



Understanding Impact of Terrorism on Heritage Site: A Case Study of *Boko Haram* Insurgency in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism is one of the devastating activities around the world today that brought about a setback to sustainable development, especially in the areas of heritage sites and monuments across the globe. Nigeria is a clear example where *Boko Haram* insurgency inflicted havoc against the heritage site of the people. Heritage sites played a significant role in human endeavors, such as job opportunities, social tourism, entertainment, sustainable environment, revenue generation, education, research, and many more. Terrorism has impacted negatively on the heritage sites that caused considerable damage to the socio-cultural and economic livelihood of the communities. In early 2014 precisely, the terrorist attacked indigenous communities and the heritage sites of Nigeria. World heritage sites and other heritages are excessively affected. This heritage site attracted tourists, researchers, excursionists, and other related partners. *Boko Haram* insurgents destroyed the livelihood of the people, and many people were forcefully displaced. The objectives of the paper are to examine the brief history of the sites and identify the impacts of the *Boko Haram* insurgency on heritage sites. This paper employed content and field research in collecting data. The information collected is presented and analyzed accordingly. The study revealed that the attack caused severe destruction on the heritage sites; many people were killed and displaced, valuable cultural properties were looted, and economic hardship was witnessed. The paper intends to draw the attention of stakeholders toward this vital matter and recommends that cultural policy be revisited in the context of safeguarding heritage sites and prevention of looting of cultural properties during times of crisis.

Keywords: *Boko Haram; Destruction; Heritage Site; Insurgency; Nigeria Cultural Property*

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INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a calculated sequence of violence against common people or government machinery which bring a series of setback to human development. It is a human set of actions that affects the community cultural blueprint that is witnessed in many parts of the world. Terrorist organizations have been destroying cultural heritage sites in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East in recent times; even artefacts were not left out. Many art collections with outstanding universal value were being looted and sold out to fund their campaign against what they believe is wrong. For instance, in 2012 Ansar Deen along with its partner Islamist Movement for Oneness and *Jihad* destroyed one of the oldest monuments in Timbuktu in the republic of Mali (UNESCO, 2015). The historical statue known as the Buddhas of Bamiyan was bombed by the Taliban in Afghanistan, which drew international attention. In Syria and Iraq, ISIS destroyed most of the valuable heritage in the areas under their control like the Lion of Al-Alat, the temple of Bel, the statue of Al-Mansur, and the Al-Askare mosque. In Pakistan, Jainabad Buddha's face and several other sites have been targeted by the Taliban (Timothy & Daher, 2009). In 2015, ISIL deliberately devastated the *Sufi* spiritual centre located near Tripoli in Libya. The case of Nigeria is a very similar scenario. The country has been suffering from bombardment, looting, highjack, and destruction of life and properties by *Boko Haram* insurgency, one of the terrorist organizations that operate within Northeast Nigeria. The sect not only killed and displaced people in the name of religious proclamation, but they have impacted negatively on heritage sites and caused considerable damage to the socio-cultural and economic livelihood of the people. One of the renowned scholar Folorunso C.A (2021) reports that the conflict in west Africa and religion inclination has destroying cultural sites. It is challenging to secure and protect relics, monuments, manuscripts, temples, or shrines, even ancient communities in times of crisis in lingering states.

Nigeria is among the seven leading population countries and one of the most populated black nations around the world that encountered considerable challenges in terms of socio-cultural, economic, and security of life and properties. The current population of Nigeria is 208,160, 493 as of Thursday, November 26, 2020, based on the worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data 2020. Northern Nigeria entirely is about ninety million (90,000,000), according to census statistics projected by Ibukun Italoye on October 4, 2019 (Ibukun, 2019). Northeast Nigeria, in particular, is the epicentre of *Boko Haram* insurgency; it occupies slightly less than one-third of Nigeria's

total area and has a projected population for 2011 of 23,558,674 (Wikivoyage, 2022). The inhabitants are mainly *Fulani* and *Kanuri* people with more minority ethnic groups. The entire geopolitical zone was affected by the activities of the insurgency. The country has over 250 ethnic groups and about 500 different languages spoken group. The country is divided into North and South with diverse socio-cultural activities (Akwanya, 2014). The attack on heritage sites is a severe crime to erase the history of over 250 ethnic groups in the country. The heritage sites contributed amicably to the socioeconomic and cultural activities of the country.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the paper are to:

1. examine a brief history of the Heritage Sites
2. identify the impact of *Boko Haram* insurgency
3. elaborate the challenges of the sites

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper adopted an instrumental theory of terrorism which provides a details case of terrorism that occurred in Nigeria. The research further explores and digests into what, how, and why insurgents carried illegal arms against the state and continue to cause havoc on the people's cultural heritage. Crenshaw (1985) pointed out that terrorism is a deliberate action by the political actors to achieve their political gain through organizational setup; as a unit, they act to actualize collective values, which involve radical changes in the social conditions of the people. Indeed, terrorism is coined as a response to motivations mainly concerned government agents. Crenshaw's theory of terrorism emphasizes that violence is deliberately supported by some external body to achieve their political objectives. However, *Boko Haram*, a terrorist organization that is linked with some political motivation, has succeeded in destroying lives and properties worth millions of dollars in the country. Experts in the field of terrorism observed that terrorism is an intentional use of or threat of violence against innocent people in order to ascertain a political mission unknown to many perpetrators. This agenda is a systematic effort to employ the use of brutal force for mission accomplishment. In this case, terrorists target places of importance that draw public attention and other international organization to address their immediate needs through diplomatic means or force. Kukawa, the ancient city of Borno, Dikwa and Rabeh's Fort, is one among the historical sites with huge socioeconomic potential that attracts the terrorist to attack the site in order to draw public attention. In other words, the heritage sites are against their political and religion believe that deserves to be destroyed. No matter the case, *Boko Haram* insurgents committed cultural homicide.

The Case Study Concerning the Concept of Heritage Site

Understanding the devastating impact of terrorism on heritage sites is essential to recall the concept of heritage. McCarthy et al., (2013), defined heritage as a legacy from the past, where we live within the present, and what we pass on to future generations to learn from, to marvel at, and enjoy. Similar to this above definition inscribed by SAHO (2011), further stated that the term heritage site broadly refers to the natural and cultural society such as masterpiece of human creativity and living experiences, the design of landscape, an ancient settlement, historic places, and built ecosystems, biodiversity, and group of buildings. While UNESCO, in World Heritage Convention (1972), came up with the definition of heritage as something which is of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art, or science, that contains unique architectural design, works of monumental sculpture, ancient settlement and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings, and combinations of features. UNESCO (1989) further added that heritage is a storehouse of human experience that contains a valuable message for human development.

In 2003, UNESCO World Convention stated that heritage sites reflect the life of the community, its history, and its preservation which helps to rebuild broken communities, re-establish their identities, and link their past with the present and future. Hermann (1989) has suggested that an awareness of history relates to heritage and architectural monuments and that such monuments constitute essential landmarks in the transmission of historical knowledge, understanding, and appreciation. There is no identity without memory, as the lyrics of a Catalan song put it "those who lose their origins, lose their identity too (Ballart, 1997). Heritage sites encompass a tangible and intangible culture of people and their natural environment that determines the history and civilization of any given human existence. It is an ancient historical landscape that attracts tourists and other visitors from different cultural backgrounds to learn from. Rabeh's Palace and other heritage sites in the region have significant features attributed to the United Nations Economic Scientific and Cultural Organization. These are cultural identities, legacies that belong to local communities, memory, and symbol of community identification. These sites became a target of *Jihadist* insurgents as they aimed to draw attention and create common beliefs. In another way, *Jihadists* believed that monuments, statues, tombs, and other heritage sites were against their teaching and practice and were worthy of destruction. Nigerian Forces successfully pushed back the *Boko Haram* insurgents, and reclaimed communities were considered the liberation of "traditional settlement".

Brief History and Background of the Site

Rabeh's Fort is one of the historical and archaeological sites located in Dikwa local government of Borno state, Nigeria, rebuilt by Rabeh ibn Fadhallah, a Sudanese army and slave trader who found himself in the region to facilitate his slave business. According to oral tradition Rabeh's Palace, also known as Rabeh's Fort, is a sieged Palace of Dikwama that was dethroned and forced to migrate to a nearby community called Gajibo by the Rabeh ibn Fadhallah forces. Rabeh took over the mantle of leadership and continued with the slave trade until European emerged. British abolished the slave trade in 1807, but Rabeh ibn Fadhallah insisted on slave business despite the amendment of the slave trade act. Rabeh's ibn Fadhallah rebuilt the fortified Palace in 1893 as a residential administration headquarters and slave trade centre (Sadiq, 2019). While in the 19th century, he was discovered by French colonial armies of the illegitimate slave trade, and in the process, he was killed during the military confrontations.

Dikwa is an ancient community that existed for several years situated in the Northeast Maiduguri. Furthermore, Dikwa is about 90km away from the capital city of Maiduguri, Borno State. However, this ancient settlement has been known for its spectacular cultural practices for a very long time. Rabeh's Palace is one of the national monuments declared by the Department of Antiquities in 1959, presently National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) (Salkida, 2015). The sites consist of exceptional architecture, notably paved way, the spiritual content of the site, sacred belief, mud walls, timber roof, mud bricks, and unique buildings that served as security, socio-cultural identity, and economic vitality of the people. Rabeh's Palace is of considerable significance that is regarded as a state of economic prosperity, cultural presentation, and treasures of historical value.

Another important heritage site is the Sukur hilltop settlement. In 1999, the 23rd session of the world heritage committee in Marrakesh, Morocco inscribed the Sukur community into the world heritage list by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. The Sukur community is one of Nigeria's first world heritage sites that consists of cultural and natural heritage. The site is the most significant asset and living treasure of the people. The monuments in the region are under the supervision and protection of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM, Nigeria).

Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency

The impact of *Boko Haram* Insurgency was discussed by different scholars from different perspectives, considering the insurgents' activities that declined the region's cultural entertainment and education industries. The massive destruction of cultural centres has drawn the attention of local and international cultural organizations. *Boko Haram* has a similar ideology to other *Jihadist* organizations such as Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Al-Shabab, and Islam State (ISIS). Cole B. (2015) opines that ISIS has claimed a caliphate to rule all Muslims from the territory it holds in both Syria, Iraq and other parts of the world. The rebels had been secretly operating in the Northeast, Nigeria since before July 2009 incident. They attacked important areas with substantial armed force from different directions; they were equipped with sophisticated weapons and destroyed many towns and cities with rocket launchers, and communities became under their control. Though, the activities of militia and fundamentalists got radicalized and became stronger in the late 20th century around the globe (United Nations, 1994). Looking at the geopolitical nature of Nigeria, its diverse ethnoreligious composition that has a positive impact on national development. The sect killed people, burnt houses, looted materials to fund their campaign, and kidnapped people for ransom in the country. The activities of the sect completely discouraged people from visiting the monument sites, and some of the inhabitants were forcefully dislocated.

Destruction of Museum and Artefacts

Tangible heritage has a significant impact on nation-building before the emergence of the insurgents. The heritage sites have archaeological deposits, and the government had to establish a museum to exhibit material culture that was discovered from excavation. The site became a centre for cultural attraction, but later on, the extremists, whose beliefs and teaching are different, demolished the building and some of the Museum collections were carted away. Some analysts further considered destruction great violence against the nation's cultural properties. Mamman (2020) affirms that Boko Haram insurgents targeted many places in Nigeria, including Museums, churches, mosques, schools, police stations, theatre houses, private and public facilities, and historical structures in various locations. Supporting the claim that insurgents are destructive organizations ever, Abara (2015) further presented a paper on the challenges of insurgency that are faced during the safeguarding of antiquities, historical materials, contemporary arts, galleries, museums, archives, famous monuments, and world heritage sites. The heritage properties are the most common target during a time of conflict and war. During their attack, *Boko Haram* carried away collections while other cultural materials were burnt down completely.

The insurgents ransacked museum collections inside the historic buildings. The sites were wrongfully emptied while other artefacts were burnt in front of the people, and they warned them not to ever come near the area. The sect was stripped of anything of value, including the looting of many items. For instance, objects and other valuable materials left behind during the war of liberation by the French and English, Rabeh ibn Fadhallah's decorative collections, and old traditional items of kings and queens. The willful wanton and malicious destruction of the properties were being witnessed despite United Nations Security Council imposed on 193 member states to take a measure to prevent illegal

vandalism, looting, and demolition of heritage sites across the globe (UNESCO, 1954). Despite international laws on the illegal destruction of heritage sites. The insurgents deliberately carried out such unlawful acts to achieve their objectives. According to a local community report, the insurgents sold out stealing materials in order to get money to support their campaign against the people.

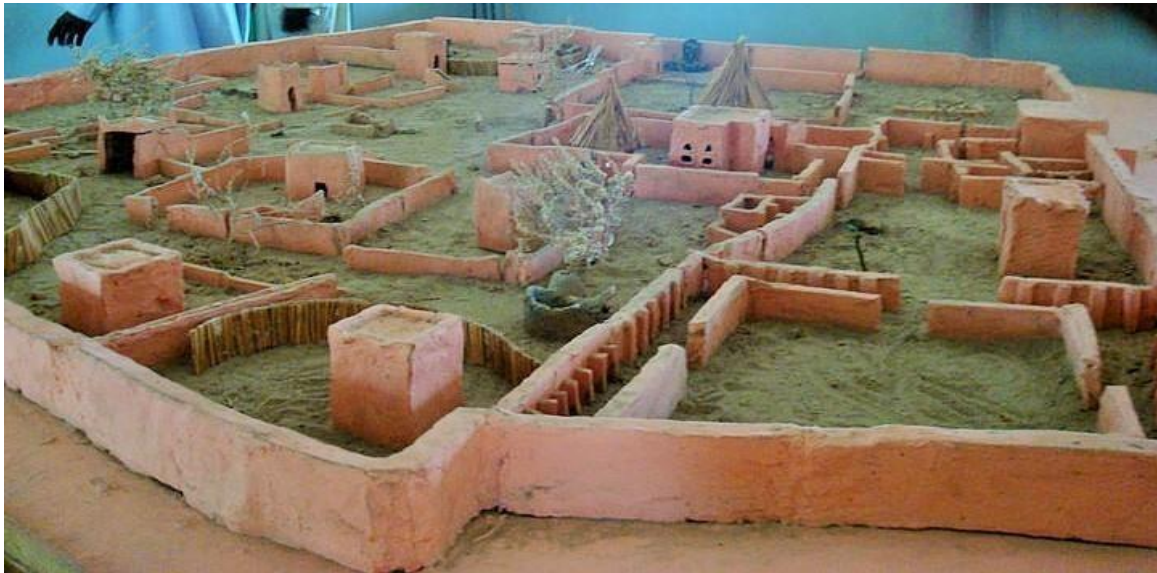


Figure 1: Replica Plan of Rabeh's Palace: the replica plan of the site is displayed in the National Museum, Nigeria. It was replicated to exhibit for the people to see in the Museum, especially for those who cannot visit the site (photo credit: Museum).

Cultural Property and Identity on stake

The Palace contains various sections such as Rabeh's main Palace, his wives, his concubines, children, quarter guard, courtyard, prayer room, assembly ground, security tower, and tollgates all built and surrounded in the mud. Sadiq (2019) posits that the traditional method of architecture was traced back to the Sudan method of building one of the most common and captivating mud buildings in sub-Saharan Africa. During the reign of Rabeh, precautionary measures are put in place to impend danger against him. According to oral tradition, Rabeh has more than two hundred guards within the Palace to guard him and his immediate family; recently, the site has remained the target of insurgents. The first attack launched destroyed part of the parameter wall, which resulted in the deterioration of the mud wall and the building structure. The sect left some of the structures untouched; however, most of the buildings were in deplorable condition. A government delegation visited the heritage site after the attack. According to the report, no tangible or valuable items except the dilapidated structure are left behind. The Bombs and massive destructions caught the attention of the national community, but this couldn't deter them from their ongoing campaign against the state. Unfortunately, no measure(s) is taken to safeguard cultural properties in times of crisis.



Figure 2: Main Building: during the visit by the government delegation (credit photo: Borno State Government Press)



Figure 3: Main Entrance of the Palace: Tourists entering the Palace before the advent of Boko Haram Insurgency (photo credit: Daniel)



Figure 4: Main Entrance of the Palace: The main entrance of Rabeh's Palace after the destructive attack by the Boko Haram insurgents (photo credit: Sadiq)

Migration Challenges

Migration of local communities, in general, is one of the most challenging parts that contributed to the total decay of the community settlement. The fundamentalists and their ideology brought a setback to the development of these communities that were affected by massive displacement and a forceful influx of people to safer areas. People left their ancestral homes for peaceful places for shelter, security, and food to survive, and they abandoned their historical sites that impacted their daily lives due to excessive hardship and threat. Many people also die on the road due to hostilities, malnutrition, and other dire conditions. Migration that has never been witnessed in the history of the region has been recorded, though many humanitarian organizations came to their aid, helping the most vulnerable people. Despite operational, security, and financial challenges, they are able to manage the migrants to some extent. People of the community, aggravated assault by *Boko Haram* insurgency, had no choice but to migrate to the capital city of Maiduguri and other peaceful areas. During the visit, few people remained and expressed their heartfelt emotions over the unfortunate incident infringing on their living rights. It is obvious that relevant peace has been witnessed for the past few years, but the people are scared to return to their ancestral land.



Figure 5: Dilapidated Part of the Building; This is one of Rabeh ibn Fadhallah's quarter guards located within the parameter wall (photo credit: Sadiq)



Figure 6: Community destroyed: These are some of the houses that Boko Haram has burned, and people are stranded and homeless in the community during the visit (photo credit: Sadiq)

Structural Challenges

Boko Haram first target was the building site by the rocket launcher and then moved to the residential areas with various gun trucks shooting drastically at the people. They succeeded in capturing the entire Dikwa community. The Shehu (king) of Dikwa, the traditional authority and custodian of the people's culture and tradition, narrowly escaped the attack, but his Palace nearly burnt down. The insurgents gathered people in one place and warned them not to be involved in anything that contradicted their teaching and practice, including keeping objects, monuments, festivals, music and dance, and other cultural activities. Women are restricted in exposing their bodies, and western education is forbidden; anybody found guilty of such would face severe punishment.

The mayhem of the sect affected jobs, research, excursion, and infrastructural development in the areas. Today, tourists no longer visit the site because of the fear of being attacked by armed militia. The site was devastated, the

town was disastrous, and the entire community looked scanty. The Dikwa community deserted, disrupted, and disordered leaving the people in dismay at the sudden situation. The community members and several cultural organizations tried to re-establish the cultural identity and sustain places of memory associated with history. Still, the cruelty of the insurgents aggravated the assault on them. This attack on cultural properties left a deeper impact on the communities associated with historic monuments and heritage sites. It alters people's cultural identity and their relationship with the traditions and creates a widening gap between generations by producing new practices and belief systems.



Figure 7: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (photo credit: Borno State Government Press)

The image of an internally displaced persons in Dikwa town affected by the atrocity of *Boko Haram*. The people line up to receive a gesture from one of the non-governmental organizations. The queue was formed differently from the female counterpart due to the socio-cultural nature of the community. The organization, in collaboration with government agencies, provides a meal ticket to the people before the food distribution takes place. According to the government report, government and non-governmental organizations render humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people in the community. The organizations that are responsible for humanitarian services are World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, Action Against Hunger, International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), Doctors Without Borders/Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF), International Rescue Committee, World Food Program, Care International, World Vision International, Save the Children, USAID, Refugees International, Islamic Relief World Wide, Catholic Relief Services, People in Need and other local NGOs.

The mud building was affected severely due to the threat of *Boko Haram* sect. The monument is a legacy from the past and present to the next, but the insurgents destroyed part of the building that stood for several decades without alteration. Comprehensive reports of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (2002) reported that more than nine (9) heritage sites in Northeast Nigeria including Rabeh's Palace in Dikwa Local Government Area of Borno State were placed on the national monument list of the country. Recently two sites have been declared as "No-Go-Area" by the government due to threats impinging on them. Pérouse de Montclos (2014) further reiterated that the primary goal of any insurgent group is to disrupt and destroy the socio-cultural and economic incentives of the people. Indeed, *Boko Haram* in Nigeria has retarded the diplomatic, political, social, and economic development of the Northeast States.



Figure 8: Condition of the Monument after the attack (photo credit: Sadiq)



Figure 9: Outer image of the main Palace of Rabeh ibn Fadhallah before the attack (photo credit: Daniel)



Figure 10: Outer View of the Palace site after the attack by the insurgents (photo credit: Chiroma)



Figure 11: Total collapsed: looking at the structure and collapsed roof of the Palace exposed the dilapidated building into other elements of destruction (photo credit: Sadiq)

The main Palace is a mud-story building with one room upstairs and two big rooms down the floor. The insurgents blew up the Palace with an armored tank that manifested a huge crack in the inner walls, holes, and a total collapse of some parts. The extreme vandalism of the historical monument that serves as a memorial place became devastating and lost the aesthetic presentation of the design and pigment.

Boko Haram insurgency has inflicted havoc on the social lives of Nigerians, thus making life very difficult. The brutal attacks on heritage sites have exposed people to a pressurized state of fear. The fear of physical assault by the insurgents is directly connected to the threat of terror and the presence of terrorist incitement in the region. Nigerians have experienced various incidences of death threats, but the government's reaction to violent conflict in the country is far from reality. It also induces general fear of attack among the populace by the harsh and unfriendly military response in the occupation of the conflict zone, which at times leads to the perpetuation of bribery and corruption, restriction of people's rights and liberty, false accusations, and illegal arrests. Furthermore, the insurgency has aggravated the social relationship between various regional cultural and religious groups. Forceful imposition of ideas and ideology led them to commit "cultural genocide" on the people's traditions. Over the years, several activities have been going on in the heritage site; that is why arrangements have been made to protect the site by the relevant authorities. Museum curators and tour guides are all on the ground to educate people on the holistic history and importance of the site to national development. It has become a more humanistic value to children, young and aged people so that they spared the devil of war, environmental degradation, and loss of human dignity and history.



Figure 12: Nigerian Army remount Nigerian Flag: This is recaptured town of Dikwa community by the Nigerian Army in late 2015 when a heavy exchange of fire took place between the two forces. (photo credit: Military Archive)

CONCLUSION

Terrorism is a global phenomenon that hampered the sustainable development of human endeavors. Since Nigeria's independence, there has been unrest and conflicts of a different kind in the country, but heritage sites were not altered like that of *Boko Haram*. The sites were in good shape until the recent advent of *Boko Haram* activities which directly affected the monuments and the communities where the sites were located. The actions of *Boko Haram* yielded negative results on the people's lives and cultural properties. Massive displacement, discouragement of tourism, research and studies, and the decay of societal and cultural values have occurred in the past few years. According to Borno State Government Population Statistic (2006) Dikwa population was about one hundred and forty-seven thousand six hundred and seventy-nine thousand five hundred and eight (147,679,508), but the people living in the community presently less than one hundred thousand (100,000) due to the substantial threat of the insurgents in the area. Indeed, effort has been made by the government and other non-governmental organizations to subdue the situation. Some people returned to reunite with their families after partial peace had returned to the community. Military personnel was deployed to crush lingering insurgents in the region, but the Rabebs Palace is still deteriorating and bound to collapse. The town is presently under the control of Nigerian forces, but the *Boko Haram* menace is still lingering in few kilometers away from the site. The remaining people in the town no longer go about

their normal businesses such as farming, fishing, fire wooding, transporting, handcrafting and other ceremonies, events, and festivals within the historical site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommended that the destroyed artefacts should be reproduced and set up a new museum, reintegrating people back into their communities. The dilapidated Palace should be restored by engaging local professionals. Authorities should implement a cultural policy to protect and safeguard monuments and revisit some of the existing cultural policies to upgrade the sites. Awareness should be created through workshops, seminars, and symposiums on the significance of the heritage sites that would attract more tourists in future endeavors. Relevant authorities should provide enough security networks to curtail security challenges and encourage and protect tourists, researchers, and other visitors. Stakeholders need to know that memorial places like Rabeh's Palace have a crucial role in the economy, education, and uniting people of different tribes, especially countries of 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages spoken across Nigeria. National growth is mostly depending on the level of economic strength, skills, and education. Still, most importantly, the security of life and properties, which places like this, if properly explored, would contribute to sustainable development. The national heritage sites would connect to other world heritage sites to earn international recognition.

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