For Benin Moat Foundation, 2007 showed, even in its dying months, the huge promise of 2008. By 27th of March 2008, our Foundation had organized a successful seminar under the auspices of Catech Consultants (Abakare & Partners) at the Guinness Hall, Saidi Centre, Murtala Mohammed Way, Benin City. That seminar immediately revealed the need for an Iya Stakeholders’ Conference, which was promptly organized and scheduled to take place in Benin City, between October 2 and 3, 2008.

Our Chairman wrote a Clarion Call to the proposed Conference to tell those to take part, the intent of the conference. By the time he proceeded on his annual holidays in June 2008, he had handed over the affairs of his office to a prominent member of our Board of Trustees pleading with him to oversee the rest of the preparation for the Conference, and placing the services of his personal assistant at his disposal. The rest is history.

The Conference did not take place. BMF paid ₦80,000 for the Akenzua Conference Centre it did not use. It had previously spent ₦150,000 printing the Clarion Call. So much for the spectacular failure of 2008!

That 2008 would cast a shadow on 2009 was inevitable. Yet, the year (the second year of our Foundation) began with a blitz and a determination to put the failure behind us. Lt. Col. P O Ogbebor brought us the first good news when he solved our problem of office space in Benin City at our meeting on January 21, 2009. Apart from donating temporary office space, Lt. Col. Ogbebor asked Ms. Irene Ehondor and three civil engineers represented by Ms. Helen Igbinaavbiere, all members of staff of his company, to serve our Foundation when they would be needed.

By April, we had the second good news of sorts. Our Thompson Yonwuren, a son of the ruling house of Warri Kingdom and a Member of the Foundation’s Governing Council, discovered that the Iya lost its National Heritage status in 1964. Reasons for government inaction against those remorselessly destroying the Iya became clearer.

This discovery was startling. The Iya was a National Monument for only three years beginning June 1961. How we came to believe for over forty-five years that the Iya was still a national monument after 1964 when it was not, will remain a mystery. We needed to ask the National Commission for Museums and Monuments what next and we did. But we have had no answer. We told principal actors notably the Curator, Benin City Museums about our finding, but they have not replied nor have they acted on this serious matter, as far as we know.

Your Chairman was stung into action. He sent newsletters to members and to others he thought could inspire BMF. He devised Conversations with Stake-holders of Anthropology and History, in his fervent search for a clear direction. As usual, only a handful of interested parties responded with telephone calls, texts or emails. Please see attachments to this report.

As the Chairman prepared this report, no government, ministries or agencies of government has answered letters sent to them on this and other issues. Some of these letters requested meetings with Edo State’s Chief Executive as advised by contacts. Newspapers have consistently affirmed the interest of governments in the Iya and what it represents in the history of our state and country, consistent with what some of our contacts tell us. But how does one reconcile these assurances with the loud silence even as our Chairman wrote this report? Please see the email of November, 2009 by Dr Patrick Darling attached to this report.
Friends tell us patience will get us there, but time lost is irrecoverable. Your Chairman is concerned. Time lost is a piece of the history of Edo and Nigeria lost. The continuing erosion or degradation of the Iya is a continuing erosion or degradation of the quality of the history we can salvage from the bowels of its red earth. Perhaps, it is not as bad as the Chairman makes it. Maybe, but he is convinced we are on the losing trail unless we pay attention to all the Iya in Edo land. History is unlikely to forgive Benin Moat Foundation if the other Iya were to lose what they hide because they were not located in Benin City.

Your Chairman spent much of his 2009 holidays looking for a way out of the maze in which the solution to the problems of the Iya currently hides. Much of the dialogue he had with some interested parties have, been consigned to appendices to this report so that no part of the main report is obscured. He urges everyone to read the dialogues for therein lie the reasons for what follows:

**RECOMMENDATION No 1**

*The Chairman recommends that BMF considers the urgent need for archaeological work to decipher materials buried in the Iya and to establish their import in, as well as, impact on the history of our people.*

Ten thousand miles of Iya must, a priori, be the most dominant feature of Edo history. Its unveiling is bound to reveal much that is unknown as well as stitch together bits and pieces already written or known as part of her oral history, but with the added advantage of dates, even if scientifically determined. Clearly therefore, the unveiling of the history of the Iya is needed desperately both for the Iya itself, and for the people.

A large number of people have tried to write the history of Edo – the people who share Benin City as their metropolis. The best known of these “historians” is our Dr. Jacob U. Egharevba of blessed memory. There are legions of others, which this report will not attempt to name. Dr. Egharevba did not attempt to write orthodox history but others did bits and pieces about aspects of Edo annals. These taken together can only make patchy and incoherent whole at best. As famous as Edo is around the world, therefore, she has no reliable, enduring and coherent history.

If Edo has no history, the famous landmark of Benin City, the Iya, has no history. At least, not the history, that can market its tourism potential. There are stories that Oba Oguola and Oba Ewuare built the Iya round the City. But hardly anyone knows when, why, how long it took to construct it, how many people constructed it, with what tools; how many people died during the construction? Why the long period between Oba Oguola stopping and Oba Ewuare resuming the construction? Not many people knew there was more Iya constructed outside Benin City, until Dr Patrick Darling and to a lesser extent, Professor Graham Connah, came along. Were the other Iya also constructed by Oba Oguola and Oba Ewuare? And were they for the same purposes? Which of the clusters of 10,000 miles of Iya in Edo land is the oldest? Answers to these questions are central to our ability to sell the Iya to the world for its tourist’s dollar.

BMF notes with infinite pleasure the interest and some of the actions Edo State Government has taken to rid the Iya of structures strangling it, since she came to power. However, a survey undertaken for this report concludes that these actions are louder than they are real. See the attached report of November 2009. We wrote to congratulate the State Government and to introduce your Foundation the moment the Government was sworn in. We have written several other letters to her. Two letters asked for meetings with the chief executive. Your Chairman wrote one at the instance of our contact, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, who delivered it himself. Unfortunately, we have had no reply to any of these letters, yet BMF interests and those of the State Government appear to be mutually inclusive.
However, there is a clear attempt to politicise the moat in Benin City. Some of us have witnessed and heard Chief Isekhurhe and his declarations of EDSG support on the NTA and elsewhere; sometimes with alleged EDSG affirmation in tow. Under my leadership, BMF will stay clear of politics, but will be ready to help with the affairs of the Iya if that help is needed by any one including Chief Isekhurhe. Whether we hear from government or not, may I declare as your Chairman that the integrity of the Iya is essential if it is to be an authentic echo of our past and the true monument bequeathed to us by our ancestors. BMF will continue to advise EDSG on actions likely to compromise this integrity even if the government might see such actions as **beautifying** the Iya. *The Structural Integrity of the Iya should NEVER be compromised, if the world is to believe what we say about it.*

**A warning:** Surfing the internet in June 2009, the Chairman found a report written for the Observer Newspaper by one Solomon Asowata. It said Benin Moat Foundation led by a Dr. Abiodun Adebowale, the curator of the Benin Museum, visited the EDSG represented by one Barrister Anthony Iyalekhue, the Commissioner for Information and Orientation. He immediately sent email from the UK to Col. Ogbebor asking him to investigate and to urge the Observer Newspaper to make necessary corrections. He also sent email to Mr Godwin Obaseki.

The crux of his concern is that in matters of public service, particularly where public money might be involved, names are sacrosanct. Any body or organisation has a right to be interested in the moat; but that body or organisation must know its own name. We must be observant and be diligent. **Benin Moat Foundation has not visited the Edo State Government. That Observer Report was false.**

The Iya in Benin City is fast disappearing. However, Dr Patrick Darling assures us that while farm fallows are a source of worry for more than 9,990 miles of the Iya left in the bush, parts of the long length are in pristine condition. Sadly, what is left of the Benin City Iya is being compromised by natural causes and by the people themselves. Unless BMF acts quickly, what they hide will disappear with them. After a long discussion with Dr Patrick Darling, the Chairman asked him to put together a three-year archaeological work programme, which could give BMF enough material for more detailed orthodox history of the Edo. His presentation needs to be reviewed for adequacy by an historian. Those the Chairman has approached have not been as helpful as he had hoped. He will approach others as the matter develops.

**RECOMMENDATION No. 2**

To save what is left of the Iya in Benin City and elsewhere in Edo land, this report recommends that BMF sets up the following new organisations:

1. **Iya Conservation Project (ICP):** *This will be an umbrella body under BMF to look after subsidiary bodies to be called Iya Conservation Association.*

2. **Iya Conservation Association (ICA):** *There will be several of these bodies all over Edo land where clusters of Iya exist. Each ICA will look after Iya or parts of Iya in its area and will protect them from forces likely to degrade them.*
BMF ACTIVITIES

Except for a hired consultant Dr Patrick Darling, activities of BMF were thin on the ground during the year. That is as it can be, given the clouds over the status of the Iya. Its national monument status was revoked more than 45 years ago, but those who revoked it seem to want to hang on to it, even if they do nothing to help or preserve it. Lawyers suggest that the Land Use Decree 1978, vests the land of the Iya in the State Government. They insist that the monument itself belongs to the owners, the Edo. This is a legal minefield which behoves us to tread with care. And we should tread with care if we aim to do anything physical such as archaeological excavation.

FINANCES:

Accounts of the Benin Moat Foundation are currently being audited. Whatever the result of the audit, the Chairman will under-write all the mundane expenses except for the two hundred and seventy thousand naira spent congratulating our Grand Patron, the Omo n’Oba, n’Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Erediauwa Oba of Benin.
EMAILS

1. Dear Patrick (Dr Patrick Darling)

Benin Moat Foundation

IYA CONSERVATION PROJECT

BMF began issuing ‘Conversation with Stakeholders of Anthropology and History’ in May, 2009. The idea was and still is to mobilize the world of ideas on how BMF goes forward dealing with the huge problems of this great heritage. Many believe that a rescue effort is coming too late. Yet, BMF believes that no one who knows the Iya as man’s greatest earthwork - about 16,000 kilometres long as you tell us - will stand by and watch the great monument go into ruins. The Iya might have secured a place in our collective reckoning, but such a place is shaky until the history of the monument has been unearthed and told to the rest of the world. We should not let man destroy the chance of this history by obliterating the stark evidence of the ingenuity of our Edo ancestors. It is right that the world should know that the forebears of Edo people (popularly called Benin people) built the Iya centuries before man developed excavators and other earthmoving equipment.

I think Iya Conservation Project can be a way of widening participation in the core programme of BMF. My belief is that the people are taking too long to pay attention to BMF’s immediate concern - the Main Iya in Benin City - probably because of social and economic problems in the state and the country. Through the Conservation Project, I hope BMF can draw attention to a hugely important point: To hold on to and protect what is; is man’s primordial concern. If fire guts a home for instance, man would reach and take what he can to safety. Our ancestors built the once Great Benin Empire. In the last one and a half centuries, we faced tremendous challenges including the British Expedition of 1897. This was no less than cataclysm. We suffered huge losses and seemed to have exacerbated our problems by forgetting we had things to reach for, to hold and to protect. The Iya is one of them. Others are lands and territories as well as artworks scattered around museums and palaces of the world, but we could not hold on to them because of the overwhelming force against us. The Iya was immovable; no one could have taken it away, but we ignored it. We woke up and found the British destroying it for roads. Nearly fifty years after they left us, we have destroyed it not only for roads, but for every other imaginable reason. There is, perhaps, time for everything. However, I believe that time has come. All moves begin with a first step. We have taken that first redemptive step; we only need to follow it through as proud children of a proud heritage. The most effective way to do this is to set up Iya Conservation Project.
Iya Conservation Project is conceived as an umbrella body for all Iya Conservation Associations. These associations will cater for and protect Iya all over what is left of Edo land. It will be administered by the Benin Moat Foundation and will be organised in Benin City and elsewhere, to raise awareness for the Iya (Moat); to enhance mass participation of the people in BMF’s core need of conservation and to raise funds for the Foundation’s works.

Iya Conservation Associations (ICA):

I will urge BMF to set up several Conservation Associations local to parts of the Iya in Benin City and in all other places where clusters of the Iya are. For example, I think there should be Iya Conservation Association at Ugbowo, hopefully located within the University of Benin. There may also be one or more Iya Conservation Associations in Udo, Usen, Ekhor and other places, probably within educational institutions where the youth can be more easily captured. Youth participation cannot be over-emphasized because the war to save the heritage, must respond to mankind’s dynamic nature.

I foresee Iya Conservation Associations in some of the following places in Benin City: St. Peter’s CMS School, Iya Ero; Edo College and Immaculate Conception College both lying on Murtala Mohammed Way with parts of the Iya in their backyards; Iya Conservation Association of Ezoti, hopefully championed by a bank that built one of its branches on the Iya.

What will the Conservation Associations do? Each will do what it is able to do. First and foremost, it will help ensure that no fly-tipping of refuse and no act capable of degrading the moat take place within its zone. Secondly, it will organize activities such as gardening, to take people to the moat. Such a move will make people recognize the heritage as a living part of the environment. Conservation Associations will raise funds for their activities. Where they have viable, laudable project suited to the Iya, the Iya Conservation Project should support them.

Just thinking: what do you think?       June 28, 2009

From: Patrick Darling Wednesday, 1 July, 2009, 1:01 AM.

Dear Solomon

Your organisation for the conservation of sections of the Benin City Iya is imaginative and viable; and I would be quite willing to assist giving illustrated lectures at the schools you mention. Dr Kokie Eghanofona of UNIBEN Anthropology Department is probably the best person to deal with the Ugbowo campus section of Iya; and she should be able to arrange obtaining a radiocarbon dating sample from it.

There was a society set up for the Iya in the 1990's but I never received any response from it. Do you know what happened to it? I can probably find out its old contact address.

Let me know what address you will be at on Saturday (and telephone number) so that I can plan the route and let you know my estimated time of arrival.

With best wishes, Patrick

Tuesday, 30 June, 2009 6:23 PM

Hi Godwin,

The loop mail I sent to you could not be delivered. I don't know how my PA got Yahoo e-mail address for you. I'm sending it again using the Afrinvest email address.
Yesterday, I stumbled on a report in the Nigerian Observer published in Benin that Barrister Anthony Iyalekhue the commissioner for Information and Orientation in Edo State, received a delegation of Benin Moat Foundation led by Dr. Biodun Adebowale of the National Council for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Benin City.

I am not aware of any such delegation. If we had one that I did not know about, it could not have been led by anyone called Biodun Adebowale. It would have been led by one of the members of our Trustee’s Board. I am disturbed by the fact that in spite of our many letters to the new EDSG, our identity could have been so fouled up.

What the Commissioner said in the report by one Solomon Asowata sounded good. Yet I think we should take matters related to the moat more seriously. I am asking our Col. Paul Ogbebor to demand an explanation from the Museum Curator and to champion a correction of the publication in the same paper. We have no reason to quarrel with bodies wanting to achieve our purpose, but names should be sacrosanct in these matters of public service.

S O Uwaifo

Dear Patrick,

Thanks for your email. Glad you were able to attend.

It is hard-going reading the BAR book. Your academic twists and turns remind me of why history was never my favourite subject. But what the book continues to teach me is that the history of my people needs to be adequately researched. It needs thorough and objective research, not one on the back of power-line’s traces; unsuitable, inconvenient and constraining.

It is clear from what you said at the meeting and from the BAR books that Iya is not unique to the Edo. Whereas protecting as much of the clusters as we can on our land is good, it seems what we probably need as fervently and urgently, is to seek to exhume our history as fast as we can from the bowels of the Iya we have.

Kindly guide me as to what to say to the Chicago blokes!

Obviously, I will have to take this up with my people. I want to do a report to guide them. However, there is no disputing the fact that we will continue to need support in our dedicated, uncompromising search for the truth of our history. I will get back to you. Kind regards,

SOU

From: Patrick Darling
To: "Solomon Uwaifo"

Dear Solomon,

Thank you for all your interest and in setting up this last meeting.

I have just been printing out new satellite imagery for the area I never surveyed between Ohovbe
and Aduhanhan; and whilst doing that, I felt it was such a pity that we could not get the imagery up on my laptop in London. It would have shown so much more.

I hope you are not finding my book too complicated (it sent my father to sleep!); but it does provide some neglected key data in the quest to discern early Benin history and its state-formation processes.

I noted Dr Idemudia's hesitation about extending beyond the main city Iya; so let me set out the key rationale for this. One of the main ways to elicit public or other support will be to re-nominate the Benin earthworks as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. By itself, the Benin City moat is not a unique phenomenon and its integrity is being compromised by its erosion, destruction and use for drainage and refuse disposal. However, when set in the context of being part of the world's longest ancient earthworks, then it becomes the jewel set in a unique global phenomenon. Whether one considers that Benin (Oba Oguola) ordered the construction of rural Iya similar to that of the city (chicken laying the eggs) or whether the Benin City moat was the culmination of an extensive state-formation process, the City moat takes its place centre stage. Therefore, anything that can forward its preparation should be done as soon as possible, as National or State Monument creation can be a time-consuming business. I have offered to map the main City Iya and its rights of way to assist in this process; and I estimate the job would take about two weeks (I would have a Benin-speaking assistant with me at all times).

The original nomination included Sungbo's Eredo; but this can be combined some time with Old Owu. The next UNESCO nomination should be solely on the Benin earthworks; but this means that the re should be a larger sample of other earthworks. Originally, there was the Benin City moat, the Udo town wall, and the Ekhor earthworks. I am suggesting that the nomination would be strengthened by a) completing the survey of the Ekhor earthworks b) dating another primary earthwork there to confirm matters, as well an Isi primary enclosure c) survey the Usen Forest Reserve Iya as they are in pristine condition and are in a position to be protected. I am suggesting that two week's work be put into a), b) and c) for each year over the next two years; and I know how to do the job and where to go.

These are just suggestions based on my past experience. Do come back to me to thrash anything out in more detail.

With best wishes, Patrick.

Friday, 10 July, 2009 12:04 PM
From: "Solomon Uwaifo"
To: "Patrick Darling"

Dear Patrick,

Thanks for the email. The processes you described are ok. Please send the photocopies to me at Hemel Hempstead.

I can see where some of the problems of our history arise. For political reasons, the work of our revered Chief Jacob U. Egharevba has been elevated to history and has been celebrated by those whose history was boosted by his accounts. The grand old man wrote oral accounts of events in the annals of the people as he and those he spoke with understood them. He spoke to both parents and the parents relatives. His mother had Yoruba lineage. He never intended to write orthodox history. That is one reason it has become compelling to address the need for a true history of our people.

Clearly, the constitution of BMF does not include this view. However, protecting the moat is not
mutually exclusive of the moat’s history. Indeed, the rate at which it has been decimated over the last fifty years raises questions as to whether it will be available to play its part in the construction of that history if we do not work fast at it. What I am thinking is that given the slow response to the need to save what is left of the moat in Benin City, it might not be there much longer to shed its light on our history.

I believe Dr. Idemudia shares this opinion. He wants the "moat" protected wherever they may be, but given our limited knowledge of the moats until researchers came along, he wants to be sure that every "moat" is in fact a "moat". And I completely agree with him.

The approach you suggested for Chicago is ok. I look forward to your input.

SOU

Re: Activity mix.
Saturday, 11 July, 2009 1:54 PM
From: "Solomon Uwaifo"
To: "Patrick Darling"

Dear Patrick

Thanks for your continued assurances and the promise of a great partnership. I am convinced enough to say that the conservation strategy I advocated will be the best way to protect the moats in the long run. The Conservation Project and the Conservation Associations can spread the responsibilities and the workload enough for BMF to turn attention on the history of the moats and the people. As I said, protection and history are not mutually exclusive. I am sure we are on the right path and my report will try to so inform our Foundation.

Have you views on how we may set about this?

SOU

Re: Activity mix.
Monday, 13 July, 2009 10:19 PM
From: "Patrick Darling" <african.legacy@googlemail.com>
To: "Solomon Uwaifo" <so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org>

Dear Solomon,

Many thanks for your e-mail. When did you send me the full BMF conservation plan? You have talked about your plans and there have been various letters, all of which I have been very pleased to support - but I do not recall a detailed plan. Have I missed something? When e-mail correspondence gets long, attachments become widely separated; so perhaps I have not seen it.

I have managed to unearth my Benin Canoe Port article and this should arrive on Wednesday (I just missed tonight's post). This particular article shows how a small archaeological feature can spark off a series of new historical reconstructions. Other articles will come to light as I disinter the old magazines from the garage; and I will send them.
The Chicago tech.spec. is taking a little longer than I expected, as I have two unexpected deadlines on other work to meet; and the key Chicago meeting is about three weeks away. I will ensure that you have enough time to put in BMF comments.

With best wishes,

Patrick.
Dear Solomon,

A few comments back -
1) I note the name River Imimikpo rather than Ovia or Osse - therefore, pre-Esigie?
2) This river being the spiritual boundary between earth and heaven, and seems to have been the early boundary to the Benin Kingdom before it conquered Udo. What do you make of the ferryman problems there?
3) There is an increasing rift between local academic and royal history - each has its own agenda and is emphasizing things in different ways.
3) As I collect traditions around Nigeria, I increasingly find a reluctance or refusal to acknowledge disaster, death or defeat in traditional histories, even when there is strong historical evidence to the contrary. Prince Aiguobasimwin noted the past capture of an Oba along the coast, whereas such an unthinkable matter is expunged from the memory of all other Benin traditions. Elsewhere, defeated leaders 'cannot be found' or they transmogrify into gods or local features or there is an alternative, less drastic, explanation, e.g., some houses were set alight by a leader infiltrating a settlement, rather than the settlement being conquered and burnt. The battle of Waterloo does not feature in French history; and I am sure that there are events in English history that are never noted, e.g., the rigging of Sudan's and Nigeria's Independence elections.

The traditions you are now citing about Ehengbuda contradict those noted by Egharevba, Ryder and Bradbury (including Obahiagbon). Bradbury, in particular, was right in at the heart of things; and I do not think he would have missed such an important tradition had it been extant at that time (1950s). Whilst one cannot discount the existence of parallel traditions, subsequent proliferation of Ogiso names (with absurd dates) and other 'aspects of Benin 'history' suggest that Benin History has become a dynamic local industry - and one local historian was even using dreams as his 'legitimate' source of inspirational data. The Heslop Memorial Library at the University of Birmingham has all Bradbury's Field Notes; and it is salutary to go through these and compare them with the histories now doing the rounds. I have even encountered beliefs that Asoro dug the City Moat!

All this makes it important that archaeological data makes its proper contribution. I trust you have Connah's "The Archaeology of Benin", Ryder's "Benin and the Europeans" and Bradbury's "The Benin Kingdom ..." and his posthumous "Benin Studies". These were all part of an ambitious project on Benin History; but the writers kept rather strictly to their own disciplines; e.g, Connah made calculations about how many were required to construct the Benin City Moat, but failed to include Egharevba's note of three years taken, nor to examine ethnographic data to see how it was probably dug. Similarly, Bradbury stayed a year at Ekhor but made no note of all the Iya there, which disproved his noting that, in the past, there were no boundaries between villages - they were all around him!

The vast network of Iya provides a unique, objective set of data which together with pottery sherds and other data can provide a better Edo history of most of the people in the Benin Kingdom. All this will be explained in some detail in my technical proposal, which I am in the process of completing.

With best wishes,

Patrick.
Dear Patrick,

Thanks for your comments. Please note the following:

1. Rivers tend to be named differently as they flow through areas, cultures, languages etc. Ovia is Edo, Osse is not. Imimikpo is not Ovia.

2. There is nothing I know that suggests there has been a war between Benin City and Udo. There were skirmishes between princes. The best known is that between Idubo and Osawe who was crowned Esigie. The skirmish had to do with heredity. Idubo was born earlier than Osawe in the same large palace. Idubo did not cry at birth and by tradition, he could not be cleaned up and announced. Osawe was born later; he cried and was cleaned, dressed and announced to his father Oba Ozolua. The Oba carried out traditional rites and Osawe became his heir and next king. When Idubo was announced, it was too late. Idubo fought all his life for justice, but in such circumstances, justice was decided by tradition.

3. Yes; it is healthy that academics should continue to question oral history. But it must not ignore it. It is important that one is a check on the other. Otherwise, we might never be able to uncover academic or intellectual laziness. With respect to Edo land, dates for Ogiso dynasty must be impossible except through archaeological evidence perhaps. Edo had no writing culture; they date events and things by significant happenings like the farming season; the beginning of the rainy season; the waxing and waning of the moon. My uncle about 95 years old was born the year of the First World War and his father died in the year of the Ugbokhokho - the Flu Pandemic of 1918.

Edo has one other advantage. It has the yearly Eho festival in which families come together to talk of their past - the important events of their lives - significant achievements and failures. As a people, they create works of art to mark significant events; they give names to commemorate events; Obas promulgate festivals or ceremonies to mark significant events in the lives of the people. These nurture oral history and keep it alive. That is why Dr. Jacob Egharevba has to be wrong if he said anything different about Oba Ehengbuda. The Oludo dance still takes place in the palace in season to commemorate Oba Ehengbuda's safe return from his attempted walk into heaven. And oral history is not always a perversion of the truth - why would Edo admit that Ozolua died at Uzea in a war?

SOU

Re: Fw: RE: Activity mix.

Dear Solomon,

Sorry not to have replied earlier to your thought-provoking reply, but my daughter came to stay for a few days; and we have been rushing around doing things with her.

I have supplied several references to Udo-Benin conflict, some of which occur in the early Intelligence Reports and have been one of the most persistent of Benin traditions. If one discounts
the Udo-Benin war, then one has also to: 1) discount Ondo traditions of being founded in c.1516/17; 2) re-interpret the sherd evidence at Unuame; 3) find other explanations for the introduction of the Ovia cult and the exaltation of Idia; 4) explain away why Udo's town wall was built just before (1300 AD) Benin's (1350 AD) and there are no other moats in the area; 5) force the poor Oliha of Udo to rewrite his history yet again so that, in addition to deleting that Udo existed before Benin and that Benin paid tribute to Udo, he now has to say that Benin never fought Udo (whilst comforting himself with the thought that every Udo schoolboy knows what really happened).

Whilst the Udo and Ife elements in Benin history are politically awkward, most Africanist scholars recognise sympathetically that there has been a politically motivated rewriting of various elements of its history, not just in recent decades, but in previous centuries. This is not unique to Benin: Henige obtained the various Ghanaian dynastic chronologies collected by Europeans down the centuries and found a whole series of elisions, telescoping, narrative devices and eponymous figures attracting events/monuments from other periods to themselves. As you rightly say, all traditions have to be tested; but those at the family level without political pressures are the most likely to remain unchanged.

What I have tried to do from the outset is to employ the principles of 'triangulation' with data and ideas being obtained from as wide a variety of sources as is possible, so that cross-checking can occur. I never discount traditions automatically: I try to see why they are saying what they are saying. However, my focus is not on the traditions: it is on the archaeology and its interpretation - which is where traditions come in.

Now that I have the chance to return to writing out the Technical Specifications, I will set out what I think needs to be done to a) obtain a UNESCO World Heritage Site and, in the process b) conserve much of the main moat and a sample of the other moats c) throw new light on key aspects of Benin's early history through new approaches and fresh data.

With best wishes, Patrick.

Re: Fw: RE: Activity mix.
From: "Solomon Uwaifo" <so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org> Thursday, 23 July, 2009 11:15 AM

Dear Patrick,

I opened the computer to email and ask if I have unintentionally stepped on your toes and hurrah! your email had arrived. I note the passionate academic leanings of your thinking and wish to say I love it.

I used the word skirmish because of the oral history I had been told. As I write, a song I learnt as a kid hums in my mind . . . "Evbe n'Udo rumwen, evbe n'Udo rumwen, evbe n'Udo rumwen erime mwen gha r'Udo . . . This was a part of the song by Osawe (crowned Esigie) who vowed to do to Udo as Udo had done to him. It was at the onset of the skirmish or war between princes. Udo was a smaller town. Osawe lived in Benin in his father's (Ozolua's) palace while Arhuanran, Prince Idubo(also son of Ozolua), lived in Udo as the Enogie of Udo. The oral history says that because of the strength - Arhuanran means giant - of Prince Idubo, Oba Ozolua supported Osawe and wanted the capture of Prince Idubo; not to do war against his subjects in Udo.

When you refer to Intelligence Reports, you are talking of Colonial reports. I think you have to accept that it will be difficult to convince a true Edo that British colonialism was ever fair to his or
her people. Why should they accept Colonial Intelligence Reports? I would take it with no more than a pinch of salt unless it is backed by archaeology or other scientific evidence. What I am saying is that if any conflict arises between Colonial Intelligence Report and Edo Oral History, I would accept Edo Oral history with little question.

It is clear to me that the true history of my people lies mainly, in untainted interpretation of her archaeology. We need a history counterpart to do the job. I hope we can put the team together.

SOU

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Re: Activity mix. Archaeo and Revelations

From: "Solomon Uwaifo" <so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org>  
Friday, 24 July, 2009 9:40 AM

Dear Michael,

Thanks for the input

SOU

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From: Michael Vickers  
Subject: Re: Activity mix. Archaeo and Revelations  
Date: Friday, 24 July, 2009, 12:44 AM

Yes, yes. It is archaeology that can provide the serious revelations. Trick is to get enough of it together to secure a reasonable grip on the relevant reality. ...Archaeologists can be just as contentious and hot/ wrong-headed about their interpretations as any historian. ...As one archaeo-specialist of the Roman Era in Britain—speaking of the HUGE numbers of erudite books/ studies that have been done over the centuries by eminent scholars—’a list of the actual relevant artifactual remains, would perhaps cover three sides of A4 paper.’ ...Difficult business. Where does speculation end, and reality commence? Too often, what is set down as ‘fact,’ is often fiction. ...Enough

Best, Michael v

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Re: Fw: RE: Activity mix.  
Friday, 24 July, 2009 11:11 AM

From: "Solomon Uwaifo" <so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org>  
To: "Patrick Darling" <african.legacy@googlemail.com>

Dear Patrick,

I thought we should talk about this face to face, but I just remembered you plan a visit to Nigeria in August? Your second paragraph proves the point of double-checking if the archaeologist or the historian is to get his facts right and fair. The people of Udo are Edo as the people of Benin, Isi, Ugo, Urhonigbe etc. The Oba once sent members of the army to capture Emokpaogbe, the Enogie. Will you call that a declaration of war? True, there was a fight and I called it a skirmish. The Enogie of Udo gave you his version; why would you assume that the other side is a pervert,
incapable of the truth? If Idubo was sent to Udo as the Enogie by his father Ozolua, why would you think it was war if the father asked that he be captured and brought to Benin for insubordination? Idubo alias Arhuanran, the Enogie of Udo was too bitter for what he thought was his stolen right of heredity to come home peacefully. Yes, there was a bitter fight.

Igodomigodo existed before several new names for her metropolis. It was first renamed Benin (Ile Ibinu) and later Edo, all during the second dynasty that is still there today. Udo was the same people as those living in Benin whatever name they bore even during the first dynasty - the Ogiso dynasty. And no Ogiso lived in Udo as far as I know. How then can the Enogie of Udo claim that both the Ogiso and the Eweka dynasties who bestowed his title on him, paid him homage in Udo - the ruler paying homage to his subject? This is not to say that the moat around Udo cannot be older than the one in Benin, but I am sure you will admit that however accurate carbon dating can be, humans are a part of the process and they can without knowing, introduce arithmetic error.

It will be a grave error to take sides in a controversy like this. And may I dare say, it would be no scholarship to so do however convenient.

SOU

From: Patrick Darling Date: Saturday, 25 July, 2009, 9:39 PM
Subject: Ethnography
To: "Solomon Uwaifo"

Dear Solomon,

Logically, Udo traditions would not have survived if many ordinary Udo people had not survived; so total conquest may well have been an ephemeral affair, with many people returning back to their city; and this fits your scenario too.

As for Colonial Intelligence Reports (IRs), their main advantage is that they were collected much earlier than data that can be obtained today. Having met some of the gentlemen who did the collecting, my impression is that they recorded what they were told as accurately as they could, but that they could sometimes have been told what some informants thought they wanted to hear. Throughout Nigeria, it has been customary for Nigerian Historians to downplay this valuable database for nationalistic reasons, then to base most of the ensuing historical description on IRs. The classic case of the Bassa Nge people, which means 'We are not Bassa' serves as a warning of the translation problems often faced. However, most history theses done at ABU and BUK, for example, rely heavily on IRs in the Kaduna archives.

In Benin, Prince Ena Basimi Eweka's Evolution of Benin Chieftaincy Titles (1994) appears to be mainly based on (but not credited to) Don Partridge's 1974 Confidential Report on Benin Chieftaincy Affairs; but some, who know both works (so not me), claim that Patridge's work was 'doctored' to fit political realities at the time of the book's publication. At the conference on Benin Kingship at Vienna, several international scholars commented publicly and privately on their concerns about similar recent 'shifts' in historical emphasis; and Rotimi-Williams' observation was regarded by them as one reasonable explanations for these 'shifts'. Aiguabasimwin's history (of which I gave you a copy) is the earliest known royal history published and, together with one I.R. on Aiguobaismwin's pre-coronation sacrifices, provides a strong base-point for their perception of these 'shifts'.

More important than the controversial details of any of these oral accounts, each of which (as you
note) may have its own agenda, is the whole issue of ethnographic parallels between Benin and Yoruba - Ogun, Olokun, Osa (contracted from Orisa) deities spring to mind straight away; and these are in addition to (later than?) the apparently earlier local Edo ihen deities. What criteria would you employ to decide which is earlier than which? Fortunately, pottery sherds in this region do have some spatio-cultural variables by which different cultures can be distinguished in different periods; and this will be one element of my tech. specs.

If we take Ekpo Eyo's archaeological excavations at Owo about halfway between Benin and Ife, Benin artistic influence occurs in later strata than the Yoruba artistic influence. Eyo was a competent, highly intelligent Calabar man genuinely interested in trying to sort out archaeological challenges. Have you seen his work? It should be at both UNIBEN and UI libraries, as well as at the NCMM Onikan.

I had to go up and see my daughter in Cambridge, which delayed matters; but my technical specifications will be ready by late tomorrow.

Best wishes, Patrick.

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**Re: Ethnography**

Monday, 27 July, 2009 1:28 PM

From: "Solomon Uwaifo" <so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org>
To: "Patrick Darling" <african.legacy@googlemail.com>
Cc: tidemudia@yahoo.com, jnehikhare@yahoo.com, oyegund@yahoo.com, taiwo.obo@taijowomakabe.com, profkecorobator@yahoo.com, mvickers@mvickers.plus.com

Dear Patrick,

I'll check my library if I have a copy of Ekpo Eyo's work to which you referred. He gave me copies of some of his works.

I will argue that Ena Eweka's is the ultimate source from which Don Patridge obtained his 1974 Confidential report. Ena, an accountant, was a prince of the Royal Palace. He was the Secretary of the Benin Traditional Council for many years. This strengthens my point that nothing should be ignored and that we must never take sides in our search for the truth.

I know about Ekpo's doubts about Ife Art and the point that art found there more probably belonged to the Nok Culture. That is another matter and quite frankly, not my interest.

We need more archaeology on the way to the truth. The site of Ogiso's and other old palaces need to be excavated. More archaeology from as many of our Iya as possible need to be done and historians positioned to put pen on paper. I am Edo, I'm tired of political history. The illusionary tripod would want the world to believe that the problems of Nigeria rest on their shoulders, whereas they are the problems. One Oba says he is the source whereas his palace has a stool on which only the Oba of Benin can sit. The truth is somewhere. I, I believe all Edo and lovers of the truth everywhere, want it.

Yoruba's would have you believe that Osa is contracted from Orisa. It is not true; it is contracted from OSANOBUA (GOD). My son's name is Osahon. I gave the name because I prayed to OSA (GOD) for a male child and He heard my prayer.

I think you meant Akintola Williams when you wrote Rotimi-Williams.

SOU
My dear Taiwo,

Thanks for showing me this. I am thrilled that the crusade to conserve the moat is catching on. The task to piece the history of the moat - our history - together must proceed apace.

SOU

D' Omo,

I am sure you would want to see the attached.

Taiwo Idemudia

From: Steveogbonmwan@aol.com <Steveogbonmwan@aol.com
Subject: Edo_Global. OBA EREDIAUWA BACKS DEMOLITION OF BUILT ON MOAT
To: Edo_Global@yahoogroups.com
Date: Sunday, 26 July, 2009, 12:32 PM

OBA EREDIAUWA BACKS DEMOLITION OF BUILT ON MOAT

The Benin Monarch, His Royal Majesty, Omo N’Oba N’ Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwa, has lent his support to the Edo State Task-force on Illegal structures as it is about to begin demolition of illegal structures built on the ancient Benin Moat.

The Oba gave the support when the Edo State Vice Chairman in charge of operations of the Taskforce on Illegal Structures, Major Lawrence Loye (Rtd) paid him a courtesy visit at the palace on Thursday.

The Benin Monarch also mandated two of his Chief to act as guide to the taskforce in carrying out its duty.
According to him, “the Moat is the property for the palace, the chiefs are the right persons to assist the taskforce to recover its property”.

Speaking with newsman shortly after the visit, Major Love said the purpose of the visit was to seek support in the task of recovering and restoring the moat to its original form.

He said the ownership of the moat was in doubt and assured of the committee’s determination to ensure success of its task hence the support from the palace.

Meanwhile, the team Leader of the Taskforce on Demolition of Illegal Structures on the buffer zone, Mr. Avister Okungbowa, has said that some of the structures on the buffer zone had been marked for demolition and that notice to that effect had been served to the owners of the illegal structures to remove them from the moat within ten days, adding that the notice has been given since July 2, 2009.
Dear Patrick,

I forgot to address two points in earlier reply. It's a battle to remember after pressing the reply key when there are several points.

You did not give me a copy of the Aiguobasimwin history to which you referred.

"Ihen" is no deity in Edo. It means a CURSE. I have seen this in some of your other writings. Ebo is; a past icon, idol, hero, heroine deified. There are many in our world. One very well known is Okhuaihe, a respected obo and elder who volunteered to take the prayers of the people to Osanobua (God) in Heaven (Erinmwin) when there was no let up in their travails - drought, disease. They built Aruosa (Eye of God or God's shrine) on that spot after years waiting for Okhuaihe to return. The Portugese saw this house of prayer, which survives to this day and hailed it a church like theirs.

I can assure you that Edo has no word like Oisa in the context. I don't know if Yoruba has, but I'm sure Orisa is more theirs than Edo. I say this because Edo elides in speech, but they add and are superfluous when their words are put into song. Wa ghogho me, Orisa no gbe mwen orhue is a common song when the Edo is very happy. When he says the same prayer, the sentence becomes - Wa ghogho me, Osa gbe mwe' orhue. Literally, this means - Rejoice with me, God has brought me joy. Orhue is there as a euphemism for happiness.

The operating law in Nigeria says that all land in any state belongs to the government of the state. In the case of Abuja, to the Federal Government. To that extent reasonableness of the Governor or of the act of those who built on or near the moat, should have a say in what is legal, and not, I think this would be better answered by a lawyer. I'm just thrilled to see that the BDSG is acting probably in accordance with the plea of the BMF or with what is reasonable.

You will notice I said Edo has no Oisa in the context. If I were to interpret the word in Edo, I will
say it means - O will not burst. Even if this looks playful, it is certainly not relevant to our thought.

Melzian did a great job on our language; thanks to him. He and people like him called us Bini and I suppose one might ask what is in a name? For the Edo, there is everything in a name. However, many are the Edo who are enamoured and overwhelmed by the wonder and beauty of the English language. For these people, they want English equivalent for every Edo word. If there is nothing exact, the approximate is good enough. I think what is right is what the grassroots accept. The grassroots Edo says he or she is Edo; that is it. For the Anglicised, Bini is anybody who lives in Benin. I am Edo; I'm not Bini.

Melzian is wrong if he said Aruosa started in the reign of Oba Esigie. The Portuguese came in his reign and found our people worshipping Osa in accordance with the pledge they made to Okhuahe who transmuted to Heaven in search of help from Osanobua (God) for the unending travails of his people.

SOU

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Dr Kathleen Berzok, Chicago Museum  
cc. Engineer Uwaifo, Benin Moat Foundation.

Dear Dr Berzok,

After discussions with the Benin Moat Foundation over your correspondence, I have been asked to submit a full proposal containing the technical requirements necessary to obtain a UNESCO World Heritage Site for Benin (see attachment).

You are welcome to use this in your talk; and we would be most grateful if you could supply EACHI with a copy of this proposal, with a view to seeing what kind of collaboration might work with the Benin Moat Foundation (BMF).

From African Legacy's point of view, there is an urgent need of funding for the above modest proposal to achieve things in a reasonable timeframe. Should there be positive interest in this respect, I would be most grateful - for the sake of open transparency - if all correspondence on this nomination is copied to Engineer Uwaifo of the BMF at so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org and v&v.

He will be adding his own thoughts on this proposal and on the possibilities of the BMF working alongside EACHI.

With best wishes,

Dr Patrick Darling,  
African Legacy.
Dear Solomon,

I would hope that the attachment came through on the letter addressed to Chicago of which you were a Cc. I will attach it again to this letter. You will see that Chicago have replied positively and it looks as though the BMF is likely to receive at the very least some strong moral support and probably more.

I think you will find that the UNESCO World Heritage Site is a good initial way forward to creating interest in the earthworks and to uniting some of the factions involved. As some factions have, as you note, created history to suit their own purposes, the genuine desire to find out the real truth may take much longer to come.

In terms of time-scale, I have indicated two monthly visits on my proposal to Chicago, largely because the accompanying key radio-carbon dates are so expensive; and one needs to ease in. In the end, as dates have only a 67% chance of lying within their standard deviation and the earthworks are so complicated, we may be talking of a two or three dozen samples before we can be reasonably sure of silencing dissent about what the earthworks tell us over the whole kingdom (more if northern Ishan is included).

However, as I have intimated to you, I am interested in retiring to Nigeria, spending much of the dry season doing archaeological fieldwork and the rainy season at Akodi Afrika museum, library and cultural research centre. My State pension top-up (from £60 a week to about £200 a week) will have various conditionalities of staying for some months in the UK; and I will need to investigate these, the housing market and my wife's financial situation before making definite plans and knowing what my 'conditions' (necessary requirements) would be.

I will go to find out about the top-up situation tomorrow, then give a considered reply to your very encouraging suggestion.

With best wishes,

Patrick.

Omo,

This is very interesting stuff. The issue, of course, is deadly serious. You are perhaps the one man properly equipped to conduct this battle. Your position, of course, is correct. It is vital that you ensure Darling is not drawn off on these various deviations. You are the tutor and guide. Like your schoolmasters of old; you must remain strict and severe.
Another observation: what you are grappling with re Benin; Falola is grappling with (and facing constant enormous stick from all kinds of Governing Authorities and vested interests, academic and otherwise) Africa-wide. ...My wish is that one day you may meet with him. You share much. ...And of course he has many folk, battling—just as you are doing (ie, fighting hard to try to ensure that heritage is accurately restored)—with whom he keeps contact—mostly through encouragement, arranging conferences, and helping publish their work.

Thoughts.

Meanwhile, it would indeed be interesting to see what it is that Darling passed on to the Chicago authorities. Did you get to see it? Not clear.

Best, Michael v
UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE FOR BENIN: 2009 2010

BACKGROUND: The Benin earthworks are the world’s longest ancient earthworks, with a total length of around 16,000 km and they cover about 6,500km² of the rainforest zone of southern Nigeria. The Benin City Moat, the best known of these earthworks, is an impressive 18m deep 14km long dump rampart with a calibrated radiocarbon date of 1350 ± 105 A.D.:1 which more or less coincides with the start the present dynasty, assuming that Bradbury’s 1959 Benin king-list chronology is the most accurate.2

In the early to mid-C20th, Egharevba perceived the Benin City Moat as the innermost of three concentric ‘walls’;3 but Connah’s 1964 surveys of the ‘Benin City Walls’ found that this Moat was part of a larger pattern, whereby various independent settlements (such as Benin, Egor, Ekae and Ugbowo) had become fused together by subsequent earthworks over the centuries.4 Connah’s work was part of a larger project, in which important but quite separate research was also carried out by Bradbury and Ryder.5 In the mid 1970s, Darling used a more holistic approach to examine the extensive rural earthworks, using oral data (e.g., Ogiso period settlements), mapped earthworks, demographic logic, ethnographic data (e.g., the Avbiogbe demarcated with trees not with earthworks), and new pottery sherd/linguistic analyses to re-interpret 700-1300 AD Edo history in terms of short-distance migratory wave-fronts in state-formation processes culminating in Benin.6

However, this interpretation was partly at odds with oral claims that the earthworks had been dug by Benin-founded settlements between about 1300 and 1500 A.D.7 The key reasons for this chicken and egg debate arose from insufficient radio-carbon dates using charcoal from ancient soil surfaces buried underneath the earthwork banks and major gaps in the pottery sherd analyses. As it is likely that there was an overlap in settlement practices over time, both sides of this debate probably contain elements of truth.

In the mid-1990’s, Darling worked with The AG Leventis Foundation to identify potential UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Nigeria; and the Benin Earthworks were assessed independently as the most important item on that list.8 Working with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) and Prince Edun Akenzua (appointed by the Oba for this task), Darling undertook fresh surveys and dating, as well as facilitating the grass-roots conservation agreements required by UNESCO. Sadly, local and national politics combined to frustrate this initiative: the conservation agreements were not ratified; and, as a consequence, this part of the UNESCO nomination failed. There were informal reports that UNESCO was particularly excited by the significance of this nomination; but it could not proceed without proper conservation measures in place.

The recent rise of The Benin Moat Foundation, established by prominent Edo individuals under Engineer Uwaifo, provides the right impetus for re-nominating Benin’s earthworks.

AIMS: 1) To achieve UNESCO World Heritage Site status for the Benin Earthworks
2) To restore National Monument status to the main Benin City Moat
3) To map and conserve key samples of the earthworks in the Benin Kingdom
4) To back up the UNESCO nomination with more comprehensive dating of the earthworks and a much wider application of pottery sherd analyses.

IMPLEMENTATION: The above four aims will be addressed as follows:

1) To achieve UNESCO World Heritage Site status for the Benin Earthworks: the two key criteria for World Heritage Sites are that they are of ‘universal significance’ and that they have ‘integrity’. The significance of the Benin Earthworks lies in their totality involving both the Benin City Moat and its related extensive network. As such, they are a unique expression of either state
formation processes or of state labour organisation fusing with local processes (or both). At present, the lack of an unequivocal interpretation based on hard data from the Benin earthworks is the major handicap to a clear expression of their ‘universal’ significance (apart from sheer length). African Legacy is fully prepared to spend time and effort on establishing this universal significance (provided it can obtain the modest funding required) in collaboration with the Benin Moat Foundation, which would address the parallel criteria of integrity and conservation.

1a) Coordinating UNESCO requirements for World Heritage Site nomination would be undertaken by the Benin Moat Foundation (BMF), who tasks would include:

- liaising with all the appropriate local and national officials
- ensuring that suitable conservation measures and agreements are put in place
- collaborating with those undertaking the necessary survey and dating work
- promotional and awareness-raising activity to encourage public support: this would include upgrading sections of the Benin City Moat accessible to the public.

2a) Restoration of National Monument status to the main Benin City moat is an achievable objective for the BMF. The failure of the Federal Department of Antiquities and its successor, the NCMM, to enforce conservation measures (which it erroneously thought were legal) is salutary; and the similar records of State Government organisations (e.g., the lack of protection afforded to the Okomu Forest Reserve) need to be considered before the BMF decides on the most suitable legal entity to supervise this new National Monument. This entity needs to be genuinely interested in conserving the Benin City Moat for posterity, as well as having the necessary means to enforce protection. It is noted that establishing a National Monument under local control might be setting a legal precedent; but this would be a way forward for other local bodies elsewhere in Nigeria. A major related task is the removal of garbage from the moat; and this will involve the identification of suitable waste-disposal sites elsewhere for this unsightly material. Thereafter, ongoing protection from fly-tipping may require the use of waste-skips and, perhaps, a legally and ethically acceptable equivalent of local vigilante groups.

2b) Technical surveys of Benin City Moat for National Monument status: A detailed and comprehensive map of the Benin City Moat, showing all the routes and rights of way crossing it needs to be produced. The failure to produce such a map was the reason for the revocation of the previous National Monument status of the Benin City Moat in the 1960s. A mosaic based on high resolution satellite imagery has been created by African Legacy to provide base data for identifying and referencing the numerous crossing points. Using the same high-resolution imagery as a source for coordinates, a detailed large-scale map will incorporate handheld GPS readings of the crossing points, each of which will be identified by a reference number. These numbers will then link directly to a full compilation of notes about each crossing point; perceptions of ownership; views about how the crossing-point could be improved in a way acceptable to the local people; key local stakeholders; as well as potential car-parking areas for visitors wishing to view the Benin City Moat. There may also need to be liaison with the relevant Ministry of Works and Transport about roads built across the moat in recent decades.

3) To map and to conserve key samples of the earthworks in the Benin Kingdom: The advent of recent high-resolution imagery for the Benin area has emphasized the need to map as much as possible of the rural earthworks, as many of them have been, or are being, destroyed. Such data is the historical birthright of every Edo person; and the vulnerability of these earthworks to erosion and suburban expansion as their tree-cover is removed is of considerable concern; as it represents the destruction of the world’s longest archaeological feature and the bulk of its as yet unrecorded history. The two most realistic forms of practical conservation are mapping and conservation by consensus.

3a) Mapping the rural earthworks: This mainly involves a record their courses, orientation and cross-profiles @ an expected mean survey rate of around five kilometres per person per day,
depending on undergrowth. In open areas, handheld GPS, compass and spirit-level do the job; and the results can be cross-checked against satellite imagery. Under thick forest cover, the new sensitive aerials of Garmin GS Map 60 CSx handheld GPS is required, as *African Legacy’s* tried and tested continuous traverses with coordinates derived from orienteering compass and pacing is time-consuming, especially in measures taken to rectify its accumulated error. Ideally, the whole extensive network presents a unique opportunity to map most of the early settlement history of this area; but it is recognised that initial attention must prioritise the sample areas.

3b) **Key sample areas conserved for the UNESCO nomination:** In the first nomination, Sungbo’s Eredo (Ijebu) was set to be conserved along with the Benin City Moat, Udo town wall, and Ekhor earthworks; but the next nomination, focusing only on the Benin Earthworks, will have to fill the sizeable gap left by the exclusion of Sungbo’s Eredo. This will be done with more high quality samples of the Benin earthworks; and the best examples are probably to be found in the Ehor Forest Reserve, the only place where the Benin earthworks are still protected by uninterrupted forest cover, although farming is cutting deeply into this reserve. Other priority sample areas for interpretation include Isi, northern Uhunwode and a completion of the Ekhor primary earthwork enclosures previously submitted. *African Legacy* has the experience, aptitude, willingness and techniques necessary to complete this task to meet the nomination deadlines.

UNESCO emphasises the need for strong grass-roots support for such conservation areas and, from past experience, most rural settlements regarded being put on the map in terms of world recognition as sufficient incentive: the added bonus of potential tourist income was not a prime motive. The BMF needs to involve all the different stakeholders in terms of local and national politics; and *African Legacy* publications would help to build up world awareness wherever possible. The previous batch of flexible local conservation agreements will be made available to the BMF for modification or rewriting by the various parties concerned.

4) **Backing up the UNESCO nomination with more comprehensive dating of the earthworks and a much wider application of pottery sherd analyses.** The universal significance of the Benin Earthworks lies in their interpretation; and dating is proving to be the crucial determinant to understanding whether they are Ogiso period (pre-dynastic) constructions showing large-scale short-distance migratory wave-fronts leading to petty chieftdoms and kingdom formation; or whether they are largely a reflection of Benin’s dynastic resettlement of peoples captured from conflicts around; or a mixture of both processes. Any definite interpretation would be uniquely significant; but one needs to know what is backed by the data to avoid embarrassment by forwarding the wrong interpretation. The relative dating of the enclosures in each individual earthwork system is fairly straightforward; but the absolute dating of each system in comparison with other systems is unknown; and radio-carbon dating provides the absolute dates required. Pottery sherds are a further means of relative and absolute dating, with the bonus of providing related cultural information.

4a) **Radio-carbon dating of the earthworks** is based on the assumption that clearance and burning left charcoal along the trace where the earthworks were originally dug. This charcoal can then be identified on top of the old grey ground surface buried under the redder sub-soils of the earthwork banks. In practice, this distinction is complicated by initial bank layers consisting of old surface soil thrown up from the ditch; and the lack of light in narrow trenches under forest cover renders crucial soil colours difficult to distinguish. However, compared to heavily leached sites studied elsewhere in this region, the fossil top-soils under the earthwork banks hold out considerable promise for dating.

**Benin City Walls complex:** The dating of these primary and secondary enclosures is long overdue; and their approximate descending order of priority is: i) dating of the primary enclosure at Ugbowo in the UNIBEN campus; ii) dating of the *Iya n’Akpa*, which enclosed the *Uzama* villages; iii) dating the primary enclosures around Egor, Ekae, Ugbokhiro and Ohohugbo, if they
have not been entirely destroyed; iv) obtaining a date for some of the last Benin City Walls to be dug.

Core Area Earthworks: North-east and east of Benin is a large area of numerous small settlement enclosures with multiple accretionary loops and separated by narrow strips of no-man’s-land; and this core area contrasts with the periphery, which includes the Benin City Walls. An early C8th AD date was obtained from Ekhor Niro primary earthwork supports the notion that the multitude of small earthwork enclosures at Isi (‘root of the world’) led to a westward expansion across Ekhor towards Benin in the centuries before the emergence of Benin as a major power. However, poor light conditions meant that the Ekhor Niro charcoal sample could have come from horizons marginally either side of the interface between the old top-soil and the bank sub-soil; and, in any case, an isolated date is never secure. As it stands, the present dating is at odds with Marshall’s Intelligence Report, which notes that Isi was settled with slaves captured by Benin. However, a few good dates from other primary earthworks in the sample areas mapped at Ekhor, Isi or Ehor Forest Reserve would resolve much of the overall interpretation of the rural earthworks, so providing greater integrity to the UNESCO nomination.

4b) Pottery sherd analyses: The two sets of chronological seriation by Daniels, using data from Connah and from Darling,10, 11 mean that in situ analyses of surface pottery sherds can be undertaken using the values of the decoration and form variables already obtained. In effect, each ‘assemblage’ can be placed in a sequence relative to one another without creating fresh, costly seriation analyses. In many cases, an approximate absolute date can be assigned to each sherd ‘assemblage’ based on Connah’s radiocarbon dates from excavation. Initial work will focus on work done on sherds at UNIBEN, Ife, UI, UNN and Akodi Afrika (Iffe Ijumu), as these will provide useful comparative data for interpretation. As African Legacy policy is to examine on site and not to remove any material, each sherd ‘assemblages’ is from site notes not from physical ‘assemblage’.

Benin Kingdom: This sherd chronology is particularly well-established, and there is a record of the differences between assemblages from known sites, from random sites, and from dug or bulldozered sites, as well as from a systematic collection of surface and sub-surface sherds through the Benin, Ishan and Etsako areas. This means that most, if not all, the likely form and decoration variables have been covered; and analyses can proceed on the ground very rapidly of ten or more ‘assemblages’ per person per day. There is a need to examine surface sherd patterns comprehensively within one small enclosure, as well identifying any differences between sherds from primary, secondary and later enclosures vis-à-vis those encountered outside the earthworks and beyond the earthwork-building areas. The easiest distinctions will be between assemblages with or without carved wooden roulette decoration with a chevron motif, as this decoration seems to appear at approximately the same date as the onset of Benin rule over this area.

Edo/Igbo Interface: If the linguistic interpretation for the Benue-Congo speakers is correct, then the early Edo migrated southwards from the Niger-Benue confluence area; but whether this was overland via Akoko-Edo, or whether they continued down the Niger and then came westwards is unknown. Also, it remains to be ascertained if the Igbo settlement incursion across the Niger displaced early Edo settlers – a possibility reinforced by some Edo creation myths involving Agbor. Once again, in situ analyses of assemblages will be made; and decisions to base results on presence-absence or ratio criteria will reflect field conditions. The key determinants expected are as follows:

- background scatter of miscellaneous sherds predating Edo or Igbo settlement
- early Edo sherds with plaited string roulettes but no carved wooden rouletting
- late Edo sherds with plaited string roulettes, punctuates and carved rouletting
- Igbo sherds with no plaited string roulettes but having other distinctive variables.
**Edo/Yoruba Interface:** Apart from Eyo’s excavations at Owo, no fieldwork archaeology has been conducted on the Edo/Yoruba interface. Exploration is needed in at least three directions: a) northwards from Etsako, through Akoko Edo, Akoko Yoruba, Iffe Ijumu and the vicinity of the Benue-Niger confluence; b) north-west through Usen, Ondo, Ekiti, Ilesa and Ife; c) westwards through Unuame, Udo, Esi and on to Ijebu. From analyses of sherds from soil-pits in the Okomu Forest Reserve, it seems that pre-Edo people may have been concentrated around the odighi (seasonal lakes). Rescue archaeology of the areas being cleared for new Michelin rubber plantations in the Okomu Forest Reserve indicated a surface archaeology dominated by assemblages containing carved wooden roulettes with coarse chevron motifs. These may represent Benin colonisation of Udo lands in the C16th or later; or it may reflect an earlier introduction of this rouletting from further west. All these collections, therefore, would provide hard statistical data for chewing over by those interested in the ramifications of the Benin-Ife controversy.

**Edo/Urhobo Interface:** A series of small reverse-banked enclosures run south from the north-east corner of the Benin City moat, to north of Uroho, to just south of the Orhiomo River, to just north of the Jamieson River. Similar enclosures on the western routes to Ughoton and Ikoro watersides, as well as northwards through NIFOR are thought to have been staging-posts for captured slaves being brought into the Benin Kingdom. The sherds from these enclosures need to be examined, as well as those from Southern Edo speakers in Urhobo, Isoko and Degema, which (from cursory examination) may be devoid of the characteristic plaited string roulettes of Northern and Central Edo speakers. A deeper study of the original Ologbo, Ughoton and Ikoro waterside settlements is also merited, aiming to contrast Edo, Itsekiri, Ijaw(?) and Urhobo sherds.

The rapid survey techniques developed by *African Legacy* for the survey of vast areas would be deployed and would not involve the removal of any material, except a few sherds for in-country pottery thin-section analyses at *Akodi Afrika* research institute.

**Oral and cultural landscape data:** This is automatically collected as part of local protocol and in using local guides. Checks will be made to see if Bradbury’s fieldwork notes copied by Nevadomsky are still accessible in UNIBEN; a spreadsheet listing of all undergraduate and postgraduate archaeology/ethnography/history theses will be made if possible; and checks will be made to ensure that there are copies of Melzian’s Dictionary and other basic works on Benin by Connah, Dark, Bradbury, Ryder *et alia*.

**SCHEDULE:** This is the proposed *African Legacy* schedule, which will be implemented to maximize opportunities, to avoid problems and to collaborate with BMF parallel work.

**August/September 2009:** Surveys of Benin City Moat crossing points: 15 days work.  
Reconnaissance surveys: Ehor FR, Ekhor and Isi: 9 days.  
Benin K. sherds: Ehor FR margins, Okomu South, Isi. 3 days  
Sherds in adjacent cultures: Ika, Aniocha. 2 days.  
Ugbowo charcoal collected for radio-carbon dating: 1 day  
Checking of data at UNIBEN & UNN *en route.*

Total work: thirty days (one month).

**February/March 2010:** Update Benin City Moat surveys to note changes: 5 days.  
Earthwork surveys: Ekhor FR and margins, Ekhor, Isi: 10 days.  
Radiocarbon sample collections from the above: 5 days.  
Benin K. sherds: Uhumwode, Urhonigbe, Ughoton: 3 days.  
Gap in previous pottery analysis: recent Etsako: 2 days.  
Adjacent cultures: Urhobo, Ondo, Owo, Usen, Akoko. 5 days.

Total work: thirty days (one month).

It is stressed that this very rapid initial survey schedule aims to provide the key data needed to assess the universal significance of the Benin Earthworks for their nomination to UNESCO as a
World Heritage Site. Later, it would be desirable to extend this schedule to map and to examine sherds and earthworks over the whole Benin Kingdom; but the present focus will be on the requirements for UNESCO World Heritage Nomination. Creating a massive framework of future research would introduce an element of inflexibility in a process that needs constantly to reassess its priorities in light of what has been achieved and what remains to be done. Consequently, African Legacy’s schedule requirements will be developed in consultation with the BMF on an annual basis.

INPUTS: African Legacy is a non-profit organisation and requires the following basics:

### August/September 2009 visit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Return Air-Fare: London-Lagos.</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa from Nigeria High Commission:</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three return Coach Fares for both the above: Bournemouth to London:</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport within Nigeria @ $750 per day for 30 days ($22,500)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation in Nigeria @ $1,000 a day for 30 days ($30,000)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, water and incidentals @ $750 a day for 30 days ($22,500)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local labour: a) colleague: Benin City Moat 15 days @ $800: $12,000</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Ugbowo: two labourers to dig for sample @ $500 per hour#</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Ehor Forest Reserve: UNIBEN colleague? @ $200 a day*</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Okomu: Forest Guards/local farmers: @ $1000 a day</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Ekpoma: local guides/informants: @ $1000 a day, three days</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Isi: local informants/guides: @ $1000 a day for three days</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment and Expendables:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repair kits for tents and sleeping mats:</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterproof notebooks and pens:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garmin GS Map 60 CSx handheld GPS for Ehor Forest Reserve:</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spare AA batteries for GPS and headlight:</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carborundum paste, slides, non-refractive adhesive (sherd thin-sections)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasticine (to make negative moulds of pottery decorations for analysis)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encapsulation of mosaic base map</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AO Graph paper; fine tracing pen; photocopying of AO sheets</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio-carbon date: postage, packing and courier to USA laboratory</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impregnated mosquito net insecticide; prophylactics, medicines</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS:** £1,500 $2,475

Later Costs: Radiocarbon dating by laboratory (Beta Analytic): one date £270 $450

# NCMM permission and presence required: BMF to organise this
* minimum accepted by labourers to spend nights in forest far away from any settlement.

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Benin K. sherds: Uhumwode, Urhonigbe, Ughoton: 3 days.
Gap in previous pottery analysis: recent Etsako: 2 days.
Adjacent cultures: Urhobo, Ondo, Owo, Usen, Akoko. 5 days.

Total work: thirty days (one month).

Local labour: a) colleague: Benin City Moat update 5 days @ N800: N4,000 20 33
  b) Ehor Forest Reserve: colleague @ N2000 a day* four days 40 66
c) Ekhor: local guides/informants: @ N1000 a day, three days 15 25
d) Isi: local informants/guides: @ N1000 a day for three days 15 25
e) Two diggers: radiocarbon samples# @ N2000 a day, 5 days 50 82

Equipment and Expendables:
Spare AA batteries for GPS and headlight:                          10  16
Carborundum paste, slides, non-refractive adhesive (sherd thin-sections) 40  66
Stationery for maps and results                                   10  16
Radio-carbon dates: postage, packing and courier to USA laboratory 20  33
Prophylactics, medicines                                         20  33

TOTALS:                                                           £1,240 $2,046

Later Costs: Radiocarbon laboratory costs: five dates @$450 a date £1,350 $2,227

The funding for the radiocarbon dating can be raised after sample collection and would
paid direct by the funders to the laboratory. Thermo-luminescent dating of pottery sherds in a
good stratigraphical provenance may be used if there is an absence of charcoal in the horizon
between top-soil and bank sub-soil. This costs about the same as radiocarbon dating.

* minimum accepted by labourers to spend night in forest far away from any settlement.
Casual labour is often more expensive in rural areas as the time spent represents a real
opportunity cost of saleable produce foregone: this contrasts with urban unemployment.
# NCMM and Forestry permission (& presence?) required: BMF to organise this.

OUTPUTS: Completion of the above fieldwork tasks will result in the following outputs:

• Accurate large-scale map of Benin City Moat cross-referenced to detailed notes on each
crossing to meet its legal requirements to become a National Monument.

• Maps of key sample areas of Benin rural earthworks for inclusion in the UNESCO
nomination of the Benin Earthworks as a World Heritage Site.

• Report to the BMF updating the physical condition and threats to all the different
earthworks, including the main Benin City Moat, as this relates to the ‘integrity’ and
‘grass-roots conservation measures’ required by UNESCO.

• Dating of primary earthworks in the Benin City Walls and core area earthworks to
determine more precisely their ‘universal significance’ for UNESCO nomination.

• Report on the analyses of surface (and recently exposed sub-surface) sherds from within
the Benin Kingdom and at its key interfaces with adjacent cultures. This would address
fundamental dating and cultural interpretation issues pertaining to the ‘universal
significance’ of the features being nominated to UNESCO.
• Publication of the earthwork and pottery work for citing in UNESCO nomination.

• New set of local conservation agreements approved in principal in advance by the Oba and then ratified by him after local consultation has fine tuned them to meet local conditions and requirements.

• New photographs to illustrate the earthworks for the UNESCO nomination.

• A complete up-dated re-write of the former UNESCO nomination to include all the above outputs once they have been completed.

• Benin Earthworks proclaimed as a newly inscribed UNESCO World Heritage Site (in about three years time, if past processing times are any guide).

Dr Patrick Darling
_African Legacy._

July 2009.

(References on next page.)

References:


7 Marshall 1930’s Intelligence Report. Egharevba _op.cit._


10 Connah G. _op.cit._, pp.182-208.

11 Darling P.J. _op cit._ Vol.2
Dear Solomon,

Further to your questions yesterday of whether I will be ‘available for the sustained effort over a long period of time’ and ‘what are the conditions?’, I have talked to those knowing about State Pensions so, with that bit of the jigsaw in place, I can now go some way to answering those questions.

1) It has always been my dream to survey and date all the Benin and Ishan earthworks together with their associated traditions, cultural landscapes and artefacts (sherds and lithics). So there is no question about my willingness to tackle this immense task. The challenges concern climatic constraints, my time organisation and my financial constraints.

2) I need to make it clear at the outset that archaeology is not a panacea: it often introduces a different set of perceptions and problems: e.g., it is impersonal; it tends to record trends rather than events; and it is often subject to conflicting interpretations. However, in respect of the early settlement history of the Edo people, it has no equal in providing dates and information on non-perishable material culture. In addition, the earthworks provide a whole range of other territorial data over a vast area that most other archaeology elsewhere completely lacks.

3) Time organisation: The dry season is by far the best period in which to survey; and I averaged nearly 250kms a month in the first five months of surveys in 1974/5 (then came the Gowan coup and my funding dried up; and I was forced to undertake less costly parallel lines of research). So fieldwork survey is best undertaken between October and March, although reconnaissance surveys along footpaths to locate the Iya or to analyse surface sherds can be done on any dry day. I already have a commitment to set up the Akodi Afrika Museum, library and research station in Kogi State; but this can be done mainly during the rains, when I can also write up the Benin work. Finally, time in the UK gives me a chance to draw maps and research on Googlemap Terrascope and the Internet. How to balance these different activities in three different locations is the question.

4) Financial constraints:
   a) Income: The West African dry season is coincident with the most likely times of the year to obtain Supply Teaching in the UK; so that would be an opportunity cost of between £1000 and £2000 a month (providing the money that keeps me going for the rest of the year). Similarly, I understand that, If I spend more than two months abroad, I am liable to lose the top-up benefits on my pension, which is due to start in early February 2010. As I have been in Nigeria so much of my life, my teaching pension is just £105 a month and my state pension will be only about £240 a month (total £345 a month) - not enough to live on. If I obtain a pension top-up, then I might receive about £95.25 a week (Total: c.£486 a month).

   b) Expenditure: Wherever I am, I need to look after my wife (who, sadly, does not love Nigeria in the same way as me). The average monthly bills are: council tax c.£130, telephone £60, electricity £90, gas £30, dental plan £12, water £35; loan repayment (taken out to help pay children's school fees many years ago) £250.95 (£313 for next four months owing to default), car c.£150, clothes £10, TV licence £10 and food c.£240-450 depending on whether I am present or not. This is a total of around £1080 to £1280 per month just to exist! The shortfall is about £600 - £800 a month; and, having been a full-time mother for a long time, my wife's pension will only be about £200 a month. Assuming eight months in Nigeria and four in UK per year, that means I forgo the top up pension (and Supply Teaching) and the shortfall comes to £6,020 p.a. (8 x £435 + 4 x £635).

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5) 'Conditions': a) The shortfall outlined in 4b is met in advance before each visit.

b) Two return London-Lagos return flights and visas (Christmas/Summer) p.a.

c) Modest accommodation in Benin where books, papers, and survey equipment can be stored safely all the year round. I am adaptable but ideally, this should have kitchen with gas fridge, dining/living room, bedroom, office/store, shower or bath, seated toilets (as my knees are now stiff!). A safe location is more important than separate living/bedroom/office. No garage is required; but if one is present, it could be used in lieu of office/storeroom. I know someone who would help find such accommodation, subject to BMF approval. This should be cheaper and safer than taking local hotels (@c.₦2,000 a day = ₦360,000 for six months), whereas two GRA rooms go for c.₦80,000 per year.

d) Local travel expenses and per diems are paid monthly in advance at a rate to be agreed (see other project proposal as a rough guide), including contingency expenditure. As things stand at present, no car is required; but there may be a need for bicycles.

e) The costs of using local labour/guides/infomants are met. I can move through the thickest undergrowth without a cutlass; but it is wiser to move with a local person to defuse unnecessary suspicion and to identify local cultural landscapes.

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g) That the BMF undertake to deal with permits, politics and permission and/or provide the necessary endorsement letters to deal with these matters.

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i) That, in order for work to begin as soon as possible, funds for the 2009 August/September visit are forwarded, so that visas and tickets can be obtained in time.

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With best wishes,

Patrick.
Dear Patrick,

Thank you for your email. You've given BMF information towards establishing much of the cost of its project. However, both what you will do and the time-scale are needed before we can arrive at actual cost. The point to note is that we want to avoid spreading the whole thing over too long a period. I personally would love to have all data within three years.

I note your #2. I agree archaeology cannot be a panacea, but it will provide perceptions and problems for academics to chew and resolve. Combined with our rich oral tradition as well as our artefacts, historians of good faith should know where much of the truth are or where they may be found.

I need to say that this is all very exploratory at this point. In my position, I need tools to work with as we try to resolve the thorny issues of who we are and why we are where we are. A people who created an empire and who had the vision, tools and the engineering to build thousands of miles of Iya (moat), must have had something going for them.

Please give as detailed a description of what you should do to help our project and then, please put it on a time-scale.

SOU

From: Patrick Darling
Subject: Re: Fw: Re: Ethnography
To: "Solomon Uwaifo"
Date: Saturday, 1 August, 2009, 1:48 AM

Dear Solomon,

Further to your questions yesterday of whether I will be 'available for the sustained effort over a long period of time' and 'what are the conditions?', I have talked to those knowing about State Pensions so, with that bit of the jigsaw in place, I can now go some way to answering those questions.

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7/31/09

From: Solomon Uwaifo:

Dear Patrick,

Thanks for your email. I have also received one from Chicago this morning. I'll respond as soon as I'm done replying you. That you can be available for the project is encouraging and I want to assure you that we deeply appreciate your professional interest in and commitment to our heritage. I hope that in the process of carrying out our assignment, if we are able to agree terms, you will be able to impart a good deal of knowledge to some of our children.

Another point that keeps occurring needs correcting. There was only one kingdom in the old Benin Empire and Esan land was always a worthy part of it. There has never been an "Ishan Kingdom." For all their hatred of Benin and its kingdom at that time, even the colonial government would admit that. This is yet another reason why these researches are necessary. And speaking for self, no part of us should be left out - east, west, north or south.

I await your response. S O. Uwaifo
Dear Solomon,

Many thanks for your reply. Yes, I will prepare a more detailed three year schedule as requested, building on the first stage of the UNESCO World Heritage Site preparation already outlined, as this embodies much of what must be covered.

In response to various other points in your previous e-mails, the main historical issue of oral traditions is that they use historical narrative to provide a legal charter for their existence and for their surrounding relationships. This is often expressed as a journey in which religious, political and social affiliations are all included - hence so many northern settlements 'originating' from the middle east. Therefore, many historians have tried to tease out the 'meaning' of traditions, often to the extent of throwing away what could be good historical content. Traditions provide the colour and flesh to the bare bones of the archaeological framework; and the two stand to enhance and modify each other.

If one deals with the 'Ogiso' period traditions, for example, one has various ways of testing the data. In the case of Eghraevba's list of 'Ogiso period' settlements in the Benin Kingdom area, one finds that a) their original sites all coincide with primary Iya on the peripheral zone of the earthworks b) they only partly coincide with the primary Iya in the core zone, i.e., some of the early Iya enclosures were built and deserted possibly even before the 'Ogiso period' c) Udo is the only settlement, Ogiso or not, to have an Iya in Iyek'Ovia, a paradox which requires analysis of other solutions (e.g., which Urhobo settlements claimed that they came from Udo? How does this gel with Egharevba's claims that they went to Ondo? What evidence is there in the pottery sherds? Overall, though, the coincidence of primary Iya and Ogiso period settlements over a large area provides some confidence in linking the two circumspectly.

Ryder and Bradbury both found little hard data on the ogiso: they describe them as shadowy figures shrouded in myth; and one has to remember that Bradbury was a very intelligent and thorough person, spoke Bini and was immersed in Edo culture. Accordingly, alarm bells ring when seeing the detailed list of 31 Ogisos compiled by Osayaomwanobo Osemwegie Ero cited by Ekhaguosa Aisien (2001) in his otherwise very useful work on The Benin Pilgrimage Stations. This alarm turns to concern when the dates are analysed.

The average Ogiso reign length here is 36.77 years (whereas that of the Oba's is about half that - assuming Bradbury's's chronology is accurate). The first three Ogisos are supposed to have reigned for 56, 50 and 34 years respectively, whilst all the last eight supposedly reigned for over 40 years each, four reining for over 50 years. Finally, there is a 285 year gap between the third and fourth Ogiso and a 70 year gap between Owodo and Oranmiyan. It would seem the Ogiso period has extended the idea of empire over a thousand years before it occured by increasing the number of Ogiso rulers, by stretching their mean reign lengths well beyond plausible limits, and by inserting vast time gaps. All these bear the hallmarks of fabrication.

My interest in Osa derives from the Igu'Osa settlements seemingly being founded after Iya construction in their area. My queries re-Ogun and Olokun remain, as Ogun's disappearance is in the Ipole area of Ilesha.

Let me draw up a three year plan with Terms of Reference and Targets, yet containing the flexibility to respond to opportunities and new challenges. To some extent this will expand in more depth and extent on the outline begun by the two month's work already described.
In the meantime, do you want me to go ahead with the work to help achieve National Monument status for the main Benin CIty moat in August/September 2009, as air tickets and visa take time?

With best wishes,

Patrick.

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Re: Fwd: Re: Benin Iya and Cultural Heritage Sites in Benin

Sunday, 2 August, 2009 1:27 PM

From: "Solomon Uwaifo" <so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org>
To: kbick@artic.edu
Cc:

Dear Dr. Kathleen Berzock,

Thank you for the copy of the email to Dr Darling. Benin Moat Foundation (BMF) is happy and grateful for your interest in our Iya and other heritage bequeathed us by our ancestors.

BMF salutes Edo Arts and Cultural Heritage Institute (EACHI) for their vision and effort. We say to them - Wa b'evbaru; wa b'iwer; t'Osa gha deba uwa hia. Jointly with them, we believe we can stem the devastation that centuries of slumber has done to these monuments and to our progress as a people.

We wish EACHI a great gala on August 8 and hope we can come together at the earliest, to discuss the common interest. BMF has no doubt that we will achieve more as a team working together.

Osaro Uhunmwunagho of EACHI is also receiving this message. Thanks and goodbye.

Omorodion S. Uwaifo

Chairman, Board of Trustees, Benin Moat Foundation.

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Date: Thursday, 30 July, 2009, 11:50 PM

From: kbick@artic.edu
Subject: Fwd: Re: Benin Iya and Cultural Heritage Sites in Benin
To: "Patrick Darling"
Cc: "Solomon Uwaifo"

Dear Dr. Patrick Darling,

Thank you for your message and for the report on the Benin Moat Foundation and African Legacy. The efforts of these two organizations to renew the nomination of the Benin Earthworks for UNESCO World Heritage Site status, and related efforts to survey, conserve, and protect the Benin Earthworks, are very much in line with the mission and interests of The Edo Arts and Cultural Heritage Institute (EACHI). The EACHI gala is Aug. 8th and I am preparing my presentation; I will certainly integrate this update information into it. I am forwarding this
message to Mr. Osaro Uhunmwangho, EACHI's Executive Director, and am asking him to forward it to EACHI president Mr. Kingsley Ehimenman and EACHI board member Dr. Kienuwa Obaseki, and to anyone else in the steering membership whom he would deem appropriate. Engineer Uwaifo of the Benin Moat Foundation is also receiving the message.

I will report back to you following Aug. 8th.

Yours sincerely,
Kathleen Berzock

Date: Thu, 30 Jul 2009
From: Patrick Darling
Reply-To: Patrick Darling
Subject: Re: Benin Iya and Cultural Heritage Sites in Benin
To: kbick
Dr Kathleen Berzok, Chicago Museum
cc. Engineer Uwaifo, Benin Moat Foundation.

Dear Dr Berzok,

After discussions with the Benin Moat Foundation over your correspondence, I have been asked to submit a full proposal containing the technical requirements necessary to obtain a UNESCO World Heritage Site for Benin (see attachment).

You are welcome to use this in your talk; and we would be most grateful if you could supply EACHI with a copy of this proposal, with a view to seeing what kind of collaboration might work with the *Benin Moat Foundation (BMF)*

From *African Legacy's* point of view, there is an urgent need of funding for the above modest proposal to achieve things in a reasonable timeframe. Should there be positive interest in this respect, I would be most grateful - for the sake of open transparency - if all correspondence on this nomination is copied to Engineer Uwaifo of the BMF a so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org and v&v.

He will be adding his own thoughts on this proposal and on the possibilities of the BMF working alongside EACHI.

With best wishes,

Dr Patrick Darling,

From KBB: 7/2/09

Dear Dr. Darling,

Thank you for your email and for sending the article from Punch, which is very helpful. I've seen the web site for the Benin Moat Foundation and am interested to learn that you are actively working with them. They seem very well organized. Is Areo, the curator of the Benin Museum, still on their board of directors? I'm curious to know if he is actively involved.
I've suggested to EACHI that they contact BMF and discuss joining forces rather than working separately towards a similar goal; however, I don’t think EACHI and the BMF members have been in touch with each other yet. I will report on your efforts on Aug. 8 as you have described them. Perhaps this will encourage them to make the contact.

This weekend is a holiday weekend in the USA and I will not be in the office tomorrow. You've given me some excellent information to digest on the status of preservation on the Benin Iya and other efforts in Nigeria. Let me mull things over this weekend and I will email you again on Monday to follow up.

With thanks for your assistance,

KBB

On Jul 1, 2009, at 5:28 PM, Patrick Darling

Dear Dr Berzok,

Thank you for your fascinating letter. It brought back memories of my visiting lecture at Chicago University in the snow in 1996, as well as noting *Carcharodontosaurus* in the NHM Chicago for use in one of the interactive units in *Akodi Afrika* (see below). I am actively engaged with the *Benin Moat Foundation* in trying to conserve and promote both the Benin City *Iya* (Moat) and to map more of the thousands of miles of other Iya throughout the Benin and Ishan Kingdoms before they erode away or are otherwise destroyed; so the royal interest is very welcome indeed.

A recent discovery has been that the National Monument status for the Benin City *Iya* lapsed within three years of it being proclaimed because no map of the feature showing rights of way, etc was produced. This year, I am mapping out this rampart ditch and bank with detailed coordinates for the *Benin Moat Foundation* being promoted by Engineer Uwaifo. I would hope that there could be some joining of forces on this issue; and I would be willing to do dry season surveys of the moats and their associated cultural landscapes for the rest of my life, if the right modest funding and arrangements could be put in place. I am seeing Engineer Uwaifo on Saturday and will discuss this new exciting development with him.

At present, I particularly want to survey the last really protected rural *Iya* in the dwindling Usen Forest Reserve, where there is no history known for the large deserted settlement enclosures there. Large farm clearing was eating into the forest reserve when I viewed it three years ago. This mapping has to be done with orienteering compass and pacing, because handheld GPS do not work well under the forest tree cover. There are other eroding legacies of Benin and pre-Benin history earthworks over 2,400 square miles of the rainforest zone: my estimate of about ten thousand miles put these as the world's longest ancient earthworks in the Guinness Book of Records in around 1974.

I did make a major effort to conserve and promote these earthworks by doing all the survey work (much of my PhD) and ghostwriting of their nomination as Nigeria's most important UNESCO World Heritage Site, as well as working with the Principal Superintendent of Monuments of Nigeria's National Commission of Museums and Monuments (NCMM) to produce the necessary grassroots conservation agreements for ratification by the *Oba*. Unfortunately, there was deliberate political misinformation circulated about me and the *Oba* was ill advised (possibly by an ambitious NCMM official, but this issue does not matter now). The result was a negative
letter to me from the *Oba* and the conservation agreements were not ratified. As a consequence of the last, Henry Cleere of ICOMOS told me, the Benin UNESCO nomination failed, whilst that for Sukur (Dr Gella's home area) passed: I had been informed that Gella would not sign the Benin nomination unless I undertook to map and ghostwrite the Sukur nomination in the last few days before the deadline. This I did by dint of working 22 hours a day; and Nigeria won its first UNESCO World Heritage Site, but not the one for which I had spent so much of my life working.

Therefore, I am delighted that the *Oba* and his family are taking an interest in this whole matter; and, if you get the opportunity, please assure them that I am still fully prepared to assist in surveys and other work to ensure that the Benin earthworks and their archaeological history achieve the accolade they so richly deserve. I am fully prepared to collaborate with their work in promoting cultural heritage in the City and its environs. There are quite a few more sites than those you mention. Also, I have also not been able to relay my thanks to Daniel Inneh for his support from the palace when I became stranded in Benin last year. I should note that I am also setting up Nigeria's first interactive museum at *Akodi Afrika,* which will function independently of NEPA; and I would be willing to share ideas about interesting modes of dynamic exhibition, quite distinct from NCMM displays, as well as new modes of outreach to schools and universities. I am hoping to complete my 300 page book on *'Exploring Nigeria's Past - its visible archaeology, cultural landscapes and local lore *' in the near future; and it would be great to record progress on the mapping, conservation and promotion of all the Benin *Iya.*

My telephone number is +44 (UK) 1202 554735; and I will be available for a conversation during your Friday morning (my Friday afternoon-evening). I could give a ring to let you know exactly when I am in, as I will be busy encapsulating an AO collage of Google map imagery on the main Benin moat in preparation for my Saturday meeting with Engineer Uwaifo.

Otherwise, please feel free to e-mail me at any time.

With best wishes,
Patrick Darling.

On 7/1/09, kbick

Dear Dr. Darling:

As the curator of African art at the Art Institute of Chicago I presented the "Benin—Kings and Rituals" exhibition in Chicago last summer. During the planning for the exhibition I developed ties with the Edo Arts and Cultural Heritage Institute (EACHI), an organization that is based in Chicago and that has members across North America and Nigeria. The group also has close ties to the Oba (the organization's manager was an omada) and the Oba's oldest daughter, Princess Theresa Erediauwa. The princess came to Chicago last July for the opening of the exhibition as the Oba's representative along with one of her aunts and a palace chief. In October Barbara Plankensteiner and I visited her and the others in Benin City.

Among the ideas that Princess Theresa is pursuing with the Edo Arts and Cultural Heritage Institute is the creation of a royal museum in Benin City. Obviously this plan has many complexities and cannot easily be made to succeed. I have been encouraging the princess and EACHI members to link their idea of a museum with the preservation and promotion of Benin Kingdom cultural heritage sites, most prominently the Iya, but also the Ogiamen Palace and the Obazagbon Palace. My perspective is that this gives them a tangible base on which to establish
their plans. As part of this conversation I have taken EACHI members to visit the ancient site of Cahokia in southern Illinois so that they could see how a cultural heritage site can be effectively supported and promoted by a site museum.

On August 8th EACHI is holding a fund raising gala in Chicago. The special guests will be Crown Prince Eheneden Erediauwa and Governor of Edo State Adams Oshiomhole. I have been asked to speak at the event about the importance of preserving Benin's irreplaceable cultural heritage sites.

I have seen your Jan. 2009 posting on the UNESCO World Heritage website regarding the Benin Iya, as well as your article about Benin Earthworks from the Spring 2008 issue of African Update (Central Connecticut State University). It is clear that you are the person who is most knowledgeable about the history of trying to preserve the Iya, its placement on the UNESCO tentative list, how (or even if) it might be moved from tentative list to inscription on the world heritage list, etc. I would very much like to talk with you about these issues before the EACHI gala on August 8th.

Is it possible for me to reach you by telephone in the coming weeks? If not, may I exchange emails with you in order to benefit from your perspective on these matters?

With thanks for your consideration,
Kathleen Berzock

Dr. Kathleen Bickford Berzock
Curator of African Art
The Art Institute of Chicago
111 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60603-6110
312 857-7172

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From: "Solomon Uwaifo" <so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org>
To: "Patrick Darling" <african.legacy@googlemail.com>
Cc:

Dear Patrick,

There is probably something of the Edo that you don't know. Every true Edo has a morning greeting which identifies his or her family lineage. These lineages are patrilineal. In theory, if I met a girl in New Foundland that I wanted to marry and she greets the same as I do, I would immediately know we have the same family roots. And I must investigate that the relationship is sufficiently distant as to be allowed by the families concerned. One such family morning greeting in Edo is Laiso or Delaiso. This is the greeting of families connected with the Ogiso - the first dynasty of kings in Igodomigodo, now Edo land. The greeting of the present dynasty is Lamogun. Any Edo who greets me in the morning saying Lamogun is definitely a member of the royal family, on his or her father's side. You might say that the Ogiso family still has shadows, but it is certainly not "shadowy."

It is clear as far as I know that Edo have no writing culture. Attempts were made by our ancestors to use artefacts to mark events, but these were no dates. And I don't know how any one can claim dates for the Ogiso period. It would have to be a fabrication if they were not backed by archaeological evidence.
One of the shortcomings of the Egharevba stories is that they are oral mixtures, which tended to have the strong flavour of his mother's people - the Yorubas. The story I know is that Arhuanran (Idubo) drowned himself in the Udo lake rather than be captured by soldiers from the Palace who were ordered to bring him. But his Iyase - Chief Osemwunghe insisted he would resist for his Enogie. After a brief fight, he ran and was pursued until he and his supporters landed in a place now called Ondo. They settled there and were known at the onset as Emwanudo ie the people who came from Udo. The Oba of Ondo has the title Osemawe till today.

Unless there is response to the calls I have made, by the end of this week, a trip to Nigeria will be off for this summer. I didn't know this before I left home; it would have been much easier to organise. I sent enquiries out a week ago. Let's see what happens.

The Palace and the Isekhurhe are likely to know of the locations of these palaces. That is why what we want to do will hopefully have the participation of all for the veracity which we all hope to achieve.

SOU

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Dear Michael,

Sorry I played a fast one on you. I thought your guidance would come at some point. Thank you! In these matters, I have only very general and little experience. I'll keep this email secure for reference as matters develop. As you would have noted in my last email to Dr Patrick, this is all very exploratory at the moment. It is a basis for costing alternative proposals I intend to present to members of the Benin Moat Foundation when I return home.

Benin Moat Foundation was set up to stop the destruction of the moat - an important heritage. The history of the moat and of the people were not stated as objective interests for BMF. But as I see, very few of our people are listening and helping. While we dither and delay, destruction trails the moat as well as its history and the history of the people. There is a sense, I said, in which protection of the moat is protection of the history of the moat and therefore the history of the people. I think we ought to pursue both ends as we struggle to save what is left of the monument. It is thought that up to 70% of the main Benin City moat (about 14 kms.) may have been destroyed mostly in the last 50 years. It is estimated that there are some 16,000 kms of moat, all endangered by natural courses and human development.

I will continue to treasure your valued support and opinions. Kind regards

Omo S. Uwaifo
From: Michael Vickers
To: "Solomon Uwaifo"

Re: Ethnography

Solomon,

Is it possible to undertake a 'preliminary submission' (a sort of 'Interim Report' with Darling/WHS—maybe that's what the 'Technical Requirements' paper constitutes?) before proceeding to the final reckoning? Twould seem Darling is making Bush-ian noises: ie, 'You're either for us; or against us.' The points you raise suggest there is some way yet to go before agreement (perhaps in the end compromise?) can be reached on the 'validated/ authorised' details. ...I see he’s been at it for some years? I didn’t know Bournemouth had a university. ...But then in my day there were only Ibadan, Ife (new) and a few other Universities in Nigeria. Anyway. One certainly doesn’t want something which is not satisfactorily validated, to go off half-cocked. How else to establish meaningful evidence and guidance than by more/ and directed archaeo investigations?

Michael v

--- On Mon, 3/8/09
From: Michael Vickers
To: "Solomon Uwaifo"

Re: Ethnography

Solomon,

Is it possible to undertake a 'preliminary submission' (a sort of 'Interim Report' with Darling/WHS—maybe that's what the 'Technical Requirements' paper constitutes?) before proceeding to the final reckoning? Twould seem Darling is making Bush-ian noises: ie, 'You're either for us; or against us.' The points you raise suggest there is some way yet to go before agreement (perhaps in the end compromise?) can be reached on the 'validated/ authorised' details. ...I see he’s been at it for some years? I didn’t know Bournemouth had a university. ...But then in my day there were only Ibadan, Ife (new) and a few other Universities in Nigeria. Anyway. One certainly doesn’t want something which is not satisfactorily validated, to go off half-cocked. How else to establish meaningful evidence and guidance than by more/ and directed archaeo investigations?

Michael v

Wednesday, 5 August, 2009 11:44 AM

From: "Solomon Uwaifo" <so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org>
To: "Patrick Darling" <african.legacy@googlemail.com>

Dear Patrick,

I agree with your para 1. This is something we have to live with because we had no writing culture. It further confirms my point that we need archaeology, directed, sustained and in detail, to record what we can of our past before it all flies away.

Until we have a researched history, I am afraid there will be people who will make a living from sensational stories of a past they know little about. You read them; I don't, because they know little more than I know. And I can, perhaps, put what I know in writing better than they can put theirs. Egharevba started them off, but did not have their motives. They parody our history even more than some others want to damage it. The British and her colonial adventurers had their day when they saw gore and bodies decaying (the Edo couldn't smell) in the approaches to the City and the palace. How else could the rascals have justified stripping the people of their humanity and pride? It would have been difficult to tell the world they were common thieves pillaging the arts of a people they took by surprise. History tells us they could defeat the Edo in a war any day, but there might have been no war if they respected the history and culture of the people and the wishes of their Oba. Indeed, there was no war. The people were not ready for war; the British just sacked them as they had their annual Igue Festival. Within Nigeria, there are the educated lot; historians et al whose home territories once formed part of the Benin Empire or was occupied (Ado-Ekiti) by soldiers from Benin (Ado is what the Yoruba's call Edo) for their protection against internal feuds.

Benin Moat Foundation is a serious organisation. WE have passed the stage of "moral supports" for the Iya. I am in London and cannot sign cheques if the money was there. I wrote to those I suspected would be home to make the sum you asked available until I return. I am still waiting.
I am quite prepared to pay £15 for a photocopy of the Melzian dictionary if you let me know where to send the money. Thanks again as ever.

Omo S. Uwaifo.

From: "Solomon Uwaifo" <so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org>
To: "Michael Vickers" <mvickers@mvickers.plus.com>
Cc:

Dear Michael,

I'm sorry I am replying this late. I have had to see to some other neglected work which has to be ready for my return home next month.

I get the point. I think Patrick wants to go to Nigeria for some other interests and he thought he could tie ours into the bargain. Edo State Government is interested in the moat and, properly, they should be part of the program. We are interested in it being listed as a WHS, but we know that can hardly happen before other things such as surveys, enacting the law to define its domain and to make it a state asset, rehabilitation of parts etc.

I tried to see if we could help him because he was not asking for much. In any case whatever he did in the time would enrich our overall purpose. But that hasn't happened.

I have asked him to define what archaeo he thinks we need towards the history of the moat and the people. He says he is working on it. When I get it, I'll of course send it along as I also intend to do with the academics on the mailing list. It will be helpful if you know of any broad-minded historian who might want to be a friend of the group.

As you might have observed, I probably turned him on because he has prejudices and biases towards the Yorubas and I was determined to make him realise that he can be academic in these matters without hanging both baggages around his neck.

I didn't know you were just as good with a camera

Omo S. Uwaifo

My dear Joe,

You made my day with your email! I had reluctantly given up hope that I'll hear from you! Ite w'udeba iran ne; ighe ofo! I was only waiting for the final fight face to face. Uru ese.

For me, rest is doing what I want to do when I want to do it and to lie down to sleep when the
body starts to wilt. I go to bed at 9 p.m. or there about and rise any time from 4 a.m. or earlier if anything is on my mind.

I am hardly able to rest in Nigeria. There is no power to work when I want to work. Often, when there is power, it is late in the day when I don't enjoy doing any serious thinking. That is the difference. I had a lot about the Benin Moat on my mind and I had to address them as soon as I arrived here to find the rest you talked about.

Unfortunately, apart from you now and David Oyegun in July, no member returned the gesture of sending out copies of discussions aimed at finding a way forward. I had asked Col. Paul Ogbebor to talk to Victor Uwaifo about a BMF jingle in June before I left Nigeria. Inspite of promptings before I came here, there was nothing other than he had spoken with Sir Victor. The day I had a meeting with Dr Patrick Darling in the home of Dr Taiwo Idemudia in London, we talked about the jingle and I called Paul. Like he told me in Lagos, he said he had spoken with Sir Victor, but that he was talking to me on the highway. I pleaded with him to call me back. That was the last time he spoke to me. I had earlier sent him a text, which he did not reply. All in all, I will carefully, quietly conduct myself in a way I will not make enemies. I do not have too many friends and time is not on my side. I hope I have offended no one trying to work the way I know how. I think I have tried my best for my people. I have never held myself out as a messiah. If they don't want my contribution and the style, there is a lot I can do elsewhere!

I intend to do a report for all members. Truth is, at the moment, there are a few members with some interest, but too few are committed. We cannot go forward with crippling cynicism and hope that one or two will do all that is needed! Like other problems of our people, the problems of Benin Moat are Herculean and protean. Lost in thickets of doubt, suspicion and mistrust, we anticipate a solution; boast it can be achieved even when we aim to contribute nothing. Basking in the glory of triumph has been makind's quest over the ages. I knew this, but not my people. I regret that I started too late to make the difference I had hoped. I will be 78 next birthday. I don't know how many years I have left; I know for certain that I don't want to waste them. BMF has a very hard choice to make! I want to go on if for nothing else, but for the glories of our ancestors flowing away in the tide of oblivion. I believe it can be dammed, but certainly not as it has been over the last two years. How can a people open their eyes and deride themselves?

I cannot do it alone. I don't want to do it alone. Something will have to give! Heads are too precious to hit repeatedly against a stone wall.

Omo S. Uwaifo

Tue, 22/9/09.

From: Josiah Nehikhare
Subject: Re: The Iya of Benin
To: "Solomon Uwaifo"

Domo,

I thought you were on holiday, but the frequency of your mails does not make me to envy you at all! Please, take a deserved rest for the remaining portion (if any) of your stay in London.
I am daily being educated by the mails and I have asked my son Kennedy to download them for me. The good news is that the Edo State Government has given notice to Iya encroachers - Gazette Or No Gazette!

Please, give our best wishes to the family. I hope to return to Nigeria by middle of next month Domo.

From: Solomon Uwaifo  
Subject: The Iya of Benin 
To: Patrick 
Date: Wednesday, September 16, 2009, 10:12 AM 

Dear Patrick,

Thanks for the emails of the last three months and the vital info they contain. As you know, I have barely two weeks before I head home. At this point, I thought I should reflect on the primary reason for the exchanges.

My aim was and remains to establish the facts of the Iya (Moat), its history and therefore the history of my people, the Edo, who dug it as oral accounts tell us. It bears repeating that the purpose of the Benin Moat Foundation is to restore, maintain and protect the Iya as well as to enhance its tourism potential. I argued and still argue that BMF purpose and my trenchant pursuit of the true history of the Iya since I came to the UK, are not mutually exclusive.

If the history of the Iya were a certainty in terms of how, why and when, the discussions would not have arisen. As I understand it, the only certainty is there is Iya in Benin City and all over Edo land. There are also unverified oral accounts about them, which lack dates. If these were enough to make the heritage acceptable as World Heritage Sites, they certainly are not enough to make them tourist attractions. After all, there are moats, canyons, trenches practically everywhere; what use is there to travel to see our particular one without its history?

From the various emails, the choice among several oral accounts to draw on begins to look like a lottery. That is why archaeology is most needed as a guide. That is where we are. To get at what we want to know from what we do know, there has to be a design and specification of archaeo. work. Perhaps even more important is the discussion that ought to take place among members of BMF and BMF with the Edo State Government as well as with the Oba of Benin. We need a way forward. In one of the emails, I suggested the establishment of bodies for the local care of the Iya wherever they may have passed through. Given the running battle with locals in Benin City, it will be wrong not to pay attention to lengths outside the City because their destruction might happen sooner than we might imagine. It is unlikely that history will forgive the Foundation if it was to wait for the rest of several thousand kilometres to be destroyed just because they were not in Benin City. All these need to be discussed.

There is also the matter of the revocation of the Iya as a national monument. This has been taken up with the Edo State Government as well as the Federal Government. It seems unlikely that we can go ahead with the idea of World Heritage pursuit without resolving these domestic issues. If we can fine, but they have to be discussed and sorted.
It is good to know you are going to Nigeria. Hopefully, we will meet there and things might have taken a better turn. See you at the British Museum tomorrow.

SOU

The Iya of Benin

From: "Solomon Uwaifo" <so_uwaifo@beninmoatfoundation.org>
To: "Josiah Nehikhare" <jnnehikhare@yahoo.com>
Cc: tidemudia@yahoo.com

Monday, 28 September, 2009 2:39 PM

My dear Joe,

I believe every word you say to me. The truth is I am filled with pity for our people. Our fall has continued and we do not seem to know it. If we don't know, we cannot expect to do something about it. These days, we go to school, get a job, have a wife and bear children; then build a house. If we can own a car, then we have arrived like the Jones's. It does not matter if our kin sleep under the bridge. Joe, if there were no Nigeria, where would we be?

Dr. Idemudia arrived from home a few weeks ago. He told me he shed tears reading through the resolution by the Urhobo Community of Delta State. They want to build a university to be called Urhobo University; no apologies for the name. The Edo will probably laugh and say - "well, the Urhobos want to do what one of our sons did; ok, they said it themselves; we are superior." In the mean time, they revile the son and think nothing of him in the open. A thousand pities.

I'll have to admit a bit of frustration too. There is a huge task before us. No simple solution exists. For a fact, there is Iya. Who dug it? Why did he or she dig it? When was it dug? How long did it take to dig it and with what tools? For all these, we have a garbled oral history. How do we sell such Iya to tourists when we have not sold it to ourselves? There are thousands of kilometres of Iya, Oyibo tells us. Until he did, I thought it was only in Benin City. What made our ancestors Iya diggers? Did they dig for territorial exclusion or to protect themselves against human enemies or rampaging animals? If we have so much trouble saving the Iya in Benin, why don't we look at bodies to protect sections with which they are geographically connected and at an umbrella body to coordinate their efforts? I sent out emails to discuss this view, but not a soul responded. And I couldn't put a programme together while the adrenalin was there! That hurt and annoyed me. Anyway, thanks for your support.

SOU

FW: Re: The Benin Moat/ Wall & WHS & Darling

From: "Michael Vickers" <mvickers@mvickers.plus.com>
To: "S.O. UWAIFO" <so_uwaifo@yahoo.co.uk>

Wednesday, 12 August, 2009 12:33 PM

Omo,

Here’s copy (thanks for amendments) of what I’ve just sent on to Falola. ...If I could suggest—if you could now put something together containing the info and the message/ appeal you wish to put out on his ‘USA Africa Dialogue’ site; with perhaps a note to him, thanking him for any assistance he may be able to give; adding that any suggestons re contacts/ info he himself might be able to provide, would be most
welcome—or something along these lines. ...Hope this may prove helpful. ...At least he’s now alerted to the fact there may be a note from you.

As for an indexer:  (Do you need an up-date on an existing index from the earlier editions; or is this a new one from scratch?) ...I’ve had to do my own for ‘Betrayed.’; and not very pleased with the modern/computerised way of doing it, and the product produced. ...Sounds like you may have the best on offer. ...You could try PEN Club, or the Small Publishers’ Assoc/ Grp—don’t know what they go under these days. Or have a word with Hurst (Michael Dwyer), or Heinemann; tell em what your after and see what they’ve got to say.

Best, Michael v

------ Forwarded Message

From: Michael VICKERS

Date: Wed, 12 Aug 2009 12:14:20 +0100

To: Prof Toyin FALOLA

Subject: Re— The Benin Moat/ Wall & WHS & Darling—Help Needed

Oloruntoyin,  My friend Solomon Omo Uwaifo, is Founder and Chairman, Board of Trustees, ‘Benin Moat Foundation.’ http://www.beninmoatfoundation.org/ ...Like me, he is elder. Like you, he is a multi-gifted person—author (2004 NLNG award-winning, 'Fattening House'—a 1998 publisher’s Review I did is attached); electrical engineer by profession who knows far too much about the Federal Govt and NEPA (with various engineering publication credits); poet ('Litany,' published 2009—which keys on 'Africa After 50 Years' issues); and is keen on restoration and elevation of Edo/ African culture and history (author/ editor, 'Edo Cultural Voyage,' 2006). ...

He has been wrestling with WHS (World Heritage Site) folk, based in Chicago; and a UK-based WHS man/ archaeo-historian called Patrick Darling. http://csweb.bournemouth.ac.uk/africanlegacy/ ...It would be advantageous for the Benin Moat to be 'validated' by WH folk as a World Heritage Site. ( A copy of WHS/ Darling ‘Technical Requirements’ Report is attached). However, it is a rather more complex and involved procedure than Darling and WHS seem to appreciate.

Uwaifo is looking for 'a broad-minded historian' who might be able to help him and the Foundation.

I have suggested he contact you, with a view towards running an item in your 'USA Africa Dialogue' series; an item which might explain the situation, and alert anyone who might be able to suggest/ guide/ assist. ...And of course, should you yourself be able make a few suggestions/ perhaps offer useful guidance, I’m sure Omo would be most grateful. ...Uwaifo, by the way, lives on ‘the front lines’; and seeks to make his contributions from Maryland, Lagos where he has been resident for many years. ...His children people the diaspora.

Best, Baba m
Domo.

Please, be assured of my 100% support of your effort. If I wanted to opt out I would have informed you.

Binis are a difficult people to assemble for a common cause. but if someone does not attempt it who will? So, I thank you and others like you for this noble role On my part I continue to participate to the best of my ability.

I take it, Sir, that the tone of your mail was not borne out of frustration but deserved pity for our people. I sincerely urge you, Sir to continue your good work to your soul's satisfaction and leave the rest to God.

My profound regards. Josiah.