

## Bida, NIGERIA

## Bida City of Crafts and Folk Art



Bida is an ancient city located in Nigeria, recognized as a member of UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in 2021 and designated as a City of Crafts and Folk Art. Bida's traditional institutions are administered by His Royal Highness, The Etsu Nupe, in keeping with the heritage of the kingdom. In the present democratic system of governance, the city is headed by elected Executive Chairman (Mayor) in line with the constitutional provisions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The name Bida originated from the chief of the Bini people who built a walled fortification in the midst of the Bidako villages that clustered on the banks of the Niger River. A red mud wall of about twelve miles long surrounded the cluster of Bidako villages on the banks of the Landzun River. The city has four gated entrances, but today only a small portion of the wall remains. The road from Suleja town enters Bida at Bangaie gate, named after Agaie town, and the road from the Kaduna River enters Bida at the Wuya



gate named after a village on the banks of the Kaduna River. The other gates are Bangbogi and Bangbara. These gates are symbolic of the old trade routes to the south passing through Bida crisscrossing from east and north.

The major ethnic group of Bida city is originally of Nupe descent. Bida serves as the headquarters of the Nupe kingdom led by the Etsu Nupe (Emir) consisting of many districts including Agaie, Lapai, Lemu, Pategi, Kutigi, Mokwa, Doko, Baddegi and Katcha among others. Popular places in Bida include Banwuya, Wadata Palace, Bangaie, Bangbogi, Bangbara, Federal Polytechnic Bida, Hajiya Fatima Lolo House, Hajiya Ladidi Food Canteen, Ramatu Dangana, Post Office, Small Market, St John's Schools, Banin-Bida (oldest) Mosque, Main Market, Landzun River and many others.

The people are skilled in the arts of glass making, iron and brass smith, wood carving, fabric weaving, rafia weaving, traditional music and songs, dating back to the eleventh century. Crafts Creator compounds in Bida include the Masaga Glass, Tswata Mukun Aluminum, Gbongbofu Brass Smith, Iron Smith of Dokodza, Malfa Fabric Weavers, Wood Cavers of Takoassa known as Gbagba. It is also a city renowned for folk festivals, music, dance, and songs. The most widely celebrated is the Durbar Festival and Nupe Day.





The city's economic activities in pre-colonial days included trade in crafts of glass, brass, silver, and iron works as early as the fourteenth century with many great nations such as the Mali Songhai Empire, the Ashanti Empire of Ghana and the Kanem-Bornu Empire of Borno. The crafts are handmade products using traditional furnaces with locally made hand tools, especially the art of glass making is believed to descend from ancient Egyptian glass art of the second millennium BCE.



Bida, as a leading city of Crafts and Folk Art in Nigeria, performed at the international stage at the 2022 Jinju World Folk Arts Biennale in South Korea. The city presented the Etsu Nupe Folk Art Troupe, which composed of the Etsu Nupe Gbando Royal Band and the traditional Angale female dancers. Etsu Nupe Folk Art Troupe performances at the Jinju Biennale preserved the traditional dances, praise singing and wise sayings, traditional Nupe music and recitation of Nupe proverbs. The fusion of Gbando and Angale was a delight at the Biennale, performing alongside international groups which are: Wheelhouse Rousters and Seth Murphy from Paducah, Kentucky in USA; Aswan Troupe for Folklore from Egypt; Saeng ya Kasay Cultural Ensemble from Baguio, Philippines; Kaihulu from Ambon, Indonesia; Sukhothai Traditional Dance from Thailand; Naaba Ambga Artistic Ensemble from Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; and *Jinju Geommu* (Sword Dance of Jinju) from South Korea.

Interestingly, the successful convergence and collaboration between creative fields at the hybrid session of the UCCN Crafts and Folk Art Sub-network Annual Meeting for member cities which took place during the festival was a great achievement. The taste of its gastronomy experiences

received and new friendship made was the best opportunity presented in Jinju. The intangible cultural assets showcased at the festival promote artistic creativity and the authenticity of cultural nations in harmony and togetherness towards advancing inclusive growth and urban sustainability. These memories define the 2022 Jinju World Folk Arts Biennale as a bridge builder and keeper of traditional knowledge. Jinju reflects a peaceful city with a living museum, a people of great heritage value that upholds diversity as foundation of creativity. Its festival demonstrations and workshops for the expressions of cultural performances and the outdoors stage performances at different locations remain as a step forward to the world's shared goal of "Sustainable Development."

As a new city after the integration into UCCN, we are faced with challenges of receiving proper orientation as a new member city, inadequate integration workshops lessons, paucity of funds, lack of access to grants, no access to technical support and lack of working manual for new cities, on how to adopt craft and folk art as core component for sustainable urban development.

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