

THE ROLE OF IMMOVABLE ARTIFACTS IN AKWA IBOM STATE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Immovable artifacts have come to have prominence amongst people of a society due to its acceptance by the people and the role it plays. They are renowned, and some are colourfully and essentially designed aesthetically. These artifacts are not only recognized and valued by members of the community or society where it is found but also appreciated by visitors all over the globe. The problem of this study is the inability of people to classify artifacts into immovable and movable objects. The specific objectives were to assess immovable artifacts in Akwa Ibom State, and to show its role in national development. The historical phenomenology method was used in the study. Data was generated through secondary and primary sources and analyzed descriptively. In conclusion, its tourism potentials help in raising the GDP of a nation and it is a boost to national development.

Keywords: GDP, Immovable artifacts, National development, Role

Introduction

To understand the inner form of a society it is quite necessary to understand its religion, and every cultural achievement understood should be done with the understanding of the religious beliefs that lie behind them. This means that there are objects produced or shaped by human craft, especially tools, weapons, or ornaments of archaeological or historical interest that has to do with the religious beliefs of the people. It could also be something viewed as a product of human conception or agency rather than an inherent element. Adams and Adams (1991, p.14) is of the opinion that artifacts are distinguished from the main body of the archaeological records such as “stratigraphic features which are non-portable remains of human activity, such as hearths, roads or deposits and remains, and from biofacts or ecofacts...tools, weapon, jewelry hints at how people dressed, what work they did, or how they worshipped”. Work of arts is a means of self-expression through the skillful use of a medium and it is human conception made manifest by the skillful use of a medium (Uzoagba, 1991).

The problem lies in a fact that very many people lack the understanding of the classification of artifacts believing that monoliths are not classified as artifacts because they are static in nature and that religion plays no role in such representation of artifacts in most cases. Others are of the opinion that artifacts should only be man-made products and thereby undermining the place of nature in forming artifacts naturally like walls and moats which could attract tourists if properly harnessed.

Therefore the objective of this study is to examine some immovable artifacts in Akwa Ibom State, and to assess their level of importance to national development. This study of importance of immovable artifacts to the people of Akwa Ibom State is delimited to the geographical location of the people, though mention is made on other cultural sectors of the country.

Granted, this study is very timely in elucidating, teaching, and exposing the rich cultural heritage of the people of Akwa Ibom State and other sub-culture areas of Nigeria.

Methodology

The choice of the phenomenological method for this research work was given thus: firstly, by suspending judgments, biases and habitual mode of thoughts by allowing the researcher to be open minded to what the subject offered. Secondly, it enabled the researcher to seek for the use of historical tools such as artifacts and religious objects to gather information by relying on the history and experiences of the people in the study area. Thirdly, this phenomenological method revealed the work of what it was, by its presence, and with what the researcher knew about it, as an insider undertaking a work on the people with the researcher's personal experiences of the subject of study.

The research instruments used in the study were primary and secondary sources of information and observation. The primary sources included data obtained from the field through oral interviews and personal observation by the researcher as an indigene of the study area. The secondary sources included: published and unpublished books, seminar papers, journals, intelligence reports, archival and internet materials, and government publications.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Identity theory in cultural studies was used in this work because it refers to a person's sense of belonging to a particular culture or group. This process of identity involves learning about and accepting traditions, heritage, language, religion, ancestry, aesthetics, thinking patterns, and social structures of a culture (Lustig, 2013). This means that culture is a part of people's self-concept as people internalize the beliefs, values, norms, and social practices of their culture and identify themselves with the said culture.

This theory is very important because it elucidates the content of value as guiding principles, to meaningful symbols, and to lifestyles that people share together in a group which the people of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria is not an exception. It further shows how the concept of self-concept becomes dynamic and multifaceted within a changing social society. An identity is a picture and some of the immovable artifacts are identified with the place and people that they are found. Therefore, some of these immovable artifacts in Akwa Ibom State are representations of the people, their belief, arts, aesthetics, value and culture.

Historical Background of The People of Akwa Ibom State

i. People: Origin and Structure

Ukpong (2007, p.2) notes that “the original homeland of the people of Akwa Ibom State before settling in Nigeria was Usak Edet, where they lived along with the Oron and perhaps also the Efut at the Nigeria/ Cameroon border”. Prior to the present time the people of Akwa Ibom as well as Cross River States were generally classified as Ibibio into sub-groups comprising of Eket, Oron, Ibeno, Efik, and Annang (Forde & Jones, 1950). On leaving the Cameroons, they migrated to their present homeland through different routes and it appears that the people’s languages and some of their customs evolved while they lived in Usak Edet in the Cameroon (Ukpong, 2007). Ukpong (2007, p.2) also notes that “the people of Akwa Ibom and Cross River States were among the 70million people speaking 700 Bantu languages/ dialects stretching approximately from Duala on the Atlantic Coast to the mouth of the Tana River in the Indian Ocean”.

The people of Akwa Ibom are culturally homogenous with a common identity and linguistic heritage and this homogeneity are considered a set of potentially unifying factor (Akpabot, 1994).

ii. Components

Akwa Ibom State is called the “*Land of Promise*” and occupies a total landmass of 7,249 square kilometres of Nigeria’s wealth basin, the South-South Zone or the Delta Region, and a coastline of 129 km long, lying between latitudes $4^{\circ} 32^1$ and $5^{\circ} 33^1$ N and longitudes $7^{\circ} 35^1$ and $8^{\circ} 25^1$ E (Government of Akwa Ibom State, 2014). The State is bounded on the East by Rivers State, the West by Cross River, the North by Abia State and the South by the Gulf of Guinea (Government of Akwa Ibom State, 2014). Akwa Ibom State was created on 23rd September, 1987 out of Cross River State, one of the pioneer 12 States created by Gowon’s military administration in 1967, following the military intervention of January, 1966 (Government of Akwa Ibom State, 2008). Sitting astride the seemingly interminable sand bank of the Bight of Bonny, the state according to NPC has a population of 3.92 million with a total of 2,044,510 males and 1,875,698 females (NPC, 2006) spread into 31 Local Government Areas.

iii. Seasons

The State has basically two distinct seasons: the rainy season which lasts from May to October, with a slight break in August, usually called “August break” while the duration of the dry season is November to April (Udoh, 1970). Due to climate change there are alterations in these seasons as they neither start nor stop when they should. However, in the coastal areas, rain falls almost all year round and the Atlantic coastline stretches from Oron in the East to Ikot Abasi in the West. The harmattan accompanied by the North-East Winds occurs in December and early January.

Akwa Ibom State falls within the tropical zone with a dominant vegetation of green foliage of trees, and shrubs. It constitutes a major chunk of the nation’s oil palm belt. The

physical relief of the State is basically flat. However, there are places in Itu and Ibiono Ibom Local Government Areas where the topography is undulating with some areas as high as 200 feet above sea level. There are in some areas, valleys, creeks and swamps due to the influence of the Atlantic Ocean, the Qua Iboe and the Cross Rivers which traverse the length and breadth of the State.

iv. Establishments

Akwa Ibom State has more than 47 hospitals and allied health institutions like “Immanuel Hospital, Eket; Psychiatric Hospital, Eket; Mercy Hospital, Abak; St. Luke’s Hospital, Anua- Uyo; Dental Care, Ikot Ekpene; Infectious Disease Hospital, Ikot Ekpene; Leprosy Hospital, Ekpene Obom; Vaginal- Vesico Fistula (VVF), Mbribrit Itam” (Government of Akwa Ibom State, 2014, p.18). Ukpe (2012) also notes that some educational institutions in Akwa Ibom State include:

University of Uyo, Uyo; Maritime Academy, Oron; College of Education, Afaha Nsit; Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Ikot Ekpene. A total of about 229 Secondary Institutions are found in the State like: Methodist Boys’ High School, Oron (1905); Etinan Institute, Etinan (1915); Holy Family College, Abak (1942); Cornelia Connelly College, Afaha Oku- Uyo (1944); Union Secondary School, Ibiaku- Itu (1948). (p.4).

Further, at present, there are no fewer than 1,110 (One thousand, one hundred and ten) public primary schools in the State (Government of Akwa Ibom State, 2014).

v. Governments

The people of Akwa Ibom State had an established system of governance and administration before the British colonial masters arrived in the 18th century. Udondata (2014) notes that:

The entire society of Akwa Ibom State was a cohesive entity under the Chieftaincy government of a highly organized structure arrangement in a hierarchy from the linear family to the mega structure of the “Local” government. There were Primary Chiefs, Higher Chiefs and Honorary Chiefs. Primary chiefs were of three types: Ete Idung or Ete Ufok (Leader of the household), Obong Ekpuk (Family Head), and Obong Isong (Village Head). The Higher Chiefs were of two types: Akuku (Clan Head) and the Paramount Ruler. The Honourary Chiefs were members of the community who had distinguished themselves in one area of prominence or the other and they enjoyed every right and privilege of the Chieftaincy institution. (p.29).

The arrangement of the different category of chiefs in their hierarchy was for the facilitation of administrative duties within their households, family, village and clans. The village head had Council of Chiefs that dispensed justice to the people. The Clan head in turn, worked with the village heads out of whom he constituted his council.

In this 21st century, Akwa Ibom State is one of the 36 States in the Nigerian Federation. The State is divided into 31 Local Government Areas and Uyo is the State capital. Other major towns include: Eket, Ikot Ekpene, Ikot Abasi, Oron, Abak, Itu,

Etinan and Ibiaku Ntok Okpo. The State has the presence of Federal, State and Local government administration. In view of this, and in contemporary political platform, the State has been governed by the following Governors since its creation:

- i. Tunde Ogbeha - (Sept. 28, 1987- Aug. 1, 1988)
- ii. Godwin Abbe - (Aug. 1, 1988- Sept. 9, 1990)
- iii. Idongesit Nkanga - (Sept. 5, 1990- Jan. 2, 1992)
- iv. Akpan Isemin (Late) - (Jan. 2, 1992- Nov. 17, 1993)
- v. Yakubu Bako - (Dec. 15, 1993- Aug. 21, 1996)
- vi. Joseph A. Adeusi - (Aug. 21, 1996- Aug. 10, 1998)
- vii. Eyepeiyah John Ebiye -(Aug. 10, 1998- May 29, 1999)
- viii. Victor Attah - (May 29, 1999- May 29, 2007)
- ix. Godswill Akpabio - (May 29, 2007- May 29, 2015)
- x. Udom Gabriel Emmanuel (May 29, 2015- ??????)

vi. Occupation

The three major intra- ethnic groups are Ibibio, Annang and Oron, other sub-groups include: Eket, Ibeno, Itu Mbonuso and the Andonis, while English is the language of government and business (K. Ekpo, Personal Communication, September 17, 2013). Akwa Ibom people are as industrious and resourceful as they are hospitable. A majority of the rural populace engaged in farming. Akwa Ibom falls within the tropical zone with a dominant vegetation of green foliage trees, shrubs and oil-palm tree belt which holds the highest density of the cash crops in the world including rubber, cocoa and rice (Ministry of Information and Culture, 1995). Other dominant crops are coconut, citrus, cassava, yam, maize, cowpeas, plantain, banana, pineapple and kolanut. Other traditional occupations of the people are fishing, trading, wood-carving, raffia works, blacksmithing, pottery, iron works, tailoring, arts and craft creations (Ministry of Information and Culture, 1995). The State is also endowed with rich deposits of limestone, gravel, sand, salt, silver nitrate, silica sand and kaolin that can be commercially exploited.

Akwa Ibom is often described as a uni-cultural State where norms, taboos, customs and traditions are the same. Folkways may vary from one ethnic grouping to another, but the operational norms of the culture are basically the same all over the State. The people of Akwa Ibom State have a common ancestral antecedence having an unparallel impact on the people through traditional songs, dances and beliefs (Umanah, 2012). This cultural commonality is epitomized in the similarities in cuisines, dressing, dances, songs, rituals, folklores, beliefs and myth (Government of Akwa Ibom State, 2008). Almost all aspects of its culture had potentials to provide fascinating experiences for tourists and for investment opportunities. The social unit consists of the *Ufok* (family), *Irib Ete* (household/patrilineal relatives), *Ekpuk* (groups of patrilineal relatives tracing their genealogy to a common ancestor or fore-father), *Awio* (village), *Imaan* (clan) (Meek, 1937 and Ekanem, 2006).

Like other Africans, religion cuts through the whole life of the people of Akwa Ibom State. Thus, the people believe in a Supreme Deity called *Awasi*, *Nnem* (intermediary deities and spirits), Ancestors (*Mme Ete-Ete*), *Aruru* (invisible and unidentifiable force) (Parrinder, 1969; Idowu, 1973; Enang, 1975; Enang, 1979). Therefore, social and religious concern is seen in a single oneness in Akwa Ibom State.

Traditional system of communication refers to modes of meaning exchange that are rooted in a people's culture, and which began from the era of pre-literate and pre-modern man (Ukonu & Wogu, 2008). Diverse ways were seen in this regards like: folktales, proverbs and fables, masquerades, masks, technology, etc. It is a means by which indigenous people communicate with one another and which survive to the present, despite the passage of time and the smothering influence of the modernity (Edeogu & Nnaji, 2012). These systems of communication were passed from one generation to another and were as such derived from society's experience and thoughts over a long period of years. Dobb (1961, p.95) describing indigenous communication media notes that "it ranges from conscious activities like dancing and drama, speech, non involuntary ones such as belching and even growing". It was a totality of what was obtained in the culture of a people which are still very necessary in the society today.

The African sense of religion entering all areas of life made people to feel that many objects and places had a religious significance. Some of these natural objects and places, and others were made by people themselves. Artifacts as already stated in the work were works of art and crafts. They were also physical and cultural life of a people as found in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Some of the artifacts were set aside as religious symbols and they provided insight into the customs, preferences, styles special occasions, work and play of the culture in which it was created.

Immovable Artifacts

Osuagwu (2002) notes that:

Immovable cultural heritage under the Nigerian law are fossil remains (human or animal), ancient habitations, caves, natural shelter, inscriptions on rocks, printings and engravings, statues, historical buildings, walls and moats, monoliths, shrines, bridges, human settlement, ancient and burial site as well as cultural landscapes. (p.56).

Hence, in Annang traditional society, ancient habitation which is still extant in rural communities depicting technological expertise of the people is shown in **figure 1** below.



Fig. 1: Traditional ancient/historical building

Source: Ukana Mkpa Eyop, Afaha Obong Clan, Abak L. G. A.

A traditional building of this nature and magnitude showed the ingenuity of the technological arts of the people of Akwa Ibom State in time past.

The 'Government Hills' at Itu, Uyo and Abak retained the feature of 20th century colonial administrative centres complete with mangoes and pear tree that were silent witnesses to the historical events and personalities that shaped the history of the era. This was also reflected in the local street names like barracks, hospital, brooks and liverpool streets. The hill behind the local Government Secretariat at Abak where the newly constructed hanging bridge passes through has mangoe, pear, and cashew trees that are of economic benefits to the people of Abak, Akwa Ibom State as shown in **figure 2**.



Fig. 2: Government Hill, Abak.
Source: Behind Abak L. G. A. Secretariat, Abak.

A newly completed suspended bridge constructed by Governor Godswill Akpabio showing the hilly terrain behind Abak Local Government Area Secretariat, Abak.

The Royal Niger boat yard is found after Lugard's house, a large boat yard where merchant ships were built and repaired with several sizes which was an indication of the extensive businesses carried out in the area in the past. Itu river was renowned slave trade route with an old jetty, a number of old prison-like ware-houses where slaves were kept awaiting shipment, main lodge and residence of the white slave merchant's much complex and beautifully constructed one-storey building.

Mary Slessor's cabin was a monument erected on the site of the home built by "the Queen of Okoyong" herself, on top of Okoyong hill as shelter for twins and their mothers, whom she rescued from the evil forest. The Hall of Fame was a monument built in remembrance of the brave women killed in the 1929 women riot at the consular beach, Egwang Opobo now Ikot Abasi and elsewhere in the State (www.aksgonline.com). In a bid to remembering all the slain women during the riot, the state government built a statue for them in Ikot Abasi Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State as shown in **figure 3**.



Fig. 3: A statue erected in honour of women killed in 1929 women protest.

Source: Ikot Abasi Local Government Secretariat.

The riot had economic, political, and social undertones, predicated upon the overture to tax the women over their petty trade, and the expatriate firms participated in the trade and in some places monopolized it (Anele, 1999). The commemorative marble plaque inside the building contains names of the twenty-three women that died at Ikot Abasi, three that died at Etim Ekpo and another thirty-three at Abak. Also listed alongside their names are the names of their towns of origin which on close examination shows they came from all over the former Eastern Region and Niger Delta areas. Also, a statue was erected in front of Ikot Abasi Local Government Secretariat which was then the administrative headquarters of the British colonial government, every December 16th each year, all Akwa Ibom women gather at the site to commemorate the selfless sacrifice of these women. The Women War Memorial, Consulate Road, Ikot Abasi also has a plaque and all the names of the women killed in the protest of 1929 as shown in **table 1**.

Table 1: Distribution of Names of Women killed in the Protest of 1929

16 th DECEMBER 1929 AT CONSULATE BEACH, EWANGA OPOBO (IKOT ABASI)		
S/N	Name	Town of Origin
1	ADIAHA EDEM (JUSTICE UDO UDOMA'S MOTHER)	IBEKWE
2	ALIMI AROMEA	LAGOS
3	MARY NSEKWE	OPOBO
4	ORUBA	

5	EKA	OPOBO
6	REGINA COOKEY	OPOBO
7	LEGE JAJA	
8	OROMI JAJA	
9	MTAKWE URANTA	
10	NWA NWA WARIBO	
11	SUI DAPPA	
12	JOSEPHINE JAJA	
13	VIRGINIA UBANI	
14	ADELIN TOBY	
15	MARY TATARE	
16	ELIZABETH BLACK	
17	ADELIN BLACK	
18	ESTHER STRONGFACE	
19	ABIGAIL IBIAGBAM	OPOBO
20	ABIGAIL MINIMA	OPOBO
21	ADIAHA UKONYA	IKOT OBONG
22	REBECCA THOMPSON	IKOT OBONG
23	ADIAHA OGBANAKU	ANDONI
24	ARIMIA INTE	ANDONI
25	NWAPA	ANDONI
26	ADIAHA OBOT	ANDONI
27	UMKO	OGONI
28	ADIAHA UDO	IKOT OBIO ITONG
29	VICTORIA DREAN	BONNY
30	ADA IGBI	
31	MARY OKONKWO	
32	VIRGINA CHAGWA	NKURI
33	NUDA RONNY	
AT UTU ETIM EKPO ON 15TH DECEMBER, 1929		
1	ADIAMA AKPAN UDOM	NTO IMONTE
2	UNWA ATAI ENYON	NTO IMONTE
3	EYEN OBOT IKONO	EKPENE OTON
4	EKPAT UDO UMO	NTO IMONTE
5	MBOBO AKPAN MBOBO	NTO IMONTE
6	ANIEHOK UDOALIATTA	NTO IMONTE
7	OFONMBUK UDO ETOKEKPO	UTU ASAKA
8	UNNA AFA IFEM	NTO IMONTE
9	EYAN ATIA ATTA	NTO IMONTE
10	UNWA AKPAN UKOETOR	EKPENE OTON
11	UNWAINYONG NKONDUOK	EKPENE OTON
12	INYANG AKPAN ETUKIPONG	NTO ODUNG
13	AMADI UDOIDONG AKPAN UMO	NTO ODUNG
14	NWEKE AKPAN ACHUKWO	NTO IMONTE
15	ANWANWA ETUKUDONKPAN- NSDP	NTO CHUKWU
16	UNWA UMON WIFE OF A PROMINENT CHIEF AKPAN OKONAWO	
17	UMO UNWA ETOKEYEN	
18	EYEN INYANG UMOH	
19	EYEN ETUKUDO	
20	ANWAN ESHIET OBOKO	
21	EKPAT UDO UMON	
22	UNWA ETUKUDO ANWAN-OWO	NTO ODUNG
AT ABAK ON 14TH DECEMBER, 1929		
1	MARY UDO EKPO ATTAI	UTU ABAK
2	MAMA KOFI UDEDEN	UTU ABAK
3	ADIAHA OKURE UMOH	IKPE IKOT AKWA

Source: Women War Memorial, Consulate Road, Ikot Abasi. 4th June, 2015.

The table shows that women involved in the protest were not just indigenes of Akwa Ibom State alone but from other parts of the country. It should be noted that among other things the most important reason for the protest was the ill- treatment of the natives mostly men, some of them also happen to be their husbands.

Mary Slessor's residence and office at the present Government Secondary School at Ikot Obong, Ibiono Local Government Area is a remodeled version of the old mission school she built in the late 19th century to cater for educational needs of indigent children. The old structure is combined with new ones but the old walls are as strong as they were built. Within the school premises are ruins of her former office and the concrete steps leading to her office and safe recently moved by the Presbyterian Church for safe keeping are still intact. It was in this site that Mary Slessor died in 1915 and from where her body was moved to Calabar, the then capital of the region for burial.

Off the road from the hall of fame is the house which Lord Lugard the colonial governor of Nigeria amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914, making Nigeria one geographical entity. It was also in this historical edifice which serves as an administrative office in Ikot Abasi Local Government, that General Olusegun Obasanjo the commanding officer of the Nigerian Army and General Phillip Effiong in January 1970 signed and declared a cease-fire that brought the Nigerian-Biafran civil war to an end. Originally, the building itself belonged to the Royal Niger Company, the merchant traders who were given the Royal Charter to govern Nigeria on behalf of the British Crown till 1900. This building served as their administrative headquarters and stands on short concrete pillars with brick wall and hard wood with its corrugated iron roof sheets. The bonker constructed by the Biafran army lies fallow beside Oron National Museum, and facing Oron beach as well as the old jetty. The bonker served the Biafran army as they fired their shots from there as shown in **figure 4**.



Fig. 4: Biafran army bunker used during the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970).
Source: National Museum, Oron.

This bunker made of a very strong concrete and iron rod with protectors lie beside the National Museum, Oron where Biafran soldiers stayed to defend their territories on possible attacks by Nigerian soldiers.

Conclusion

Every society has one immovable artifact or the other that is part of the culture of the people, which is also valued and very central to the development of that particular community or society. Traditional artists are involved in the construction of some of the artifacts as it is believed that they are given such powers by an overpowering sense of communion with the supernatural which may invoke a desire for outward representation. In Akwa Ibom State, though there are many of such immovable artifacts mention was made of a vast number but just a few was pictured like: traditional ancient / historical building, government hills, women statue, and the Biafran bunker. These were used to show how important they are to the people of the state as well as the country Nigeria at large. The different history behind every immovable artifact makes them auspicious in the development of Nigeria. Therefore, trying to sever them from the history of the Nigerian nation would make such history an incomplete one.

Recommendations

- i. Governments at federal, state and local levels should work on legislation that would enhance proper preservation of these artifacts.
- ii. Every individual and group should collectively make the protection of such artifacts a key and paramount thing in their daily lives.
- iii. Governments should further give these artifacts a face- lift as and when due to encourage more tourists.
- iv. The younger generations and pupil in schools should be exposed to these immovable artifacts as it would be more knowledgeable practically to them.

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