

Museum and Nation Building: A Case Study of Calabar and Umuahia Museums in Nigeria

Dr. Urekwere Joe-Mgbakiri

Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of Humanities, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Rumuolumeni, PortHarcourt, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: Museum is one of the propelling agents to nation building in Nigeria. It is one of the good elements that will make the citizens develop love for their country in conjunction with other factors such as good roads, water supply, electricity, education, health and employment. This paper in examining museums and nation building in Nigeria argues that museum remains one of the agents of nation building and national development. Most countries in Africa including Nigeria were not nations but rather nation states brought together by accident of colonialism, then museums remains very vital to building the Nigerian nation. The study specifically discussed the roles of Calabar slave museum and the Umuahia war museum in nation building such as the preservation of our cultural heritage, economic development investment opportunities and employment. The study established that these factors significantly contributes to Nation building in Nigeria. Among there commendations are; Museums should be holding exhibitions according to the current problems on ground and how such problems could be solved. They should constantly monitor and evaluate development in society while enriching their collections as well as engage in a training and retraining program for their workers so that they can function effectively and develop the capacity to embrace change.

KEYWORD: Museum, Nation Building, Development, Calabar, Umuahia.

Introduction

Nigeria as a country has a pride in her nationhood and has been able to sustain it till now. Nationhood, in this case means a state of having an identity and a story of how this country has remained as a nation until the present. The story may include many factors such as; people history, culture both tangible and intangible. One way to present the story of the country is to communicate via museums and national war museum Umuahia and slave history museum Calabar and this seems to be an appropriate means. However, the slave history museum and national war museum Umuahia and their prospects for tourism attraction contributes to nation building and national development.

This paper will examine the Slave history museum Calabar and Umuahia war museum as agent of nation building and repositories of cultural heritages in the making of nation by mentioning their impact in economic development of Nigeria. The national war museums Umuahia and slave history museum Calabar are tools of making nations, and throwing light on the preservation of cultural heritages. They also contribute significantly to building a nation while the preservation of cultural heritages are actually of greater impact to the people and the country at large.

Conceptual Clarification

In order to be a nation, many factors are concerned. But what is a nation? Nation means “a large body of people united by common descent, history, culture or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory” (Oxford University, 2013).

Rasmussen (2001) defines nation as “a common blood relationship” which include the interrelationship, linguistic coherence, shared cultural heritages and importantly, a sense of identification from people as factors of being a nation.

Interrelationship means a link between members of that national though they are not families whilst linguistic coherence means; a uniqueness of language that identifies national identity. For shared cultural heritage, it means that culture comes from continuity of what people do or create from the past which have remained until date. Thus, culture can become a heritage which represent that nation with a sense of identification from members of the nation.

Laughland (2008) defines a nation according to Renanas “a group of people who decide to live together and have done great things in the past and want to do more in the future”. Laughland posits that Renan’s idea is argued these days due to the impossibility of the same group of people who have done something great in the past and want to do more in the future. However, his idea about a nation still contains the point of being together, which is assumed to be the same view of point of the interrelationship by Rasmussen.

Another vital term to our discourse is nation building. Nation building connotes the idea by which people of different language and culture live together and ruled under one political entity. Nwabughuogu (2004:1) sees nation building as “a process of developing national consciousness among individuals and groups to cultivate a sense of love for a given nation and to accept their commitment to a nation state. He thus added that nation building involves the creation of a favorable environment such as museum that will sustain the sense of love, harmony and cohesion developed by the individuals and groups for the nation state.

As a corollary, Oguagha (1994:1) defines nation building as “a process of nationhood where cultural differentiation hinged on distinctive language, religion, habits and memories are fused together by colonialism. This means that colonial state did not evolve out of their historical experience which is bound to pose problems of national integration and nation building for the people with diverse language, customs and habit unless good elements of organization that will make such as museums are put in place. The memories of different groups preserved in the museums should be able to state practically the level of intergroup relations that existed among the group in the past in order to facilitate nation building and development.

Debrah(2002)posits that museums are “institutions in the service of society and its development which communicate or educate the public through the exhibits which they acquire and conserve about the material evidence of man and his environment” museums have been established by societies to take an active role in promoting knowledge about man and his development in a given environment such as Nigeria. Museum has been utilized as tools for nation building, national development and a harmonious society.

The National War Museum Unuahia

The thought of establishing the Umuahia war museum came up by the Military Government of Nigeria in 1977. There was the ignorance of its positive benefits to the people of Nigeria, scholars, businessmen as well as tourist to the south east. The national war museum Umuahia is located in Abia State, the south–east region of Nigeria at Ebite Amafor in Isingwu Autonomous community in Umuahia 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 Danjumato Yugoslavia in 1977. It was thoroughly debated and approved by the

184	ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by “Global Research Network LLC” under Volume: 3 Issue: 10 in Oct-2022 https://grnjournals.us/index.php/AJSHR
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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 in its main site, that is 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) hectares it prior to the Civil War, serve 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 Nigeria Civil War. In September 14, 1989 the first phase was commissioned by the then minister of Defence, Lt. General Domk at Bali. In addition, the former residence of Dr. Michael Iheonukara Okpara, the former Premier of Eastern Nigeria region. Located at the Government Reserved Area (GRA) at the hearth of the Umuahia capital city, served as an annex of the museum at Ugwunchara. It has three galleries comprising the traditional warfare, the armed forces and the Nigerian Civil War weapon galleries.

The civil war was a water shed in the history of Nigeria as a country. The civil war lasted for a very long time and various sophisticated weapons were used. Some of these deadly weapons were fabricated due to 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 for propaganda about the nature and course of the war (Ambrose, 2006).

The experience, many agree, is such that makes there sort to arms and war as a means of conflict resolution not a good-looking option. It is upon this fact that led to 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.

Plate1: National War Museum Umuahia

Source: `

Year: 2022



Plate2: One of the War Shooting Machine

Source: <https://goodnigeria.com>

Year: 2022



Plate3: Another War Shooting Machine

Source: <https://goodnigeria.com>

Year: 2022

The Umuahia war museum as agent of nation building served to remind the Nigerian populace that crises is not beneficial to all and sundry and should be avoided as the Nigerian Civil War led to untold hardship, destruction of property and loss of lives. It is against this back drop that the Umuahia war museum have aided nation building by dissuading the Nigeria populace from violent crises.

Slave History Museum Calabar

The Slave History Museum is located on the site of a 15th-century slave-trade warehouse in Mariana Resort, Calabar. The museum has an extensive depiction of the era of slave trade in Nigeria and West Africa which area also linked to other aspects of Nigeria's rich history.

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The Museum documents the horrific experience of these slaves at that time, the museum's exhibits and explored local slave markets, the paraphernalia of the trade include shackles and chains and the variety of currencies used to buy people, such as copper bars, manila, cowries, iron bars, tobacco, brass bell, gun and gun powder etc. The horror of the middle passage across the Atlantic which showed how slaves were transported and treated. Slaves were arranged in the ships like sardine and remained below the deck of the stinking ships. Slave ships resembled floating prison. The ill treatment of the slaves in various plantations were exhibited in the museum (Amadi,2018:38-43).

Interestingly, this museum, is different from the other museum in the country in term so fits graphics 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 roles Calabar played in trade and commerce. A part of the museum shows the rich Efik tradition similar to that of Trinidad and Tabago.

According to Amadi (2018:161) European imperialism in Nigeria is one of the most important impact of the slave trade and its abolition. It was suggested by the abolitionist that European government should protect and support their traders and missionaries, intervene in the political affairs of African states in order to produce peaceful conditions for lawful trade and found colonies as bases for fighting the slave trade .It stand store as on that Britain who Colonized Nigeria after the Berlin conference of 1884 later amalgamated the kingdoms and empires in the area and named it Nigeria. There have been problem of nation building arising from this arrangement. However, the Calabar museum has been able to convey to the people reasons for our coming together in order to build the Nigerian nation. If this was in place, the Europeans wouldn't have succeeded to pull millions of young Nigerians to the New World and the Caribbean.



Plate4: Life Size Sculptural Pieces of Slaves on Chain

Source: /-wap-ams.op-mobile.opera.com

Year: 2022

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Plate5: Chain and Key Used for Chaining Slaves

Source: www.whatsonincalabr.com

Year: 2022

The Role of National War Museum Umuahia and Slave History Museum in Calabar in National Building

The main purpose of every museum is to provide education with enjoyment. Museums are permanently non-profit making institution including the national war museum Umuahia and slave history museum Calabar. Basically Umuahia war museum and slave museum Calabar like other museums are able to play a powerful role in the social, cultural and economic life these days. Social and cultural roles of these museums can be counted together. They mainly include contributing community's cultured and natural heritage preservation, education, conservation and representative roles. The economic role relates to tourism, which means museums can make a great amount of profit to the country and communities in which it is located by being a top tourist attraction (Ambrose and Paine, 2006). Therefore, these three elements, social, culture and economic are regarded as the general role of these museums.

The Louvre Museum is a suitable example of the general roles of almost every museum at this point. This is because Louvre Museum is not only considered as one of the world's leading museum by having more than eight million visitors, which made a great impact on economic profits, but also serving social role by exhibiting many world's famous art pieces, which give people inspiration about art history and other aspects. The Louvre museum provides accessibility to cultural events and activities which helped to educate the people through visiting and having discussion on a topic in the area of interest, (Louvre Museum, 2019).

However, national war museum and slave history museum Calabar fundamentally are not different from the roles played by museums in other climes because they are also concerned with three factors; which are social, cultural and economic. With emphasis in nation building, we believe the role of social enhancement, cultural and heritage preservation and economic advancement are still carried out in Umuahia war museum and slave

museum Calabar. These two museums are anchored on the need to be more specific with the nation's past (Knell, 2010) mentioned that anchoring of history is recognized in every national museum because national museums are responsible for handling the past. Umuahia war museum and slave museum Calabar is seen as part of a nation because every element from the beginning of national formation, such as culture, language and the people's thoughts and actions which will be told traditionally through the generations and will become national history and represented adequately. The purpose of establishing National War Museum Umuahia is for the glory of Nigeria and "preserving for posterity, Nigerian war efforts through the ages", also for "consolidating the gains of National unity". Furthermore, it is important to particularly indicate the role of national war museum Umuahia and slave museum Calabar in national building since the major roles about the social, cultural and economic development as well as national history preservation and representation which are pre-requisite for national building to give a sense of belonging to the Nigerian people. These two museums also inspires native people to be proud of their identity, nationality and to be patriotic so that the people feel to cherish and want to enjoy their nationhood and country at large. Moreover, the role of these museums are also relevant to cultural diversity which presents us as one people.

In clearer terms, the roles of national war museum Umuahia and slave history museum include:

1. Cultural Exchange/Across Fertilization:

On the local level, exchange of cultural ideas help people to understand and appreciate the cultures of each other. It also improves relationship between communities. This relationship could lead to exchange of goods and services, inter-tribal marriages, visits during festival period. The cultural exchange program also helps to bring about peace and harmony among communities.

2. Investment Opportunities by Private Sectors:

The prevailing political stability in Nigeria coupled with the government and policy on economy liberalization, private sector-led development have provided a conducive environment for profitable investment opportunities in the tourism sector, including museums.

With this fact, private sectors can now invest on the rural communities, especially in areas that have tourist attractions by providing tourist facilities such as Hotels, Amusement parks, cultural center, like private museums/craft shops, travel agencies, bank, information technology facilities etc. The provision of these infrastructures in localities would help in the development of such areas. Museum can therefore be said to generate investment, thus creating jobs for the populace. However, the present in security in Nigeria has hampered this very role. Investors are afraid of coming to Nigeria to invest. This has added to the number of unemployed youths which ordinary would have been taking out of streets by the investors.

3. Economic Development/Empowerment

Museums generate income for communities if the tourism facilities, such as Motels, Hotels Restaurants, Souvenir shops, local transportation, local guides, good roads, electricity etc. are established within the area. Small scale industries spring up as a result of museums in such communities. Museum generates a lot of employment for the people in that locality. It also enhances and uplifts social life of that community and increases food production among farmers.

4. Promotion of Culture/Community Relevance

Museum could also be used to resuscitate and preserve the fading Heritage and Culture of a given tourist destination. The truth is that, well guided tourism brings, about improvement in living conditions, preservation and interpretation of intangible heritage historic monuments, conservation of sites of outstanding natural beauty, development of hand crafts improvement of architecture as well as the architecture of the environment which gives the forms to the cities.

189	<p>ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC" under Volume: 3 Issue: 10 in Oct-2022 https://grnjournals.us/index.php/AJSHR</p>
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With in this cultural constitution, thewarmuseum Umuahiaandslavemuseumcalabarcanaactasinstitutionalize drepresentations, negotiatinganddis playing valuesofnature, culture, artandhistory, relatingthemtothenational community and to th estate.(OmuaruandSalome,2014)).

5. Economic Factor

The following words will be defined in view of examination of its combined and background meaning. Economy derived from the Greek word *oikonomos* which means one which manages a household”. Just as the word implies, economy was not used in the modern sense of the economic system of a country or area until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An *economy* is the arrangement according to which the money, industry and trade of a country or region be organized. The careful managing of resources to avoid over generous expenditure or waste and the financial dealing as well as the production and use of goods and services of a community, Omuaru and Salome, (2014) defined economy in sociological terms as “economy is the dominant form of economic activities characterizing a society. They noted that some examples of economies includes gathering and hunting economy, nomadic economy, settled agricultural economy, modern industrial economy.

Development is a process that generates growth, improvement, positive change and the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components. Development canal so be defined by as change from the low class condition to the more and higher and classic condition Omuaru and Salome, (2014) posits that this definition is concerned with human situations and conditions that have to do with their environment such as social, legal, economic, that produce a better environment to live a godly and religious life. However, museum are source of revenue to the government as tourist centers and to the communities as indirect wealth creator as it generates other axillary businesses and also creates employment. These contributions of war museum in Umuahia and slave history museum, Calabar will help in nation building and development to the Nigerian state free from rancor and acrimony.

Alon (2018) explained that the purpose of development is to raise the level and quality of life of the population and the creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities, without damaging there sources of the environment. Here, it is obvious to agree with Alon that: Development is visible and useful, not necessarily immediately and includes an aspect of quality change and the creation of conditions for a continuation of that change. Encarta (2001) defined development as, “event causing change; an incident that causes a situation to change or progress”. Here it means that, the activities of national war museum Umuahia and slave museum Calabar when guided through the right channel can cause events to change for progressive development.

For an explicit explanation and understanding, let’s look at the view of Rodney (1973). Rodney holds that; Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being at the level of social groups, capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. The concept, which Rodney highlights here transcends the narrow purview of many literary exercises on development, or some classes of Governments officials’ understanding of development’ as building and construction of roads. He is of the broader idea of the term ‘development’, indicating that certain characteristics possessed by the individual such as increased skills and capacity, freedom to choose, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility to oneself, family and nation and material well-being are indices of development; the lack of these is at variance with the term development.

6. Preservation of Cultural Heritages

Blessing (2016) defined preservation as “the promotion of cultural property whether of concrete or non-concrete nature, past or present, written or unwritten/oral. He further posit that preservation involves the

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identification, documentation (appropriate registration) and proper storage of cultural objects whether in private hands or in museums.

However, the preservation of the Nigerian civil war items in national war museum Umuahia and slave history in slave history museum Calabar is very vital irrespective of the fact that these museums are beclouded with lots of challenges ranging from funding, technological developments, nepotism among others, which can also in simple terms be classified into human activities and natural force, yet in the face of these bottle necks, the museums by its tourist nature and exhibition have exposed the fact that the people of Nigeria are one people in brotherhood which has contributed to nation building. According to Blessing in quoting Okpoko (2011). In this view of preservation of Nigerian cultural heritage, states that “the little success made over the years in the preservation of Nigerian cultural heritages has been attributed to conscious systematic and scientific efforts, and researches conducted by professionals in the disciplines of archaeology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, ethnography, palynology, paleontology, geology, geography, museum studies, among other cultural resources managers.

This assertion given an explicit answer to questions such as “were those items found in Umuahia war museums truly the civil war weapons? if yes, “how possible could they be gotten ” and “ of what importance are they to the economy and the society at large?. However one of the importance of history I would never forget is that; it helps us to know the problem of the past, thus, knowing the problem of the past and how well they were solved helps to identify the present problem and solve them well. Hence, it is therefore very important to note that the past is essentially the key to the present and platform into the future. Thus Umuahia war museum and slave museum Calabar are repositories of the past account and have helped in solving the identity problems leading to effective building of our nation state.

Recommendation

1. Museums should be holding exhibitions according to the current problems on ground and how such problems could be solved.
2. They should constantly monitor and evaluate developments in society while enriching their collections as well as engage in training and retraining programme for their workers so that they can function effectively and develop the capacity to embrace change.
3. Government should assist in funding these museums and adequately motivate the staff.
4. There should be public orientations about the importance of war museum and the slave museum.

Conclusion

Umuahia war museum and slave museum Calabar contributes significantly to nation building and their preservation of cultural heritage are actually of greater impact to the people and the country at large. For the slave museum, the idea of the continental tragedy aimed at discouraging all forms of slavery and for people to see themselves as one. By visiting the war museum at Umuahia, you will do all it takes to avoid war. By the absence of war, peace will thrive and this is one of the elements of nation building and national development.

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