

CULTURAL HERITAGE COLLECTIONS, PRESERVATION AND ACCESS: CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN.

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Abstract

Nigeria has rich cultural heritages imbued in her language, songs, traditional religious practices, folktales, lore, chants, history, literature and general worldview. Her diversity, borne out of her heterogeneous components and numerous nationalities, add to the profundity of her cultural legacies. The establishment of University of Ibadan in 1948 heralded a new paradigm in the preservation of heritage and historic materials including oral tradition across the country. Since the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan was created in 1962. It caters for the collection, processing, preservation, conservation and dissemination of cultural relics, antiquities and oral information. It introduced programs through which the cultural properties could be preserved using gadgets such as films, slides, audio, video and audio-visual storage devices. This paper aims at documenting the efforts of the university at acquiring, preserving, conserving, processing and creating access to these valuable cultural materials in the Institute and other sites. It recommends that the university should harmonize these cultural resources, provide funds to rehabilitate, digitize, and organize them by creating access parameters through classificatory models, thereby ensuring their identity and longevity.

Keywords: Oral tradition and information, Preservation and conservation, Cultural heritage and management, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Introduction

According to the World Bank (2006), cultural heritage are the movable or immovable objects, sites, structures, groups of structures, and natural features and landscapes that have archeological, paleontological, historical, architectural, religious, aesthetic, or other cultural significance. The World Bank (2006) also recognizes that physical cultural resources are important as sources of valuable scientific and historical information, as assets for economic and social development, and as integral parts of a people's cultural identity and practices. Cultural heritage is the value people have given to items and places through their association with those items and places. These values include those of significance to aboriginal people, places of social value to the community, and places of historic, architectural or scientific significance, and therefore encompass both aboriginal and historic heritage.

The role cultural practices and knowledge plays in the transferring and preservation of cultural heritage cannot be over emphasized. It is a veritable medium by which Black Africans transfer their cultural heritage from one generation to the other. Due to the flexibility of the medium of exchange of cultural heritage, it stands the risk of being lost or forgotten. This situation therefore, made preservation and conservation of cultural heritage a very important task to librarians, archivists and information scientists in order to ascertain onward transfer of these traditions to unborn generations.

In Nigeria, Yoruba race (a tribe inhabiting the South-West part of the country) has one of the richest cultural heritages and preserving these cultural heritages has generated lots of concerns from major stakeholders. The creation of the University of Ibadan in 1948 heralded a new paradigm in preservation of cultural heritage especially in the region and generally across the country when the Institute of African Studies (IAS) was created in 1962 to cater for collection, processing, preservation, conservation dissemination of cultural heritage information and training of academics and cultural heritage practitioners. The Institute thereby introduced various programmes and processes by which these traditions can be preserved using various technological gadgets such as film strips, slides, audio, video and audio-visual storage devices such as cassette, video cassette, compact disc etc. In addition, the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies introduced a Course on 'Oral Archives' which later transformed to oral information where students are expected to, through a field work, capture and record a peculiar cultural practice of a group of people especially those that seem endangered in order to preserve them and make them available for future generation. A recent development, heralded by the passion to preserve and conserve cultural heritage relics in the University

gave birth to the University of Ibadan Cultural Heritage Museum which houses and integrated all tangible cultural relics into one place.

Of serious concern however is the state of these resources in the 21st century having been collected largely in the 19th/20th century with rather obsolete gadgets and equipment. This article hereby aims at documenting valuable cultural heritage materials in Nigeria; collecting and accessing cultural materials in University of Ibadan; methods of conservation and preservation of cultural materials in the University of Ibadan; efforts at safeguarding cultural materials; and outlining an overview of the management of cultural practices in the University of Ibadan.

Statement of the problem

Oral traditions or information, cultural relics and identity play pivotal roles in transferring cultural heritage from one generation to another. They are the means by which a community transfers its practices, values, norms, and traditional rights to the coming generations. In Yoruba land and most other African tribes, transferring of cultural knowledge is largely done orally prior to the advent of writing and other modern means of documentation.

Introduction of modern technology heralded by the influx of colonialists in Black Africa brought with it change in the form by which these cultural heritage and practices are documented against the hitherto ordinary verbal passage from one generation to another. Cultural practices such as festivals, ceremonies, rights, etc. are thereby been recorded, photographed, drawn, captioned etc. for the main reason of serving the coming generations and for posterity.

University of Ibadan (privileged for being the premier university) through its Institute of African Studies play a leading role in collecting, processing, managing and creating access for use to these mammoth resources. Of serious concern however is the state of these resources in the 21st century having been collected largely in the 19th/20th century with rather obsolete gadgets and equipment. The collection media, storage processes and practices, access, use, conservation and preservation are equally of great concern going by the fact that most of these have been collected long time ago. It is against this background that this paper looks at an overview of cultural management of cultural heritages in University of Ibadan.

Methodology

A qualitative research method was adopted taking a cue from Al-Suqri, Al-Saleem and Gharieb, (2012), since the essence is to investigate the cultural heritage management. A study of the related and recent literature, observation and unstructured interview was conducted.

Values of cultural heritage in the Nigeria perspectives

Nigeria is a heterogeneous country comprising many nationalities with varying cultures. According to Adedimeji (2009) each culture represents the people's ways of life, norms, values, mores, ethos, ethics, and etiquettes and complete worldview. He, however, posited that the peculiar Nigerian cultural values are being eroded by the pop culture brought by globalization. Greeting norms, cuisine, "appeareess" (i.e. appearance and dress), custom, occupations, religion and other cultural components are giving way to acculturation, the suppression and subjugation of African culture...a tragic phenomenon of history that is fast destroying the original cultural complexion of not only the budding generation but even the adults.

Adedimeji (2009) further identified seven distinct values of cultural heritage in any society as follows:

- culture functions as lenses of perception which reflects how people see themselves and see their environment.
- culture acts as a spring of motivation. What people respond to as incentives or disincentives for certain patterns of behaviour is a phenomenon which is greatly influenced by culture. For instance, many oral traditions (folk stories, lores, aphorisms, proverbs and songs) in Nigerian culture denounce indolence and indolent people while several others promote and advance the spirit of hard work.

- cultural heritage serves as a standard of judgment especially when deciding what is acceptable as good or bad in a particular culture. In African culture, honour and respect are conferred on the elderly and their words are automatically associated with wisdom and experience in most Nigeria cultural practices.
- culture also functions as the basis for stratification. Rank, caste and class are all profoundly conditioned by, if not created, by culture.
- culture is valuable for serving the important role as a means of communication. It produces language and it is advanced by it.
- culture defines production and consumption attitude of people. The Igbo tribe in Nigeria is noted for their daring entrepreneurship traits. A larger percentage of what is “made in Nigeria” is produced by the Igbos. While cultures may imbue productivity, other cultures may settle for consumerism. Attitudes to education are also culturally determined.
- Lastly, culture constitutes the basis of identity. Being Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Efik, Kanuri, Ijaw, Fulani, etc. in Nigeria is a function of cultural variables like lineage system, kinship and language. To be removed from one’s culture is to be deprived of one’s identity.

However as valuable as these cultural heritage resources are, there has been strong argument in the literature for a case for preservation and conservation. According to New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value (2010) the purpose of conservation is to care for places of cultural heritage value. In general, such places have lasting values and can be appreciated in their own right, inform us about the past and the cultures of those who came before us, provide tangible evidence of the continuity between past, present, and future, underpin and reinforce community identity and relationships to ancestors and the land and provide a measure against which the achievements of the present can be compared. It is the purpose of conservation to retain and reveal such values, and to support the ongoing meanings and functions of places of cultural heritage value, in the interests of present and future generations.

As far as cultural heritage management is concerned, four phases has been identified. The first phase is to know and understand; which is the phase to establish the knowledge base needed to shape and drive the operation’s cultural heritage management approach and cultural heritage management system. The second phase is to plan and implement. This is the phase when to develop cultural heritage management procedures and systems appropriate to the operational and cultural heritage context. The next phase is to monitor, evaluate and improve, that is, to set targets and indicators to monitor the impact of the operation on cultural places, objects and practices, and the overall performance of the cultural heritage management system and the fourth phase is to report and communicate. This is the phase to report on the operation’s cultural heritage projects and incidents.

Collecting and accessing cultural heritage in the University of Ibadan

The University of Ibadan has three main frontiers for collecting and accessing cultural heritage materials. Through the Institute of African Studies, the University of Ibadan Cultural Heritage Museum and the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies. These three bodies play different roles as far as cultural heritage management is concerned. The different role played by each is enumerated below.

The Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan

The Institute of African Studies University of Ibadan was established to promote peace and cultural value on not just only in the University but the entire ethnic races in Africa, preserve culture and tradition of the people and play the role of mediation in the continent of Africa. The Institute was established in 1962 with a library serving it. The various types of resources in the library include audio tapes, printed works, books, journals, conference and seminar papers, pictures of various artistic works and decorations and postgraduate projects.

Book materials in the library go through normal librarianship management process of cataloguing and classification being done at the University of Ibadan main library using Library of Congress Classification scheme. Journal holdings are recorded in a record book, tapes and cassettes are labeled with serial number similar to accession number being given to books while pictures are put in photo albums with album label and shelved.

As far as access to these resources is concerned, all the resources are accessible to students and researchers based on formal request. Usage is restricted to within the library while photocopy/reprographic opportunity are equally available within the Institutes premises.

Preservation of cultural heritage resources in Institute of African Studies Library is ensured through various means such as being kept in air-conditioned room under controlled temperature in order to ensure especially that the audio cassettes do not get melted, ephemeral materials kept in special boxes to prevent mutilation, defacing or damage while the library is equally being fumigated time to time in order to protect the resources from rodents and insects infestation. As far as conservation is concerned however, the Institute recently opened a media room which is saddled with the responsibility of transferring the audio cassette into modern devices readable formats such as mp3, mp4, vlc, etc.

University of Ibadan Cultural Heritage Museum

The University of Ibadan Cultural Heritage Museum is located in a gallery inside the Trenchard Hall, overlooking the Tower Court in the main administrative arena of the university. Over three hundred pieces of amazing collection of fabric, wooden, ceramics and metal cultural objects are on display in the museum. These objects, in addition to their restoration have also been digitized and can be watched on the multimedia screens in the museum.

The MacArthur Foundation's intervention through the University of Ibadan Heritage programmes has saved the institution's more that 300 cultural objects pieces of wooden ceramics, indigenous textiles, metal objects, etc. They were salvaged from their different degrees of deterioration and have been fully restored. These cultural objects are currently on exhibition at the temporary site at the Trenchard Hall Gallery.

The collection in UI Cultural Heritage Museum is unique in more than one way: the objects many of which were sourced from places of worship and shrines are from the Yoruba, Igbo and middle-belt regions of Nigeria. Masks and masquerade paraphernalia and totems indicating the different streaks of ancestral cults and other related cults; indigenous military war kits and weaponry, farming and fishing tools and implements. Besides the non-contemporary archival cultural objects, there are also some that belong to contemporary history and historical objects. They include a photo history of the nation's premier University of Ibadan: from its humble beginning as a distance learning centre of the University of London, the University College, Ibadan till it became a full-fledged University of Ibadan in 1962.

Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of Ibadan

In recognition of the importance of preserving through documentation of cultural resources, the Department offers a course under the Archival Studies Unit tagged 'Oral Archives' coded ASE 702. The course teaches the nature and value of oral tradition and oral history programmes; recording of oral traditions and oral history transcription and organization in libraries and archives (University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1995). As part of the course requirements, students are compulsorily expected to carry out a field work and do a tape recording of a cultural practice or event from a community, town or village in Nigeria or elsewhere. These include marriage ceremonies, new yam festivals, masquerade festivals, naming ceremonies, festivals of all sorts, religious functions and practices, belief systems among others. They are then transcribed typed and bound as projects and submitted along with the tapes to the department. This have been collected and stored for about three decades. The diversity in terms of students' places of origin depicts the richness of the Oral Archives collections. There is no indication, however, that these cultural heritage resources are properly stored or managed. Below is a tabular outline of the cultural heritage resources in University of Ibadan; their formats, volume, management and preservation and conservation technique.

s/n	Institution	Cultural Heritage Resources and Formats	Volume	Management	Preservation and Conservation Technique
1	Institute of African Studies	• Audio Cassettes (containing recorded audio)	More than 2000	Cataloging and Classification of books	Ensuring air-conditioned room.

		<p>of the proceedings of various cultural practices such as ceremonies, deity worshiping, initiations, festivals, folklore etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books on various cultural topics • Journals on various cultural topics • Pictures of various artistic works • Postgraduate projects relating to Peace and Cultural Heritage studies • Newspapers and Magazines 	<p>More than 5000</p> <p>More than 300</p> <p>Numerous</p> <p>Almost 3000</p> <p>Many</p>	<p>Journal holdings are recorded in a record book.</p> <p>Tapes and cassettes are labeled with serial number similar to accession number.</p> <p>Pictures are put in photo albums with album label and shelved.</p> <p>Access to these resources is accessible by students and researchers based on formal request.</p>	<p>Controlling temperature</p> <p>Materials kept in special boxes to prevent mutilation, defacing or damage</p> <p>Time to time fumigation in order to prevent rodents and insects infestation of the resources.</p> <p>Transferring of the audio cassette into modern devices readable formats such as mp3, mp4, vlc etc.</p>
2	University of Ibadan Cultural Heritage Museum	<p>Realia Regalia Masks Traditional Drums Head Dress Household Traditional Cooking Utensils Indigenous Box for Keeping Money Tobacco Pipes Deities Farm Tools</p>	Numerous	<p>Acquisitions: through accidental discovering, from Institute of African Studies, from Department of Archeology, Purchase, Donations, Bequest etc.</p> <p>Documentation: origin/provenance, purpose/use from its origin, materials used in making and the technology.</p> <p>Access: there is still need for creation of awareness about the Museum. Access is currently free and open to everybody.</p>	<p>Isolation method with continuous treatment</p> <p>Time to time dusting</p> <p>Fumigation</p> <p>Eating prohibition</p> <p>Temperature control</p>
3	Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies	<p>Audio Tapes of Recorded Traditional Practices for the Oral Archives or Oral Information.</p> <p>Transcript of the interview</p>	Numerous	<p>Student Projects in fulfillment of the course Oral Archive/Information</p> <p>Documentation: No proper documentation</p> <p>Access: Restricted</p>	Non

Conclusion and recommendation

It is important to preserve cultural heritage resources and sites in a manner that both maintain their attractiveness to visitors and the values for which they were preserved. Thus, a policy should be developed to harmonize and bring together all cultural heritage resources in University of Ibadan in order to effectively preserve and conserve the materials for posterity. To achieve this, proper funding should be sourced to procure modern equipment. The resources should also be digitized in order to enhance their visibility. A methodical access definition should be evolved with appropriate meta-data for digital repositories and classificatory paradigms for proper information documentation and ease of retrieval. Harnessing these resources will not only engender the longevity of the cultural entities and objects, it will also ensure that the historic, physical and archival materials and antiquities preserve the reflections of Nigeria's cultural heritage and identity.

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