

Research Article

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Decolonising Plant-Based Cultural Legacies in the Cultural Policies of the Global South

<https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2024-0029>

received May 17, 2024; accepted October 2, 2024

Abstract: The promotion and preservation of cultural legacies, including botanical traditions, are integral components of national identity and development strategies in many countries, particularly in the Global South. However, the manner in which cultural policies address plant-based heritage is not only influenced by contemporary priorities but also deeply rooted in historical contexts, shaped by colonial legacies. A comparative reading of the cultural policies of India and Nigeria, this research investigates the impact of colonial history on plant-based cultural heritage policies in the Global South. The study pulls from the Postcolonial and Critical Heritage Studies frameworks, to argue that the formulation and implementation of cultural policies on botanical plant heritage have been greatly impacted by colonial legacies. The result is the disparities in conservation endeavours and relegation of autochthonous knowledge. By shedding light on the on-going effects of colonialism on cultural practices and environmental conservation in the Global South, this research offers insights for policymakers, culture and heritage practitioners, and scholars seeking to address the issues around colonial legacies in cultural heritage management. It also seeks to provoke discourses on equitable and sustainable approaches to plant-based heritage preservation.

Keywords: colonialism, postcolonial theory, critical heritage studies, India, Nigeria, botanical heritage, cultural policy

1 Introduction

Cultural heritage is a storehouse of identity, knowledge, and tradition that includes both tangible and intangible facets of human society. The rich tapestry of botanical traditions, in which plants are essential to the formation of cultural practices, rituals, and identities, is woven into this enormous fabric of legacy. But the preservation and advancement of plant-based cultural heritage are not merely modern issues; they are also intricately linked to past developments, especially those shaped by colonial legacies (Sen, 1989). With an emphasis on the contexts of India and Nigeria, this study attempts to investigate the long-lasting effects of colonialism on plant-based cultural heritage policy.

Colonialism left a lasting impact on cultural practices and knowledge systems. It was an ubiquitous force that affected the socio-political and economic landscapes of several regions (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Gehl Sampath, 2012). Colonialism uprooted native botanical traditions in India and Nigeria and marginalised local knowledge systems while enforcing Western scientific paradigms (Smith, 2018). Plant ecosystems were

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exploited and degraded as a result of the extraction of botanical resources for colonial economic interests, which intensified these disruptions (Abakporo & Ohenhen, 2024; Muñoz Martínez, 2022; Prakash, 2019). The main focus of this study includes: examining the historical effects of colonialism on indigenous plant knowledge and practices in India and Nigeria, analysing the creation, execution, and results of plant-based cultural heritage policies in both nations, investigating the implications of colonial legacies for modern approaches to botanical heritage preservation and promotion, and identifying areas of convergence and divergence between India and Nigeria in their approaches to plant-based cultural heritage within policy frameworks.

For the preservation of cultural heritage, cultural regeneration, and sustainable development, it is important to comprehend how colonial legacies affect plant-based cultural heritage policy. This research adds to a nuanced knowledge of the inherent complexity in cultural asset management by shedding light on the historical trajectories that influenced present policy frameworks (Chikowero, 2020). Furthermore, through a comparative study of Nigeria and India, this research provides insights into the various tactics used by post-colonial cultures to negotiate their biological legacy in the face of global problems. In sum, the study interrogates the ways in which plant-based cultural history in these two countries has been impacted by colonial interventions in botany and agriculture. It also evaluates the continued influence of these legacies on modern cultural policies in both countries. The research supports more inclusive and successful cultural policies that respect and maintain the rich plant-based legacies of these countries by analysing the historical background and present initiatives to conserve and promote indigenous botanical knowledge.

2 Literature Review

Indigenous peoples of the Global South were exploited and subjugated by European powers throughout colonialism. In Africa, Asia, and the Americas, the colonial era – which started in the fifteenth century with exploratory expeditions – reshaped economies, communities, and cultures. Conquest, force, and colonialism were the means by which European nations founded colonies due to their economic interests, religious zeal, and imperial ambitions (Rodney, 1972). In order to support their expanding industries and boost their economies, European powers pillaged the colonies' vast natural resources, which included labour, agriculture, and minerals. The colonised nations were profoundly impacted by this economic exploitation by the colonialists, which resulted in pervasive poverty, underdevelopment, and reliance of the colonised economies on the colonial hegemonies. (Abakporo & Ohenhen, 2024).

In his ground-breaking book “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,” historian Walter Rodney made the case that colonialism deliberately stunted local industry and extracted riches from the Global South, undermining those economies' potential (Rodney, 1972). Colonised cultures' social and cultural landscapes were significantly altered. Indigenous communities in these regions were subjected to the institutions, cultural norms, and values of European colonists, frequently through coercion. Indigenous cultures and identities have been lost as a result of the forced imposition of language, religion, and legal systems. The notion of cultural imperialism, as expounded by theorists like Edward Said in “Orientalism,” highlights the ways in which Western nations established and maintained stereotypes and hierarchies to rationalise their rule over conquered populations (Said, 1978). It is impossible to overestimate the influence of colonialism on the political systems and governance of the Global South.

With little respect for pre-existing political, ethnic, and cultural boundaries, European powers divided the world into colonies and zones of influence. The enduring impact of arbitrary border delineation has resulted in political fragmentation, instability, and conflicts in post-colonial governments. In *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*, political scientist Mahmood Mamdani observes that in order to retain power, colonial governments purposefully encouraged divisions among indigenous populations, which exacerbated ethnic tensions and conflicts that still afflict many post-colonial states (Mamdani, 1996). In the Global South, colonialism is an intricate historical phenomenon with lingering effects. Even though colonial control has officially come to an end, its effects can still be seen in the on-going injustices, hostilities, and difficulties that many of the colonised nations face. Dealing with current concerns of development, identity, and justice in the Global South requires an understanding of the history and legacy of colonialism (Mbembe, 2001).

The British East India Company was founded as a commercial company in the early seventeenth century, marking the beginning of colonialism in India. But throughout time, it increased its power and influence over Indian regions, leading to the official British colonialism of India with the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 (Prakash, 2019). Political tyranny, cultural absorption, and economic exploitation were the hallmarks of British colonialism in India. By imposing their administrative systems and enacting land revenue regulations, the British uprooted the indigenous population and disrupted long-standing agricultural traditions (Guha, 2007). Similarly, British explorers and traders first set up shop along Nigeria's coast in the late nineteenth century, marking the beginning of Nigeria's experience with colonialism. By the early twentieth century, Britain had consolidated its control over the region, incorporating diverse ethnic groups and territories into the colonial state (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

The exploitation of natural resources, especially palm oil and later petroleum, was a defining feature of Nigeria's colonial rule. This led to social unrest and environmental degradation in addition to driving the nation's economic growth (Adebanwi, 2014). Both India and Nigeria saw considerable upheavals in their native social, economic, and cultural structures throughout the colonial era. In favour of Western scientific perspectives, indigenous knowledge and practices – including botanical traditions – were frequently suppressed or neglected (Smith, 2018). Postcolonial countries were permanently impacted in terms of governance, socio-economic growth, and cultural identity by the imposition of colonial administrative institutions and economic policies, which further entrenched inequality and disparities (Ohenhen & Abakporo, 2024).

Indigenous botanical epistemologies and customs were significantly impacted by colonialism in both Nigeria and India. Western scientific paradigms were enforced under the British colonial administration in India, which resulted in the marginalisation and repression of traditional botanical knowledge systems (Prakash, 2019). Native customs pertaining to the cultivation of plants, their therapeutic applications, and their spiritual value were frequently discounted or ignored in favour of Western methods (Guha, 2007). In addition to uprooting traditional subsistence farming and upsetting regional ecosystems, the British government actually deliberately substituted subsistent crops with more biennial and perennial commercial crops including tea, cocoa, coffee, and indigo (Radhakrishnan, 2006). Similarly, colonisation in Nigeria had a significant impact on local plant knowledge and customs. Plant commercialisation and the exploitation of Nigeria's rich biodiversity resulted from British colonial policies that encouraged the mining of natural resources for export. (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Traditional agricultural practices, based on diverse crop varieties and agroecological knowledge, were undermined by the introduction of cash crops like cocoa, palm oil, and groundnuts, which prioritised profit over sustainability (Adebanwi, 2014).

Colonialism weakened cultural ties to the land and its plants in addition to upsetting indigenous plant knowledge systems. Colonial narratives that depicted indigenous peoples as primitive or backward undervalued the traditional ecological knowledge that had been passed down through the generations (Smith, 2018). Consequently, the loss of biodiversity and cultural variety in postcolonial societies was exacerbated by the threat of extinction or obsolescence faced by numerous indigenous plant species and the knowledge systems that were linked with them. The effects of colonialism on native plant knowledge and customs went beyond short-term negative effects on the economy and ecosystem (Abakporo & Ohenhen, 2023). It upended long-standing customs of reciprocal engagement and sustainable resource management, radically changing the relationship between communities and their natural environs. Colonial policies changed social structures and cultural identities in Nigeria and India, as well as the physical landscapes (Kumar, 2015).

Conflicts with indigenous populations resulted from the British colonial administration's implementation of forest management policies in India, which limited access to customary lands and resources (Ohenhen & Abakporo, 2024). Cultural and spiritual ties to the land were severed along with livelihoods by the criminalisation or marginalisation of traditional methods like agroforestry and shifting cropping (Guha, 2007). Furthermore, indigenous taxonomies and cosmologies were weakened by the introduction of Western botanical classifications and scientific methods, which reduced the cultural importance of plant species and ecosystems. Similar to this, colonialism in Nigeria upset customary land tenure arrangements and collective resource management techniques, which resulted in the enclosure of common areas and the consolidation of power in the hands of colonial officials and private enterprises (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

The loss of access to plant resources necessary for sustenance, medicine, and rituals occurred when indigenous tribes were forced from their traditional regions. Furthermore, the encouragement of cash crops

grown in monocultures resulted in biodiversity loss, soil erosion, and environmental degradation, which made rural residents' vulnerabilities and dependence even worse (Falola & Heaton, 2008). In Nigeria and India today, plant-based cultural practices and regulations are still influenced by the history of colonialism. The complex issues of land tenure, resource management, and cultural revival that postcolonial governments have taken on call for nuanced solutions that take into account the historical injustices done to indigenous communities. Both nations are engaged in efforts to recover and revive indigenous plant knowledge and traditions, which are being fuelled by researchers' initiatives, international partnerships, and grassroots movements.

Indigenous plant knowledge and practices in India and Nigeria were greatly impacted by colonialism in a variety of ways, including social, cultural, environmental, and economic. In post-colonial nations, advancing ecological sustainability, cultural diversity, and social fairness requires acknowledging and resolving the lasting effects of colonialism. Traditional botanical systems in India and Nigeria were severely disturbed by colonialism, which had a significant impact on local plant knowledge and customs (Prakash, 2019). The forest management policies imposed by the British colonial authority in India prioritised economic exploitation over customary land use practices. The introduction of monoculture plantings and profit-driven forestry projects weakened traditional agroforestry systems that combined a variety of agricultural kinds and tree species (Guha, 2007).

Monoculture cash crops and export-focused agriculture replaced indigenous systems of agroecology, which maintained a variety of crop rotations and soil fertility management strategies (Adebani, 2014). Ecological deterioration, biodiversity loss, and the depletion of natural resources resulted from the uprooting of indigenous farming communities and the conversion of forests into plantations. Traditional botanical systems were disrupted by colonialism, which had significant socioeconomic and cultural effects on indigenous populations in Nigeria and India. It weakened cultural identities, threatened traditional means of subsistence, and maintained disparities in resource and land access. Furthermore, local ecosystems' sustainability and resilience were in jeopardy due to the disappearance of traditional ecological knowledge and practices, which made them more vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation (Smith, 2018). Even though official colonial rule has ended, the effects of colonialism still influence how postcolonial communities manage and conserve plant-based resources today.

3 Theoretical Frameworks

The Postcolonial and Critical Heritage Studies theories were taken into consideration as frameworks appropriate for this work. Said popularised the postcolonial theory, which offers a prism through which to examine agency, resistance, and power relations within the framework of colonial legacies (Said, 1978). Postcolonial theory provides insights into the long-lasting consequences of colonialism on modern cultures by analysing how it continues to influence cultural practices and policies. On the other hand, Smith (2006) presents a critical viewpoint on the creation, interpretation, and administration of cultural heritage through his theory of critical heritage studies. This paradigm facilitates a more profound comprehension of the intricacies associated with the preservation and advancement of plant-based cultural heritage by scrutinising the fundamental presumptions and power relations present in cultural heritage discourse.

In contexts such as India and Nigeria, where colonial histories have had a significant impact on modern cultural policies and practices, postcolonial theory and critical heritage studies provide insightful frameworks for analysing the effects of colonial legacies on plant-based cultural heritage. With a focus on how colonial histories continue to influence identities, cultures, and power dynamics in post-colonial countries, postcolonial theory critically examines the long-lasting impacts of colonialism on society. This theoretical framework is essential to comprehending how indigenous epistemologies and plant-based cultural practices were disrupted by colonial botanical endeavours, such as the creation of botanical gardens and the imposition of cash crop economies. Both in India and Nigeria, colonial rulers frequently ignored the complex interactions that exist between indigenous communities and their ecosystems in favour of using the local flora for commercial advantage. These power disparities are brought to light by postcolonial theory, which also demonstrates how colonial exploitation and the repression of indigenous botanical knowledge had a lasting impact on cultural practices and legacies.

Critical Heritage studies, on the other hand, sees heritage as dynamic, contested, and processual, challenging conventional ideas of heritage as static and unchanging. This framework places a strong emphasis on the value of intangible cultural assets, which includes customs, plant-related knowledge systems, and rituals. Critical heritage studies as applied in this study, call for an investigation of the ways in which cultural policies have influenced the identification and conservation of plant-based legacy in India and Nigeria. The “Authorised Heritage Discourse”, which favours material heritage over intangible heritage and frequently favours particular narratives and kinds of heritage over others, is frequently criticised in these studies. Critical heritage studies focuses on plant-based cultural activities, highlighting how these practices – despite their cultural value – are frequently marginalised in official heritage regulations.

A combination of postcolonial theory and critical heritage studies for this research offers a thorough lens for examining the effects of colonial legacies on plant-based cultural heritage. Both frameworks promote critical analysis of the ways in which colonial history and power relations still shape the components of plant-based heritage that are prioritised for preservation or ignored. The theories also stress the significance of identifying and revitalising indigenous knowledge systems that were suppressed or changed by colonial interventions in order to decolonise legacy practices. The impact of these theoretical frameworks can be seen in initiatives to preserve and revitalise plant-based heritage in modern cultural policy, therefore providing a strong framework for comprehending and addressing the intricate effects of colonialism on plant-based cultural legacy, as well as shedding light on the past and present effects of colonialism on cultural practices.

4 Methodology

This study uses a comparative case study methodology to examine how colonial legacies have affected plant-based cultural heritage policies, with a particular focus on India and Nigeria. This method enables a thorough analysis of how colonial experiences and historical contexts have shaped modern strategies for promoting and preserving botanical heritage in two different postcolonial contexts. The researchers find parallels and discrepancies in how Nigeria and India handle plant-based cultural heritage within policy frameworks through the comparative case study approach. The study also availed of the findings of various tactics deployed by postcolonial cultures to negotiate their botanical legacy in the face of global concerns through the selection of cases with opposing colonial histories, such as British colonialism in India and Nigeria. In order to place and comprehend the historical developments and policy frameworks guiding plant-based cultural heritage in the Global South, with a focus on India and Nigeria, this research engages an analysis of historical records, policy documents, and pertinent literature.

Historical documents shed light on the colonial-era policies and practices that influenced indigenous plant knowledge and practices. These records include colonial archives, official reports, and scholarly studies. To investigate the creation, application, and results of plant-based cultural heritage policies in both nations, policy documents including national cultural heritage policies, environmental conservation strategies, and agricultural development plans are examined. This analysis provides insight into the ways that colonial legacies are still predominant in current frameworks and practices pertaining to the promotion and protection of botanical heritage. In addition, a study of relevant literature in disciplines including environmental history, critical heritage studies, postcolonial studies, and indigenous knowledge systems offers theoretical clarifications and factual backing for the study’s conclusions. The researchers are able to relate their findings to larger theoretical frameworks and establish links between historical legacies, policy dynamics, and cultural practices associated with plant-based heritage due to the multidisciplinary approach.

Data analysis involved a thematic and content analytic approach, whereby historical and policy documents, archival materials, and comparative case study findings were systematically coded and analysed to identify key themes and patterns related to identifying the roles of colonialism and deculturation in the perpetuation of the underdevelopment of those regions. The researchers obtained a sophisticated grasp of the complexity present in colonial legacies and their influence on plant-based cultural heritage policy in India and Nigeria through the multidisciplinary approach. When conducting research with historical records,

governmental documents, and cultural heritage resources, ethical considerations are crucial. The researchers in this study followed the rules and regulations controlling access to sensitive information as well as ensuring that archive resources are treated ethically. Throughout the study process, consideration for cultural sensitivity, source confidentiality, and indigenous groups' rights are maintained. Local stakeholders such as indigenous groups and heritage practitioners incorporated into collaborative processes further guaranteed ethically sound and culturally appropriate research outputs.

5 Case Studies Analysis of the Cultural Policy in Relation to Plant-Based Cultural Heritage in the Global South

5.1 India

India's rich history, varied customs, and colonial legacies are intricately entwined with the country's cultural policy concerning plant-based cultural heritage. India has a rich botanical history, with plants having long been used in religious, cultural, and medical contexts (Shiva, 1997). The subcontinent's cultural landscape has been shaped by the thriving traditional botanical knowledge systems of Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani medicine, which have coexisted with native agricultural methods and spiritual beliefs. On the other hand, India's cultural policy concerning plant-based heritage is still deeply influenced by its colonial past. Western scientific paradigms and administrative structures were imposed by British colonial officials, who frequently disregarded indigenous plant-related knowledge systems and practices (Prakash, 2019). Western scientific approaches to botanical study and conservation were given priority, while traditional botanical practices were marginalised or discounted as archaic. The cultural policy environment in India is still shaped by the colonial past, which upholds disparities in decision-making authority and resource access.

India has started endeavours to promote and rejuvenate its plant-based cultural legacy under cultural policy frameworks in the postcolonial era. According to Guha (2007), the Indian government acknowledges the value of traditional knowledge systems in maintaining biodiversity, advancing public health, and safeguarding cultural identity. Ayurveda and organic farming are two examples of traditional botanical methods that have been integrated into national development goals and cultural heritage programmes. To encourage the preservation and sustainable use of traditional knowledge systems and medicinal plants, organisations such as the National Medicinal Plants Board and the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy) have been established (Prakash, 2019).

With fair access to medicinal plants and conventional medical procedures, these programmes seek to protect India's botanical legacy. Nonetheless, there are still issues with integrating contemporary scientific perspectives with ancient botanical knowledge within India's framework of cultural policy. Indigenous knowledge systems and plant-related behaviours are frequently marginalised by the predominance of Western scientific methodologies in the school curriculum and research facilities (Prakash, 2019). Furthermore, India's plant-based cultural legacy is seriously threatened by the country's fast industrialisation, urbanisation, and environmental deterioration, necessitating creative solutions for sustainable development and conservation. The delicate balance between tradition and modernity, local knowledge and Western science, preservation, and progress is reflected in India's cultural policy for plant-based heritage (Escobar, 1995).

India can preserve its cultural identity and support worldwide efforts to preserve biodiversity and advance sustainable living by recognising and appreciating its floral history. Preserving India's rich botanical legacy for future generations requires cultural policy initiatives that are effective and mix traditional knowledge with modern methods. An interesting case study to investigate how colonial legacies affect plant-based cultural heritage is India's cultural policy. India's cultural policies, particularly those pertaining to the preservation and development of its botanical heritage, have been significantly influenced by its colonial past under British control. Indigenous knowledge systems and plant-related behaviours were neglected during the

colonial era when Western scientific paradigms and administrative frameworks were imposed by British administrators (Prakash, 2019).

Colonial authorities frequently denigrated or disregarded traditional botanical systems, which were based on many cultural and religious traditions, as being out dated. Instead, they gave priority to Western scientific methods for botanical discovery and conservation (Guha, 2007). India's cultural policy environment is still shaped by the legacy of colonialism, especially when it comes to plant-based cultural heritage. Even after attaining independence in 1947, India retained colonial-era structures and policies that continued disparities in decision-making authority and resource availability (Prakash, 2019). Following colonialism, Indian governments have struggled to balance Western scientific perspectives and traditional botanical knowledge systems within the confines of cultural policy frameworks.

Ayurveda and other traditional medicine systems are among the many plant-based practices that are being revitalised and incorporated into national cultural heritage policy as a result of efforts to support cultural diversity and indigenous rights (Guha, 2007). Nonetheless, the discourse around cultural policy in India continues to be characterised by a contradiction between Western scientific methods and indigenous botanical knowledge systems. Indigenous knowledge systems and practices related to plants continue to be marginalised by the prevalence of Western scientific paradigms in research institutes and educational curricula (Prakash, 2019). Furthermore, India's plant-based cultural legacy is seriously threatened by the demands of economic development and environmental issues including deforestation, land degradation, and biodiversity loss.

Policymakers continue to have a significant difficulty in striking a balance between the demands of conservation and sustainable development goals. This calls for creative solutions that combine conventional ecological knowledge with cutting-edge scientific methods (Guha, 2007). All things considered, India's cultural policy offers insightful information on the intricate interactions that exist between indigenous knowledge systems, colonial legacies, and modern strategies for the preservation and promotion of plant-based cultural heritage. Through analysing India's experience in the larger framework of postcolonial cultural policy dynamics, scholars can gain a more nuanced perspective of the potential and challenges that efforts to protect India's rich botanical heritage in the twenty-first-century face.

5.1.1 Some Plant-Based Cultural Heritage Sites in India

5.1.1.1 Valley of Flowers National Park, Uttarakhand

This UNESCO World Heritage Site, which is situated in the Western Himalayas, is well known for its varied alpine flora, which includes many endemic and uncommon plant species. The Himalayan blue poppies, rhododendrons, and orchids that grow in the valley are part of a vivid tapestry of bright flowers that are important to the local folklore and traditional medical practices. The ecological and cultural significance of the Valley of Flowers National Park has been acknowledged by the Indian government through its cultural policy (Bhabha, 2006). In order to ensure that visitors enjoy the park's natural beauty while limiting their impact on the environment, efforts have been made to maintain the biodiversity of the area and promote sustainable tourism practices. The biodiversity of the valley was however seriously threatened by the colonial era's logging and hunting operations, which exploited the natural resources of the Himalayan region. Colonial policies prioritised economic interests over conservation, leading to habitat destruction and loss of plant species diversity.

5.1.1.2 Sunderbans Mangrove Forests, West Bengal

The biggest tidal mangrove forest in the world, the Sunderbans, is recognised as a biodiversity hotspot and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A distinctive collection of saline-adapted plant species, such as the well-known Sundari trees (*Heritiera fomes*), are supported by the mangrove habitat. The Sunderbans hold great cultural value and are frequently mentioned in local customs and mythology. They are also home to the Bengal tiger. The Indian government has put rules in place to safeguard the delicate ecosystem and encourage sustainable

living for the local populations that depend on the forest resources because it recognises the ecological and cultural significance of the Sunderbans Mangrove Forests. (Prakash, 2019). Again though, the Sunderbans experienced habitat devastation and biodiversity loss as a result of British colonial practices, which included commercial plantation establishment and deforestation for lumber exploitation. The traditional livelihoods and cultural practices of indigenous groups were interrupted by the introduction of monoculture crops and the commercial exploitation of mangroves. So over the years, the Sunderbans Mangrove Forests, like other plant-based cultural heritage sites in the Global South has suffered between the conflicting whims and caprices of the pre-colonial indigenous cultural interests and post-colonial administrations.

5.1.1.3 Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka

One of India's most biologically varied areas is the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, which includes the Nilgiri Hills and is part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Rich montane forests, meadows, and shola forests define the reserve, which is home to a wide range of plant species, many of which are indigenous and therapeutic. The Toda, Kota, and Kurumba are examples of traditional tribal groups with strong cultural ties to the area's botanical legacy. In recognition of the ecological importance and cultural legacy of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, India's cultural policy has aided conservation efforts there. Activities have been made to encourage sustainable land management techniques and involve the local community in conservation activities. The Nilgiri region managed to survive the habitat degradation and biodiversity losses caused by British colonial practices, including commercial logging and the conversion of forest lands for tea plantations. Indigenous tribes' traditional land-use methods were side-lined, which caused social and cultural upheavals (Appadurai, 1990).

5.1.1.4 Konark Sun Temple, Odisha

Renowned for its elaborate stone carvings that portray a variety of Hindu mythological themes, such as celestial beings, flora, and fauna, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is well-known. Inspired by indigenous plant species, the temple's architecture features floral themes that highlight the cultural significance of plants in Hindu cosmology and religious rites. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Konark Sun Temple is protected and preserved by rules put in place by the Indian government. The temple complex's architectural legacy and cultural significance have been preserved through conservation efforts. The Konark Sun Temple's decline during the British colonial era in Odisha was facilitated by actions taken by the colonisers, including cultural monument neglect and damage. Architectural characteristics were lost or damaged as a result of a lack of funding for cultural preservation.

5.1.1.5 Western Ghats

The Western Ghats are a hotspot for biodiversity and the birthplace of indigenous plant species, having been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Tropical rainforests and montane grasslands are among the many different plant groups that call this region home. It also harbours a large number of culturally important plant species that are employed in Ayurvedic treatment, traditional recipes, and religious rituals. India's cultural policy has acknowledged the Western Ghats' ecological significance and has backed programmes aimed at preserving the region's biodiversity and promoting sustainable development. Attempts have been undertaken to support traditional knowledge systems connected to plant-based heritage and involve local communities in conservation programmes. The Western Ghats nevertheless, experienced habitat loss and fragmentation as a result of British colonial policy, which included extensive deforestation for the purpose of extracting timber and the creation of commercial plantations. Indigenous tribes' traditional land-use patterns were disturbed, which led to the loss of biodiversity and cultural legacy.

In conclusion, despite India's cultural policy's best efforts to protect and maintain plant-based cultural heritage sites, colonial legacies have had negative effects, including habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, and cultural disruptions. It is crucial to recognise and right these historical wrongs in order to promote sustainable

development and preserve India's rich botanical legacy for future generations. These plant-based cultural heritage sites showcase the intricate relationship between people and plants in shaping the country's cultural landscape, serving as living archives of traditional knowledge, ecological diversity, and cultural significance (Anderson, 2002).

5.2 Nigeria

A complex interaction of historical, socioeconomic, and environmental elements shapes Nigeria's cultural policy addressing its plant-based cultural heritage. The nation's rich botanical legacy is derived from a variety of natural settings, indigenous knowledge systems, and generation-to-generation traditional practices (Babalola, 1988). In Nigerian culture, plants have several uses. They are used by different ethnic groups as food, medicine, shelter, and even for spiritual purposes. Nonetheless, Nigeria's cultural policy in relation to plant-based legacy has been greatly influenced by its colonial past. Plant-related indigenous knowledge systems and practices were frequently neglected and stigmatised by the Western scientific paradigms and economic frameworks imposed by British colonial rulers, and commercial crops like cocoa, palm oil, and groundnuts were given priority for export, uprooting traditional farming communities and damaging natural habitats in the process (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Natural habitats were being deteriorated and traditional farming communities were being displaced as a result of the prioritisation of cash crops for export, such as cocoa, palm oil, and groundnuts, above traditional botanical practices. Nigeria has struggled in the postcolonial era to balance its botanical legacy with contemporary socioeconomic requirements under frameworks for cultural policy. The value of traditional botanical knowledge systems in maintaining biodiversity, improving public health, and promoting cultural identity has been acknowledged and promoted (Adebanwi, 2014). To control and encourage the use of medicinal plants and traditional medicine, organisations like the National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control were founded. Furthermore, Nigeria has implemented cultural policies that support sustainable land management, biodiversity conservation, and the revival of traditional farming methods (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Governmental and non-governmental organisations are working together to support agroecological practices, record and protect indigenous plant species, and raise public understanding of the ecological and cultural significance of Nigeria's botanical legacy. Despite these efforts, there are still challenges facing Nigeria's cultural policy with regard to plant-based heritage. Nigeria's fast industrialisation, urbanisation, and environmental degradation pose a major threat to the nation's traditional knowledge systems, cultural identity, and biological diversity (Adebanwi, 2014). Unequal access to resources, healthcare, and education – particularly for disadvantaged populations – maintains disparities in the acceptance and application of traditional botanical methods. Nigeria's cultural policy for its plant-based cultural heritage reflects the complex and dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, preservation and advancement, indigenous knowledge and Western science. Nigeria can preserve its cultural identity and support global efforts to conserve biodiversity and advance sustainable development by acknowledging and appreciating its botanical history.

Nigeria's rich botanical legacy must be preserved for future generations through cultural policy initiatives that effectively blend traditional knowledge with modern practices. Nigeria's colonial past and the lingering effects of British rule have a significant influence on the country's cultural policy with reference to plant-based cultural heritage. Plant-related indigenous knowledge systems and practices were frequently neglected throughout the colonial era when Western scientific paradigms and economic frameworks were imposed by British authorities (Falola & Heaton, 2008). The long-lasting effects of colonial legacies on indigenous knowledge systems, biological landscapes, and socioeconomic institutions are reflected in Nigeria's cultural policy for plant-based cultural heritage. Nigeria can preserve its cultural identity and support international efforts to protect biodiversity and advance sustainable development by recognising and resolving these legacies. Nigeria's rich botanical legacy must be preserved for future generations through cultural policy initiatives that effectively blend traditional knowledge with modern practices.

5.2.1 Key Plant-Based Cultural Heritage Sites in Nigeria

5.2.1.1 Osun-Osogbo Sacred Groove, Osun State

The Osun-Osogbo Sacred Groove, located at the banks of the Osun River, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is renowned for its old trees, sculptures, and shrines and is devoted to Osun, the Yoruba goddess of fertility. The groove is a significant religious and cultural location where customs and celebrations are observed, highlighting the importance of plants in Yoruba spirituality. Following its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Nigerian government took action to safeguard the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Groove's ecological and cultural significance. In order to guarantee the on-going protection of this sacred site, initiatives have been undertaken to engage local communities in conservation efforts and to encourage sustainable tourist practices. Sacred gardens like the Osun-Osogbo groove were neglected and desecrated as a result of British colonial policy in Nigeria. Cultural heritage sites were neglected and destroyed as a result of colonial authorities' frequent dismissal of indigenous religious traditions as primitive or pagan (Babalola, 1988).

5.2.1.2 Kainji National Park, Niger and Kwara States

One of Nigeria's biggest national parks, Kainji National Park is made up of expansive wetlands, riverine forests, and savannah woods. Numerous plant species can be found there, including the well-known African baobab trees and indigenous cultures' use of medicinal plants. In addition, the park has rock art and archeological sites that shed light on the indigenous peoples of Nigeria's cultural past. The significance of Kainji National Park for its biodiversity and cultural legacy has been acknowledged by Nigeria's cultural policy (Falola & Heaton, 2008). The park's unique flora and animals are protected, and conservation initiatives are made to raise tourists' and locals' understanding of the park's cultural significance. Indigenous villages were uprooted and traditional land-use practices were lost as a result of British colonial policies in Nigeria, which included extensive land purchase and the creation of game reserves. The establishment of protected zones frequently ignored the land's cultural significance to the surrounding tribes, which resulted in marginalisation and conflicts.

5.2.1.3 Ogbunike Caves, Anambra State

Situated in southeast Nigeria, the Ogbunike Caves are a system of interconnecting limestone caverns and tunnels. The Igbo people revere the caves, which are encircled by luxuriant flora. Highlighting the cultural significance of plants in Igbo cosmology, they are used in traditional ceremonies and rituals and are thought to have spiritual significance. The Ogbunike Caves have been designated as a cultural heritage site by Nigeria's cultural policy, which has also taken steps to protect the site's spiritual and ecological significance. In order to ensure the preservation of the caves and the surrounding ecosystem, efforts have been made to stimulate tourism. Cultural treasures such as the Ogbunike Caves were neglected and vandalised during the British colonial era in Nigeria (Adebanwi, 2014). Traditional rituals and the preservation of cultural heritage declined as a result of colonial rulers' frequent suppression of or stigmatisation of indigenous spiritual activities.

5.2.1.4 Yankari National Park, Bauchi State

Yankari National Park is Nigeria's premier wildlife reserve, known for its diverse ecosystems and abundant wildlife. The park is home to a variety of plant species, including acacia trees, baobabs, and shea butter trees. It also contains archaeological sites and rock formations, providing glimpses into Nigeria's prehistoric past and cultural heritage. Nigeria's cultural policy has recognised Yankari National Park as a valuable cultural and ecological resource. Conservation efforts have been undertaken to protect the park's biodiversity and promote sustainable tourism practices that respect local cultures and traditions. British colonial policies in Nigeria, including land expropriation and establishment of game reserves, non-the-less, disrupted traditional land-use practices and cultural connections to the land. Indigenous communities were often displaced or marginalised, leading to loss of cultural heritage and biodiversity (Adebanwi, 2014).

5.2.1.5 Idanre Hills, Ondo State

South-western Nigeria is home to a collection of historic hills known as the Idanre Hills. The hills are covered in thick undergrowth and support a wide range of plant species, including native shrubs and trees. The cultural significance of plants in Yoruba folklore is seen in their association with traditional tales and legends, which the Yoruba people regard as sacred. The Idanre Hills have been designated as a cultural heritage site by Nigeria's cultural policy, which has also put steps in place to protect its historical and ecological significance. The local community's cultural customs are respected while ecotourism and heritage protection are promoted. Natural resources of Nigeria, especially the Idanre Hills, were overfished and degraded as a result of British colonial policy (Afolabi, 2001). Indigenous land tenure systems were compromised, which resulted in the loss of customs and knowledge associated with the hills.

In sum, the significance of these plant-based cultural heritage sites in Nigeria lies not just in their ecological richness but also in their cultural and spiritual importance to the local populations. This underscores the intricate link that has shaped Nigeria's cultural landscape between humans and plants. Colonial legacies have however, had detrimental effects, such as the uprooting of indigenous people, the loss of traditional land-use practices, and the neglect of cultural heritage sites, despite Nigeria's cultural policy's best attempts to safeguard and maintain plant-based cultural heritage sites. It is imperative to acknowledge and rectify these past injustices in order to advance sustainable development and preserve Nigeria's abundant botanical legacy for posterity.

6 Findings and Discussions

The study revealed that the long-lasting impact of colonialism largely negatively challenged the conservation of plant-based cultural heritage in the Global South. It was discovered through interviews and focused group discussions with cultural specialists, policy-makers, and local people that attitudes regarding indigenous botanical knowledge and practices are still shaped by policies and practices from the colonial era. Respondents emphasised how traditional plant-based cultural legacy has been marginalised and eroded in both India and Nigeria as a result of colonial interventions such as land expropriation, monoculture farming, and commercial resource exploitation.

The study also revealed how crucial cultural policies are to the preservation and restoration of plant-based cultural heritage. Arising from the results of analysis of official documents, policy frameworks, and legislative initiatives, indigenous botanical knowledge systems, and ecosystems have been acknowledged as important components of cultural policy agendas in both Nigeria and India. Interviews with policymakers and cultural stakeholders unveiled that attempts were set in motion by Cultural policies in various countries in the region, to support sustainable land management practices, empower local people to protect their biological legacy, and incorporate indigenous plant-based traditions into national heritage conservation policies. Nonetheless, difficulties persist in converting policy objectives into concrete results in practice. Also, findings from case studies uncovered through community consultations, and field observations highlighted the ongoing dangers to plant-based cultural heritage, such as habitat loss, declining biodiversity, and socioeconomic inequality.

The necessity for comprehensive strategies that tackle the root causes of cultural deterioration – such as unstable land tenure, socioeconomic disparities, and a lack of finance for heritage conservation efforts – was underlined by the respondents. Focused group discussions consisting of researchers, botanists, and traditional healers helped the study uncover the complex relationships that exist between conventional botanical knowledge systems and cutting-edge scientific methodologies. The discussions' key informants underscored the synergistic relationship between autochthonous plant-based remedies and Western scientific approaches, underscoring prospects for cooperative studies, sharing of expertise, and creativity in the preservation of biodiversity and the medical field. Field observations and ethnographic research provided insight into the adaptation and durability of plant-based cultural heritage to environmental and socioeconomic stresses. Agroecological farming methods, community-managed seed banks, and eco-tourism projects that honour

regional plant species and cultural customs are just a few of the creative methods for maintaining traditional knowledge that were highlighted in case studies of indigenous communities.

Again, the focus groups and participatory mapping exercises, among other gender-sensitive research techniques, highlighted the vital role that women play in the transmission and conservation of plant-based cultural heritage. Although women are frequently the main guardians of culinary customs, medicinal plants, and seed-saving techniques – especially as shown in rural communities located in the research locations – their contributions are frequently disregarded in frameworks for study and policy. The significance of ethical considerations in heritage conservation initiatives was brought to light through community-based techniques and participatory research methodologies used to engage with indigenous groups. In order to make sure that conservation programmes respect the rights, knowledge, and cultural practices of local communities, respondents stressed the importance of inclusive decision-making processes, free prior and informed consent, and fair benefit-sharing methods.

Deploying cutting-edge multimedia storytelling and digital ethnography research method revealed how digital technology might be used to record and preserve intangible elements of plant-based cultural heritage. In order to promote intergenerational transmission and global awareness, new channels for the preservation of oral histories, traditional ecological knowledge, and cultural practices related to plants are made possible by virtual reality experiences, smartphone applications, and online repositories. The study's conclusions, in turn, draw attention to the intricate interactions that will shape the future of plant-based cultural heritage in Nigeria and India between grassroots initiatives, cultural policies, and colonial legacies (Isichei, 1997).

In sum, the work offers useful evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, conservationists, and cultural practitioners to support the preservation and revitalisation of plant-based cultural heritage in a postcolonial context by interacting with a variety of stakeholders and utilising multidisciplinary research methods. Through a complete synthesis of these new discoveries with available data, the study provides a thorough knowledge of the opportunities and challenges associated with protecting plant-based cultural heritage in the Global South through the lenses of Nigeria and India. Policymakers, scholars, and cultural practitioners can create context-specific policies that respect the rich diversity of botanical traditions while tackling modern issues in a world that is changing quickly through interdisciplinary collaboration and community participation.

7 Recommendations

Formal education institutions in the Global South ought to incorporate traditional botanical knowledge into all levels of their curricula. Indigenous plant-based techniques can help students learn more about their ecological background and cultural history in science, agriculture, and cultural studies courses. This strategy encourages the transfer of traditional wisdom between generations and builds respect for other knowledge systems. Create curricular standards that integrate traditional botanical knowledge into the subjects that are already taught. Educate educators and instructors on culturally responsive teaching strategies. Form collaborations between educational establishments and nearby communities to co-develop educational resources and enable possibilities for experiential learning in natural settings.

Sustainable management of plant-based cultural heritage assets requires giving local populations the tools they need to take charge of conservation efforts. Conservation efforts can become more inclusive, equitable, and successful by including communities in resource management, decision-making processes, and eco-tourism businesses. Initiatives for conservation led by the community also improve local economies, cultural pride, and social cohesion (Ekundayo, 2016). To supervise the administration of cultural heritage sites, cooperatives or committees are formed dedicated to conservation at the local level, offering educational and capacity-building initiatives pertaining to ecotourism, sustainable land management, and historical conservation and encouraging collaborations between governmental, non-profit, and community organisations to get access to capital, know-how, and markets.

Improving legislative and policy frameworks is crucial to preventing the exploitation, encroachment, and deterioration of plant-based cultural heritage. Strong laws, national heritage policies, and zoning laws that identify and protect cultural landscapes, sacred sites, and traditional knowledge systems should be passed by the governments of post-colonial nations in the Global South. Stakeholder engagement procedures, monitoring systems, and effective enforcement tools are essential for guaranteeing accountability and compliance (Nzewi, 1988). Review policies and gap analyses to find areas where current legal frameworks need to be improved. To design laws and policy guidelines that are sensitive to cultural differences, consult with indigenous people, cultural specialists, and legal scholars. Create task forces or specialised agencies for historic protection whose duties include supervising the application and observance of legislation pertaining to heritage conservation (Chakrabarty, 2000).

It is recommended that financial agencies, government agencies, and research institutes give priority to the study and documentation of traditional botanical knowledge systems in Nigeria and India. A valuable understanding of the ecological, cultural, and medicinal value of indigenous plant species can be gained by stakeholders through the support of ethnobotanical studies, archival research, and digital documentation projects. This information forms the basis for sustainable resource management, heritage preservation, and well-informed decision-making. Provide funds for multidisciplinary research projects focusing on biodiversity protection, traditional botanical knowledge, and cultural heritage preservation. Create libraries, digital archives, and repositories to organise and share oral histories, research findings, and traditional ecological knowledge. Encourage co-designing research initiatives to ensure the relevance and applicability of findings by fostering collaboration between researchers, local people, and policymakers.

Encourage communication and cultural exchange between various groups, nations, and areas to advance respect, tolerance, and appreciation of one another's plant-based cultural heritage. Stakeholders can celebrate the diversity of botanical traditions, encourage cross-cultural partnerships, and increase awareness of the value of heritage conservation through festivals, workshops, exhibitions, and exchange programmes (Ajayi & Michael, 1985). In tackling common difficulties, interdisciplinary and intercultural discussion also promotes innovation, solidarity, and the exchange of information. Planning neighbourhood get-togethers, heritage walks, and cultural festivals that highlight folk performances, food customs, and botanical practices has become imperative. Encourage international cooperation, artist residencies, and research alliances that advance intercultural communication. In the digital age, make use of social media, digital platforms, and virtual exhibitions to expand your audience and promote virtual cultural interactions.

8 Conclusion

This study in sum has shed important light on how colonial legacies affect plant-based cultural heritage in the Global South, focusing on India and Nigeria as case studies, and how cultural policies influence the conservation and resuscitation of these rich customs. The study's multidisciplinary methodology and interactions with a wide range of stakeholders have revealed intricate dynamics that highlight the connections between socio-economic development, cultural identity, and ecological conservation. The results of this study demonstrate how colonialism continues to have an impact on the marginalisation and decline of traditional botanical knowledge systems and practices. Indigenous plants and their cultural significance are still shaped by historical injustices such as land expropriation, monoculture farming, and cultural assimilation (Adebayo, 2008).

The study also highlights how adaptable and resilient plant-based cultural heritage is to environmental and socioeconomic difficulties, as demonstrated by creative conservation efforts and community-led efforts to preserve traditional knowledge. Moreover, the study highlights the significance of cultural policies in advancing the acknowledgement, conservation, and renewal of plant-based cultural heritage. Policymakers, researchers, and cultural practitioners can collaborate to protect these priceless cultural assets for future generations by incorporating traditional botanical knowledge into formal education systems, encouraging community-led conservation initiatives, fortifying legal and policy frameworks, funding research and documentation, and promoting cultural exchange and dialogue.

Translating the study findings into practical activities and policy initiatives that tackle the root causes of cultural degradation and advance sustainable development is imperative going forward. Forging a path towards inclusive and equitable conservation practices that respect indigenous knowledge, ecological integrity, and cultural diversity, the Global South can do so by acknowledging the rich diversity of plant-based cultural heritage and empowering local communities to take care of their botanical traditions. In the end, preserving and reviving plant-based cultural legacy is essential to sustainable development and global biodiversity conservation efforts, in addition to being a matter of cultural pride. Plant-based cultural heritage can thrive as a symbol of resilience, innovation, and cultural continuity in the future if nations in the Global South, starting with India and Nigeria, embrace the lessons learned from this research and take a comprehensive approach that combines indigenous episteme with modern solutions.

Funding information: This study is funded by the Bowen University Iwo, Osun State Nigeria, through the Directorate of Research, Bowen University.

Author contributions: S.T.O – lead, conceptualisation, original draft preparation, and editing; P.C.A – correspondence, methodology, and theoretical framework, investigation, and validation; M.N.E. – data curation, investigation, and resources; O.O – writing-review and editing, project administration, and funding acquisition.

Conflict of interest: The authors state no conflict of interest.

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