

Decolonizing the Cultural Heritage of the Igbo People of Nigeria: A Critical Analysis of the Role of Museums in Preserving and Sharing Cultural Heritage

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Summary. *This study examines the function of museums in preserving and sharing the cultural heritage of Nigeria's Igbo people, with specific reference to the decolonization process. It draws on Dependency Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a framework. The article concerns how museum practices are shaped and how the colonial legacy affects the representation of Igbo culture. It analyzes museum texts, their descriptive storytelling and exhibition narratives, by considering the colonial power relations they reflect. The study describes the impact of representing cultural identity and discusses the ongoing process of decolonization taking place in Nigerian museums, explaining the difficulties involved and ways used to restructure the museum's role in presenting and preserving the Igbo people's culture.*

Key words: Museums, Igbo heritage, CDA, Dependency Theory.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria is the Igbo people who possess a well-known cultural heritage with traditions that have been in existence for centuries. This heritage has been passed down from one generation to another and is also preserved in museums. Museums serve as a medium for history, a window to the past. However, as an institution, museums in Nigeria have been shaped by colonial ideology, and they may be seen as the front line in conflicts over how the Igbo culture is interpreted. Not only do mu-

seums conserve people's objects but they also construct the narratives that explain them, and these narratives are often presented from the perspective of outsiders rather than of the people themselves. The presentation of western views, for example, may misinterpret the actual character of the culture. This is the case with the legacy of the Igbo people, in which the legacy of colonialism has created a historical narrative that marginalizes their identity because it has relied on outsiders to tell the story.

The common reliance on such “external” narratives creates a challenge to decolonize museums, especially in post-colonial cultures. Although museums aspire to convey the culture of indigenous peoples accurately, the image of Igbo culture is trapped in the perspective of colonialist representations. Museums often continue to maintain the political status quo, presenting indigenous culture from the view of the colonizers instead of giving the Igbo people themselves a cultural voice.

The current study aims to clarify the problem of decolonizing museums by applying dependency theory.

With the dependency theory as an application, the study explains the power relations of the external that continues to shape the culture of the Igbo which is represented in the museums and the framework is established theoretically to help analyse the power and inequalities of the history. In addition, the Critical Discourse Analysis as a tool to analyse the language, ideologies and strategies of the narratives employed in the exhibition of the museum's studies. CDA offers to interpret the manner of discourse underlying constructions views of cultures and operation of the power relations. Through the explanation of narratives associated with the museum to use this approach, the study shows the legacy continued by the ideologies of the colonialism impact in the representation of the heritage of the igbo culture and cultural dependency.

In the process, this study seeks to explain and apply the things associated with the discourses of the museums through the paradigms offered by the dependency theory and with the insights provided by the CDA on museums re-structuring towards the indigenous cultures in a way that empowers the people in way like the take back control of the Igbo people over the aspect of cultures.

The Theoretical Framework: Dependency Theory

Dependency Theory considers Nigeria both in relation to the Igbo people and to the stages of international development. The theory is attributed to Raúl Prebisch in the late 1950s. This gave way to the ideas of [Andre 1972]¹ on the causes of dependence, saying that a country's paths of development are structured by their ties with nations that are more developed and the relationship between their economies. Dependency Theory helps explain a Postcolonial culture's economic tendency to remain under a type of colonial government, as in the case of Nigeria, which depends on the world capitalist system that conserves or increases inequalities, especially in reference to indigenous cultures.

Dependency Theory features several key ideas that closely correspond to the challenges that museums are faced with in the Postcolonial epoch. These include the *Core-Periphery Model* that describes the one-way dependence of third-world countries (the “periphery”) on developed ones (the “core”), in which advanced countries take third world resources for their own use [Amin 1974]². The concept of *Unequal Exchange* holds that developing countries are disadvantaged in international trade, as their products — encompassing both cultural items and raw materials — are often sold at a lower value than they merit. This results in the *Development of Underdevelopment* in which the effect of the capitalist system is also to distort traditional histories and cultures [Andre 1967]³.

The application of Dependency Theory to decolonizing museums aims to explain how colonialism organizes cultural practices in Neo-colonial society. In Postcolonial Nigeria, museums are regarded as institutions where indigenous culture is displayed via

¹ The theory of unequal exchange explains how the imbalance between industrialized and developing countries create structures of dependency. See Andre on “the development of underdevelopment” [Andre 1972, 19–45].

² See the critique of the global economic structure that links the wealth of the “core” nation to the systematic underdevelopment of “peripheral” economies. See [Amin 1974].

³ For example, the stagnation of the economy of the southern hemisphere has been ascribed to the historical role of the capitalist system [Andre 1967].

frameworks shaped by imperialist values and as a space of cultural hegemony that is replicated through the way in which the culture of indigenous people is showcased. Exhibitions of Igbo culture still retain an imperialist power structure. Imperialism or colonialism may have halted, but the narratives of culture described in these exhibits still stay with the epistemology of the western subject, which involves a degree of control over the representation and consumption (interpretation) of the cultures displayed.

An examination of Nigerian museums, particularly from an Igbo viewpoint, highlights the enduring influence of colonialism on the construction of the Igbo heritage. Colonial legacies continue to shape the ways in which Igbo history and culture are presented and interpreted within museum settings. Museums serve as powerful institutions, playing a significant role in the formation of cultural identity among the Igbo people. Through their exhibitions and narratives, museums not only formulate cultural meaning but also act as mechanisms that reinforce cultural dependency. The structures and practices within these museums often perpetuate the dominance of external, non-indigenous perspectives, thereby maintaining a form of cultural reliance that echoes the colonial past. In critically assessing these dynamics, our analysis underscores the importance of understanding how museums contribute to both the representation and the ongoing dependency surrounding the Igbo cultural heritage.

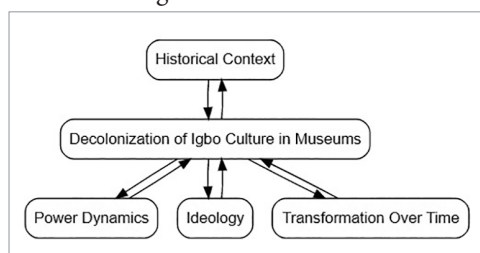


Fig. 1. How Dependency Theory applies to the decolonization of museums

Рис. 1. Как теория зависимости применяется к деколонизации музеев

The goal of decolonizing museums is to free them from stereotyping on the part of non-native people and to give full access to the indigenous people and their viewpoint

[Lonetree 2012]. Addressing internal dependencies within museums has led to discussions about decolonizing museum practices, particularly in relation to the influence of Western epistemologies [Ibid 153]. The national museum in Nigeria has made a significant effort to design and implement displays which are intended to reduce dependence on non-native curatorial approaches. This strategic direction is in line with the suggestions made by Grek in 2005, emphasizing the importance of fostering homegrown curatorial expertise. The museum aims to strengthen its identity and independence, promoting a more authentic representation of Nigerian heritage and culture.

Attempts at decolonialization of museum practices include attention to the following problems:

Exhibition Classifications created by non-indigenous individuals, with special attention to defining roles, traditional significance, and collective value [Grek 2005].

Colonial Discourses: Objects framed through a colonial lens in exhibition labels that may prioritize discovery and educational validation over the context of Igbo history [Lonetree 2012].

Limited Native Input: Artifacts curated without consulting indigenous historians, tradition bearers, or cultural experts, thereby restricting opportunities for authentic local interpretation [Grek 2009]. To decolonize such practices, curatorial processes should prioritize the perspectives of native inhabitants by incorporating oral traditions and locally grounded modes of representation. Integrating Igbo interpretations into the understanding of artifacts enables museums to dismantle hegemonic narratives and foster renewed agency among indigenous people.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA) IN MUSEUM NARRATIVES

The key idea associated with strengthening the indigenous voice is to understand how the native heritage is expressed — culturally, linguistically and discursively. Museums as an institution do not merely display objects, they create narratives that determine awareness of the people's history and identity.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a methodology to analyze power relations reflected in institutional discourses — museum texts, display labels and other practices [Fairclough 1995]. CDA assists in the analysis of exhibitions that continue to share the ideology of colonialism and sideline native awareness, traditions and history.

Applying CDA to museum descriptions of Igbo objects may reveal: 1) *Western-oriented framing* that privileges the efforts of westernized collectors to learn about Igbo artifacts, rather than to learn from Igbo artifacts themselves and proceeding from the indigenous knowledge system that defines them [Ibid]. 2) *Consideration of Igbo culture as static* and belonging entirely to the past, as opposed to one still alive and developing [Grek 2009]. 3) *The Validation of Colonialism*: when artifacts are valued when they have been categorized and displayed in non-native museums, which defines their cultural worth (on the application of the ideologies of colonialism see [Fairclough 2001]). CDA is not only appropriate for analyzing museums' descriptions of artifacts, it provides ways to negotiate histories and cultural identities. It offers a framework for the analysis of linguistic practices that promote the hegemony of western views and devaluation of native ones. CDA enables us to reveal the ideology behind museum practices. Most museum texts reflect colonial attitudes by assuming Western superiority, portraying African societies as less developed. Analyzing these texts reveals how museums in postcolonial contexts perpetuate dependency.

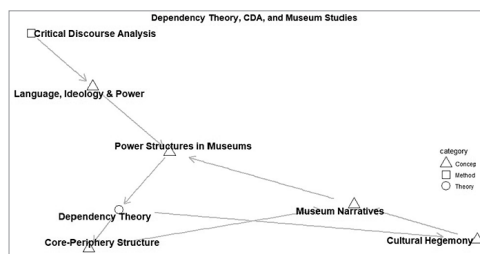


Fig. 2. Dependency Theory, Method and Concept representation

Рис. 2. Представление теории, метода и концепции зависимости

MUSEUMS AS AN INSTRUMENT OF CULTURAL DEPENDENCY

Museums have long been shaping society, presenting ways to understand and decipher the cultural heritage. The Postcolonial museum in Africa has played a pivotal role in preserving and exhibiting the history of the colonial period. In as much as museums stereotype indigenous culture, they present a critical focus for decolonization efforts, especially in African countries like Nigeria, where the portrayal of native cultures such as the Igbo people remains affected by narratives shaped by colonialism, a period when the museum was a tool for cultural hegemony. At that time, the cultural authorities took and displayed objects without the consent of their native owners. These were often perceived as artistic items, but also as primitive and unrefined, and their spiritual, cultural and historical importance from the standpoint of the native owners was disregarded. The curatorial practices of this era served the interests of the colonial powers, and museums acted as tools of ideological control. Museum displays often focused on the western discovery of native objects and ways to categorize them, manifesting little or no interest in the culture for which these items were made and used. By presenting them apart from their actual cultural meanings and functions, museums thus contributed to the weakening of indigenous African identity and to the destruction of native culture.

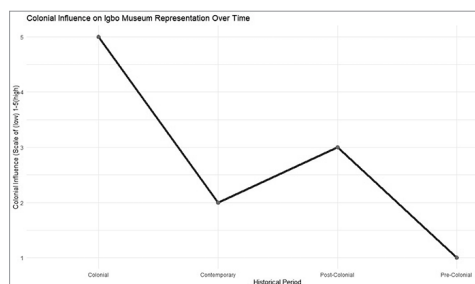


Fig. 3. The Effect of Colonialism

Рис. 3. Влияние колониализма

MUSEUMS IN THE POSTCOLONIAL EPOCH

Postcolonial museums still have to make peace with the past in order to address these issues. The challenges for Postcolonial muse-

ums primarily stem from the persistence of dominant operational modes that influence institutional practices. These modes often perpetuate exhibition narratives and interpretive strategies that marginalize the voices of native stakeholders. For example, Igbo artifacts housed in Nigerian national museums are commonly exhibited and described without significant opportunities for indigenous input. Additionally, efforts toward cultural reclamation within museums face further complications, particularly regarding funding and reliance on external expertise. Cultural centers often depend on support from former colonial powers for financial resources, specialized knowledge, and collaboration, which can reinforce the existing power dynamics of curatorial processes. Although there is growing recognition of the importance of fostering independence in museum practices, progress is hindered by limited systems for promoting indigenous awareness, scarce resources, and ongoing challenges related to the interpretation of colonial collections.

The struggle for truth and the authentic portrayal of native cultures continues to be the museums' aim. However, the continued exclusion of natives from curation and interpretation of their cultural heritage hinders attempts to present their histories and identities more correctly and respectfully. In the case of the Igbo people, their heritage is presented in national museums in less-than-ideal ways that are inadequate to the wealth and diversity of Igbo culture; they instead often rely on outdated stereotypical representations. Smaller local museums, on the other hand, which are sensitive to the cultural reality of the Igbo, can provide alternatives, but these are underrepresented and underfunded.

Museums are at the center of the storing and interpretation of the cultural heritage of Nigeria's Igbo people. Yet museum representation of their heritage is still shaped by the legacies of colonialism. The way Igbo artifacts are displayed and presented and the narratives associated with them reflect colonial ideology. Its impact is not only visible in reference to the artefacts but also in the funding and the policies that guide the institu-

tion. Colonial powers were prominent in the creation of museums in colonies like Nigeria, so that exhibition and curatorial strategies followed their lead. These practices helped make sure that Western perspectives dominated in representing native cultures such as the Igbo. Nigerian museums' reliance on external support, grants, and experts, make it likely that colonial period paradigms will maintain their hegemony. The practices of conservators within these museums are also guided by the plans of external donor organizations which influence the form and content of exhibitions. This seems largely responsible for the Igbo heritage being repeatedly treated within the discursive scope of the colonial order that downplays the diversity and richness of Igbo culture. This kind of colonial legacy is still felt.

HOW MUSEUMS REFLECT DEPENDENCY STRUCTURES AND NARRATIVES IN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT: EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Museums, often overseen by former imperial powers, foster philosophical and cultural dependency. In the Postcolonial epoch, they rely on external funding and administrative help to keep their doors open. In Nigeria, museums often rely on foreign experts for management, display design, and conservation, leading to a dominance of foreign knowledge to the exclusion of local perspectives.

However, in addition to the museum displays and labels of exhibitions that tend to reconstitute these dependencies by anecdotes African cultures, like the Igbo, in language associated with colonial power relations. Most museum representations of Igbo objects, for example, are centered on their findings by explorers, rather than on the local meanings of the objects. These anecdotes of the events are of the confirmation of the argument that it is only within their traditions that the cultural value of such objects is legitimized, and note the persistence of African cultures needing explanation and legitimation by outside experts.

Textual and discourse analysis is certainly one of the most important approaches utilized within the analysis of portraying depen-

gency structures via museums. Through interpreting of museum texts, labels exhibition and museum discourses, one is able to disentangle the intangible ways in which power relations and colonial histories that are interwoven within the cultural center. In the Igbo heritage conditions, textual interpretation or consumption means that artifacts framing is done with colonial understanding in mind with little consideration for local settings within which such artifacts were originally developed or used.

Using the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it is observed on how words are produced, conserved, consumed or used to make colonial hegemony legitimate and tangible external cultural dominance. For example, Igbo objects may be framed in explanation using words that talk to them as primitive or unusual in terms using words that denote them as the subject of concern rather than being agents of change within the progress of change in culture. It is a language that is brought to justify the power structures which continue to be the outer histories and cultures from other self-knowledge.

Art museums and galleries have been taking steps toward preserving Nigeria's native cultural, social, and political heritage. They also make an important contribution to cultural education, as discussed by Adie and Echeng [Adie, Echeng, 2024]⁴. However, the authors further describe glaring drawbacks such as underfunding and poor infrastructure as constraints to effective heritage management. Their findings establish that although museums greatly contribute to ensuring cultural continuity, they face many institutional constraints. Interviews with administrators and tourists at the Lagos Na-

tional Museum⁵ confirm that despite having the potential for large-scale cultural tourism, issues that museums face include insufficient funding, inadequate qualified staff and low visibility [Ibukun, Olumuyiwa, Ibidapo 2024]. This suggests that the government should give greater priority to museum funding, invest in developing human resources, and make greater efforts to educate the public about museum resources. These are important if the museum is to be able to play its role in attracting tourists and preserving the national cultural heritage. Among new initiatives are a collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum of Art for organizing and digitizing the National Commission for Museums and Monuments' (NCMM) records [Metropolitan Museum of Art 2023]⁶. Additionally, the NCMM documents the progress of Nigeria's museums, reporting on efforts towards improving histories of museums⁷, enhancing infrastructure, and strengthening the role of native people in the preservation of heritage [NCMM 2023]. In 2018, the Central Bank of Nigeria pointed out that the NCMM had increased its collection by acquiring 18 new artifacts, bringing the total collection to 1,926 pieces⁸. This demonstrates the commitment of the commission to conserving and storing Nigeria's heritage [Central Bank of Nigeria 2018]. The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) launched the "RE-ORG Nigeria" project to develop a method for the reorganizing and storage of Nigerian museum collections, a method that has also been applied in 171 museums in 42 other countries [ICCROM 2017]. In spite of such initiatives, there remain challenges to be overcome [Okonkwo 2016].

⁴ Through interviews with the museum staff and artists, Adie and Echeng examine the important role of art museums and galleries in preserving Nigeria's social, cultural and administrative heritage. The museum as an institution contributes not only to preserving the cultural artifacts but also to educating the public.

⁵ URL: <https://journals.jozacpublishers.com/index.php/asshj/article/view/793> (access date: 20.02.2025).

⁶ URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/press-releases/ncmm-project-announcement-2023-news> (access date: 20.02.2025).

⁷ URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/ru/press-releases/ncmm-project-announcement-2023-news> (access date: 20.02.2025).

⁸ URL: <https://www.cbn.gov.ng/out/2019/ccd/2018%20cod%20annual%20report.pdf> (access date: 20.02.2025).

APPLYING CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TO MUSEUM NARRATIVES

The goal of using CDA is to analyze the way museum language in exhibitions forms social realities and enacts power relations. Discourse analysis of museum texts-labels and panels-reveals the ideology and presumptions employed to produce knowledge about history, culture, and identity. Objects of particular attention here include: 1) *Colonial Stereotypes* and the use of such terms as primitive, tribal, and traditional. These convey the notion that cultures in Africa, including Igbo culture, are underdeveloped and defined against Western ideas of modernity and progress. 2) *Discoveries of Stories*: Such interpretations can diminish their cultural value by separating them from their native cultures and defining them according to colonial narratives. For example, display of Igbo artifacts at a museum may imply that their real value only became visible with the help of Western collectors or archaeologists; the meaning of the objects for Igbo society is ignored. 3) *Narrative Framing: The Cultural Value of Art Objects*: Does an exhibit describe the cultural value of objects within native society or present them as museum art objects? It is essential to understand the communicative context used in museum texts [Ravelli 2006]. Museums tend to display native artifacts as art objects and not emphasize their social and cultural roles. In the case of the Igbo people, for example, they relate to religious rituals, politics, and social institutions. Displaying them simply as beautiful objects can miss or misinterpret their meaning and symbolism. 4) *Colonial Histories*: Museum labels significantly influence people's understanding of history, especially in colonial era acquisitions [Van Beurden 2022]. Museums often use displays to reflect institutional ideology rather than focusing on the historical facts of artifact acquisition. This is particularly relevant to artifacts in Nigeria, most of which were looted during the colonial era. Through careful examination of exhibition labels and consideration of what is included and what excluded (e.g., the history of acquisition), one may better understand how and by whom "cultural heritage" is defined. His-

tories like those concerning looted objects may be presented in such a way that only a sanitized record remains, while the exploitative acquisition of these objects is ignored.

Applying CDA to Nigeria's museum narratives may thus reveal how knowledge is framed and constructed and how framing and language are used to construct social realities. It may produce an increased awareness of power relations involved in portraying cultural history and objects. At the same time, Dependency Theory can clarify Nigeria's structural inequalities and the external forces that shape Nigeria's museums. As noted, the theory examines the historical dependencies of pre- and post-colonial countries on powerful external powers, and the forces that keep those dependencies active. Applied to museum labels, it may draw our attention to the following issues:

Dependence on Funding and Institutional Weakness. This points to underfunding as the primary limitation on Nigerian museums. Dependence Theory focuses on the fact that the autonomy of developing nations is weakened by financial dependence on external powers. Nigerian museums turn to external relationships (e.g., the Metropolitan Museum of Art digitization program) because they lack internal funding.

Resource Constraints: Insufficient infrastructure and inefficient museum management imply that Third World countries are weak because they remain economically dependent on foreign institutions, thus hindering them from building self-sufficient cultural policies.

Neo-Colonial Influence on Museum Practice; Foreign Collaborations. Although such co-operative projects as ICCROM's "RE-ORG Nigeria" support museum activities, they foster a reliance on external institutions. Dependency Theory maintains that this kind of undertaking tends to strengthen Nigeria's Western cultural reliance because they shape how its heritage is preserved and exhibited.

Narrative control: Foreign institutions thus acquire a degree of control over the narrative of Nigerian art.

The Marginalization of Culture and Lack of Public Input; Lack of Local Involvement: [Ibu-

kun, Olumuyiwa, Ibidapo 2024; Okonkwo 2016]⁹ note that there is a significant lack of public participation in Nigerian museums¹⁰. Dependency Theory proponents attribute this to the fact that cultural centers are planned to be useful to foreigners but not to natives.

The Museum and Western Standards: Nigerian museums should adhere to common standards, adapting their methods to local resources. Reliance on external influences can sideline local perspectives.

Structural Shift and the Path to Cultural Independence; Local Infrastructure Investment: As Dependency Theory suggests, being less dependent on external parties leads to having more local institutions. More government funding for cultural centres and education would reduce countries' reliance on others for money.

Decolonization of Museum Narratives: Replacing museum narratives based on outsiders' exploration and objectification with accurate local interpretation aligns with Dependency Theory's call to restore cultural autonomy.

African artifacts labeled as high art in big city museums, while in local museums they are displayed as remains of the past, is a reflection of such dependency

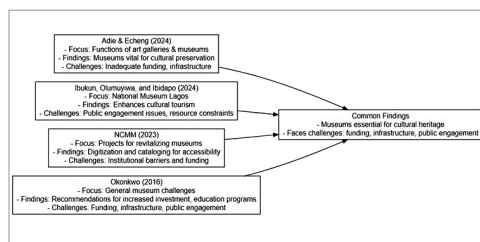


Fig. 4. Comparative Analysis of Studies

Рис. 4. Сравнительный анализ исследований

THE DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: A NARRATIVE APPROACH

Comparison of Igbo artifacts in Nigeria and British museums demonstrates how under-

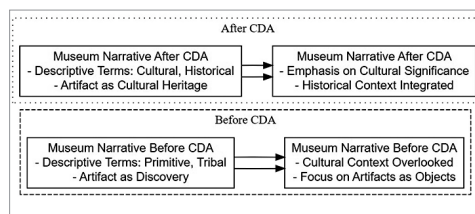


Fig. 5. Critical Discourse Analysis

Рис. 5. Критический дискурс-анализ

standing of the people and their culture is constructed through practices of display. The Igbo exhibit in the National Museum in Lagos frames them as primitive, thus supporting the colonialist narrative and disregarding modern Igbo identity. The British Museum exhibits the very same objects as “Masterpieces of African Art,” and includes them in their narrative of world art history. Such differences have made Nigerian museums reconsider their practices so that they can better show and celebrate the cultural aspects of their collections. The way exhibitions are arranged and the language used in explanatory labels limits the people's understanding and by default, conserves power relations from the colonial past.

By revisiting spatial dynamics, representation, and exhibition methodologies, Nigerian museums have the potential to challenge colonial legacies and foster self-determined cultural identities. A strategic approach involving systematic adjustments and critical reassessment of how artifacts are contextualized as cultural assets within the museum setting is essential for positioning museums as vital cultural institutions.

BREAKING THE CYCLE: TOWARDS DECOLONIZATION

Nigerian museums lack outreach and local or native input. In the absence of participation by indigenous peoples in telling their own story, museum records become a representation of other viewpoints rather than indigenous voices. As the number of Nigerian mu-

⁹ The authors describe cultural tourism in Lagos state while highlighting the lack of local involvement. The prospects for, and challenges to this tourism is discussed in [Ibukun, Olumuyiwa, Ibidapo 2016, 19–39].

¹⁰ Similarly, Okonkwo examines the challenges of museum education in Nigeria, describing the lack of people's engagement and its impact on the portrayal of culture.

seums increases, this problem remains but the possibility of transformation exists. Some procedures that are needed include:

Rewriting Exhibition Labels and Descriptions using culturally sensitive language that addresses indigenous awareness and not employing colonial explanations which contemporary museums often fall back on.

Local Funding — Reducing reliance on outside assistance and encouraging native spending on museum activities.

Repatriation Schemes — Actions for the restitution of looted artifacts so that they may be exhibited in their native land.

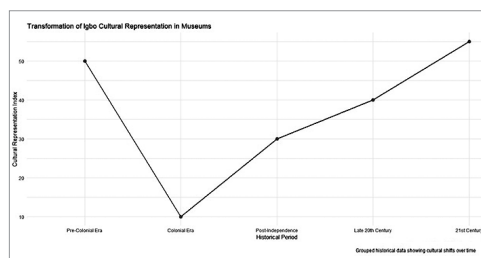


Fig. 6. The diagram shows the process of transformation of Nigerian museums' cultural representation

Рис. 6. На диаграмме показан процесс трансформации представления культур в нигерийских музеях

Nigerian museums continue to manifest language, framing, and cultural issues that reflect and induce cultural dependency. Continued dependence on external approval and financial support as described in Dependency Theory demonstrate that colonial relations of power are deeply rooted. But through retelling the past, incorporating native voices and reclaiming the ability to interpret the national heritage, Nigerian museums are able to become more independent and offer genuine articulations of the Igbo people's cultural past.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined Nigerian museums, and especially the display of Igbo cultural objects, and the issues encountered in conserving and showcasing them. From the application of Dependency Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it is clear that the discourse and framing used in museum

texts and explanatory labels continue to echo a colonial mindset, which is an obstacle to recognizing and exploring the Igbo people's authentic heritage. Nigerian museums continue to rely on external resources, financial and intellectual, which determines their lack of independence.

With the resolution of funding issues, native voices' involvement, and the connected cultural issues clarified, Nigerian museums would be in a better position to offer culturally sensitive and inclusive exhibitions. Of course, collaboration with foreign institutions offers much-needed financial and technical assistance, but it should be used to build native capabilities and independent consciousness in place of dependence. We put forward the following recommendations:

1) *Decolonize Museum Narratives*: Museums need to consciously rephrase exhibit labels to stop using colonial expressions such as primitive or tribal and to replace them with culturally informed language that speaks to the daily lives of the Igbo and other Nigerians. It is crucial to advocate for the importance of the indigenous cultural heritage. Curators can achieve this with the help of local artists, elders, and native inhabitants to confirm that the narratives presented reflect indigenous awareness.

2) Museums should directly *integrate indigenous knowledge and cultural practices* in their exhibitions so that they convey and properly interpret the richness of local history and traditions — and not repeat the teaching of external voices, whether foreign or Neo-colonial, who have little or no knowledge about the Igbo people's cultural life.

3) Nigerian museums can devise *heritage tourism activities* that enable visitors to engage with the cultural, historical, and social value of artifacts in an experiential and exceptional way.

4) Developing *cultural exchange programs among museums in Nigeria and their international counterparts* can lead to mutual understanding, sharing of best practices, and the strengthening of local museum networks.

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Деколонизация культурного наследия народа игбо в Нигерии: критический анализ роли музеев в сохранении и распространении культурного наследия африканской нации

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Аннотация. Данное исследование рассматривает роль музеев в сохранении и популяризации культурного наследия народа игбо в Нигерии, уделяя особое внимание процессу деколонизации. Опираясь на Теорию зависимости (включая такие ключевые элементы, как модель «Центр — Периферия», теорию неравноценного обмена и концепцию «развития отсталости»), в работе предлагается глубокий анализ развития страны в контексте положения народа игбо. В качестве методологической основы применяется критический дискурс-анализ (CDA). Исследование раскрывает, как музейные практики и репрезентация культуры игбо до сих пор формируются колониальным наследием. Через анализ музейных текстов, описательных нарративов и экспозиционных подходов изучается влияние колониальных властных отношений на подачу исторического и культурного материала.

Ключевые слова: музеи, наследие игбо, CDA, теория зависимости.

КРАТКОЕ СОДЕРЖАНИЕ

В статье исследуется, как нигерийские музеи сохраняют и представляют богатое наследие народа игбо, и рассматривается вопрос, действительно ли это пространство служит тому, что оно изображает. В настоящее время тень колониализма все еще ощущается в том, как демонстрируется история и традиции игбо. Предпочтение отдается внешним точкам зрения, а не собственной культурной практике народа игбо.

Чтобы разобраться в этом, автор использует теорию зависимости, которая помогает выявить, как дисбаланс сил колониальной эпохи до сих пор формирует культурное представление. Когда музеи отдают предпочтение внешним интерпретациям, а не взглядам игбо, повторяются старые модели неравенства. Также используется критический дискурс-анализ (метод ана-

лиза языка и повествования), чтобы показать, как музейные экспозиции — через слова, изображения и даже организацию выставок — могут незаметно укреплять колониальные способы восприятия.

В музеях деколонизации наблюдаются постепенные изменения: как за счет добавления большего количества экспонатов, посвященных игбо, так и за счет фундаментального пересмотра того, как создаются выставки. Этот сдвиг не только делает выставки более точными, но и позволит народу игбо вернуть себе право на собственное повествование. Однако это бросает вызов музеям: нужно выйти за рамки роли «витрин прошлого» и стать живыми пространствами, где культуры существуют на собственных условиях. Посыл ясен: истинное сохранение и популяризация начинаются с того, чтобы услышать людей, чье наследие представляется.

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