



National Commission for Museums and Monuments

National Museum, Ataoja's Palace, P.M.B.4376,
Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria

Department.....**Curator's office**

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The Director General,
Nigeria Governors' Forum,
1, Deng Xiaoping Street,
Opp. Imperial House,
Off AIT Junction,
Asokoro Extension,
Abuja.

RE: VISIT OF NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM

On behalf of the Management and entire staff of National Commission for Museums and Monuments Osogbo, I wish to express our profound gratitude to Nigeria Governors' Forum most especially the Director General for your official visit to Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove on **Thursday 2nd September, 2010**.

In addition, the National Commission for Museums and Monuments would like to remind the Director General as was discussed the need to close the median road bisecting the Grove. The need for action **now** cannot be over emphasized. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) before the declaration of the grove as a World Heritage Site in July year 2005 categorically rejected the existence of a median road passing through the sacred grove as it is at present.

Therefore, the solution Sir is the total closure and diversion of the road, so that the present road will become an exclusive use for the staff of the National Museum, Tourists, Osun devotees, users and visitors to the Sacred Grove.

We shall appreciate an immediate and appropriate effort on the subject matter, Sir.

Thanks for your anticipated full cooperation.

O. W. MAKINDE,
CURATOR/HERITAGE & SITE MANAGER,
NATIONAL MUSEUM OSOGBO.

Abstract

This presentation titled Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove; Challenges and the ways forward intends to discuss briefly the current management problems of this UNESCO World Heritage Site and various conservation efforts. It will also shed some lights on the probable solutions that could serve as ways forward for sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove is an organically evolved cultural landscape of 75 hectares of land with 47 metres buffer zone. The Sacred Grove is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, enlisted on 15th July, 2005 at Durban, South Africa. The Grove is the foundation of Osogbo Kingdom and origin of her Kingship since 1370AD. The Sacred Grove also harbours the repository of the fundamental values of both tangible and intangible heritage of Yoruba people, their art, religion and natural environment.

The Grove stands as a rare centre of traditional knowledge system and practices with significant socio-cultural obligation of worship and appreciation of OSUN and their deities in form of the well acclaimed Annual Osun Osogbo Festival (an International tourism destination in Nigeria). this rare example of fusion of culture, arts and nature is further projected in the beautiful masterpieces of sculptures, structures and shrines erected to honour, celebrate and propitiate all the deities by our celebrated mother SUZANNE WENGER through the SACRED ART MOVEMENT.

TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

Traditional Management was originally based on myth and belief system which has conferred status of sacredness on the grove as abode of OSUN and other Yoruba deities and so regarded as sacred forest and hallowed ground.

All the plants and animals were regarded as “totemic children” of OSUN and other deities hence the traditional sanctions of no fishing, hunting, felling of trees and other unwholesome activities.

Customary laws and traditional/religious sanctions were employed on erring offenders.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS OR CHALLENGES

In the early 50s, the grove was faced with the problems of desecration, looting, encroachment and destruction by religious fundamentalists and land speculators.

However, the privileged and timely intervention of Madame SUZANNE WENGER in conjunction with the indigenous artists saved the precarious situation. Through the organization of the SACRED ART MOVEMENT they embarked on creating giant sculptures and traditional monumental arts as inspired by Yoruba mythology and in consultation with the deities all over the grove. This had proved successfully to stop the encroachment into the grove and added values to the traditional practices attached to the deities.

In recent times, due to its current World Heritage status, this heritage property has been subjected to some problems and challenges in the areas of maintenance and restoration of the immovable cultural heritage, management plan, capacity and skill development, protection and security, mass cultural tourism (festival), community benefits, visitors' facilities, Education, Research and Publication.

MAINTENANCE AND RESTORATION

Osun Grove has six main sacred divisions. There are two main palaces of historical significance, six (16) worship points, three (3) primordial sacred spaces, eight (8) later sacred spaces, ten (10) different shrines dedicated to various deities and the first traditional market. All these require regular maintenance in terms of restoration of structures, sculptures, shrines and buildings.

In addition, the need for constant surveillance and maintenance of the entire landscape of 75 hectares of land is also paramount. Our organization has achieved about 50% restoration of these heritage properties using the original concepts. In areas where traditional materials have become unavailable we have improvised with modern materials and maintained harmony and balance of technologies.

The crucial issue here is FUNDING. The funding from the Federal Government needs to be augmented with external finances in order to achieve the best.

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