

Heritage Services

Exploring the Past,
Enriching the Future

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MOWAA





Our mission is to support institutions, businesses and government initiatives in preserving and enhancing cultural heritage assets while fostering sustainable development. We collaborate with clients and partners to unlock the potential of the region's exceptional and globally renowned heritage for the benefit of all.

Embedded within the groundbreaking Museum of West African Art, our Heritage Services team leverages outstanding expertise to provide strategic consultancy and practical solutions for heritage conservation, archaeological science, and community engagement in Nigeria and West Africa.

What is Cultural Heritage?

Cultural heritage encompasses both the material and intangible remnants of past societies. From our ancestors, we have inherited landscapes, buildings, and buried remains that shape our cultural identity. However, West Africa’s rich and diverse heritage remains poorly documented and increasingly vulnerable, as rapid population growth and urban expansion continue to erase historic settlements, buildings, and traditional ways of life.

Why Should We Preserve It?

Requirements to protect, document, and preserve cultural heritage are becoming increasingly stringent for major developments in Nigeria, often driven by the environmental standards of international lending banks. These regulations underscore the urgent need to record and conserve West Africa’s material heritage. Conducting proportional assessments and documenting historic or archaeological sites before development is both a business necessity, and a vital contribution to long-term cultural and economic success in Nigeria and the wider region.

Professionalising Heritage Management

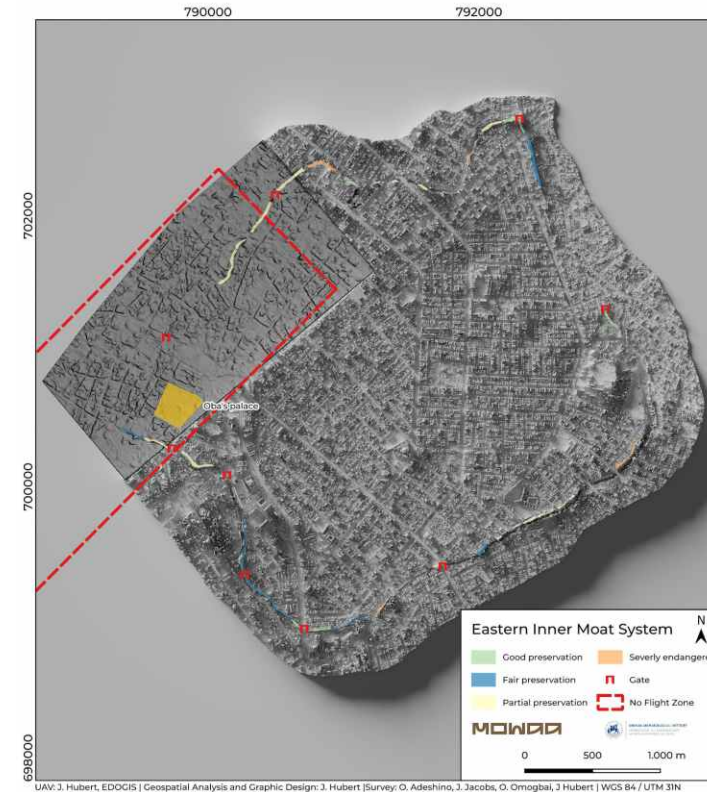
We work at the intersection of culture and business, bringing a deep knowledge of international and regional commerce together with world-class expertise in the management of material and living heritage. Our team of heritage experts—ranging from archaeologists and geophysicists to community engagement specialists deeply understand the cultures of West Africa combined with practical experience in construction and development adhering to set programmes and budgets.



Our Solutions

Site-Based Heritage Management

1



We provide expert guidance on managing cultural heritage sites across West Africa, ensuring their preservation and integration into sustainable urban and environmental planning.

Using advanced technologies, such as high-precision GNSS (digital survey), LiDAR, and photogrammetry, we create detailed digital documentation and 3D mapping of heritage sites, enabling precise spatial analysis, and monitoring of cultural assets while supporting evidence-based conservation efforts. We work collaboratively with communities, regulators, academia, and state and federal governments to develop sustainable, meaningful programmes that conserve heritage while making it relevant and accessible to the public today. Our experience ranges from community conservation projects to developing World Heritage Site nominations.

Pre-Construction Heritage Consultancy

2

International environmental standards for projects funded by international banks require assessments and documentation before major infrastructure development begins.

While these standards were not always strictly adhered to in the past, this is changing. The need for effective cultural heritage protection and documentation in the context of development is becoming increasingly urgent in Nigeria and across West Africa.

The MOWAA Heritage Service team possesses the technical expertise and experience to provide these services, ranging from desk-based studies and intangible heritage assessments to field surveys and archaeological excavations. Our digital mapping and geomatics team collect and analyse data rapidly using the latest remote sensing techniques, while also assisting in documenting and sharing information through GIS databases and webmaps.



Geophysics

3



Using cutting-edge technology, we use advanced surveying, geospatial analysis, and non-invasive geophysical investigations to support archaeological research, heritage site management, and industry-specific subsurface investigations.

The MOWAA Geophysics unit offers the following services:

Archaeological Site Surveying

- Detection of buried structures, artifacts, and other features of archaeological interest.
- Subsurface mapping of historical sites for preservation and research purposes.

Land and Construction Surveys

- Non-invasive site assessments for construction and development projects.
- Detection of underground utilities, voids, and other potential hazards.

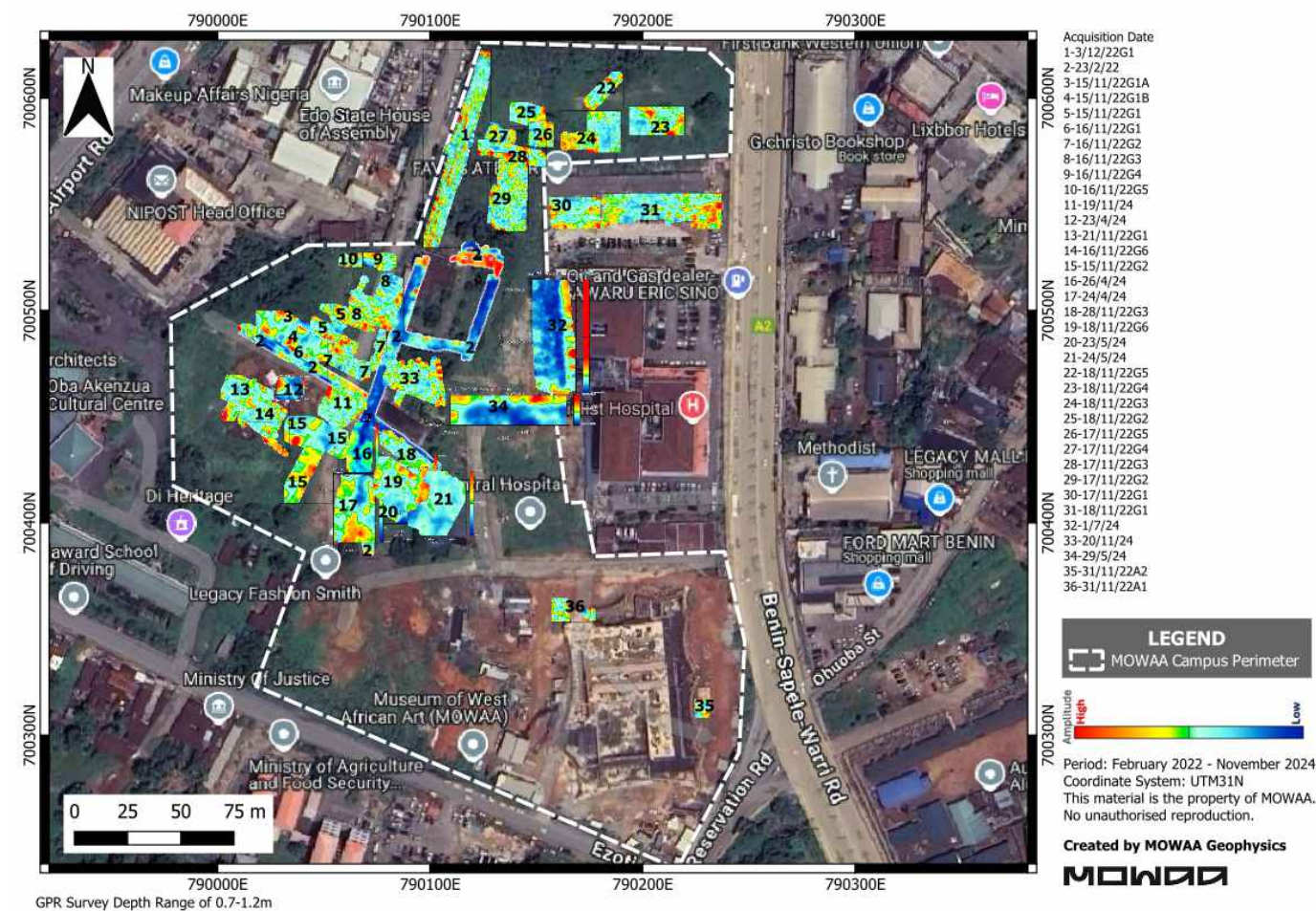
Environmental Assessments and Geological Survey

- Locating contaminated sites or monitoring subsurface conditions in environmental studies.

Consulting and Data Analysis

- Provide consulting services, including data interpretation, reporting, and recommendations based on Geophysical survey results.

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Geomatics Mapping and Data Analysis

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Our expert geomatics team are equipped with the latest digital equipment, ranging from the latest DGPS measuring kit, to drones equipped with camera, video and Lidar sensors.



Using this we bring together information about any given project, site or area to create clear and easily accessible GIS mapping and graphics. These can be included in technical reports or shared via online platforms.

We offer a range of specialized services including:

LiDAR Scanning and Photogrammetry

We use advanced techniques to create detailed digital models of terrain and 3D visualizations.

Applications: Urban planning, forestry management, flood modelling, and infrastructure development.

High-Precision GNSS Systems

Our Global Navigation Satellite Systems ensure accurate positioning for all our mapping projects.

Applications: Construction site surveying, land boundary determination, and precision agriculture.

GIS-Based Spatial Analysis

We conduct thorough site assessments and monitoring solutions using Geographic Information Systems and remote sensing interpretation.

Applications: Environmental impact studies, land use planning, and disaster management.



RTK Positioning and Total Station Measurements

Our team uses these methods for precise topographic mapping and volumetric calculations.

Applications: Civil engineering projects, mining operations, archaeological site mapping, Utility mapping, and topographic surveys

UAV-Based Aerial Surveys

We offer drone surveys and multispectral imaging for large-scale mapping projects, allowing for efficient data collection and analysis.

Applications: Large-scale agricultural monitoring, environmental conservation, and real estate development.

Material Science

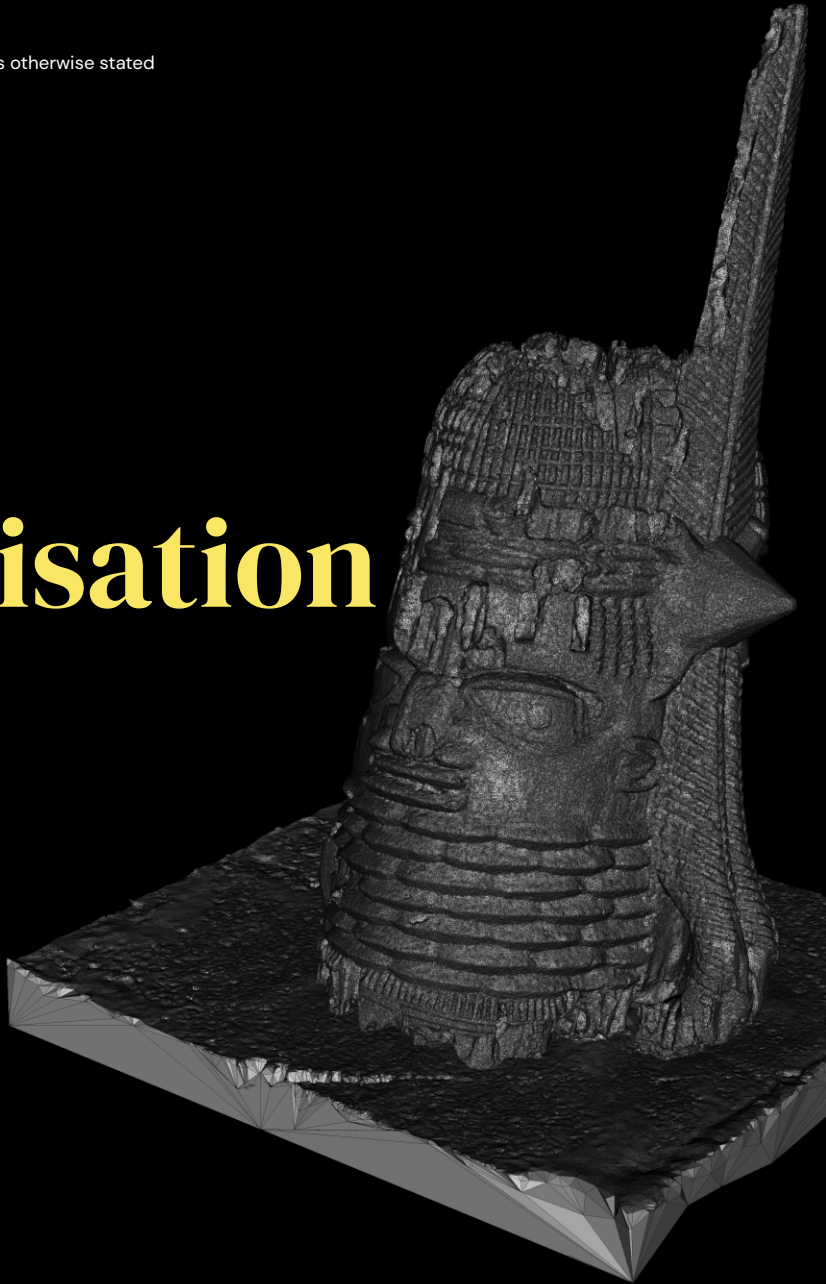
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We use laboratory analysis, material conservation, and dating techniques to uncover insights into past civilisations and inform best practices for heritage conservation.

In our new materials science laboratories at the MOWAA Institute, we conduct much of the materials analysis that was previously outsourced to laboratories outside the continent—right here in Africa. Our equipment includes the latest high-powered petrographic-metallurgical microscopes for analysis of archaeological materials including ceramics and metals. We have in-house expertise in the analysis and conservation of the full range of archaeological and craft materials, as well as environmental specialists who are well-versed in the sampling, analysis and identification of ancient plant remains and pollen.

3D Digitisation

6



MOWAA has developed expertise over several years in digitisation of artefacts and museum objects.

With training from leaders in the field, our team is fully equipped with the cameras, hardware and software needed to develop high quality, high-resolution 3D digital models of objects. We work closely with clients to place them in virtual environments, create online galleries and other applications as appropriate.

Archival Research

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Our team includes a range of researchers, including historians, ethnographers, oral heritage specialists and archaeologists. We work with clients to create and make accessible archives online and utilise data to develop reports and digital content, including websites and webmaps.

Community Engagement Advisory

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We are able to offer community engagement advisory services, in combination with heritage management services.

Our team actively collaborates with local communities and stakeholders to foster inclusive heritage conservation, education, and participatory practices to ensure cultural heritage remains a dynamic and accessible resource for all.

Our Partners & Collaborators

We have worked
with a range of
partners including:

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**International
Research
Partners**

- German Archaeological Institute
- Institut Francais de Recherche Africain (IFRA)
- MAEASAM (hosted by the University of Cambridge)
- University of Oxford
- The British Museum

Clients

- Africa Nature Investors
- Edo State Government
- Azura Power
- National Commission for Museums and Monuments

**Environmental
Consultancies**

- Environmental Accord
- Environmental Resource Management (ERM)

**Commercial/
Technical
Partners**

- Wessex Archaeology
- Quercus Heritage

Case Studies

Azura Power Station

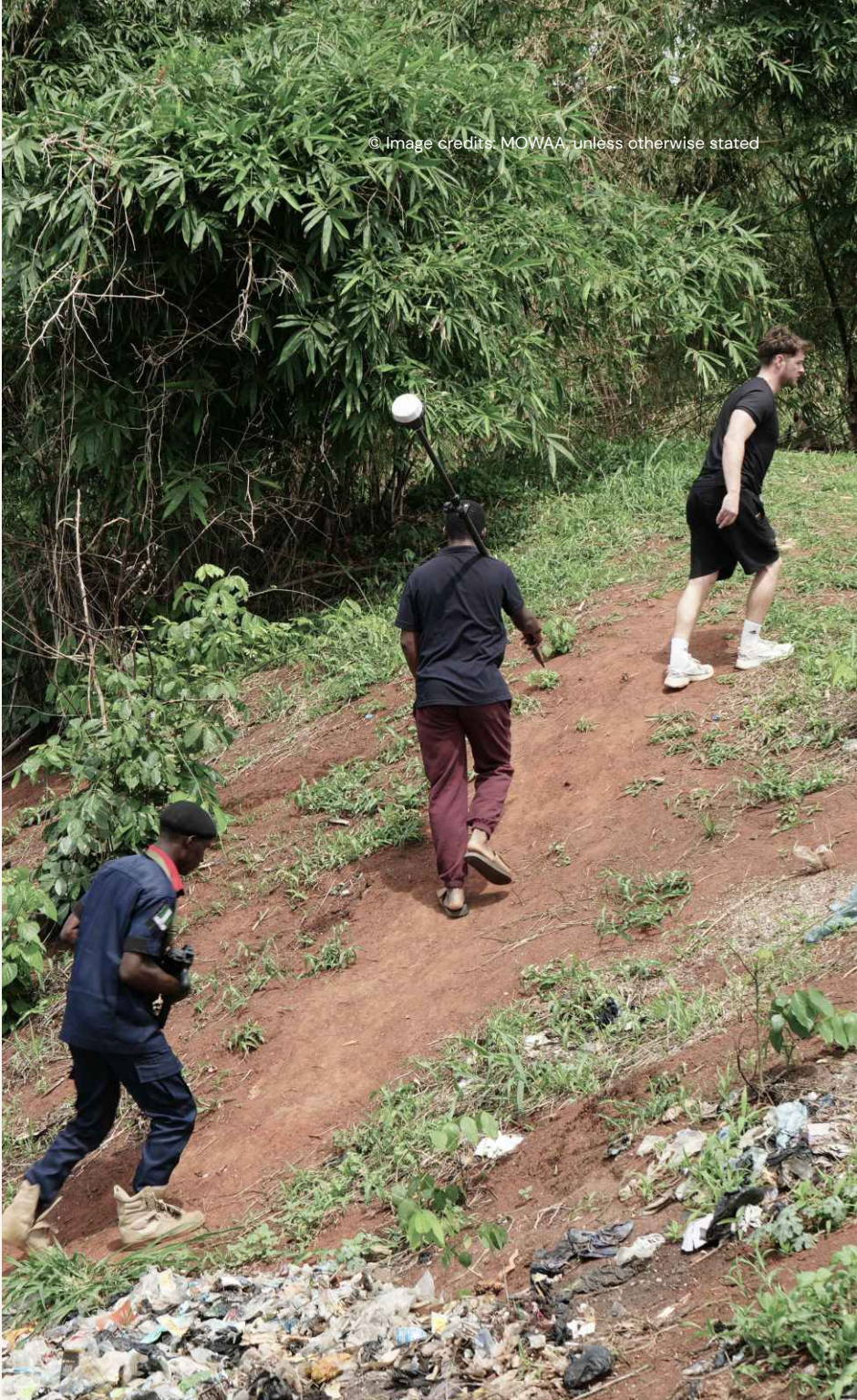
In 2023 and 2024, the MOWAA Heritage Services team worked with Azura Power and Environmental Accord to carry out cultural heritage assessments ahead of the extension of an existing gas-fired power station in accordance with IFC standards required by investors. This included a desk-based study, trial-trenching and documentation of intangible heritage through community engagement.

Gashaka National Park

In 2023 and 2024, MOWAA supported the development of a World Heritage Site application for Africa Nature Investors, who are currently managing the park. This has included desk-based research, remote sensing and site reconnaissance.

Benin’s Ancient Moats

Working with a range of partners, including the National Commission for Museums and Monument (NCMM), Edo State government, the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), and the Institute Francais de Recherche Africain (IFRA), the MOWAA Heritage Services team mapped the historic Benin moats as part of a long-term programme of conservation with the aim of a successful World Heritage Site nomination. The Benin Moat, acknowledged for its historical significance, was proposed as an extension to the existing World Heritage Site of the Royal Palaces of Abomey in 1995, though it remains awaiting official recognition by UNESCO.



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Ogiamien House, Benin City

A unique survival of ancient Benin architectural traditions, Ogiamien House is a millennium-old earthen structure, which stands as one of the most important historic buildings in Benin City. MOWAA worked with NCMM and other partners to provide emergency conservation to the building, including onsite training of locals on red earth mixing and building, and develop a longer-term conservation plan. More recently, we successfully nominated the house for the World Monuments Fund 2025 watch list.

Belzoni’s Grave

At the request of the Italian Embassy, Edo State commissioned MOWAA to undertake a study to locate the grave of Italian traveller and archaeologist Giovanni Belzoni, who died in Ughoton, 30 km west of Benin City, in 1823. MOWAA combined desk-based research, drone surveys, and site visits to identify the probable location of Belzoni’s grave.

About MOWAA

The Museum of West African Art is an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to the preservation of heritage, expansion of knowledge and celebration of West African arts and culture. Founded in 2020, MOWAA serves as a catalyst for connecting the region's rich heritage with contemporary practices through research, exhibitions, collections management, education, and public programmes.

At the heart of our practice is a commitment to rigorous research and meaningful knowledge exchanges. Our Campus, located in the heart of Benin City, is home to the MOWAA Institute—a hub for innovation in artistic and cultural research, dedicated to advancing new methodologies, nurturing talent, and deepening connections to African heritage.

Find out more about us at
wearemowaa.org

Get in Touch

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