Negligent Attitude towards Cameroonian Works of Art: The need for an Appropriate Attention

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Abstract
Most treasured Cameroonian works of art like the legendary Afo-a-Kom statue are grossly not well taken care of by those charged with protecting them. This study sets out to examine the reasons behind this neglect attitude and to propose measures, which if implemented, could give the works of art the required attention and protection.

1. Introduction

1.1 Meaning and importance of works of arts
Generally, works of art are more than aesthetically pleasing objects of manual skills and ingenuity. They deepen and sharpen our insight about others and ourselves; enlighten our frame of mind or thoughts and religious creed by generally broadening our understanding and perception of the spiritual life of a people. In Africa, works of art are generally a potential source of information on socio-economic, political, technology, artistic style, religious ideology and the way people conceptualized the world (Connah 2004; Ben-Amos 1998). They therefore, reflect the soul of a people and their conception of the spirituality of the environment; fortunes and misfortunes as well as reveal some aspect of a society’s cultural history and evolution. Different meanings and definitions have, thus, been given to works of art by those studying them. Some of the interpretations might completely be out of line with the original thoughts of the authors of the art, but this is what makes the study more fascinating (Honour et al., 1995). For some time, the study of African works of art was done at an iconographical level, but today most people view it as a component of...
an historical phenomenon of a people. In most cases and as indicated above, African arts were often produced to honour their kings, gods and ancestors, who positively impacted the life of their societies in one way or the other. It is in line with this that most of the works of arts produced in a good number of communities in Africa, including Cameroon, had sacred religious undertones and shaped the peoples’ world view of life as well as also defined their day to day conception of activities and social interactions. This was not very different in content with the arts of those who lived in the age of faith, even in the western world (Harris 1987).

1.2 Cameroon’s works of arts
Traditional art forms of Cameroon, a country of more than 250 ethnic groups, include works especially, from wood, stones and clay. They are used throughout the country for commercial, decorative and religious purposes. Although a part of the national budget is always reserved for cultural activities by the Ministry of Culture, which occasionally organises the National Festival of and Arts and Culture (NAFAC) and manages the national and regional museums, most if not all the artists are self supporting. No government sponsored professional schools of art do exist in the country. The state museums and cultural centres which house works of arts and exist at regional or national levels are poorly equipped and most of the staff are neither well trained nor well paid. The situation in indigenous palace or community museums is even worst. Generally, this has over the years, left the preservation of the works of art in the hands of untrained, unequipped and demoralised staff. As a consequence, most of the works of arts have been disappearing.

1.3 Objective of study
This study, principally seeks to examine the reasons behind the negligent attitude in the management and protection of Cameroon’s works of arts by the state, and the local people assigned with the responsibility of protecting them. In addition, it makes proposals on how such a neglect attitude could be overcome so that Cameroonian works of art should be salvaged and better preserved for posterity.

1.4 Sources and methodology
Primary sources used, included interviews conducted with some indigenous artists and people who are interested in works of arts. Secondary sources were also beneficial to this study. An examination of the Afo-a-Akom or Mbang statue of the great Kom Fondom in the Bamenda grassland of the North West region of Cameroon which is representative of the type of works of arts that have been disappearing from Cameroon over the years, is used to illustrate the thesis of this study. Kom tradition holds that it was Fon Yuh (1865-1912) who carved from iroko, the 5ft 2.5 inches high wooden Afo-a-Kom; an almost life size human-like figure, and bestowed it with sacred qualities. It was called Mbang, meaning, male sexual organ by the Kom people. In addition, the Kom people and her vassal states also saw it as a god, a symbol of prosperity, unity, fertility and above all, the heart and soul of the people (Ngumi, 2002). The socio-economic and political life of the Fondom revolved around this statue (Ferretti, 1975).

Despite its fame and importance in the Kom Fondom, the statue was stolen from the Fondom in 1966 and strangely smuggled by thieves to the United States of America. The Kom people mourned the loss of their “god” and the negative consequences of its absence were felt even beyond the Fondom (Song. Interviewed 20 March 2011). It is because of its importance to the Kom people and the negative impact (both physical and psychological), which its disappearance in 1966 (Ngumi, 2002) had on them that, Afo-a-Kom, which literally means, “Kom Thing” became a “Cameroonian Thing”. This explains why it required the intervention of not only indigenous Kom leaders in Cameroon, but also political elites both in Cameroon and in the United States of America for its ultimate return, which made national and international headlines in 1973 (Nkwi, 2005; Ellis, 2008).

1.5 Justification of Study
The study is informed by the fact that, despite the agony the people of Kom in particular and Cameroonians in general went through between 1966 and 1973 because of the loss of the revered statue, Afo-a-Kom; lessons have not been learned in Cameroon. Unfortunately, this situation is still obtainable today as similar highly revered indigenous works of art in different parts of the country have been disappearing over the years at even, an alarming rate. This still has to do with negligence or security lapses and love for money particularly by guards and government officials at airports and on the boarders. It is believed that this study will surely tickle especially the government and its Ministry of Culture to review its policies and programmes on the protection and promotion of...
2. Reasons for the Negligent Attitude

This section examines what we consider as the reasons behind the attitude of neglect exhibited by those assigned with the duties of preserving Cameroonian works of art. They include issues such as the slave trade, colonialism, the introduction of Christianity, rural-urban migration, greed for money, lack of material and human resources, unfocused political leadership and no practical government policies and programmes.

2.1 Slave trade, colonialism and Christianity

The basis for the attitude of neglect exhibited in Cameroon today with regards to the protection and preservation of Cameroonian works of art was laid during the episodes of slave trade and colonialism. Slave trade and colonialism eroded a great lot of Cameroon’s cultural values, and psychologically damaged the African psyche. Slave trade in particular, carted away able men and women, talented in producing works of art, from especially, the Bamenda grassfields to the coast of Cameroon (Bimbia) and finally, to the Americas. Their absence created a serious vacuum in terms of the production of works of art in the society they left behind. Out of home and in foreign lands, they could no longer exercise their talented artistic professions as before and with time, they lost touch with their actual identity (Andah et al., 1994). The acquisition of slaves also involved raids and wars. It is believed a good number of people in areas where slaves were obtained like the Tikar country of Cameroon were either displaced or killed. Some of them were talented artists and their professions disappeared with them (Andah et al., 1994).

The colonial masters also illegally made away with a good number of African works of art to their home countries. They became so excited when they saw the marvels of African culture exhibited in their works of art. They used superior military force to loot Cameroonian works of art especially in the rich cultured Bamenda grassfield with no pity and without even recording the context in which they existed. Most of these statues like the Benin bronze head of Nigeria, which was taken to London in 1897 during the colonial days, are today found in European museums (Connah 2004). Such looting actions directly or indirectly instilled a spirit of neglect in the indigenous people and their government which exhibited a lukewarm attitude in trying to recover them.

In line with the above, missionaries who, in most cases, acted as agents of colonialism, discouraged the production of especially, works of art which had indigenous religious undertones and were regarded and worshipped as gods in local shrines. The missionaries considered such a practice unGodly and an obstacle to the spread of their own religion, called Christianity. Local converts were used as instruments to ensure compliance in the society. This was the case in Mbam land where a local convert called Joseph Mamodu, was used to dissuade the local people from worshipping village gods, some of them represented by carved statues. This, therefore, seriously helped in murdering the art industry whose inspiration in most cases, came from the invisible local forces and the environment in the local communities of Cameroon in particular, and Africa in general (Njinti Interviewed 20 March 2011).

3. Rural-urban migration and love for money

The creation of urban centres like Douala, Yaounde, Buea, Bamenda and Garoua, which served like administrative head quarters of the colonial administration, with time, became a pull factor as far as rural – urban migration was concerned. Such centres had services like electricity, pipe borne water, western ways of life, which the local environment or villages could not offer. These services attracted the attention of the local folks, a situation which continued even after independence and has reached its apex in contemporary times. Some of those who left and still leave the rural areas for the cities were/are talented artists whose talents could and still cannot be accommodated by the new environment they encounter in the city. As a consequence, most of them tend to overlook their natural talents as they are forced by circumstances to do other things in order to survive or make ends meet (Njinti Interviewed 20 March 2011).

The indigenous leaders are by nature custodians of their culture. Unfortunately, some of them who have acquired western education and are civil servants, have also abandoned their villages which they consider primitive, for the city. They now operate as absentee landlords, leaving the works of art in their shrines and palace museums in the
village to the mercy of pot hunters or thieves. Some of them have even been shamefully involved in the illegal sale and gifts of venerated works of arts from their palaces. In 2008 a chief from a village in Mbum land of the North West Region of Cameroon was involved in a fatal accident on the Bamenda-Douala road. The bag he was travelling with contained venerated works of arts from his village he was taking to Douala for sale without the knowledge of his people. This is a situation where the owner becomes the thief or smuggler. Also, the chief of another village in the same region for obvious selfish political reasons and without the authorisation of his traditional council, offered a piece of sacred work of art as a gift to the National Museum. After his death, his people needed this piece for some rituals in the village. The government is forced to give this piece back to the villagers.

When some Africans realized that their works of art were highly cherished by the western world, and could fetch them foreign hard currency to improve on their typically poor living conditions, smuggling and theft became the game of the day (Ekechukwu, 1990). Those involved in this business were not even the artists per se, but greedy ordinary citizens who were prepared to go against societal norms and values to steal and smuggle out venerated works of art to sell them to foreigners for even meager sums. This is exactly what happened with the *Afo-a-Kom* and many works of art, which are still illegally finding their way out of Cameroon. According to the Times Magazine of 25 October 1975, the *Afo-a-Kom* statue was finally sold for 60,000 US Dollars while, the curator of the shrine at Laikom was only given 7000 FRS CFA, by the middle man (Ngumi, 2002).

4. Lack of security, financial and human resources

The lack of security at all levels of the society was and is still responsible for the disappearance of Cameroonian works of art. This is one factor that encourages stealing and smuggling. If there were good security measures enforced at the local shrine in Kom which was constructed with bamboos and daubed with clay, and on the national borders of Cameroon, the *Afo-a-Kom* like most other art works, would not have found its way out of Cameroon ( Nkwii, 2005). This was also the case when some thieves with the complicity of some palace security officials illegally made away with works of art; some of them very sacred to the community, from the palace museum of Tarla village, in Donga Mantung Division, Bamenda grassfields of Cameroon in June, 2009. This led the village into a period of mourning until the culprits were cut and the items returned to the palace a few months later (Nkeh. Interviewed 7 May 2011). Another good example is the regional museum in Bamenda where there was no enough qualified staff and the artifacts stored there, kept on disappearing at an alarming rate until recently, when the Minister of Culture, Madam Tutu Muna was forced to transfer them to the National Museum in Yaounde. The situation becomes worst, when security agents and custom officers because of poor pay package or selfishness, tend to be smugglers or agents of smuggling and theft.

Most museums and cultural centres which are the custodians of our cultural objects do not have the necessary resources (human and other wise) to function. The objects are, therefore, not well taken care of as they get degraded over time and thereby, losing their original qualities and value. Although, museums and cultural centres serve as touristic sites which could contribute in bringing funds to the national economy if well catered for, there are no serious financial allocations made by the State for museum curators to continuously acquire some of the most current works of art for the museum or even take care of those already in their possession. The National Museum in Yaounde just like the regional museums in the country have in recent years, witnessed the depreciation of very valuable works of arts. It is an open secret that a good number of the furniture the first Cameroon head of state, Ahmadu Ahidjo used is now in a depreciable state in the National museum, Yaounde (Ibrahim. Interviewoj 2 June 2011).

The State has over the years made no serious effort in even training or opening professional schools geared towards the production of qualified personnel who could better manage the works of art in cultural centers, archives or museums. The teaching of archaeology, museum studies and cultural resource management in Cameroon’s higher institutions is still at an embryonic stage. There are hardly any in-service training programmes for the few available members of staff who exist. This has made it difficult for them to constantly upgrade their knowledge so as to meet up with the daily challenges. Hence, most of them remain outmoded and unaware of the modern techniques of arts preservation and the works
of arts under their protection are not well taken care of.

The situation becomes dire especially, when one of them dies and there is usually no professional replacement and amateurs are appointed to man such positions with little or no experience in cultural resource management. This was once the situation in 2010, at the most important National Archives, Buea where the daughter of the late archivists who is not a professional in the management of archival materials, took over because there was no qualified person available to replace her father and the archives was locked for some time (Nkwain. Interviewed 24 July 2009)

5. Poor Leadership and Failed Policies

It is also more worrying that even after realising what slave trade and colonialism negatively did to Cameroonian and African cultures, successive post-colonial political leaderships have continued to encourage the decline of indigenous technology and done nothing or little to encourage and restore our lost cultural values. Over the years, they have kept on propagating neo-colonial ideas to the detriment of our indigenous culture. This is done through the uncontrolled importation of all forms of foreign technologies, which include works of art that, do not fit into our local realities. This has also given rise to a feeling of inferiority complex amongst Cameroonian as far as their local works of art are concerned, and hence, a decline in the local industries producing such products (Andah 1992). For example, there are areas in some parts of the country like the far north, which do not have electricity. Over the years, people in this area have effectively depended on pots produced by the local pottery industry to cool their water and store food items. The use of fridges imported by government is not effective because of the lack of electricity..The government has done nothing through its programmes like the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC) during which, Cameroonian artists showcase their artistic prowess to the public, to encourage the use of these local clay pots and other works of art which are adaptable to the region. This attitude has therefore helped to kill the powerful pottery or clay industry of this region that produced very admirable works of art. It has also encouraged an outward looking attitude towards foreign works of arts by Cameroonians to decorate their homes as they look down on their own works of art.

Statutorily, this festival is supposed to be organised on annual basis, but this has hardly been the case. The Ministry usually, complains of lack of funds. The celebration of Cameroonian works of art through this National Festival has, therefore been an occasional affair with the last two held in 2008 and 2014 respectively; almost six years apart. In addition, the process of selecting participants has been very cloudy and most of those selected finally attend and participate without any proper orientation on the objectives of the festival. As a consequence, they participate not because they dutifully want to promote their cultural traits through works of arts, but more because they were given a token to do so.

These are very serious problems because this National Festival, which is supposed to be the most important national event during which talented artists from all corners of Cameroon congregate, in a large sense, only tends to generally, create a momentarily awareness of the art and cultural potentials of the state of Cameroon amongst Cameroonians and tourists. Most participants and visitors at the festivals only take home vague memories of the festival which vanish as the days pass by. Their experiences at the festival in most cases do not have any concrete or intimate impact on the reality of their hidden talents, culture and roots. It is more of a public show meant to serve just for that moment. This practically falls short of the main target or focus of the organisers, which on paper, is to reactivate and promote the waning art culture of Cameroon’s more than 250 ethnic groups.

There is no doubt, that Cameroon’s government and its Ministry of Culture in line with this, has over the years, done a lot in terms of signing legislation and bilateral agreements with other countries and organisations like United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to safeguard her works of art and some heritage sites. But it seems to these researchers that most of the agreements and intentions are very effective on paper and when it comes to implementation this becomes difficult. A good number of those assigned with implementing those policies are either complicit, incapable or intentionally contravene them for their selfish reasons. As we said earlier, this creates a situation where security officers steal or abet in stealing works of arts and custom officers also become smugglers or help in smuggling them out of the country.
The above factors, to the best of our knowledge, have been responsible over the years for the fading nature of the cultural values and the neglect of Cameroonian works of art in particular amongst our local communities. Mindful of the foregoing arguments, some suggestions on how we could overcome these obstacles are proposed in the following part of this study.

6. Way Forward or Recommendations

As earlier indicated Cameroonian, works of art are more than aesthetically pleasing objects of manual skills and ingenuity. They reflect the material cultural aspects of a community and broaden our understanding and perception of the socio-economic, political, technology and spiritual life of a people. This therefore demands that any community should pay serious attention to their protection. It is based on this that this study makes the following suggestions, which we hope if considered, would certainly spur those concerned with the management of Cameroonian works of art both in government and the local communities to be proactive and not lax in their duties.

6.1 National festival of arts and culture
The Ministry of Culture which occasionally organises the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC), should use the opportunity to create a task force. This force should establish a national register of all Cameroonian works of art from the past to the present, indicating their areas of origin or location in the country. This exercise should not just be limited to the works of art displayed at the festival but should also extend to works of art preserved in the national, regional and community museums. Each work of art should be photographed, labeled and given a reference number. They should be stored both in hard and soft copies so that in case of damage and /or theft, owners should be able to come up with a photo gallery (Sarkar, 1977). Such documentation could also help from a legal stand point in case of theft and subsequent discovery. If the roped bronze pot excavated by Thurstan Shaw in Igbo Ukwu, Nigeria in 1959 (Shaw 1977) was recovered in 1996 after it was stolen by thieves and taken to Europe, it was because the University of Ibadan which was the custodian of this object, and the Nigerian Government produced valid documentation of its ownership (Andah. Personal Communication 21 July 1996)

A complete and accurate documentation of the works of art as earlier mentioned might not only give the people, knowledge of what they as Cameroonian have in stock, but will also expose the real cultural potentials of the more than 250 ethnic groups in Cameroon. It will even incite a consciousness of the vital interdependence of various ethnic groups in Cameroon today and their cultural debts or ties to each other. This will surely as (Andah, 1988), notes, reveal the commonalities amongst the various cultures and certainly reduce the series of destructive inter-ethnic conflicts so common today in this part of Cameroon.

If such a festival has to raise cultural awareness amongst Cameroonians and also help them devise a practical way of protecting and preserving their works of art, the Cameroonian government must provide funds not only to sustain a continuous annual organisation but also to organise mini art and culture festivals at the local, sub regional and regional levels. This will give each and every Cameroonian artist the public chance to let his creative abilities be recognised and felt by the society in which he lives. The process of selecting participants for the festival must be transparent so as to give room to those local talented artists to present their works at such national festivals.

It is only then that such celebrations would help Cameroonians to be conscious of their works of art and to use them to learn more about their history and the achievements of their ancestors. This will surely position Cameroonian works of art in a truly historical sense and also enable Cameroonians to positively and proudly move forward in life with an inward looking attitude. The young generation looking up to the older generation would therefore, get to position themselves and their artistic talents in a more useful manner and on a daily basis in this world that is faced with varied challenges.

The Ministry of Culture should also, after such festivals, keep a watchful eye on the young talented men and women who displayed their artistic talents at the festival and see how it could continuously assist them to make a purposeful living out of their vocations where ever they are. This will enable them to be proud to retain and promote their specific cultural values and those of Cameroon at large. Until the issues raised above are sincerely addressed, all the efforts by the state will not yield the desired results and the National Festival of Arts and Culture will continue to serve as an annual relaxation or...
amusement event with no direct and positive impact on the Ministry’s efforts to promote and preserve the indigenous cultural values and works of art of the various ethnic groups in Cameroon. This should be the focus as Cameroonians prepare for future festivals of arts and culture in the country. It is only then that the National Festival of Arts and Culture which today looks so elitist will have a meaning in the lives of especially, artists in the rural areas.

6.2: Need for more agreements and strict enforcement

There is still a need for more practicable and implementable bilateral and multilateral agreements with the sole aim of protecting and preserving Cameroonian works of art. This will prevent or reduce smuggling, illegal transportation and sales of works of art in and out of Cameroon. Such agreements must entail that Cameroon’s national boarders be secured and the custom and security officers given the necessary bonuses and resources to effectively carry out their jobs. This will certainly dissuade them from facilitating the disappearance of our works of arts. Also, in this direction, people with educational background in culture related disciplines such as archaeology, history, ethnography and sociology, should be officially recruited into the custom and security departments of Cameroon. They are in a better position to identify some of these works of arts, which are stolen and being ferried out of the country because of their educational background in African culture. Above all, they should also be those who are conscious and proud of their cultural identity as Cameroonians.

Those caught illegally transporting or trafficking Cameroonian works of art, no matter their status, should be publicly, promptly and severely punished according to the laws governing their protection (Egunjobi, 1988), just as the Ministry of Forestry and Wild Life is presently doing with those involved in destroying the endangered animal species of Cameroon. This will drastically reduce the rate of theft and trafficking in works of art as it has done with the killing of endangered animal species. Since most of the stolen works of art are taken to western countries, some of the agreements should recommend the immediate return of such works of arts if identified, to their home countries. It was certainly such agreements which helped the Nigerian government to recover the roped bronze pot which was stolen from the museum in the University of Ibadan and taken to Britain in

Structures housing works of art (at all levels of the society) like museums and cultural centres should be well guarded and furnished with the necessary human and material resources. For this to be effective, the government should increase the budget of the Ministry of Culture so that those working in these institutions should be given a comfortable pay package with bonuses just like it is done with the members of the armed forces. Those appointed to administer or head the cultural institutions should also make those working under them feel as part of the institution and know the importance of the works of art that are under their care. This has to do with their attitude as appointed administrators towards workers; some of whom might have no idea of the important role of museums and the works of art in a society. To achieve this, administrators should organise occasional lectures for their staff on the importance of the museum, archives or cultural centres and its content to the historical, socio-economic, cultural life of a people. This will surely raise awareness, and would certainly deter workers of lower grade from facilitating in the theft and smuggling of works of art under their care (Ekechukwu, 1990).

In addition to the above, the buildings housing Cameroonian works of arts and their entrances should be well protected with solid iron doors and bars which could foil any criminal access by thieves or art looters, even if they succeed to dislodge the guards. This has been lacking in most of these centres in Cameroon today, hence making access by professional thieves very easy as earlier indicated, the shrine housing the Afo-a-Kom was only made of bamboos daubed with clay (Ngumi, 2002).

6.3: Development of rural areas and cultural group meetings in urban space

The government in particular and the local leaders (chiefs) should discourage rural-urban migration of rural people with natural artistic talents and creative abilities. They should be encouraged to stay in their local environments by offering them employment in the rural milieu. This could be done through financial and logistic assistance from the state to enable them produce works of art in their rural areas using the available and abundant resources found there. The state could also open craft centres in those rural areas where such works could be displayed for
visitors/tourist to admire and buy. Some of the works of arts produced there could even be purchased by government and local leaders for storage and display in their museums in the cities or shrines in the villages. Above all, certain basic socio-economic facilities like good roads, electricity, and pipe borne water, schools and health facilities, must be made available in the rural areas to make such environments attractive to the young talented artists for settlements.

Source: National Geographic

Since rural-urban migration cannot be completely curbed, those rural folks who have moved to the city should be encouraged by the local elite settled in the city to congregate at least monthly under the canopy of their cultural groupings. The elite should also occasionally, organise cultural festivals during which, indigenous works of art from the local areas and local talented artists based in the city are displayed. If it is possible, some artists based in the rural areas could be invited to also show case their talents. This will surely inspire the attention of the young generation brought forth in the city as well as revive the spirit of those talented artists who left the village and are engaged in different vocations in the town (Nfor. Interviewed 19 December 2011).

In addition to this, city dwellers should be encouraged during such meetings to visit their villages when possible and necessary. For this to be possible, the State should also give civil servants in particular, their deserved annual leave with the necessary financial benefits. This will surely encourage most of them to visit home with their families. During such visits, they might learn more about their culture in general and works of arts in particular. Interestingly, this is not widespread or possible today because workers are poorly paid and some are even on self exile because they come from villages or families where witchcraft is prevalent and are afraid to go home, lest they die at the hands of witches/wizards. As a consequence, some town dwellers usually make rapid visits overnight during which they stay indoors in the day to avoid being noticed by the suspected witches/wizards (Talla et.al. 2005). Under these circumstances, they hardly learn anything.

Apart from local visits, city dwellers should encourage each other at their weekly and monthly meetings or during cultural festivals to make use of locally produced Cameroonian works of art, even for house decorations. This will discourage the use of imported works of art for home decoration or use. It will certainly, persuade those with artistic talents both in the city and the rural areas to remain in the profession.

To foster some of the recommendations outlined above, the government and the indigenous leadership who are custodians of our culture, should organise cultural festivals at village, district, and sub-divisional, divisional and regional levels, at least on annual basis, so as to motivate local folks with artistic talents into seeing the need to continuously maintain their vocations. The organisation of festivals like Lela, a cultural festival which brings together annually, sons and daughters of Bali-Nyongha in the North West Region of Cameroon, should be encouraged by government and local authorities as well as national elites with interest in the culture of their people. Such encouragement should take the form of financial, moral and material support without overtly or remotely influencing the conduct of events.

Most importantly, the local leadership of the various ethnic groups in Cameroon also have a duty to assist the government in protecting Cameroonian works of art, since most of the artists come from the rural areas of the country. They have to ensure that there is security in their local museums or shrines even if they chose to stay in the city as civil servants and operate as absentee landlord.

6.4: Reviewing of educational curriculum

Above all, Cameroon’s educational planners should restructure the educational system and include programmes which reflect African cultural values and achievements over the years. This will surely redirect and transform the self psyche and personality of most
Cameroonian artists and those charged with managing the works of art. Such a transformation could only be possible and successful if our children are filled with such knowledge from the primary schools where local craft is encouraged through what we used to call “hand work” right up to the University where an African studies centre will prepare graduates in various fields of indigenous craft (Okpoko, 1999). One of such centres called, Centre for African Languages and Culture (CALAC), already exist very much on paper, at the Anglo-Saxon University of Buea.

Whenever and where ever such centres are created, they should as matter of preference and in collaboration with the organisers of the National Festival of Arts and Culture in the Ministry of Culture, organise techno-cultural workshops, and public demonstrations on various aspects of traditional technologies at all levels of the society. Local folks who might not be western educated but are naturally talented or versed in indigenous technologies, should be invited to such workshops as resource persons (Andah, 1992). In addition, the centres must be headed research-oriented leadership, which will focus on all fields of local and foreign technologies. This will enable them to identify where local Cameroonian technology intersects or does not intersect with western or other African technologies. Such identification will enable us to know what we could borrow from or export to especially, the western world and still retain our identity as Cameroonians or Africans in this global village that the world has become. This is so dire because Cameroonian technology and works of art are gradually being replaced by western imported technology.

Conclusion

The perturbing situation in Cameroon with regards to the protection of her works of art is similar to what is obtained in most African countries today. What we have therefore, tried in this study to show as some of the remote and immediate prime factors responsible for the negligent attitude exhibited in the protection of Cameroonian works of art as well as proposed solutions, also go for most African countries. The Cameroonian government like most African countries will certainly argue that all the issues highlighted above have been addressed.

The proof of this according to them, would be the national and regional museums and cultural centres created by government in the country. These, to the best of our knowledge are poorly equipped and cannot take care of the various artifacts stored there as it was the case with the regional museum in Bamenda earlier mentioned. Interestingly, the national museum where these artifacts are now stored has not been opened to the public since 2009 because it was undergoing renovations. The Minister of Arts and Culture, speaking over “Cameroon Calling” on Sunday 8, June 2014, said this was due to lack of funds. It would therefore be better for government to stop the policy of opening museums in all regional headquarters and instead encourage indigenous leaders to house the artifacts in their palace museums like the Foumban and Mankon museums, where the burden of protection might be less on government. Another erroneous argument by government would be the series of legislations, bilateral and multilateral agreements, most of which are very effective only on paper. It would most importantly, also pride in the National Festival of Arts and Culture, which is occasionally organised by its Ministry of Culture. This is also seriously wanting as we have already indicated above.

We should understand that, the protection of Cameroonian works of art is not just the concern of government, but also that of all indigenous local leadership and Cameroonians who care about their culture and identity. Most Cameroonian artists stay in the rural areas. If it is possible, the government should stop the recruitment of local chiefs into the public service and improve on its current policy of giving them allowances as auxiliaries of the government. This will encourage the chiefs to stay in their villages and discourage them from taking up jobs as civil servants, which will require that they stay in the city. Their presence in the village will ensure the protection of the local museums or shrines and above all, peace, which is very essential to the survival of the country. There is also need for the local chiefs to sit up and seriously punish those local people caught trafficking in their works of art with the highest punishment in the land, irrespective of their status.

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