

HERITAGE RESOURCES CONSERVATION FOR TOURISM GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF SELECTED HISTORICAL SITES IN LOKOJA, KOGI STATE

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ABSTRACT

The treasure of Nigeria tourism is its abundant historical and cultural sites and attractions. Foremost among the cities in Nigeria with abundant cultural sites and historical relics is Lokoja, the Kogi State Capital, a former colonial seat of power. Cultural and historical sites are established for their intrinsic values. But to derive these values, efforts must be made to conserve and manage the sites optimally. It is on this note that this paper examines some important cultural and historical sites in Lokoja; their present state and how they could propel tourism growth and development in Nigeria if well conserved. The study uses ethnography research method to elicit the require information in achieving the stated objectives. Findings reveal that among the challenges confronting the sites are inadequate preservation and protection, threats of urbanization among others. For these sites to optimally contribute to tourism development in Nigeria, the study suggests conscious efforts towards their restoration, protection and maintenance among other things.

KEY WORDS: historical sites, preservation, heritage, tourism, development

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria with a landmass of about 923,733 sq km² is Africa's most populous country with about 160 million people. It has over 250 ethnic groups within its geo-polity, and each of them is identified with a unique cultural heritage. The riches, beauties and diversities of Nigeria's culture are manifestation of the socio-cultural differences of the ethnic nationals that inhabit the land. Each city in Nigeria has distinctively interesting things to offer a tourist who is bound to enjoy not only the hospitality of the people but also the physical beauty of the land.

Foremost among the cities in Nigeria is Lokoja the Kogi state capital. Lokoja was formally the colonial seat of power of Nigeria. It also played a prominent role during the slave trade era, as the River Niger was a major route to transport slaves to the western countries. The city is also a confluence city where the two biggest Rivers in West Africa (Niger and Benue Rivers) meet. It is a town with a very rich history. No wonder it is often referred to as 'the museum city of Nigeria colonial history'. The numerous relics and heritage sites of Nigeria colonial past adorning every nook and cranny of the town attest to this.

Cultural heritage tourism means travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. www.culturalheritagetourism.org. Hence, visiting historical and cultural sites is the most popular tourist activities today.

It is on this basis, that this study is being undertaken to unravel some of the numerous historical sites in Lokoja. As pointed out by Cooper e tal (2008:319) "cultural and historical sites are established for their

intrinsic values”. But to derive these values, efforts must be made to conserve and manage the sites optimally. The numerous historical sites in Lokoja could serve as viable attractions to both tourists and other researchers, if well preserved. Page and Connell (2006:185) posit that; “attraction face a number of threats from the external and internal environment that pose risks to product quality, operational viability and the visitors’ experience”. It therefore becomes essential for attraction managers to derive strategies that recognise threats and focus on managing potential impacts in attempt to strive long term viability.

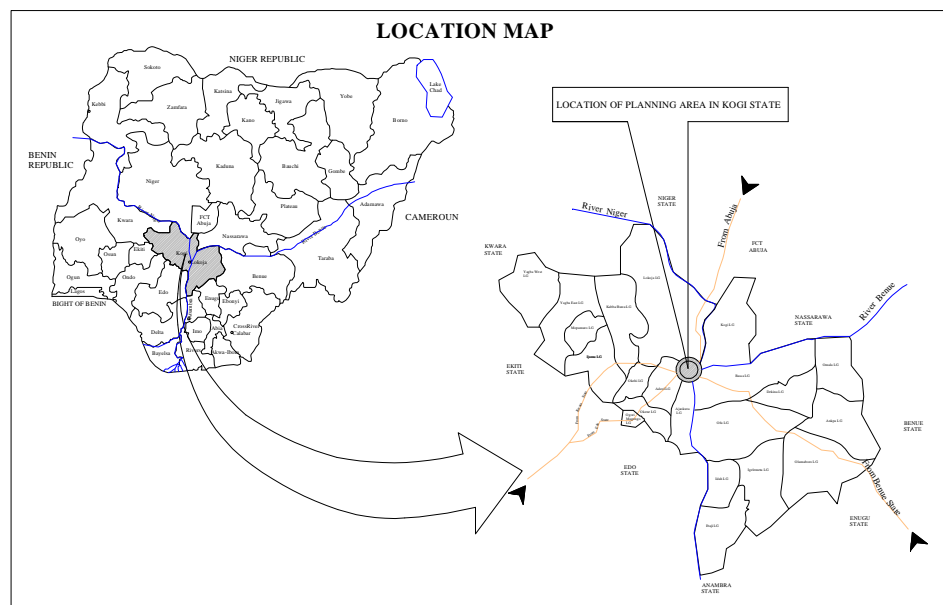
The study will in essence, identify some major heritage sites in Lokoja, highlight their present state of affair, their likely threats and challenges and offer recommendations as a way of mitigating them. This will help to reposition the city as a viable heritage and tourism destination in Nigeria and beyond.

STUDY AREA

Kogi state was created on 27th August, 1991 by the then military president Ibrahim Babangida. The state was carved out of the former Kwara and Benue States with Lokoja as the state capital. Lokoja is an ancient town located west bank of River Niger, a confluence town where the two famous Rivers (Niger and Benue) meet.

Lokoja is the most centrally located state capital in the country. Located between Latitude 7, 47N and Longitude 6, 47E. Lokoja is approximately 162 kilometres away from Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory.

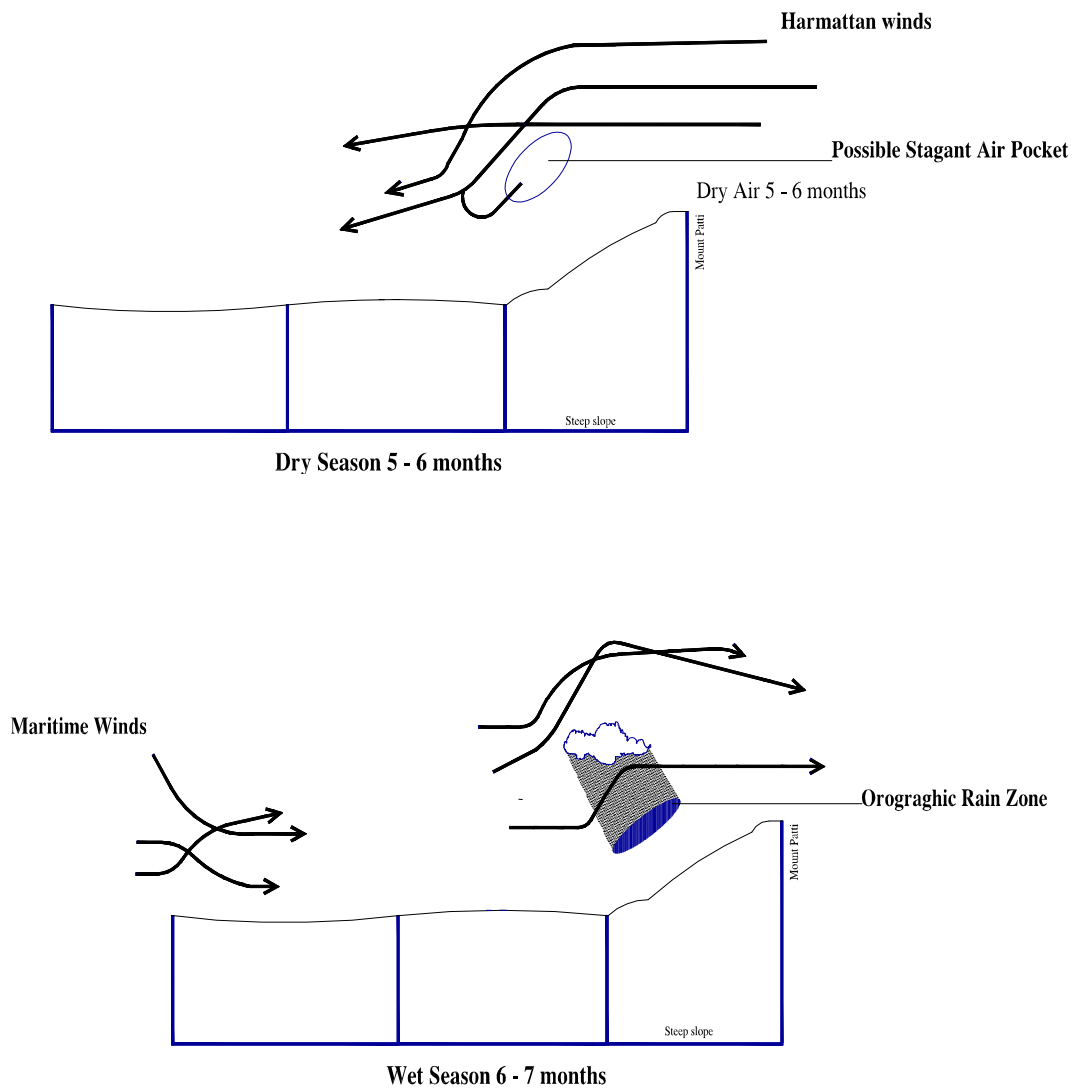
Figure1: Location Map



Source: field survey 2011.

Several factors have contributed to the geographical outlook of Lokoja. A major factor is climate, Lokoja has a tropical that comprises of two seasons namely dry and wet seasons as obtain throughout Nigeria. The wet season starts from the month of April and ends in October, while the dry season starts from November and continues till the month of March.

Figure 2: seasonal wind pattern



Source: Micro Climate of Lokoja: Adopted from Alaci and Baba (2007)

The two seasons are affected by the South-Westerly winds coming from the Atlantic Ocean and North-Easterly winds which come from the Sahara Desert. Two major Air masses dominate the climate of the study Area, these are; the Tropical Maritime Air mass which formed over the Atlantic Ocean to the South of the country, and is therefore warm and moist moving inland in South-West to North-East direction. And the Tropical Continental Air mass developed over the Sahara Desert and is therefore warm and dry, and blow in the opposite direction (North-East to South-West). The oscillation between

these two Air masses produces high seasonal characteristics of weather conditions in our study Area, dry season and wet season. As described in figure 2 above.

METHODOLOGY

This study is primarily aimed at bringing to the fore, some major historical site and heritage tourism attraction in Lokoja. In view of this, the qualitative research/ ethnography fieldwork is the most appropriate methods through which this study could be tackled.

The data collection instruments for this research are; key informants' interviews, personal observation and documentaries. Purposive sampling method was used to select the key informants who were deemed to be knowledgeable of the study under review. These personalities include; two palace chiefs of Maigari of Lokoja, the General Manager of the Kogi Hotel and Tourism Board, the Curator of the National Museum of Colonial History Lokoja, the Director of Tourism Ministry of Culture and Tourism Lokoja and some local residents. The interviews were carried out using open-ended questions which enabled the interviewees respond in their own language, thus giving the researcher the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. As Veal (2006:199), pointed out, "as important skill in interview is to avoid becoming so taken up in the conversational style of the interview that the interviewee is led by the interviewer. The interviewer should avoid agreeing- or disagreeing- with the interviewee or suggesting answers". This assertion was strictly adhered to by the researcher.

A good understanding of the industry helped the researcher in the personal observation and documented profiles of the sites, which have enriched the paper. Qualitative descriptive analysis was used to analyse the data.

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION

The trappings of the slave trade and colonial legacies are very much visible in Lokoja our study area. Hence, detail of some of these are hereby presented and analysed.

MOUNT PATTI

'Patti' is a Nupe word for a Hill, and the early Europeans to Lokoja in the early 19th Century added the English word 'Mount'. The hill towering over Lokoja stands at a height of about 458 metres above sea level, with a wide flat top (a Plateau of about 15km²) the ancient inhabitants of Lokoja were said to have settled a top the hill before they finally moved down the bank of the River Niger after the era of inter-tribal wars and slavery. The Hill was more of a refuge site for these early inhabitants.

Lord Fredrick Lugard discovered the Hill during the colonial era and subsequently built a relaxation centre, a radio house and a focal point to monitor the activities on River Niger toward ensuring proper security network for the colonialists in Lokoja. Interestingly, one can have an aerial panoramic view of Lokoja Township together with the confluence of Rivers Niger and Benue from the top of the mountain. The entire area including top and slope of Mount Patti constitute about 3000 hectares of land.

The Hill is a tourist delight for curious visitors who cherished the natural attraction. The climate a top the hill is ever inviting and a contrast from what is obtainable down the ancient town of Lokoja. Regrettably, all the colonial relics a top the hill are in a state of dilapidation. The Rest house had been taken over by weeds, with part of the roof blown off by winds. It must be noted that the Kogi State government have proposed a development plan aimed at turning the hill into an enviable tourist Resort comparable to that of Obudu Mountain Resort in Cross River State. But it is curious enough to note that, there is no sustained attempt in the plan to preserve those colonial relics as a top the hill.

IRON OF LIBERTY

The location of Lokoja at the bank of Rivers Niger and Benue made the town a prominent centre of slave trade during 18th and 19th Century, coupled with the fact that the confluence attracted Europeans, explorers, missionaries, and administrators.

The slave merchants and barons used to station slaves in Lokoja for buying, selling and finally exportation. Soon after the enactment of the Act to end slavery in British Empires, slaves who were in the custody of the slave merchants were consequently seized and set free in a place which is now the compound of the Holy Trinity Bishop Crowther school in Lokoja. To commemorate this historic event, the British Government created two poles indicating freedom square and named it 'the iron of liberty'. A top of the iron poles was a bell hanged. Aside the earlier seized and freed slaves, any slaves who escaped from their captors to the spot, rang the bell to regain their freedom and will get registered as free slaves

THE CENOTAPH (WAR ARMOURY)

This is a war armorial erected in remembrance of the British and Nigerian officers and other ranks that lost their lives in the first and second world war of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 respectively. The cenotaph is a massive concrete block with old Artillery mounted on it, located along Murtala Mohammed way, besides the Federal Medical Centre. The Cenotaph is relics of Weapons used by the British forces against the German forces in defence of their occupied territories in East Africa and Cameroon.

A glance at the list of the names of some military personnel inscribed on the Cenotaph who served in the two world wars makes an interesting reading. While one could see through the cannon on display, the technology of the old era in comparison with present day technology advancement in military weaponry and warfare.

THE FIRST PRIMARY SCHOOL IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

This is a monumental old building that was built for the education of the people in the year 1865 by late Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther and named 'Holy Trinity School', which was later renamed, 'Holy Trinity Bishop Crowther Primary School. The school is located within the compound of the church mission society (CMS) Lokoja.

The school building shows the ancient Architectural design of a generation. Though, some innovations have been added when it was rebuilt in 1907. The building whose shape looks like a pyramid is over 100 years old, the first in the present Northern Nigeria. It is regrettable that this great monument is in a deplorable state. A section of the building had been broken down to create room for the Cathedral building project. The main school block is gradually collapsing as at the time of visit. The school

compound currently hosts the



PLATE 1. The Holy Trinity Primary School Lokoja. (First primary sch. In Northern Nigeria.

Anglican Church Cathedral, the famous iron of liberty and the Tomb of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

THE EUROPEANS AND AFRICANS CEMETERIES

This is one of the evidence behind the notion that Lokoja is a city of colonial history of Nigeria. Lokoja has one of the largest concentrations of Europeans cemetery in Nigeria. The cemeteries are tomb where Europeans and African (Missionaries and military) who either worked with Bishop Ajayi Crowther or Lord Lugard, are located. The cemeteries are in three difference places within Lokoja Township. The first is located opposite the unity bank, where mostly the British soldiers were buried. The second, which is the biggest of the cemeteries, is located along the Murtala Mohammed Way behind the Kogi Travellers Terminal, while the third which is purely African is located at the end of the cemetery road. There were over six hundred tombs, each which were made of different design, with name of the deceased. Some of the identification plaque made of marble, concrete, metals, stones etc, stated the names, causes of death, the year and their countries of origin. The cross or crucifix as a symbol of Christianity can be found as the trade mark on almost every of the tombs.

THE MAGAZINE HILL

This is another important historical relic left behind by the colonialists. The magazine hill is located in the Northern part of Lokoja within the native town in the area called Angwa Rimi (Rimi Quarters). The name 'magazine hill' was given because it once served as the military armoury, a store house for military ammunitions especially by the Royal Niger Company Constabulary and later by the West African Frontier Force (W.A.F.F). The place was strategically located at a vantage view point, with a rectangular stone wall and gate built when George Toubman Goldie was the Governor of the Royal Niger Company. There were bungalows within this stone wall, served as the 'store' for guns and other military weapons and ammunitions. It also served as police station and jail yard for accused persons from the native town. Regrettably this relic has been turned into toilet and dumping ground by the people living around the hill.

Other notable monuments and sites of attraction in our study area, which could not be fully presented due limited space, include:

- The first Cantonment Church in Northern Nigeria.
- The safe of the first Bank in Northern Nigeria.
- First Prison Yard in Northern Nigeria.

- UAC Ware house.
- Lord Lugard Senior Staff Quarters.
- National Museum of Colonial History.
- River Niger water Front.
- The spot where the Royal Niger Company's flag was lowered in 1900.
- The Confluence of Niger and Benue Rivers.
- Tombs of the deposed Northern Emirs.

PROBLEMS BESETTING THE HERITAGE SITES IN THE STUDY AREA

There are major problems identified in the study area, which by no means have weigh down the contribution of these heritage resources to the tourism growth and development Lokoja.

These include:

- **INADEQUATE PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION OF THE SITES AND MONUMENTS.**

This posed a major problem confronting the monuments and sites in Lokoja. The sites are entitled to be protected, preserved and to receive attention and maintenance by the Stakeholders. But reverse hold the case in most situation on ground. For example, the Europeans and Africans cemeteries, and the magazine hill, were found to be badly littered, poorly maintained and had complete lack of sanitary facilities for visitors. Some of these aforementioned sites are used as dumping ground and full of filth, which in essence have eroded their values and significance. According to Okpoko and Ezeadichie (2002) "The Conservation and advertisement of designated Archaeological, Ethnographic, and Sacred historical sites as centre of cultural excellence backed by the provision of adequate infrastructural facilities within these sites to make them appealing to visitors are quite necessary".

- **THREAT OF URBANIZATION**

The present urbanization drive in Lokoja Township posed a major threat to most of these historical sites. As noted by Kendall (2007) "Urbanization accompanied modernization and rapid process of industrialization" consequent upon this, Bill and Hassan (1983) posit that, "traditional religious belief and cultural traits usually become less important as modernization takes hold". It is on this premised that major threat to these sites was noticed, as some of these colonial relics, and sacred tombs are gradually giving ways to urbanization in the form of residential and office building, roads construction, and other economic activities. A case in point is the site of the 'Cenotaph' which almost pave way for the expansion and perimeter fencing of the Federal Medical Centre. Also, the Europeans and Africans cemetery is being threatened by the activities of the Road Transport workers' union and Kogi State Transport Company.

- **UNTIDY PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

The physical environments of some of these sites still leave much to be desired. Some of these historical monuments are suffering due to poor landscaping or lack of it around the facilities. While some are found to be badly littered due to dumping of solid wastes, indiscriminate placement of posters and bills on some of these monuments make them not too fascinating to visitors.

- **LACK OF SOUND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

There is no sound institutional arrangement on the management and maintenance of these sites in the state. Although, the State Hotel and Tourism Board is empowered by virtue of Decree

81 of 1992 through sub-section 7 to preserve, protect, and develop tourism assets and resources within the state. But the Board as presently constituted is doing little or nothing in this regards. The Board has little data of the tourist arrival to these numerous sites. There are also no conscious efforts towards the promotion of these monuments through printed materials, because the Board is poorly funded by the State government. While the manpower aspect is greatly inadequate, there is great paucity of staff with requisite qualifications in tourism or related courses at the Board. All these constitute major snag in the sound and effective institutional framework for the sites and monuments.

- **INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE**

There is acute shortage of Parks and Recreational spaces in Lokoja Township. The existing open spaces are not properly maintained and managed for tourism activities. The state of road network need to be improved upon especially the interior part of the township, because gaining access to some of the sites during wet season is difficult.

- **LACK OF PUBLIC APPRECIATION OF THE SITES**

There is no gain saying the fact that a preponderance of the Nigeria populace are apathetic to cultural sites such as sacred groove, tomb and even museum and monuments. Among the educated elites who are much aware of the existence and values of these cultural landscapes, a vast majority hardly bother to visit them. This lack of public appreciation posed major challenges to the existence and conservation of these monuments.

CONCLUSION

Lokoja, the Kogi State Capital occupies a special space in the historical evolution of Nigeria. The Conservation situation and the state of affairs of some of the important historical sites and monuments in the area were assessed. The study therefore concludes that most of these heritage resources are in state of deplorable conditions due to the identified problems.

The paper emphasized that, the scourge of cultural property has many faces both within and without, therefore posits that conscious efforts towards the management, protection and preservation of these cultural landscapes become sacrosanct. Hence, the success of sustainable cultural tourism growth and development is reliant upon the maintenance of a healthy and attractive environment of the cultural resources, and it is a task for all the Stakeholders.

RECOMMENDED STEPS TO MITIGATE THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

- There must be conscious efforts towards the restoration, protection and maintenance of the sites and monuments. This can be achieved through urban clean up and environmental protection policies of enforced conservation and introduction of a litter free zone around the premises of the monuments. There should be immediate renovation and redesigning of the wall and fencing of some of the sites. Cleaning and continued maintenance of the environment in the vicinity of the monuments should be sacrosanct. A synergy between the Kogi State government and the federal government through its agency; the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in achieving this becomes inevitable.
- The cultural landscapes in the study area should be gazetted and infused in the Lokoja master plan currently being considered. This will go a long way to curb the urbanization threat presently facing those sites. Kogi State government should as a matter of urgency relocates the motor parks in front of the Europeans and African cemetery.
- For any meaningful development to take place in the cultural sector, attempt must be made to ensure a practical execution of the principles of cultural Resource Management. Hence, the

Kogi State ministry of culture and Tourism, the State Hotels and Tourism Board, the State Council for Arts and Culture as presently constituted need to be reorganized in such a way that can enhance their efficiency towards the protection and maintenance of the monuments and historical sites.

- The issue of funding of these aforementioned Agencies should be addressed. The Kogi State government must recognise and appreciate the existence and important of these heritage resources and provides the necessary funds for their management.
- Obviously, infrastructure is the life support system of tourism. It is the bedrock for any meaningful tourism development. Therefore, massive rehabilitation of roads in the interior parts of Lokoja township, provision of portable water, good drainage system among others are solutions to the present decay and dearth of infrastructural facilities in the area. Maps and sign post should be mounted at strategic places within the Lokoja township for self guided tour.
- One of the most important methods of sites and monuments protection is through the use of public enlightenment policies. This entails the policy of educating the general public on the values of those heritage sites and monuments, and the roles they play in the nation's building as aid to National history and identity. If the general public are well informed of these values the incidence of wilful destruction, defacing and other negative attitudes towards these sites would be minimized or even eradicated.

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