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Olumo Rock tourist destination: A survey of the potential and aesthetic value of the facility

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Abstract

Studies of the history of the civilisation indicate that societies have experienced the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age and the Technological Age and while doing so, benefited from the benevolence and mysteries of the surrounding physical environment. The physical surroundings, with time, have become centres of human attraction and tourism. This has led to the economic prosperity of society. In Nigeria for example, interaction with colonialism, urbanisation, education, westernization, emerging innovations, religious Christian and Muslim faiths among others have affected the value and therefore human attraction of existent tourist centres. This study explores the effects of time on Olumo Rock, a tourist centre in Ogun State, Nigeria. The research employed a qualitative approach to determine the potential and aesthetic value of the facility. Scholars have argued that aesthetic value is the worth that an object, event, or state of affairs (most often an artwork or the natural environment) has as a consequence of its propensity to elicit pleasure (positive value) or unhappiness (negative value). Results showed that the site was important for the growth and development of Ogun state and had the

potential to boost the economy and preserve the history of the Egba people who live there.

Key words: *Human attraction, potential, aesthetic value*

Introduction

The research on the past of human culture indicates that a specific community has existed in a technological era, like the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, and the technological age. During his stay on this planet, man has often marveled at the kindness and mysteries of his physical world. Millions of stars and other paradises, wind, light and solid, cloud and related rains, and large expanses of water created by our creator, in oceans, seas, lakes, mountains, and rocks, remain a mystery to mankind. The varieties of terrain with their luxuriant mountainous design, plateau, rivers and valleys, tropical forest, and dry wilderness are all unexplained wonders with which people have existed, which they term "Tourist Centres".

Tourism has acted as a stable economic commodity, creating much-needed exchanges, helping to foster domestic trade, aesthetic value, and national solidarity in several countries. It also facilitates mutual understanding among nations, particularly in Africa as people move from country to country. The collection of reasons responsible for the current involvement in the physical background for actions resulting from man's increasing presence is another inexplicable cause that affects human beings in the world that he considers being tourist centres.

Nature holds a lot of amazements in Africa, which stir up curiosity in foreigners and beckon visitors from around the world to visit the continent. The trans-atlantic and Trans-Saharan trade of the 15th and 16th through 18th century attracted a lot of tourists (Olanrewajuel, *al*

P.8). Tourism is scarcely appreciated in this part of the world. It is seen as travel for recreational or leisure purposes for those who can afford it. Tourism is a pure consumer of time, money, and enjoyment. It engages a tourist in leisure activities such as picnics, sightseeing, sport, and business activities. Moya & Jain (2013) say that "tourism is a phenomenon arising from temporary visits (i.e. stay away from home) outside the normal place of residence for any reason other than furthering an occupation remunerated from within the place visited." In other words, many people tend to stay away from home but this does not portray tourism. Temporary visits hold sway in Nigeria and other countries. Hence, Lickorish & Jenkins, (2007) took it from another perspective, they view tourism as "the temporary movement of person or group of people from their commonest environment to another for any reason, but essentially for leisure or pleasure". Tourism is therefore meant for leisure or pleasure.

People travel for various reasons, married couples visit tourist centers for their honey moon and they stay for a given period. Some stay for three days, while others stay for one week depending on their own time. Okpoko (1990:79) asserts that in Nigeria "tourism is mainly motivated by her cultural resources which could be packaged and "sold" to potential tourists. This statement is particularly relevant since it seems that the bulk of Nigerian's customers would usually come from within since domestic tourism has always accounted for a greater percentage of the world's total tourist movement. In addition to this statement, Nigeria is truly rich and versatile in terms of culture. All the thirty-six states of the federation including the federal capital have their own cultural displays. Ekechukwu (1990:82) believes that tourism in Nigeria involves "cultural sites, resource towns and archaeological sites, historic towns and sites, museums and monuments of various sizes and sacred grooves. In this cases, one of

the most important organs which help to galvanize archeological ethnographic and other activities of cultural nature in Nigeria is the national commission for museums and monument which was established by Decree No 77 of 1999.

Mere looking at the problems that besiege the development of the tourism industry in Nigeria, one will see that bad roads, poor electricity supply and to a large extent, inadequate funding, have a strong effect on the development of the parks and tourism in Nigeria. Onsite (1988) states that "the creation of a first class infrastructure is of prime importance for tourism - roads, Airports, Navigable water, telecommunications and many others, are the main elements of basic infrastructure." In support this statement, security, hospitality and standardized recreational facilities should also be in place. Nigerians require knowledge and a lot of information about the parks and tourism generally and the benefits embedded in it. This will ignite their interest and they will patronize the centers, As they do, they will be educated and have their fun.

Oladele (1991) disclosed that tourism can bring many benefits by creating employment opportunities, stimulating economies, and social welfare providing recreational facilities and services. It is possible for tourism to become a significant factor in Nigeria's economy if handled with seriousness and well managed and could become second to crude oil and farming as a foreign exchange earner for the country.

Boswell (1979) observed that "tourism is by nature a luxury demand". In Nigeria, Ogun state has a lot of tourist centers. Olumo Rock is one of the unique centers which attracts human beings to its environment. Olumo rock also attracted educationalists like Fascist in 1953 and Rev. B.K. Ashade in 2003 as indicated in his poem "Ode to Olumo Rock in

Abeokuta". Olumo Rock as a tourist center contributes immensely to the development of economic activities in the state. To the Egba people, Olumo Rock does not stand only as a monument of faith and unity, but also a source of communal strength and unfailing protection and substances from Olodumare (God) and the Supreme Being who led their ancestors through all hazards safely to Abeokuta.

It is at the rock that is located at Ikeja where the first settlers found refuge from their attackers. God loves Ikija and Oke-Ona Egbas so much that he dropped the sacred and monumental Olumo Rock in their midst. Every Egba son and daughter are descendants of Olumo Rock as reflected in the Egba anthem. The anthem verses mean that all Egbas, Owu, Gbaguras, Akes, and Oke-Onas together are endowed with the grandeur and natural beauty which Olumo Rock radiates. This research employed a qualitative approach to determine the potential and aesthetic value of the Olumo Rock. Aesthetic value is the worth that an object, event, or state of affairs (most often an artwork or the natural environment) has as a consequence of its propensity to elicit pleasure (positive value) or unhappiness (negative value. (Stecker, 2019).

The discovery of Olumo Rock

Myths have it that one of the local chiefs, named Liperu, escaped to his farm at Lantoro immediately after the destruction of Itoku town. He crossed river Ogun and took refuge under the king of Ibara named Lafa for fear of being recaptured. Liperu initiated the chief of Ibara into the mysteries of craft and thus established it at Orile Ibara. This craft was a means of removing the Ibara government. After the war ended, Liperu found there was no cause for him to fear staying on his farm. He, therefore, took leave under his farm, with the assistance of Ibara King (Onibara) he built his first house and settled within the

surroundings of Olumo Rock, now known as Abeokuta.

Jibulu, Oso, and Olu- Nje are three brothers who first of all joined him in Abeokuta. The three brothers were known to be hunters by profession. Both Liperu and the three brothers did not give the rock any name. However, the three brothers being hunterstook lodging in some of the caves inside the rock on the eastern side just like early men who lived in the Lascaux cave, unlike Liperuwho built his own house with the help of Olubara (King of Ibara)

Therefore, they said to any of their people or tribesmen who met them by chance in the bush that their lodging was under a stone (Abeokuta). Hence when the town was founded afterward it was given the name "Abeokuta" (under a stone).

A man named Adagba and some others moved to this place. He was very short and slender but brave. He twice repulsed some bands of marauders from Oyo camp and thereby became famous and respected. By 1830 immediately after the war, Egba people were seeking a good place of security for settlement "Sodeke". One of the leaders in the Egba war front had heard about "under stone" (Abeokuta) where the three brothers (hunters) mentioned earlier and some of their kinsmen were lodging. He then sent one of their members called Somokun, the Bamokun of Ilugun, to bring a handful of earth from the place with which the *ifa* oracle might be consulted either or not the settlement at the place would be favorable to the people.

The earth was brought and the oracle portended good "prosperity would be found there and that a nation from overseas would cometo rise the Egba nation on the proposed site" predicted by the chiefPriest (Ajayi, 1964). Necessary sacrifice was offered by Sodeke andhe sent few men under Edun of Kenta to quietly cut a wide route tothe place.



Plate 1: The Old Olumo Rock in (976 Early settlers of Egba people around Olumo Rock.

Source: Duke Oreva, 2017. <http://www.pulse.ng/lifestyle/food-travel-arts-culture/a-brief-history-on-the-egba-people-id7422618.html>

Around the end of July or early August in 1830, chief Sodeke, like Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt to the promised land, heled all the Egba tribes to under stone. During that period the settlement was called Oko Adegba (Adagba village) the other name for Abeokuta (under a stone). Olumo Rock took its name from its being naturally furnished with apartments where human begins might live. Hence, 'OLUMO' simply means 'Oluwa LO Mo' (built by the lord).

Tourism services in Olumo Rock

Olumo Rock has been a popular tourist destination for decades. It has undergone multiple transformations and flourished under the auspices of several organizations. Many years ago, the management of all tourist facilities in Nigeria's Ogun State was placed in the ministry of commerce and tourism. A token of US\$300 (fifty naira) was charged to tourists to properly maintain the place.

In 2006, after the site's rehabilitation and commissioning as a tourist attraction, it began earning revenue for the state government. This

prompted the state government to transfer it to a private business called Resource Support Limited, which has managed it since 2006. This corporation is estimated to earn US\$241million in revenue for the state government over a ten-year period(Anidugbe, 2010). In February 2006, they took over the administration of the resort. Though it was said that the firm had several difficulties at its inception. Attendance has been really motivational and inspiring so far. This is because Nigerians are increasingly adopting the culture of domestic and local tourism as a result of education.

Resort Support Jimited, the management firm of Olumo rock, operates using four distinct departments: accounting, ticketing, and customer service, department of tourist guides, technical department, and administrative department. All of these departments work together to establish this facility. According to the company's management, "the account/ticketing department is responsible for the registration of tourists and visitors to thecenter; they are also responsible for the payment of employee salaries and certain other financial obligations."

A tourist guide will be handed out immediately upon entering the gate to tourists or anyone interested in learning more about Olumo Rock. The tourist guide's job is to show the tourist or visitor aroundeach location that the tourist or visitor should see and to teach them about the activities that occur in each region.

Another critical department that cannot be overlooked is the technical one. This division is responsible for technical work. Several of them remain extremely close to the lift in case of an emergency. Additionally, the administration department consists ofthe people at the top who are responsible for the center's welfare,which includes the director and manager of the company. They areresponsible for the

center's development and promotion. Resort Support Limited employs approximately eighty people. They are a mix of highly skilled and skilled workers; the workday is at least eight hours long. The service rendered in Olumo rock is awe- inspiring not only to Nigerians but also to foreign visitors from all over the world.

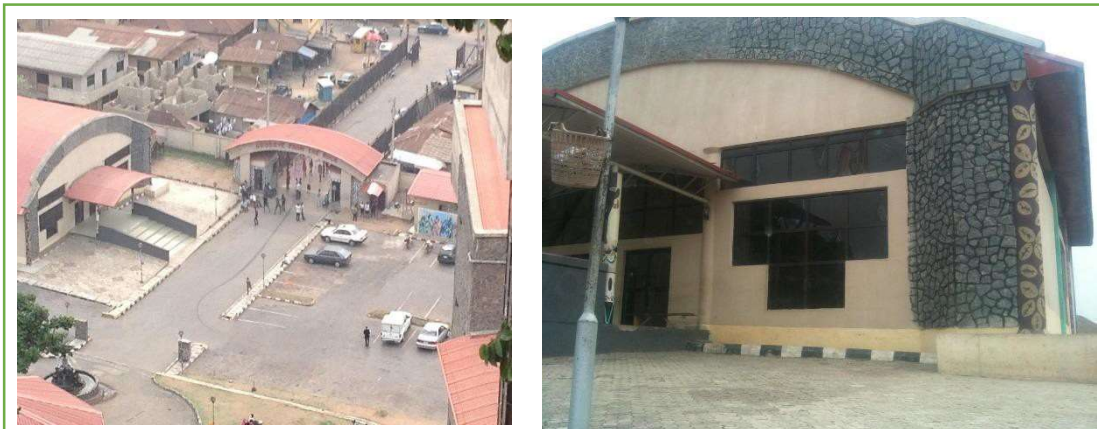
The existing facilities in Olumo Rock

The term "facilities" refer to structures, pieces of equipment, or services that are given for a specific purpose (Oxford 1995). Additionally, the Long man dictionary (2004) defines facilities as "spaces, equipment, and services offered for a certain purpose." Numerous amenities have been established at Olumo Rock for the tourist's enjoyment. The location of Olumo Rock has seen significant development since 2003 when former Ogun State Governor Gbenga Daniel was freshly elected. Ogun state had a transformation at Olumo rock at that period, when the road leadingto the site was re-tarred and made motorable. At the start of 2006, considerable expansion was evident at the site. At the entrance to the tourist center, a large fence made of iron poles was designed to direct tourists and visitors to Olumo's main gate (plate 2).



*Plate 2: Entrance of Olumo Rock
Photograph by Isaac Abati 2018*

After studying history, one may conclude that Nigeria's cultural legacy is a tangible and intangible culture that the current generation inherits in order to ensure the survival and continuation of the many Nigerian groups. These assets include the services and goods that our society needs for social, economic, religious, and political stability. At the entrance to the Olumo rock grounds, one will see a large structure on the right-hand side that has been created for various occasions like seminal, wedding ceremonies, and birthdays. This complex is connected by a long corridor that is paved in interlocking bricks. It consists of about seven stairs with little eaves at the front that terminates immediately after the last step in front of the complex. The structure is artistically enhanced with stones at the corner, with some famous sculptural elements throughout the building's perimeter, and is painted in a bright hue that attracts tourists (Plate 3).



***Plate 3: Image showing the Multipurpose complex, the part and washroom:
Photograph by Adepegba Kehinde 2014***

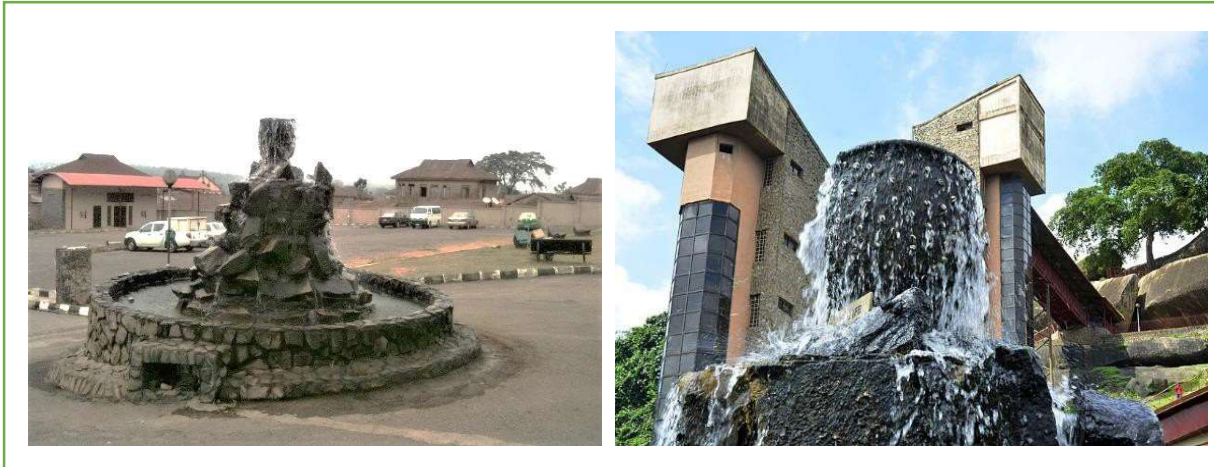
However, the washroom and energy room are opposite of the complex. The washroom was wired with power and the water supply which is extended to other buildings in the center. The wall just beside the washroom has an aesthetically pleasing mural painting of three

dramatic abstract characters (plate 4). The artwork is composed of linear and geometric shapes and has a monochrome palette of blue, light brown, and cream hues. The painting included two female figures dancing and a man figure drumming, symbolizing the happiness of the people of Abeokuta and the broader Olumo rock environment's cultural treasure.



*Plate 4: image of abstract mural painting in Olumo Rock.
Photograph by Isaac Abati, 2018*

Another interesting monumental fountain artwork is found at the center of the compound, where visitors take pleasure of taken photographs at the sport for their everlasting memories. The tourist's enclosed fountain built with rough rocks glued to one another and embellished with a big pot (*Amu or Ikoko*) at the top, patterned around with cowries (*owo eyo*) which is synonymous with most of the decorated object at the Olumo Rock. An inscription at the base reads: 'Pot of Life'. Watching water gush from the pot and run down the rocks was a thrill in itself.



***Plate 5: Image of the monumental fountain at Olumo Rock.
Source:https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fountainat_Olumo_Rock_in_Abeokuta,_Ogun_State_Nigeria.jpg***

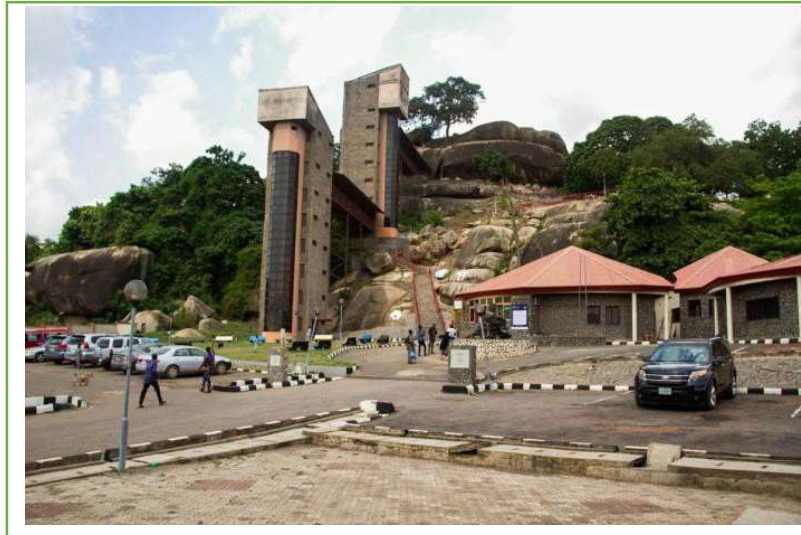
There are around thirty-five (35) parking spaces available for tourists and visitors to park their vehicles and pay a nominal fee for the security and maintenance of the park. The amount is determined by the kind of vehicle. A relaxing area and a lift are located in front of this automobile park. The relaxation area is about one hundred meters long and has fifteen (15) built chairs that have been organized for travelers looking to unwind or for small gatherings such as picnics, get-togethers, or film screenings (Plate 6).



***Plate 6: Image showing relaxing area and the lift.
Photograph by: Abati Isaac 2018***

A small building adjacent to this recreation area sells souvenirs and fast food. Resort support limited operates this shop/restaurant (Plate 5). They sell a range of products designed to instill a lasting memory of Olumo Rock and Abeokuta in tourists. They seek to connect the past and the future by selling a variety of indigenous items. Among them are textiles with traditional designs, an indigenous product of Abeokuta. They are available in both men's and women's shirts and shorts. Additionally, some artists create sculptures that can be carried away by tourists and are sold in this store. Their gifts and souvenir products cut across class and age. Within this complex, we have a distinct portion that comprises the reception, the store, counters, and two expanded rooms; one for the chef who prepares meals for the restaurant, and the other for the receptionist's extension. Within this facility, there is a restroom dedicated to visitors who come to purchase items.

At the rear of this restaurant, there are two expanded cylindrical structures. According to the tourist guide (Kola Olaoti), one of these buildings is for senior worker's offices of the tourist center, while the other is a museum and an art gallery. According to the Longman dictionary of modern English (2003), a museum is "a structure that houses significant cultural, historical, or scientific artefacts and exhibits them to the public."



***Plate 7: the Restaurant, the Office of senior staff and the gallery complex.
Photograph by: Isaac Abati.***

Olumo Rock museum complex has been equipped with a lot of cultural artifacts such as mask, headdresses, traditional drums, equatorial figure, Egungun statue, *ajere ifa*, and a lot more can be told about the history of the site and the *egba* people at large which also add to the aesthetic value of the place.

Next door to the museum one will see a large entrance tagged Olumo Rock art gallery, which is just at the Western part of the rock. Inside the Art Gallery, there are incredible artworks on display which were made by the local artist within Abeokuta. The artworks that are visibly present include painting, sculpture, ceramics, and textile. There was also a section where craftworks like customized beads and other African attires were sold. The outpart of the museum and the gallery were painted with black, and yellow colours, with a beautiful pattern of cowries and other lines decorations. Other pillars attached to the buildings are painted with abstract images of drummers which symbolize celebration and joy and others with cowries which is a symbol of money and wealth.



*Plate 8: Image of Art Gallery at Olumo Rock.
Photography by Isaac Abati 20018*

Additionally, before ascending to the rock's summit, one must choose a path. The summit of this rock can be reached in three ways: via the lift, via the traditional root, or via the stairs. At the lift's entrance is a small V-shaped corridor lined with interlocking black tiles. This lift stands at approximately 120 meters in height. The front is designed and constructed entirely of glass, while the rest of the structure is covered in granite. At the top of this lift's capital, there is a brick element that was used to decorate or embellish the lift's design. Each lift is equipped with approximately eight constructed windows with glass. At the top, there is another small window that was added for aesthetic purposes or some other reason. The Olumo rock lift is built in three stages, the first two of which are located at the base of the rock. The first two constructed lifts to transport tourists to the rock's first summit, allowing them to move around the rock and assess its potential.

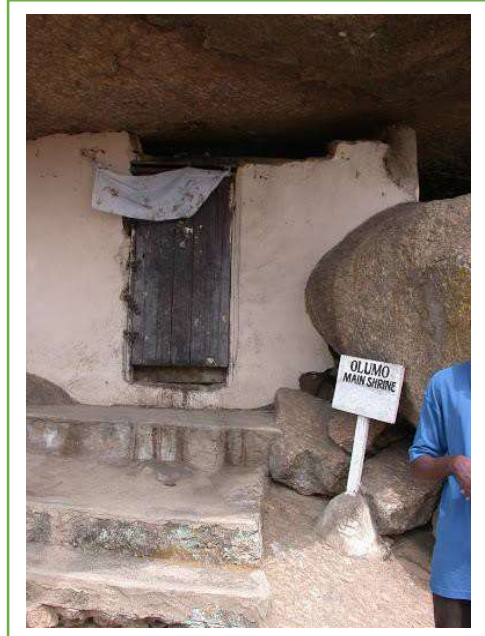
There is a little area between the front and second lifts where a cage-

like bridge is erected for the visitor to pass over to reach the second lift. This provides them with the opportunity to maneuver for a better look. Tourists may observe the "Panseke" garden and surrounding views of Itoko, Itoku, Agboba, and the rest from the top of the first lift. From here, tourists may go to the first summit of the rock.

Each lift has a designated area for visitors to sit, who is supposed to maintain social distance while resting. There are four specially built seats, two on the left and two on the right. On the tourist route to the lift's entrance, there are poles in horizontal and vertical configurations to protect the tourist from falling from the top of this place. The third lift, located behind the rock and quite near to "Orisa Sanpona shine," transports tourists to the final top. Except for the bridge, it is identical to the other two built lifts in the front. It is undeniable how a place's peacefulness dazzles the mind and draws the eyes. As a result, Resort Support Limited has made a concerted effort to transform Olumo rock into a genuine sight to see.

The potential and aesthetic value of Olumo Rock

Olumo Rock is steeped in history and has significant spiritual importance. On the climb up the rock, there is a tiny chamber devoted to Olumo Shrine, which is open for a festival and assembly of chiefs, priests, local leaders, and townsfolk just once a year — on 5th August. Throughout the remainder of the year, sacrifices are offered at the shrine: chicken feathers and dried blood are often found stuck to the entrance. Further up, a blue-painted rock indicates other temples, where the seemingly immortal priestesses would greet you; Afrobeat legend Fela Kuti, who was a traditionalist, was claimed to have worshiped with them several times before his death.



*Plate 10:Image of the main shrine at Olumo Rock.
Photography by Isaac Abati 2018*

Another deity with devotees in Olumo rock is Sànpnà, the god of smallpox. Sànpnà's deity was reported to be towering, ferocious, and scary. The deity was always on the go with his herd of dogs. Each dog in Sanpona was supposed to have four eyes, rather than the two that a regular dog possesses. This deity enjoyed roaming about in the blazing sun, and anybody who does so, or who sings or whistles in the heat, maybe assaulted by this Sanpona spirit. Parents have traditionally urged their tiny children and wards to avoid the scorching sun and refrain from whistles and singing at this time (Neimark,1993). The priest of Sànpnà is known as Elegun- Sanpona, and the devotees are known as Òbíwùmí, Òbíwándé, Òbísòlá, Òbíkúnlé etc. When there were no health care methods like vaccine, inoculation, and so on, *Sanpona* worshipers were quite popular in Olumo rock. It is believed that anytime there is a pandemic such as Corona or any other once, it is believed to have caused by Sanpona at the time, it was thought that one guaranteed method to avoid contracting

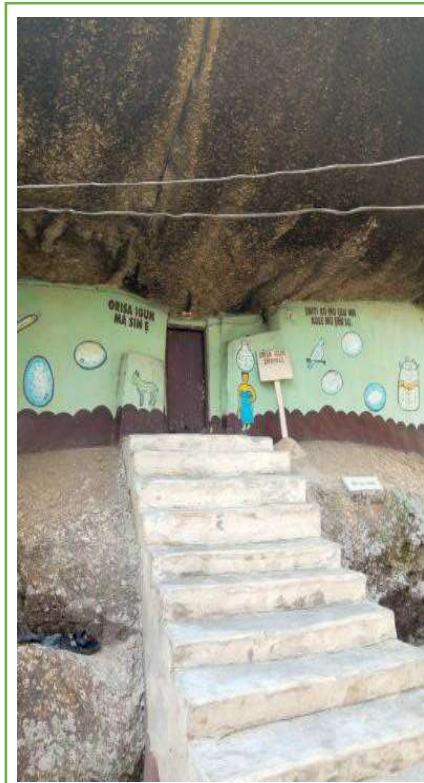
smallpox was to be a follower of the *Sanpna* spirit. Sanpona's devotees would not spend time burying any smallpox victim; they would confiscate everything of the person's belongings. To please the deity of Sànpná, palm wine, kolanuts, hen, yam, *eko*, palm oil, and ram are offered.



Plate 11: Image of the Sopona shrin showing Ewe Akoko at Olumo Rock.
Photography by: Isaac Abati 2018

Not far from this hideout is a shrine to Obaluwaye, also known as *Orisa Igun* shrine. In front of *Orisa Igun* shrine is a little tree (*Akoko*) that has been in existence for 400 years, according to history. In Abeokuta, the leaves of the tree (*ewe akoko*) are used to ordain rulers. Worshippers of Orisa Igun (god of longevity) at Olumo rock in Abeokuta, Nigeria, from a subsidiary shrine at the rear of the rock. Orisa Igun is worshiped yearly during a 30-day festival that includes the sacrifice of rams, goats, and other animals. The shrines were painted blue and adorned with various iconographic figures, including

firearms, an opon ifa (divination tray), a lady holding a pot, a bird, a goat, cowries, drums, and a chicken. These designs reflect items used in deity offerings at the shrines at Olumo rock that are also visually pleasing to the tourist or visitor and contribute to the site's cultural significance.



*Plate 12: Image of Orisa Igun at Olumo Rock
Photograph by: Isaac Abati*

From the first shrine, one will be lead towards the cave in which the Egba people hid during the ancient Egba-Dahomey (now the Republic of Benin) war over territorial expansion. The war happened between 1851-1864 (Intellectual Leaders Foundation, 2019). This entrance leads to the cave which is under the rock, hence, the name Abeokuta. Abeokuta is a Yoruba word that means under the rock. Abe means under while Stone and Rock are called Okuta in Yoruba. This hideout was partitioned into 5 room apartments with mud, was first

discovered by a great hunter "Adagba" who lived under the rock with his brother and later invited other people to come and live with them. Behind the hideout was a forest called 'IGBO AIWO' which is presently out of existence. However, back then, only the powerful people can actually enter into the wilderness of the forest and come back alive.



*Plate 13: Images of Egba people hidout during War
Photograph by: Isaac Abati 2018.*

There are five hollowed holes (grinding hole) (*Olota*) that are believed to have served the Olumo rock's early user as a grinding stone with a grinding pestle (*omo'lota*), where women, both elderly and young, performed grinding activities in bygone eras. The deeper hollowness is a consequence of the stone's usage over time, which also limits the kind of materials that may be grounded in any of the grinding holes, and the deeper hole often prevents grains from dropping off the stone. This sport also served as a focal point for women living in Olumo, as well as a vehicle for teaching young girls who have not yet married to appropriate moral values. These mortars have been mostly replaced homemade stones or wood materials that can easily be lost or damaged, making it difficult to locate authentic remains of this kind of mortar.



***Plate 14: Image of grinding hole (Olota) at Olumo Rock.
Photography by: Isaac Abati 2018.***

The rock consists of statutes that represent the Egba past heroes and symbols of the Egba warriors who are "Lisabi Agbongbakala, Adagba the great hunter" and "Okonkenu the first paramount ruler in Egba land", "Jagun Jagun the sharpshooter and general in command" and symbols like "cowries" which represented money used at that period.



***Plate 15: The image of Egba past heroes and symbols of the Egba warriors.
Photography by: Adepegba Kehinde (2014)***

Conclusion

Olumo Rock has been characterized by a wealth of amenities and enormous potential, all of which are complemented by strong aesthetic values. Aesthetic value is the worth that an object, event, or state of affairs (most often an artwork or the natural environment) has as a consequence of its proclivity to elicit pleasure (positive value) or unhappiness (negative value) when aesthetically appreciated or experienced (Stecker, 2019). By examining the facilities and potentials inside the Olumo rock, one can see that it has a great deal of aesthetic value in relation to the sort of service given at the location. Olumo Rock's artistic pieces have emotional, historical, and commercial worth. The place has economic as well as recreational importance. Their art gallery features outstanding pieces of art that have a specific instrumental, utilitarian and decorative value that is paramount when they are judged as they should be. The museum is filled with wonderful artifacts that teach visitors about the significance of cultural beauty, albeit not every artifact discovered is attractive but educative. The notion that nature has intrinsic aesthetic worth is universally recognized in many cultures, even though certain natural landscapes are regarded more lovely than others. The conviction in the aesthetic worth of nature was the impetus for social changes such as those seen at Olumo Rock.

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