

Archaeological Sites as Visitor Attractions: Towards Preserving and Presenting Nigeria's Archaeological Heritage

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Abstract:

Archaeological sites in different parts of the world have acted as cultural icon or focal point that have served as magnet in attracting visitors to these regions. Although archaeological sites were not originally created with the deliberate intention to attract tourists, yet over time their appeal and significance, have widened to the point where tourism flourishes because they exist in these areas.

Archaeological sites that are serving as important visitors attractions today in different parts of the world, include the Stone Henge in Wiltshire England; the tomb of Queen Nefertari in Luxor, the Pyramids at Giza, the burial sites at the valley of the kings, the great Zimbabwean Ruins and the archaeological sites in the Mediterranean such as Knossos in Crete and Ephesus in Turkey. Efforts have been made by governments and agencies in these regions, through legislations and local sanctions, to protect and preserve these sites and to harness, package and present them as visitor attractions. This has yielded substantial amount in tourist revenue to these countries

Nigeria is blessed with a plethora of archaeological sites some of which rank among the most exquisite in the world. Unfortunately, however, their potential as visitor attractions have hardly been realized and harnessed.

In this paper, therefore, attempts will be made to identify those sites with immense visitor attraction potential and methods will be suggested on how to protect, package and present them to the domestic and international tourist markets.

Introduction:

Archaeological sites in different parts of the world are today being harnessed as visitor attractions. This has been made possible by the diversified nature and unlimited scope of the products that interest tourist today arising from man's insatiable appetite for new tourism experiences. Another reason for the pull exerted by archaeological sites on tourist is the realization by several countries of the world of the immense economic, social and cultural benefits derivable from harnessing their tourism potential, archaeological sites being considered an important tourism resource that can be developed to achieve the above goals.

Nigeria's archaeological heritage though rich and diverse, has hardly been recognized and appreciated as an important ingredient that can help to grow the country's tourism as has been realized by some countries like Egypt and Turkey. These sites, which dot Nigerian's geographical landscape range from Stone Age sites, caves and rock shelter sites through iron working sites to industrial sites. Examples include the Early Stone Age site at Ugwuele Uturu in Southeast Nigeria, regarded as the largest stone axe factory in the world; the world-famous Nok sites that produced the Nok terra colta, figurines located in Northcentral Nigeria; the Ife sites that yielded life-size terra- colta heads in Western Nigeria ; the Benin sites in Midwest Nigeria where bronzes of exquisite craftsmanship were excavated. Others are the sites at Old Oyo in North Yoruba land; the excavated mound at Daima in Northeast Nigeria and the several iron-smelting sites located in different parts of the country. Although these sites have been lying waste, it is envisioned that with appropriate planning measures they can be protected, preserved, packaged and presented as visitor attractions. As visitor attractions, these sites, when adequately publicized, can help expand the countries primary tourist markets and help to increase the country is increase the number of international tourist arrivals, especially those interested in cultural tourism. The revenue that should be generated will help to boost the local and national economies. Besides, proper planning measures could go a long way in protecting and preserving the country's archaeological heritage and enable this resource play an enviable role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the nation.

Definition of Basic Concepts:

Visitor Attractions:

Attractions are about the most important factor behind tourism because they generate the visit and act as the object that pulls man to visit unusual environments. Attractions give rise to excursion circuits and create an industry of their own. Ashamu Fadipe (2007), has identified three categories of attractions, although there is an on-going debate on the appropriate definition due to lack of conceptualization of the term. These categories are:

- a. Natural Attractions:** They are unusual objects whose origins are derived from the physical environment and have outstanding values that appeal to the tourists. They include scenic landscapes wildlife parks, beaches, lakes. Examples include the Yankari Game Reserve in Bauchi State, the Agulu Lake in Anambra State. Natural attractions may be further divided into those that are managed and those that are left in their natural state.
- b. Cultural/Historical Attractions:** They are those attractions that relate to history, science, religion, politics, archaeology traditions such as music, folklore and the way of life of a particular society. Cultural and historical attractions are as diverse as the people of the world. Attractions that arise from people's culture and history include museums and monuments, festivals, folklore, archaeological sites, places of worship and native life. Examples of these are Abuja Carnival, the Kano and Benin City walls, the Sukur World Heritage Site in Adamawa.
- c. Man-Made Attractions:** They are those objects created by man that appeal to the curiosity of tourist and help to generate tourist trips. They include theme and amusement parks, theatres, casinos, historical buildings museums.

Carrying Capacity: According to Matheson and Wall (1982:21), carrying capacity –is the maximum number of people who can use a site without an unacceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors. To this definition has been added –without an unacceptable adverse impact on the society, economy, and culture of the tourism area. –(Inskip, 1991:144). The reason for establishing carrying capacity in tourism areas is to ensure the level of development and use is maintained that will not give rise to environmental or

sociocultural deterioration or that will not be perceived by tourists as undermining their enjoyment and appreciation of the tourist area. By using carrying capacity analysis, it will be possible to set the upper limits on development of the tourist area, and thereby limiting the number of tourist arrivals or more precisely the number of tourist days.

Archaeological Heritage Management:

The International Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM, 1986) has defined archaeological heritage management as — the protection and administration of archaeological heritage in its original environment and in its relationship to history and contemporary society. This entails the application of care in the preservation and conservation of archaeological resources in a territory for the benefits of present and future generations.

An Overview Of Previous Efforts To Protect, Preserve And Present Nigeria's Archaeological Heritage:

A number of spirited efforts have been made, over the years to protect, preserve and present Nigeria's archaeological heritage. These have been made possible through parliamentary legislations and military decrease that sought to protect and preserve the country's archaeological heritage. Presentation has been mainly achieved through exhibition in museums art galleries, journal publications, newspaper articles, radio and television presentations as well as the production of souvenirs. The first piece of legislation that helped to guide prehistoric research in Nigeria was passed in 1953. This legislation popularly called -Ordinance 17 created both the Federal Department of Antiquities and the Antiquities Commission. Before this law came into existence, -archaeology in Nigeria was the mere past-time of amateurs in the Colonial Service or that of intrepid adventures (Nzewunwa, 1983), who engaged in unscientific and sometimes illicit archaeological excavations often resulting in the plunder and illegal transfer of the antiquities discovered (Ekechukwu N.J.H. No 17 Forth Coming). It is important to recall that by 1943 the colonial administrators inaugurated the Antiquities Services as a result of a strong feeling for the protection and preservation of Nigeria's antiquities that had been plundered, illegally transferred overseas, desecrated or destroyed through ignorance. The Antiquities Services of 1943 gave the needed impetus to the establishment of the first set of museums in Nigeria. -Interestingly enough, these museums were archaeological in character, and located in places where archaeological discoveries had been made

and they exhibited the discovered materials (Fatunsin, 1994 in Ekechukwu, Forth Coming). These early museums that helped in presenting Nigeria's Archaeological heritage to the public were located at Esie, Jos and Ife. The statutory responsibility for executing and guiding archaeological research in Nigeria was, by Ordinance 171 vested only on the Federal Department of Antiquities (Now National Commission for Museums and Monuments. Today however some of these responsibilities are shared with academic institutions with the proviso that these academic institutions obtain authorization before embarking on archaeological field research. The provision of Ordinance 171 and other subsequent legislations preclude non-professionals from engaging in archaeological research in Nigeria except under strict guidance by accredited professionals. In 1957, the Antiquities (Export permits) Regulations was enacted to help monitor the movement of antiquities, including archaeological objects from Nigeria. This was followed in 1975 by another minor legislation known as the Antiquities (Prohibited Transfers) Decree Popularly known as Decree 9. This decree provided for the protection of antiquities such as archaeological objects and made the buying and selling of antiquities in Nigeria an illegal business. It has been observed that both Decree 9 and the Antiquities Regulation of 1957 made little or no impact on cultural heritage management in Nigeria since they were sometimes unenforceable (Ekechukwu N.J.H. No 17 Forthcoming). However, Decree No. 77 of 1979 put in place a new administrative structure known as the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), which replaced the federal Department of Antiquities and helped to rectify nearly all the anomalies of Ordinance No. 19 of 1953 (Agbaje-Williams 1994 in Ekechukwu N. J. H. No 17 Forthcoming). In an effort to protect and preserve Nigeria's archaeological heritage, as part of its statutory function, the Commission maintains effective archaeological presence in almost all parts of the country through its new policy of recruiting and attaching archaeologists to every National Museum. The Commission through its Archaeology Division has conducted excavations and other research activities in different parts of the country and has sometimes collaborated with the Universities in these research endeavours. Apart from the museum display, the Commission has also played a leading role in presenting the archaeological heritage to the public through its various journals, newsletters as well as through radio and television programmes across the country.

Another important body that has participated actively in the task of protecting, preserving and presenting the country's archaeological heritage is the Archaeological Association of Nigeria, (AAN). The body was inaugurated in 1975 as the apex organization of archaeologists in Nigeria. The association holds annual conferences and the proceedings of such conferences are published for public enlightenment. The universities in the country have also played very important role in research and manpower training geared towards producing the needed manpower for the archaeological enterprise in Nigeria. Among the Universities that have established full-fledged archaeology department are the University of Ibadan and the Universities of Port Harcourt and Ahamadu Bello University, Zaria have their archaeology unit in History Departments (Fatunsin, 1994). Although concerted efforts have been made to protect, preserve and present Nigeria's archaeological heritage, these efforts laudable as they have appeared, have failed to yield the required dividends as a result of a number of problems most of which are largely scio-economic in nature (Ekechukwu, Forthcoming). These problems have, in some way, hindered the protection, preservation and proper utilization of our rich archaeological sites as a viable option for generating tourism, that could help to grow the country's economy.

Charting a Course for the Transformation of the Sites:

In order to harness the social, economic and cultural potential of the archaeological sites in Nigeria, a number of strategies need to be adopted. These strategies will involve a site planning approach that will enlist, to a large extent, the support and participation of the various stakeholders, especially members of the local communities; the adoption of a more proactive approach to site protection and conservation, and the use of a aggressive marketing campaign to present the sites and promote their use as tourist attractions.

In this paper, we shall adapt the planning model put forward by Inskip (1991) as a tool for effective planning and development of sites in Nigeria. This model outlines the objectives, approaches, process and techniques as well as principles for planning of archaeological sites. The reason for adopting this model is informed by the similarity in the nature of most archaeological sites across the world. For example, cave and rockshelter sites in different parts of the world assume similar morphologies but could differ in terms of the material artifacts located in them. Also iron-working sites especially smelting sites and their

contents (furnace and slag) assume similar shapes if the smelting tradition adopted is the same.

A. Planning Objectives and Development:

Among the planning objectives will be:

- ❖ To involve the local communities and other stakeholders in the planning and management of the sites, thereby making the peoples the stewards of their heritage. All the stakeholders must be identified and involved in planning and management. The stakeholders will include the community leaders/head and other custodians of the people's culture and tradition; the various tourism bodies and the art and culture institutions.
- ❖ To create awareness among Nigerians about the importance of the archaeological heritage by implementing educational programmes for both children and adults.
- ❖ To protect and secure the archaeological heritage from looting and destruction through guarding and building of facilities that can secure the sites from encroachments.
- ❖ To strengthen the laws that govern theft, illegal exports of the artifacts and destruction of sites.
- ❖ To publicize the sites to the outside world in order to appeal to tourists.
- ❖ To generate revenue especially foreign exchange by using the sites as visitor attractions.
- ❖ To construct visitor facilities at designated sites to accommodate the needs of visitors.
- ❖ To develop a comprehensive site management programme for selected sites with conservation undertones
- ❖ To enable the sites play an active role in the nation's socio- economic development.

B. Planning Approaches:

The basic planning approach that could be adopted will involve survey, mapping, inventorization and analysis of sites to determine those that have primary importance or attracting power and those that are secondary and complementary to the primary features. In other words, the surveyed and inventorized sites should be prioritized to select those that have high potential to attract visitors. For site mapping, the rapid survey method called traversing could be used as the basic field mapping technique. Another basic approach for planning archaeological sites involves the application of the environmental and

cultural conservation approach. In this approach, emphasis is laid on the conservation of the natural environment of the sites to help minimize the impact that may arise from the immediate environment. This approach also involves the design of visitor facilities and organization of site use that could help to preserve and not degrade the environment. The approach enables an equilibrium to be maintained among such variables as maximum use, enjoyment and appreciation of the sites by visitors and avoiding environmental impact by tourist while helping to uphold and maintain the conservation objectives. When planning a site the main issue considered is conservation of the principal archaeological features. This may involve the preservation of the site as it is or the use of preservation technique such restoration where there are visible signs of deterioration.

C. Planning Process and Technique:

This will involve:

- ❖ A determination of the conservation needs from the archaeological survey and analysis of the sites. The survey and analysis may sometimes involve site excavation.
- ❖ The establishment of visitor carrying capacity.
- ❖ An analysis of the socio cultural and environmental impacts, especially where some people are living in the site area.
- ❖ Determination of the type and extent of visitor facilities and services that should be provided at the sites. The facilities should be integrated into a visitor centre complex and located at or near the main entrance to the site.
- ❖ Provision of a visitor use plan that will show the entry and exit points and the manner in which traffic should flow at the site. Direct access to very fragile archaeological features could be prohibited but only allowing views of them from a distance.
- ❖ Control of the total numbers of visitors at the site at any one time, especially if there is danger of congestion or site deterioration.

D. Planning Principles:

The best principles for developing visitor facility within a site are usually to concentrate the major facilities in one area, so that they can become an integrated complex. This facility complex, often known as the visitor centre usually include the reception/lounge area, an information centre, a shop selling books and other items such as souvenirs related to the site, a snack bar or restaurant, an exhibit area or small museum about the site and other facilities like toilets, parking

space for cars and tour buses. In building the visitor information centre and other structures at the site, traditional architectural styles of the area can be adopted, while building materials could be sourced from the local environment. Visitor accommodation can also be provided within or near the facility complex and where this is not available, arrangements could be made for visitor accommodation in a nearby village or town. (Adapted from Inskeep,1991).

Site Protection and Conservation Measures:

Although a number of measures have been taken, to protect and preserve the artifacts excavated from different sites in Nigeria, as can be seen from the various ordinances and military decrees highlighted above, however, not much has been achieved in the area of site protection and conservation. Most of these sites have suffered from all forms of neglect, abandonment desecration, destruction and environmental degradation without any attempts at protecting and conserving them. In Nigeria and indeed several parts of the world, site conservation has not kept pace with excavation, as archaeologists are busy excavating without sparing a thought for the preservation of the sites they have excavated upon. With expanding industrialization, there have been increased activities in the field of construction, mining, and agriculture. These industrial activities have given rise to large-scale development projects like housing, highways, dam construction, and refineries, most of which have frequently resulted in the obliteration of the natural landscape and with them, of course, our archaeological features, –Although social and environmental protection concerns have been expressed in several quarters with regard to these projects and studies have been commissioned by the governments of this country on the impacts of these large-scale public works, unfortunately, however, archaeologists have hardly been invited to participate in such environmental and social impact assessment studies in this country (Ekechukwu, N.J.H. VOL.17 Forthcoming). The absence of a comprehensive register or inventory of archaeological sites and features along with archaeological survey maps showing the locations of these sites and features within the landscape have not helped matters at all. The laws and regulations for the protection and preservation of the archaeological heritage, including the sites and features do not carry stiff penalties that serve as deterrent to offenders. To achieve a measure of success in the area of site protection and preservation, a number of strategies need to be adopted. These should include:

- 1) The development of a comprehensive site management programme for all the sites in the country, whether excavated or potential. This will include the construction of visitor facilities at some designated sites to accommodate the needs of visitor/tourists while helping to minimize the impact of these visitors on the sites.
- 2) The establishment of site conservation programme and insisting that conservation experts be included in excavation teams. To realize this objective, archaeologists could be trained in archaeological field conservation so that they can carry out conservation treatments in the course of site excavation.
- 3) The strengthening of the cultural legislations to ensure that the country's sites and features are well-protected. Infact, Local Governments should be empowered to make bye-laws as appropriate to protect and preserve the archaeological sites in their domains.
- 4) The engagement of the local communities in the task of site protection and preservation. One way of achieving this, is by employing members of these communities around which the sites are located as guides and guards.

Presenting the Sites to the Public:

In several countries of the world, archaeological sites have been developed, packaged and sometimes presented with interpretation as visitor attractions. This presentation with some interpretation has not only helped to arouse interest about the sites but has also assisted in generating huge traffic in tourism to these countries with the attendant economic benefits. Some of the countries where this has been achieved are Egypt, Turkey, and the United of America. For example, the sites in Egypt that range in age from the prehistoric, pharaonic, Greco-Roman through Jewish, Coptic to Islamic, have kept attracting unprecedented number of international tourists to that country. The — Valley of the kings| one of the sites located in the Theban West Bank attracts nearly two million visitors per year while the figure put for the — Valley of the Queens| an adjacent site, is approximately four hundred thousand per year (Neville Agnew and Martha Demas, 2008: 20). Today a vast tourism industry, based on these sites, exists in Egypt and the country's economy depends on the revenue from this form of tourism. The sites of Ephesus in turkey, which was the capital of the province of Asia and one of the wealthiest cities of Asia Minor during Roman Imperial period, attracts thousands of tourist from different parts of the world

every year, who come to see its Hellenistic and Roman architecture and urban planning (Torre and Maclean, 1997:21). Also at Chaco Canyon in North-western New Mexico, USA, the Native American Anasazi established a series of settlements and the magnificent archaeological ruins of this ancient community now form the Chaco Culture National Historic Park, a World Heritage site that attracts thousands of tourists to the area. In these countries, various strategies and techniques have been adopted in interpreting, presenting and promoting these sites to make them attractive to visitors. One of these strategies is the building of visitor information centre, a facility that helps to publicize the site and enable visitors appreciate the various values of the site. At Chaco Canyon, the visitor centre complex consists of an exhibition gallery in which materials excavated from the ruins for several years are exhibited. It also contains photographs, maps, site brochures and other items of information on the culture and tradition of the Native American Anasazi for the benefit of its visitors. An important marketing tool used by these sites is the tour brochure. The tour brochure is a tool used by tour operators to package tours to destinations. It has the advantage of influencing customers to reach a decision to buy the tour products offered. Apart from the manual brochure, the use of the electronic website (e-brochure) is now gaining much popularity within the travel and tourism industry. The particular advantage of the websites is that information about the product can be changed frequently and at short notice (Holloway, 2006), to enable quicker market penetration and allow visitors from distant parts of the world to browse and download information about the sites. Nowadays, the use of mobile phones has enabled visitors to download materials direct from the internet provided information about the sites are posted on the internet. In line with the practice in other parts of the world, site museums with visitor facilities can be built in some designated sites in Nigeria to achieve a similar purpose. The use of brochures, both manual and electronic, as a marketing tool for advertising and promoting sites in Nigeria in both local and overseas travel and tour markets cannot be overemphasized. Information on important archaeological sites in Nigeria should be made available on the worldwide web in order to create awareness about them and arouse some curiosity in the minds of people in Nigeria's primary tourism markets. This type of marketing campaign can pay off by generating a substantial flow of international tourists to Nigeria. Tour guides should be trained for these sites and the local communities should serve as the major source from which such manpower can be recruited.

Benefits to the Society:

Developing archaeological sites into visitor attractions have their benefits on the society. Some of the over-riding reasons for tourism development in any society are the various socio-economic and cultural benefits they bring to the host communities. However, such benefits, may go with their negative effects which invariably tend to slow down the pace of tourism development. Among the economic, social and cultural benefits of tourism, are foreign exchanges generation; local empowerment with its income, and employment effects; infrastructural changes, environmental effects, and cultural awareness creation. With increased popularity through publicity, our sites can attraction international visitors and this can help generate substantial foreign exchange. When large number of tourist visit an area, their presence can impact on the local economies through their spending, provided there are no leakages and this can go a long way in empowering members of the local communities. This could come in the form of employment and income generation which tend to raise the living standards of the people. Tourism usually creates the need for modernized and improved facilities and the provision of such infrastructural facilities usually benefit the visitors/ tourist and the host communities Tourism helps to beautify the environment and when these sites are transformed into visitor attraction that will bring changes in the surface of the environment around the sites. When these sites are developed and presented, it will generate pride in the people of these communities and help to promote the people's cultural heritage to the outside world.

Summary and Conclusion:

In this paper, we have examined the possibilities of transforming the archaeological sites in Nigeria into visitor attractions. It is recognized that some of these sites are already popular across the world, especially among the archaeological community. It emphasized the planning objectives that could enable the sites to publicize the culture and tradition of the country to the outside world, protect and preserve the country's archaeological heritage and also enable the sites play an active role in the nations socio economic development. The paper also adapted a development objective that ensures that both conservation and tourism needs are served The paper lamented the near-absence of site conservation in the country and suggested the

inclusion of conservation in all planned excavations in the country as well as the training of archaeologist in archaeological conservation.

In order to plan and develop archaeological sites in Nigeria into visitor attractions has been achieved in such countries as Turkey, Egypt and the United States there is the need to provide the visitor facilities, and mobilize the stakeholders, especially the local communities around which the sites are located and mount aggressive marketing and promotional campaigns using the modern ICT to reach the primary tourism markets across the world. By these efforts, archaeology can play a leading role in helping Nigeria actualize its dream of ranking among the global top 20 economies by the year 2020.

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