

NIGERIA

SANGO OYO: INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE ENDANGERED



INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF SANGO CITY - Oyo Alaafin, Nigeria -



Sango Oyo: International Heritage in Danger



1. PRESENTATION

This document was prepared by Paula Gomes Cultural Foundation with support from of The Candomblé of Bahia, institution Osumarê (Ilé Òsùmàrè Araka Ase Ogodo), aiming to make a brief introduction on the outstanding universal value of the tangible and intangible heritage of city of Oyo, given their invaluable importance as the capital of one of the greatest empires in Africa, responsible for the dissemination of culture and Yoruba religion in West Africa and the Americas.

The city is located in Oyo, Oyo State in Nigeria. As already mentioned, this city was the capital of an empire that dominated the whole territory of southwest Nigeria. It extended to Benin, Togo and Ghana. The old Oyo Empire was responsible for the dissemination of culture, language, technologies, practices, norms and value system of the people of Yoruba as well as the traditions of Sango. From the sixteenth century, when starting the transatlantic slave trade, the traditions of Sango and Oyo are also widespread in the New World, being preserved today in several countries in South America, North America and the Caribbean.

Nowadays, Oyo remains the main reference of Yoruba culture. However, the influence and pressures of the modern world seem risky to the heritage of the city, consisting of palaces, temples, markets and a number of other urban buildings, and complex cultural system, political and religious topics that reflect the power of Oyo Empire. It is urgent to conserve and safeguard this heritage so as not to miss forever.

Therefore, considering that the heritage of Oyo has outstanding universal value, by portraying a very special chapter of human history and because of their cultural legacy remains alive today in the countries of the black diaspora - and even to be officially recognized as part of their national cultural heritage as is the case of Brazil - search with this brief note mobilize international organizations, the Nigerian government and the governments of other countries in diaspora to support the urgent safeguarding of the heritage of Oyo.

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3. OYO TANGIBLE HERITAGE IN DANGER

The ancient city of Oyo consists of a number of important historic buildings that perform many different functions in the complex political, religious and cultural systems of the Yoruba people. However, many of these monuments are now in an advanced state of disrepair and in need of urgent conservation and restoration interventions. Not objective of this exhaustively catalog all tabalho sites that constitute assets of Oyo. So, the list below shows the conservation status of some of the most important historical monuments.

3.1 KOSO NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE TEMPLE OF SANGO-KOSO

This suburban district of Oyo is one of the holiest places of the city because it was the place where Sango laid his power, his Ase. For this reason, one of the titles is Obakoso Sango (the king of Koso). No king is installed without performing all the rites of coronation inside the temple of Sango in Koso. After the coronation of the king, he can never join the community until his death.

Therefore, the connection between Koso and the Alaafin is both spiritual and political time. The Alaafin should regularly perform traditional rites for their direct ancestor (Sango), which inherited his crown. This crown was passed from generation to generation, under the protection of the high-priest of Sango, the Mogba Koso. At the end of a reign, the crown is returned to Sango Mogba Koso and kept at the shrine of Sango-Koso, while the city awaits the selection of a new king.

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Photo 2. Gbongan Koso (Main Shrine of Sango in Koso)



Photo 3. Inside of Sango-Koso Shrine, century XIX.



Photo 4. Nowadays inside of Sango-Koso Shrine.



Photo 5. Current status of the original walls on the outside of Sango-Koso Shrine

As illustrated by the photos above, the inside of the temple is in an advanced state of degradation, and the few fallen walls as well as the interior roof fell in its entirety. On the initiative of the local community, a wall was built of concrete blocks to protect the temple. To return your originality is necessary to demolish this wall and restore all ancient walls made of mud. Also, it is also necessary to redo the roof of traditional straw (Bere) and restore the external decorations of the temple, powder formed a set of traditional artistic reliefs and carved wooden pillars.

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3.2 OBATALA SHRINE

According to Yoruba belief, one of the main orisas in the spiritual world is Obatala. This is considered an employee of Olodumare (God) in the creation of the world and humanity. According to belief, man is created by God in a lump and molded Obatala. This gives the following praise: "Mori mori, moori tuntun atom" which means "the final draw of our body shapes." Obatala is also responsible for the Orisha and purity is the oldest among all orisas. There are several shrines dedicated to the tradition of Obatala, but differ in the history of its foundation. One of the oldest buildings in Oyo is the Obatala shrine located in Aaje complex Isale-Oyo.

This building was in total state of disrepair and was recently restored by Paula Gomes Cultural Foundation, with the support of the community, using traditional methods and materials of construction, so as not to lose the originality of the temple.



Photo 6. The exterior of the Obatala shrine in advanced degree of degradation.



Photo 7. The outside of the Obatala shrine after restoration.

3.3 ALAAFIN PALACE

The Oyo palace is the main cultural center of the city, where all cultural forms are widely practiced and stored. The palace is decorated with works of art, murals and various forms of sculpture, including the posts of wood and carved paneled doors, symbolizing the status of wealth and royalty.

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Photo 8. Left wing of the main building of the Palace of the Alaafin.



Photo 9 . Main entrance of the Palace



Photo 10. Decorative paintings from the palace entrance



Photo 11. Palace old map, 1937



Photo 12. Internal corridor of the palace



Photo 13. Internal corridor of the palace



Photo 14. Internal corridor of the palace

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The palace of the Alaafin Oyo is the largest Yoruba royal residence and has the largest number of Kobis (runners). This complex corridor system allows the Alaafin move in without exiting to the outside. Within the complex, there are shrines of Sango, Obatala, Ogun and Imole.

Besides the Alaafin residence , and shrines , the complex also houses the palace 's throne room , offices, housing officials, the dwellings of the queens , the court , the room Aganju where confer the Oyes (titles) , the garden , the Akesan market , among other spaces .

The Oyo palace houses important works of art and antiques of the Yorubas. It is also the place where they are performed and traditional touches daily songs of praise and communication to the king, informing him about the external events of the palace . Touch is one of the most significant forms of communication culture of Oyo. Touch inside the palace is a real privilege and shows the continuation of the cultural practices of the Oyo Empire.

Altogether , the old traditional and natural architecture of the Oyo palace, as well as its art treasures , urgent need of restoration and preservation. This palace is a great testimony to the architectural ingenuity of the Yoruba and their empire.

(This is an abridged version. The 27-page original report also includes detailed information on the genesis and dissemination of Yoruba culture, on Oyo intangible heritage, and an urgent appeal to safeguard and protect this endangered heritage.)