



NIGERIAN

DRESS CULTURE:

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE



A Publication of National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria

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Cover Page Picture: Titled Benin Man in Ceremonial Attire

Nigerian Dress Culture: An Ethnographic Perspective

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National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria

Vision Statement

A stable museum system, which ensures the preservation and integration of Nigerian cultural and natural heritage within the local and national developmental process and the world heritage network

Mission Statement

The systematic collection, preservation, study and interpretation of the heritage of the people of Nigeria and Nigerians in Diaspora

Motto: "Greater Heritage for a Greater Future"

Profile

In 1979 the Federal Government of Nigeria with decree 77 of 1979 established the National Commission for Museums and Monuments as a replacement for the Federal Antiquities Department to manage the collection, documentation, conservation and presentation of the National Cultural properties to the public for the purposes of Education, Enlightenment and Entertainment. This decree has now been replaced by NCMM ACT, CAP 242 of the Law of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1990.

Consequent upon the impact of Nigeria's civil war, the Federal Government in its quest for lasting unity in the country created Museums of National Unity to serve as veritable instrument of cultural education through which peace and understanding among the various Nigerian Nationalities would be achieved. At the moment, the Museums of National Unity in Ibadan and Enugu have been completed, commissioned and opened to the public in 2002 and 2006 respectively. In like manner, Sites have been secured and construction work ongoing in Maiduguri and Sokoto.

Presently the National Commission for Museums and Monuments manages and oversees fifty-two museums and outlets spread across the country. These include museums in Abeokuta, Aba, Akure, Asaba, Benin, Calabar, Enugu, Esie, Ibadan, Igbo-Ukwu, Ile-Ife, Ilorin, Jos, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Lafia, Lagos, Lokoja, Maiduguri, Markudi, Minna, Nok, Osogbo, Oyo, Oron, Owerri, Owo, Port-Harcourt, Sokoto, Umuahia, Uyo, Yola and Ogbomoso, etc. There are also two UNESCO World Heritage Sites namely Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa state and Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove in Osun state. NCMM also has the Institute of Archaeology and Museum Studies in Jos for capacity building of different categories of staff and others outside the commission. In the past years, sixty-five national monuments and sites have been declared, while one hundred additional ones were proposed for declaration to mark Nigeria's Centenary.

NCMM is the representative of Nigeria at International Cultural bodies like the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Centre for the Study of the Restoration and Preservation of Cultural Properties (ICCROM), West African Museums Programme (WAMP), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) the African Council on Museums (AFRICOM) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations (UNESCO) among others.



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PREFACE

Dress culture deserves rapt attention and consideration in contemporary times. This is due to the rising concerns over the manners in which so many people dress that do not seem to understand the rationale behind dressing. As such, the desire to dress up in questionable patterns has infiltrated the entire socio-cultural systems. In Nigeria, the insatiable appetite for foreign fashion trends is the leading cause of the outlandish dressing styles; hence, the choice of "Dress Culture in Nigeria" as the main theme of this book.

Ideally, people dress for the purposes of covering their bodies, appearing decent, looking beautiful, showcasing status, and easy identification. These salient reasons for dressing combine to shape up the clothing and adornment patterns of children, youths, men and women of various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The motivation for writing this book is the urgent need to resuscitate the dress culture threatened by the influx of foreign fashion into the multifarious ethnic groups in Nigeria. As expected, researching and publishing a book of this nature is challenging. The Department of Research, Planning and Publications however designed modalities which were helpful in making the subject matter much more researchable.

The modalities for conducting this ethnographic research project were straightforward. Researchers were instructed to partition the topic of their study into some researchable subdivisions. Among them is the choice of a topic that is related to the main theme. Next is the formulation of research objectives with the specific intent to:

- promote cultural dressing as a means of sustaining moral codes, national identity symbols, prestige and harmony.
- encourage the production of local fabrics.
- collect as well as document materials and tools related to dress culture.

In order to make research reports comprehensive, the areas of concentration were clearly spelt out which included the notable traditional attires of various ethnic groups, clothing styles of each gender and age, rituals and religious regalia, traditional fashion accessories, significance of colours and symbols on attires, and the impact of modern dressing on traditional dressing in Nigeria. The researchers collected data by relying on primary and secondary sources, involving the use of interview methods and the review of relevant literature respectively.

The study focused on the six geo-political and cultural zones including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in Nigeria in order to collect representational findings and reports. I therefore recommend this book for readership and application by all categories of schools, traditional institutions, policy makers, fashion designers, arts and culture agencies, and members of the general public.

Prof. Abba Isa Tijani

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