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Culture, Tourism and National Integration in Nigeria

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Abstract

The state of affairs that preceded Nigeria's independence and its emergence as a nation state nurtured an idea of a promising nation of greatness. However, that outburst of hope was short-lived by sudden incursions resulting from various crises that personified its existence and the woes that plunged the young country into a confused state, battered by instability, and disunity. To that extend, lots of issues surrounding Nigeria's existence as one indivisible entity have for decades been threatened and subjected to ridicule against the backdrop of its multi-ethnic conglomeration and identity crisis. Though concerted efforts were made in a bid to nip the issues at its bud; but, it appears only little had been achieved thus far. Little wonder the continuous relapse in spite of all adopted and invented strategies. Suffice it to say, the events of the past had the heads of both military and civilian governments under pressure to fashion out ways of tackling the menace. In all of that, less attention was given to the culture and tourism sector. This paper examines the roles of culture and tourism as cohesive factors in tackling the difficult and appalling problems of Nigeria's national cohesion. It notes that the inability to surmount the apparent challenges of disunity was exacerbated by the obvious neglect of the sector. Hence, the paper suggests that the solution to the long range schism lies in the history of cultural diversity and laying much emphasis on that would help greatly to foster national unity in Nigeria.

Introduction

The nativity of Nigeria with the sobriquet; 1914 amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates, paved way for the fusion of dissimilar ethnic groups alongside

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obvious huge cultural bifurcation. This seemingly forceful union had been argued to be the reason behind some serious challenges that engulfed Nigeria since independence.¹ Viewed and considered as a credible assertion, some scholars have faulted the union and avowed that it is one of the root causes of the country's woes. While that has been a popular storyline to garner some level of empathy and justify its perpetuity and obdurateness, some intellectuals have maintained a contrarian – stating that despite the challenges inherited from the colonial masters, the elites at independence had all they needed to shape the future of the country.² But, against all practical purposes, they botched in virtually every attempt to undo some of the colonial legacies that were known to be antithetical to Nigeria's progress and unity.³ Within such popular opinion, it has been argued that the scenarios that played out could not have superimposed the fact that seated on a tectonic plate is an embattled country whose nationhood has been threatened and it is on the verge of losing its nationhood due to some obvious features of underdevelopment which precludes justice, good governance, equity, bestiality, very minimal ethno-religious crisis, corruption free, apolitical disturbance *inter alia*.⁴

Against all contrivance, the country had witnessed different stages of schisms instilled by identity crisis – a dreaded situation that has continued to form an atmosphere of rancor with much consternation; presumed to be caused by cultural variance and mutual suspicion. Thus, it has been argued that within the estimated ethnic groups of about 250, there exist deep divides; a fissure created by warring factions, triggered by mutual suspicion and exacerbated by high level of intolerance.⁵ However, it is thoughtful to note that within the nuances of all subsisting cultural differences lies so much that had united and encouraged ethnic unison.

Be that as it may, it has been argued that given such tendencies, there are huge chances or likelihood of two dissimilar bodies to come together and relate within the purview of shared interest and common factors. It is in line with this that proponents of "unity in diversity" have shown that the incorporation of common or shared socio-political framework is very crucial to ensuring unity between and among dissimilar groups which espouses the very idea of homophily. This knowledge had since been put to use by

countries like: Kenya, Ghana, India, Malaysia and lots of others with results oriented reinforcements – where words are marched with actions.⁶ The situation has not been different in Nigeria where several attempts have been made in the past by constituted authorities targeted at reinvigorating all consigned mores and cultural heritages with a view to aid the enhancement of national integration. Those attempts were executed either via direct contact with cultural Administrators in government's MDAs (such as NATCOM-UNESCO and NICO) or through NGOs, multinationals, and arms of UN like UNESCO whose statutory engagements involve reviving and sustaining diverse cultures and world heritage sites.⁷ But despite the efforts made thus far, the country has continued to hit "rock bottom" as it struggles to stem the rising tide of disunity among its multi-various ethnic groups. The problem has continued to deepen with less emphasis on pro-unity and people friendly measures that support consensual elements of culture and tourism such as: languages, dressing patterns, tapestry, local delicacies, festivals, traditional marriages, indigenous arts and craft among others that have been helping in promulgating national cohesion vis-à-vis cultural integration policies and programmes.⁸

An Overview of Culture and Tourism Sector in Nigeria

A close view at the précis of Nigeria's culture and tourism sector gives a frigid idea of a beleaguered entity. Given Nigeria's heterogeneous nature that defines its diversity, the country is well endowed with rich cultural endowments, reputable world heritage sites, creative arts men/women and craftsmen/craftswomen that are found and confined within the domain of its geographical boundaries.⁹ By such endowments, it would not be too much to expect a vibrant and viable sector of culture and tourism. Nonetheless, in spite of the great potentials that if tapped and maximized would accelerate greater economic growth, increase national unity and even enhance the chances of job creation, the sector is pathetically at a sorry state with some minimal degree of attention accorded to it by the government. The situation is even aggravated by either misappropriation in cases where funds are made available or mismanagement on

the side of cultural officers entrusted with the duty of nurturing the sector.¹⁰

History is replete with information about the diversity of the Nigerian nation. Study has equally shown that there subsist about 500 languages of different ethnic groups with diverse traditions and mores – most of which have been in existence for more than a half century A.D. Both ancient and relatively recent cultures have found their bearings in the scheme of events that characterised the existence of Nigeria as a nation. The correlation between culture and development have been evinced to be the very reason behind the progress of inter-group relations that paved way for cultural transposition.¹¹ Hence, Nigeria today is known as one of the countries in the continent of Africa with the most diverse cultural endowment due to its multi-various ethnic groups. In consequence, it is argued that the Connubial relationship between and among the concentration of those groups ought to have contributed monumentally to the growth and development of a unified country. But the process of nation building and cohesion was bridled and truncated by colonial invasion which in turn exploited and capitalised on the symbolic differences obvious among the different ethnic groups.¹² Instead of capitalizing and focusing on the diverse cultural elements that promote unity, much efforts were voted on those things that further created division among the people. And because of that, the disparities over time were widened by ethnic nationalism, religious bigotry, and cultural hegemony among other viral suspicious moves. Husaini Abdu presents a more precise reason behind the division: "As each ethnic group asserts its identity and continue to forward its interest over and above the interest of others, ethnic and religious gaps continued to widen. As a result, the growing combustion escalated into incessant violence of ethno-religious character."¹³ In other words, it was within the perimeter of such vicious circle that different societies witnessed an upsurge in the threshold of heated altercation. Consequently, chaos and confusion obfuscated the sceneries of events; hence, became the norm. That was the case that personified the occurrence of events. As Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was one of the elites during the first republic asserts: "The entity Nigeria was a mere geographical expression; there is no country called Nigeria because he

happened to be first an Egba man, then a Yoruba man before being a Nigerian."¹⁴

However, beyond such obvious differences lie a lot of novel ideas, strands of social and cultural potentials that have bonded rather than divided the people with interesting cases buttressing the intrinsic gestures. Though, studies have shown that very little emphasis have been laid on vital and circumstantial components of culture that possess latent influences on human behaviours in terms of reforming and re-orientating the mind.¹⁵ Notably, mention have been made that the fact that Nigeria has come thus far as a united nation does not imply the absence of squabbles. In actual fact, the country had been through a lot with so much to account for especially with regards to less action on the parts of leaders and followers as well; to deliberately insist on superimpositions of neutral or common cultural constituents that have spurred national unity through culture and tourism (social networks and homophily).¹⁶

The Place of Culture and Tourism in Promoting National Cohesion

Characteristically, culture has evinced the ability to bring together various components of life to form a unique lifestyle for different people with a view to enhancing inter-group relations and foist national unity. It has been defined by the National Policy Document as "the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges 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 neighbour".¹⁷ Besides, in the past, cultural diversity served as a force that drove long distant trade between and among two or more nations that were poles apart. Trade relations engineered by the desperate desire for more and more exotic and luxury goods which in turn assisted in enhancing cordial trade relations. It was upon that pedestal that tourism eventually emerged – a travel for leisure and by extension provided avenues where people got to meet and espoused dissimilar customs, made new friendships and even related better, hence, fostered integration.¹⁸

As a result, people began to respect and appreciate other peoples' cultures other than theirs. Little by little, denigration of unfamiliar cultures or traditions drastically reduced with an attendant upsurge in cultural diffusion through adoption. That was the case that gave birth to cultural diffusion or transposition with scenarios where a Yoruba man accepts say: the Hausa attire or ways of dressing which is completely different from what is entirely a Yoruba mode of dressing. And by implication, he/she share in the latter's distinct cultural constituents with much veneration and the other way round. While that is the case, same story goes with an Igbo man seen proudly displaying Hausa man's culture and a Hausa man doing same with great delight. Even more impressive is the fact that minority cultures have permeated majority cultures with a wide range and astonishing level of acceptability.¹⁹

Nigeria's Cultural Diversity and its Impact on Promoting Unity

As the term culture educes numerous manifestations of human intellectual achievements which are considered to be common to a group of people. It could as be known as ideas, customs, and social behaviours of a particular group of people that differentiates them from yet another group. It connotes likewise the knowledge, belief, art, morals, law and any other capabilities or habits acquired by man as a member of a society.²⁰ Essentially, culture has been able to stand as an optic fiber that connects people with either similar or dissimilar way of life. It is interesting to note that cultural connections or affiliations transcend national borders.

Material Culture

This speaks largely about the physical aspect of culture that humans create or make and give meanings to. Examples of material culture includes: dress pattern, local delicacies, indigenous architecture, arts and craft among others.

Dress Pattern

In the area of dressing, Nigeria is characterized by the diversity of its traditional attires. More like what is often seen,

it is fashionable for Nigerians to wear the traditional dresses of their regions or ethnic groups of origin. Thus:

The Igbo men from southeast geo-political region for instance are known for their red caps just as the hat is a peculiar feature of men's traditional wears in the Niger Delta region. In Benue State the "Ange" cloth characterized by its zebra-like black and white stripes is used by the Tiv people while their Idoma neighbour wear similar clothes with red and black stripes.²¹

However, the situation is even more interesting in that it is not unusual for Nigerians to adopt particular attire from other regions which have become very popular. For example, Nigerians all over the country have been seen in different cultural outfits representing one culture or another that is not inherently theirs. Such occurrences are commonly seen during occasions like marriages, conferences, coronations, naming ceremonies and others. The prevalence of such helps in cementing cultural ties as more and more people feel comfortable and acceptable dressing in other peoples' traditional outfit.²² Hence:

...the ensemble "Baban riga" (or "Agbada"), "Buba" and "Shokoto", completed with a cap to match, or the "Kaftan" which are popular among the men-folk in the north (predominantly Hausa/Fulani) are now worn by people from other parts of the country. In western Nigeria, the Yoruba brand of the "Agbada", "Buba", "Shokoto", with the cap to match, has become popular too. The recently introduced attire, referred to as "resource control", which was initially associated with men from the Niger-Delta region has today become a common outfit across the length and breadth of Nigeria. As for the women-folk, the "Buba", "Iro", "Gele", "Ipele" have been adopted across the regions with minor nuances of style. Although attached to the uniqueness of the traditional attires of their places of origin, Nigerians are also simple lovers of beauty and so do not hesitate to adopt a fashion or an object of beauty that appeals to them. Most of these cloths are products of hand-woven fabrics such as "Akwete", "Aso-Oke", "Batik", "Tie and Dye", "Ota-ochi". These materials

are the vogue in the textile industry. Nigerians have carved a niche for themselves in the fashion world. The use of "Ankara" materials by both men and women sets Nigerians apart in fashion at home and internationally.²³

Undoubtedly, the level of cultural transposition within the length and breadth of Nigeria as shown in dress pattern has helped in cultural diffusion and that to a large extent has equally assisted Nigerians to see each other as one. Needless to say, the cultural blend in various traditional attires has indeed blended Nigerians such that in many instances, it is difficult to differentiate an Igala man from an Ogoja man or a Northerner from a Southerner – judging by the way they dress. This happenstance has helped to discourage laying emphasis on contentious issues and has encouraged the gradual attrition of antagonistic cultures (senile dementia). Because of that, a man from the North can dress like a man from the South, likewise those in the West, or East. Consequently, a Yoruba man from the South/West begins to see and relate with a Hausa man from either far North/East or North/Western part of the country or even an Ijaw man from South/South with a Tiv from the Middle Belt.²⁴ This has inadvertently created beautiful scenery of a unified Nigeria and showcased the exquisiteness of cultural diversity.

Local Delicacies

The mixture of specially selected condiments found locally in cooking different foodstuffs has led to the emergence of unique cuisines characterised with sweet taste and flavour. The situation is not too different with Nigeria's unique cookery. The effect of cultural diversity occasioned by the country's multi-various ethnic groups is felt even in the method and style of culinary practice in Nigeria. This means that every ethnic group has a particular food they are known with which they cherish a lot. The diverse cuisine has become synonymous to the ethnic group that produces it; in a way that the mere mentioning of say Amala brings to mind an aspect of Yoruba culinary or Fura da Nono speaks of the Hausa/Fulani cookery and same goes for others.²⁵ To that extent, the major local delicacies have become a sort of national heritage of distinct cultures which include:

Edikaikon, Okoho, Fufu, Tuwo, Akpu, Suya, Kilishi, Gbegeri, Owo, Bush meat, Fura da nono, Kunu, Amala, Eba, Pounded Yam and lots of others. The rich tastes and alluring cuisines have made Nigerians from various cultures to prefer eating these foods to the western or so-called continental dishes.²⁶ Accordingly, Nigerians have become freer to eat whatever it is they want to eat not minding where it comes from. That in diverse ways had cemented the relationships among various ethnic groups in Nigeria as well as promoted national unity.

Arts and Crafts

In view of the ingenuity of mankind, high level of inventiveness had been on display since prehistoric times when man relied solely on what he can get readily from his environment. To survive the vagaries of the environment, early man – *Homo Habilis* who was also known as the handy man manufactured stone tools like Choppers, Flakes, arrow heads grafted to sticks to form spears and others which were largely classified into: Oldowan, Acheulian and Sangoan tools.²⁷

Those tools were put to use in hunting games and in digging root crops that served as food at a time when man lived by hunting and gathering, shortly before the onset of a sedentary lifestyle. With the passage of time, progress was made and man could not have continued with the early rudimentary way of life. And at the passage of time, man discovered iron from its ore which led to the manufacturing of more sophisticated tools. He began to put to use his prehensile abilities aided by high dexterity to create objects that supported his life. Wood was carved into different shapes and sizes while iron went through the process of smelting and smiting to forge or form different objects with beautiful designs and inscriptions.²⁸ That gives an idea of how arts and craft started. Factors which include climate, geography and religious practices did play a role in arts and crafts developments which were pitted on both utility and aesthetic values.

Eccentrically, early works of arts were personified by high technical know-how as seen in a nascent civilization which were reflected in major artistic works or traditional art cultures such as the Nok, Ife, Benin, Igbo-Ukwu, Owo, Esie to mention but a few. Symbolically, the art works provided lots

of information that were used to reconstruct past events that if not for them, the knowledge of those events would have been completely lost.²⁹ Graded as high quality works of arts, they represented the evidence of early civilization in Nigeria as well as the peopling of the region. Needless to say, the onset of art traditions had been linked to traditional carvers and with gradual changes, the practice has over time and space been transformed into modern-day art with "western-trained" artists. Since Independence, Nigeria had witnessed five successive generations of modern artists portraying different substantive ingenious abilities. As a result, some periods in the cultural transition of Nigeria have enjoyed worldwide patronage.³⁰ With more and more patronage, the craftsmen were encouraged to produce things like state swords, sceptres, royal drums, ivory ornaments, whisks fans beaded handles, crowns and various royal regalia. The level of impacts has been outlined in virtually all encyclopedia of world art.³¹

Nonmaterial Culture

This is principally an aspect of culture that deals with cultural elements which are knitted to behavioural patterns in humans. It involves abstract gestures made by humans when relating with one another. Such gestures appear in different intangible forms like belief system (religion), social roles, music, dance, rules, ethics, language, values, trust, and social networks *inter alia*.³²

Traditional Music and Dance

In contemporary Nigeria, the foundation of modern music and dance had been traced to the traditions of the various local communities in Nigeria. Different ethnic groups have been known to have their unique music and dance forms, which they use for entertaining themselves and important guests during festivals. Take for instance, on the Plateau, cultural festivals like Nzambirom presents an opportunity where the Magavul, Angas, and the Gamai dancers among host of others converge to display their cultures which of course tell a lot about their proclivity to life. Such gathering creates an awesome ambiance that brings about respect for each other and enhances deep interaction which promotes peace and unity. It is symbolic and also

cultural that in a traditional Nigerian setting, every event attracts its own form of music.³³ There is music for entertaining workmen in farms or any communal function with double membrane drums on hollow wood, gongs, horns local flutes and trumpets. Example include songs used for farming among the Nupe people in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.³⁴ In the same vein, there is music for naming ceremony, coronation of kings and even that specifically done during burials. It is interesting that both genders are involved in this ancient tradition cutting across many generations. For example the Idoma of Benue state, have the *Ajah*, *Oghrinye*, *Odumu* and *Ichicha* to mention but a few. Their Tiv brothers have the *Swange* and *Kwagh-hir*; while *Atilogu* and *Nkponkiti* is common in southeast; *Sakara*, *Bata*, *Sato*, *Ponse*, *Yemoja*, *Gelede*, are prominent among Southwestern people; as *Chalawa*, *Dabe*, *Goje* hold sway in the northeast and northwest respectively; and *Igbabo* is well known in Edo State (south-south region).³⁵

Music and dance do not just represent the leisure aspects of culture but they also tell stories of Nigerians who are widely known for their orchestra or ensemble of traditional performance. Within the strength of its entertaining powers lies same and equal power to bring people of different cultures together in an atmosphere of peace, unity and tranquility. Through music, lots of messages of peace have been transmitted emphasising the need for people to love one another, eschew violence and tolerate their excesses. The songs of Onyeka Onwenu title: "One Love Keep Us Together" and "Me and You will Live as One" puts it succinctly.³⁶ To that extent, music and dance have played crucial roles in bringing people together. It has also been of help in making people realised how important it is to respect other peoples' culture, thereby creating connect between and among two or more ethnic groups. There is therefore no gainsaying the fact that music and dance has been an integral aspect of human life which speak a lot about events and happenstance in virtually all human societies. Every type of music associated to any community has a unique tradition attached to it; a tradition that helps oversee its pattern as well as the instruments used which enunciate the rationale behind its make up or why it is formed either as a byproduct of peace and unity or otherwise.

The Movie Industry

Clearly, one cannot undermine the role of movies or dramas in uniting people with different cultural affiliations. Part of the roles of the National Theatre Management is to ensure the censorship and approval of good productions for public viewing. And within the ambit of the criteria that warrants such approval is that the movie or drama must promote unity and progress of Nigeria.³⁷ Although, there had been quite a few missive or ideas that have send wrong messages, thereby inciting one group against another. Yakubu Gowon posits that:

There are situations in which creative individuals have lent their talents to the propagation of hate and other divisive tendencies that threaten the unity of our nation. Owning to the popularity of these people, ordinary citizens on the street have now tended to believe that the short term benefits of evil are to be preferred to the long term good of society.³⁸

However, some movies or drama have the potency to foster unity and encourage the culture of peace and harmony. There is no doubt therefore that some have been used to either avert war or promote peace and unity in various instances. Nigerian Former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon states that:

The Nigerian motion picture Industry is a veritable tool that can be used to drive nationalism, build values of love, peace and tolerance among Nigerians. Film should and must be used to sustain conversations that bind us together. Motion picture practitioners must sustain the current narratives with positive images and stories that cast Nigeria in good light and reinforce tendencies that promote our diverse cultures, economies, languages and dialects. I believe that the industry has the power to encourage citizens to see themselves as friends of Nigeria, and friends are always loyal to one another...³⁹

Explicit ideas from movie or drama scenes have been used to promote intergroup marriages, cultural innovations, and cultural diffusion and adaptation. Take for instance the

Nollywood drama titled: "North East" tells a story of an Igbo Christian physiotherapist who embarks on a romantic relationship with one of his patients who is a Hausa Muslim, only to face a vehement opposition on the basis of religion and ethnicity from her father. However, the abysmal storyline turned out to be beautiful as the two lovers turned their fortune around and got married with the blessings of their parents.⁴⁰ By and large, stories of such and many alike can be so humorous and appalling at times. They equally demonstrate high potency and might in uniting a people.

Language

Articulated spoken words or languages remain a very crucial element of every culture. It is a system of words and symbols which are used to communicate between two or more people. The complexities resulting in the development of language as a special human culture had stirred up some contentious views. Such intricacies hinged on how language developed. Chomsky posits that: "humans have an innate mental apparatus specifically devoted to assemble words in sentences – an inborn *language organ*". Conversely, Daniel L. Everett in his "Language: The Cultural Tool" holds to the view that against what Chomsky thought, language is learned. But even beyond what they both consider as the genre of language is the fact that it is characteristically a cultural element that potentiates the means through which human talk and understand themselves, hence, aids in the promotion of unity.⁴¹

Generally, it has been recorded that Nigeria constitutes about two hundred and fifty ethnic groups (250); each of which possesses its dialect or Language through which it is identified. This therefore means that language is a potent tool for creating and mastering the complex realities that define a people within any geographical area. Hence, it remains one of the most dynamic elements of any culture within any given society. Languages are very important means of communication and equally the medium through which knowledge is transmitted. To that extent, language is an essential medium of understanding and mutual cooperation between and among different groups or "ethnic nationalities". Be that as it may, some super structures have

grown within the strands of both spoken and written languages which have been helping to reconcile the diversities of ethnic groups so as to promote unity. This explains the relevance of "Unity in Diversity". Models or instances that buttress such includes: dress patterns, inter-group marriages, national festivals that brings different cultures together, music, shared religious beliefs and practices as well as commerce. There is no doubt that the fore bearing have created platforms upon which people have developed interest in other cultures to the extent of speaking different languages and taking names from other cultures for their children and even titles for themselves.⁴² And that gave rise to what had been regarded as "The Nigerian Culture", such that it is not uncommon to see an Igbo man speaking Hausa so fluently that one can barely say whether or not he/she is from the Eastern part of the country and vice versa.

The Tourism Industry

Nigeria is a country heavily endowed with both natural and human resources; it most advertently makes it one of the most preferred tourist destinations in Africa. The rich cultural heritage and diverse species of fauna and flora (cultural and ecological resources) together with a high population of over 177 million people, earned it the honour of bearing the foremost title of the "Giant of Africa." The conglomeration of resources that are spread within a landmass of about 932,768 km² make Nigeria an intriguing place to visit.⁴³ The sceneries and magnificence outcrops, boulders and landscapes have fascinated tourists all over the world. Thus:

(Lots of people have visited the country as tourist owing to its natural features or endowments) which include: a warm, sunny climate, fascinating beaches and evergreen vegetation in the south; while in the north; alluring landforms overshadow wide expanses of savannah grassland. There are other interesting natural features including hill formations, waterfalls, and springs, pockets of mountainous areas with temperate-like climate and a range of unique and uncommon species of wildlife.⁴⁴

Explicitly, some of the natural features have been given different local names based on either the name of where

they are located or the functions they perform or something else. For example: Sukur Landscape which is in present day Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Zuma Rock located along Kaduna- Abuja Highway in Niger State, Olumo Rock is located in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Kura Falls is located 77 km from Jos, Plateau State, Shere Hills is at the apex of the Jos Plateau, Agbokim Waterfalls at Agbokim, Gurara Water Falls is located off Minna Suleja road in Niger State, Erin Ijesha waterfalls: This waterfall lies some 20 km east of Ilesha Akure road, Mambilla Plateau is located at Gembu in Sarduna local government council of Taraba State, Idanre and Oka Hills is located 15km southwest of Akure, Ondo state, Obudu cattle ranch is about 350 km from Calabar, Cross river state, Oguta Lake in Imo State, Ikogosi springs is located in Ikogosi, Ekiti state, about 52 km North-West of Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Lekki beach is located at Lekki Peninsula area of Lagos, Mayegun beach is located at the beginning of Lekki peninsula, The whispering Palm Resort is located along Badagry Expressway, Iworu-Ajido, Lagos.⁴⁵ Out of all the aforementioned tourism sites and the potentials therein, only two have been profiled and have attained the status of World Heritage Sites. The two sites are the Surkun Cultural Landscape and the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Groove.⁴⁶

Apart from that, some of the big cultural events with tourism potentials include: the Grand Durbar Festival and the famous Argungu Fishing Festival in the north, the Atilogwu Dancers and the New Yam Festival in the East; the boat Regatta in Lagos and Yenogoa; the Olofin Festival in Idanre, Ondo State; the Olojo Festival at Ile-Ife; the Oshun Festival in Osogbo, Osun State; Abuja, Calabar and Rivers carnivals among others.⁴⁷

All of the abovementioned natural features and some renowned and well celebrated festivals have been known to play significant roles in galvanizing the various functional cells or units that build peace, unity and stability in all facets of human societies. Little wonder the famous Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC 1977) made it landmark and imprint in the annals of world history as one important event that brought together Africans from all walks of life.⁴⁸ During that event, all Africans had only one thing in mind which was the interest of the black race in every nook and crevices of the world. The festival had as a

strategic goal to ensure revival, resurgence and the propagation of Black African culture and black's cultural values and civilization.⁴⁹ It is noteworthy to state that those strategic goals were achieved to a reasonable degree. They were however short-lived; as structures and modalities were not put in place to ensure continuity. Though some sweet memories and symbolism of Festac 77 has lingered in our minds, the rationale behind its invention and organisation is fast loosing grounds. As a matter of fact, the younger generation can only say little of it. As a matter of fact, the much that they can say about that glorious event are gestures from some eye witness accounts and writings on the newspapers as well as those in colloquiums which have been shelved in some national libraries/archives. The story however would have been different if it had been continued as an annual event. Africa and indeed Nigeria would have experienced better harmonious and peaceful coexistence within and among its diverse nations.⁵⁰

By and large, giving a boost to the tourism industry will no doubt bring about a conducive atmosphere whereby people with divergent ideas or from different factions would begin to see the need to rob minds and put aside ethnic nationalism, ill-fated political maneuvers which would enable the man from South East or South West to go down to say Daura or any town in the North Central and the other way round. Even more is the fact that tourism has created an ample opportunity for people to move from one place to another, inter-marry and have a convivial relationship. Nevertheless, more needs to be done such that a Kanuri man can marry an Edo lady or even a Southern Christian is allowed to marry a Northern Muslim without any hitches.⁵¹ The attainment of that level of equipoise allows for a containment of our obvious differences beyond cultural, religious and regional affiliations. However, study has shown that it has not augur well thus far because the symbolic differences in cultures in Nigeria has not been harnessed as a galvanizing factor to help promote peace and unity.

Conclusion

Based on available reports from myriads of studies conducted, the storylines of culture and tourism sector had not been a palatable one. Albeit, intermittently the sector has

witnessed some reforms by different regimes and administrations that have come and gone; but given the journey thus far, there tend to be a lot yet to be done and that explains why it is far from yielding conclusive or tangible outputs. While some changes tilted the balance and elicited some degrees of impacts, a chunk part of the whole has remained a mirage. Little wonder the level of impulsiveness in terms of innovating and sustaining efficient means of revamping the sector through policy formation and strategic implementation had long been the major shortfall of all constituted authorities entrusted with such duties. Suffice it to say; the issues discussed above bring to fore the role of culture and tourism in uniting the multi-various ethnic groups. It epitomises a structured and an active cohesive force; as having contributed greatly toward promoting national cohesion in Nigeria. More so, attempts made thus far in demonstrating that culture and tourism are indeed efficient means of fostering unity between and among two or more inter-group relations, had given credence to such claim. Apart from that, it has indicated that the cohesive potentials of culture and tourism when properly harnessed and enhanced can alter the course of this great nation. Therefore, it cannot gainsaid that those things that unite us are more than those things that divide us.

Endnotes

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