

MUSEUMS' SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Security stresses the protection of the museum buildings, its contents, staffs, the visitors and their properties. On the other hand, it also involves the care of the collections and insurance against severe financial lose, maintenance of physical security measures which involves protection against fire theft and vandalism.

1.0. Introduction

The history of museums in Nigeria can be said to date to pre-Arab and European times. During those periods, various cultural materials of ritual, religious and political importance were fashioned, conserved and preserved on temples or traditional shrines and in palaces of kings and chiefs. Apart from housing such cultural materials like ivory, bronze and carved wooden objects, these institutions (temples, shrines and palaces) were preserved as monuments in their own right. Some natural features like caves (for example, Ogbunike cave in Anambra State) were also maintained as monuments. Persons responsible for organising and preserving the cultural materials included the head of each household, priests of various shrines and any of the kings or chiefs officers. In Igboland, for instance, a head of the household was in charge of his family's temple. In such temples cultural materials like iron or bronze amulets, wooden statues (Ikenga) or images of deities were kept. The head of the household or (in some cases) priests take care of ritual objects like iron gongs, ivory trumpets, drums as well as stone or clay images of deities kept in the shrines. These heads of priests acted more or less as curators, taking care of these objects. Wooden and iron/bronze staffs, statues and thrones, ceremonial regalia of past kings kept in the royal palaces were taken care of by any of the king's officers. In these pre-colonial museums objects were preserved because of their utilitarian or symbolic value. For instance, the cultural objects found in king's palace were useful in displaying the political structure

and ritual significance of the kingship system. Some of the objects found in the shrines helped to concretise the deities. Also in Igbo land a pot (like iteike – a very large pot which can contain about 105 litres of wine) kept in Obu (shrine house) were preserved and used during the initiation of new members into the masquerade societies while the wooden statues and the wooden symbol of authority (ofe) were used for administration of oaths. The development of modern museums began during the colonial period. In 1927, Mr. Kenneth Murray, an art teacher in the British colonial service, was appointed to advise the government “on the effects of the colonial education system on local art. While performing the assignment Murray made a personal collection of several Nigerian art forms. Later he advised the government on the establishment of museums and the proclamation of relevant laws to prevent the illegal exportation of Nigerian works of art. However, because of the Second World War, Murray's recommendations for the establishment of museums in three centres in Nigeria could not be implemented. Murray was therefore permitted to continue with the purchase of antiquities pending the building of a permanent centre for the preservation of the cultural objects. The Nigerian Antiquities Services was established on July 28, 1943 in response to appeals by concerned Europeans like Murray and Duckwork, and Education officer. In 1946 Mr. J. H. Braunholtz, a keeper in the department of Ethnography of the British Museum, was send to Lagos by the colonial office to advice the British government on the preservation of Nigerian cultural resources. In 1947 Mr. E. B. Fagg, a trained archaeologist, was appointed government archaeologist and assistant surveyor of antiquities. Mr. Fagg carried out much archaeological work in the Jos Plateau and helped in the establishment of the Jos Museums in 1952 in which most of the archaeological materials have been preserved to this day. Clear-cut legislations to prevent the indiscriminate acquisition and exportations of Nigerian cultural

materials was not instituted until 1953 when the Antiquities Ordinance No. 17 was passed. This bill provided for the creation of the National Department of Antiquities and charged it with the responsibility of exploration, care and preservation of antiquities or works of art, and provided also for the control of exportation of works of art from Nigeria. Subsequent laws such as the Antiquities (export permits) Regulations of 1957 and the Antiquities (prohibited transfers) Decree of 1979 were enacted to check the illegal exportation of cultural objects from Nigeria. The Department of Antiquities, however, saw to the establishment of museums in Nigeria to preserve these cultural objects.

In 1979 a comprehensive review of the legislation concerning cultural resources in Nigeria was undertaken with the promulgation of Decree No.77. This decree dissolved the National Antiquities Commission and the Department of Antiquities established by the earlier decree. It created in its place the National Commission for Museums and Monuments which was designated as a corporate body with powers to generate funds and enter into contracts. It also made fresh provisions for the designation of National Monuments and ensured stiffer penalties for the destruction, unauthorised alteration and removal of monuments in Nigeria. The then Department of Antiquities and the present National Commission for Museums and Monuments saw to the establishment of museums in different parts of Nigeria to preserve Nigeria's cultural objects.

1.1. Museums and Museum Centres in Nigeria

There are about 29 federal museums, including museums in the making (i.e.centres) in Nigeria, and at least one in each state. At Sokoto, Yola and Owerri there are as yet museum centres. In eight towns (Port-Harcourt, Ilorin, Markurdi, Minna, Maiduguri, Akure, Abeokuta, Uyo and Katsina) there are fledging museums with exhibition galleries. Of the remaining museums, the one situated in Lagos serves as the headquarters for the commission, functioning as the major National Museum with all requisite facilities. The museum situated in Jos, Plateau State was one time headquarters of the defunct Federal Department of Antiquities. It is the largest and most comprehensive museum complex in Nigeria, and includes a zoo, Museum of Traditional Nigerian

Architecture (MOTNA) and houses the centre for museum studies.

Other relatively important museums are located in major historic towns (e.g. Kano, Benin, Kaduna and Calabar). Such National museum have galleries and render comprehensive services in addition to reflecting the history of the locality. Thus for instance, the museum in Benin has a collection centred in Benin and related antiquities, that in Kaduna was established in 1975 and holds important collections of Nok Terra cottas. At Calabar (Cross River State) the museum is housed in the Old Residency building which in itself is a National Monument. At Aba (Abia State) the commission has a museum of colonial history while the National Museum Complex in Umuahia (Abia State) functions as the Nigeria Museum of Traditional and Modern warefare. Although existing since 1977 it was opened in 1985. The museum in Ile-Ife (Oyo State) was opened to the public in 1956 and is centred on the Antiquities of Ife and environs. The National Museum in Oron (Akwa Ibom State) is centred on the sculpture of the Oron sub-region, whereas that in Kano occupies GidanMakama which in itself a National Monument. Its collection is centred on Hausa culture and the Nigeria Islamic heritage. Another museum of colonial history (still in its incipient states) is located in Lokoja (Niger State). At Esie in Kwara State, there is a National Museum of Antiquities centred on the Esie stone images, while in Oshogbo (Oyo State) is located a museum of National History linked with the Osun sacred grove and other monuments in Oshogbo. In Owo (Ondo State) the Commission Museum of Antiquities is centred on the arts and antiquities of the Owo sub-region. Ibadan (Oyo State) and Enugu (Enugu State) constitute seats for museum centre and Research base, and modern museums of National Unity are nearing completion. At Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, there is an incipient National Museum which when completed, will serve as the new headquarters of the National Commission. Apart from these National museum owned by the federal government, there are other state and privately owned museums which are opened to the public. These include museums of the various State Arts Councils, the Igbo-ukwu Museum and OfoNri Museum (owned by IgweOsitaAgwuna of Enugu-Ukwu) both in Anambra State and that of Emir of Yawuri in Yelwa, Sokoto State.

In the palace of several kings and chiefs in parts of Nigeria there are mini museums in which para-phernalia associated with the crown and other objects of cultural significance are displayed. Museums are also found in our higher institutions of learning mainly the universities. For instance, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University Ife have museums. At Ibadan and Nsukka, there are museums at the Institute of African Studies and at the Department of Archaeology, Zoology and Geology Department at these universities also have museums. At Ife, there is a museum at the Institute of African Studies and a National History Museum. There is also the odinani museum at Nri, Anambra State with local collections but sponsored by the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.

1.2. Museum Security

Security is one of the most important considerations in the administration of any museum. It is something that provides safety, freedom from danger or anxiety.

Security stresses the protection of the museum buildings, its contents, staffs, the visitors and their properties. On the other hand, it also involves the care of the collections and insurance against severe financial lose, maintenance of physical security measures which involves protection against fire theft and vandalism. The loss of objects through fire, theft and vandalism is the greatest risks to the museum. In the course of this study the security consideration will be limited to the aspect of storage and collection.

1.3. Security Measures in Storage Areas

When discussing security in the museum, physical provision is usually given priority, particularly the storage area which is usually restricted to the public. Planning architects should always give more consideration to providing the best and most flexible means of displaying the collection. Security is the most fundamental requirement of the museum building and the architect must keep this need paramount. Every legitimate location in the building for the collections receiving room, photography studio, workrooms, exhibition halls, etc is provided with security and barriers are set up in effect, between the collections and unauthorised people. The museum must be so designed

to provide maximum security for the collections, which is the primary function of the museum building. It is therefore imperative that at the designing stage of a museum, efforts should be made to integrate into the design physical measures and structures that will enhance the protection of its collection from fire, theft and vandalism.

1.4. Storage

- (a) At the storage section the location to the museum should be secure and accessible to the staff for ease of use.
- (b) The size must be adequate to ensure that objects are not piled. There must be enough space for the circulation of air and for ease of retrieval.
- (c) Climate control should be considered. The storage requirement at one place should definite not the same as another place.
- (d) Objects should be given several rooms for varied control.
- (e) It is not proper for visitors passage to be located close to storage entrance
- (f) Air conditioning is essential for temperature control in storage, at the same time it provides undue access to the stores. However, all air conditioner openings should be burglar proofed.

1.5. Movement of Materials

The Registrars department should be notified in advance about movement of any materials and as early as possible even of arrival and departure of materials to and fro locations. This is important in the case of making necessary arrangement for proper handling or packaging of materials. It is necessary that objects be routed through the Registrars Department and so it is, for better and effective co-ordination. The shipping and receiving room should be an arm of the Registrar's department. A carpenter should be attached and detailed to supervise the aspect of crafting and packing. Staff of the Registration Department should be knowledgeable and well informed in handling, packing and shipping. They should be trained in the observation of atmospheric conditions and its effects on various kinds of artefacts especially the nature of the material used in fabrications. Attention should be paid to archaeological materials

arriving from the field for documentation and even contemporary art, painting in particular.

When unpacking, the Registrar must personally supervise and watch for change in temperature and also check if the objects have been attacked by pests. If attacked immediate action should be taken to have the objects isolated for fumigation.

1.6. Physical Planning and Provision for Storage Security

The storage unit consist of about sixty to eighty percent of the entire collection and for the security purpose that a non-public area of the museum. It should be protected against all risks of loss through fire, theft, vandalism or natural damage. Artefacts store rooms and vault should be located in the inner part of the building away from outer walls which could be penetrated. The storage should be compartmented to prevent the spread of fire in case of outbreak. It is advisable to insist on the non-flammable materials for storage racks and shelve while strong burglar-proof-doors is recommended. It is the same time effort must be made to ensure that the entrance is made available to public fire service in case of any outbreak. Fire extinguishers should be installed in each of the compartments, to prevent fire spreading in case of any outbreak. It is recommended that the carbon dioxide extinguishers should be used. The alkaline water type or the dry power kind that smothers the fire by excluding oxygen.

1.7. Registrars' and Conservation Department

These are restricted areas and should be completely protected from unauthorised entry. It is more ideal to have these work area adjacent to each other and the storage situated behind them (i.e. the Registrar and the conservation).

1.8. Theft

Human danger is one of the most serious threats to museum collections. The human threat has caused loss and damage to many museum collections. There are several reports on theft of museum pieces. Much has been discussed on physical provision for the prevention of theft, it should be borne in mind that buildings are usually broken into by means of common hand tools – hammer, crowbar, chisel and screw driver. There should

be no outside circuit box or socket for the connection of power tools. That would accelerate a quick break through. Ladders used by painters, masons and other workers should not be left carelessly and all tall trees by the store should be cut down. There should not be any short wall that aid climbing through to where the artefacts are kept. A guard should always be on duty at the entrance to check movement of people around the storage area and should be permitted to search people leaving the storage areas. It is seen that the best way to check, detect and cutting theft is through inventory control.

1.9. Inventory Control

This is a system whereby artefacts are documented or registered in the museums. The control of artefacts through inventory records and inspection play an important role in museum security by providing a deterrent to theft, an immediate indication of the absence of the object, and descriptive information for the recovery of an object in the event of theft. The essentiality of cataloguing are two ways. It safeguard the objects, ensures the museums claim of ownership. Secondly it provides information for research purposes. Coded numbers and identification mark are placed on objects on acquisition, photographic records for identification purposes usually accompany each catalogue.

2.0. Catalogue

This is referred to as descriptive record. There are other useful records, and actions involved in inventory control as it affects storage system, such as

2.1. Location Register

Museums should have a master Movement Register which shows at any time the location of any objects in the collection, e.g. if it is on exhibition, for conservation or to the store, etc.

2.2. Receipt: For movement of any object within or outside the museum for whatever reason, receipt must be filled out in triplicate giving the reason for the movement and its new location, dates, the names and title of the person responsible for moving the object and details of authorisation by the curator or the director.

2.3. Verification Inspection

The Central Documentation Centre (CDC) should create a collection verification inspection unit, the duty of which should be to carry out frequent but unexpected inspection to verify the presence of objects. These verification should be on-site and should be led by very senior officer.

2.4. Storage Checklist

Most stores are in deplorable situation as curators either from ignorance of professional ethics or apathy have continued to pay no attention to the collections. Stores are only visited and cared by junior staff whom most of the time the curator turn to for information. It is due to this unfortunate neglect that makes it most impossible to carry out constant check on the collections. The situation is now being arrested and it is hoped that in the very near future it would be possible to maintain constant storage checklists. Each object should be assigned a specific location in the store. Storage areas should be photographed, and a systematic checklist of all objects arranged by location should be made. When an object is removed the duplicate of the receipt should be placed at the location.

2.5. Insurance and Reports

The curator or director of a museum should arrange for adequate insurance coverage for any object or objects incoming or outgoing when in transit and during the period which the objects would be with the borrowing museums or institution (insurance for rare art pieces). All possible care is usually taken to avoid damage when in transit either within or outside the museums. It is necessary despite all these specialty to make room for accident (motor, shipwreck, aircraft, fire, etc.). Although these objects cannot be replaced, it is only compensating and consoling to have them insured for just certain value. The amount of coverage is based on valuation established by the director or the lender in the case of loan. The value of the object should be worked out at the directorate level. Adequate record should be kept and this should be regularly checked and verified by the registrar or the curator. This should be forwarded from time to time to the directorate giving details. The issue of insurance should be dedicated for a special workshop in future. Other Security Measures in the

Museum: Using of mirrors, close circuit television and glass show cases.

2.6. Mirror

Mirrors are hung in some specific places in the museum hereby aiding in the checking of people entering and leaving the museum, in this case if anybody entering the museum has carried any of the museum's property without permission will be caught by the security staff.

2.7. Close Circuit Television

This is another means of checking theft and other activities in the museum and other places. This is a system whereby a close circuit television is kept at specific place and the movement of people and other activities are checked by the security staff. In this case nothing can be carried out without detecting by the security.

2.8. Glass Showcase

The use of glass showcases help a lot in the displaying of the objects in the museums. In this case nothing can be easily stolen since the show cases in some cases are closed and locked, and is only the staff in charge can open it, if there is need to be opened. Fire extinguishers in the case of fire outbreak: Acoustic devices is an instrument which is installed outside the museum. Fencing and the use of security doors are also very vital in museum security.

2.9. Conclusion

The storage of museum collections are essentially with the province of the curators and conservators. The Registrar is only responsible for temporary storage of the objects while they are being worked upon, unpacked, packed, examined and documented although in some museums, the Registrar oversees the storage of permanent collections for the curator.

Adequate time should be allowed by the object at the Registrar's office to give enough time for the objects to equilibrate. While the objects proceed to the store the documents are retained at the Registrar's department and should receive the same care as the object would. Records therefore should be adequately kept and indexed for case of retrieval. Fire is museum's number one enemy, the harm caused is usually irreparable. The

Registrar's department is most prone to fire hazards, all documents soon as completed should be stored away in fire-proof cabinets, catalogues should be protected with protective envelopes.

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