



## CITY SCOPE AFRICA ACADEMY

Guest Speaker: **His Royal Majesty, Oba Dokun Thompson (Oloni of Eti-Oni)**

Topic: **POST 2020 AfPEC 5: Cocoa and Tourism for Sustainable Transformation**

Session Date: **12th December, 2020.**

Session Time: **20:00 WAT**

Session Attendance: 38

Session Notes: The session was initiated by the Principal of the Academy, Mr. Olowoyo Oluwatomisin. After which he introduced Mr. Kolade Ayorinde, who introduced His **Royal Majesty Oba Dokun Thompson to the Academy.**

Opening Statement by **HRM Oba Dokun Thompson**

His Royal Majesty, Oba Dokun Thompson spoke about the cocoa renaissance initiative as an initiative that was started in 2014 to take us back to where we were coming from. Cocoa is a cash crop and built western Nigeria. Today, cocoa has been forgotten for so many reasons. He also mentioned that cocoa producing regions all over the world are left for poor while the story in consumption regions is different as wealth was created through value addition to our cocoa.

### **BUT WHERE ARE WE? HOW DO WE CHANGE THE NARRATIVE?**

The Cocoa renaissance initiative was created in 2014 and open to the rest of the world by 2016. The Cocoa Festival is a week long programme and is about celebrating peace, love and development.

The reason for Peace is because cocoa was introduced to Eti-Oni in 1896, after the peace treaty was signed at the end of the Kiriji war between 1878 and 1886. Eti-Oni was established and cocoa was introduced to develop it. Cocoa became the economic mainstay of Eti-Oni and the ancient Ijesa nation. Cocoa was produced sustainably, well traded and was used to accelerate the development of Western Nigeria which saw the region as the fastest developing in Africa. HRM reiterated that we should return people to what we know in terms of cocoa, agriculture and economic empowerment.

Cocoa festival has various angles to it; the social, economic and political angles. Cocoa Renaissance Initiative can only be achieved by creating the culture but how do we create the culture? We need to bridge the gap between consumption and production. When we are able to do this, we will be able to move from production to consumption and also take advantage of several economic opportunities (e.g. job opportunities that will lead to transformation of producing communities across the regions in the world). This returns dignity and self-worth to the farmers. It will also ensure that next generation farmers are on board and this is what will achieve sustainability.

Attendee question via the Moderator: How can chocolate factories be established in Nigeria?

His Royal Majesty: There are cocoa processing facilities in Nigeria at the moment with up to 150,000 tons of processing capacity per annum producing intermediary or secondary industrial products.

They are facing several challenges and currently only about 15% of the capacity is utilized. There are also a number of artisanal chocolate manufacturers in the country, who also have different challenges. These challenges have to do with things that the government should look into and can easily be resolved for instance issues around certifications and approvals of branding requirements. The way to optimize that is to have more people consuming chocolate. We need that culture of consumption.

**COCOA AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM:** Tourism is a by-product of cocoa. We have education, research, merchandizing, tourism, entertainment and a wide range in other areas.

Attendee question via the Moderator: I would like to know a little history of the Nigerian cocoa farming plan. How did it grind to a halt? Is production of oil, a reason for its decline?

His Royal Majesty: cocoa production was never grounded to a halt. What happened was that when oil was discovered there was a lot of free money, new cities were built and there were jobs to be taken up, so people just generally drifted in that direction and agricultural areas were left without any plan. This was what caused the reduction in production and because there were not enough hands to produce the cocoa. Cocoa cultivation is an extremely hand and labour intensive activity. It has not been mechanized and calls for more hands in its cultivation. HRM said that the impact of the work being done currently to revive the industry will be felt soon.

Attendee question via the Moderator: Can you explain a little more what cocoa tourism is?

His Royal Majesty: I will like to define tourism for better understanding. Tourism is the movement of people from one location or the other to another for whatever purpose. Many have failed to define the word "tourism" for the purpose of value or wealth creation and in Nigeria our biggest tourism factor is religious tourism where people are moving from one prayer ground to another.

There is also the social aspect of tourism and not necessarily to build economic value. This is where we have a challenge with everything we do in Nigeria, we do not add value to anything we do even the oil, agriculture that we have. We always see the raw product as the final or finished product.

**AGRICULTURE (COCOA) TOURISM:** Most festivals have their roots in agriculture, in one product or the other. Cocoa tourism is more expansive than other festivals. Beyond the ecotourism that cocoa offers when it comes to going to visit cocoa farms depending on type of location it is. There are different types of tourism products that can be generated or developed from all these things. There is merchandizing, entertainment, fashion and culture. Until we learn how to develop these products from one singular raw product, we will never be able to optimize the value that we can take from it.

For example, after Cocoa Festival was launched as a social event, we began working on developing the festival as a product with economic value. I wrote a book titled, "The Royal Origins and Traditions of Cocoa", a photo documentary of the history, landscape and lifestyle of Eti-Oni. This book was supposed to capture and educate people about cocoa, the beauty of Eti-Oni and the people so that people can visit. When people know what they want to go and see, they have an idea and want to touch it. It also captures a bit about the history of cocoa around the world and even some locations that are historic to cocoa production and development in Africa showcasing stories around our travels just to let you know that cocoa is about travelling (i.e. movement from Eti-Oni to Lagos to Sao Tome to USA to United Kingdom to Italy to the Netherlands to Colombia).

Attendee question via the Moderator: With Agriculture (Cocoa Tourism, etc.) Chief Obafemi Awolowo built the Cocoa house in Ibadan, gave free education to South Western Nigeria, when we

discovered petroleum everybody became lazy and wants to become oil merchant. How can we make Cocoa Production and Development attractive in Nigeria?

His Royal Majesty: It's all about culture and mind set. What the cocoa renaissance initiative is about is the renewal of the mind-set that there is more to life than oil or short-term gains. If you take a look at the first 10 richest families in the world, none of them is an oil merchant but you will find two that are into chocolates. If you go into 20 richest families in the world, you will find that about five are into chocolate production. It is beyond ecotourism, we have had visitors from USA, UK, Poland, Columbia, India, Ghana, Brazil and from different parts of the world coming to visit Eti-Oni for Cocoa Festival and we are still at that development stage and have a lot to do in that area.

Eti-Oni chocolate at the moment is for the United Kingdom Market and there's a reason for that. It is to let people know that it can be done. Eti-Oni chocolate has a global brand has been known worldwide for its cocoa offerings, cocoa advocacy and promotion. Eti-Oni chocolate was launched in Nigeria on 3rd December, 2016 and launched in London on 28th October, 2017.

Attendee - Nana Aduna II believed that Cocoa ecotourism from his perspective was just about inviting people to visit the cocoa farm site. Giving people access to the farm to learn about cocoa processing. He also stated that they have started something like the Eti-Oni festival in Ghana and look forward to collaborating together so there can be a joint effort to make cocoa take its rightful place in Africa.

Attendee question via the Moderator: What are cocoa pods used for after the cocoa beans have been taken out?

His Royal Majesty: When it comes to cocoa, there is no waste. The pods are used in different ways. Some are used in the production of black soap. It can also be used to fertilize cocoa itself. It is also used for biogas to generate clean electricity.

His Royal Majesty stated that he is available to share his knowledge as regards learning anything on cocoa and also provide help in pointing in the right direction. The Academy of Chocolate, UK is showing us through their award programs that cocoa from Africa has value that will compare well with cocoa from any other part of the world. We have the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria that is available for production needs like high yield seedlings, training on excellent farming practices, and Cocoa Renaissance Initiative is available as regards guidance and advice on the entire value chain.

#### **His Royal Majesty Oba Dokun Thompson Closing Remarks:**

It has been an interesting evening although a challenging year but the year has also created a lot of opportunities with new ways of doing things in a different manner to achieve the same result and even possibly better results.

Discussions: Remarks from attendees at the session include - very stimulating, Oba is very articulate and knowledgeable in the subject matter, information obtained will be of use in my field, the session was engaging, please invite me for the next session, there were lots of batter and laughter.

His Royal Majesty gave away the book he authored titled "The Royal Origins and Traditions of Cocoa" to one of the attendees. Attendees were on time, unfortunately, some were unable to enter the meeting room due to zoom error.

Issues: Some people that registered did not receive automated email details of the zoom meeting. This was because some mail servers like Yahoo blocked responses from IP Addresses originating from Nigeria.

City Scope Africa Academy sincerely apologize to anyone affected. City Scope Africa Academy will investigate this issue and resolve it prior to the next academy session.

Video: Full session available on City Scope Africa YouTube Channel - <https://youtu.be/iIEE3Hlleq0>

Thank you all and God bless. Happy 2021 in advance.