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Heritage Architecture as Empowerment for Architects in National Development; Ogbunike Cave Case, Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract: ***With more than one hundred (100) sites, the research identified such as Obudu Cattle Ranch, Benin Kingdom moat, Olumo rock in Egba, Abeokuta, Osun-Oshogbo sacred Grooves, Osun State, Oduduwa Grooves, Ogbunike Caves, Ikogosi Spring in Ekiti and Ogbunike cave. The paper highlighted the investment and entrepreneurial potentials of historical heritage sites and buildings that are yet to be harnessed. Relevant literature, visits and case study of Ogbunike cave was used in the study and transformed into a designed proposed tourist centre. It identified the methods of preservation, transmission, investment and care from generations as oral tradition, individual, community and government as inadequate, with religious spaces declared as historical sites, and protected by religious beliefs and practices. The strength and weaknesses of the various management systems in place across Nigeria, were highlighted proposing the potential for professionals involvement for improvements, with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) as a partner for managing historical sites at formal level. The paper believes that for sustainability, empowerment, safety and security of the historical heritage sites community engagement is not only important but and integral part of the heritage governance system. In addition, it proposes the involvement of built environment professional indigenes in identifying, documenting, designing and development of the sites as a policy going forward. With maintenance, retrofitting and joint ownership with the traditional institutions, local community, investors and the professional bodies as stakeholders and shareholders as imperative for effective harnessing of the heritage assets.***

Keywords; *Community engagement, heritage architecture, investment, smart technology*

1.Introduction

Nigeria is rich in tangible assets garnished with annual intangible heritage assets as festivals with numerous historical sites and buildings. However, the paper studied the complex and challenging tasks of professionally harnessing, management and development of these assets for national development. From the traditional community-based management systems, pre-colonial interventions, religious, socio-cultural, individuals and groups, the situation has not improved. With more than one hundred (100) sites and buildings, the research identifies some of these as Benin Kingdom moat, Osun-Oshogbo sacred Grooves, Osun State, Ogbunike Caves, Ikogosi Spring in Ekiti with Ogbunike cave as a case study. It also identified the methods of preservation, transmission, investment and care from generations as oral tradition, natural heritage sites, ornamentations and arts. It recognised sacred religious spaces declared as historical sites, protected by religious beliefs and practices. Outlines the various management systems in place across Nigeria, highlighting their strengths, weaknesses, and potential for professional improvements, with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) as pivotally responsible for managing historical sites at formal level. Challenges such as underfunding, inadequate listing and documentation, poor professional staffing, illegal excavations and mining activities were identified. It concludes that with professional smart technology, design, packaging and documentation led by the architect more can be achieved in partnership with communities, the government, investors and financial stakeholders through business pragmatic and strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and action. This could lead to socioeconomic and sociocultural development of the sites with branding, copyright and patency to the benefit of the profession, the local community and the country. It therefore recommends an integrated management investment structure from the communities, Local Government, geopolitical Zones with the architect coordinating for the professional identification, documentation and development of these sites as

business and investment ventures under Public-Private-Partnership-Build-Operate-Handover business model.

2. Context and Background

Nigeria is rich in tangible and intangible history, culture, and home to numerous historical sites, buildings, ornamentations and arts with Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa and Osun-Osogbo sacred Grove in Osun, State inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1999 and 2005 respectively, (icomos.com, 2005, whc.unesco.org, 2023, Abiodun and Musa, 2024, Osasona, 2007). However, the management system of these valuable assets has been complex and challenging leading to the poor harnessing of the full benefit of these assets. The management systems in place across Nigeria under National Commission for Museum and Monuments is not only weak, ineffective but needs serious reimagining and improvements with inclusive professional pragmatic traditional management system that involves planning, organising, leading, controlling, feedback, evaluation and improvement using key performance socioeconomic, sociocultural and environmental indicators. This would involve; traditional community Management Systems with individuals and groups, that integrates pre-colonial, religious, sociocultural structures. Community-based management with individuals or groups that transmits oral traditions from generation to generation. This would ensure integrating all aspects of the heritage sites such as; natural, man-made, sacred spaces historically protected by religious beliefs and practices without neglecting the post-independence established government agencies responsible for heritage management, such as National Commission of Museum and Monuments into the system, it will be largely private sector professionally driven with appropriate legal frameworks enacted to protect the historical sites that respects local peculiar situations.

Although Nigeria has ratified international heritage conventions, such as the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, implementation has been weak, therefore needs home-grown model. This therefore calls for reimagining and innovative ways for heritage documentation, conservation and preservation, (Okpalanozie and Adetunji, 2021). Therefore. a synergy with the Association of Professional Bodies of Nigeria with the architects coordinating under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and subsequently a Memorandum of Action (MoA) to build on the gains already made by President Nigeria Institute of Architects, (PNIA) on advocacy. The crux of this action is that a desk office could be created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate foreign cooperation, partnership and investment to ensure appropriate and adequate local content of relevant professionals for any foreign cooperation on heritage. All relevant Association of Professional Bodies of Nigeria, (APBN) members including the architects should be part of any delegation on foreign visits, exhibition and investment promotions by relevant heritage Nigerian, Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDA) and institutions including the legislature and judiciary at both the national and subnational levels. Zonal and State APBN organs to work on the heritage investment at such levels to ensure adequate coverage and inclusivity.

The frontline MDAs for this investment purpose could therefore be; Ministry of foreign Affairs, Ministries of culture and creative economy, Agriculture, Forestry Department, Ministry of Environment; land degradation and restoration, Ministry of land and housing and National Commission for Museum and Monuments.

3. Approach, framework and case study

The Ogbunike cave, Anambra State as a potential heritage tourist attraction which houses natural rocks, ancient indigenous animals, plant carcasses and remains, waterfall, and minerals, presents a good start for an integrated business model professional development and management approach. The Ogbunike cave is located about 15 kilometers east of Onitsha with the Onitsha-Enugu expressway cutting through the northern border. It is one of the sub-urban areas that form the conurbation of Onitsha metropolis. The town is bordered on the East by Umudioka, Dunukofia Local Government Area, on the North-east by Umunya and on the North by Nkwelle-Ezunaka in Oyi Local Government Area. It shares its boundary on the West and South with Ogidi of Idemili North Local Government Area. Its coordinates are Longitude and Latitude 6.1859N and 6.9061E, respectively (Agoha, 2019, Plates; 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3).

Plate 3.1: Map of Nigeria
Source: Agoha, 2019

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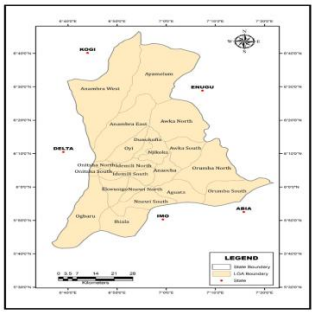

Plate 3.2: Map of Anambra State
Source: Agoha, 2019

Plate 3.3: Project site
Source: Agoha, 2019

Although Nigeria subscribed to the United Nation Convention on heritage, however, challenges of heritage management system poor development and harnessing of these economic assets have persisted. These challenges are;

i. Lack of adequate local and foreign resources mobilisation for funding for site maintenance, technical documentation, research, and personnel training and retraining.
ii. Inadequate staffing: Shortage of qualified professionals in heritage documentation & management.
iii. Lack of public awareness, leading to limited understanding of the importance of heritage preservation.
iv. Urbanisation and development pressures resulting in threats to historical sites from construction, mining and infrastructure projects.
v. Induced conflict and instability that damage heritage sites during armed conflicts.
vi. Illegal activities such as theft, vandalism, and illicit trade and traffic in cultural artifacts.
vii. Religious and cultural barriers
viii. Illegal international merchandising and trafficking of the movable historical materials
ix. Local ethnic wars and boundary conflicts leading to the destruction of some of the sites and artifacts
x. The National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) which has the sole responsibility for managing historical sites with challenges that include underfunding, inadequate listing, documentation, inadequate staffing training and retraining, and illegal excavations.

Interestingly, some other identified active heritage sites in Nigeria are; Obudu Cattle Ranch**, t**he Benin Kingdom moat/wall, Olumo rock in Egba, Abeokuta, Osun-Oshogbo sacred Grooves, Osun State, Oduduwa Grooves, Ikogosi Spring in Ekiti, Obudu Mountain Resort, Cross River State, Ibeano Beach, Akwa ibom, Awhum Waterfall, Enugu State, Arochukwu Long Juju Slave Route, Abia State, the Giant Footprint of Ukhuse Oke, Edo State, Port Harcourt Tourist Beach, River State, Gashaki-Gumpti National Park, Taraba State, The Tinapa Free Zone & Resort, Cross River State, Osun-Osogbo Grove, Osun State, The Emotan Statue, Edo State, Sukur Cultural Landscape, Adamawa State, Queen Amina's Wall, Kaduna State, Surame Cultural Landscape, Sokoto State, Gurara Waterfall, Niger State, Oban Hills, Cross River State, Oke-Idanre Hill, Ondo State, Bar Beach Victoria Island, Lagos State, Millennium Park Maitama, Abuja, New Afrika Shrine Ikeja, Lagos State, The Emotan Statue Benin, Edo State, Coconut Beach Badagry, Lagos State, Bar Beach Victoria Island, Lagos State, Nana Living History Museum Warri, Delta State, The Ancient Nok Settlement Jaba, Kaduna State, Abuja Arts and Crafts Village, The Royal Palace of Oba of Benin, Edo State, Yankari National Park, Bauch State, Kainji National Park and Gurara Waterfall, Niger State. (Agoha, 2019).

The following development governance management and inclusive structure can be effective for harnessing the heritage sites;

i. Public-Private -Partnership-Develop-Manage-Handover, (PPPDMH), Joint Venture, Public Private Partnership, with APBN, Architects, Financiers, Movie, Nollywood and Actors' guild.
ii. NIA Design competitions, at professional and students' levels, Technical partnerships with built environment professionals and Tourism managers
iii. Entrepreneurship, Manpower and Resource Development, management investment, development and redevelopment at the

Regional, National and subnational units involving relevant stakeholders.

iv. This unit should have funding arrangements & budget, assess statuses of the heritage assets, attract investors and employ management systems that oversee the sustainable management of the Heritage sites
v. Governance Systems; professionals, community, national governments, financial institutions, investors and eco-stakeholders
vi. Management Structure; MoU to handover the sites to the APBN and NIA
vii. Packaging of identified and documented sites to attract local, global and international investors
viii. Community involvement and engagement to empower local communities
ix. Capacity building investing in local training and education for heritage professionals.
x. Sustainable financing under Government public-private partnerships local communities and neighbourhoods. Age-grades, cooperative societies, Socio- economic, and cultural groups.
xi. Employment of digital technologies and ICT for documentation, monitoring, outreach and management.
xii. Regional cooperation with local and international cooperation
xiii. Job creation with SMES for crafts, technology, souvenirs production, income generation, Women, Youth involvement and empowerment
xiv. Multi-use, Community, citizen participation, recreation, hospitality, tourism and education

In addition to tangible economic benefits others are;

i. Educational use as a living history classroom for outdoor studies about history of the sites, and culture of the people as curriculum enrichment of tangible connections to the past, thus enhancing learning experience and making history more real.
ii. Cultural understanding for students to help develop a deeper appreciation for cultural heritage and diversity.
iii. Critical thinking and problem-solving using historical challenges, and solutions to foster critical skills and problem-solving abilities.
iv. Research and documentation for researchers and students to contribute to the preservation of history by conducting research and documenting historical sites.
v. As sources of indigenous oral history to developing relevant traditional theories, principle and concepts guiding the practice, development and preservation of the heritage. Such issues as history, theory of traditional architecture, sustainability, Green architecture, material science, energy efficiency and control, biophilic, biomimic and traditional architecture could be studied with historical heritages thus leading to strong foundation and expression in the study and practice of architecture if historical sites and buildings are properly studied in context
vi. Local architectural, materials, ornaments icons could be appreciated leading to the development of Negro-Afrocentric Architecture curriculum could be developed.
vii. Tourism development using well-preserved and developed historical sites that can attract tourists, generating revenue for local communities and supporting the economy.
viii. Community development through heritage tourism that can create job opportunities in the hospitality, transportation, and crafts industries.
ix. Cultural preservation through increased awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritage.
x. Urban planning and development through heritage integration could lead to urban regeneration, sustainable development, design and investment
xi. Improved outdoor activities such as recreation, festivals and carnivals
xii. Improved design and Investment potentials through
xiii. Tax credit to companies/firms
xiv. Market driven incentives; Climate change responsive carbon credit; wildlife protection and preservation
xv. Corporate/Financial organization; Facility directed to investors
xvi. Community and Neighbourhood involvement
xvii. Corporate social Responsibility Action

4. Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats, (SWOT) Analysis Threats, Risks and Mitigation for Heritage Sites

i. Evaluation and monitoring development, history, statuses, peculiarities of each of the identified heritage sites and buildings

ii. Identification and Evaluation of Threat such arson, vandalism, terrorism, excavations and mining
iii. Legal framework for protection and preservation, wildlife carcasses
iv. Sanctions for infringement
v. Physical protection against, arson, vandalism and encroachment using barricades and local vigilante security network
vi. Insurance cover of the sites and buildings against intentional and force majeure losses

5. Lessons learnt and Professional insight

Although Ogbunike is a suburb of Onitsha, the physical development of the cave is located and maintained in a natural valley blanketed by rich tropical rain forest ecosystem, used over centuries by local people for whom it has particular spiritual significance, as expressed in the **"Ime Ogba" festival**, undertaken every year to commemorate the discovery of the cave. This is a good example of green, sustainable, culturally inspired and vernacular architecture. Visitors to the cave must remove their shoes before entering, as per tradition and women who are having their monthly cycle cannot go in**.** Descending into the stepped valley is a **long walkway** made up of about **317 steps** with local and natural materials said to have been constructed by the Anambra State Government in the mid-90s, plates,5.1,5.2, (Agoha, 2019). The main cave consists of a massive structure with a big open natural chamber of about 5m high, 10m wide and 30m long at the entrance. There are ten (10) interconnected tunnels at the main chamber leading to different directions which vary in lengths. The caves are occupied by a large colony of bats of various sizes with streams and body of water at various places in the cave. A natural stream flows out from one of the tunnels of the Ogbunike cave into a rapid flowing river Nkissa. At the meeting point of the river and the stream one can feel the warm water from the caves and the cold river water. Beside this portion of the river is a table land of about 5 X 5 square meters used as a relaxation spot by visitors to the caves. The immediate environment of the caves up to about 200 meters' radius with a thick tropical rainforest vegetation provides opportunity to design the proposed resort centre for the development of the area. The site has sufficient boundaries (20 hectares) to protect its values from direct effects of human encroachment (UNESCO World Heritage Center, 2023).

Plate 5.1.Steps into the cave
Source;Agoha,2019

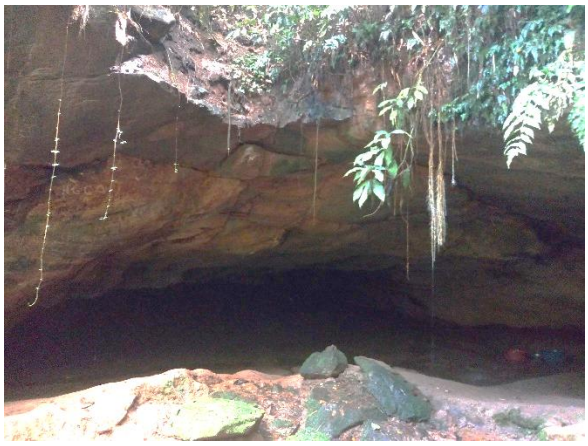

Plate 5.2: cave entrance
Source: Agoha, 2019

6. Findings and Analysis

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, preservation of the biodiversity of the Ogbunike cave in the natural Nkissa river, and the forest (plates 6.1,6.2,6.3) within the fast-developing urban area of Onitsha will not only contribute to climate change action but will improve the carbon footprint of the area. Indirect contribution of heritage to the national GDP are through cultural resources 3.6 ($16billion), tourism 4% (2.4million people) and Aviation $1.7billion, heritage can therefore drive professional, and economic empowerment through the following;

i. Tourism that encourages both local and international tourism with increased hospitality, job creation and local business
ii. Crafts and culture for traditional crafts, souvenirs production in form of artifacts, costumes, cuisine and other Small and Medium Enterprises (SMSEs) for increased income and livelihood

iii. Job creation for all levels of income including tourism guide, conservation and transportation
iv. Resources management for health natural recreation, eco-biodiversity and forestry, urban agriculture, blue economy, wildlife development and management of fauna and flora species. Plates, 6, 7, 8.
v. Infrastructure development such as roads, hotel design and construction projects, communication, recreation, transportation and aviation to provide consultancy jobs and construction for relevant professionals.
vi. Heritage-based entrepreneurship businesses that create livelihood and increased job opportunities and income
vii. Community engagement and empowerment to give sense of ownership, security, safety and sustainable economic development.

Plate 6.1: Nkessi river/stream from the cave
Source: Agoha, 2019

Plate 6.2: Entrance/reception area
Source: Agoha, 2019

Plate 6.3: Natural forest/ecosystem area
Source: Agoha, 2019

7.Conclusions and Recommendations for the profession

Heritage preservation not only empowers economically a large spectrum of the society with the professionals like the architect as driving force but is a means of preserving tangible, intangible assets, arts, monuments, crafts, building materials, technology, ecosystem and ornaments, (Okafor, Agbonome, Obiadi, Barnaby and Mbadugha, 2024, Omale and Ifeoluwa, 2024, Peter, 2014,Osasona,2007). The paper therefore has the following conclusions, recommendations and observed that;

i. While the potential benefits of historical sites are significant, challenges such as lack of funding, vandalism, awareness and

inadequate management hinder their full potential. However, with increased private sector investment, public awareness, and collaborative efforts, these challenges can be overcome.

ii. By effectively utilising historical sites and buildings, Nigeria and Africa can reap the rewards of cultural preservation, education, and economic development.

iii. Effective management of historical sites and buildings is crucial for preserving Nigeria's and indeed Africa's rich heritage and invaluable assets for future generations.

iv. Historical sites and buildings serve as invaluable resources for oral history, education, cultural preservation, and economic development in Nigeria and Africa. Their potential for both learning and practical application is immense.

v. Intentional integration of nature, natural and local materials are part of historical preservation and good evidence of green, sustainable and vernacular architecture which can be replicated in various places in Nigeria to reflect the peculiarities in the diversity of Nigeria culture and architectural experience.

vi. For maximisation of limited resources in fast growing urban areas like Onitsha the opportunity offered for the application of smart climate technology for the holistic development of Afrometropolitanism concept in historical preservation is imperative and great to be overlooked.

8. Actions plan

i. Identification of historical heritage sites and buildings from community, State, geopolitical zones for documentation and profiling.

ii. Listing of all heritage design projects from Departments of Architecture for documentation and profiling

iii. Formation of zonal steering committee mobilization of stakeholders, resources, and designs

iv. MoUs and MoAs with MDAs and communities

v. Profiling of architecture schools/institutions and relevant design projects for unveiling and production.

vi. Formation of relevant Non-Governmental Organisations, (NGOs) by professionals especially Architects for more aggressive grass root advocacy.

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10. Appendix

1. Site plan for Proposed Ogbunike Tourist centre, Development

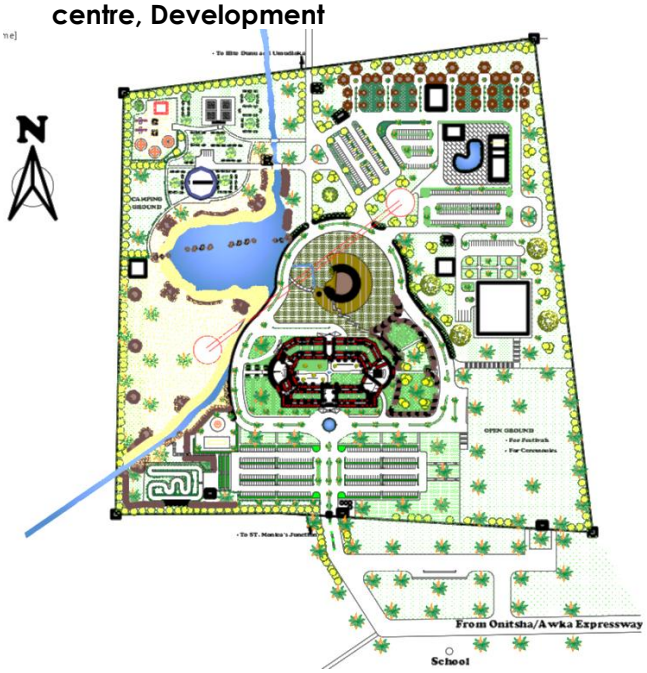

Plate 9.1: Site plan for Proposed Ogbunike Tourist centre, Development
Source: Agoha, 2019

10.1. Scope

The project covers the design of a tourist center in Ogbunike, which would provide the following;

i. Museum
ii. Hotels
iii. Restaurant and Recreational Facilities.
iv. Library
v. Administrative block and coordinators offices.
vi. Data room/archives
vii. Auditorium
viii. Conference halls.
ix. Classrooms/training rooms with projector.
x. Media / ICT
xi. Laboratory/workshops
xii. Storage spaces for equipment.
xiii. Clinic.

xiv. Fire service post.
xv. Outdoor gardens/recreation
xvi. Car parks for workers and clients.
xvii. Entrances and exits
xviii. Roads with drainage systems, pedestrian walkways and lay-by's where necessary.
xix. Security and surveillance post.
xx. Waste disposal and management

Plate 9.2: North Elevation
Source: Agoha, 2019

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