

Preservation of Historical Relics in Nigeria: Challenges of Maintenance Culture in National War Museum Umuahia and Slave History Museum Calabar

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Abstract

In Nigeria, maintenance culture has become a widely recognized problem which has poorly affected the quality of public properties especially resource centers like the museums, Art galleries, libraries etc. dedicated to public use. No matter how needful a resource may be, it takes a good maintenance culture for it to meet the purpose of which it was made for and to also satisfy need at which it identifies. Historical relics play a significant role in preserving the cultural heritage of a nation. Nigeria possesses a rich history, and the preservation of historical relics is essential to retain the nation's cultural identity. However, the maintenance culture in Nigeria is a significant challenge to the preservation of historical relics, as many museums and historical sites are poorly maintained. This paper examines the challenges of maintenance culture in the National War Museum Umuahia and Slave Historical Museum Calabar and provides recommendations to improve preservation and maintenance efforts already on ground for the organizations. This study aimed at identifying some of the challenges militating against the maintenance culture of these museums and this is discussed herein, A number of salient subject matters. To achieve the aim, literatures in libraries and other resource centres were consulted, a visit to the museums under study were also made. The paper in its finding reveals that inadequate funding, nepotism, and the attitude of the employees contributed significantly to the poor maintenance culture in these museums. In conclusion, the preservation of historical relics in Nigeria is essential to retaining the country's cultural identity, will also boost the maintenance culture at optimum, given that the effort and support of the government is not left out.

Background to the Study

Nigeria is a country with a rich cultural history, and it is essential to preserve historical artifacts in order to maintain the nation's cultural identity. Physical artifacts with important historical, cultural, and scientific worth are known as historical relics, and they are crucial to maintaining a country's past. However, a major obstacle to the preservation of historical artifacts in Nigeria is the maintenance culture, giving that a lot of these artifacts are paintings, ceramic wares, sculptures, textiles and others. Museums have significant roles they play in the society; they also have their significant meaning for social integration, especially on social-economic and cultural context. Umuahia war museum and slave history museum is among these museums that are of great significant to its country. In Nigeria, two museums have struggled with the issue of maintenance culture: the National War Museum in Umuahia and the Slave Historical Museum in Calabar. The National War Museum in Umuahia and the Slave Historical Museum in Calabar face maintenance culture difficulties, which are examined in this essay along with suggestions for strengthening preservation efforts. In Nigeria, history exist in all aspects of human activities particularly in art and culture. History in art as cultural heritage has vital role the plays in the society. One of these vital roles of Art to the society is that; Art expresses the emotions and struggles of the society it exists within and inspires society to cope and even overcome. This is because through artifacts, and archeological findings as historical relics, one gets an insight to the problem of the past and how well they were solved and therefore use those ideas to solve the present problem.

More so, Art is important because it encompasses all the developmental domains in child development. It lends itself to physical development and the enhancement of fine and gross motor skills. For instance, when kids work with play dough, they fine-tune their muscle control in their fingers. As a cultural heritage, art also gives us hints on the past activities or events through archeological fact findings and these findings are stored and preserved in museums for the purpose of educating the public, leisure etc thereby contributing significantly to the growth and development of it host country.

Museums like the Umuahia war museum and slave history museum Calabar are very important to their regional economy, but despite its importance to the people, these institutions still suffer poor maintenance. A museum is an institution that cares for a collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance. An example of this museum that cares for collection of artifact and other object of artistic, cultural, and historical importance is the national war museum Umuahia and slave history museum Calabar. Umuahia, is the capital city of Abia State, the city that has been part of history of Nigeria. While The Slave History.

Museum is located on the site of a 15th-century slave-trading warehouse in Marina Resort, Calabar (Wikipedia 2020). In the area of commerce, it is a thin of interest to note that Umuahia is a strategic town for trading and movement of goods to different parts of the country, most especially through the railway. The national war museum Umuahia is located in Abia state, the south-eastern region of Nigeria at Ebite Amafor in Isingu

Autonomous community in Umuhia North Local Government Area of Abia State off Umuahia Uzuakoli road.

The National War Museum

The thought of establishment of the Umuahia war museum came up by the Military Government of Nigeria, in 1977, even with the ignorance of its positive benefit to the people of Nigerian scholars, as well as tourists in general especially, the south east. The national war museum Umuahia is located in Abia state, the south-east region of Nigeria at Ebite Amafor in Isingu Autonomous community in Umuhia North Local Government Area of Abia State, off Umuahia Uzuakoli road.

The initial idea for establishing a National War Museum in Nigeria was first debated after an official visit of Lt. General Theophilous Danjuma to Yugoslavia in 1977. According to Chijioke Onuora (2016) it was thoroughly debated and approved by the Supreme Military Council of the Lt. General Olusegun Obasanjo administration in the same year. Originally, the project was planned to be executed in three phases to be seen as its main site, thus the Ugwunchara, (a hilly part of the Ebite Amafor area of the Isingwu Autonomous Community of Umuahia North Local Government Area in Abia State). The three thousand seven hundred and seventy-eight (3,778) hectare site prior to the Civil War, served as the premises of the former Eastern Nigerian Television Relaying Station. Major- General Tunde Idiagbon, Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters launched the project officially In 1985, under the leadership of General Muhammadu Buhari, which coincided with the 21st anniversary of the first military coup in Nigeria and the 15th anniversary of the end of the Nigerian Civil War (aka Biafra Conflict). On September 14, 1989 the first phase was commissioned by the then Minister of Defence, Lt. General Domkat Bali. Onuora” adds that the former residence of Dr. Michael Iheonukara Okpara, the former Premier of Eastern Nigeria region was also located at the Government Reserved Area (GRA) at the heart of the Umuahia capital city, serves as an annex of the museum at Ugwunchara. It has three galleries that cover. Thus, traditional warfare, the armed forces and the Nigerian Civil War weapon galleries.

The civil war was a watershed in the history of Nigeria as a country. The civil war lasted, a very long time and various sophisticated weapons were used. Some of these deadly weapons were fabricated due the exigencies of the war. Outside the appurtenances of war, civilians were also involved in the process of not just fighting, but psyching up the minds of the people to forge ahead despite the deprivations that came with war. Different media of mass communication were used. The experience, many agree, is such that makes the resort to arms and war as a means of conflict resolution not a good-looking option. It is upon this fact that led the establishment of Nigerian War Museum, in Umuahia. The various sophisticated weapons that were used in the civil war were consciously preserved in National war museum Umuahia.

Slave History Museum Calabar

The Slave History Museum is located on the site of a 15th-century slave-trading warehouse in Marina Resort, Calabar. The museum has an extensive depiction of the

slave trade era in Nigeria and West Africa, and other celebrations of Nigeria's rich history. The Museum documents the horrific experiences of these slaves at that time. the nuseum' s exhibits explored local slave markets, the grim paraphernalia of the trade including shackles and chains, and the variety of currencies used to buy people, such as copper bars, brass bells and flutes, how slaves were transported and treated, how slaves were arranged on the ships, how the white slave masters treated the slaves while on the farm (Wikipedia 2019).

Maintenance Culture

The problem of maintenance culture has degenerate into a tropical issue that has beclouded the climate condition of most museums in Nigeria, particularly the national war museum Umuahia an slave history museum Calabar. The poor maintenance culture has affected the quality of these museums as public properties and subset of government properties as well. Maintenance culture in Nigeria is one of the lowest around the world, especially, in our principal towns and cities, museums and in other establishments. Interestingly, the way this museum is, is different from the other slave museums in the country in terms of its graphic representation of the slaves which show life sized sculptures. The sculptures in the museum depict different scenes representing different eras and goes a step further to include audio recordings. You can hear slaves being auctioned and sold off, hear them working on plantations and some other scenes. You can also see the unique historic artifact roles Calabar played in trade and commerce. A part of the museum shows the rich Efik tradition similar to that of Trinidad and Tobago. Unfortunately, Pictures are not allowed in the museum so you might not be able to get a photo inside. Entrance fee is N200 only and it is a guided tour.

Challenges

The National War Museum Umuahia and Slave History Museum Calabar are faced with a lot of challenges such as: insecurity, Nigerian economic downturn, modernization, Christianity, poor advocacy, nepotism, individual antiquarians, looting, and sadly, religious dogmatism and iconoclasm among others. Eluyemi (2002) refers to them as die-hard suffering from colonial hangover; they are the religious zealots who burn cultural objects in the name of deliverance. Apart from the above mentioned, inability to conduct international events in the area of professional education, can also militate against tourist attraction to the Umuahia war museum and slave history museum Calabar. (Ogundele, 2000). In spite of the above, the National Antiquities Commission (NAC) now National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) has hoisted up in preserving these endangered heritages. The commission made to also be in charge of the organization and preservation of museums and for finding of heritage sites, ensures the preservation and study of traditional arts and culture.

Their powers also are extended to program monuments and antiquities, and to control archaeological excavations and the export of antiquities (Fasuyi, 1973). But the efforts by NCMM have often been slowed down by some challenges ranging from low subventions and funding from government to carry out their tasks. Kidnapping, corruption is deep-

rooted in the society and as well, militate against tourism. According to Blessing (2016), this has been traced to the failure of the family system. Parents in their quest for wealth and materialism abandoned their primary responsibility of inculcating right moral values into their children through proper parental training. This affects the society in the long run negatively by leading to chaos and conflict. Therefore, the war museum Umuahia and slave history museum must be perspicacious and pragmatic in the way they execute their project to ensure sustainable preservation of our heritages, to enhance tourist attraction which is the anchor point or tool for every museum's contribution on economic development.

Prescription of good Maintenance Culture in Umuahia War Museum and slave history museum Calabar

Generally, good maintenance in every setting enhances maximally that setting to meet the purpose of which it was made for and to also satisfy a need expected of it. It is the level of maintenance applied on such resource like Umuahia War Museum and slave history museum Calabar that will entirely determine its lifespan (if well maintained, it exceeds its life-span of creation and if not maintained it wears off before reaching its life span). For instance, an individual who valued a T-Shirt or trouser, skirt or a top, its takes efforts like washing and ironing the shirt or trouser, (and skirt or a top), as at when needed and ensure stains are wiped off to ensure the original looks are maintained. This helps cut cost, re-channel resource for other uses. The same is applied to both private and public organizations such as these museums under study that may understand the policy of maintenance culture, as it assists in reaching its set goals, vision, and objectives quickly, increase the quality of productivity as every tool or machine used is properly taken care of before packed or taken to the store. Cost of repairs will be reduced as tools or machines used are always checked and treated accordingly before kept in the store. A good maintenance culture saves time and resources, reduce organizational liquidity, a good maintenance culture in the museums will definitely help in their economic development of it host country as it attracts tourism to the country. And finally inculcate good attitudes and creates a good working environment to employees and making it an organizational culture.

Causes of Poor Maintenance Culture

Here, some of the factors that leads to poor maintenance culture in the museums under study, they include Funding, The attitude of the employee or individual, lack of awareness, lack of patriotism, organizational culture and structure, the kind of leadership in place, the level of motivation present, provision of artificial amenities, tools or equipment, use of inadequate resources for the construction of projects, nepotism etc. Other challenges are some government developmental projects which destroy cultural heritages without any compensation that enhances the renewal and the renovation of the items destroyed. Conflicts and social changes also affected... maintenance culture in national war museum Umuahia and slave history museum Calabar.

Results of Poor Maintenance Culture

Unarguably, these museums under study are prone to be wastage of resources and time for rehabilitation, innovations, reduction in per capital invested, losses as a result of wastages etc. if they continue their operations, not minding how poor their maintenance culture are. They are also prone to downsizing and total short down. Therefore, it is very important for every museum to improve their maintenance culture this will help ascertain the desired goal and objective as well maintain its role of tourist attraction since the museums under study and its heritages are considered as motivators for domestic and Scandinavian visits to Nigeria (Amadi-ikpa 2020).

Possible solution to the challenges of maintenance culture

First, Maintenance starts with the individual itself to the entire organization or community at large, creating awareness on how the importance of maintaining a tool, machine or project should be as part of a citizen's patriotic efforts in the organization. Yes! If you love your organization, you will protect her properties, same as the properties of your country like the museum itself. Ensure that any identified malfunction of a building, tool, and machine is quickly taken care off. For instances, if there is rain drops on where it is not supposed to, you ensure it is fixed up.

Though maintenance process is not for a sect of employees in an organization but every body's responsibility, however, maintenance processes should be centralized to a particular unit in the organization like the maintenance and facility department to ensure proper control of organizational assets maintenances. Focus should not be place only on working tools or machines but also on the environment in which the organization resides, the trees, grasses etc. should be trimmed and cleared accordingly for a beautiful atmosphere, cobwebs and other undesirable nest on or around buildings or equipment should quickly be discarded to avoid moisture and accommodation of unwanted pests, insect and reptiles etc.

Benefits of a Good Maintenance Culture

These museums under study and their host country stand to benefit a lot if there is adequate maintenance culture. It can as well increase the country's economy through tourism. When the practice of maintenance culture is adopted, cultural heritages are properly preserved and advertised, and therefore stand a chance of attracting more cultural tourists from different places. This will enhance development in the country because Nigerian cultural heritages also are capable of promoting mutual understanding and respect among Nigerians. The museum under study contributes to relaxation, leisure and increases an individual life span due to it appreciation of beauty. All this stem from a good maintenance culture.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Maintenance culture is an attitude which is sadly lacking in Nigeria, whether in the home, office, school or factory or even museums. Maintenance defined as the process of protecting or preserving someone or something, or the process of keeping

something in good condition. However, this paper concludes that Maintenance starts with the individual its self to the entire organization or community at large, creating awareness on how the importance of maintaining a tool, machine or project should be as part of a citizen's patriotic efforts in the organization. The preservation of historical relics is crucial to retaining a nation's cultural identity. However, the maintenance culture in Nigeria is a significant challenge to the preservation of historical relics. The National War Museum Umuahia and Slave Historical Museum Calabar are two museums in Nigeria that have grappled with this challenge. To improve the preservation of historical relics in Nigeria, the government should allocate more funding towards maintenance of museums and historical sites, training programs should be established to educate museum staff on proper artifact preservation techniques, and partnerships should be established with international organizations to provide additional resources and expertise. These recommendations will help to improve the preservation of historical relics in Nigeria and ensure that important artifacts are not lost to decay, theft, or neglect.

In addition to these recommendations, it is also important to raise public awareness about the importance of preserving historical relics. Education and outreach programs should be established to inform the public about the significance of the artifacts housed in museums and historical sites, and the importance of preserving them for future generations. This will help to build support for preservation efforts and encourage people to take an active role in protecting their cultural heritage. Another important aspect of preserving historical relics is the need to document and digitize them. Digital documentation is becoming increasingly important in the preservation of cultural heritage, as it allows for easy access to information about artifacts and can help to preserve them in the event of damage or loss. Museums and historical sites should invest in digital documentation and storage systems to ensure that their collections are preserved for future generations. However, the maintenance culture in Nigeria is a significant challenge to the preservation of historical relics, and museums and historical sites must take proactive steps to address this challenge. By allocating more funding towards maintenance, establishing training programs, building partnerships with international organizations, raising public awareness, and investing in digital documentation and storage systems, Nigeria can ensure that its cultural heritage is preserved for future generations.

Recommendations

To improve the preservation of historical relics in Nigeria, several recommendations can be made. Firstly, the government should allocate more funding towards the maintenance of museums and historical sites. This funding should be used to improve climate control systems, security, and lighting. Secondly, training programs should be established to educate museum staff on proper artifact preservation techniques. This training should include techniques for preventing insect infestation, water damage, and theft. Thirdly, partnerships should be established with international organizations to provide additional resources and expertise. Therefore, the paper recommends that these museums should have an adequate or a good maintenance culture, this is because it helps

develop the museum and as well attain its set goals that is usually of benefit to its host country.

Background

The National War Museum Umuahia is located in Abia State, Nigeria, and was established in 1985. The museum houses a collection of relics from the Nigerian Civil War, including weapons, photographs, and artifacts. The Slave Historical Museum Calabar, located in Cross River State, Nigeria, was established in 2007 and houses a collection of artifacts related to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Both museums are critical to Nigeria's cultural heritage, and the preservation of their collections is essential.

Challenges of Maintenance Culture

The maintenance culture in Nigeria is a significant challenge to the preservation of historical relics. Many museums and historical sites are poorly maintained, and the lack of funding and resources for maintenance has led to the deterioration of many artifacts. The National War Museum Umuahia and Slave Historical Museum Calabar have both faced challenges related to maintenance culture. The National War Museum Umuahia has suffered from poor maintenance, resulting in the deterioration of many artifacts. The museum lacks proper climate control systems and has suffered from water damage and insect infestation. The Slave Historical Museum Calabar has also faced challenges related to maintenance culture. The museum has suffered from poor lighting and inadequate security, leading to theft and damage of artifacts.

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