



National Commission for Museums and Monuments

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(OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL)

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The Director

United Nations, Educational, Scientific &
Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)
Culture Sector
Division of Heritage
7, Place de Fontenoy
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France

RE: STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY "OSUN OSOGBO SACRED GROVE (C1118)"

I wish to refer to your letter on the state of conservation of Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and to submit an updated state of conservation report of the property as at November, 2016.

This report contains the conservation activities undertaken by the State Party and other stakeholders to enhance the authenticity and integrity of the property thereby preserving its Outstanding Universal Value.

Attached for consideration is the report.

Please accept as usual my highest regards.


Yusuf Abdallah Usman
Director General

STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT ON OSUN OSOGBO SACRED GROVE

NAME OF PROPERTY: OSUN-OSOGBO SACRED GROVE

STATE PARTY: NIGERIA

IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: C1118

DATE OF INSCRIPTION: JULY 15, 2005

CRITERIA: II, III, VI

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2005 under criteria II, III and IV as Nigeria's second property on the list.

The level of pollution of Osun River which passed through the forest has been addressed from the source through public enlightenment, provision of refuse disposal for upstream inhabitants and through cleaning and clearing of the River course.

The revised management 2015-2019 which incorporated Cultural Tourism Management and Risk Preparedness Plans have been submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies on the 29th March 2016 and even though no feedback was received from the centre, the plan remain the current management instrument for the site.

A major restoration work on the monumental sculptures in the grove was embarked upon through a project called "Save Our Art/Save Our Heritage" launched on 24th November, 2015 under the auspices of Adunnin Oloris Trust Fund (AOT) which was championed by Mr. and Mrs. Campbell. The restoration project is planned for four years in three phases. The project is in its second phase and has recorded the restoration of thirteen sculptures and twenty seven motifs on the wall fence in the grove all of which are fully documented.

Mrs. Deborah Whelan visited the site in October 2015 and assessed the bisecting road, the level of pollution of the river; the pavilion and the conservation status of the sculptures as well as the natural resources of the grove. The mission held meetings with the Osun State Government officials, the traditional king; (Ataoja) and his council of chiefs and the heritage staff managing the grove. The mission advised each management segment about the need to undertake its responsibilities as specified in the management plan and urged each stakeholder to fulfill its responsibility towards addressing major issues of the grove.

2. RESPONSE TO THE DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

A progress report on state of conservation of Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove was sent in 2015 to World Heritage Centre. In furtherance to the decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session (Bonn, 2015), the State Party wishes to update the committee on the actions taken to improve on the state of conservation of the property.

SOURCE OF RIVER POLLUTION

The state party has undertaken activities to tackle the source of the river pollution. Osun State Ministry of Environment and National Environmental Standard and Regulatory Enforcement Agency (NESREA) have carried out several enlightenment campaigns in the radio and television to change the habits of those living near the course of the river. This is in addition to the continuous clearing and cleaning of the river course carried out by the same ministry. These actions have greatly reduced the pollution level and made the river to be conducive to aquatic life as witnessed by the ICOMOS reactive mission. The reduced pollution level of the river was also apparent during the 2016 Osun Osogbo Festival which witnessed the massive use of “the waters of life”; by thousands of people for medicinal and spiritual purposes.

REVISION OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM AND RISK PREPAREDNESS PLANS

The reviewed management plan (2015-2019), which incorporated Cultural Tourism and Risk Preparedness Plans for the site have been submitted to the World Heritage Centre on 29th March 2016 for review by the Advisory Bodies. The State Party is yet to receive any report from World Heritage Centre on the review carried out. However, we have continued to use the decisions of the new plans in the management of the site. The new management plans have addressed important issues that will assist in ameliorating impacts of developments and potential development threats. New control measures have been introduced during the festival with the use of volunteers assisting in crowd control and shielding sensitive sites in the grove from crowd surges.

Although Osun River exhibits some levels of pollution as it passes through the Grove, the pollution is triggered by seasonal rains and human activities at the

upstream. The National Commission for Museums and Monuments management and other stakeholders have demarcated activity-specific zones in the grove for spiritual and recreational purposes to enhance the preservation of the spirituality and sacredness of the grove. In addition, social activities associated with the festival have been diverted to the buffer zone and less sensitive areas. Furthermore, the festival committee is to release 5% of fund realized from the festival to National Commission for Museums and Monuments for conservation and restoration works in the grove after each festival.

3. CONSERVATION WORKS ON THE GROVE

The monumental sculptures which adorn the site were created by the renowned cultural icon of Austrian origin, late Madam Susanne Wenger in collaboration with local artists in Osogbo such as Chief Adebisi Akanji, Rabiun Abesu, Kasakli Akangbe-Ogun and others who form the Osogbo Sacred Art Group. Most of the sculptures were created between 1960 and 1980 and have undergone repairs and restorations overtime. The last major restoration work was carried out in the 1980's and for a long time no such project was done hence condition of many of the sculptures have deteriorated.

RESTORATION WORK OF TRADITIONAL STRUCTURE AT THE OJA ONTOTO IN OSUN – OSOGBO SACRED GROVE, 2013 – 2014

The restoration work was financed by the Austrian Government/ Adunni Olorisa Trust [A.O.T]

Materials used were:-

1. Red Pigment Cement,
2. Elephant Cement
3. Iron rod of different sizes
4. Plaster sand
5. Fixing Net
6. Binding wire
7. Nails

This restoration project commenced in early 2013 and lasted for 16 weeks covering sections of Oja Ontoto and Iledi Ontotom. All the Traditional Structures in Ontoto market were restored with reinforcement of iron rods and fixing net, then plastered with sand and cement before the final artistic decoration with red pigment cement, sand and elephant/ ordinary cement. The restoration work was also carried out at the main entrance of Osun - Osogbo Sacred Grove, as well as traditional tortoise gate.

RESTORATION OF THE COLLAPSED OLD TORTOISE GATE AT THE MAIN ENTRANCE

The restoration work started on the 27th May 2014 and was supervised by Mr. Robbin Campbell of A.O.T [Adunni Olorisa Trust]. The following members of the New Sacred Art of Osogbo participated in the restoration work:- Chief Sangodare Ajala Supervising Site Manager; Adebisi Akanji Senior Artist I; Adebisi Nuru Senior Art II, [NCMM Staff]; Rufai Adeyemi Senior Artist; Ajayi Toyin Administrative Secretary [NCMM Staff]; Ojuwale Tunrayo Artist [NCMM ad'hoc Staff]; Ajanaku Olawale; Traditional Carpenter; Lamidi Fatai [carpenter NCMM Staff].

The work involved digging foundation and erecting of pillars. After digging, both 12mm/ 10mm and 8mm iron rods were casted into shapes and laid inside the foundation to reinforce the pillars. This was followed by casting of different sizes of iron rods into shapes to depict the flying Tortoise, while both granite stone and sand mixed with elephant cement was used to dot out the shapes.

Artistic decoration was done with both red pigments, sand, lateritic and elephant cement. The restoration work was completed before the annual Osun-Osogbo Festival held on Friday 22nd August, 2014.

CURRENT CONSERVATION WORK

To ensure that more sculptures are restored, on 24th November, 2015, a launch on "Save our art/Save our heritage "was organized by Mr. and Mrs. Campbell under the auspices of ADUNNI OLORISA TRUST FUND (AOT).

This was to raise funds for restoration works in the grove. After a successful launch in Lagos in 2015, a stakeholders meeting was held in the grove on January 29th, 2016 to intimate members on the processes to be followed in the

restoration work. It was agreed that the project will take place in phases which may last for the next four years.

In the first phase, the objects restored include Aiyedakun Courtyard, Esus riding on a lion, Alajere riding on a tortoise, lion looking up appreciating olodumare (god), a member of ogboni cult paying homage and an elder within the ogboni fraternity.

Before the commencement of work on the sculptures, photographs of the affected objects were taken and all stages of the exercise documented. The materials used were of different sizes of iron rods, wire mesh/gauzes, red and white cement, gravel and binding wires. All these materials were to be reinforced to consolidate the weak sculptures during the restoration work.

As a measure to stem deterioration of the structures in the grove, the conservation unit of National Museum, Osogbo has a maintenance plan which is to ensure continuous maintenance of the cultural value of the market shrine. This is in addition to the preservation of the sculptures as at when due with each stage properly documented. For a forward planning and documentation of the restoration works in the market shrine, staff of the conservation and heritage units will be involved in all stages of the works.

ICOMOS REACTIVE MONITORING MISSION

Mrs. Deborah Whelan from South Africa visited the site in October, 2015 on an ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission. During her mission, she met with the Deputy Governor, Secretary to Osun State Government and officials of National Commission for Museums and Monuments. She also discussed the issues of the dissecting road in the grove, completion of pavilion, creation of a car park and received a positive response from the state government.

CONSERVATION OF THE FLORAL AND FAUNA

FLORAL POPULATION OF THE GROVE

The Osun-Osogbo Grove still retains its status as primary rainforest and its integrity has not been compromised in any form. The high forest has increased in number of species from 400 – 465. Some of the trees have been retagged to facilitate research and educational activities in the forest.

A plan regeneration programme for replanting trees in areas that were disturbed has commenced especially at the former Islamic school area which was converted to Heritage and Education Resource Centre by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments.

In addition, fifteen (15) medicinal rainforest plant species were introduced into the forest which has contributed to the increase of the medicinal value of the forest. They are;

- a) *Alstonia scholaris*
- b) *Chromolaena odorata*
- c) *Cosmos candata*
- d) *Glochidion luftenscens*
- e) *Viscum orientale*
- f) *Euphorbia hypericifolia*
- g) *Fagre crassipes*
- h) *Lindsaea borneensio*
- i) *Gliricidia maculate*
- j) *Pruus arborea*
- k) *Nuclea subdita*
- l) *Mycetia javanica*
- m) *Smilax laevis*
- n) *Scaphium macropodium*
- o) *Melina spp*

The constant monitoring of the grove by the patrol team made up of Heritage guards and guides has helped to protect the riparian forest.

In addition, the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in collaboration with the Forestry department of Osun State Ministry of Agriculture have engaged in enlightenment campaigns against bush burning, tree felling and other unwholesome activities in the grove which is yielding positive reponse from the community.

Furthermore, fire beaker zone around the buffer zone is maintained intact to prevent outbreak of fire. There are also campaigns against encroachment at both the core area and buffer zone to protect the trees.

FAUNAL POPULATION

The wire mesh boundaries around most sections of the grove have helped to prevent the animal population from leaving it. In addition, traffic barriers have been created on the road bisecting the grove. The communities surrounding the grove and the forestry department of Osun State Ministry of Agriculture collaborate to ensure enforcement of the regulations against hunting, poaching and killing of any animal in the grove. These measures have preserved all the species of primates existing in the forest. These primates include:-

- a) *Cercopithecus erytrogaster*
- b) *Cercopithecus nictitans*
- c) *Cercocebus* spp
- d) *Manis tricuspis*
- e) *Tragelaphis spekei*
- f) *Artiodactyla* spp