film industry has failed to preserve the great heritage of Nigeria. The study suggests that for easy identification on the globe, Nigerian filmmakers must make every effort in the preservation of the Nigerian culture.

Furthermore, the media are recognized as playing a vital role in the preservation and promotion of archaeological heritage. Brittain and Clack (2007) argue that archaeology's use of the media to secure its future is by no means new. Eck (2014) remarks that since archaeology began evolving from its antiquarian roots into a modern science, the media have played a role through book publishing, newspaper

coverage of discoveries, and visual depictions of archaeology in shaping both the profession and the public's awareness and commitment to preserving the world's archaeological and cultural heritage. McManamon, cited in Stone and Molyneaux (1994) avers that mass media messages can awaken interest in the study of archaeology, through various ways, at different levels. For instance, people can read books or newspapers, or journal articles about archaeological sites, excavations, or other archaeological subjects.

### Theoretical framework

This paper was anchored on the theory of Functionalism based on Emile Durkeim's hypothesis of social solidarity.

Functionalism is construed here as the contribution made by an institution or a sub-entity to the maintenance of the whole (Okeibunor & Anugwom, 2002).

This sociological theory was popularized by scholars such as Bronislaw Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. Malinowski argues that for society to remain at equilibrium, there should be a fusion of cultural items. His stance on Functionalism supports the integration of cultural materials for society to maintain equilibrium. The two basic assumptions of Functionalism are 'organismic analogy' and the notion of 'social structure'. The two assumptions demonstrate how society maintains its

unity or equilibrium through the efficient dependence (or interdependence) of its various parts.

A key criticism of the theory was put forward by Edmund Leach, who frowned at the static nature of functional analysis. Leach questioned the viability of Functionalism in tackling the problem of change in societies. Another criticism is the "over estimation of the degree of functional unity to be found in a social system" (Okeibunor & Anugwom, 2002, p. 44). Critics also faulted the analogy drawn between 'society' and 'organism' in Functionalism, in the sense that while the organismic analogy always holds (the interdependent functions of different parts of the body towards healthy existence of the body), the same cannot be said of the entire social system or society.

These criticisms notwithstanding, Functionalism provides a suitable framework for the demonstration of the significance of heritage preservation for Nigeria's progress, and the need to formulate a robust heritage management approach for the future. Artifacts, for instance, are objects made and used by man in the attempt to cope with the environment. Environment in this context refers to the complete range of external conditions, physical and biological, in

which man lives (Allaby, 1994). It is therefore important to state that "man cannot survive without the construction and use of artifacts" (Ogundele, 2014, p.5). These artifacts could then be said to play a role in maintaining the society at a state of equilibrium.

If it can be assumed that all cultural traits and aspects of natural heritage are useful parts of society; that all customary patterns of behavior, beliefs, attitudes, and social structures [those not detrimental] perform different functions within societies (Onyima, 2016), then policy makers in Nigeria should see the need to make concerted efforts towards the preservation of Nigeria's heritage. In doing so, it is needful to have a proper understanding of Nigeria's heritage across past and present, and the possible plans for a sustainable heritage management in the future.

### **Research Method**

Data for the current study were gathered through the critical analysis and synthesis of literature. The nature of literature analysis employed was the narrative review. Narrative review encompasses a comprehensive appraisal of existing literature on a specific topic with the aim of identifying emerging themes and patterns.

The literature used in this study was classified based on publication type, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books and book chapters, conference proceedings, theses, and dissertations. An attempt was made to evaluate the quality and relevance of the literature using clearly defined criteria including methodological rigor; appropriateness of data collection and analysis procedures; the extent to which results and conclusions were supported by data; peer-review status; and the relevance of each source to the research objectives.

The data were presented as an interpretive-descriptive narrative, and a thematic analytical technique was employed for the interpretation. The thematic analytical technique is concerned with the identification, examination and recording of themes. Themes refer to patterns that are spread across data sets which are considered germane to the focus of an inquiry or relevant to the description of the phenomena under investigation.

### **Findings and discussion**

#### **Nigeria's heritage as of yesterday**

Nigeria's heritage is a rich blend of the unique cultural identities and peculiar heritage sites of its over 370 ethnic groups. Some examples include: Eyo masquerade festival in Lagos, Durbar festival in northern Nigeria, the Long Juju

of Arochukwu in southeast, Nigeria, Osun-Osogbo Sacred grove (a world heritage site), boating and fishing-related sports, such as the Argungu Fishing festival in Kebbi State, the Kano City wall, slave trade relics in Badagry, the Mbari cultural centre in Imo state. Others are museums and monuments highlighting key historical and cultural events, such as the National War Museum, Umuahia and Museum of Colonial History, both in Abia State; Iva Valley Coal Mines in Enugu, Ikogosi warm springs in Ondo and Ekiti States, confluence of River Niger and Benue, National parks (e.g., Cross River, Kainji, Okomu, GashakaGumti national parks); forest reserves (e.g., Afi River, Idanre, Akure Ofosu, Gujba forest reserves); game reserves (e.g., Borgu, Yankari, Zugurma, Falgore game reserves) and so on.

Before the advent of colonialism, cultural groups in Nigeria had well-established ways in which they managed their heritage. In the pre-colonial Nigeria, religious rites and ritual practices helped in inspiring creative works in the form of arts and crafts. Bankole (2013) notes that arts and crafts flourished in the pre-colonial era as a result of their crucial roles in both the material and religious lives of the people, since they were connected with important ceremonial occasions, such as death, birth, coming to

puberty, marriage and naming ceremonies.

Furthermore, aspects of Nigerian cultural heritage in the precolonial period were preserved in sacred groves and shrines which were primarily managed by priests devoted to indigenous deities. Cultural heritages were equally managed by kings, chiefs, and heads of clans in royal palaces. Also, there were carvers who made masks for masquerades, traditional costume designers who made royal regalia, beads and dresses; other crafts makers made baskets, local talking drums and other musical instruments; the music and dance specialists made music, praise songs to celebrate valiant warriors and trained dancers for festivals (Onyima, 2016).

Again, Cultural education on Nigeria's heritage thrived very well in the past. A good example of cultural education is the *Ifa* literary corpus in Southwestern Nigeria. The corpus is the storehouse of Yoruba culture. As the repository for Yoruba traditional body of knowledge, embracing history, philosophy, medicine, and folktale, it serves as the basic means through which Yoruba people comprehend their environment and historical experiences (Abimbola, 1975, in Ajayi & Ojo, 2009). It forms the foundation of Yoruba traditional

education, expressed in a coded form that can only be interpreted by a veteran Ifa priest. The primary material an *Ifa* Priest uses to discern the problems of his clients is known as the *Ifa* in literary and divinatory corpus (Abimbola, 1973, in Ajayi & Ojo, 2009).

Nigeria's heritage of the past is also characterized by the use of symbols as a form of communication. Symbols are objects, actions, relationships, or linguistic formations that stand for a multiplicity of meanings. They are used in the form of religious emblems, ideograms, icons, rituals, songs, prayers, myths, incantations, vows, customary behaviour, and personifications (Nabofa, 1994). A typical example is the *Nsibidi* pictograph.

*Nsibidi* is thought to have originated among the Ejagham people, whose territory spans from Cameroon into Nigeria's Cross River State (Ajibade et al., 2012). *Nsibidi* is a pictographic artistic expression used in the pre-colonial era for different purposes (Oghale, 2015). It comprises symbols representing words, morphemes, concepts, and ideas, forming a comprehensive symbolic lexicon.

*Nsibidi*, like the Egyptian hieroglyphics, has been used to challenge the assertion that communication in pre-colonial Africa was done only verbally. It is instructive to note that *Nsibidi* has been

used in the documentation of history, including social norms and values, and the dissemination of information.

The traditional Nupe (north-central Nigeria) royal music band, as introduced by Tsoede in the 15th century, is well-known for its indigenous knowledge acquisition and transfer system. Alhassan (2012) remarked that the practice is sustained within families by knowledge transfer from older to younger family members, who usually begin to learn it at a very early age (3-10 years) by observing and imitating elders within the family.

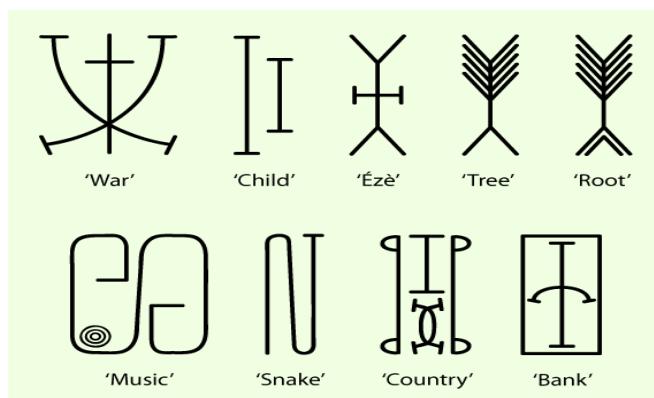
Going further, many Nigerian cultural groups are endowed with moral and societal values (hospitality, chastity before marriage, spirit of fraternity, deference for elders, covenant keeping, decent character, diligence, truth, modesty) meant to enhance interpersonal relationships and sustain social order and cohesion. These cultural groups also have idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and axioms, which play a significant role in improving social and moral values. These and many more result in cultural education. Ajayi and Ojo (2009) in Awoniyi (2015) submit that the main goal of cultural education is to build the character, morals, physical and vocational development of the individual, as well as the inculcation of the right type of values

in the children of the society, as they learn to identify, understand and appreciate the cultures, norms and values of society.

It is instructive to note at this juncture that, in the management of cultural heritage, traditional institutions and leadership styles, which are themselves part of cultural heritage, were instrumental in managing Nigeria's heritage in the past, referred to in this study as pre-colonial Nigeria. The Igbos of Southeast Nigeria, for example, were said to have combined consultative and participatory group leadership styles (highly democratic and decentralized leadership system) in the management of Igbo cultural heritage in the pre-colonial Nigeria (Okpoko, 2002). This allowed the masses to participate in the making of laws that would guide them. The bottom-

up approach to legislative processes ensures that the people respect and preserve their laws, since they were involved in making such laws (Emeafor & Onyeka, 2020). Thus, such laws as intangible aspects of culture are maintained and handed down to posterity.

The traditional leadership systems, moral precepts, societal values, and many more, helped to create morally sanctioned societies, where people are very mindful of their actions, knowing fully well that guilty parties must make amends for crimes committed by them. However, all these changed when the Europeans (led by the Portuguese) made their first contact with the continent of Africa via the Guinea coastland in about the middle of the Fifteenth Century, ushering in colonialism.



Note. Adapted from, *Trip Down Memory Lane*

### Nigeria's heritage as of today

Nigeria's heritage of today, as used in the context of this study, is the period from colonization to the present-day Nigeria. Colonialism had both positive and negative impacts on Nigeria's cultural heritage. On the one hand, it retarded the development of aspects of the cultural heritage of various ethnic groups in Nigeria, through, for instance, the looting of cultural resources. Several scholars have affirmed that the peoples of West Africa, including Nigeria, developed indigenous civilizations by drawing on their rich cultural heritage. However, this cultural advancement was impeded by the advent of colonialism. For instance, Abang (2010, p.5) avers that:

The region known as West Africa enjoyed a long history of some of the greatest empires and kingdoms in Black race before some European civilizations came into being. This region is celebrated for names like the old Ghana empire, the Kanem Bornu empire, the Mali and Songhai empires, the great Benin kingdom and such cultures that still dwarf some of the best known elsewhere in the world – Igbo Ukwu, Ife bronze head, Nok culture, Ashanti kingdom and the myths of the golden

stool...This rich culture was soon abandoned with the advent of alien cultures and peoples.

As noted by Folorunsho (2021), colonial activities such as mineral exploration, and the construction of roads, water reservoirs, and housing in Nigeria put archaeological heritage at risk of destruction and looting. For instance, the first piece of Nok terracotta figurines was found in 1928 at a tin mine close to Nok village near Jos, Plateau State.

There were instances where Christian missionaries instructed converts to submit objects (artefacts, e.g., idols, beads, rings, amulets, colourful clothes, and plates for sacrificial meals) of their traditional systems of worship for destruction (Folorunsho, 2021). Some of the objects were destroyed in reality, while others were transported to various European museums. The lucid description of, *The Discovery of Benin Art* at the Sainsbury African Galleries in the British Museum, attests to how critical aspects of African cultural heritage were lost to the West through the exercise of brute force. The description, cited in Bankole (2013, p.), reads thus:

The West discovered Benin art following the sack of Benin City by the British in 1897. In the 1890s, Benin resisted

British control over southern Nigeria. In March 1897, retaliating for the killing of British representatives, a punitive expedition conquered the capital. Thousands of treasures were taken as booty, including around 1000 brass plaques from the palace.

The implication of this is that a substantial number of Nigeria's art and craft works (statues, terracotta, bronze objects, ivories, wooden objects) of the past that would have provided vivid picture and reconstruction of the rich cultural heritage of the Nigerian people currently adorn world's major museums, where they have been attested to rank among other world's masterpiece (Bankole, 2013). It is instructive to note, however, that at present, efforts are underway to repatriate cultural materials which were taken to Europe during colonialism.

The introduction of alien culture through colonialism brought about the distortion of Nigeria's cultural heritage; thus, the socio-cultural fabric of the Nigerian society was deeply affected. This is clearly captured in one of the best novels to have come out of Africa - Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The following lines at the end of chapter 20 of Achebe's masterpiece (a discussion between Okonkwo and Obierika) refer

to the distortion of the cultural heritage of the Igbo nation by European interruption, in the form of colonialism:

Does the white man understand our custom about land? How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.

The writer, Achebe, appears to point out through these lines the total relegation of the culture of Umuofia, which represents the Igbo group, by the white man. He emphasizes through these lines the lack of fairness in denigrating other cultures or ethnocentrism.

On the positive side, colonialism is responsible for the development of

modern museums in Nigeria. Modern museum fashioned after European model is a product of colonialism as triggered by the endeavours of expatriates, such as Kenneth Murray, E.H. Duckwork, J.H. Brauholtz, and B.E.B. Fagg, who worked extensively in the Taruga Historical Iron Smelting Site. It was the efforts of these British expatriates that culminated in the establishment of Esie, Jos, and Oron museums - Nigeria's first generational museums. In 1979, Decree No. 77, which established the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), was promulgated. The headquarters of NCMM is located at block C, first floor, Federal Secretariat, Abuja. The commission is today a key institution in the management of Nigeria's tangible cultural heritage. NCMM is responsible for the following:

- administration of the national museums' antiquities, and monuments;
- construction, maintenance, and management of national museums;
- preservation of antiquities and monuments and their declaration as national ones and;
- granting approvals for the establishment of private museums.

Other boards and parastatals in the management of Nigeria's heritage are:

- National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC): NCAC, as one of the agencies under the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, was established by Decree No. 3 of 1975 as amended and Decree No. 5 of 1987. The headquarters is located at Garki, Abuja. NCAC was established to promote and foster the appreciation, revival and development of Nigerian arts, crafts and culture; registering artists and artiste group for effective business relationship; coordinating inter-state cultural exchange activities; organizing exhibitions in visual, performing and literary arts; promoting the development of traditional dance, drama, opera, photography, folklore, oral tradition, literature, poetry, painting and general arts, woodworks, embroidery, weaving and similar crafts; establishing cultural centres, theatre arts galleries and craft centres; and the preservation of all cultural materials that contribute to the image of Nigeria.
- Centre for Black African Arts and Culture (CBAAC): This parastatal

was established by decree 69 of 1979. Its headquarters is in Lagos. CBAAC was given the mandate to promote and preserve aspects of Black and African cultural heritage and civilization through activities such as exhibitions, seminars and workshops. It was upgraded to Pan-African Heritage Centre in 2000. (Anyanwu, 2024).

- National Troupe: The National Troupe was established in 1981 with headquarters located at the National Theatre Complex in Iganmu, Surulere, Lagos. The Festac'77 that brought the assemblage of different cultural troupes across the globe to exhibit their rich cultural heritage in Nigeria is thought to have been the impetus behind the establishment of this agency. Some of the responsibilities of the agency include to enhance the cultural development and artistic creativity of Nigeria, as well as to develop and maintain a national repertory system in the country. The agency also represents Nigeria in international tours.
- National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO): The headquarters of the National Institute for Cultural Orientation is located at No. 23 Kigoma Street, Wuse Zone 7, Abuja, Nigeria. Established in 1993 by decree No. 93, the main responsibility of NICO is to promote positive cultural values in Nigeria, and harness the country's cultural practices for national development, as outlined in the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria.
- National Arts Theatre: The National Arts Theatre has as its main function, the development and promotion of performing arts as an aspect of cultural heritage. It was established in 1976 with its office location at Surulere, Lagos. In July 2024, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu renamed the theatre in honor of Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka (Ekugbe, 2024).
- The National Gallery of Art: This was established in 1993 by decree No. 86. The gallery is located within the National Arts Theatre. The National Gallery of Art serves as a repository of Nigeria's creative spirit and a window to showcase Nigerian art and promote its appreciation. In this way, the gallery fosters artistic creativity.

As part of the framework for cultural reawakening, Nigeria formulated its National Cultural Policy. The ultimate

goal of the policy is to create an enabling environment for the reawakening of Nigerian cultural heritage and its potential development for tourism.

. Its areas of focus include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Analysis and understanding of Nigerian cultural life, values, needs and the expectations of the people;
- identification of authentic cultural values and heritage;
- the development of a national cultural identity alongside the recognition of distinct cultural identities of different ethnic groups;
- the development of cultural infrastructure and introduction of new technologies in cultural activities; and,
- the establishment of links between culture and education, as well as between education and different cultural industries, particularly the mass media.

It is regrettable, however, that the general state of Nigeria's cultural heritage as of today is far from being envied in spite of the country's laudable institutional framework for sustainable heritage management. Many factors, such as poor funding, lack of proper understanding of the role of heritage in sustainable development, flippant

government attitude towards heritage management, modernization and cultural globalization, lack of tourism committees at local government levels, and corruption, have continued to prevent Nigeria from reaping the gains derivable from a rich heritage, one the key potential gains being tourism revenue. (Ogonna & Igbojekwe, 2013; Emeafor, 2016; Gbadegesin & Osaghale, 2014). Ogonna and Igbojekwe (2013) in their study titled "Local Government and Responses to Sustainable Tourism Development in Nigeria" found that none of the local government areas in Imo State had established a tourism committee, as mandated by the National Tourism Policy and Decree No. 81 of 1992. The non-existence of tourism committee suggests that the identification of heritage resources, which have the potential to serve as tourist attractions, especially those in the remote areas, may present stiffer challenges. Equally, Emeafor (2016) in a study titled "Ethnographic Investigation of Cultural and Agro-tourism in Ebonyi State" lamented that poor funding is a major challenge to the development of the rich cultural, natural and agricultural heritage of Ebonyi State. Again, Wale Okediran, a former member of Nigeria's Federal House of Representatives in a paper delivered at the 62nd CORA Arts Stampede at the National Theatre, Lagos, on July 1, 2007, bemoaned the budgetary inadequacy of the culture

and tourism sector. In 2016, the then Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, decried the budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, describing it as 'mere tokenism' (Ovuakporie & Agbakwuru (2016)). The unenthusiastic approach to the management of national heritage assets by Nigerian leaders seem pathetic when compared to the laudable strides being made other in places, such as Rome in Italy (Gbadegesin & Osaghale, 2014; Opata & Apeh, 2016).

### **Nigeria's heritage of tomorrow**

Proper management of Nigeria's heritage in the future should take into account the best approaches for preserving and promoting heritage. The first to be considered here is the digitization of heritage.

#### **▪ Heritage digitization**

Digital preservation refers to a set of inter-related activities geared towards sustaining digital materials and providing access to them for over a long period of time. It is, according to Edward (2009), the practice of converting materials in analog forms to digital formats, to prevent permanent loss due to deterioration of the physical medium. Digital materials include texts, databases, still and moving images, audio, graphics, software, and web pages. Information technology is the lifeblood of digital preservation.

According to Velmurugan (2013), digital preservation occurs in two forms of documents - born digital documents and digitally created documents. Born digital documents refers to those materials that were initially created using some form of digital technology, they are also referred to as electronic records. Digitally created documents are those materials which have been transformed from analog to digital form through some reproductive means, such as re-keying of information or scanning of document/objects.

According to Adeyinka et al. (2020), the preservation of digital cultural heritage seems more like an extension of the traditional tasks of national libraries, archives and museums. One of the advantages of digital preservation is that it provides enduring solution to threats from natural disasters, looting, iconoclasms, and fire outbreak; thus, ensuring that documents are preserved for future generations, and also preventing the extinction of cultures. (Moseti, 2016).

Nonetheless, many of the cultural heritage institutions in Nigeria still grapple with the challenges of digitally preserving cultural heritage. As noted by Koiki-Owoyele et al. (2020), cultural institutions in Nigeria are yet to make concerted effort towards the digital preservation of cultural heritage. Other

scholars such as Mutula (2014), Ekwelem et al. (2011) identified the impediments to digital preservation of cultural heritage as including: inadequate infrastructure, inexperienced manpower; weak policy and regulatory frameworks; inadequate government support, limited connectivity and bandwidths.

Plans for preserving Nigeria's heritage in the future ought to make sufficient arrangements for the digitization of various aspects of its tangible and intangible cultural heritage. An enabling environment to achieve this should be provided by the government. This includes the provision of suitable infrastructure, Information Technology facilities, electronic gadgets and trained manpower. Digitizing Nigeria's heritage offers the major benefit of increasing its visibility on the global stage

- **Regulatory system for heritage preservation**

While pursuing economic and infrastructural development, the Nigerian government must strive to strike a balance between developmental efforts and the protection of the country's cultural heritage. The rapid growth of the country's population has implications for increased conflicts over land, housing and infrastructure, which would in turn affect heritage protection.

Critical issues affecting the regulatory

systems for heritage protection must not be overlooked. This implies that there must be a balance between the pursuit of developmental activities and the preservation of cultural heritage, especially immovable heritage. As noted by Fajemirokun (2021), there should be a detailed analysis of the nature and scope of the regulatory systems for heritage management in Nigeria, with a view to determining the extent of their efficacy and impacts.

- **Application of innovative methods in conserving architectural heritage**

Architectural heritage of Nigeria encompasses buildings with cultural, historical, aesthetic, religious, or economic significance inherited from past generations. Unfortunately, the conservation of architectural heritage in Nigeria is mainly through conventional methods; little attention has so far been paid to the adoption of innovative and advanced approaches. This is in spite of emphasis on innovative techniques by the ICOMOS Charter on the analysis, conservation, and structural restoration of architectural heritage (Okpalanzie & Adetunji, 2021). The result is that many architectural heritage in Nigeria are under intense threat of extinction due to deterioration, and lack of political will to conserve heritage.

Ultimately, robust management of Nigeria's heritage will require

conserving the intrinsic values of architectural heritage through a combination of conventional and innovative methods to achieve optimal results. Thus, following the example set by Okpalanozie and Adetunji (2021), it is necessary to improve advocacy efforts and provide training for conservation officers in innovative conservation techniques. This training should focus on enabling them to characterize architectural heritage materials and investigate their chemical composition, microstructure, and morphological features.

- **Use of GIS in managing archaeological sites**

Archaeological resources demand proper management as they are irreplaceable and non-renewable once lost. Constantinidis (2009) notes that besides excavating, observing, recording, cataloguing, and analyzing, archaeologists also have a moral obligation to protect, by putting in place, mechanisms that preserve sites for future generations. Anthropogenic and natural forces, which are capable of defacing archaeological resources have made it imperative to reflect on Geographic Information System (computer-based systems for mapping and analyzing spatial data) as a support infrastructure in heritage conservation endeavours.

GIS can be used to monitor potential negative impacts on archaeological sites and monuments, such that factors that are detrimental to a site can be determined on time for proactive control measures (Constantinidis, 2009). GIS also enhances the use of predictive modeling - a general term for methodologies, which model the distribution of archaeological materials in locations that are not surveyed (Wheatley, 1995).

These examples clearly delineate the importance of GIS in the management and conservation of archaeological sites. Nigeria, like many other African countries, has unique challenges in developing and using geographic information systems, especially in low-priority areas like cultural resources management. However, a journey of one thousand miles begins with a step' GIS is an important consideration for Nigeria's heritage management in the future.

- **Understanding heritage as an enabler of social capital**

Planning the management of Nigeria's heritage for the future should seriously consider the place of cultural heritage, in constructing and enhancing social capital. Social capital comprises shared values and norms, understanding, and links that exist in societies; enabling them to function efficiently. The enhancement of social capital highlights

the significance of cultural heritage in providing places of socializations and community hubs, sites of social integration and inclusion, which function as sources of identity and local pride, as well as bases for common actions (Jarosław & Murzyn-Kupisz, 2013). In Managing Nigeria's heritage in the future, cultural heritage should be recognized as a rallying point for members of societies.

### **Conclusion**

This paper presented a comprehensive discourse on Nigeria's heritage, critically examining its past and present, and proposing appropriate strategies for future heritage management. It must be stressed that though heritage resources exist in a given area, their long-term survival is hinged on proper management approaches. Thus, Nigeria's heritage should be given serious attention now and in the future. There is the need for leaders and policymakers in Nigeria to have a thorough understanding of the role of heritage in sustainable development. This will propel them to muster the political will to put the necessary machinery in place for a viable heritage management in the country. Finally, it is necessary to note that heritage management is relevant to society in many ways. People manage the past and the present for future generations, in order not to fail those who come

after them. Nigerian political leaders should realize the ideological basis of heritage management—the sustenance and promotion of the cultural identities of societies.

### **Recommendations**

- Heritage management should be based on effective participation, high-level government commitment, people-centeredness, ability to building on existing structures and mechanisms, as well as comprehensive and reliable analyzes. There should be an occasional comprehensive and reliable analysis of the present state of heritage and how they are being managed. The knowledge acquired will be of immense help in planning for the future.
- There should be concerted efforts to achieve proper funding of heritage management. Multiple avenues can be created for financing heritage conservation and promotion, such as, bank foundations for heritage related matters, fundraising and contributions from non-governmental organizations/private bodies, lottery funds, tax incentives for heritage conservation and so on.

These may spur individuals and groups into augmenting government's efforts in heritage management.

- Nigeria can take a cue from global best practices in heritage management. However, in doing this, the concept of 'Glocalization' should be applied. Glocalization emphasizes the need to adapt global best practices to local contexts for sustainable development. This means tailoring the tenets of this global best practices to meet the Nigerian reality in heritage management, since uncritical grafting of policies and ideas for the sake of best practices may not yield desirable outcome.
- Heritage management studies should be incorporated into the curriculum of primary and secondary education, such that from young age, Nigerian citizens will be presented with the opportunity of understanding and appreciating the need to preserve and promote various aspects of Nigeria's heritage.

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