

NIGERIAN HERITAGE:



Journal of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments

VOLUME 17 & 18, 2008/2009



Published Annually by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments



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**NIGERIAN HERITAGE
JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR MUSEUMS AND MONUMENTS
VOL. 17 AND 18, 2008/2009**

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THE MEDIA, CULTURAL PROMOTION AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

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Introduction

Culture is a priceless asset of any group of people belonging to a particular society (Tsado 2006). In spite of its value, a lot still need to be done in order to maintain and preserve it especially in developing countries in this era of cultural encroachment engendered by globalization. Scholars and stakeholders have been making case for the rate at which our culture has been fading away and the need for the promotion and propagation of our cultural heritage to avert extinction (Shoremi and Oyeneye 1985). Stressing on this malady, Shoremi and Oyeneye (1985) noted that:

....discussion in public forums, conferences, symposia, and indeed, some technical reports and contributions to academic journals have tended to focus on the need for a cultural revival in Nigeria. Much of this discussion derives from the need for Nigeria to be truly self-reliant. The core of the discussion is that Nigeria should go back to its cultural past, take a critical look at the existing cultural forms, resuscitate, adapt, and utilize them for the attainment of its development objectives.

Cultural revival is a necessity in view of the assessment of present status of Nigeria's culture which Shoremi and Oyeneye (1985). The observation was that western cultures are readily acceptable to many Nigerian with sheer neglect of indigenous cultures, especially among the urban and cities based educated elites. This according to Shoremi and Oyeneye (1995) has led to the alienation of a group of Nigerians, especially the educated elites and youths who have no full cultural identification with their motherland; and technological dependence. Necessity of reversing this trend through revival of cultural heritage has been emphasized for the country to be self reliant. The use of mass media (such as radio, television, newspapers, and films) is seen as the best way out. The media will foster proper understanding of the past and the adaptation of old cultural forms for use in the contemporary situation.

The realization of the significance of culture in human consciousness and social integration has prompted individuals and groups in the country to embark on various strategies to revive the dying culture in the country. The need for cultural revival in Africa particularly among the Yorubas in Southwest Nigeria took many dimensions. Very prominent amongst the channels for cultural revival and promotion is the use of mass media; the choice of which could be likened to its comparative advantage, which MAMSER (1987) noted as providing widest and the fastest means of informing and enlightening the people. The electronic arm (Radio and Television) of mass media thus become veritable tools in this regard. The services of electronic media (Radio and Television) have been fully exploited in this regard most especially in the last one decade

with liberalization of information sector which gave rise to private ownership of electronic media; encouraged freelance broadcasters as well as improvement in talents and innovation in broadcasting. Cultural promotion comes in form of Music, Drama, debates and discussion on burning national issues in local vernacular, reminiscence of past customs and tradition (especially the exploits of traditional hunters) etc.

In the course of this work consideration is being given to hunting expeditions among Yoruba as being currently showcased by two media stations in Oyo State, Nigeria. The first programmed is called Ode Akoni (The Great Hunter) on Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) Radio Service and Ode Tedo (Hunter's Settlement) on Television service of BCOS. The bone of contention here is that the need for cultural revival, promotion and preservation is a necessity that must be given utmost consideration. At the same time, there is need to ensure that such practice do not impinge on the wellbeing and survival of the generality. It is within this ambit that this study is trying to embark on academic critique of the two programmes, and their implication on biodiversity and its conservation.

The area of concern of this study is the place of conservation of biodiversity especially the fauna aspect of wildlife while promoting the exploits of indigenous hunters on these media. The issues under focus include the effects of biodiversity depletion on the entire populace; the concerns of cultural promotion/revival through mass media on biodiversity; and effects of the programmes under focus on biodiversity depletion. The followings are the posers being raised to help give this work a focus: has the issue of biodiversity depletion been taken into cognizance by presenters and the producers alike? Is non-consideration of biodiversity protection/conservation in promotion of culture not going to encourage unregulated consumption of wildlife resources? What are the likely effects of unregulated consumption of wildlife resources? Is there no way by which culture could be promoted and at the same time help protect the biodiversity from unregulated consumption?

Biodiversity and the Need for its Conservation

The concept of Biodiversity refers to the total variety of living organisms (plants, animals and micro-organisms) their general materials and the ecosystem of which they are part (Adegbola and Onadeko (1998). To Okojie (1997), it is the totality of genes, species and ecosystems in a region. It includes all living organisms individually and their relationship with one another. To Conservation International (2006a), biodiversity is our living natural heritage, our natural resource base. Its importance is profound and far-reaching; from the inherent value of Earth's species in their natural habitats, to the medicinal, nutritional and economic benefits provided by individual species, to the invaluable role of ecosystems in controlling erosion, cleansing the air and water, storing carbon, enriching soil and pollinating crops.

Plant and animal species are disappearing from the earth at an alarming rate and many scientists believe that human activity is largely responsible. As the world's human population increased over the years, the obvious impact and its negative influence on the genetic resources of the earth had continued to loom large (Adekegbejo-Samsons, 1998). The quest by man for material comfort in the use of raw materials for diverse economic, industrial and technological advancement has exerted pressure on the use of natural resources globally. Through uncontrolled exploitation of wildlife resources with its attendant environmental degradation, many species have been depleted to be either threatened or endangered. This appalling situation has therefore necessitated the application of certain strategies to address the loss of biodiversity through the establishment of protected areas particularly in developing countries (GEF 2008).

The objectives include using protected areas to safeguard the endangered and

vulnerable natural resources and enhance sustainable management of natural resources by the present generation and to support their availability in the generation to come. Other benefits of environmental conservation through protected areas include:

- i) Minimizing the risk to the environment in view of the fact that plants, animals and natural communities represent the diversity of life on earth hence the protection of the lands and water for their survival through rational use of the earth's resources. For better understanding of the interaction between nature and humanity.
- ii) Appreciation of one another also becomes possible through this in such a way that no party will be at loss.
- iii) Environment that is conserved will be more attractive for tourist patronage thereby ensuring source of income generation for further development of tourism industry.
- iv) When tourism industry is further developed through this, sustenance of man equally becomes possible in view of the benefits (employment opportunities for the individuals within the system and general development of the host communities) obtainable from it.
- v) To promote game viewing, sports fishing, hunting and photographic safaris for foreign exchange earning.
- vi) To ensure preservation of natural heritage, ecological diversity and stability through preservation of gene pool and maintenance of continuity of gene pool.

A number of international treaties, protocols and conventions came up in consonance with global concerns for conservation of nature and natural resources. Some of these are:

- The 1972 convention for protection of world cultural and natural heritage in Paris.
- The 1973 convention on international trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna (CITES) in Washington and
- 1992 - Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro where a convention on Biodiversity was signed as part of UN's agenda 21. A total number of 153 countries including Nigeria were signatories to this convention (Jayeola and Osaguona, nd).

Methodology

Sampling method, Instruments and the study Population: This work adopted the qualitative method of data gathering. This method involved the use of combination of telephone survey and in-depth interview on 21 key informants selected from three Local Government areas of Oyo State, namely Akinyele, Ibadan North and Ido; content analysis of the programmes under focus and the use of secondary source of data collection (existing literatures). The key informants were picked through snowball method, which involved identifying someone who meets the criteria for inclusion in the study and subsequently interviewed; the person is then asked to recommend others who also meet the criteria. Through these steps, the required number of study population shall be met. The key informants were engaged in order to understand certain areas of the study for meaningful results and to give credence to such results. Telephone survey method was resorted to due to continual absence of the identified key informants.

The breakdown of the Key informants includes 4 hunters; 5 traders; 4 experts in environmental conservation; 4 members of Freelance and Independent Broadcasters

Association of Nigeria (FIBAN), 4 academics from communication related departments of University of Ibadan and The Polytechnic, Ibadan. Gender distribution of the respondents revealed that the study population who were traders was made up of female folks, while 3 members of academic were equally female.

Method of Data analysis: Data collected through In-depth interviews were analyzed through the use of Open Code computer software.

Cultural Promotion on Mass Media: The Case of Ode Akoni and Ode Tedo

These two programmes are peculiar to both radio and television services of Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS). *Ode Akoni* being presented by a freelance broadcaster has been on for a couple of years, but monitoring of the programme for academic analysis of this nature started in June 2003 to August 2006. At the initial stage when the programme was introduced, it was being aired between 9pm till 10pm on radio service of BCOS on Sundays, but has now been extended to 12 midnight. The monitoring of *Ode Tedo* (A 8.00pm to 8.30pm Television broadcasts on Thursdays) could not go beyond a period of six months because of poor power (electricity) supply in Ibadan. For this reason, monitoring of *Ode Tedo* only took place within the period of November 2005 to April 2006. Efforts were made for occasional monitoring of *Ode Akoni* in order to document any innovation particularly those relating to biodiversity conservation information. The presenter of *Ode Tedo* is a serving Civil Servant.

Ode Akoni as a cultural promotion effort focuses on presenting the dexterities of Yoruba traditional hunters. It showcases the activities of these hunters when they are in the thick forests. It shows their enduring capability when they were faced with difficulties particularly in their encounters of confronting dangerous animals like Leopard, Tigers, Lions etc vis-à-vis the use of locally made rifles that are not as sophisticated as those of western worlds.

In most case, the programme usually starts with Yoruba oratory utterances, discussions on various animals in the wild, issues pertaining to dangers being faced by hunters with occasional jokes and humours to perk up the programme, deter people from dosing off and to keep them glued to their radio sets. The most important aspect of the programme is the personality interview segment, where a prominent hunter within the society is interviewed on his experiences and prowess as a hunter. In some instances, the personality may be a retired powerful hunter or those that are still active in the trade. The interviews may cover issues like:

- age of the personality,
- the number of wife or wives,
- number of children,
- years of experience in game hunting,
- his contemporaries in the trade
- the whereabouts of such contemporaries (whether dead or alive)
- the most Herculean tasks
- The unforgettable outings
- Coping mechanisms adopted to weather the problems encountered during uch bad outing(s).
- Elements of injuries or deformities during such outing(s)

- The types and magnitude of wildlife harvests
- The distribution of such harvests
- Information on desire to Hand over of hunting legacy to the offspring/descendants

At the close of such interview is the expression of appreciation for the kind gestures of the personality to turn up for the programme. The presenter usually used such occasion to appreciate the sponsors of the programme. For the personality that comes from outside Ibadan city, a sponsor (one hotel industry) within Ibadan city usually take care of that through a stand-by room provided for such visitors every week.

Ode Tedo: This is visual representation of what is obtainable on the radio service of BCOS. The difference here is the manner of presentation. The presenter here (as said earlier) is a serving Civil Servant working with BCOS, Ibadan, unlike the presenter of Ode Akoni who is a hunter by lineage and also versed in hunters genre. He tried as much as possible to imitate the hunters during this programme; design his costumes in typical hunters style, though always in Ankara fabric.

Another thing here is that hunters are usually gathered together to sing, dance and present their hunters' lyric. Occasionally, efforts are usually made to get across to these hunters in their camps. When this is the case, the activities relating to dressing of the animals killed will be shown. The when and how the animals were killed are not always part of the show. It is also common to see some women (trading in bushmeat) on the screen either bargaining on the prices for these animals or whatever. At times, the previous programme may be repeated or visitation to the camp may not take place, but efforts are always being made to see visual presentations of previous camp activities for the audience relish. In Ode Tedo hunters are usually interviewed in group and common issue here the inclusion of young generations among the group of hunters taking part in the programme.

Ode Akoni and Ode Tedo: the People and Other Issues **Respondents' Awareness of the Programmes**

All the respondents are aware of these programmes. They have on several occasions, listened or viewed the two programmes. Only the experts on environmental conservation and the hunters have been consistent in listening to one of these programmes (Ode Akoni). The remaining could be classified as occasional or circumstantial listeners who only listen to the programme by chance not by intention. Whatever the case, the most important issue here is that these respondents are aware of the programmes under discussion. Erratic power supply was also cited as basic reason that prevented them from being consistent to Ode Tedo programme on BCOS television service.

General Public's Awareness of the Programmes and other side Attractions: The programmes particularly the Ode Akoni is becoming popular among the people in Ibadan. Common phrase that comes in form of question and simultaneous answer from the presenter is Se'e sun; orun we e in Yoruba language meaning Are you sleeping; not at all. It is the usual practice of the presenter to chip this phrase in a humorous way to jerk people from sleeping and at the same time amuses the audience. The members of the public have turned this into regular anthem by Se'e sun, orun we e to amuse one another. The implication of this is that people are aware of the programme and directly or indirectly helping the presenter spread the tentacle of such information. The point here is that anybody hearing this for the first is likely to ask for the meaning of the phrase thereby developing interest in knowing more about the programme. Through this the population of audience is likely to increase on weekly basis.

Much could not be said about the extent or magnitude of viewers of Ode Tedo, however some key informants who are members of FIBAN threw more light on this, they revealed that the erratic power supply from Power Holding Company Nigeria Plc contributed immensely to low patronage of all Television programmes. They equally submitted that people have developed a flair for Home Video rather than wasting their times on regular programmes on the television set. A respondent within this group revealed further that:

People prefer buying fuel for their generating sets to watch their home video to using the same to watch programme on television. This is what affected Ode Tedo as programme. Unlike radio that is very compatible with affordable price of battery. Even people listening to radio are very selective in their choice of programmes. The existence of FIBAN members who are daily innovating programmes of interest for general consumption is the saving grace the electronic media enjoys today.

Another member said:

If you ask people about the time Ode Akoni comes up on Radio and the Station on which it is being aired, more than 5 out of 10 people are likely to give you the correct answers, but the same could not be said of Ode Tedo, many including myself could not even say exactly whether the programme is still on now. The last thing I heard about this programme is that the anchor and the presenter has been given political appointment by the state government. Another friend of mine said the programme has been rested.

Yoruba Oratory in its Natural Forms and Knowledge about Traditional Hunting Expeditions

It is undisputable that the presenters of the two programmes are versatile in Yoruba language and its usage. The respondents in this study all affirmed this fact. To a cross section of these respondents, the programmes, to those who care to listen to them, have a lot of benefit in terms of rich cultural heritage in Yoruba language.

Another benefit derived from these programmes is knowledge about traditional hunting expeditions. The intricacies involved in hunting in traditional ways are usually explained while the programme lasts on radio. Television service on its own gives room for visual demonstration of activities. Along with this is the display of the implements involved in the expedition for the viewers at home to see. Both the radio and television programmes (on hunters exploits as step towards cultural promotion among the Yorubas in southwest Nigeria) intimate people with hardship being faced by hunters in the course of their chosen endeavours in the jungles.

Information on the relevance of the efforts of the initiators and presenters of the programmes on the use of electronic media as tools for cultural revival and promotion among the Yorubas of Southwest Nigeria was generated from the Key informants. To get the fact the respondents were asked to rate the programmes and give further comments on them. The results from this revealed some respondents rating the programmes as good and timely (4 entries). In the view of another group of respondents, the efforts towards cultural revival and promotion are commendable (5 responses); to another set of respondents it is a good start for others to build upon (3 entries). Others added that the programmes have added creativity to broadcasting and cultural revival (6 entries), while the remaining said

the programmes are excellent but only need a little innovation (3 entries). The comment of a respondent here revealed that:

The programmes are excellent but only need to carry the youth who are leaders of tomorrow along through little innovation on what will catch their attention. This is mandatory since the youths are the leaders of tomorrow and they should know much about Yoruba culture and what goes with it for posterity sake.

Talking about innovation in broadcasting, a respondent who is an academic revealed that:

It is sure that we have bundle of talents in this country particularly among Yoruba stock. The broad of programmes under focus are very unique. The only one that could be linked with this is the segment introduced into Iri Aye by late Kolawole Olawuyi on Radio Nigeria Ibadan in the early 90s. Since then, there has not been any of such until the ones on BCOS were introduced.

In the opinion of another respondent, the relevance of media in revival and promotion of culture was stressed further:

People might be thinking that these efforts are not working, but whether we like it or not the message is being passed. The media has ability to enforce what is known as mental coercion. Mental faculty of the people is in one way or the other being encroached upon by the media. Though they won't realize this until later in the day when what the brain had stored is/are being relieved in the consciousness of the individuals; from that point such individual may reminisce over this, and decide on whether to reject the information or act on it/them.

Effects of these Cultural Promoting Programmes on Biodiversity Conservation

One cannot help but commend the efforts of the initiators and presenters of the two hunting expedition programmes on the radio and television services of Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State. But from the scrutiny of the programmes and within the period when these programmes were put under observation, *there was no time when the issue of conservation of biodiversity of which wildlife species is of importance was given consideration.* In all the episodes of the two programmes the hunters being interviewed always relish on their exploits; there was nothing to show that these personalities know the implication of their exploits which is the degradation of wildlife resources. Meanwhile attempt to continue in this practice is likely to lead to biodiversity depletion which has environmental and ecological consequences particularly the fact that man depends on biodiversity for fuel, food, medicine, amenity value and raw materials. The foregoing benefits according to Adeyemo (1995) are the basic determinants of the structure and function of all ecosystems and provide the foundation on which the future well being of the human society rests. They also help in regulating the earth's atmospheric, climatic, hydrological and biogeochemical cycles.

The Concerns of Cultural Promotion/Revival through Mass Media on Biodiversity

The fear of this work is that if the cultural revival through these programmes on electronic media should continue unabated without any segment taking into cognizance the issue of biodiversity conservation it may encourage people to engage in unregulated consumption of wildlife resources. This may automatically lead to higher demand for

wildlife resources (especially bush-meat). Increase in demand for this means the price to the products will go up thereby encouraging many people to diversify into wildlife trade. Asserting the implication of this, Onadeko and Meduna (1984) are of the view that the demand for bush-meat by all at food restaurants goes a long way to foster the illegal bushmeat trade. Within this backdrop Onadeko (2004) noted that commercial bushmeat trade constitutes a major and singular conservation crisis confronting the sustainability of almost all species of wildlife. This is coupled with another observation by Conservation International (CI) [2006b] that habitat loss and climate change are primary causes of species decline. CI (2006b) further noted public health implications of unregulated wildlife trade by tracing the recent epidemics such as avian influenza (bird flu), Ebola hemorrhagic fever and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) to wildlife-to-human contact.

In spite of this, nobody bothers to think along this line presently in view of Africans insatiable appetite for bushmeat. Onadeko (2004) noted that almost all species of wildlife are acceptable as a food resource in Africa, though some may be unacceptable or tabooed by some clans or tribes, the same species may be delicacies to another clan or tribe in another location. The grim picture of future prospects of wildlife survival was further painted by Onadeko (2004) through Jane Goodall Institutes (JGI) report (1999) that commercial bush-meat trade could lead to the loss of several species in 15 years time. Citing scholars like Muchaal and Ngandjul (1995) and Ntiemoa-Baidu (1997), Onadeko (2004) revealed further that a vast majority of communities in West and Central African sub-regions are involved in hunting; while approximately 50% of households earned their income from bush-meat sales in the Congo's forested area. In Cameroon, 95% of people in nearest towns are bush-meat hunters. For Ghana between 70 and 80%, Botswana is between 40 and 60% and in Zimbabwe, at least 60%. Using the case in Nigeria to illustrate further, Onadeko (2004) noted four main stakeholders that play immense role in this trade. These include hunters (comprised of local opportunists, specialist guilds, migrant commercial hunters and local professionals), loggers, traders/vendors and eventual consumers.

The experts in environmental conservation however noted that experience has revealed that most of the people involved in wildlife trade (either the poachers or the women hawkers of bush-meat) are mostly people who diversified into the venture due to the failure in their subsequent economic enterprise. This case is not being limited to poachers alone; another environmental conservation expert revealed heavy presence of this same set of people in logging business. It then means that with the present precarious economic situation in the country, more people are likely to diversify into environmental related business, what they need is just a little encouragement from a programme like the ones under focus.

With the above, it means the programmes under focus why having their genuine objectives of enabling people not to forget their roots, are indirectly encouraging people to destroy their environmental heritage. The implication of this is that loss of biodiversity impoverishes the world and humankind; reduces the quality of life for all people and may in fact be a survival issue for communities who depend directly upon healthy and productive natural lands to meet their daily needs (Conservation International, 2006a). In view of this there is need for demonstration of vital role the biodiversity plays in supporting human survival so that people will readily agree and support efforts to conserve it.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the Ode Akoni and Ode Tedo programmes for cultural revival and promotion are necessary for people to appreciate their cultural peculiarity for proper

exploit of the same for sustainable development. But at the same time, the programmes have environmental implications. They have tendency to lure people into unsustainable biodiversity exploitation. When this happens, the impact may be too severe for societal survival.

It was also noted that the presenters of the two programmes did not consider environmental implication of the programmed neither did the media stations that broadcasted the programmes for human consumption bother to consider this issue. In the light of this, it would be imprudent to ask for the discontinuation of these programmes because of their noble goals. At the same time, it will be unsafe to keep the programmes running without doing anything whether in form of innovation that will take the issue of conservation of biodiversity into cognizance or modification in another form. However, the following recommendations are being put forward as the contribution of this work towards salvaging our environment and at the same time engender Yoruba cultural heritage:

The presenters should be called upon on the need to incorporate conservation education into their programmes. If possible refresher course should be given to them to prepare them adequately for this challenge.

Incorporation of conservation education may take the form of a separate segment in each of these programmes or the presenters may be encouraged to be mixing the message on the need for environmental conservation (of which biodiversity is inclusive) and the implication of unregulated hunting and consumption of wildlife resources. This will enhance continuous promotion of Yoruba culture on these media and at the same time help protect the biodiversity from unregulated consumption.

Non-governmental organizations whose activities bothered on environment and biodiversity conservation should be encouraged to sponsor these programmes, and occasional invitation of the experts from such organization to educate people on the need to conserve our environment.

Exploring viable and sustainable wildlife harvesting alternatives with local communities to discourage illegal wildlife trading.

Provision of sustainable economic opportunities for communities in a way that conserves rather than depletes the natural resources of nearby protected areas is a central element for ensuring long term conservation. This is better than resorting to legal convictions of wildlife criminals.

Economic incentives have been noted as relevant tools for acquiring local supports in biodiversity conservation. Conservation International supported this with assertion that effective conservation of biodiversity requires strategies that make conservation economically viable and attractive to resource owners. Such incentives according to Conservation International (2006c) are fairly negotiated agreements in which resource owners promise to protect specific habits or species in exchange for a steady stream of concrete benefits. The types of benefits provided vary but may include technical assistance, support for social services, employment in resource protection, or direct cash payments. Adoption of incentives of these kinds will equally go a long way in fostering communities' supports for protection and conservation of biodiversity resource within their areas.

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