



NEWSLETTER
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GOMBE

Jewel in the Savannah



**MBIDO IGBO TRADITIONAL RULERS
VISIT NACD PROJECT SECRETARIAT >>>**

FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

In this edition, we attempted to do a splash on Gombe State, “The Jewel in the Savannah” – This is in the spirit of exposing the Arts, Culture and Tourism potentials in the federating States of Nigeria, as contained in the mandate of the Nigerian Arts and Culture Directory Project.

Without any fear of contradiction, we came off with the impression that, the Gombe people are among, if not, the most hospitable people in the country. We were simply “blown away” by their enthusiastic welcome and elaborate reception, spiced with the hunger to impress and expose the beauty of their fashion, cuisine, ecology, royalty, cultural heritage, etc., upon visitors and tourists alike.

We also left the State with the conviction that, the government, through the Ministry of Sports and Culture in liaison with the Ministry of Industries, Tourism and Solid Minerals Development, has a clear vision of exposing these God-given potentials to the world. This was quite evident in the close working relationship with Traditional Institutions at the grassroots level.

We also bring to you a report of the visit of the leadership of the Mbido Igbo Cultural Organization to the Secretariat of the NACD Project.

A report on the International Museum Day (IMD) celebrated in May 2008, is as well contained in this ninth edition.

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View of the Savannah landscape

WHY THE JEWEL?

Unstilled, untainted and uncluttered are words that readily come to mind when contemplating the savannah grasslands of Gombe State. From its entrance gate, one is immediately impressed by miles of landscape to the left and to the right, as far as the eyes can see. To first-time visitors, there is surprise, bothering on awe, an experience akin to stepping into a dream land of unreality. This doubt is however dispelled by the third day of exploring the land as it gradually dawns that this is quite real. From then, the nature-loving tourist expects to be delighted and is not disappointed.

From Sunday, April 27 to Saturday, May 3, 2008, the NACD Project Research Team was in Gombe State, exploring and discovering these same wonders. To say the least, it was a most uncommon experience. Set amidst the savannah is Gombe, the State's Capital City, which one comes upon quite suddenly. From the rural and simple beauty of the border villages, one meets the city as a glittering white jewel bathed in bright sunlight. The sunset is spectacular to watch. This is usually the best part of the day, tinting the city a burnished gold.

An ultra modern airport, already nearing completion is located at the outskirts, towards its western border. This, when completed will shorten the journey from Abuja, the Nation's Capital to less than an hour, thereby, ensuring quicker and easier access to the State by intending tourists.

A CULTURE-BASED TOURISM INDUSTRY



Royal horsemen from Dukku Emirate

Arts, Culture and Tourism cannot be treated independent of each other; this fact comes across very strongly in the case of Gombe State. The people's culture is indeed a force to reckon with. It has obviously taken time and effort to attain its present state of development. Cuisines, fashion, traditional institutions, music, dances, festivals and hospitality of the people are all well articulated, organized, preserved, and deliberately passed down the generations. Their pride and joy are evident as they showcase their cultural heritage to visitors.

To say the least, the people of Gombe State enjoy a cultural endowment that many would envy. The grandeur, opulence, glory and splendour of its traditional institutions alone, can sustain the industry of the state; especially with the conscious



efforts by the royal fathers to preserve and hence, pass down their cultural practices and arts, in their original forms by building and equipping museums, within the vicinity of their palaces. Some of such museums/galleries were seen in the Palaces of the Emir of Deba, and the Mai Tangle in Billiri. The NACD Project team, was also treated to a fashion show in the Palace of the Emir of Funakaye, as well as a Video Documentary by the Mai Kaltungo.

THE PALACES



**HRH. Alh. Shehu Usman Abubakir
Emir of Gombe**

The NACD Project Research team was received by no less than seven Royal Fathers of Gombe State in their palaces during the six-day working visit. Without prior knowledge of the terrain, members of the team were in a state of mind to appreciate what was presented. The palaces of the Emirs of Gombe, Funakaye, Dukku and Deba, as well the palaces of the Bala Waja in Balanga, Mai Tangle and Mai Kaltungo, all rivaled each other in majestic splendour. Both ancient and modern in outlook, most of the palaces were traditional architectural designs created with modern materials.

Another concession to modernity is the two rows of upholstered seats reserved for visitors within every Emir's reception room. In the past, all and sundry were expected to sit on the floor before the Emir or King.

Indigenes however still take their place on the floor whenever their Sovereign is seated on the throne. Floors are covered with beautifully designed persian rugs, tiles and marbles, depending on the individual's taste.

The palace of the Emir of Gombe is particularly grand, painted all white with an expansive reception area. Relics of the past are used as adornment for walls and floors. This means that while being comfortably seated, it is never far from a visitor's consciousness that a traditional ruler is in residence. However, the palace of HRH Alhaji Abdulkadir Haruna El-Rasheed, Emir of Dukku happens to be the most traditional in outlook. This is informed by the fact that Dukku is the oldest emirate in Gombe State.



**HRH. Alh. Abdulkadir Haruna El-Rasheed
Emir of Dukku**

The present Emir of Dukku can easily trace his ancestry back to Buba Yero, a flag bearer of Usman Dan Fodio, who settled in Dukku in the late 16th century. From its entrance to the inner court and grounds and onward to the reception area, the palace is just as it must have been centuries back besides the addition of modern furniture.

The palace of HRH Engr. Sale Mohammed, Mai Kaltungo is so modern that one may be in danger of forgetting the traditional aspect.



An ultramodern throne, overset by a huge painting of Kilang hill, a major tourist attraction of the area, tells a story of modernity that words cannot describe. Teak, marble, expensive chandeliers and electronic gadgets say it all.



HRH. Engr. Sale Mohammed Mai Kaltungo

The team was treated to a video show of Kaltungo's most popular festivals such as sharo. Video tapes of some music and dances were presented by the royal father to the team. This would aid the development of the Gombe State web pages on the NACD website.



Kaltungo Dancers

PALACE JESTERS/ PRAISE SINGERS



Musicians performing at the Palace of the Emir of Dukku

The art of palace jesting (praise – singing) is an ancient one traceable to some of the oldest and most powerful kingdoms in pre-colonial Nigeria. Most emirates in Gombe State incidentally have retained this culture, which has actually become endangered in most other cultures. Palace jesters are found in every Emir's palace in Gombe State. Consisting of both old and young men, they manage to find a place around the Emir's court to practice their art.

They are most evident during important occasions, seeming neither afraid of the Emir nor his guards. Shouting encouragement to speakers, dishing out free counsel and chanting praises of important personalities is about the sum of their activity. The high level of noise, which they generate, is accepted as all part of the fun, attracting laughter and sometimes



tokens of appreciation in forms of monetary rewards. With this incentive, the custom of court jesting is hardly expected to die in Gombe any time soon.

ROYAL FATHERS



**HRH. Alh. Muhammed Danjuma Muhammed
Bala Waja**



**HRH. Dr. Abdu Buba Mai Sheru II (OON)
Mai Tangle**

It is a well known fact that traditional institutions in northern Nigeria enjoy a well established political administrative structure with which, they governed their subjects right from earliest days.

This system was integrated and accepted as a God-given mandate of the ruler. The traditional institution has occupied an all-powerful position in the lives of the masses for as long as they can remember. With the advent of democracy, this power has hardly diminished. It became a case of two complementing power blocks working together in the interest of the people, without necessarily encroaching into the other's jurisdiction. Whereas the turbaning of an Emir is the prerogative of the State's Executive Governor, the same Governor must, as a matter of courtesy, call on the same Emir whenever he is within that Emirate.

Just like the indirect rule system adopted by Lord Lugard in 1900s, government reaches the people through their Emirs / Kings, who have the necessary machinery to implement government edicts at the grass-root level. The NACD Project team's courtesy call on the Mai Kaltungo, for instance, was led by the Kaltungo Local Government Chairman, Hon. Shehu Kanar. At the palace, the Chairman handed the team over to the Mai and took his place on the floor among Palace Chiefs, District and Clan heads.

To a visitor from Eastern Nigeria for instance, such reverence to any institution will appear strange. From then onwards, the Mai held sway, directing events without interference. This formed the mode of every other courtesy call on Traditional Rulers carried by the NACD Project team.



**HRH. Lt.Col. Abubakir Waziri Mahdi (Rtd)
Emir of Deba**



THE PEOPLE AND HOSPITALITY

The people of Gombe State possess a legendary spirit of hospitality. From the moment of arrival at the premises of the Ministry of Sports and Culture, the NACD Project team was received by the Director of Culture and thenceforth, made to feel at home. Every Local Government Secretariat or Palace visited was characterized by a sumptuous feast for guests.



A local delicacy, 'Masa'

An omission of this aspect is seen not to bode well for any host. Local cuisines such as *masa* (a rice cake delicacy), *fura da nono* (a milk and millet drink), grilled beef (*suya*), and *kilishi*- the dried variety are served along with fried chicken, potato chips, rice and tomato stew to satisfy everyone's choice and taste. As the saying goes, "It is the mind of the giver that gives value to the Gift". From the people's expressions, eagerness and solicitousness, the message is clearly sent – "You are very welcome to our Land". Simply put, they are a people anxious to please their visitors.

This leaves the tourist with fond memories and the desire to return.

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Mairiga dance group of Balanga



Praise singers in Dukku

It is an endearing quality inherent even among the most eminent and learned sons of Gombe; a lesson in African traditional values for every tribe and language. The Gombe people have been very wise in recognizing what is important, preserving their valued ancestral heritage in order to ensure a better future for generations to come, while at the same time, imbibing as much modern and western trends as will be beneficial for their growth and development.



BINEZ HOTEL
ABA



Jewel in the Savannah



Traditional horn blower, Balanga

The emergence of a Traditional Ruler from his palace elicits a cacophony of noise in forms of drumming, chanting, loud trumpeting and shouts of praise extolling the achievements of his forebears. His appearance leaves no one in doubt about who he is. Walking under a large canopy borne by guards, he is both accompanied and surrounded by a retinue of Chiefs, District Heads, Aides and Guards. People are shepherded out of his way, as no one is considered his equal, no matter how highly placed. The Emir takes his seat and everyone else prostrates, bows or kneels before taking his or her place. In the case of visiting dignitaries however, exceptions are made in the observance of this tradition.



Bitbit dance group Billiri



Palace chiefs in Dukku



Drummers welcoming the Emir into his palace in Dukku



Royal musicians in Deba



MUSIC AND DANCES



Fulani love dance

For the first time in a Research and Documentation exercise, the NACD Project team was privileged to record first-hand, the original version of the Fulani Love Dance as performed by Fulanis of Gombe. The setting was a savannah landscape, complete with cattle in pasture so that the essence of this dance will be better appreciated. It depicts the simplicity and contentment of life among migrating Fulani tribes, who in their isolation from the rest of the world, find love and happiness in the wilds.

The next most popular type of music to be found in the State is the Royal Dance. This is obtainable only in palaces of traditional rulers, where its performers are always present. They play the *gangakura* and *alligator* music usually for welcoming the Emir's visitors. With large drums and long trumpets, they play tunes that welcome, usher as well as praise eminent personalities.

Gombe State is multi-tribal and some of its Emirates / Chiefdoms consist of as many as six of these tribes. Welcoming visitors therefore, involved cultural dance performances from all its component tribes. This forms the bedrock of tourism in such areas - Dukku is an example of such an emirate.



'Jealous Housewives' dance Kaltungo



Royal dance Deba Emirate

At the palace of Mai Tangle in Billiri Local Government, a cultural group exists, which specializes in composition of epic songs based on the people's history and their past. They recall great achievements of the Mai and his predecessors to the throne of Tangle and remind the people of the need to follow in their footsteps, shunning vices and disgraceful behavior. Their performance sends the people wild with joy and pride in their land of birth. A tourist in Tangle would benefit from this display and come to understand the native people better.





ARTS AND CRAFT



Calabash carving

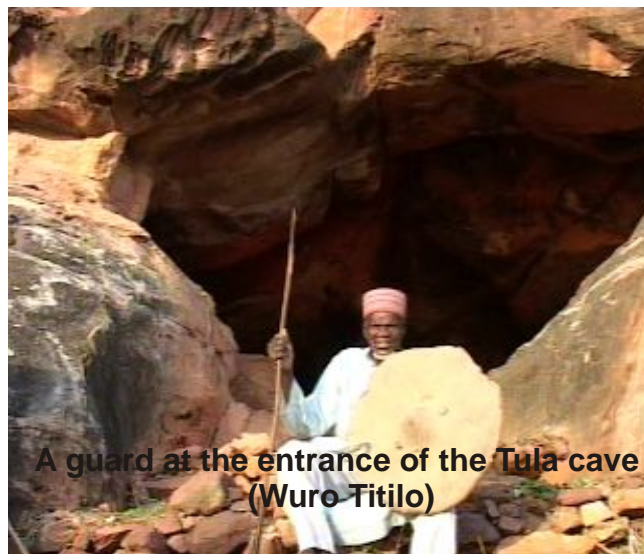
In Gombe State, there is an organized and thriving arts and crafts industry. Within the Gombe Main Market, a tourist has access to different locally crafted beautiful works of art for both household and commercial use or as souvenirs. They include decorated calabash crafts, woodcarvings, mat weaving, leather works, pottery, metal crafts, aluminum and cane crafts. The calabash craft especially is an old cultural heritage of the people. Time and experience has perfected this craft and the result is evident in some of the most beautifully decorated products to be seen anywhere.

Practitioners of each craft are located in a particular section of the market, enabling easy location by customers. Visitors are faced with so many delightful choices that a whole day spent exploring its wonders would not be a wasted one. These souvenirs serve the purpose of reminding tourists of good times spent in far distant lands. Again, they are strong marketing tools for the sector wherever they are found in the world.

TOURISM ENDOWMENTS

Being in Nigeria's Sudan Savannah region, Gombe State is characterized by mountain ranges, rocks and hills. It is to these high lands that the tourist is usually taken since according to history, the people's past is invariably tied to them. Most modern towns in the State are located at the foot of one hill or the other. The people having lived atop these hills in the past only vacating them at the coming of Europeans.

In Billiri Local Government Area, the Tangle old settlement atop Dutsen Mamaki at Kufai is a must-see for every visitor and the people of Tangle usually make sure of this. According to them, there is no past besides this rock. The stone foundations of former compounds can be seen still in their places.



A guard at the entrance of the Tula cave (Wuro Titilo)

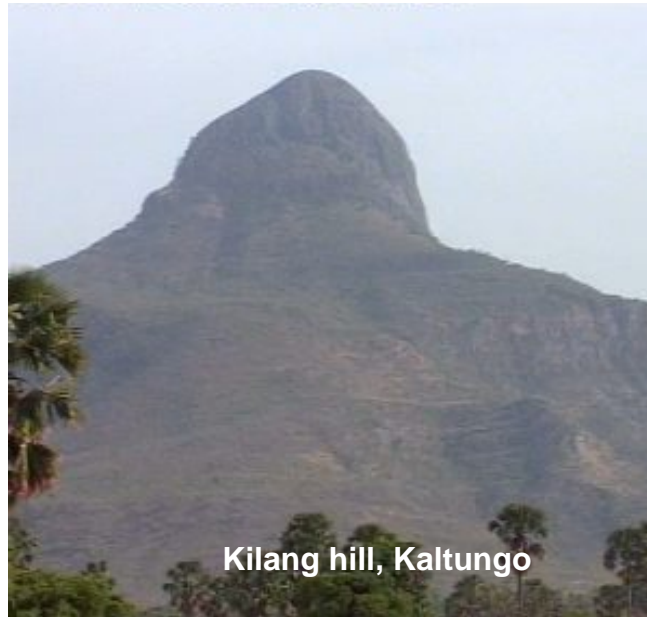
Grinding stones, grave stones, shrines and granaries show that a major civilization had existed up there. The village square of Tanglang clan can be seen just as it was back then, with stone seats arranged in circular formation under shady trees, enabling relaxation and peaceful deliberations on meeting days.

Kalam hill, the ancestral home of the Dukku people is another historically significant site,



so are Bage Hills of Funakaye, Kilang Hill in Kaltungo and Binga Hills of Pindiga in Akko Local Government Area. These along with the tombs of great leaders, ancient mosques and many dams form the bulk of the State's tourism potentials.

One vital aspect of this viable sector has been relegated to the background. Made up of about 70% savannah grasslands, the people of Gombe are blessed with an endowment not often recognized as such. As mentioned earlier, from one border to the other, Gombe State is surrounded by the beautiful savannah. The tourist may stand gazing for hours, simply taking in the beauty.



Kilang hill, Kaltungo



Geometric rock formations atop Dutsen Mamaki

The sight of grazing livestock and little shepherd boys, milk maids and cattle rearers, tiny settlements amidst shrubs is an uncommon one to a nature-loving tourist. Peace and quiet would be the only necessary companions as picnicking and camping assume a new and more interesting dimension, giving the imagination a wide range of scope.

It is quite understandable that this significant aspect of the State's tourism

industry is taken for granted. It is natural to overlook what is always there especially when no effort was put into its creation; consider the Dutsen Mamaki (Mystery Rock), for instance, with its arrangement of hundreds of stones cut in various geometrical shapes and piled up in the most orderly of manners overlooking the Kufai settlement. To the Gombe people, the savannah is a part of their everyday lives - In every direction one looks; it is the first thing the eye encounters. Miles upon miles of beauty no longer make any impression on the natives. The NACD Project, which has a mandate to discover the hidden treasures of the art, culture and tourism sector is therefore partnering with the government and people of Gombe State to bring this aspect of their tourism to the fore. To any tourist with the intention of visiting Gombe State at any time in the future, the Project advises that a whole week be set aside just for exploring the savannah, which houses the jewel. In this case therefore, the savannah is just as interesting as the jewel it accommodates.





Mbido Igbo traditional rulers with the NACD Project Director, Prince Chinedu Obi

MBIDO IGBO TRADITIONAL RULERS VISIT NACD PROJECT

As an organization with the mandate of promoting cultural unity among the Igbo people and harnessing their numerous cultural heritage, the Mbido Igbo Cultural Association has been tireless in its efforts to see this vision come to fruition. You may recall that, between June 18 and June 22, 2007, the NACD Project was in Anambra State on a one-week research and documentation at the instance of the Mbido Igbo Cultural Association. The association, which was still at its early stages of formation at the time already, had a focus and a vision that informed its partnership with the NACD Project.

Led by its founder, His Royal Majesty, Igwe (Dr.) Martin N. Eze, Idu II of Igbo-Ukwu, the association's executive and board of trustees paid a courtesy visit on the Project Director and management of the NACD Project at its secretariat office at Block C, Federal Secretariat, phase II, Abuja. The purpose then was to initiate a strategic partnership in order to realize a common goal.

Thereafter, the association during its maiden *Iwa Ji Ndi Igbo* festival in August of the same year honoured the National Coordinator of NACD Project and Director-General of the National Gallery of Art, Chief Joe Musa, with the chieftaincy title of '*Nka Nwere Ugwu 1 of Igbo Land*'. The programmes carried out by the association last year were numerous and ambitious. That they succeeded was due to the doggedness of spirit characterizing its founding members. With purpose and persistence, they have been able to attain unexpected heights in so short a period. By inviting the Project on a five-day working visit to Anambra State, the association's contribution to that state's culture and tourism development cannot be over-emphasized.

The year 2007 has come and gone but the association is not resting on its oars. In the early months of 2008, it embarked on an expansion programme meant to co-opt other member states into the association as its original plan implied. Whereas founding members were mainly from towns within the vicinity of Aguata Local Government Area, they now cut across the five states of the south-east zone. Igbo-Ukwu being the



NACD Project Director addressing Mbido Igbo delegates

acknowledged land of birth of the Igbo race, it was therefore befitting that such a unifying body should emanate from there. It was in furtherance of this goal therefore, that on Tuesday, March 4, 2008, the Mbido-Igbo Association had cause to; once again visit the NACD Project secretariat. Their mission this time around was to give the Project Director an update of previous activities of the association and the arrangements already put in place for the take-off of the year's activities.

Others on the team were:

1. HRH Eze Boniface Unogu – Isi Igbo of Owerre Nkworji – Imo State
2. HRH Igwe (Dr.) Christopher Nnamani – Eze Udo of Likke Iheaka, Igbo Eze South LGA of Enugu State.
3. HRH Igwe Hon. (Dr.) Emma Ukwueze – Agunabo of Ununya Ovoko, Igbiri Izzi Iga of Ebonyi State.
4. Mazi Okafouzu Ugochukwu – Chairman, Mbido Igbo Cultural Association
5. Mr. Sunday Okeke – Secretary, Mbido Igbo Board of Trustees
6. Mrs. A. A. Eze Director of Culture, Anambra State

After protocol was observed including introductions, opening prayer, breaking and blessing of kolanuts in line with the Igbo tradition, the visiting team presented a comprehensive programme of this year's *Iwa Ji Ndi Igbo* festival and Video CD of the maiden edition. If last year's programme passed for the ambitious, then this year's line-up is nothing short of monumental, as it aims to give the annual event an International outlook beginning this August.

A period of six days from August 25 to 31, promises a chain of events more colourful and spectacular than ever before - the first day set aside for the arrival of guests and dignitaries. The arrivals of any important personality will be announced by festival criers (traditional town criers) prior to their entrance into the venue.

Day 2 is slated for the harvest and display of different varieties yams of grown in the eastern part of the country. Later the same day will see masquerade and cultural displays from the entire Igbo Land while lectures and a barbeque will take up the night hours.

On the third day, there would be a "making





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of a yam barn” event of art, displaying the technological shrewdness of the Igbo race. Also on the same day, the art of assembling an *Ite Ike* (a traditional palm-wine container), will be showcased by local artisans.

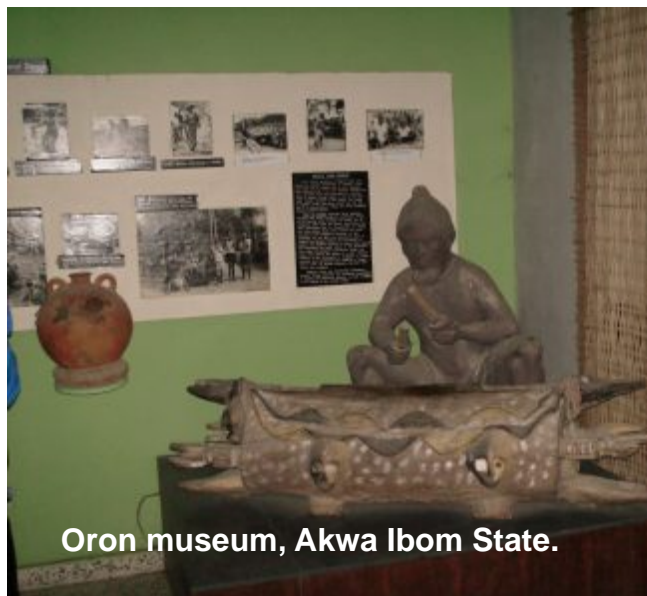
Day 4 would begin with a traditional wrestling contest to determine the strongest Igbo man of the year, and end with another contest for the best palm wine tapper of the year. Tappers will gather to pour palm wine into the *Ite Ike* while tasters apportion marks or good wine content.

Day 5 would be for the Miss Igbo Land beauty contest, where the Idu II of Igbo-Ukwu shall crown the winner ‘*Agbomma*’ – queen of the kingdom. Other events of the week-long programme would include a gala night and the launching of the Igbo Cultural Heritage Foundation.

The sixth and final day would be the new yam festival (*Iwa Ji Ndi Igbo*) proper. The activities of this all-encompassing day would include cultural displays, dances, roasting and eating of new yam, conferment of chieftaincy titles on eminent citizens, etc. It is a culminating event that usually takes up a whole day. This marks the end of the week-long programme as guests from nearby towns start taking their leaves immediately. Others choose to spend the night and leave the next day, fulfilled and content. Anyone who has ever attended an ‘*Iwa Ji Ndi Igbo*’ in Igbo-Ukwu will certainly go home with the desire to return. This is a plus for the Mbido Igbo Association, whose mission is to make this particular event a comprehensive one. It is a matter of time before it becomes the melting pot for tourists across the globe, in line with the conception of the founding fathers.

THE INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY 2008 - WHICH WAY NIGERIA?

May 18, marked this year’s International Museum Day (IMD). The importance of a museum can be gleaned from the motto of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), which says, “Museums are an important means of cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures and development of mutual understanding, cooperation and peace among people”. The observance was launched in 1977 by ICOM, which recommended that the celebration be held on or around May 18 annually. ICOM conceived IMD to create an opportunity for museum workers to face the public, publicize their work, as well as draw public attention to problems museums face. It is a long time since ICOM kicked off this observance, 31 years down the lane today.



Oron museum, Akwa Ibom State.

MUSEUM AND TOURISM

Admission to some museums is free, whereas the visitor must pay a charge at others. Whatever the case, it must be noted that whether or not there is a charge to view a museum’s collection, every repository contributes immensely to the economic activities in its host community. Since most



museums draw visitors from far-flung places, many tourists end up spending a night or two in the host community where they rely on local hotels, bars, restaurants, laundry, etc. Evidently, the role of a museum in the local tourism industry can hardly be over-emphasized.

In the developed world, museum workers and enthusiasts can afford to celebrate, but in Nigeria, IMD 2008 is likely to send many into seclusion for deep introspection. This year marks the 65th year of the establishment of the National Council of Museums and Monuments (NCMM). Unfortunately, five years to its 70th anniversary, the commission, which began as Nigeria Antiquities Service in 1943, has been embroiled in one crisis after the other. In order to forge a lasting solution to the problems plaguing the commission, Culture

and Tourism Minister, Prince Adetokunbo Kayode SAN had intervened by raising various panels of enquiry to finally, unravel the causes of the numerous drawbacks bogging that institution.

CULLED FROM SUNDAY SUN OF MAY 18, 2008.

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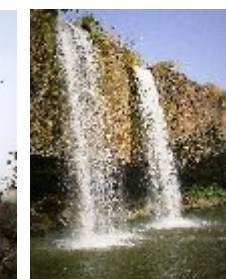
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