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## **Editorial**

Again, the new *Al-Mahram* journal is ready to be published; however, again financing the printing is still presenting a problem that we hope to overcome soonest.

This year's issues has attracted the contribution of reknown scholars from within and outside the country. It is rather unfortunate that as at the time we were about to publish this volume a sad event happened, that is the Editor-In-Chief of the journal Ms Gisela Seidensticker Brikay passed on to the great beyond on the early Sunday of 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2017. The first paragraph of this editorial was her handiwork, but ill health could not allow her to complete it. Therefore as a result of her demise, I had to complete this portion and to mention as a honour, that this volume is dedicated to her blessed memory.

## **THE TRAVAILS OF INSURGENCY ON HERITAGE SITES AND RELICS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

A. Garba, A. H. Girei & A. B. Hamid

### **Abstract**

*The whole of sub-Saharan Africa over the years have witnessed several instances of insurgency which resulted in killing, maiming, displacement and migration of the affected populace to areas where they will have solace. These displaced populations are today internationally recognized with the acronym IDPs (internally displaced persons). This paper in essence will attempt to examine on a wholistic scale the travails of insurgency in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa. The sub-Sahara is geographically defined to include “areas of Africa that lie south of Sahara desert,” and politically it consists of “African countries that are fully or partially located south of the Sahara such as Somalia, Djibouti, Comoros and Mauritania” (en.m.wikipedia.org). This paper was predicated due to the current travails the sub-Saharan Africa faces as a theatre of conflict, religious or otherwise devastating the larger portion of our local, national and global heritage enshrined in monuments, sites, manuscripts and several relics, which if not safeguarded will amount to lost of history and heritage on a world scale. These information were derived from newspaper reports, personal communications and on the site inspection.*

**Keywords:** *Travail, Insurgency, Sub-Sahara, Manuscripts, Relics Heritage*

## **Introduction**

The Sub-Saharan region had started experiencing the elements of insurgency with the wake of the West's statement; both political and economic over the longevity and dissatisfaction some of the venerated leaders of the region, such as Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya, Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt. This unfavourable climate engendered hatred and distrust that culminated into popular uprisings in some of the Arab countries leading to what is popularly referred to as the "Arabs spring". This period coincided with the economic doldrums faced by the West, its allies and some of these Arab countries with mass unemployed youth, poverty and lack of education.

The paper is thus divided into four parts all attempting to portray events that engendered the uprisings, the damage done to the patrimony and a glimpse of what obtains within the Nigerian region in an isolated area that was not prone to insurgency but faces travail of a gargantuan nature such as the cross river monolith. The last part of the paper will examine the way forward as to how to safeguard these relics and monuments from future destruction.

## **Precursors to the great debacle**

Even though the "Arab spring" sprung of within the heart of the Sahara, but it radiated down to the sub-saharan region, where it metamorphosed into series of insurgency starting from Mali in the West to the north east Part of Nigeria, transcending to

contiguous parts of Chad, and Cameroon, while the central African region witnessed a different climate of insecurity exacerbated by ethnic and religious bigotry.

The Tunisian Revolution also known as “Jasmine Revolution” was an intensive civil resistance along the major streets of Tunisia. It began on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2010 which, ousted the long time president Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011.

The demonstrations were “precipitated by high unemployment, food inflation, corruption, lack of political freedom and poor living conditions” (Wikipedia.org). It was sparked by Mohammed Bouazizi’s self-immolation on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2010. The ousting of the President laid to rest the 23 years of monarchy, ushering a thorough democratization of the country through a fair and free democratic elections. This earned the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet”, the 2015 Nobel Peace Prizes for “its decisive contribution to the building of a pluralistic democracy in Tunisia in the wake of the “Tunisian Revolution of 2011” (Wikipedia.org). The emergence of radical Islamism after the Ouster of Ben Ali in 2011 led to the return of the Nadha Party and the release of thousands of salafists from prisons who later became potential elements for propagating the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, making shariah law as the new constitution. This was escalated in September 2012 when the United States of America accused Ansar al-Shariah of attacking the American Embassy in Tunis and the looting of American



cooperative school. The explosion of the masses popularly known as the “Arab spring”, culminated in the Bush-fire theory which sparks neighbouring sovereign states in the Arab world, with each mimicking each other, leading to the collapse of their sovereignty and the proliferation of arms in the hands of notorious and radicalised groups.

The Libyan scenario was so critical, as the United States and NATO allies used air power to propel the Libyan rebels to a sweeping victory over Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, bombing government troops so that rebels could advance on cities and even the colonel himself, when he tried to flee, (Hakim, K. 2014). After the revolt, violence continued to spread, and the United States and its allies failed to restore order and to help Libyans achieve either democracy or internal security, and thus, “the Libyans have been left to wonder whether there is anyone left to broker the endless fights”. Right now two self proclaimed governments are in existence in Libya confusing the whole political scenario. The Libyan crisis led to the mass migration of weapons of destruction to neighbouring countries such as Mali, Niger, Chad, Nigeria and Cameroun. The Libyan armoury used to be one of the richest in terms of military hardware in sub-saharan Africa.

The Central African region scenario, particularly Central Afrique crisis was more of ethnic and religious bickering between the minority Muslim population and the majority Christian folks. Somalia had long been the haven of el-Shabaab – a notorious radicalised Islamic group which on

several occasions were in control of the region. Their atrocities sometimes transcend the Somali territory, to neighbouring country of Kenya, where they unleash mayhem on shopping mall, Garissa university and the civilian populations. The West African theatre is confronted with a radicalised Islamic group popularly known as the Boko-Haram, while Mali in this region was held by two rival groups who overran the country that created a vacuum left by the retreating Malian Government is called the Ansar Dine, a salafist Islamist group that wanted to impose Shari'ah law. The other rival group is the national movement for the liberation of AZAWAD (MNLA) fighting to secure a separate homeland, for the nomadic Tuareqs. With the fall of the Libyan leader many Tuareqs who fought on his side returned to Mali with their arms and triggered a military coup that ousted Mali's President Amadou Toumani Toure. They took control of Timbuktu a medieval city with legendary importance, described by Leo Africanus as the "African El-Dorado".

The background to the crisis in the sub-saharan Africa became an impetus for the destruction of local, national and global heritage reflected either in relics, monuments, manuscripts, temples and shrines etc. The series of destructions as was observed, recorded both in print media and video will be highlighted below as it affects the various scenarios in the such-Saharan region.

### **The Great Debacle in Nigeria of sites, monuments and manuscripts**

Several devastating instances occurred with the rise of the so-call Islamists radicalised groups, first in the North east region of Nigeria whose history dates back to “1982 with Maitatsine group staging a rebellion at Bulumkutu, Maiduguri against both residents of the area and the security operative” This was calmed down, even though it erupted in Kano and Yola under the leadership of one Musa Makaniki. The Boko-Haram crisis started its activities first at Kanamma in Yobe State between 2000-2003 and by the year 2003 to 2004, they relocated to Maiduguri where youths were attracted by the eloquent and outspoken preaching of Mohammed Yusuf (CTSS Report December, 2015). This group happens to be a great debacle in the history of this region, destroying monumental churches, monumental mosques, shrines, and historical edifices in the following localities in Borno.

Biu-Zur Waksha pre-colonial building was partially destroyed along with some artefacts and relics. This applies to Balbaya areas of Gulani and Gujba. There are no standing monuments in these areas for now.

#### **Kukawa**

The El-Kanemi tomb was not destroyed but the Baobab tree (*Adamsonia digitata*) from which the town derived its name, a symbolic monument was completely razed to the ground by the insurgents.

## **Ngala**

The popular El-Kanemi prayer ground, which stood at a height above the mound, was partially destroyed because of the attack by the insurgents to take control of the town. The insurgents used the prayer house and the adjoining structures to store their weapons. The military completely knocked down the house (Personal communication, 2015). This town has the permanent site of the Nigerian Arabic village (similar in status to the French village in Lagos) where students undergoing training in Arabic in our universities are expected to spend one year as part of the training. The Arabic village library where it houses some of the valuable manuscripts in the region was destroyed by the insurgents.

Both Kaga, and Konduga local government areas had their Islamiyya schools burnt to ashes. In Kukawa, Marte and Monguno towns, the Emirs Palace and the Lawan house were burnt respectively. Some Muslim and Christian clerics were either killed or abducted in Adamawa state, most particularly, the Jambutu mosque in Yola North (Jimeta) Local Government Area, it was burnt by explosives.

Similar debacles were realised in Cameroun at Talaa Sheriff, Tchad at Tumbungini and Niger at Diffa nauleya and Shettimari. It should be noted that monumental damages occurred in most palaces in the locality – where the palace is conceived as the symbol of authority. Prisons were forced open and destroyed a monumental symbol

or edifice of reform. As at the time of writing this paper, we are yet to be informed about the state of sukur (in Adamawa State) which is the Africa's first cultural landscape and Nigeria's first world Heritage. Site nothing is also known of Hong ecofact. The area is still a danger zone as insurgents crisis. Cross the areas causing mayhem to the entire populace. Various ecofact, which also forms the basis of tourism an aspect of national and global heritage, stretches from waza Game reserve in the Cameroun to the Sambisa forest becomes war theatres perpetrated by the insurgent Boko-Haram.

### **The Debacle in Mali the sites and the manuscripts**

In the year 2012 a radical Islamist rebels waged series of mayhem on Timbuktu, Mali, a city that made its prominence as a trading town in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was located at the crossroad of the trans-Saharan trade routes. The city witnessed the rise, development and decline of the medieval African empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai. It became noticeable to Europeans because of its riches in gold, Under the control of the Mali empire. It houses "two famous mosques – the Jingere – Ber and Sankore" which became "centres of scholarship and political demonstration carried out by scholar families in the town" (CSMN, 1005:5). Learned men were attracted to the city from all corners of the Islamic Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. A learned Moorish diplomat Hassan al-Wazzan (known as Leo Africanus) in his treatise "Description of Africa" wrote that the city

had “numerous judges, teachers and priest remunerated by the king. Learning was the centre stage of the development of the city as books were imported from Barbary (the Maghreb) which made it much more profitable than commerce from other merchandise. The political crisis that broke out as a result of military coup on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2012 helped several insurgent groups took over the main cities in the north and Timbuktu was brought under their control on 1<sup>st</sup> April. According to the (CSMC 2014:7) report placed it on record that “the radical islamist fighters showed no mercy for the cultural heritage of Timbuktu, destroying UNESCO protected monuments of venerated Muslim scholars, when the rebels became aware that Timbuktu’s manuscripts were also part of the UNESCO world heritage site, and were considered important by the western world, the destruction of the manuscripts became a priority for the rebels. From June 2012 to January 2013 a total number of 285,000 manuscripts were transported to Bamako in the south for safekeeping in different location having escaped the travails of the rebels, then ensued the travails of change of environment from the dry north to the humid south and the in appropriates storage conditions constitute yet another awake threat to the survival of the manuscript” (CSMC 2014:10). Other sites in Mali which were destroyed by the insurgents included tombs of saints (Hubbare). Muslim saints mostly venerated, had their tombs plundered typical of what ISIS did at Palmyra in Syria and the pillaged to the tomb of prophet Sulayman in Jordan.

### **Cross River Monoliths**

Far down in the south-south several monoliths are tracing not the travails of insurgency but the local populace through human interference such as farming, bush burning, deliberate pillage of standing monoliths to take lack of care to the detriment of our heritage several studies were conducted on the Cross River monoliths by scholars such as partridge (1905) Nickin (1975) Eyo (1986) Edet (2000,2003) less has been done to date and systematically study than in context. The monolith destruction in the cross river area is an issue of concern for (Archaeological Association of Nigeria (AAN), National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) and our colleagues that are in tango with SAFA (Society for Africanist Archaeologists) and world Archaeology congress (WAC) should carry the advocacy message to such fora for immediate salvage operation, dating and preservation for coming generations.

### **Conclusion**

Since the inception of the insurgency and terrorist activities within the sub-saharan region possibly triggered by the “April Spring” which metamorphosed towards the “Bush fire theory” sparing from a single spot and spread like the bush fire to countries contiguous with the radicalised group. This bush fire has gained momentum and its control has almost become impossible for now affecting all parts of the globe. The safeguarding of the monuments, relics and manuscripts remains the concern of the local community, the nation and world bodies concern with global heritage much more strategic needs to be evolved towards safeguarding, restitution of all patrimonies.

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