

CULTURE

AND

ITS
MANIFESTATIONS

KNOW NIGERIA SERIES 3

CULTURE

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MANIFESTATIONS**

1991

EDITORIAL

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CULTURE AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS

Culture, as defined in the cultural policy, is "the totality of a way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organisation thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours".

Culture involves more than dance, music, charms and incantations; it comprises material and non-material dimensions; it blends practical accomplishments, inspiring philosophies, oral traditions and abilities in man's continuous effort for development.

The Federal Government, in pursuance of its programme of national mobilisation, self-reliance, re-orientation, integration and economic recovery through the use of culture and its components, launched the National Cultural Policy whose aims and objectives are to:

- (i) mobilize and motivate the people by disseminating and propagating ideas which promote national pride, solidarity and consciousness;
- (ii) evolve from our plurality a national culture, the stamp of which will be reflected in Africa and world affairs;
- (iii) promote an educational system that motivates and stimulates creativity and draws largely from our traditional values, namely: respect for humanity and human dignity, for legitimate authority and the dignity of labour, and respect for positive Nigerian moral and religious values;
- (iv) promote creativity in the fields of arts, science and technology; ensure the continuity of traditional skills and sports and their progressive updating to serve modern development needs as our contribution to world growth of culture and ideas;
- (v) to establish a code of behaviour compatible with our tradition of humanism and a disciplined moral society;
- (vi) sustain environmental and cosier conditions which enhance the quality of life, produce responsible citizenship and an ordered society;
- (vii) enhance the efficient management of national resources through the transformation of indigenous technology, design resources and skills, and
- (viii) enhance national self-reliance and self-sufficiency, and reflect our cultural heritage and national aspirations in the process of industrialization.

II ADMINISTRATION

For effective implementation of the policy and successful administration of culture in the country, the Ministry of Culture and Social Welfare is

at the helm of affairs in culture administration. Appendix I is the current administrative structure which comprises the following:
The Federal Ministry of Culture and Social Welfare.

- i The Federal Department of Culture
- ii National Council for Arts and Culture
- iii National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM)
- iv Centre for Black, African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC)
- v National Arts Theatre
- vi National Troupe

FUNCTIONS:

1. NCAC was established by a decree in 1975 as a result of the need to set up a central co-ordinating body in the nation; to:

- (a) promote and foster the appreciation, revival and development of Nigerian arts and culture;
- (b) plan and co-ordinate cultural activities in Nigeria and foster the development of literacy, visual and the performing arts in Nigeria;
- (c) assist the Antiquities Commission established under Section 3 of the Antiquities Act in the creation, acquisition and preservation of artistic work, cultural monuments and depositories;
- (d) organise and promote exhibition in visual, performing and literary arts as may be determined from time to time by the Minister.
- (e) co-ordinate inter-state exchange activities;
- (f) render assistance to the states in the field of arts and culture; and
- (g) promote the development of music, traditional dancing, drama, opera, cinema, films, photography, folklore, oral tradition, literature, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, town planning and general arts, woodwork, embroidery, weaving and similar crafts.

2. CBAAC, came into being as a by-product of the seminars and workshops of FESTAC '77. It is the national repository of all documentation from FESTAC '77 and information about Africans in the diaspora. Its statutory functions are as follows:

- (a) to locate, identify and assemble for better preservation all recorded matter, published materials and museum artefacts relating to the 1977 Festival and to prepare an inventory of these works;
- (b) to promote understanding and appreciation of Black and African Arts and Culture by involving the general public in its

- activities through lecturers, discussions, symposia, exhibitions, performances and demonstrations of arts and crafts;
- (c) to acquire from zonal secretaries of the 1977 Festival of Arts and Culture materials of relevance to Black and African Arts and Civilization;
- (d) to produce guides, catalogues, bibliographies, abstracts and indices to facilitate the use of the materials preserved at the Centre;
- (e) to make the facilities of the Centre available to members of the public on such terms as the Board may, with the approval of the Ministry, determine;
- (f) to organise exhibitions, displays and such other manifestations as are calculated to achieve the objects of the Centre;
- (g) to make appropriate arrangements for the exchange either by way of lending or gifts, materials held at the Centre;
- (h) to supplement the materials held at the Centre by acquiring copies of materials relating to past and future world, regional and national festivals of arts and culture of relevance to Black and African Arts and Civilization;
- (i) to safeguard the property of the Centre; and
- (j) to provide such services as are usually provided by cultural resource centres.

3. The NCMM, came into being as a culmination of the merging of the Department of Antiquities and Antiquities Service Commission as a result of the 1974 review of the activities of these bodies. The Commission, among its other functions, administers National Museums, Antiquities and Monuments which involves collecting, preserving and presenting for the enjoyment and education of the public on all the material evidence of human existence in Nigeria.

The functions of the Commission were clearly stated by the Decree that established it, and they include the following:

- (a) to administer National Museums, Antiquities and Monuments;
- (b) to establish and maintain National Museums and other outlets for, or in connection with, National Antiquities;
- (c) to make recommendation to any, state government or other person or authority concerning the establishment and management of Museums and the preservation of antiquities and monuments, not being National Museums, Antiquities and Monuments; and to approve any Museum, which is privately established and maintained, for the purpose of the Decree and to withdraw such approval at any time the existence of such Museum no longer serves the purpose of the Decree.

4. NATIONAL ARTS THEATRE

The National Arts Theatre is a periscope of Nigeria's cultural development. This magnificent edifice, built in 1975 by the Federal Government, has become a vehicle for cultural preservation, presentation, promotion and development.

When, in 1977, Nigeria hosted the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC 77) the National Theatre played a leading role in unifying and propagating the culture of blacks.

Consequently, it serves as a meeting point to facilitate the accessibility of arts and culture to the widest spectrum of Nigerians.

It is also a source of education, leisure and entertainment to the people. This is achieved through the presentation of concerts, musicals, operas, plays, art and photographic exhibitions and film shows.

The Theatre has facilities to host national and international conferences/seminars and accommodates the National Gallery of Modern Arts.

Administratively, the National Arts Theatre is responsible to the Ministry of Culture and Social Welfare through the Department of Culture. It is being administered by an Interim National Theatre Board headed by a Chairman. The Board manages the affairs of the Theatre, which is run on a commercial basis, by making its facilities available to members of the public at a prescribed fee determined by the Board, subject to the approval of the Ministry.

The Management of the National Theatre also incorporates the National Troupe of Nigeria.

5. NATIONAL TROUPE

A National Troupe that would represent Nigeria's rich cultural heritage had been in the pipeline for several years. The Troupe concept, however, actually bore fruit in 1986 when the Federal Government appointed the late Chief Herbert Ogunde as the artistic Director of the National Troupe. In 1987, he was also made the consultant of the Troupe. Chief Ogunde was responsible for recruitment, training, administration and welfare of all Troupe members.

The recruitment process began with about 6,000 artistes being initially auditioned nationwide for selection into the Troupe in 1988. In the end, 121 best artistes were selected from 21 States and Abuja.

The Troupe has, until the death of Chief Ogunde, been based in his home town of Ososa, Ogun State.

Plans to establish a National Troupe for Nigeria stemmed from the desire to build an institutionalized artistic outfit which could revive the vital elements in the cultures of Nigeria for the enhancement and consequent development of the country's creative culture. It is conceived as a professional and commercial oriented National Troupe which will promote, present, preserve and propagate the values of the Nigerian culture through its national and international performances. In addition, the activities of the Troupe

could enable it to become a revenue earner.

In fact, the Troupe has represented the country in cultural festivals in Burkina Faso, during their independence ceremony, Morocco and most recently at Caracas, Venezuela.

By performing music, dance and drama - a fusion of what is called Total Theatre, the National Troupe is now on course to achieving excellence in the performing arts, encouraging creativity and promoting high artistic productions specifically designed for national and international performance.



ATILOGU TRADITIONAL DANCERS

III CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

Before the new National Cultural Policy, Cultural Administration has been conceived mainly as a social service with little to contribute to economic and national development. In most advanced countries, despite their high-technology, their traditional crafts and designs are directly linked to their technological and industrial processes.

A. Traditional Industries In Nigeria

These consist of those traditional crafts i.e. textiles, metal works, ceramics, carving, traditional architecture, fibre-crafts, etc. which have been, and are still, in practice in many parts of Nigeria. The produce from these industries are being adapted to modern uses, and their standards adjusted to current technological needs.

In Nigeria, the indigenous crafts are rooted in our history, integrated



A 9TH CENTURY IGBO-UKWU BRONZE POT

into our living patterns and inseparable from our world as we understand it.

Nigerian crafts constitute a potential force in the development of technology, tourism and economic stabilization in the rural areas. They provide gainful employment, as a complement to farming - itself basically traditional for people who cannot be re-trained under the formal education system. This is aptly illustrated by the flourishing traditional crafts in, for example,

- (i) Tatiko, Niger State - woven fabric, traditional ceramics
- (ii) Akwete, Imo State - woven fabric of the same name.

(iii) Suleja (Abuja) - traditional ceramics, etc.

Our craft traditions have a guaranteed viability which can be fully realised through infusing the following essential characteristics into them for economic success: orientation, in-built process for regeneration and a well organised marketing system.

Ceramics:

The most well-known influence in modern Nigerian pottery development has been Abuja, whose reputation has resulted in heavy demand for its ceramics from many parts of the world. But the development is also part of the widespread rich pottery craftsmanship and tradition which can be identified in different forms. Fine potteries are to be found at Isiagu, Afikpo, Okigwe and Boue area (of the Eastern States); Jos (Naraguta), Zaria, Dakakari and Yola areas (of the Northern States); the Alolo, Akoko Edo, Aboh, as well as Ife and Abeokuta areas of the Western States; Isiagu, Akoko Edo and Aboh potters in fact have unique sculptural elements of their own, although like the other potters, their works also explore the use of lines and geometric forms. Glazing technique from place to place and involves the use of mineral and vegetable extracts. Traditional firing is done in the open air and often on communal basis.

Wood Carvings:

The figure carvings and low relief decorations on panels in traditional style, represent one of the most important forms of art in Nigeria. Often, works are in the white woods - iroko as well as ebony, the two popular dark shining wood whose high cost is making its use increasingly difficult for craftsmen, who are now resorting to more readily available local woods. The leading wood carvers are in Benin, Igbomina, Ekiti, Ife and Oyo areas of the Western States; Akwa-Ibom, Afikpo and Ikot Ekpene areas of the Eastern States; and Lapai and Agaie areas of Nupeland. The ancestral and ceremonial wood carvings of the Benin, Igbo, Ibibio, Igbira, Chamba and Mama (both in the central Plateau) and the Yoruba are famous for their power of expression and simplicity of form.

Ivory Carving:

This is an area in which the Benin craftsmen have excelled. The works of these craftsmen and the ancient ivories by the Yoruba carvers are also among the most beautiful works of Nigerian art. In other parts of the country, particularly the Eastern States, a richly designed sub-style of the Benin craft exists in the form of bangles and other fashion accessories and musical instruments.

Calabash Carvings:

Oyo, the ancient political centre of the Yoruba people, and one of the more craft-oriented towns of the western states of Nigeria, is the most noted

for calabash carvings in the country. The northern states, (particularly, Plateau, Bauchi, Sokoto, Gongola and Borno) however produce richly decorative and beautiful burnt-on engraved geometric designed calabashes which are widely used for everyday need as containers, food bowls, etc. In Yola (Gongola State) calabash decoration is done by women.



CALABASH CARVER IN OYO STATE

Metal Works:

Decorative metal ware are produced either by beating or casting of the metal to produce uneven textures and beautiful patterns. They range from simple blacksmithing, including decorative wrought iron grilles, to the sophisticated craft of making fine quality jewelry in gold and silver; traditional bronze figure casting of the Edo and Mumuye and the brass trays of Bida. The decorative combs and hairpins used by Efik women is made by women.

Leather:

The decoration of hides and leather by applique technique and the scoring or printing of designs and patterns is a craft for which the northern states of Nigeria are well known. Naraguta, on the Jos-Bauchi road, Sokoto, Kano and Maiduguri areas, are well known centres of leather craft, although good and richly decorated leather works also come from Oyo. Pouffes, interlaced bags, sandals and shoes are produced from the various methods.

Raffia and fibre weaving:

The craftsmen and women of Ikot-Ekpene, Warri, Maiduguri and Brass, produce beautiful designs of baskets, caneworks fibre craft (fai-fai) and richly coloured mats and screens. The Nupe areas as well as the waterside areas of Ijebuland produce distinctive mats.

Beadwork:

Glass beads are used mainly for ornamental purpose for making patterns or covering the whole or parts of other objects such as pots, calabash, ritual objects, masks or dresses. Bida is famous for its beads from re-cycled glass.

IV. MARKETING

The marketing strategies are being fully coordinated through proper monitoring of craft outlets, through the establishment of craftshops in:

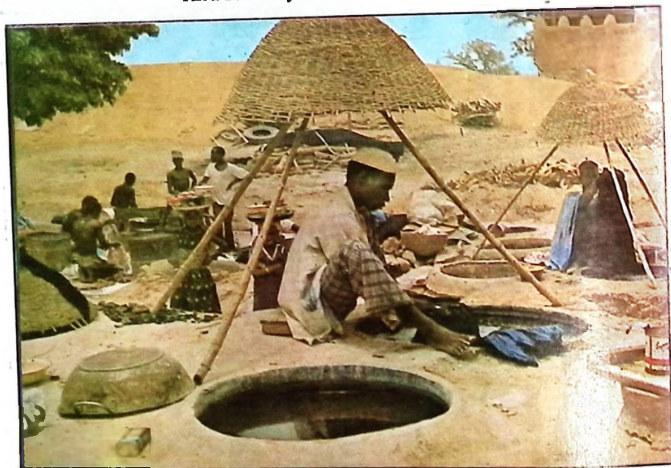
- (i) the National Gallery for Crafts and Design;
- (ii) the National States' crafts shops;
- (iii) local entrepreneurs who are also crafts people (e.g. Naraguta leather factory, Jos). The crafts community of Kasuwar Kore in Kano;
- (iv) the Igun craftsmen (brass casters of Benin), and, the
- (v) local, general-purpose markets (such as, Onitsha main market and the local market in Yola) to name a few.

However, there is an evolution in Nigerian crafts especially in the textile industry, which is as a result of different factors, namely, the economy, increase in cultural awareness and the need for self-actualisation of our traditional potentials.

The general interest among Nigerians for locally produced fabrics, i.e factory produced, handwoven cloth and tie/dye, has resulted in new trends in the fashion industry, thereby promoting the growth of textile design and technology.

Woven fabrics like:

- | | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| Aso-oke | - | Strip weave by men in the Yoruba-speaking areas; |
| Sanyan | - | Indigenous silk strip-weave hand-spun by women and woven by men among the Yorubas; |
| Tsamiya | - | Indigenous silk-strip weave-hand-spun by women and woven by men in the northern states; |
| Popo | - | Cotton strip-weave by women in Imo and Rivers states |
| Akwete | - | Broad loom weaving by women in Imo State. |
| Anger Tiv | - | Strip-weave-hand-spun by women and children, dyed and woven by men. |
| Atala | - | Indigenous silk hand-spun and woven on broad-loom by women among the Niger Igbo. |



INDIGO DYEING IN KANO

Elizabeth Seriki Cards

These were before usually used by royalty and elders in society as status symbols. But today, they have traversed these borders to being adapted for every-day use to meet modern needs. In order to achieve this, the fabrics are now being woven with lighter yarn, using contemporary colours and motifs borrowed largely from traditional patterns. In this way, use of such fabrics has transcended ethnic barriers, resulting in the gradual evolution of Nigerian national costumes and designs.

FOOD

Traditional Foods and Snacks:

Apart from main food dishes, Nigeria has a wealthy variety of snacks. Food, such as **kilishi**, **dokwa**, **fura**, **suya**, **ugba**, **abacha**, **ose oji**, **akara**, **moi-moi**, **mosa**, **kpekere**, to mention a few, were once considered exclusive "in-thing". But now, they abound beyond their original locality of consumption, and are now popular Nigerian snacks. However, the problem which producers of such snacks face is the development of proper packaging and preservation techniques so as to make them more adaptable and last longer.

The Council, through its programme of promoting indigenous food items as shown in the festival syllabus and the proposed traditional snacks' Pavilion, both at National and State level, aims at making these snacks available to a large majority of people other than in areas from where they

originate. A plan to work out ways of food preservation to meet local needs is currently being carried out by the NCAC in connection with a number of States Art Councils.

The concept is to promote Nigerian snacks cuisine to meet local demands and international standards and thereby achieve the export of our food culture.

Performing Arts:

These encompass artistry that is physically expressed e.g. dance, drama, musical performances, etc. The root of these expressions can be found in the numerous religious rites and celebration of mans' relationship with his society and nature. According to Yemi Ogunbiyi, drama rose out of fundamental human needs, in the dawn of civilization, and has continued to be an expression of those needs ever since. Contemporary performances use modern idiom which borrow largely from traditional sources using topical issues to make strong commentaries on life and society.

Performances and traditional festivals complement one another- one as a re-enactment of life and the other as progression of traditional values to meet modern demands, thereby creating a broad-base for cultural development in a modern technological society.

A clause in the Cultural Policy, which requires that cultural centres be established in all the states and, if possible, in all local government headquarters, will further help to meet the goals of cultural development.

Traditional Festivals

Festivals are periodic celebrations marking significant events in the life of a people or community. It is used to transmit ideas, aspirations and the philosophy of a people which makes life meaningful. They are a re-enactment of historical, religious and traditional events which serve as factors of interaction, cohesion and mobilisation in these societies. The periodicity of these festivals are determined either by natural cycles e.g. harvest reason, new moon, etc. or what is termed manifestations of the supernatural in traditional circles. Whole communities use these festivals as rallying points and fora for unification; geographical boundaries become non-existent for communities who share common ideas and philosophies. In this sense therefore, festivals are like modern promotional fairs that mobilise members of society to achieve particular aims and cement their aspirations as well as display their creative achievements.

Among the various traditional communities in Nigeria, there abound numerous festivals some of which are well documented and others of which there is very little information e.g. the (Osun festival of Osogbo and 'Leboku' of the Ugep people of Cross River State). The great **Ofala** of Onitsha and the **Sharo** of the Fulanis of northern Nigeria are others. The popular **Awon mass wedding** of Awon, Kwara State and the **Igue** festival of Benin, **Uholá** festival of the Dakakari of Sokoto and the **Idu** festival of Nemsa are others.

OSUN FESTIVAL

The Osun river rises in the hills north of Ilesa and flows through Yoruba country into the system of lagoons east of Lagos. It is one of the several rivers which were formerly human beings (usually female) until some traumatic event frightened or angered them into changing to water. Osun was one of the wives of Sango, the god of thunder and former King of Oyo. She is still widely worshipped in Yoruba and especially along the stretch of country through which the River Osun flows. Her most important sanctuaries are in Osogbo which is contracted from *Oso Igbo* (spirit of the forest). The goddess is supposed to have cried out: *Oso Igbo o, gbogbo Ikoko are me ni nwon fo tan* when a tree being cut by Larooye and Timehin, the two founders of Osogbo, fell on the river. Timehin was a great Oyo hunter who discovered the Osun as a main source of water and reported to Larooye, Owa of Ipole whose town (some eight kilometres away from Osogbo) suffered severe draught. The royal title *Ataoja* is derived from *Ate-wogba aja* (one who received the god-fish on the palm). Laro, who became the king of Osogbo, is said to have made a pact with Osun: to bring sacrifices to the river annually and feed the fish (Osun's messenger). The water of Osun is said to have the power to make barren women fertile.

There are three principal sanctuaries of the goddess in Osogbo. One is right inside the palace compound. This is where the head priestess (*Iya Osun*) and the Chief priest (*Aworo*) perform rites and rituals every Osun sabbath (*Ose Osun*) which is every fourth day. This is also the place where the sacred brass figures from Osun (*Edan Osun*) are kept.

The second shrine of Osun is opposite the palace and is marked by peregun tree.

The third shrine is in a grove by the river side remarkable for the peaceful aura surrounding it, its lush vegetation and the cement sculpture with which it has been adorned by artists who have established for the town an international reputation in art. This is the scene of the great annual festival that takes place every August.

LEBOKU FESTIVAL

Leboku is a sacred festival celebrated annually in August at Ugep, north-west of Calabar.

It is a yam festival in which the Yakurr people thank the gods of the land for a rich harvest. The thanksgiving takes the form of ancestral worship in shrines, the offering of sacrifices, the performance of traditional dances and the shooting of a sacred tree whose branches must only be cut down with bullets and not knife or matchet.

When the planting season has ended, the Binna (shrine priests) in Ugep led by the Ina (selected from among them for his seniority in age) begin their calculations for fixing the festival days. They calculate from the appearances of the moon, the number of traditional market days and from the



EFIK DANCERS IN CROSS RIVERS STATE

setting in of the rains. **LABOKU** celebrants are fully conversant with the dry and rainy season schedule, so it does not matter whether the rains set in early or late in a particular year.

OFALA FESTIVAL

In the olden days, the Obi of Onitsha was a general of a warring army. As his field commanders waged war in foreign lands, the Obi and his cabinet (**Ndichie**) stayed at home in anxious anticipation of the outcome. It was a mark of honour for youngmen to return from the battle fields with heads of enemies killed. A man who had not accomplished this feat has not achieved one of his important missions in life.

He could not speak with pride in the councils of men and was a source of irritation and shame to his wife, especially when other women proudly alluded to the brave deeds of their own husbands. In order therefore to win glory in war, comrades-in-arms vied for positions in the first line of battle where the fight was supposed to be fiercest.

At the conclusion of wars in the olden times, there was the feast of **Ofala**. The smallest village in Onitsha was asked by the **Obi** and the **Ndichie** to eat new yams. Other villages in Onitsha watched the result in case the new yam killed its inhabitants.

If nothing happened then the **Obi** and his cabinet asked other villagers, in order of their population and seniority, to eat new yams. If they did not die, then the **Obi** and his cabinet announced that they too would eat yams. The day they fixed for this was called **Iwa Ji Eze** which comes immediately after the great **Ofala**.

Four days before the festival, the **Obi** goes into mourning and prays for the peaceful rest of the souls of his subjects who died during the year. After successful completion of the ceremony, the **Obi** is received by his people who flock round the palace to see him and make manifest their joy and happiness in public demonstration of their loyalty.

SHARO

The Fulani culture presents a complex system involving age-grades and initiation, the most important of which is **Sharo** or **Shadi** (flogging meetings) believed to have originated among the **Dahun Fulani** in whose ranks are still the keenest exponents of the ritual. Among both the settled and nomadic Fulani, boys are circumcized in batches of age-mate. They are isolated for a fortnight, food being taken to them. A feast is often held before they disperse. Although not all sections of the **Bororogi** or **Yagwamawa** nomads insist on it, **Sharo** is still practised over a wide area of the northern states. It signifies the essence of Fulani moral values. The Fulani, as he wanders about in search of grazing land, undergoes several hardship and hard-living. The **sharo** or **shadi** provides a regular platform for preserving the Fulani character of hardiness, toughness, independence, self-reliance and rectitude in the face of extreme difficulties and also ensure that secrets, no matter the pressure, remain secret. This test of the Fulani's will-power ensures a high moral standard and fierce pride and independence.

The short period after harvest provides the time of **Sharo** which is only the culmination of a series of ceremonies leading to marriage and the preparation of the start of another annual cycle. Such Fulani activities cover wide areas of the Northern part of the country from **Sokoto**, through **Niger**, to **Gongola States**. **Yalle** in **Fulfude** means to spend the day (i.e. with friends). **Miyalle** is a festivity connected with the **Sharo** season during which Fulani youths move from village to village.

A **Shadi** gathering often lasts from five to seven days. It is usually staged twice yearly - during the dry season around the guinea-corn harvest and during the **Sallah Festival**. Occasionally **Sharo** is held during a marriage, the naming of the first born of a famous exponent of **Sharo** (in his youth), in honour of a chief and sometimes between small communities to settle claims of greater prowess.

AWON (MASS WEDDING) FESTIVAL

Awon according to a tradition, was a fairy women with only one breast, who emerged mysteriously amidst the people of Shao, two kilometres from Ilorin and after spending eighteen days in their midst, decided to leave.

She halted on reaching a spot and handed the Bale and his Chiefs who escorted her a charm to enable them establish a strong settlement. One condition for efficacy of the charm was that

BRONZE PLAQUE OF A 17TH CENTURY OBA OF BENIN

the settlement be named after her, and that a day be set aside every year, to mark her presence among them with the mass wedding of all marriageable girls.

She then pledged to bless all descendants and inhabitants of Shao with children if only they could come forward to put their request to her during the celebration of her festival.

Water sprang up from where the strange woman disappeared into the earth and formed a stream which joined another stream known as Asa. The Asa and Moro streams met and formed a tributary of the River Niger.

Today three carved human images are kept in a compound where the symbols of the Awon goddess and two other women described as her relatives who came later to search for her are kept.

The Awon festival which has been observed since the disappearance of

the goddess is celebrated annually in the month of October.

IGUE FESTIVAL

Igue marks the end of the Edo year and ushers in a new one with renewed hope for peace and prosperity. It is a combination of many festivals linked to land-marks in Edo history. Several elements in the Festival are connected with past Obas around whom Edo customs and traditions are woven, especially Oba Ewuare with whom several observations of the festival are linked.

Oba Akenzue II was said to have introduced the present innovations in respect of time and date of the festival. Before then, Igue was celebrated during the month of September to the end of a series of ceremonies such as Ugiododua, *Ukpoleki*, Eghute, Ehor, Ugioro, Ugigun or Isiokwo and Ihiekhu.

The present Igue festival is a combination of about nine major ceremonies. They are, Otua-Ugierhoba, Ugierhoba, Iron, Oute-Igueoba, Iron, Oute-Igueoba, Igue-Inene, Emobo, Igue Ubioba, Iguedohia and Igue-Ewere.

One important feature of Igue is that it is usually held at night. It is only at this time that the Oba's wives (*Iloi*) are seen by the people, and also the only occasion during which the Oba wears his full traditional regalia and dances with the Royal Eben in the presence of his subjects.

Igue festival is associated with certain taboos. Funeral rites are prohibited during the eleven days of celebration. The Eben must not fall during a chief's dance. In the past, this led to the denial of some chieftaincy rights. Nowadays, this could be resolved with the payment of a fine. No one (except members of the Armed Forces and other para-military organisations) is allowed to wear a cap when the Oba is around Ugie-Erhoba. The arrival of Akharonmwon, the royal jester, on each occasion, signals the commencement of each day's activities.

UHOLA FESTIVAL

The Uhola Festival of the Dakarkari of Zuru Local Government of Sokoto State is said to have developed from the cultures of people with whom the Dakarkari had contact during the seasonal migrations. The earliest settlement is said to have been founded on the present site of Kansan in Sakaba District by ancestors of the people of Borgu and Illo. The Uhola festival is also observed by the Fakawa and the Dukkawa.

The Uhola Festival involves the appeasement of the gods by pouring libation at their shrines. For instance, the god of rain is thanked for the rainfalls and then requested to stop further rain to enable the crops yield well. It is believed that too much rain does not make for good yield.

The ceremony at the shrine of god of rain takes place in October or early November and is known in Dakarchi as Kabun Menke, the hall of rain. The Chief priest is called Gon menke or Gonu nmenke (the Chief rain-maker).

All ceremonies relating to the rain are done by the priest in a communal worship known as **gyitim menke** (sending off of the rain). The appeasement of other gods at their shrines follows. These gods include **gouuk dada** and **gokunna Iso** who permit the appeasement of other smaller gods. These celebrations are said to be for the purifications of the community in preparation for **Uholá** celebration and to thank the various gods for their guidance through the year.

IDU FESTIVAL

Idu festival is rightly called **Suo Olali**, Feast of the Creator, though commonly referred to as **Idu Pele Olali** or simply **Idu Olali**, the feast of **banana cutting**. This name is derived from the climax of the ritual when a banana tree is cut by the **Feni Alabo** (Bird Priest), and the direction towards which it falls indicates whether the offering is accepted or not. It is celebrated at intervals of seven, fourteen, twenty-one or twenty-eight years.

The national god of the Nembe people is **Ogidiga**, held to be a god of war brought from Benin by warrior fugitives. It is based at Nembe. **Kalaorwei** of Okpoma is believed to be the son of **Ada**, **Ada** being the name of the Sword brought from Benin and preserved in the shrine of **Ogidiga** at Nembe. **Okpo**, the founder of Okpoma is also said to be a brother of **Obolo** or **Ogbolo**, the founder of Nembe. It is generally believed that **Kalaorwei** has imparted his dashing spirit to the men of Okpoma, thus in general the myth of invincibility surrounding the Nembe warriors. Okpoma must begin the hostilities by firing the first shot. This explains the importance attached not only to the **Idu Festival** but also to Okpoma as a whole. It is in this all-embracing sense that the creator is worshipped during the ritual of **Idu Festival**. It is a Festival in which the whole community of the town, its gods, spirits and ancestors, and even the gods of the neighbouring towns, are involved.

NATIONAL AND STATES FESTIVALS

The National Festival of Arts and Culture (**NAFEST**) organised by the National Council for Arts and Culture, serves to promote creativity in the fields of arts, science and technology, for ensuring the continuity and progressive updating of traditional skills and sports for modern development needs. It also serves as a melting pot and the crucible for promoting inter-cultural communication as well as the development of a national culture.

With the launching of the National Cultural Policy, the Festival has become a key vehicle for realisation of the objectives of the policy. In consonance with the new demand, the concept of the Festival has further broadened to accommodate new ideas which are geared towards technological development and seeks to promote indigenous creativity, generate employment opportunity, and establish a base for self-reliance. Furthermore, its presentation has been consciously designed to promote patriotism and national discipline for a proper social cohesion, which will eventually

supplant and substitute present dependence on foreign imports, and provide a basis for all-round independent development.



TIV CULTURAL DANCERS FROM BENUE STATE

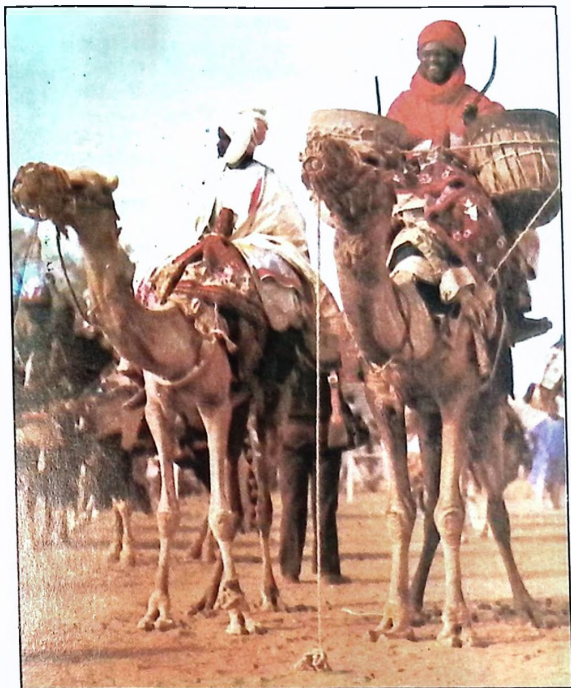
Apart from the National Festival, some states are promoting local festivals, by making them more acceptable to a larger audience thereby promoting tourism. However, there are some festivals with roots in traditional societies that have been developed to annual fairs, which serve as a rallying point for all communities with similar festivals. For example, the **Argunga** fishing festival brings together the fishing communities in Sokoto State and some neighbouring states. There are also the regatta and the durbar which are popular among the riverine communities and the northern emirates respectively.

REGATTA

Regatta is associated with rowing and sailing. The first record of regatta in Nigeria was in September 1933 which featured in the Lagos Boat Race Club during the visit of H.M.S. Cardiff. Boat regattas are an indispensable part of the annual traditional festivals in the riverine areas of Nigeria. The riverine people reflect lores associated with their physical locations, in their dances and rituals; lobsters, fishes, crocodiles and other water creatures (some mythical) are represented in dance and costumes of performers.

The regattas design and format has continued to be adapted to suit new usages and its content is gradually broadening in scope to serve more than the purpose of celebration and worships.

The concept of the regatta in Nigeria is growing beyond the scope of the western function. It serves as a visual symbol of one common purpose and heritage and has become an important ingredient, not only for the development of tourism, but also for evolving a national culture out of our plurality.



Elizabeth Sereki Cards

DURBAR FESTIVAL

DURBAR

The word Durbar is derived from a Persian word Durbar which means house or court room. A Durbar was performed in India to mark the proclamation of Queen Victoria of Britain as the Empress of India in 1876.

The Durbar was introduced by the first viceroy of Nigeria, Lord Lugard, to Northern Nigeria. The British held several Durbars between 1911 and 1948, which serve to remind local rulers of the powers of colonial authority and since then the Durbar has been held in Nigeria. Some people regard the Durbar as a colonial idea which has no relevance to Nigerian history. It

seems so at first glance; but a major point worthy of note is the existence of some prevalent factors in the area, i.e. the presence of horses, camels and their riders which made it easy for the first Durbar to be staged.

The present-day Durbar has become an indispensable part of traditional and religious life of the old northern emirates. It now serves as symbol of power and authority in the Sultanate. Because of the enormous cost of undertaking the Durbar, the last time this event was staged in a grand style was during Festac'77. Since then, mini-Durbars have been staged from time to time for various reasons.

However, to fully understand the Durbar, cognisance of the socio-political and religious factors of life in the emirate must be mentioned. These factors, irrespective of its colonial origin, have made it possible for the Durbar to remain a social manifestation of certain aspects of our cultural heritage especially the way it signifies the development of political institutions, capacity for handicraft production and the skills of breeding, riding and maintaining horses.

MMANWU FESTIVAL:

Nmanwu Festival is a festival of spirits and ancestors. The supernatural plays a very distinct role in traditional administration. They are embodied in the masking traditions of the middle belt zone and southern states. The traditional belief is that once costumed, the member of various masking societies transmogrify into ancestors or incarnate elemental forces and spirits. These masks were originally used as law-enforcers, guardians, messengers and entertainers and were greatly revered by the people.

However, the demands of contemporary living have eroded the importance of these masks thereby leaving them in modern uses as mere vestiges of ancient beliefs, tokenly displayed as a reminder of their past position in society.

In order to preserve this manifestation of our cultural heritage, the Anambra State Government originated staging of annual festival - Mmanwu Festival.

The initial idea of the festival was to have a gathering point for the masking traditions of Anambra State and thereby engender unity among the various dialectic groups in the state. The great success of the first edition of this festival, held in 1987, prompted its organisers to widen its scope, by inviting neighbouring States to participate. This reason is also making it a tourist event of note. It serves as publicity and propagation of an important aspect of our cultural heritage, which is being modernized. It affords the people a chance to see such rare masks as Ijele - the king of masks.

The Mmanwu Festival has now become a major annual event, celebrating the wealth, pomp and pageantry of the masking traditions in Nigeria.

ARGUNGU FISHING FESTIVAL:

The Argungu fishing festival dates back to the 16th century and has its origin in one of the traditional fishing festivals called **Su**. In 1934 this festival was given a wide dimension and has since then grown to include water display (**Kabanci**) traditional wrestling, boxing, archery, motor rally and agricultural show.

The festival which attracts participants from neighbouring states, Niger Republic, agricultural institutions and about 8,000 spectators, takes place along the River Rima.

The best fisherman with the heaviest catch is always awarded a prize. Fishing in this festival is still undertaken manually in the age-long traditional ways in order to display the indigenous aquaculture.

These festivals are not just a re-enactment of the past but also a recognition of our traditional technological capacity as well as a promotion of traditional crafts.

Culture therefore is a viable component for economic and technological development towards achieving national goals and aspirations. It is a basic ingredient, if not the main force, behind our technological break-through. It is also what distinguishes us from other peoples in the diaspora.

The Nigerian dream is for high-tech future based on inputs from our traditional resources. These various components which the cultural policy seeks to address is a means of promoting and harnessing these dreams, and giving them expression. At the end of the day, this will help put Nigeria on a sound technological footing and a self-reliant nation.

APPENDIX I

MINISTRY OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL WELFARE (Department of Culture)

