

**REPATRIATION OF BENIN CULTURAL OBJECTS PRESERVATION AND  
MANAGEMENT AT THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR MUSEUMS AND  
MONUMENTS (NCMM), BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

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**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY,  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,  
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**NOVEMBER, 2023**

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**BEING A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD) THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE  
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ANTHROPOLOGY (CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY)**

**NOVEMBER, 2023**

## CERTIFICATION

We certify that **Omorotioman, Emmanuel Imadorie** with matriculation number **PG/SSC 1219164** of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria carried out this research under our supervision.

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to Almighty God the creator of all things and the giver of life and through whom every good and perfect things, come without variableness, neither showdown of turning James 1:17 and my beloved mother who by stood by us when we lost our father at attender age.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	x
Acronym	xi
Abstract	xii
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	5
1.3 Research Questions	7
1.4 Objectives of the Study	7
1.5 Significance of the Study	8
1.6 Scope of the Study	9
1.7 Justification of the Study	9
<b>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE</b>	
2.1 Brief History of Museum	11
2.1.1 Brief History of Museum in Nigeria	15
2.1.2 Brief History of Museum in Benin City	17
2.2 Nigeria's Experience in Repatriation of Benin Cultural Objects	19
2.2.1 Pre-Independence	19

2.2.2	Post-Independence	21
2.2.3	Current Efforts at the Repartition of Benin Objects	26
2.3	The National Museum Benin’s Management, Security and Protection of Objects in the Museum	30
2.3.1	Museum Management of Cultural Objects	30
2.3.2	Museums Security and Protection of Cultural Objects	31
2.3.3	National Commission for Museums and Monuments Preservation of Cultural Objects for Educational Purpose, Effective Tourism and Development	32
2.3.4	Seven Hazards to Historic Artefacts	34
2.3.5	Basic Preservation of Wood Cultural Objects	37
2.6	Theoretical Frame Work	39
2.6.1	Symbolic Interactionism Theory	45
2.6.2	Assumptions	46
2.6.3	Criticism Symbolic Interactionism Theory	46
2.6.4	Application of Symbolic Interactionism Theory to this Study	47
2.7	Structural – Functionalism Theory	49
2.7.1	Criticism of Structural-Functionalism	52
2.7.2	Application of Structural-Functionalism Theory to this Study	53
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</b>		
3.1	Research Design	56
3.2	Area of the Study	56
3.3	Population of the Study	57
3.4	Instrument of Data Collection	57
3.4.1	In-depth Interview (IDI) and Key Informants	57

3.4.2	Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	58
3.4.3	Photographs	59
3.4.4	Key informants	59
3.4.5	Observations by the Researcher	59
3.5	Method of Data Collection	59
3.6	Data Analysis	60
3.7	Validation of Research Instruments	61
3.8	Ethical Consideration	61

#### **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

4.1	Photographs from the Field and Analysis	62
4.2	Research Questions	70
4.2.1	The roles of the NCMM (Federal Government of Nigeria) Benin Royal Family (Traditional Leaders), Benin Dialog Group (BDG) and Edo State Government in the Repatriation of Benin Cultural Objects	70
4.2.2	Research Question 2: How can the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Benin preserve and manage of the repatriated Benin Cultural Objects?	74
4.2.3	Research question 3: How can the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Benin secure and protect the cultural objects in the museum?	77
4.2.4	Research question 4: In what ways can the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Benin preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education and tourism development?	78
4.2.5	Research question 5: What is the action plan proposed for the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects?	81
4.2.6	Research question 6: what impact would these repatriated Benin cultural objects bring to the NCMM in particular and the Nigeria Society at Large?	84

**CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1	Summary	85
5.2	Findings	87
5.3	Conclusion	89
5.4	Recommendation	90
5.5	Contributions to Knowledge	92
	References	93
	Appendix 1: In-Depth Interview Guide	100
	Appendix 11: Observation Guide	102

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	The Earl of Plymouth (right) visiting the <i>Oba</i> of Benin, Oba Akenzua 11 Benin City, 1938	20
Figure 2:	Queen Idia original 16th century ivory pectoral mask at the British Museum	22
Figure 3:	Cast, pendant mask – associated with Queen Ida Resource: britishmuseum.org	23
Figure 4:	The Repatriation of Benin Bronze on 28 October 2021, at the University of Aberdeen	29
Figure 5:	Telegraphic stool that was sent to Oba Ovonranmwun when he was exiled in Calabar. Source: taken by researcher, 2023. National Museum, King Square, Benin City.	48
Figure 6:	In-depth interviews section with some staff of National Museum, Benin City.	58
Figure 7:	National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Benin or National Museum, Benin City. Source Field Survey, 2023.	62
Figure 8:	The Site for the storage facility for the repatriated Benin cultural objects in National Museum, Benin City	63
Figure 9:	The Repatriated Okhoko or Okpa. A Benin Bronze Hen	65
Figure 10:	Head of an Oba (King)	66
Figure 11:	The Oba (King) and his body guards	67
Figure 12:	Repatriated Benin cultural objects from Germany.	68
Figure 13:	Side view of the storage facility site for the repatriated Benin objects in NCMM, Benin City.	69
Figure: 14	Site of the construction of the storage facility in NCMM, Benin City	82

## ACRONYM

NCMM	-	National Commission for Museums and Monuments
BDG	-	Benin Dialogue Group
DG	-	Director General
MOU	-	Memorandum of Understanding

## **Abstract**

This study was conducted to ascertain the role the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Benin City Benin Dialogue Group (BDG), Benin Royal Family / Benin Traditional Council and the Edo State Government played in the repatriation of Benin cultural objects and the exploration of the NCMM level of preparedness and capability to secure, preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education, tourism development and sustainability.

The qualitative method of data collection was adopted in this study. The qualitative research survey such as in-depth interviews (IDIs) Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informant and photograph was used to gather information from the targeted population or participants in the study area. Data were collected from two sources: the secondary data and primary data. The total population or participant of the study was 158. The entire staff (population) of NCMM, Benin City which is 145 participated in the study plus 13 key informants of Benin indigenes and some top management staff from the Head- quarters of NCMM, Abuja who had profound knowledge about the repatriation of Benin cultural objects, preservation and management and were ready to talk also participated in the study.

Results from the study established that National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Benin City Benin Dialogue Group (BDG), Benin Royal family / Benin Traditional council and the Edo State Government played prominent roles in the repatriation of Benin cultural objects and that NCMM as the only accredited agency of Federal Government of Nigeria, is still playing the role of repatriation of cultural artifacts / objects to Nigeria. The Benin Dialogue Group had a constrain in the repatriation of Benin cultural objects. It also showed that the NCMM, Benin is prepared and capable to secure preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education, tourism development and sustainability. And if the repatriated objects are fully installed and mounted for exhibition it will boost or increase tourism development/ activities in Benin National Museum and generate income for the residents of Benin and the government.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Material cultural heritage such as monuments and artefacts [cultural objects] are transmitted from one generation to another through its preservation and management. This varies with specific modalities for conservation of the sacred cultural art objects all over the world and in Africa in particular (Sarr and Savoy, 2018). Cultural objects, known as artefacts, play significant and functional roles in cultural heritages than being of aesthetic values. Cultural Objects (artefacts) is referred to anything created by humans and that can provide information about the culture/way of life of its creator and users. They can be ancient (antiquities) or of current usage and offer insight into aspects of the culture of the makers such as their technological processes, economic development as well as their social structure, among other attributes (Wartofsky, 1979). These artefacts can therefore be works of antiquity and art. On the other hand Artefacts: (Artifacts- American English); (Artefacts- United Kingdom English): are defined as man-made object taken as a whole. They are objects made by human beings, objects produced or and shaped by human ability and skill (American Heritage Dictionary, 2011). Artefacts range from tools, weapons, ornament and some end up as objects of archaeological and historical significance (retrieved 23/8/2022) Benin cultural objects are cultural works of arts/ objects made and used by the Benin people for religious, aesthetics, educational, communication /information and other cultural purpose. Benin kingdom, one of the foremost kingdoms in Africa, stood out in the act of keeping historical and cultural events. These historical records were kept in folk songs, stories (oral

records) and cultural objects which the early European tagged “Works of Arts” (Edionwe, 2016).

And these works of arts, collectively called the Benin bronzes, were looted by British soldiers in the 1897 expedition in Benin kingdom, Nigeria in West Africa.

The Benin bronzes erroneously are not all made of bronzes, and metal objects as specified by the Europeans. It is the collective name given to Benin cultural objects (made for practical, aesthetical and spiritual purposes) on arrival in Britain in 1897. These Benin cultural objects are numerous. The objects are made of clay, metal, ivory, wood, leather, coral, and textile. They also include sculptures such as decorated cast plaques, commemorative heads, animal, and human figures; carved ivory tusks; items of royal regalia, and personal ornaments. The metal objects are more brass of variable composition than bronze (Agbontaen, 1983; Frum, 2022; Gunsch; 2013; Phillips, 2021; Zimmerer, 2021). Bronze is mainly an alloy of copper, tin, and other metals, while brass is an alloy of copper, zinc, and other metals.

The Benin brass were considered royal art made by special guild for the Oba, the king of Benin. These bronzes were made exclusively for the king and were kept in his palace. The Benin Empire produced many arts and craft works for many centuries until the punitive expedition of 1897. The punitive action was organized by British naval expedition because a previous visiting British team had been killed when they attempted to interrupt a sacred ceremony being performed by the Oba (Greenfield, 2007, Edebiri, 2022). Cultural objects are usually removed from their place of origin through gifts, sale, purchase, exchange, theft, and massively through war, spoilage/looting. Greek historian Polybius, over two centuries

ago, describes the dual pain that the conqueror inflicts on the conquered by not only depriving him of his cultural heritage, but then inviting him to partake in the humiliating spectacle of passing through the various cities where his home country's objects have now become the mere spoils of plundering.

Benin cultural objects are of great interest and concern presently, as the subject of repatriating them to Nigeria or restitution to the Benin monarch has become a topical issue. It is a topic of global media, recently. The intensity of the return increased in 2018, with the report by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy commissioned by French President Emmanuel Macron (Sarr & Savoy, 2018). Specifically, in 2018 French President Emmanuel Macron announced his plan for the restitution of all African artefacts acquired during colonization. This declaration was preceded by a year filled with demands for the restitution of artefacts from countries around the world (Guy, 2019). Dan Hicks argued that 2020 seems to be a decade of returns as international cooperation and agitation to return such cultural objects have increased. This got a major burst in December, 2021 following UN General Assembly's unanimous adoption and approval of the return or restitution of cultural properties to the countries of origin (Hicks, 2022).

In Benin City Nigeria, a series of returns seem to have been made from some museums and private collections in Europe and America. The objects have come to symbolise the broader return/repatriation/restitution and decolonizing of the museums debate (The Nigerian museum, 2022).

In support of repatriation of cultural objects to their provenance, it has been observed that, the original works of art are better understood in the location that gave birth to them

(Shyllon, 2007). This is because every nation/people has their unique heritage consisting of natural and cultural endowments which they are occupying in a particular space on the globe. Cultural objects are symbols of an identity and people of varied cultures have ways they prefer to relate to their cultural objects. Different groups of people worldwide produce artefacts usually in synchronisation with their environment (Agbontaen-Eghafona, 2020).

However, these Benin work of arts [Benin cultural objects] were preserved and managed in attractive ways in the pre-colonial Benin by some group of people or individuals who kept and cared for Benin cultural objects at various stages of development of the pre-colonial Benin society who we can refer to as the modern day curator in the museum (Agbontan-Eghafona and Okpoko, 2004). In pre-colonial Benin the general care can be traced alongside the history and structure of the traditional Benin society. The earliest form of preservation and management of cultural objects can be regarded as an element of family system (Inneh, 1997, Osemwegie, 1997, Omoruyi, 1994, Omoregie, 1992). Cited in (Agbontan-Eghafona and Okpoko, 2004). In a related manner Bradbury, the first anthropologist to do extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Benin City during the 1950s and 1960s, observed that much of the artworks removed from Benin in 1897 were in a good state of preservation and management (Dark, 1973). In fact, there were special caretakers in the palace whose job it was to look after these treasures (Dark, 1973). If such care had not been given, it would have been impossible for valuable cultural materials fashioned before the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to survive the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and find their places in museums around the world today.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The repatriation of the Benin cultural objects has been a concern of the Benin Royal Family, cultural activists, the Federal government of Nigeria through the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Benin Dialogue Group (BDG), and private collectors among other interested parties since 1936, when Oba Akenzua 11 (enthroned 1933), began the movement for the repatriation to Nigeria and restitution to the Benin palace, the objects that were looted in 1897. So many moves have been made to date for these Benin objects scattered around the globe to be returned to provenance (Plankensteiner, 2016).

However, some schools of thought have expressed worries and concern for the preservation, conservation, security and the management of the objects for effective tourism and sustainability, for instance the insecurity of the objects in the Nigerian museums. This is due to reported theft of cultural objects, stolen, or taken away and sold at auctions in Europe. There have been reported cases of theft of cultural objects that were sold at auction prices in Europe and majorly in USA. The theft of Nigerian antiquities has been properly documented by scholars and other stakeholders (Jegede 1996; Adesari 1999; Darling, 2000; Brodie 2000; Willet 2000; Labi and Robinson 2001; Shyllon 2007; Opoku 2008; Schulz 2009; and Opoku 2009). Frank Willet (2001) drew attention to theft of artefacts in Nigerian Museums, in the London Times of 7 December, 2001. There has been report on large scale looting and illicit digging in places like Kwatarkwashi, Ife and the Nok valley. Patrick Darling also reported the plunder of the Kwatarkwashi terracotta. Both Ekpo Eyo and Ade Obayemi (former Directors General, National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) in the 1980s and 1990s) in their hand over notes mentioned very high levels of illicit trade in the country's antiquities.

For example, out of the 52 museums in Nigeria three museums namely, Jos National Museum, Ife National Museum and Esie National Museum were affected with the cases of theft of cultural objects. In 1987, nine objects were stolen from the Jos Museum, and between 1993 and 1994, forty objects were stolen from the Ife Museum and thirty-four Esie soap stones were stolen between 1993 and 1995. In general, in the 1990s, an estimated 429 objects were stolen from about 33 Museums and Institutions in Nigeria (Willet 2000). In an article in *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, Willet , in this regard, stylishly made an assertion in his work titled “Restitution or Re-circulation: Benin, Ife and Nok”, as to whether the objects restituted will be kept safe. Kwame Anthony Appiah of New York University and a world authority on African patrimony argued that ‘hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of art has been stolen from the museums of Nigeria alone, almost with the complicity of insiders (Opoku 2009).

In like manner Shyllon, also argued that the disappearance of objects from Nigerian museums became a regular occurrence in the 1980s, when a variety of Nok, Ife, and Benin heads, amongst other valuable objects, appeared in Togo, Switzerland and the United States. It was later discovered that a dealer who removed these objects was being assisted by the Nigerian government (Shyllon, 2007). There is also the problem of iconoclasm where some of the valuable art objects are willingly being destroyed as some people of the Christian faith have come to identify cultural objects as idol worship, not being able to differentiate them as cultural objects from traditional religious objects and calling them all *juju* (Strother, 2017).

However, the agitation for the repatriation and restitution of the Benin cultural objects for a long time and the agreement to return the cultural objects has been signed (The Nigerian

Museum, 2022). The problem in question is that if these cultural objects are allowed to be looted again, poorly preserved, conserved, not properly secured and managed for effective tourism and sustainability, all the repatriation efforts will be wasted. Hence the NCMM should do everything possible for the problem not to repeat itself.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions.

- i. What are the roles of NCMM, the Benin Royal family (Oba of Benin) and the BDG in the repatriation and restitution of Benin cultural objects
- ii. How can the NCMM, Benin secure and protect the cultural objects in the museum?
- iii. In what ways can the NCMM, Benin preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education and tourism development?
- iv. Are there any plans on ground proposed for the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects by any institution?
- v. What impact is envisaged of the repatriated Benin cultural objects on the NCMM in particular and the Nigeria society at large?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study is to investigate the preservation and management of repatriated Benin cultural objects at the National Museum, Benin City, Nigeria, while the specific objectives are to:

- i. Explore the different and collaborative roles of Benin royal family/ the Benin Traditional council , NCMM, and the Benin Dialogue Group in the repatriation of Benin cultural objects

- ii. Examine the roles of the NCMM in the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects;
- iii. Describe and analyse the methods in which NCMM has on ground to manage, secure and protect the cultural objects.
- iv. Explore ways in which the NCMM can preserve the cultural objects for education and tourism.
- v. Design an action plan for the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects.
- vi. Assess the impact of the repatriated Benin cultural objects on the NCMM in particular and the Nigeria society at large

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The clamour for the repatriation/restitution of Benin cultural objects started from the Benin palace in 1933 and is eventually coming to fruition with the subsequent return of some objects and hope of others being fully returned. On the part of Benin City as the original place of the looting and Nigeria as a Country, there must be adequate preparation to receive, care and exhibit these objects. The importance of this study to the National museums and other stakeholders can be adopted as proposed plans for protecting, preserving and managing the repatriated objects.

However if study was not conducted it would have been difficult or impossible to realised the NCMM potentials ability and capability in the protection, preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects. It would have been difficult to realise the potential benefits or usefulness of these repatriated Benin cultural objects in terms of revenue generation for the residents of Benin and the government, increase in tourism and tourism

development in National Benin, boosting the traditional culture of Benin and enhancing academic activities and research in Benin looted and repatriated cultural objects in the National Museum, Benin and the community. Without this research it will difficult or impossible for the results of the study to assist government and the policy makers. And the finding from this study to add the knowledge in the existing literature and form the bases for further research.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study was on the exploration of the preservation and management for the Benin cultural objects at the National Museum, Benin. Therefore the research interview was conducted among all categories of staff in all the various departments/units of the institution. The scope was also on the readiness of the Museum, to secure, protect, preserve and manage the Benin cultural objects. The museum most importantly, was examined for the purpose of education, exhibition, and preservation, of these most important cultural objects / artefacts. The study also focussed on other interested parties and institutions.

### **1.7 Justification of the Study**

This study was carried to eradicate the doubt or fear of the number of oppositions of the repatriation of cultural objects to Benin /Nigeria and the old narrative of loss or degradation of museum thefts and resale of cultural objects. The study was able to establish the facts that the National commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) is fully prepared and capable to secure and protect the repatriated Benin cultural objects in particular and other repatriated cultural objects. The study also affirmed that the NCMM is prepared and

capable to preserve and manage the repatriated cultural objects for educational services, tourism development and sustainability.

The result (s) of this study/ research can assist the government, policy makers, top management officers in NCMM other related institutions and researchers to draw strategic plans the protection, security, preservation and management of all cultural objects in Nigeria and elsewhere. Findings from this research added or contributed to knowledge in the existing literature and formed the bases for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The following review will begin with a brief exploration of major theme of Benin cultural objects, followed by the history and role of museums. Following this, a deeper exploration of the Nigeria's experience in repatriation of Benin cultural objects literature to provide background and illuminate the current context in which the preservation and management of these object need to be currently situated. Highlighting common and divergent themes, issues, and gaps within both sets of literature is useful to gain a complete perspective of the history and context of universities' engagement with their surrounding communities and overseas partners.

#### 2.1 Brief History of Museum

A museum is a place and an institution that collects, takes care and interprets objects, artifacts, and other material evidence of human history, as well as of nature, and makes them available for viewing by the general public. The word “museum” is from the Greek word “mouseion,” meaning “seat of Muses,” a place for contemplation, observation and meditation. In Rome, the Latin word “museum” was a place for philosophical discussions. The first known museum was located in the University of Alexandria in Egypt (Alexandrian Museum, the Museum, **or** Museum of Alexandria) built about 280 BC Arinze, 1999). Though, it was not until the 15th century for the collection of Lorenzo de Medici in Florence was the word used it in the modern sense (<http://www.historyofmuseums.com/#>). Then in 1683, University of Oxford opened the Ashmolean Museum considered the first museum open to the public in the modern term “museum”. That is when the “museum” began as an

institution (<https://www.ashmolean.org/history-ashmolean>). Museums are institutions (publicly or privately owned) which collect, preserve and display objects (both natural and cultural) with the basic aim of entertaining, educating and providing materials for research on aspects of man's heritage and development. In terms of enlightenment, museums are comparable to schools, universities, libraries and other agencies of knowledge and culture. Museums preserve the tangible evidence of man's history, creativity and the physical aspects of the world he inhabits. They also give information about the past environment of the materials displayed; such materials then attract, entertain and arouse curiosity amongst the people (Momin and Okpoko, 1990).

However, though the museum is seen as a foreign institution, Agbontaen-Eghafona and Okpoko (2004) claim that production and care for objects is a culturally universal phenomenon. Every nation/people occupying a particular space on the globe have its/their unique heritage consisting of a natural and cultural endowment. The desire to collect, take care of, preserve, and even display objects of value is inherent in man. People of various cultures have been known to have had ways of collecting and looking after their cultural materials or artefacts of value before the establishment of institutions known as museums (Afigbo & Okita, 1985, Agbontaen-Eghafona & Okpoko, 2004). Today in the 21st Century the institution called museum can be found all over the world and it has become a global concept (Arinze, 1999).

Since International Council of Museums (ICOM) came into being in 1946, ICOM's definitions played a central role for museums and museum professionals and a reference in the international museum community. The statement defining the museum made in the Copenhagen 10th General Assembly of the ICOM held in 1974 is still fairly comprehensive.

According to the ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August 2007:

*A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. (ICOM Statutes adopted by the 22nd General Assembly, Vienna, Austria, 24 August 2007).*

The definition of a museum has evolved, in line with developments in society. The first ICOM museum definition in 1946 was: A museum includes all collections open to the public, of artistic, technical, scientific, historical or archaeological material, including zoos and botanical gardens, but excluding libraries, except in so far as they maintain permanent exhibition room (Levä, 2017).

Then in 1946, a museum was more as an exhibition and a showroom. The early museums were elitist, uninspiring and aloof as they encouraged only the educated people to visit them and the general public was excluded (Arinze 1999). According to DeCarli and Christophe (2012), before 2007, the definition of museum referred to material evidence, and not to tangible and intangible heritage. The change broadens the concept of collection to heritage, and the cultural institution no longer centred on the collection, but the heritage, thereby, having an impact on the concept of the cultural institution itself.

From the ICOM definition of a museum, the primary tasks of the museum are collecting, preservation/conservation, research, communication, exhibition for interpretation and final educational and pleasure purposes. Museums are non-profit institutions that:

- are **responsible** for tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage.

- have the **duty** to acquire, preserve and promote their collections as a contribution to safeguarding the natural, cultural and scientific heritage.
- have **particular responsibilities** to all for the care, accessibility, and interpretation of primary evidence collected and held in their collections.
- have an **important duty** to develop their educational role and attract wider audiences from the community, locality, or group they serve.

The Museum, therefore, is an important institution in society. Emmanuel Arinze, then President, Commonwealth Association of Museums on May 17, 1999 said that the museum as an institution that tells the story of man, the world over and how humanity has survived in its environment over the years. It houses things created by nature and by man and in our modern society, it houses the cultural soul of the nation. (It holds the cultural wealth of the nation in trust for all generations and by its function and unique position, it has become the cultural conscience of the nation.). Currently, it has become necessary and urgent for museums to redefine their missions, their goals, their functions, and their strategies to reflect the expectations of a changing world (Arinze, 1999).

Museums, consequently, are comparable to schools, universities, libraries and other agencies of knowledge and culture. Museums have the duty to:

*"...preserve the tangible evidence of man's history, creativity and the physical aspects of the world he inhabits. They also give information about the past environment of the materials displayed; such materials then attract, entertain and arouse curiosity amongst the people. Museums, therefore, give people opportunities to rediscover themselves (including their natural resources) and to identify their place in the past and role they can play in the contemporary world (Akpomovie, 2010:531).*

In 2022, ICOM provided a new definition of museum as:

*A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing*

This new definition is said to align with major changes in the role of museums, especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These new changes include community participation and sustainability. However, though this latest definition was released in the height of restitution debates, it has not taken note of the burning issues of repatriation of objects.

### **2.1.1 Brief History of Museum in Nigeria**

The informal origin of museums in Nigeria can be traced to pre-European era during which cultural materials of religious, political and social importance were fashioned, conserved and preserved in traditional shrines and palaces of traditional rulers, shrines and sometimes caves. The persons in charge of these places that cared and protected of these materials were heads of household, priests of various shrines and could be seen as today's curator(<https://museum.ng/about-us/history-of-ncmm/>).

The modern museum in Nigeria came into being during the colonial era through the then Federal Ministry of Works that was in 1943. Colonial masters in Nigeria's Education Department such as K.C Murray, J. D. Clarks, B. E. Fagg, Hunt-Coole and Milburn were in the fore front of advocating the Nigerian museum. The inauguration of Nigerian Antiquity Service was on 28 of July 1943 and K. C Murray was the first Director. (<https://museum.ng/about-us/history-of-ncmm/>). In 1953 it became Department of Antiquities in the Federal Ministry of information by ordinance 17 of the Colonial Government of 1953. The bill

provided for the creation of the National Department of Antiquities and charged with the responsibility of exploration, care and preservation of antiquities or works of art, and provided also for the control of exportation of works of art from Nigeria. In 1979, the Department of Antiquities earlier established was replaced with National Commission for Museums and Monuments. NCMM then saw to the establishment of museums and monuments in different parts of the country (Nzewunwa, 1984:102). Today NCMM is in charge of fifty-three Museums and outlets, sixty-five National Monuments and two World Heritage Sites all over Nigeria (<https://museum.ng/about-us/history-of-ncmm/>).

The NCMM is made up of nine departments and four units:

1. Departments of Museum;
2. Department of Planning, Research and Statistics
3. Department of Archaeology and Ethnography;
4. Department of Educational Services and Training;
5. Department of Heritage Services
6. Department of Monuments and sites
7. Department of Antiquity Protection and Conservation
8. Finance and Accounts
9. Department of Human Resources Management

#### Units

1. Legal Service Units
2. Procurement Units
3. Internal Audit Unit
4. Press and Protocol Unit

The National Museum in Benin City is one of the fifty-three museums in Nigeria.

### 2.1.2 Brief History of Museum in Benin City

The formal word “Museum” was not officially known in Benin until 1918. In that year, the Benin provincial exhibition was held. Chief Jacob Uwadiae Egharevba who could be referred to as the pioneer of the formal museum in Benin City had for two years prior to 1918, been engaged in gathering/ collections of cultural objects (artefacts) and telling stories about them. He told stories about how they came into being and about they what use were meant to serve. All these were done out of absolute interest and curiosity. Egharevba educational background was standard six, which was about the height of learning at that time, which he completed it in 1916 (Omorie, 2006). Jacob Egharevba distinguished himself in collecting artefacts and creating stories for arousing the interest of people to their importance. Through this art he soon began to attract the interest of the colonial community to his collections. This led to more intimate friendship between Chief Egharevba and the then Prince Godfrey who later became Oba Akenzua 11 (1933-1979). Their warm relationship right from their school days made the then heir apparent to the Benin throne to secure a room in a royal palace for Egharevba where the artefacts he collected, were stored when the exhibition was held in 1918 (Omorie, 2006).

At local level in the Benin tradition, the collection might have been conveniently called *Aruerinmwi*, meaning a shrine of spirit. Omorie argued that, the origin of museum in Benin would have been seen to be much older than the colonial period, if the concept *Aruerinmwi* was just all that the Museum embodies. Most of the artefacts/cultural objects Egharevba gathered came from shrines. People in Egharevba’s time, thought he was out of his mind as he went from place to place and from village to village bringing new artefacts. He would carefully clean them up and stored them up in the royal palace (Omorie, 2006).

In 1943, however, KC Murray who was the director of Nigeria antiquities visited Benin to explore the chances of setting up a museum. In 1946 the Benin museum took off. The director of British Museums and KC Murray spent months with Egharevba gathering artefacts and storing them, they went to Udo, Sokponba, Ugboko, and Ughoton (Omorieg, 2006). .

In 1948 Egharevba went to conference in Lagos. When it was over, he met with the Governor General of Nigeria, Sir John Macpherson. The governor had heard about him and was delighted to see him. He resolved to draw him closed to himself as a resource person on the development of museum in Benin (Omorieg, 2006). On the other hand, museum activities in Benin started with Oba Akenzua 11who maintained a corpus of objects in Bronzes and woods in his palace. In the early Benin, there was keen interest shown by the Oba acquiring objects of artistic and cultural values. The Oba's artistic acquisition and patronage led great collection of Benin art treasures for which the City is world famous. In Benin then, the Oba officially appoint a keeper in the person of late chief Jacob Egharevba to his Iwebo Royal Palace Museum in 1946. With time, much interest was generated for these curious cultural objects on display in the Iwebo accessible to the teeming public who were eager to visit to see the cultural objects because of the protocols before entering the palace (Omorieg, 2006).

Due to the eager demand, the Oba allowed the cultural objects to be moved out of the palace into the former Benin Tax Office. Since the cultural objects were accessible to the public coupled with the public awareness, the Oba brought in more cultural objects with the result that the tax office was rather quite small to take the whole lot of the cultural objects. It was at this period that Mr KC Murray of the surveyor of antiquities in 1943 recommended that

for space and proper care of these cultural objects, the Benin Divisional Council should take over in 1960 by the National Museum (Omorie, 2006, Obichere, 1974). Later on, the museum was moved from the Benin Divisional Council Office to the old Benin Post Office as a permanent site then but in any case, that was a temporary place because today an elegant building has been built as the museum (Obichere, 1974). National Museum, Benin had begun to wax strong in collection, preservation and management of the cultural objects and staff in the Benin Museum. During the era of Colonel Samuel Ogbemudia, the first military Governor of Mid-Western State of Nigeria. The Benin National Museum was completely built at the central area of the King Square in Benin (Obichere, 1974).

By 1973, a permanent and exquisite museum was opened so that all the cultural objectives could be properly exhibited for effective tourism attraction, (Omorie, 2008, Obichere, 1974). In any case, ever since the National Museum, Benin has been established, there has been meaningful dynamic innovation and renovation for effective tourism and sustainable development (Omorotioman, 2015). For instance in 2017 there was a massive renovation and restructuring of the Benin Museum gallery tagged “Benin Exhibition Gallery, (NCMM,2017). Currently, in 2023, the National Museum, Benin is doing internal expansion and renovation for the accommodation, preservation and the management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects.

## **2.2 Nigeria's Experience in Repatriation of Benin Cultural Objects**

### **2.2.1 Pre-Independence**

In the colonial era, Oba Akenzua II (1899–1978), as enthroned 1933, began the movement for the return to Nigeria the looted Benin cultural objects in 1936. Two valuable collections: a coral crown and coral bead garment, belonging to Oba

Ovonramwen, were returned to Oba Akenzua II in 1938 by G.M. Miller a son of a member of the Benin expedition, who had loaned the pieces to the British Museum in 1935 (Plankensteiner 2016). Some Benin objects had to be purchased in the 1940s to help build up the collection of the newly founded National Museum in Benin. In the 1950s, the British Museum sold a number of Benin cultural objects to Nigeria to beef up the collection in the newly founded museums (Afigbo & Okita, 1985). In 1957, Josephine Walker, relative of Captain Herbert Sutherland Walker (who participated in the 1897 punitive expedition loot sharing) donated a carved Benin Ivory tusk of 6 foot (1.8288 m) tall to the Jos museum, established in 1952 (Layiwola, 2014).



**Figure 1:** The Earl of Plymouth (right) visiting the *Oba* of Benin, Oba Akenzua II Benin City, 1938

Source: Chief S.O. Alonge Collection EEPA 2009-007-0038

Oba Akenzua 11 (1899-1978) enthroned in 1933. Loved cultural objects. Museum activities started in Benin with Oba Akenzua. He maintained a couple of objects in bronzes and woods in his palace. In then Benin Oba Akenzua 11 officially appoint a keeper in the person of Late Chief Jacob Egharevba to his Iwebo Royal palace in 1946. And late Chief Jacob Egharevba happened to be the first curator of National Museum, Benin (Omoregie, 2006). Oba Akenzua 11 began the movement of for the return to Nigeria the looted Benin cultural objects in 1936 (Plankensteiner 2016).

### **2.2.2 Post-Independence**

Since independence in 1960, Benin looted works of art made of brass, ivory and wood, often referred to as "Benin bronzes", have been the focus of public debate on the restitution of colonial heritage. Demands have been made for the return of the objects. Among several individual /group efforts, a few are mentioned below: The National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM)/ Nigerian Government has always been in the negotiation for the objects.

In December 1970, the British Museum put on show a large selection of brass from the city of Benin. Shortly after the opening, Chukwuma Osugi, General Secretary of the All Africa Students and Workers Union, publicly asked Lord Eccles, British Minister for the Arts, "to instruct the British Museum to explain when and how they acquired the bronzes, now worth a fortune to western collectors." (Ratte, 1972) In 1977, the Nigerian government needed the loan of Queen Idia original 16th century ivory pectoral mask which was last worn by King Ovonramwen Nogbasi in 1897 before he was exiled. The mask in the British Museum was the official emblem for 'the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture

(FESTAC '77) in Lagos. It was seen as a unification symbol for Nigerians, Black and African peoples worldwide. Attempts were made but the request was turned down, and this led to the cooling of relations between Britain and Nigeria at that time.



**Figure 2: Queen Idia original 16th century ivory pectoral mask at the British Museum**  
**Source: Eghafona at the British Museum July 2023.**

The Trustees of the British Museum may sell, exchange, give away or otherwise dispose of any object vested in them and comprised in their collection if –

- a. The object is duplicate or another object, or
- b. The object appears to the Trustees to have been made not earlier than the year 1850, and substantially consists of printed matter of which a copy made by photography or a process akin to photography is held by the Trustees, or
- c. In the opinion of the Trustees the object is unfit to be retained in the collections of the Museum and can be disposed of without detriment to the interests of students (British Museum 1963).

Being an unfit object seems quite subjective and does not leave clear guidance for the Trustees. On the other hand, objects on loan also have specific criteria associated with them, such as holding the interest of students, what the objects physical conditions are, and finally what, and if there are

any risks in loaning the work. Each of these conditions needs to be considered before the works can be approved for a loan.



*Figure 3 Cast, pendant mask – associated with Queen Ida Resource: [britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)*

The British Museum possesses around 950 pieces of the Royal Art of Benin. Currently there are only 100 on display (Phillips 2021, xx). One of these objects is especially illustrative of how resistant the British have been to repatriation: an ivory mask that is believed to portray Queen Idia wearing a tiara of 10 miniature bearded Portuguese heads, inlaid with copper wire (Figure 2.2) (Phillips 2021, xx). The mask symbolizes the alliance between Benin City and Portugal. This artifact was taken during the 1897 military battle; and is known to be one of five objects taken out of a trunk kept in the *Oba's* bedchamber (Phillips 2021, xxiii). In short, this is a piece that was recorded by an unknown individual and has a distinct association in the memories of the Nigerians. Even so, Britain has historically refused to return it. During the 1970s, Nigeria requested to borrow the mask to display during an important international festival that celebrated African arts and culture. Britain denied their request, stating that its conservation and safety was not guaranteed (Phillips 2021, xxii). When loans are requested from museums in the U.S., it is a customary procedure to request a facility report. This report provides details on the humidity, light, and temperature control, as well as any safety measures. Nigeria was denied the loan because the British Museum did not believe that museum standards could be met for this item and it bears noting that such standard may be used as a barrier for return

In commemoration of 1897- 1997, a hundred years after the expedition, fresh request were made from the Benin palace. On 10<sup>th</sup> December 1996 in a letter to Mr Julian Spalding, Director Art Gallery and Museum Kelvingrove Glasgow, Bernie Grant a Member of Parliament wrote on behalf of the Oba of Benin, Oba Erediauwa, and on behalf of the Africa Reparations Movement (UK) of which he was the Chair. He requested for Benin Objects in a letter titled "Benin Bronzes, Ivories and other cultural and religious objects contained in

the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum". Grant reminded the director of the Museum that the Benin religious and cultural objects belong to a living culture and have deep historic and social value, which go far beyond the aesthetic and monetary value which they hold in exile. The Royal Family of Benin in the formal request asked Grant to draw an analogy with the recent return to Scotland of the Stone of Destiny. Just as the Stone is of such great significance to the people of Scotland, so the Benin treasures are significant to the people of Benin (Opoku, 2017). On 10th January 1997, Julian Spalding replied and politely refused for so called professional reasons:

Museums have a collective responsibility, both nationally and internationally to preserve the past so that people can enjoy it and learn from it. In the case of the Benin collection in Glasgow though it is small and not of the highest quality, it does play an important role in introducing our visitors to the culture, and religious beliefs of Benin, whose artistic achievements rank with the finest not just in Africa but in the whole world ( Adebisi, 2009).

In addition to these requests, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1997, Emmanuel N. Arinze, Chairman, West African Museums Programme (WAMP) further requested from Spalding, Director, Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, for the Return of Benin Objects to the Oba of Benin. It was specified that the singular act of the Glasgow Museum will encourage many others in Europe to take the path of honour and join in the historic quest for restitution. This request was turned down. By 2000, Prince Edun Akenzua, the Enogie of Obazuwa and brother of the Oba of Benin gave testimony before the British House of Commons. He enumerated the relief sought.

*(i) The official record of the property removed from the Palace of Benin in 1897 be made available to the owner, the Oba of Benin.*

*(ii) All the cultural property belonging to the Oba of Benin illegally taken away by the British in 1897 should be returned to the rightful owner, the Oba of Benin.*

*(iii) As an alternative, to (ii) above, the British should pay monetary compensation, based on the current market value, to the rightful owner, the Oba of Benin.*

*(iv) Britain being the principal looters of the Benin Palace, should take full responsibility for retrieving the cultural property or the monetary compensation from all those to whom the British sold them.*

The entire above request was not honoured.

### **2.2.3 Current Efforts at the Repartition of Benin Objects**

The recent quest, negotiation and consensus in the twenty-first century are now being spearheaded by the Benin royal family, NCMM, and, BDG and other institutions for the restitution and repatriation of Benin cultural objects. President Emmanuel Macron of French was the first to set the stage for what has become a movement, delivering a speech at the 2017 event in Burkina Faso. Macron had declared that a means was to be devised for temporary or permanent repatriation restitution of African cultural objects / heritages , because he asserted that, “ I cannot accept that large part of African cultural heritages from numerous African nations in France”, (Guardian Newspaper, 2022).

German became the first nation after five of President Emmanuel Macron’s declaration to fire Salvo with the return of two cultural objects in July, 2022. One month later a

consensus was arrived at and a treaty was signed between German and Nigeria government , the treaty has been described as the most extensive transfer of Museum artefacts from a colonial framework to date covers 512 cultural objects, which ended up in Berlin in the aftermath of the 1897 looting (Kan, 2022). Much latter in October, 2022 as reported by Art forum “ the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington DC, in October 11, 2022 officially ceded ownership of twenty nine Benin bronze to National Commission for Museums and Monuments in Nigeria “. On Monday, November 28, 2022 the Horniman Museum, which was founded by social reformer Fredrick Horniman, a vigorous campaigner for the creation of the British welfare state, followed suit with the transfer of ownership of 72 cultural objects looted from the Benin kingdom in 1897 (Kan, 2022).

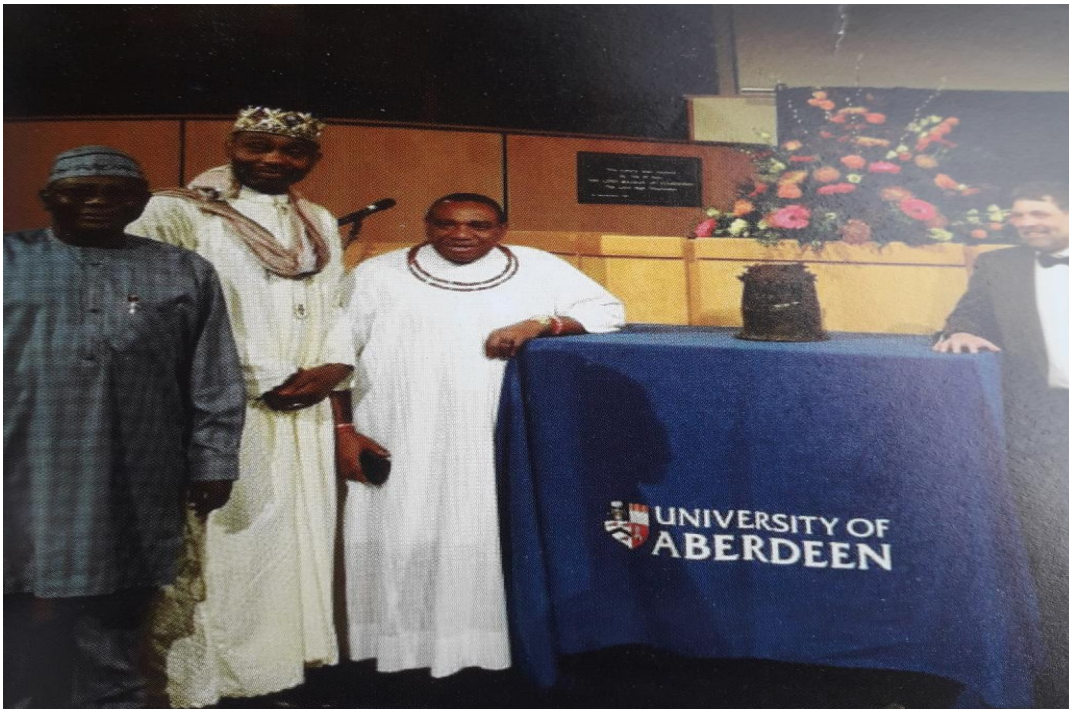
Since September 2020, the NCMM under the leadership of Prof. Abba Isa Tijani has approached many museums and institutions using different methods and recorded success in most cases. The Netherland in October 2020 returned 600 years old Ife Terracotta, in March 2021, the University of Aberdeen Scotland agreed to return a Benin bronze from it collection. In April 2021, the NCMM received a Bronze piece from Mexico. The University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom has also agreed to return a disputed Benin bronze. The NCMM have started more procedures for the repatriation of more cultural objects they have secured a date in October 2021 to repatriate antiquities [cultural objects] from the Metropolitan Museum, New York and Germany to repatriate 1,130 Benin bronzes to Nigeria. (The Nigerian Museum,2021). In an efforts to repatriate more artefacts [Benin cultural objects] the Federal Government of Nigeria through NCMM, BDG, Royal Palace (Oba of Benin and Edo State Government after many discussion and negotiations with many countries have agreed like USA, Scotland, and Netherlands etc. to repatriate the Benin

cultural objects to Nigeria (The Nigerian Museum,2021). This was done in glorious ceremony attended by Edo State governor, officials of NCMM as well as chiefs from the Oba's palace (Kan, 2022). As these treaties were signed and the cultural objects are been repatriated home, the enigma is how to preserve and manage them, because these cultural objects speaks to who we are and to our history, our religion, our values and ethics.

In this regard, mention must be made of the BDG. The group is a multi-lateral collaborative working group that brings together museum directors and delegates from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom with representatives of the Edo State Government, the Royal Court of Benin, and the NCMM. A central objective of the BDG is to work together to establish a museum in Benin City that will facilitate a permanent display reuniting Benin works of art dispersed in collections around the world. The Benin Dialogue Group has been working on sharing information concerning collections of Benin works of art as a basis for developing content, training, joint activities and initiatives to facilitate the creation of the Royal Museum (Press Statement of the meeting of the BDG, 2018).

The University of Aberdeen on 25 March, 2021 was the first museum in the United Kingdom (UK) to announce their commitment to repatriate a Benin bronze depicting the head of an Oba of Benin.( <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/law/blog/the-repatriation-of-benin-bronze-and-decolonisation-of-museums-views-from-the-university-of-aberdeen>). And on the 28 October 2021, they University of Aberdeen fulfilled its commitment through a solemn handover ceremony. On the University of Aberdeen's part, Professor George Boyne, the Principal and Vice Chancellor and Mr Neil Curtis, Head of Museums and Special Collections, signed the handover agreement. On the Nigerian part, Prince Aghatise Erediauwa, representing His Royal Majesty the Oba of Benin, Ewuare II, Chief Charles

Uwensuyi-Edosomwan SAN, Legal Advisor to His Royal Majesty, the Oba of Benin Ewuare II, Professor Abba Isa Tijani, Director-General of the MCM, Mr Babatunde Adebisi, Legal Adviser/Director, Legal Services, NCMM and His Excellency, Suleiman Sani, Deputy High Commissioner of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the UK, signed the handover agreement.



**Figure 4: The Repatriation of Benin Bronze on 28 October 2021, at the University of Aberdeen**

The handover agreement signed by the University of Aberdeen and the Nigerian stakeholders transferred copyright in images of the Benin bronze to the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments. However, the University of Aberdeen was granted a non-exclusive license to use the images for any non-commercial purpose. Similarly, the agreement provides that all images and information relating to the Benin

bronze held by the University of Aberdeen will be supplied on request by the Nigerian stakeholders at no cost and with no restrictions on their use.

## **2.3 The National Museum Benin's Management, Security and Protection of Objects in the Museum**

### **2.3.1 Museum Management of Cultural Objects**

Museums are not mysteries, nor are the people that closely associated them. Therefore museums are rationally organized institutions directed toward articulate purpose or objective at their excellent which can accomplish its purpose with maximum effect with minimum waste (Weil, 2002). From the foregoing, it is clear that museum is a formal organization/institution which indulges in management skills to achieve it set goals and objectives.

Museum management is defined today as the action of ensuring the running of the museum's administrative business and, more generally, all the activities which are not directly attached to the specific fields of museum work (preservation, research and communication). In this regard, museum management essentially encompasses tasks relating to financial (accounting, management control, finances) and legal responsibilities, to security and upkeep, to staff management and to marketing as well as to strategic procedures and the general planning of museum activities. (Desvallées and Maires, 2010).

Museum management focus on the care and the study of its collections and the way museums are staffed and how workers are trained (Weil, 2002). Museum management also involves documentation of cultural objects/ heritages in the museums setting. Simply put documentation 'refers to record keeping'. This documentation in museum is often done in

written form. Prior to the technological advancement, museums are increasingly adopting computerized database to do the documentation of cultural objects, monuments and heritages (Binkat, 2008).

### **2.3.2 Museums Security and Protection of Cultural Objects**

One of the fundamental functional management of museums all the world is the security and protection of cultural objects, heritages and sites from thefts and deterioration. The museums management is also concerned with security and the preservation of cultural objects in the museums setting. Cultural heritage, legislation and management started in Nigeria more than seventy years ago, however NCMM remains a marginal institution without adequate resources to manage, secure and protect the country's cultural objects and heritages (Shyllon. 2013).

The NCMM act, 1979 was made for the security, protection and preservation of cultural objects / monuments. Therefore section 13 of the NCMM act (hereafter the act) provides that if the commission considers that any antiquity [cultural objects] is in need of protection or preservation, it may publish notices to the effect in the federal gazette and in the appropriate state Gazette and a copy of the notice to be served on the owner of the antiquity. The notice must specify the antiquity [cultural objects] and the place where it is (Shyllon, 2013). The NCMM was established with the responsibility for the conservation, preservation and restoration of the nation's historical, cultural, artistic and scientific relics. The commission is also the agency responsible for cultural heritage management (Shyllon. 2013). Therefore, the NCMM is the only government agency in charge of preservation and management cultural objects in Nigeria.

### **2.3.3 National Commission for Museums and Monuments Preservation of Cultural Objects for Educational Purpose, Effective Tourism and Development**

Preservation in museum can be interchangeably used as conservation. Preservation is an action taken to keep in safety or conserve the existing state of cultural objects of antiquity or heritage (Ezeokeke, 2018). Preservation also means an action taken to prevent decay of cultural objects, monuments and cultural heritage properties for posterity (Ezeokeke, 2018). Ezeokeke further argued that preservation of cultural objects has to do with consolidation. Consolidation has to do with any action taken to strengthen the part or whole of cultural objects due to deterioration.

The physical addition or application of adhesive or supportive materials to the actual fabric of the cultural property or object in order ensures its durability or structural integrity (Ezeokeke, 2018). Preservation means to protect a thing or a group of things from different hazards such as destruction, deterioration, separation or even theft; this protection is ensured by gathering the collection in one place, inventorying it, sheltering it, making it secure and repairing it. In museology, preservation covers all the operations involved when an object enters a museum, that is to say all the operations of acquisition, entering in the inventory, recording in the catalogue, placing in storage, conservation, and if necessary restoration. The preservation of heritage generally leads to a policy which starts with the establishment of a procedure and criteria for acquisition of the material and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment, and continues with the management of those things which have become museum objects, and finally with their conservation. In this sense the concept of preservation represents that which is fundamentally at stake in museums, because the building up of collections structures the mission of museums and their development.

Preservation is one axis of museum action, the other being transmission to the public (Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010).

The principal focus of history museums is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret objects of historical and cultural significance. Over time, all objects will begin to deteriorate for variety of reasons such as environmental conditions, use, and natural decay. However, that deterioration can mitigate by practicing proper preservation measures. Knowing how to handle, display, and store the cultural objects in your museum's collections can add an important number of years to life of cultural objects (The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works) the Texas Association. In general, museums and volunteers can successfully and reasonably undertake most preservation practices. However, if an object requires repairs, major restoration, or major cleaning, or if basic preservation measures do not slow an object rate of deterioration, the museum should contact a conservator.

A cultural object (property) is the product and witness of the different traditions and of spiritual achievements of the past and thus is an essential element in the personality of the people of the world. Therefore it is indispensable to preserve it as much as possible, according to historical and artistic importance, so that the significance and messages of the cultural objects becomes part of the culture of the people who thereby might gain consciousness of their own dignity (UNESCO, 1968). Preservation is an action taken in order to prevent, stop or retard the process of deterioration of the cultural objects or artefacts.

It is sometimes supplemented by the restoration work, which means the treatment of objects with necessary corrections and alterations. The concept of conservation is the ultimate reality, which includes both preservation and restoration. Now the question is what we mean by deterioration. Deterioration is the alteration in an object, produced by the interaction between the object and factors of destruction (AIC).

In order to make the objects look attractive and last for a long time for museums and tourism business some steps must be taken to preserve the objects and some hazards must be avoided to preserve the objects for effective tourism business.

#### **2.3.4 Seven Hazards to Historic Artefacts**

The basic principle of preservation of significant cultural objects/ collections is DO NO HARM. The following hazards are recognized as some of the most dangerous to important cultural objects/ collections (<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/preservation-artifacts>)

##### **I Light**

Too much light speeds deterioration of photographs, textiles and printed or handwritten paper, furniture, etc. Historic objects should be protected from excessive light levels, and especially from sunlight and florescent light, which contain high amounts of ultraviolet radiation--which is the most harmful form of light. Place furniture, antique quilts and other memorabilia out of direct sunlight and/or florescent light.

##### **II Temperature**

Too high or too low a temperature (or rapid temperature swings) can damage rubber, wood, metal, etc. Store or display historic memorabilia in spaces that have climate-control systems (heating and air conditioning). Do not store in sheds, attics and basements.

### **III. Humidity**

Humidity that is too high encourages pests and mold growth on paper, textiles and parchment, and promotes rust on metal. Humidity that is too low can cause objects to become brittle. Organic objects in particular absorb and release moisture depending on the relative humidity of their environment and need a stable humidity. Store historic memorabilia in an area that has a steady, constant humidity (45%–55%), and store or display historic materials away from heating and air conditioning vents.

### **IV. Pests**

Different types of historic materials attract different types of pests. Roaches and silverfish are attracted to paper and books. Moths are attracted to protein fibers such as silk and wool. Termites are attracted to wood. Conduct regular inspections of historic objects that attract pests.

### **V. Human Beings**

Human beings are one of the greatest threats to historic objects, not only due to surface compounds, such as oil, sweat and make-up that they carry on their skin, but also because we continue to use historic objects. These oils and other surface substances are transferred to the object during handling. Wear cotton or nylon gloves when handling historic paper, textiles, photographs, and wooden and metal objects. Many objects are damaged because people handle them in inappropriate ways, such as trying on clothing, taking items to show and tell at school or even using them for their original purposes. All of these uses put undue strain on the objects and put them at risk for loss or damage.

## **VI Chemical Reaction and Air Pollutants**

Certain types of materials, such as metal and marble, react to chemicals present in the air. This is a particular concern for outdoor objects such as marble statuary, iron architectural elements, etc. Chemicals such as formaldehyde and acidic gases from wooden compounds can also harm historic objects.

## **VII Inherent Vice**

Some objects that are composed of incompatible materials, such as wood and leather or wood and paint, have built-in deterioration risks. Conduct regular inspections of these objects for any changes in condition. For example the American institute of Conservation highlighted some basic methods of preserving various cultural objects such as metal, iron and steel, copper, brass, silver, woods, paper, clothes and leather etc.

For the purpose of this study, I will like to list few of these cultural objects most relevant to this study. Among some are metal, copper, brass, silver, bronze and woods objects, All metal except gold is susceptible to oxidation or corrosion. Prevention of corrosion or oxidation is the primary goal in caring for metal artefacts. Most corrosion is caused by moisture, although certain chemicals can also play a role. The oils and acids that occur naturally on skin can be very damaging to metal artefacts. One of the simplest ways to help preserve your artefacts is to store them in a relatively dry environment. Typically, metal artefacts should be stored in living areas, which are much dryer then sheds garages or basements. Basic preservation of copper, bronze, brass and silver cultural objects these metals are relatively stable. Their oxidation provides a stable coating that protects the metal. These metals generally should not be cleaned or polished without consulting a professional

### **2.3.5 Basic Preservation of Wood Cultural Objects**

Wood is a relatively stable material to preserve. Wooden artefacts can be maintained for years, provided that some basic care and attention is given to their preservation. Store wooden items in your home where they are protected from extremes of temperature and humidity. Having said that the NCMM/ National Museums, Benin preserve and manage all the cultural objects in the museums institution for educational purposes, effective tourism and development.

The NCMM/ National Museum, Benin adopt all the mechanism to preserve her cultural objects in the museum from time to time to make the cultural objects attractive to the visitors and for education and tourism. However, Museums have a collective responsibility, both nationally and internationally to preserve the past so that people can enjoy it and learn from it. In the case of the Benin collection in Glasgow though it is small and not of the highest quality, it does play an important role in introducing our visitors to the culture, and religious beliefs of Benin, whose artistic achievements rank with the finest not just in Africa but in the whole world (Adebiyi, 2009).

## **2. Action Plan for the Preservation and Management of the Repatriated Benin Cultural Objects.**

The Federal government of Nigeria through the NCMM has accelerated action plans on the construction of new museums will be built where the cultural objects that were repatriated from Germany and other countries of the world would be preserved (The Nigeria Museum, 2022). The Director General Prof. Abba Isa Tijani of NCMM stated that the Benin cultural objects worth £ 2.5 billion that were looted over 125 years ago by the British colonial

soldiers during the Benin expedition have been handed over to the Oba of Benin, Oba Ewuare 11 by immediate past Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari. Tajani, therefore opined that there was need for cooperation and involvement of all stakeholders in promoting the repatriation of more cultural objects (artefacts) and the preservation and management of the repatriated cultural objects (The Nigerian Museum, 2022). Tijani, argued that the Federal government of Nigeria and the of Republic Germany planned to build solid structure on ground especially in Abuja and Benin City for the cultural objects to survive when they are fully brought in (The Nigerian Museum, 2022).

It was in the peak of the debate of the repatriation of the Benin objects in 2023, that the Federal Government of Nigeria issued a gazette recognizing ownership and vesting custody and management of repatriated Benin Artefacts in the Oba of Benin. The Government Notice No. 25 in Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette No. 57, Volume 110 dated March 28, 2023 and titled: "Notice of Presidential Declaration - on the Recognition of Ownership, and an order vesting custody and Management of Repatriated looted Benin Artefacts in the Oba of Benin kingdom", ordered that the "ownership of artefacts looted from the ancient Palace of the Oba and other parts of Benin Kingdom be and is vested in the Oba." It also ordered that "custody of the repatriated artefacts, shall, from wherever and whenever they are brought into Nigeria, be handed over to the Oba as the original owner and custodian of the culture, heritage and tradition of the people of Benin Kingdom in Edo State of Nigeria. "The gazette said the "repatriated artefacts may be kept within the Palace of the Oba or such other locations within Benin City, or other place that the Oba and the Federal Government of Nigeria may consider secure and safe."

Furthermore, it ordered that the "Oba shall be responsible for the management of all places where the repatriated artefacts are domiciled or located." The "Oba shall work jointly with any recognized national or international institution to ensure the preservation and security of the repatriated artefacts for the benefits of humanity, and repatriated artefacts shall not be taken out of the designated custody without the written consent and authorization of the Oba, and upon such return, the artefacts shall first be inspected and authenticated by the Oba before it is accepted and restored to its designated custody."

With regards to the gazette and the return of objects, it can be seen at first instance as restitution of the objects to the palace. However, it is still necessary for the National Museum in Benin City to prepare to collaborate with the palace fulfilling the aspect that states that the "*Oba shall work jointly with any recognised national or international institution to ensure the preservation and security of the repatriated artefacts for the benefits of humanity...*"

## **2.6 Theoretical Frame Work**

The Social Exchange theory, Symbolic Interactionism theory and Structural Functionalism theory were used to explain the phenomenon under study.

Social exchange theory (SET) is among the most influential conceptual models for understanding organizational behaviour or workplace behaviour and the society at large. Its venerable roots can be traced back to at least the 1920s (e.g., Malinowski, 1922; Mauss, 1925), bridging such disciplines as anthropology (e.g., Firth, 1967; Sahlins, 1972), social psychology (e.g., Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1958; Thibault & Kelley, 1959), and sociology (e.g., Blau, 1964). Although different views of social exchange have emerged, theorists agree that social exchange involves a series of interactions that

generate obligations (Emerson, 1976). Within SET, these interactions are usually seen as *interdependent* and contingent on the actions of another person (Blau, 1964).

Social exchange theory also emphasizes that these interdependent transactions have the potential to generate high-quality relationships, although as we shall see this only will occur under certain circumstances.

Social exchange theory's explanatory value has been felt in such diverse areas as social power (Molm, Peterson, & Takahashi, 1999), networks (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004; Cook, Molm, & Yamagishi, 1993), board independence (Westphal & Zajac, 1997), organizational justice (Konovsky, 2000), psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995), and leadership (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997), among others.

### **Rules and Norms of Exchange**

One of the basic tenets of social exchange theory is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments. To do so, parties must abide by certain "rules" of exchange. Rules of exchange form a "normative definition of the situation that forms among or is adopted by the participants in an exchange relation" (Emerson, 1976: 351). In this way, rules and norms of exchange are "the guidelines" of exchange processes. Thus, the use of SET in models of organizational behaviour is framed on the basis of the exchange rule or principle the researcher relies on. Most of management research focuses on expectations of reciprocity; however, a number of other exchange rules have been outlined in SET. Thus, the majority of this section will outline principles of reciprocity, but we also introduce negotiated rules and lesser researched rules of exchange.

### ***Reciprocity Rules***

Reciprocity or repayment in kind is probably the best known exchange rule. Gouldner (1960) provided an interdisciplinary review of what was then known of social exchange theory. Gouldner's review makes clear that there is some ambiguity in the way in which reciprocity can be defined. The primary contribution of this review was outlining the nature of reciprocity within exchange and distinguishing three different types of reciprocity: (a) reciprocity as a transactional pattern of interdependent exchanges, (b) reciprocity as a folk belief, and (c) reciprocity as a moral norm. We review each of these traditions of reciprocity in terms of organizational research (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Key insights on the nature of social exchange theory resources originated from classic anthropology studies (e.g., Malinowski 1922, 1932; Mauss, 1967). From this work, it was common to view exchange in terms of economic value. However, exchanges were also shown to have symbolic relevance. That is, exchange stood for something beyond plain material properties. These ideas are still a part of social exchange theory and are embraced by contemporary scholars in this area.

### ***Six Exchange Resources***

Foa and Foa's (1974, 1980) resource theory presents six types of resources in exchange: love, status, information, money, goods, and services. These benefits are organized into a two-dimensional matrix. One dimension refers to a resource's *particularism* (vs. universalism), meaning the resource's worth varies based on its source. Money is relatively low in particularism—its monetary value is constant regardless who provides it. Love, however, is highly particularistic, and its importance depends on its source. The second dimension refers

to the resource's *concreteness*, meaning how tangible or specific the resource is. Most services and goods are at least somewhat concrete. Less concrete resources provide *symbolic* benefit. Symbolic resources convey a meaning that goes beyond objective worth.

Although resource theory primarily identifies *what* is exchanged, Foa and Foa (1974, 1980) also maintained that certain types of benefits are likely to be exchanged in different ways.

Generally speaking, the less particularistic and the more concrete a benefit is, the more likely it is to be exchanged in a short-term, *quid pro quo* fashion. In contrast, benefits that are highly particularistic and symbolic are exchanged in a more open-ended manner. It is not uncommon to expect monetary payment for a specific good, but less likely to be true for love or status.

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### **Limitation Criticism of Social exchange theory (SET)**

The social exchange theory has been criticised on the ground of uncertainty and lack empirical values or evidence in the explanation of phenomenon. However, recent appraisals have emphasized problems facing the theory. For example, Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2004) discussed theoretical ambiguities and empirical needs, whereas Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, and Schminke (2001) lamented frequent misunderstandings of the general SET model. In spite of this criticism the SET is very useful in the analysis of organizational and social action in social science and management sciences disciplines.

### **Application of Social exchange theory (SET) to this study**

**Looking at** the key insights on the nature of social exchange theory resources originated from classic anthropological studies (e.g., Malinowski 1922, 1932; Mauss, 1967). From this work, it was common to view exchange in terms of economic value and reciprocity. However, exchanges were also shown to have symbolic relevance. That is, exchange stood for something beyond plain material properties. These ideas are still a part of social exchange theory and are embraced by contemporary scholars in this area. In line with this statement above, it can be deduced that what informed the agitation of the repatriation of Benin cultural objects is the economic values, cultural values and beyond plain material properties.

### *The repatriation of Benin cultural was based on Six Exchange Resources*

Foa and Foa's (1974, 1980) resource theory presents six types of resources in exchange: love, status, information, money, goods, and services. These benefits are organized into a two-dimensional matrix. One dimension refers to a resource's *particularism* (vs. universalism), meaning the resource's worth varies based on its source. Money is relatively low in particularism—its monetary value is constant regardless that provides it. Love, however, is highly particularistic, and its importance depends on its source. The second dimension refers to the resource's *concreteness*, meaning how tangible or specific the resource is. Most services and goods are at least somewhat concrete. Less concrete resources provide *symbolic* benefit. Symbolic resources convey a meaning that goes beyond objective worth.

For instance the agitation for the repatriation of Benin to Nigeria became important base on the love, status and cultural values the Oba of Benin, Edo State Government and the Federal Government of Nigeria attached to the cultural objects repatriated. It is important to note that these repatriated Benin cultural carries vital cultural and historical information about Benin kingdom and Nigeria as a whole.. the Benin cultural objects worth money or they have economic value / relevance to Nigeria and it can play vital role tourism development in Nigeria and African at large if well manage therefor the reciprocity of the repatriation of the cultural object is both gain to the government, the individuals and the society at large. The repatriated Benin cultural objects are symbolic to the Benin kingdom and the Nigeria society at large. In essence the European and other Western countries have agreed to carry out this social exchange (repatriation of cultural objects) with Nigeria due to the reciprocal benefits to each other socially, materially and economically.

#### **2.6.1 Symbolic Interactionism Theory**

Symbolic interactionism theory is a sociological framework for viewing human beings as living in the world of a meaning “objectives” may include material things, actions, other people, relationship and symbols (Schaefer, 2001). This theory was developed first in the United States by George Herbert Mead (1863-1931). Mead is widely regarded as founder of this theory. Mead taught at the University of Chicago from 1893 until his death. Despite his innovative views, Mead only occasionally wrote articles, and never a book. (Schaefer, 2001). Other proponents of this theory are Charles Horton Cooley, W.I. Thomas, Herbert Blumer, Erving Goffman, (Igbinovia, Okonufua, Omoyibo, Osunde and Obaro, 2005). According to some school of thought Herbert Blumer is regarded as the originator of symbolic interactionism at the University of Chicago, Chicago Illinois, U.S.A. in 1936. Described as “a somewhat barbaric neologism that I coined in an offhand way in an article written in **man and society** in 1936. The term caught on and is now in general use.” (Clark, 2012). Herbert Blumer is regarded as the originator of symbolic interactionism theory he was a student of George Herbert Mead, and his master Mead never wrote a book on his own, his teacher’s innovative teaching was he and some other students Mead put together in an article **Man and Society** in 1936 led by Blumer in honour of master/teacher (Schaefer, 2001).

Symbolic interactionism argued that we act towards people, objects and events on the basis of meaning we attach to them. And symbols according to them, is important part of human communication. Put differently reality does not exist out there in the world but is manufactured by people as they intervene in the world and interpret what is happening there (Schaefer, 2001), (Igbinovia, et al, 2005).

### **2.6.2 Assumptions**

Most symbolic interactionists believe a physical reality does indeed exist by an individual's social definitions, and that social definitions do develop in part or in relation to something "real". People thus do not respond to this reality directly, but rather to the social understanding of reality; i.e., they respond to this reality indirectly through a kind of filter which consists of individuals' different perspectives. This means that humans exist not in the physical space composed of realities, but in the "world" composed only of "objects". According to Erving Goffman, what motivates humans to position their body parts in certain manners and the desires to capture and examine those moments

are of two elements that constitute the composition of the social reality which is made of

Various individuals' perceptions, it's crucial to examine how these two elements' occurrence.

Three assumptions frame symbolic interactionism are:

1. *Individuals construct meaning via the communication process.*
2. *Self-Concept is a motivation for behavior.*
3. *A unique relationship exists between the individual and society (West & Turner, 2017).*

### **2.6.3 Criticism Symbolic Interactionism Theory**

Symbolic interactionists are often criticized for being overly impressionistic in their research methods and somewhat unsystematic in their theories. It is argued that the theory is not one theory, but rather, therefor many different theories. Additionally, some theorists have a problem with symbolic interaction theory due to its lack of. These objections, combined with the fairly narrow focus of interactionist research on small-group interactions and other social psychological issues, have relegated the interactionist camp to a minority position

among sociologists (albeit a fairly substantial minority). Much of this criticism arose during the 1970s in the U.S. when quantitative approaches to sociology were dominant, and perhaps the best known of these is by Alvin Gouldner, (1971). The symbolic interactionism theory is suitable or useful for qualitative research.

#### **2.6.4 Application of Symbolic Interactionism Theory to this Study**

The symbolic interactionism theory argued that symbols are important aspect of human communication because members of the society share social meanings of symbols (Schaefer, 2001). For example the Benin cultural objects like the bronze ivory and wooden objects have symbolic meaning for the Benin people. Victor Ehikhamenor argued that the Benin Cultural objects that were looted by the British army in 1897, in interviewed with Barnaby Philips, that “they were our documents, our archives, the “photograph” of our kings, when they were taken our history was exhumed.” (Churchhill, 2021). In similar vein the writer asserted that, the *telegraphic stool* in the ground floor, Oba Akenzua cultural gallery at national museum, Benin was sent to Oba Ovonranmwun in Calabar as letter to convey information about what was happening in the palace why he was in Calabar (The National Museum information Tour guide).

That means the Benin cultural objects are not just made for beauty/ aesthetic purpose but for symbolic meaning. Before the emergence of British colonialism in Benin Kingdom and even after the Benin Cultural object were used as a means of communication and preservation of historical events , for instance the Oba headbust and plaque and Idia head plaque was to immortalized the past Obas (Kings) for the next generation to know them. In National Museums Benin and all the museums in Nigeria and all over the world the cultural objects in their gallery have symbolic meaning and the symbolic meaning are interpreted by the

education officers after the ethnographers have gone to the field to research the various objects displayed in the museum gallery. In a similar manner Kendra Voelz, argued that the Benin people uses the sculptures (cultural objects) of previous Obas bust to remember the deceased within the place and as demonstration of their lineage (Voelz, 2022)

It is therefore argued in this thesis that symbolic interactionism theory is important to explaining the Benin cultural object because it help us to understand the value the Benin people placed on the looted objects by the British Colonial masters and the need to return (repatriate) them.



**Figure 5: Telegraphic stool that was sent to Oba Ovonranmwun when he was exiled in Calabar. Source: taken by researcher, 2023. National Museum, King Square, Benin City.**

The telegraphic stool is presently in ground floor, Oba Akenzua cultural gallery in National Museum, Benin City. This telegraphic stool conveyed classified information about happening in the palace and kingdom to exiled Oba Ovonramwan in Calabar. The

information, in the form of pictorial inscriptions, was undecipherable to all but the Oba and revealed the apparent lack of peace in the kingdom and the atrocities some palace chief and agents of the British or European were perpetrating in the palace.

The second theory, structural functionalism theory will be useful in explaining the repatriation of Benin cultural objects in this study.

## **2.7 Structural – Functionalism Theory**

Structural- functionalism theory or Functionalism theory is the name of one of the two macro theoretical perspectives in sociology which seek to explain the nature and dynamics of human society as a whole ( Clark, 2012; 2016). The concept or theory was first used by an anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) in the 1920s and 1940s. Clark asserted that functionalism as a distinct and independent theoretical perspective was explicitly designated and systematically formulated by Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s and 1940s in Great Britain.

Malinowski's conception of functionalism has been regarded as being largely psychological and as a result it has attracted a barrage of harsh criticism to itself by sociologists, social-cultural anthropologists. It was social/ cultural anthropologist Arthur Radcliffe- Brown. Malinowski's professional compatriot and archival, who provided the first acceptable systematic sociological formulation of structural- functionalism in the 1930s and 1940s (Clark, 2016). According to Clark, after Malinowski and Radcliff - Brown established the functional perspective in the 1920s through the 1940s, it was Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton, Neil Smelser, Kingsley Davis, among several other Americans, who consolidated the perspective and made it full- fledged theoretical perspective from the 1930s through the

1970s. In the hand of these Americans, greater emphasis was placed on the functional aspect of the perspective and the name of the perspective and name of the perspective was shorten to “functionalism” Clark, 2016).

However, structural-functionalism is defined as the analysis of social and cultural phenomenon in terms of the functions they perform in a social-cultural system. In structural –functionalism society is conceived of as a system of interrelated parts in which the no part can be understood in isolation from the whole. A change in any part is seen as leading to certain degree of imbalance, which in turn result in change in other parts of the system and to some extent to re-organization of the system as a whole (Theodorson, and Theodorson,1967) cited in Clark,(2016). The development structural-functionalism was therefore viewed or based on the model of organic system found in the biological sciences. (Clark, 2016).

From the definition above by Theodorson & Theodorson, (1967) three objectives can be outline, thus:

1. The general interestedness of the system parts;
2. The existence of a normal or healthy state of an organism; and
3. The way in which all parts of the system re-organize to bring things back to normal whenever the equilibrium is displaced (Clark, 2016).

Structural – functionalism or functionalism theory is one perspective that is dominant in socio- of society are created and how these parts are functional (meaning having beneficial consequences to the individuals and the society) and the dysfunctional (meaning having

negative consequences). The theory sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability; it states that our social lives are guided by social structure, which are relatively stable patterns of social structure, which are relatively patterns of social behaviour (Doda, 2005).

All social structure contributes to the operation of society. Two dominant British anthropologists in functionalism theory were Radcliff Brown Bronislaw Malinowski; represent two sides' stands in the theory: Structural Functionalism, which stresses individual need to be melt in the society (Doda, 2005). However, it is clear from this analyzes that Bronislaw Malinowski (1884- 1942) structural functionalism borders on psychological functions, that is how society should be able to function and meet the individual need(s). While on the other hand, Structure functionalism by Arthur Alfred Radcliff Brown (1881-1955) boards on the different relationship of component part that made up the function together to meet the societal and individual need(s).

This theory regards culture as an integrated whole (Howard & Dunaif-hattius, 1992), and tries to explain how the relationships among the parts. In a related manner, anthropologist Garry Ferraro, (2006) heighted the two different stands view of Malinowski Bronislaw (1884- 1942) and A.R Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955). Malinowski concentrated on exploring how contemporary culture operated or functioned. This theoretical orientation, known as functionalism, assumed that cultures provided various means for satisfying both societal and individual needs.

According to Malinowski, no matter how bizarre a cultural item might at first appear, it had a meaning and performs some useful function for the well-being of the individuals of the

society. The job the field worker is to become sufficiently immersed in the culture and language to be able to identify these functions. Not only do all aspect of a culture have a function, but, according to Malinowski, they are also interrelated to one another. This functionalist tenet is no better illustrated than Malinowski own description of the Kula ring, a system of trade found among the Trobraind Islanders.

Another form of functionalism was developed by the British anthropologist Radcliffe-brown. Like Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, is based on two *fundamental principles*. First, the notion of universal functions, which states that every parts of a culture have a function. The second principal known as functional unity, states that a culture is an interrelated parts. As a corollary to this second principle of structural functionalism theory by Radcliffe-Brown, it follows that a change in part of the culture or system (society) is likely to produce change in other parts.

In addition, Robert .K. Merton took issue with the notion of functional unity. Although he fully recognized that all societies have some degree of functional integration, he could not accept the very high degree of interconnectedness by the early British functionalist.

### **2.7.1 Criticism of Structural-Functionalism**

However this theory has been criticized several grounds. Some of the weaknesses of structural-functionalist theory are:

- It fail to explain why societies different or similar.

Functionalist anthropologists assumed an orderly world, playing little or no attention to completion and conflict (Howard and Dunaif-Hattis, 1992) cited in (Doda, 2005).

- The theory was a historical, neglecting historical process as a stable and unchanging.

Despite these weaknesses, functionalism or structural- functionalist theory influences a great deal of empirical research in anthropology, sociology and other social sciences (Doda, 2005).

### **2.7.2 Application of Structural-Functionalism Theory to this Study**

The reason for adopting the structural-functionalism theory to explain this topic at hand is due to one of its basic assumptions or principles of universal functions. According to this principles / assumptions of structural –functionalists Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski argued that every part of the culture has function. Therefore Benin cultural objects have various functions in the society both the Benin people, the British that looted the cultural objects, the museums and the Western world the society in generally. For the aesthetic point of view and promotion of BritishMuseum, MacGregor has continually insisted that existence of Benin Bronzes in the British Museum is crucial to the worldwide appreciation it deserves. The Benin cultural objects also have economic function and development for the nation for example: According to Greenfield, the British government wanted to sell the bronzes to pay for the expenses of invading and destroying the city of Benin (Greenfield, In fact, an article in the *Illustrated London News* of 1897 called the bronzes —grotesque, although they are now considered to represent one of the great empires of Africa (Greenfield, 2007).

According to Folarin Shyllon, Nigeria holds the fifth largest collection of Benin Bronzes after Berlin, London, Oxford, and New York (Shyllon,2007). It is reported that one bronze figure has been valued as much as £185,000. (Greenfield,2007). In 1977, Nigeria requested a loan from the British Museum of a fifteenth century Benin ivory mask for a pan-African festival in Lagos. Although the British Museum initially requested a £2 million insurance

bond, it later rejected the loan request stating that the mask was too fragile to travel (Shyllon,2007). When the National Museum of Benin was being constructed in the 1960s, the Nigerian government requested donations from countries holding large quantities of Benin Bronzes in the form of a resolution that was presented at the General Assembly of ICOM in France in 1968 (Shyllon,2007). Although the resolution was circulated to the embassies and high commissions of those countries, Nigeria did not receive a single response.

Eventually, Nigeria had to compete with other countries in auction houses in Europe to buy back its own cultural heritage. Further, in 1980, the government of Nigeria bought five Nigerian works of art at a total cost of eight hundred thousand pounds sterling (Shyllon, 2007). Similarly we can also understand the socio economic function of the looted Benin cultural objects thus: The Ohly Head which broke the previous record for a Benin Bronze sale at a whopping £10M. Known as the Ohly Head, this Benin Bronze sculpture was auctioned off by Lance Entwistle to an undisclosed buyer for £10 million in 2016. Benin bronzes have been slowly gaining in price since they were first stolen in 1897 from the kingdom of Benin, in modern day Nigeria's Edo state. In 1953, a piece was sold for £5,500 and by the 1970s, prices of "tribal art" soared so that in 2007, a Benin bronze head was sold by Sotheby's New York for £4.7 million. The pieces are so rare, that Lance Entwistle claims "99 times out of 100 are fake, and often the remaining 1% has been stolen. Yet, due to the relevance of William and Ernest Ohly, he suspected that Frieda's bronze may be a legitimate Benin bronze (Churchhill, 2021).

With these, one adduced the socio-economic functions of Benin cultural objects and the reason why the British Museum and Western Museums who hold/ housed Benin Cultural Objects feel very reluctant to return it original owner. The Benin cultural objects play various role or function in the society ranging from communication aesthetic, entertainment and socio- economic functions therefore, the repatriation of Benin cultural objects looted in 1897 from Benin Kingdom will enhance curiosity, research and creativity among Nigeria researchers, it will also boost Nigeria foreign exchange , employment opportunities and cultural value and appeals to the government to safely preserve the cultural objects due to it crucial structural functions and benefits to the society (Okpoko, 2022, Onifade, 2022, Alagbe, 2022, in University World News, 2022).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study was purely a qualitative research adopting the qualitative methods. The qualitative research method such as the In-depth Interview (IDI), Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informants, observation and Photograph was used to gather information from the targeted participants of the study area. Data was collected from two major research sources: primary data and secondary data. The primary source of data collection consisted of IDIs, FGD, key informants and photograph. The secondary sources of data collection were: books, journals, newspapers and accessible and retrievable related online materials.

#### **3.2 Area of the Study**

The study was conducted in National Museum Benin, King Square, Benin City, Edo state. Benin kingdom was the original location where the objects looted in 1897 were taken from. The National Museum is divided into seven departments; they are (1) Museums Department (2) Monuments, Heritages and sites Department (3) Educational services and Training Department (4) Research, Planning and Publication Department (5) Administration and supplies department (6) Department of Finance and Accounts and (7) Legal Department. (The Nigerian Museum, 2022).

In this study all the departments mentioned above in the Benin National Museum participated in the research. While some essential departments were purposively selected for focus group discussion.

### **3.3 Population of the Study**

The population of the study was one hundred and fifty eight (158) participants. This constituted the total number of staff that made up the National Museum, Benin 145 and 13 key informants outside the NCMM, Benin. These were Benin indigenes and top management staff from NCMM, in Abuja the Headquarters that possessed the common characteristics or good knowledge that needed to achieve the objectives of the study. Since the population of study was small there was no need for sampling size and sampling techniques. Therefore the total population of the study was one hundred and fifty eight (158).

### **3.4 Instrument of Data Collection**

Data in qualitative research were collected through a set of predetermined questions by raising issues around different enquiries (Kumar, 2011). Therefore this study adopted combination of techniques or instrument of data collection. The instruments are: key informants, photographs, observation, focus group discussion and in-depth- interview. The reason for adopting these four methods of data collection in the qualitative research was to focus on the participants that had good knowledge needed to achieve the objectives of the study.

#### **3.4.1 In-depth Interview (IDI) and Key Informants**

The in-depth interview and key informants are sustained session with identified people who were willing to talk about the subject matter of the research in a face to face communication during fieldwork. The face to face contact was required for interviewer to explain the purpose of the study to the interviewee and seek their consent. Reflecting on the aforementioned, it is clear that the identified people by the researcher are the key informants. A key informant is an expert source of information that is interested and ready to contribute

to any discourse that is important to the development of his /her community or field of endeavour. They are opinion leaders / people who were accessible and who understand the information needed and are always interested to talk about the research topic (Bocoum, 2004). The interview started immediately the consents were given. In addition, the use of the tape recorder, where necessary, the research questions/ objectives was explained to respondents and also sought their permission. This research tool also helped to collect information from the top management staff of the various departments in National Museum, Benin, Abuja and Benin indigenes participants.



**Figure 6: In-depth interviews section with some staff of National Museum, Benin City.**

### **3.4.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

Focus Group Discussion method of data collection was used by grouping some departments instead of interviewing all the individuals per department. The FGD was conducted in three sessions and the composition was 8 persons per panel. Two research assistants, a moderator and a note taker were employed to conduct the discussion. The moderator facilitated the discussion while the note taker took notes and recorded the responses of the participants.

The researcher ensured that the composition of the discussion group was geared towards the research questions and objectives of the study. Members of the discussion group were eight and, prior to the focus group discussion commencement, the researcher introduced himself and the note taker to the participants. The purpose of the study was introduced and the researcher requested them to freely express their views. He maintained that any of their opinion was relevant to the study.

### **3.4.3 Photographs**

Photographs were taken of physical attributes of the research area and the people, only with their verbal consent. The photographs were used to record some practical way the National museum preserve her cultural objects for educational and tourism purpose.

### **3.4.4 Key informants**

Key informants were participants who were knowledgeable and ready to give out relevant information about the subject matter in line with the research objective of the study. The key informant method of data collection was used to extract information from some Benin indigenes and top management staff of NCMM, Abuja at the Headquarters who were knowledgeable and willing to talk about of the repatriation of Benin cultural objects.

### **3.4.5 Observations by the Researcher**

**Observation:** this helped the researcher to document observations pertaining the physical and human geography of the case site.

## **3.5 Method of Data Collection**

The study employed various qualitative instruments of data collection to gather information which include the primary source such as in-depth interview, focus group discussion, key informants and photograph. The essence of using the combination of the aforementioned

method was to enable the researcher to gain comprehensive anthropogenic and cultural issues involved in the study. Three research assistants were trained to administer focus group discussions, while the researcher handled the in-depth interview and key informant session by himself. The three research assistants for FGD were staff of NCMM who worked together as notes takers, while the researcher asked interview questions and the third one monitored the tape recorder in the various departments at the National Museum, Benin. Therefore the qualitative techniques used to collect qualitative data from the participants and interview guild was used to extract demographic data from the participants.

The in-depth interviews and key informant was used to collect information from management staff in NCMM, Benin, some top management staff of NCMM in Abuja the Headquarters and some Benin indigenes outside NCMM, Benin. The focus group discussion was organized in three sessions to extract information from staff of NCMM, Benin, from the entire department. These various departments were grouped into four to represent the entire population of the NCMM, Benin staff. Photograph were taken when necessary in line with the research objectives of the study. Observation was used to document the physical and human geography of the case site.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

The qualitative data analysis commenced by familiarisation with the data collected which involved the immersion in the audio file data derived from listening to the recorded tape of the interview repeatedly to ensure proper transcription, repeated reading of the transcripts, studying notes and listing the themes which recurrently followed. After identifying the themes, the transcript was coded line by line, using open coding technique to develop additional codes in all inductive manners to analyse the data. Inductive reasoning was used

to analyse the narrative and descriptive data as perceived by the participants using the manual thematic and content analysis. The study used discussion analysis in line with the qualitative software programme ATLAS. Ti data analysis following the transcription of the audiotape interviews.

### **3.7 Validation of Research Instruments**

In an attempt to achieve the objectives of the study, the validity of the data collection instruments was given the necessary attention to ensure that the instruments of data collection (in-depth interview guide) measured the issues of importance in the study. The face validity is the extent to which a test is subjectively view as covering the content it purports to measure. Therefore, the face validity was adopted with aid of the project's supervisor and experts in the field of anthropology and their evaluations declared the validation.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

Every participant was guaranteed anonymity prior to and following data collection. Participation was voluntary throughout the data collection process, and participants were free to withdraw their participation at any time. Only participants who were eighteen years (age of accountability in Nigeria) or older were asked to participate. A consideration of basic ethical issues concerning the people involved was put in place as their right, dignity, privacy, and safety for academic purpose and the participants were assured that the study was confidential.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Photographs from the Field and Analysis



**Figure 7:** National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Benin or National Museum, Benin City. Source Field Survey, 2023.

This is the National Museum, Benin City where some of the repatriated objects have been kept, waiting for proper storage and future exhibition to the public for proper tourism. The National Museum, Benin City, was built and commissioned on 10th August, 1973 by His Excellency Colonel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia, the then Military Governor of the Mid-Western State of Nigeria.



**Figure 8:** The Site for the storage facility for the repatriated Benin cultural objects in National Museum, Benin City.

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

As we can see the construction building of the storage facility for repatriated Benin Cultural is on-going. This building when completed is hoped to housed, (store) preserve and manages the repatriated Benin cultural objects for tourism, education and sustainability. This on-going building is directly in front of the gallery of National Museum, Benin City, and the same compound. The project is sponsored by the Federal Government.

As part of the action plans of NCMM to preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects. *“Interviewees the NCMM in Benin City has received a facility of expansion of its grand floor in order to create enough space to accommodate an exhibition of the repatriated Benin cultural objects which is been planned. The participants also said in addition to this development the management of the NCMM has sought and obtain a huge intervention fund of 1.9 billion naira from the Federal Government of Nigeria for the construction of a state – of – the-art storage facility within the precincts of the museum in Benin. To this end the National Museum in Benin has received a facelift in terms of its ground floor in order to create enough space to accommodate an exhibition of the repatriated Benin cultural objects which is being planned”.*

(Mr Toc, Mr Cmao, Mr Bom, Mr Jae, Mr Bam. MR Bate Married/ first degree and above top and middle management staff of NCMM, Benin, NCMM, Abuja).

The photograph of the site under construction above shows the readiness of the Federal Government of Nigeria in collaboration with the NCMM to effectively preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects in National Museum, Benin, City

Some of the repatriated Benin cultural objects currently in National Museum, Benin City are shown below:



**Figure 9:** The Repatriated Okhoko or Okpa. A Benin Bronze Hen

**Source:** Field Survey. 2023

Okhokor or okpa in Benin mean the male fowl/ Cockrel was the first Benin cultural objects to repatriated or returned to Nigeria in October 2021 (Khomami 2021). Jesus College, University of Cambridge became the first British institution to repatriate one of the Benin Bronzes to Nigeria in October 2021 (Khomami 2021). That this news comes from an institution in Britain is an encouraging developments since English government offices have been outspoken about keeping this type of material in the country. Nevertheless, Jesus College is a private institution which allows them to make decisions on their own without involving the English Parliament in contrast to the British Museum. The work is a bronze cockerel, titled the *Okukor*(Figure 4.1).

The *Okukor* was first removed from public display in 2016 after students protested that the work was looted and should be returned to Nigeria (Khomami 2021). After these protests,

the college set up a group known as the Legacy of Slavery Working Party. This team was comprised of fellows, staff, and student representatives tasked with exploring the historical, legal, and moral status of the college's ownership of the bronze. Through their research, the team found that the statue was indeed looted from the Royal Court of Benin and was given to Jesus College in 1905 by the father of a student (Khomami 2021). From this research, in 2019 the college announced the decision to return the bronze and carried out this promise in 2021.



**Figure 10: Head of an Oba (King)**

**Source: Field survey, 2023**

This sculpture which depicts the head The NCMM have started more procedures for the repatriation of more cultural objects they have secured a date in October 2021 to repatriate antiquities [cultural objects] from the Metropolitan Museum, New York and Germany to

repatriate 1,130 Benin bronzes to Nigeria. (The Nigerian Museum,2021)d of an Oba (king) was stolen during destruction of the Benin City by the British military expedition in 1817, was handed over at a ceremony recently in Aberdeen.

The artefact or cultural objects was purchased by the university of Aberdeen at an auction in 1957, but the university agreed to the full repatriation of the Benin cultural object [Benin Bronze]in March, 2020. In a nut shell the University of Aberdeen, Scotland returned a Benin Bronze head, one of the thousands of religious and cultural artifacts (cultural objects)looted in the ancient Benin Kingdom (The Nigerian Museum, 2022) .



**Figure 11: The Oba (King) and his body guards**

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

These Benin Cultural objects were repatriated by the Germany government in October, 2021. Germany Government agreed to repatriate 1,130 Benin cultural objects to Nigeria. In October, 2021 the Germany government and the Nigeria government signed M.O.U through the then Minister of culture and information Mr. Lai Mohamed and the Director General of the NCMM, Professor Abba Isa Tijani to returned 1,130 Benin cultural objects ( Bronzes) to Nigeria ( The Nigerian, Museum. 2021). In similar vein more courtiers like Metropolitan Museum, New York have promised to repatriate or return the cultural objects in possession to Nigeria in that year 2021 and which they have done.



**Figure 12: repatriated Benin cultural objects from Germany.**

Source: The Nigerian Museum, (2022)

This is the pictorial display of 1,130 Benin cultural objects returned by Germany government in October, 2023. In figure 8 display various Benin cultural objects such as the

Portuguese soldiers or massagers who were trading with the Benin kingdom or who first had contact with the Benin kingdom. Most of the raw materials used for the production of the ancient Benin cultural art works or cultural object were derived from early Portuguese .who had bilateral agreement in terms of trade.



**Figure 13:** Side view of the storage facility site for the repatriated Benin objects in NCMM, Benin City.

## **4.2 Research Questions**

### **4.2.1 The roles of the NCMM (Federal Government of Nigeria) Benin Royal Family (Traditional Leaders), Benin Dialog Group (BDG) and Edo State Government in the Repatriation of Benin Cultural Objects**

*Majority of the interviewees said the Federal government of Nigeria through the NCMM, the traditional leaders (Oba of Benin), the Edo State government and the BDG have played prominent roles in the repatriation of the Benin cultural objects (bronzes). the interviewees also said that the NCMM is still the playing the role or making frantic efforts through the Federal government of Nigeria of signing more memorandum of understanding (M.O.U) to repatriate more Benin cultural objects.*

(Mr. T, Mr. Mr. B, Mr AB, Mr.MO, Mr. MA Mr. UV, Mrs E, Mr. JA,Dr,prof Married, first degree above 40- 49, 50-59 60-69)

*All most all the participants said that the NCMM is the only accredited government agency in Nigeria saddled with the responsibilities of antiquity (cultural objects) repatriation. The NCMM's role in the repatriation of the Benin cultural objects is a continued role because they have been set up by law to play the roles of repatriation of antiquities [cultural objects] and museums functions.*

*By the provision of Decree 77of 1979 the NCMM became an agency of the Federal Government, charge with the responsibility of managing all Nigeria heritages asserts, among other administrative functions.*

(Mr Omon, Mr. B.A, ,Mr. B.O, Mr. T.O, Doc Mr. MA, Mr. V.E/married first degree and above 41-50 and 51-60 Benin indigenes, Museum staff , Benin and Abuja)

This is in agreement with The NCMM act, 1979, was made for the security, protection and preservation of cultural objects / monuments. Therefore section 13 of the NCMM act (hereafter the act ) provides that if the commission considers that any antiquity [cultural objects] is in need of protection or preservation, it may publish notices to the effect in the federal Gazette and in the appropriate state Gazette and a copy of the notice to be served on the owner of the antiquity. The notice must specify the antiquity [cultural objects] and the place where it is (Shyllon, 2013). The NCMM was established with the responsibility for the conservation, preservation and restoration of the nation's historical, cultural, artistic and scientific relics. The commission is also the agency responsible for cultural heritage management (Shyllon. 2013). Therefore, NCMM is the only government agency in charge of repatriation, preservation and management of cultural objects in Nigeria.

This Decree has since been re-enacted as the NCMM, the Edo State Government and the palace of the Oba of Benin (Benin Royal Family). These various institutions mentioned above have played prominent roles in the repatriation of Benin cultural objects. However the NCMM is the accredited agency responsible to manage all Nigeria cultural heritages, monuments and cultural objects (antiquities).

*Some of the participants said the BDG a multi- lateral collaborative working group is also collaborating with NCMM. The interviewees also said that since December, 2010 the BDG has held a series of meeting in Europe and Nigeria aimed at harnessing the strident calls for the repatriation of Benin cultural objects (Benin Bronzes) in the custody of some museums abroad in this regard; the following steps were proposed and vigorously discussed over the period of the BDG meetings. The BDG had contains which took the form of European members' inability to on their own move artifacts or cultural objects or repatriate cultural*

*objects beyond the shore of their countries, the BDG did not such power , because the European felt they have no business to with individuals that constituted or formed the BDG hence at the juncture the European members sought to deal with Federal Government through the accredited agency or the government representative of Nigeria the NCMM.*

( Mr Omon, Mr. B.A, ,Mr. B.O, Mr. T.O, Doc Mr. MA, Mr. V.E/married first degree and above 41-50 and 51-60 Benin indigenes, Museum staff , Benin and Abuja)

This shows that despite all the of the efforts of the BDG to repatriate the Benin cultural objects, they had constrains or hindrances because the European countries were not ready to deal with individual or group of individuals called BDG rather they preferred to deal government to government or country to country and the only accredited government agency is the NCMM which represented the Nigeria government,

*one the participants opined that the vision and mission goal of the BDG has been replaced by a broader commitment by one or two European countries especially Germany, which has since gone ahead to have different agreement signed different MOU with NCMM with aim the aim of repatriating directly from their public museums objects of Benin provenance to Nigeria. In addition, the Misonia- Museum of African Art has since on their own willingly repatriated or returned over twenty cultural objects to Nigeria. All of these objects are domiciled in NCMM.*

(Mr T,U / Married/master holder/ 60+ NCMM Abuja )

In a related manner some of the interviewees said antiquities issues are regulated by NCMM act. Therefore Benin cultural objects (Benin Bronzes) are considered antiquities. So the NCMM has a role to play regarding repatriation of Benin cultural objects. That the Royal family was the inherent owners of the Benin Bronzes [Benin cultural objects], so the

NCMM involves them greatly in the repatriation efforts. The BDG is an informal group of museum officials that developed from discussions among the NCMM, foreign museums and Royal family to fashion out a way of repatriating the Benin cultural objects (bronzes) in amity. The BDG has been recognized by governments and administrators as a great assistant to the repatriation progress.

In a nut shell some interviewees argued that since the repatriation of the cultural objects involves different nation of the world or government to government the NCMM been the custodian antiquities and the only accredited agency by law to manage cultural objects, heritages, sites and monuments still remain the front burner in the repatriation of the cultural objects. Although other institutions and individuals like the Benin Dialogue Group, Benin Royal Family (Oba of Benin) Edo State Government understand they alone cannot succeed in the issues of repatriation of Benin cultural objects. That even the European and other Western societies are professionals and they know the implication of handling cultural objects to laymen or non-professionals. Therefore as MOU are signed and they agreed to return the objects to their home country or the owner (s) they must seek for the professional which is the NCMM the government accredited agency to manage cultural objects, heritage, sites and monuments.

From the foregoing is clear that the NCMM serves as Federal Government representative or delegate to make negotiate and sign different MOU with different countries of the world where the Nigerian looted cultural objects (antiquities) are domiciled for repatriation to Nigeria. This is has been sphere headed by the Director General Professor Abba Isa Tijani. And through him a lot of success story of repatriation of Benin cultural objects (Bonzes) has been made.

These roles of Federal Government of Nigeria through the NCMM, BDG, the Royal Palace of Benin (Oba of Benin) and Edo State Government is in agreement with (The Nigerian Museum, 2021), since September 2020, the NCMM under the leadership of Prof. Abba Isa Tijani has approached many museums and institutions using different methods and recorded success in most cases. The Netherland in October 2020 returned 600 years old Ife Terracotta, in March 2021, the University of Aberdeen Scotland agreed to return a Benin bronze from it collection. In April 2021, the NCMM received a Bronze piece from Mexico. The University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom has also agreed to return a disputed Benin bronze. The NCMM have started more procedures for the repatriation of more cultural objects they have secured a date in October 2021to repatriate antiquities [cultural objects] from the Metropolitan Museum, New York and Germany to repatriate 1,130 Benin bronzes to Nigeria (The Nigerian Museum, 2021). In an efforts to repatriate more artefacts [Benin cultural objects] the Federal Government of Nigeria through NCMM, BDG, Royal Palace (Oba of Benin and Edo State Government after many discussion and negotiations with many countries have agreed like USA, Scotland, and Netherlands etc to repatriate the Benin cultural objects to Nigeria(The Nigerian Museum,2021). .

#### **4.2.2 Research Question 2: How can the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Benin preserve and manage of the repatriated Benin Cultural Objects?**

Virtually all the participants interviewed during this study unanimously agreed and said that there should be no fear on how the NCMM, Benin would preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects. That even when the British invaded the Benin Kingdom and looted their artefacts (Benin cultural Objects) the ones they left behind has been preserved and managed by (NCMM), Benin. For instance they said all the cultural objects in

Oba Akenzua 11 cultural gallery were the remains of the looted of the 1897 Benin massacre, that they have been preserve and managed from that time till date in NCMM, Benin City. That the same method of preservation and management of those bronzes and other cultural objects will be apply to the repatriated Benin cultural objects. Some of the interviewees said that the repatriated cultural objects were taken from Benin environment, that the ones repatriated so far are environmental friendly and the environment is suitable for Benin cultural objects repatriated so far.

(Mr T.O, Mr M.O, Mr OB, Mr B.A, Mr ABE /married first degree and above, age 41-50 and 51-60 Benin indigenes, Museum staff, Benin and Abuja)

Some of the participants argued that the NCMM is the only government agency saddled with the responsibility of preservation and management of Nigerian cultural objects and heritages. Therefore by the provision of Decree 77 of 1979 the NCMM became an agency of the Federal Government of Nigeria in charge of preserving and managing all Nigerian heritages asserts, among other administrative functions. The Decree has since been re-enacted as the NCMM Act Cap N 19, LFN of 2004. Both legal retained the powers and functions of the NCMM law which has been passed by the outgone 9th National Assembly awaiting the assent of the president of Nigeria. The Act further strengthen the authority of the NCMM through extensive expansion of its roles, activities and personnel responsibilities all gear towards improving the efficiency and effectiveness NCMM.

(Mr T.O, Mr M.O, Mr OB, Mr B.A, Mr ABE /married first degree and above, age 41-50 and 51-60 Benin indigenes, Museum staff, Benin and Abuja)

*In addition to these functions, the NCMM is poised to continue its official roles to accessing, documenting, preserving (conserving), and exhibiting the repatriated Benin cultural objects*

*domiciled in the foreign museums as soon as they arrived in Nigeria. According to the interviewees a number of such objects are the custody of the NCMM but yet to be exhibited to the public.*

*On the other hand some participants opined that times are changing, that NCMM is also working in partner with other foreign institution on how best to preserve and manage these repatriated Benin cultural objects. In relation to this development some staff of NCMM have been sent for training and more will be sent on how to preserve and manage these repatriated cultural objects in the world best practices.*

*(Mrs E.K.A, Mrs E. O, Chief, some Benin Indigenes / married, first degree and above/Age: 51-60 and 61-70)*

*Similarly some interviewees said there is what they called testing programme in NCMM which enable staff from the NCMM to interact with other museums or related institution from time to time, that is sending NCMM staff for training and they too coming to learn from us NCMM. They said the NCMM is fully prepared for preservation and management of repatriated Benin cultural objects they long expected or waited. The interviewees also said that part of the effort to ensure the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects, expansion of the NCMM Benin is on-going and the Federal Government of Nigeria has proposed to build a large storage facility in NCMM, Benin, and Museum of National Unity in Abuja and special preservation centre in NCMM, Lagos respectively. Also the Benin Royal Museum is proposed to accommodate and to preserve and managed the repatriated Benin cultural objects. All the interviewees said that applying all these methods and the new methods anticipated there be no far or issues for preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects.*

(Mr, M.O, Mr B.O, Mr AB/ Mr J.A Married, first degree, age 51-60)

**4.2.3 Research question 3: How can the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Benin secure and protect the cultural objects in the museum?**

*Some participants said the NCMM is working in synergy with all security agencies such as the Nigerian police, soldiers, immigration officers and the Nigerian Civil Defence Corp etc to secure and protect the repatriated Benin cultural objects from theft in Benin city, in particular and Nigeria as whole. The NCMM is also working in hand in hand with the traditional rulers, the community leaders, stake holders and the local communities towards the security and protection of the repatriated Benin cultural objects. The interviewees also said why the Federal Government of Nigeria in general and the NCMM in particular is more interested about the security and protection of the Benin price less cultural objects is because the Nigerian Government through NCMM has been battling the case repatriation of cultural objects since one hundred and twenty six (126) now.*

(Mr, M.O, Mr B.O, Mr AB/ Mr J.A Mr T.O/ Married, first degree and above, age 51-60)

It is apparently clear due the long struggle and agitation for the repatriation of the looted Benin cultural objects the NCMM in collaboration with all the Nigerian security agencies both at the federal, state and local government level will do everything possible to secure and protect the repatriated Benin repatriated objects. They also intend to work with local community and the museums stake holders to ensure adequate security of the repatriated Benin cultural objects and the exiting cultural objects in the museums in Benin and all over Nigeria.

#### **4.2.4 Research question 4: In what ways can the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Benin preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education and tourism development?**

*The participants interviewed in this light argued that it is the functional duty of the NCMM, Benin in particular and the NCMM nationwide to preserve and manage the cultural objects, heritages, sites and monuments. Therefore the NCMM, Benin is 100% prepared or ready to preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects. They said that the Benin cultural objects repatriated so far are not different from the ones at home. That repatriated Benin cultural objects are friendly to Benin environment. That the same method of preservation and management of objects at NCMM, Benin could be applied to the repatriated Benin Cultural objects. Other participants said there are two major ways or methods of preservation or conservation and management of cultural objects in NCMM, Benin and elsewhere in the world*

*(a). Preventive.*

*(b). Curative*

*a. Preventive method is an act of protecting the cultural objects from going bad or deteriorating. As they commonly say that prevention is better than cure. For instance visitors and staff of the NCMM are not allowed to eat and touch the cultural objects in the museum gallery. Eating in the gallery is prohibited in order to avoid ants and rodents from entering or destroying the cultural objects in the gallery. Also touching is not allowed in order not to break or destroys the objects, because most of the objects are fragile in nature.*

*b. Curative method is the process of taking care of or treating deteriorating cultural objects from further destruction or damaging. In other words it means rescuing cultural objects from further destruction or total damages in the museums. This is done for the cultural objects to last long.*

(Mr B.O, Mr AB/ Mr J.A, Mr M.A, Mr V.E/ male married, first degree, age 51-60)

Interviewees said that there is a synergy between some foreign museums and Museums related institutions in Germany and others countries who promised to assist the NCMM, Benin in particular and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in general to train some staff in department of museums and conservation unit and also provide materials and equipment needed for modern preservation and management of objects. According the interviewees they said the Director General (DG) Professor Isa working tirelessly in making negotiation and signing of MOUs with various countries of the world to achieving this goal.

Some of the interviewees said that one the commission mandate is the preservation and management of museum collections including the formation and promotion of museums policies ethics and practices.. These are achieved through acquisition of cultural objects, their documentation, preservation, storage, interpretation and display through exhibitions, publication and educational services to the public as well as the establishment of a new museum and maintenance (management) of the existing one.

The participants said cultural objects haven well preserved and managed in the museum (s) are used to educate the public. They said these cultural objects, like the repatriated Benin cultural objects represent our identity and history, our roots, who we are, or our origin, what

we are now and what we are going to be. These repatriated Benin cultural objects will be used to educate people across culture and age for sustainable development. The interviewees argued that the students or visitors to the NCMM, Benin will be educated the practical of culture or cultural items and values different from the theoretical aspect of Benin culture. The education officers in the museums will use these repatriated Benin cultural objects to teach the public or the visitors to National Museum, Benin City about the rich culture and heritages of the Benin people. That the education officers in the National Museum, Benin City will explain the content and the meaning of the repatriated Benin cultural objects, functions the objects play than and even now. Visitors will be informed about the symbols of the objects and their cultural values and significance to Benin Kingdom in particular and the society at large more so the contribution of the cultural objects to socio-economic and tourism development. This is in agreement with recent definition of museum by ICOM, (2022).

A museum is a not for- profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves (preserves), interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage or cultural objects (ICOM, 2022). They further argued that museum is an institution open to the public, accessible and inclusive, it foster diversity and sustainability. Museums operate and communicate ethically, professionally and participation of communities, offering varied experiences **for education**, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing (ICOM, 2022.)

#### **4.2.5 Research question 5: What is the action plan proposed for the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects?**

*The interviewees said that to effectively carry out the preservation (conservation) and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects the NCMM in Benin City has received a facility of expansion of its grand floor in order to create enough space to accommodate an exhibition of the repatriated Benin cultural objects which is being planned. The participants also said in addition to this development the management of the NCMM has sought and obtained a huge intervention fund of 1.9 billion naira from the Federal Government of Nigeria for the construction of a state –of – the-art storage facility within the precincts of the museum in Benin. To this end the National Museum in Benin has received a facelift in terms of its ground floor in order to create enough space to accommodate an exhibition of the repatriated Benin cultural objects which is being planned.*

(Mr T.O, Barr, A.B.E, Mr B.O, Mr BA Mr M.A, Mr VE, Mrs EKA married, first degree +)

Below here is the photograph of on-going construction work of the state –of – the-art storage facility within the precincts of the museum in Benin. It is directly opposite the National Museum, Benin Gallery.



**Figure 14: Site of the construction of the storage facility in NCMM, Benin City**

Source: Field survey, 2023.

The interviewees also said that, training is been proposed or planned for staff to ensure round the clock preservation (conservation) and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects. They also said based on the action plan (s) to effectively preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects, in the last two years the management of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) has also embarked on the

expansion area and exhibit galleries of 17 other museums across the country which will also provide more space for the repatriated Benin cultural objects.

The interviewees said that action plan has been proposed in the following areas:

- (a). that data on Benin art holding are made accessible to partner institution through on line portals and hard copies (as requested).
- (b). that partner institutions upon request shall have the right of producing and using free of charge photographs of the Benin cultural objects and historic photographs in the collection of partner institutions, particularly for scholarly purpose.
- (c). that partner institution shall grant access to their Benin collections to staff of all others partner in accordance of the said institutions.
- (d). the NCMM aims to improving the university education of its staff working on the collections and that European partner institutions are willing to assist in supporting internship and scholarship for postgraduate study .
- (e). the partner institutions assist with expertise in the establishment of a conservation (preservation) laboratory in Nigeria.
- (f). the partner institution shall provide to NCMM in developing it library and archive facilities related to the Benin cultural objects.
- (h). that the partner institution work together to establish a long term exhibition in Benin City with a rotation of loan from a consortium of European Museum in collection NCMM and Royal Court of Benin. In light of the undertaking the NCMM endeavours to guarantee to a legal framework for immunity from seizure of objects on loan to Nigeria. In a nut shell all the participants agreed and said the NCMM is proposing to build a conservation centre in NCMM, Lagos for all Nigerian antiquities and large

storage facilities is being built in NCMM, Benin to preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects.

#### **4.2.6 Research question 6: what impact would these repatriated Benin cultural objects bring to the NCMM in particular and the Nigeria Society at Large?**

All the respondents and participants interviewed in this study agreed that the repatriation of Benin cultural objects will bring positive impacts to the NCMM in particular and the Nigerian society at large. Majority of the interviewees said the issue of the repatriation of the Benin cultural objects has brought the NCMM and Nigeria to a global recognition and line light among the community of nations. They also said as the looted objects are being repatriated and they install in the NCMM, Benin, Benin City history is been made.

They argued that if these repatriated cultural objects are finally install and exhibited to the public: It will create more curiosity for the public because they will want to see the repatriated objects live and to get first-hand information about the objects. It will attract a lot of tourist to Benin and this will lead to increase in tourism in Benin City in particular and Nigeria at large. Therefore it can boast tourism locally and internationally in Benin City and Nigeria at large. It will boast the Nigeria economy or improve the income level of Benin people and their environs, thereby improving the living standard of the people of Benin.

It will help in the area of education and research: It will create more enlightenment about the repatriated Benin cultural objects, Benin culture and the NCMM, Benin, City Edo State. It will give a good account of Benin culture, history and political values because it will enable us the National Museum, Benin to show case the hero of the past. It will also promote the name of Benin or Benin history. It will enhance knowledge of the values and the functions these repatriated cultural objects and it will also be explained adequately.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

This study examined repatriation of Benin cultural objects preservation and management at the NCMM, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. It investigated the role the NCMM, the BDG the Benin Royal family or the Benin traditional council and the method the NCMM, Benin adopted in the preservation and the management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education, tourism development and sustainability. It also examined the proposed action plans towards the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects. In doing this, the following objectives were raised for the study:

- i. explore the roles of NCMM the Benin Dialogue Group and Benin royal family or the Benin Traditional council in the repatriation of Benin cultural objects
- ii. examine the roles of the NCMM in the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects;
- iii. determine the methods in which the NCMM would manage, secure and protect the cultural objects for education, tourism and sustainability.
- v. find out the action plan for the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects.
- vi. to examine the impacts of these repatriated Benin cultural objects on the NCMM in particular and the Nigeria society at large?

This study revealed that the NCMM, BDG and the Benin Royal family, Oba of Benin, the Benin Traditional Council played prominent roles in the repatriation of the Benin cultural

objects. And the roles and processes of the repatriation of Benin cultural objects by the NCMM still continues because it is the only Federal Government agency saddled with such responsibility by law.

And that the NCMM, Benin in particular and the NCMM generally is fully ready and capable for the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects. (Findings in the study were largely on data from fieldwork, which were collected through in-depth interview, observation and focus group discussion supplemented by the analysis of secondary data). The research design was qualitative with a purely descriptive survey method, using oral interviews with recorder, social network and narratives, a method of survey for opinions, preferences and the perception of the participants in the study area.

Four-research instruments for data collection were used viz: in- depth interview, key informants focus group discussion and photograph. Relevant literature were revealed, focused on the process and role of different institutions, bodies and individuals from pre-independence, post-independence and the current in the repatriation of Benin cultural objects and the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects. The study was anchored on two theories, the symbolic interactionism theory and the structural – functionalism theory to explain the subject matter of the study or the phenomenon of the study.

The population of the study was one hundred and fifty eight (158). The population of the study was in two segments which was 145 the total number of staff the NCMM, Benin City and key informant (Benin indigenes) and some top management staff of NCMM, Abuja the Headquarters which was selected purposively and snowball for participant outside NCMM,

Benin branch and other institutions which possessed common attributes to achieve the objectives of the study. In this case, since the population of the study was small, there was no need for sample size and sampling techniques.

## **5.2 Findings**

Analysis of the data yielded results. The results from the study showed the benefits of the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects. The study affirmed among others that::

1. Only NCMM has the power by law to preserved and managed cultural objects (antiquities) heritages, sites and monuments hence, by the provisions of the Decree 77 of the 1979, the NCMM became an Agency of the Federal Government charged with the responsibility of protecting, securing, preserving and managing all Nigerian heritage asserts, among other administrative function. That means any museum in Nigeria be it publicly or privately owned must take directive from the NCMM.
2. One of the Commission mandate is the management of museums, including the formation and promotion of museums policies. These are achieved through acquisition of cultural objects, their documentation, preservation, conservation, storage, interpretation and display through exhibitions, publication and public programmes as well as the establishment of new museums and maintenance of existing ones.
3. The NCMM, headed by the director general (DG) Professor Abba Isa Tijani, the BDG the Benin Royal family or Benin traditional council (Oba of Benin) all played prominent roles in the repatriation of Benin cultural objects. And the role of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) still continues.

4. The Benin Dialogue Group (BDG) had **constrains** at some point because European museum member lack the ability on their move or repatriate cultural objects beyond the shores of their countries. This led to the direct intervention of the Germany Government in the repatriation of Benin cultural objects. BDG only had discussion about repatriation Benin cultural objects. So BDG, was constrain at that level, that is to say the mission, ideas and goal of the BDG has been replaced by a broader commitment by one or two European countries especially Germany which has since gone ahead to have different agreement, signed different MOUs with the NCMM representing the Federal Government of Nigeria aimed at repatriating directly from their public museums objects of Benin province to Nigeria.
5. The NCMM is fully prepared to secure, protect, preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects as they have been repatriated for education, tourism development and sustainability.
6. The repatriation, the installation and the exhibition of the repatriated Benin cultural objects will bring many positive impacts such as increase in tourism activities in NCMM, Benin City and its environs and tourism development, and boost the income for the residents of Benin City and its environs.
7. This study revealed the major problem of the preservation and management of repatriated Benin cultural objects is lack of space or storage facility to store or install the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education and tourism development.
8. Lack of space or storage facility for the repatriated Benin cultural objects can hinder or work against the successful preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The ethnographic approaches of carrying out this study the repatriation of Benin cultural objects preservation and management provided useful insights to the objectives of the study. Based on the findings of the study, the study concluded that the NCMM, Benin City is fully prepared and capable to manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects. That there should be no fear of how to secure, protect, preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education, tourism development and sustainability which is one of the cardinal functional duty of any museum in the world.

It was revealed that the NCMM, role of repatriation of the Benin cultural objects is still on going. More MOUs are still been sign by the commission led by the Director General (DG) Professor Abba Isa Tijani on behalf of the Federal Government for repatriation of more cultural objects. It was also observed ` that the Benin Dialogue Group which comprises of some staff of National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), the Edo State Government, the Benin Royal family Benin traditional council. Oba of Benin and European museum members played prominent roles towards the repatriation of the Benin cultural objects but had constrains because European countries preferred to deal with country to country or government to government not individuals or group of individuals like BDG. It was on the ground the NCMM took the bull by the horn as the Agency representing the Federal government of Nigeria to do the needful for the repatriation of the cultural objects to Nigeria. Based on this NCMM had the autonomous power to deal with it issues of repatriation, establishment of a new museum, preservation and management of cultural objects and all other museums policies and administrative functions in Nigeria. Therefore

the upcoming construction of Benin Royal Museum and the Museum of West Africa Art (MOWAA) are under the supervision of the NCMM.

The issue of space or storage facility should be into consideration for the realisation of effective preservation and management of repatriated Benin cultural objects. If the repatriated Benin cultural objects are fully installed and exhibited to the public, it will boost tourism activities and tourism development in Benin City and its environs, it will create more income for those in tourism business or tourist related business. It will create more employment opportunities for the NCMM to manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects. It will also bring foreign exchange to Nigeria.

#### **5.4 Recommendation**

Arising from the findings the following recommendations were made:

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should, as a matter of urgency, release and monitor the 1.9 billion naira intervention fund meant to build large storage facilities in NCMM, Benin in order to accommodate the repatriated Benin cultural objects and to carry out effective preservation and management of the repatriated Benin Cultural objects.
2. The Federal Government of Nigeria should deploy adequate funds for the completion of grand floor extension National Museum, the building of the large storage facilities in NCMM, Benin and proposed preservation centre in National Museum Lagos to enhance effective preservation and management of the repatriated cultural objects
3. The Federal Government of Nigeria should, also as matter of urgency, swing into action to build the prosed Benin ROYAL Museum in Benin to also accommodate and ease the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects.

4. More staff of the NCMM, Benin station and other stations should be given adequate training on preservation and management of cultural objects and monuments in Nigeria and outside Nigeria to enable them to learn the world best practices of cultural and monuments preservation and management.
5. There should be organized exchange programmes between the NCMM and other museums abroad to enable the staff of the NCMM to learn world best cultural practices of preservation and management of cultural objects, heritage, monuments and sites and other museums administrative system.
6. More education/ awareness and adverts of the repatriated Benin cultural objects should be created or air in television stations, radio stations, social media and print media in order to increase tourism activities in Benin City and its environ and in Nigerian Society at large.
7. There should be synergy between the Oredo community, museum stakeholders, all the Nigerian security agencies and NCMM, Benin to protect and secure the repatriated cultural in Benin City and elsewhere in Nigeria.
8. If all these are put in place there will be the success of preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects. In other world if all the recommendation is applied very well the success of preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural will be guaranteed.

## 5.5 Contributions to Knowledge

This study has contributed to knowledge in the following ways:

1. The study established the fact that the NCMM is 100% capable and ready for the protection, preservation and management , of the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education, tourism development and sustainability.
2. That the repatriated Benin Cultural object are environmental friendly because they were stolen from Benin. The repatriated Benin cultural objects are not different from ones in National Museum, Benin and method could be applied in the preservation (conservation) and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects.
3. The repatriated Benin cultural objects were well preserved and managed in the pre-colonial era in attractive manner, that attracted the colonial masters or British soldiers to loot the objects in 1897 and the cultural objects can still be preserve and secure for better tourism attraction and sustainability.
4. That the repatriated Benin cultural objects have cultural symbolic and functional importance to the Benin people, Nigeria and African society in general.
5. That if the repatriated Benin cultural objects is fully installed and exhibited to the public, it will bring positive impacts to Benin City and its environs and the Nigerian society at large.

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## APPENDIX 1

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Good morning, how is your work and the family? My name is Emmanuel Imadorie OMOROTIOMWAN, A student of the University of Benin and curretting undertaking research as part of the requirement for graduation for which I need to complete. I will like to introduce the topic around the interview in trying to understand the role of National Museum, Benin in the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects. This interview is to seek your opinion/ ideas and observation about the repatriation of Benin cultural objects and how they can be preserve and manage for education, tourism development and sustainability.

#### **Section A: socio- demographic background of the professional National Museum, Benin staff**

1. Gender -----
2. Marital Status: -----
3. Age Brackets: 21-30 [ ] 31-40[ ] 41-50[ ] 51-60[ ] 61+[ ]
4. Education qualification: -----
5. Religion Affiliation: .....
6. Local Government of Origin: .....;
7. State of Origin: .....
8. Office status/Rank.....

#### **Section B: Interview Guide**

1. What are the roles of the NCMM, Benin Royal family and BDG played in the repatriation of the Benin cultural objects?
2. How can the National Museum, Benin preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects?

3. In what ways can NCMM preserve and manage the repatriated Benin cultural objects for educational and tourism?
4. What action plan(s) can NCMM adopt for the preservation and management of the repatriated Benin cultural objects for sustainability at the National Museum, Benin City, Nigeria?
5. How can the NCMM secure and protect the repatriated of Benin cultural objects?
6. What impact would these repatriated Benin cultural objects bring to the museums and the Nigerian society?

## **APPENDIX 11**

### **OBSERVATION GUIDE**

1. How does National Museum, Benin preserve her cultural objects?
2. What methods is the National Museum using in the preservation of their cultural objects?
3. What methods will be used in the preservation of the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education and tourism by the National Museum, Benin?
4. How will the National Museum, Benin manage, secure and protect the repatriated Benin cultural objects for education and tourism?