
ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**Factors That Inhibit Tourism Development: A Case Study of Ababa
(Festival) Religio- Cultural Carnival in Oron**

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Abstract

Religious tourism is as old as religion itself and consequently, it is the oldest form of tourism in the world. Most religions have holy places that people visit from time to time for several reasons. This work examines the Ababa carnival which involves faith- activities, but in a heightened form. It involves pilgrimages to the Ababa holy shrine in Esin Ufot Eyo-Abasi in Oron. This work identifies as a problem, the lack of basic infrastructures and non-patriotic and neglecting attitudes of Nigerians towards their indigenous religious tourism development, as they are so much involved in faith-based activities and travels to Israel, Mecca, Rome among several others. It adopts the Phenomenological method in a Culture Area of Oron. As primary research, it will rely on oral interviews and secondary materials from the libraries and the internet. The findings indicate that the positive effects of indigenous faith-based religious tourism such as Ababa are yet to be used in developing Oron and Nigeria as found in other parts of the world such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Italy. This work concludes that traditional religious tourism can be used as a tool for National Development and unity of Nigeria. As a recommendation it calls on the government who sponsors individuals and particular religious groups on pilgrimages, to divert such funds and invest in infrastructural development in Oron to attract tourists to the area and as well develop traditional religious tourism of Nigeria, as this will reduce poverty and create employment opportunities.

Keywords: Ababa Carnival, Religio-Cultural tourism, Development and Oron.

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a part of human civilization and it is a powerful tool to keep people together. The relationship between religion and tourism is so close and strong that both are benefited from

the frequency of travel. Religion is one of the major motivating factors to pull and push tourists to undertake travel. From the immemorial, people have been traveling for religious purposes such as offering prayers, performing rituals and attending religious festivals. It is a significant form of tourism that makes people spare some time for personal fulfillment or family or community obligations. Traveling to pilgrim centres is considered an important part of tourism for religious purposes. People travel to their respective pilgrim centres and offer prayers. Religion is an integral part of an individual's inner quest for completing the cycle of life. The purpose of religious tourism is to help people find the inner truth of life and advance themselves economically, socio-culturally and diplomatically (Sampad & Jitendra 2012).

Tourism has a role to play in the development of Nigeria, locally, nationally and internationally. Religious tourism is as old as religion itself and consequently, it is the oldest form of tourism in the world (Edet 2008; Yta & Umukoro 2017). Most religions have several holy places they visit from time to time for several reasons. Sarahani and Musa give a good example of the Zoroastrians, which motivated pilgrimages in ancient times, which is still going on uninterrupted today. Each year around 300-330 million tourists visit the world's key religious sites (UNWTO, 2017). Also, UNWTO (2017) has reported that 60% of the world population practices religion and these believers form a demographic base of religious tourism. The three major religions in the world; Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, with 33%, 21% and 14% worldwide followers respectively have received the highest proportion of religious tourists in their headquarters. For instance, Israel which is important for all Christians and Judaism received more than 2 million foreign visitors that make religious tourism backbone for Israel's economy (Collins-Kreiner 2010). Makah origin and center for Islamic religion received more than 2 million pilgrims from different countries of the world which makes religious tourism to be the second GDP contributor of the Saudi economy next to oil (Ascoura, 2012). Rome origin and center for Catholic Christianity have received more than 10 million religious and cultural tourists from everywhere especially from Europe and America. Gwa and Velankani, and India have annually attracted one million and 500,000 pilgrims respectively; and 100,000 in both Sri Lanka and the Philippines (Louth 1997).

Though noted for its tourism potential and unknown statistics for religious tourism, Africa's underdeveloped tourism sector is attracting 5.2% (49.4 million) of the total tourist arrived in 2011 in the world (UNWTO, 2017). According to Ighobor and Haidara (2012), in Africa, around 7.7 million people are employed in the tourism sector. They also noted that tourism is contributing an average of 9% GDP to East African countries' economies. This work examines the Ababa religious festival and its holy shrine in Oron of Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria, it will examine the factors that inhibits tourism development of the Oron people, in an attempt to highlight the potentials and tap from the impact of religious tourism into the Akwa Ibom state and Nigerians economy for national development. And suggests how it can be used to developed Oron and Nigeria at large, as seen in other countries of the world

ETHNOGRAPHY AND COSMOLOGY OF ORON NATION

The Oron people occupy the low lying and often swampy territory on the west bank of the Cross River Estuary, a few kilometers inland from the Atlantic Ocean (Ekerete & Ekanem 2014). Their Northern neighbours are the Nsit and Uyo, while to the West are the Ubium and

Eket people, while their south-eastern boundary with the Efiks in Cross River. Marshall's report gives the total area occupied by the Oron people as 200 – 220 square miles (320 sq km) one-fifth of which comprises uninhabited mangrove swamp. Height above sea level does not exceed 200 feet (70 – 90 meters). Annual rainfall figures are 120 – 160 inches (300 – 400cm) with a rainy season from May to October and a dry season for the remainder of the year (Ekeke 2011). Oron lies 80 kilometres away from the Bight of Bonny, between latitude 04⁰N and 5N and longitude 08 30⁰E and covers a landmass of 219.60 square kilometers. Oron has a total population of over one million.

The natural drainage system consists of a complex network of streams principally feeding the Uya Oron Creek and the Mbo River, both of which enter the estuary (Onyile 2005). The margin of the estuary creeks is predominantly mangrove forest, while a little way inland the vegetation, once tropical rain forest is now mainly a secondary cover of oil palm (*Elacis guinerisis*) and (*raphia sap*). Keith Nicklin (1974) has rightly said that: Although much of Oron today lies within the palm Belt of Southeast Nigeria, as one proceeds by road from Uyo to Oron, palm trees decrease in frequency, while bananas a plantain increase. Today, Oron can be rightly classified into the Niger Delta or better still the south-south. In the Oron cosmology, religion is inevitable and plays a prominent role in the Oron society, the society or the universe is interpreted as a spiritual world that was created by the Almighty God or Supreme Being, these shows the sovereignty of God in Oron cosmology. There is also widespread belief in gods and ancestors which can be seen in the “Venerated Ekpu” pantheons. Good life is the central focus of Oron cosmology and the clan (Udip) and family (Ufok) plays a prominent role in the composition of the entire Oron cosmology (Onyile 2005).

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ORON NATION

There are two traditions associated with the history of the Oron people. The first traces the Oron origin to the Bantu. Uya (1984) quotes Roland Oliver who attributed the Bantu expansion from the Cameroon-Nigeria corridor to the coming of Iron Age with the Oron attendant improvement in woodwork, boat, tools, and weapons for hunting and fishing.

The second tradition is the most generally accepted source by several Oron indigenes who trace their origin to Usahadit Cameroon origin which took place about 300 years before the Portuguese arrived Fernando Po in the 15th century. Based on this, Uya(1984) gave the date of the migration of the Oron people from Cameroon to their present location between the (11th and 15th) eleventh and fifteenth century. This fact is gotten from the Ekpu ancestral carvings which the Oron families and clans trace their origin in 1900 traced their genealogical trees about 15 to 16 generations back. Within Nigeria, there is also claim by majority ethnic group who impose a common pan identity on the smaller group, which here the Ibibio claims the Ibibio pan identity and origin of the Oron. There are several arguments in support and against this particular claim. Uya (1984) quotes Old Chief of Ikot Eyo to Jeffreys in M.D.W. Jeffreys reports on the clans and tribes of Eket district, May 1925 “We are neither Efiks nor Ibibio but we are Oron and more related to the Efiks than to the Ibibios” (p. 35). Chief O.E Isong, the Ahta of Oron, in an interview noted that “the Oron People came from Cameroon through the river and after settling in Calabar for some time passed to their present site” (Oral Source). Uya (1984) critically

examined the two claims of Oron origin which one is the Ibibio origin of the Oron people and the non-Ibibio origin and disapproved the Ibibio origin which has recently been refined into a

creed by Monday Noah, Edet Akpaudoh among others as a mistake and errors which was created by Europeans, visitors, Missionaries, Traders, anthropologists, and administrators in the 19th and early 20th century. Oron land, because of our geographical location was included in Ibibio country by the early travelers and traders. The pan-Ibibio origin of Oron is a political way of which the Ibibio majority wants to claim supremacy over the minority such as Oron, Ekets, Efiks among others. The event surrounding the formation of the Ibibio union and the exclusion of Oron, therefore, is worth noting of Oron as a different and distinct ethnic group from the Ibibios. Another glaring point is the Oron language (Oron dialect) which is in its broadest sense regarded as a dialect of Ibibio, without noting its peculiarities which makes it unintelligible to the Ibibios and Efiks to understand the language. This, as a matter of fact, makes the Oron language a distinct language rather than the dialect of the Ibibio (The Oron people speak Oron dialect, not Ibibio). Historically, among the Oron people, to be called “Ibibio” tantamount to being called a “slave”. This explains why until comparatively recently, the Oron did not intermarry with the Ibibios for fear of being linked to descendants of slaves.

The non-Ibibio origin of the Oron, in totality, rejects the Ibibio origin of the Oron people. In support of this, Uya (1984) noted that even in the early years of colonial rule, the Ibibio never disputed the claims of Oron as a distinct ethnic group in Nigeria. On December 4th, 1939, in answer to a question put to Chief Nyong Essien, an Ibibio by the Chief Secretary to the then government replied: “they Ukpabang are not of Ibibio origin and are not accepted as such by the Ibibios” (p. 45). Similarly, in local government reforms in the Calabar province (1949), The various Oron groups are in agreement with the view that their patriarch came from Cameroon. According to Chief E.O. Isong, then Ahtah Oro, “the Ukpabang people migrated away from conversion to Islam in the general area of Egypt, and under their leader, Abang who led them to Cameroon and Abang begat Do, who begat Doni, Doni begat Oro and Obolo” owing to dispute over farmlands, the group later moved into present-day Nigeria. The district officer, R.N.O. Marshall also supports Cameroon's origin. Oron origin is narrowed to Usahadit region in Cameroon. Evidence in support of this is evident in 1 Oron sharing names with Cameroon such as Akan, Ekang, Abang, Etong, Osun, Etang. Another is a familiar saying among the Oron people indicating that the farthest point in the world is Usahadit. Another point is the Usahadit coming to Oron annually to attend festivals in commemoration of their oneness. Another point is the Oron word for the white man “Mbatang Onwi” which means human kidnapers (Stealer of men), is of Cameroon origin as Jeffreys, rightly notes that Mbatang is an importation of Yaounde word coming from Douala via Usahadit and is the word Cameroon probably used to describe the Portuguese at Fernando Po. The visit of the federal inspector of Education of West Cameroon, G. Nseke during his visit to Oron in 1972 and the address given by the chief also prove this origin, it reads:

You must have heard of the legend among Oron people that Cameroon is your original home when Abang, the great Ancestor migrated into this land now occupied by his descendants. As tradition now lasts longer than city walls, it is then reasonable and correct for the Oron man to regard anything Cameroon as native (Uya 1984, p.11)

Speaking the majority of Oron views, Uya (1984) rightly notes that “most of the groups that now inhabit Oron originated from Cameroon and migrated from quite distinctly and separately

from the Ibibio group (Uya 1984). The Oron people are not Ibibio origin as can be seen in their religious practices, social-cultural institutions such as Ekpe, Awanadit (Ekpri Akata), Alughu, Ekpu ancestral cult, while the Ibibios are known for Ekpo masks and Uta mbiam among others. This proves that the Oron migrated from Cameroon to their present abode and different from the Ibibios.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND PRACTICES OF THE ORON PEOPLE

The diversity of the original antecedent of the Oron people fuses into one monolithic whole. A value system and traditional structure which displays the variety of its constituting experience from previous contacts and interactions. The Oron has a process and product of their culture, as the culture here is a complex whole of what the Oron people do, believed, respond to, value, respect, reject, prohibit from doing and disrespect as against the collective norms and morality of society. This is patterned ideology found in their culture which regulates social means of livelihood, human relations with the living in their environment and the spiritual world. Solomon Madubuike (2005) points out that: “Culture is the fabric of human and societal development because its forms and contents are capable of producing predictable changes that enable humans to adapt, integrate and adjust to any conditions” (p. ix). The quotation makes it clear that the Oron culture is dynamic, noting also the traditional norms of the Oron people here refer to established principles handed down from generation to generation, while cultural values/customs are the generally accepted behaviours of the Oron people. On this Okon observes that “tradition establishes principles which after being accepted and put into continuous practice becomes custom” (p. 269). Tradition can also be seen as whatever is delivered or transmitted, this form is known as objective tradition, while the way and means of propagation and transmission are called active tradition. George Agius adds that: “traditions are often (always) unwritten ideas, philosophy, religious beliefs that are at first stage oral and later may be written. Customs, on the other hand, refers to the way of life which includes the beliefs of a particular group of people (Little et al., 2014). In this regard, Iwe (1976) defines culture as:

The way of life of a people's distinctive fundamental character or spirit, their value orientation or ethos, world view, institutions and achievements in the various fields of human endeavors, legal and literary, artistic and scientific, religious, philosophical, and technological (p.55).

In this regard, customs are cultural ingredients of any society which can be seen as a descriptive and complex whole with wide-ranging and comprehensive connotations and significance which is fundamentally characterized by the distinctive, way of life, device for living and attainment of a people (p. 55). The Oron society is not an exception of this integral, cultural, and traditional component as their various, rich, advanced culture and custom which is a combination of so many ingredients that will be considered in the following categories.

ORON SOCIO -RELIGIO -POLITICAL AND CULTURAL

INSTITUTIONS

In Oron, the cultural institution most often had a dual role which ranges from economic, religious, political and social which made it difficult for their categorization. The institutions were integrated into the administration of the general well-being and maintenance of peace and order in Oron. Politically, the king or kingship association was the head of the executive, in Oron kingship association (royalty) were more trustworthy and sincere to each other in their

council. Though the kings belong to one or more secret society and the highest rank holder in Ekpe fraternity. The system was more of patrilinear though in some cases matrilinear was also recognized especially among the Idua and Enwang. Uya (1984) on this noted that succession to offices and properties was essentially patrilinear with exception of Idua which a dead chief or ruler was only succeeded by his kingsman: the highest Ekpe title holder Iyamba which was the large hereditary with the Abiak Elibi (p. 38).

Among the Oron people, the government was administered by the elders which conformed gerontocratic system of government. This was done through five recognized bodies arranged into social and political units as follows:

- a. **UDIP** – This group is made up of immediate family
- b. **UFOK** – This group comprises of the extended family headed by the Ubuhu ufok, the oldest male child, this was an elaborate compound.
- c. **EFAK/EKPUK** – This group is a lineage group headed by the oldest male who becomes the single ancestral father who heads alongside the council of elders.
- d. **UDUNG** – This is the village headed by the Ofong-Udung (Village head or king) with his governing council which comprises of the different representatives from Efak and lineage. The king is always rotational to the different lineage and he is also seen as the father of the village.
- e. **THE ISONG COUNCIL** – This council was made up of Ofong, Mmeudungs, the OfongEfak, the Ubuhu-Efak and other persons famed for their ability to contribute to the deliberation (Alaba-Ofong) would be chief. They were in charge of the rulership of the entire Oron which is today known as Akpakip-Oro headed by the Ahta Oro.

The following are some of the socio-religio cultural institutions found in Oron: Ekpe (Nyanikpe, Nkanda Usongo, Ekpenyong, Esa, Ibang, Eyamba, Obon, Ekpe Uko), Ekung, Awan-Idit (Ekprie Akata), Abang (Iban Isong), Nkoho, Aged Group (Nka The Nka (aged group) found in Oron are as follows: Nka Ikponoew – for elders, Nka nnap – youths, Nka asian, Nka Ime, Nka afe, Nka ukwak, Nka uteghe, Nka ukparaosung: Cleaning market square street, streams, Nka Ufere: look after village shrine and administered to the accused person, Nka ndito: they maintain peace and order in the village, Nka eso: village guards/police, Nka mkparawa: Warrior group), Mbok Mbaya (Otune).

THE TRADITIONAL RELIGION OF THE ORON PEOPLE

Before looking at Oron Traditional Religion, there is a need for a universal look at Religion. Etymologically, “Religion” derives from three Latin words by three different scholars which are Cicerol, St. Augustine and Lactancius. Religion in its Latin words as its roots are Relegree (which means to unite or to link, Ligare means to bind together, and Religion means a relationship. From the etymology of Religion, it shows that Religion is essentially a relationship,

a link, or that which binds two persons together, namely the human person and his supreme, transcendent Being, or God.

According to DiCenso (2011) who quotes Kant's definition of Religion

“as a recognition of our duties as divine commands, Religion is the belief which sets what is essential in all adoration of God in human morality...Religion is the law in us, in so far it obtains emphasis from a lawgiver and judges over us. It is a morality directed to the recognition of God. (p. 71).

It should also be noted that Religion is usually based upon a relationship, which is usually covenantal. This is well illustrated in the Old Testament as in the New Testaments. It is the same in African Traditional Religion. This implies that the moral element is a vital factor in every religion. According to Schleiermachers, Religion is:

A feeling of absolute dependence, of pure and entire passiveness...the universe is an uninterrupted activity, and at every moment reveals itself to us...it is religion to take up into our life, and to allow ourselves to be moved in these influences...The one thing and everything in religion are to feel all that moves us in our feelings... (Adelowo, 2014, p. 71)

Religions from time immemorial have always been an inescapable part of the people, the easiest way to a person or group people is through their religion. This is why Mbiti expatiates on the relevance of Religion in traditional African society, to him: Religion penetrates all the departments of life so fully that it cannot be isolated. Both in tradition (ancient) and modern life...Religion is the strongest element or force and the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people” (Emeka 2014, p. 15). Religion is an important aspect of human life which the Oron is not an exception. Pope Paul VI also proved this when he said that: To the African Traditions, life is viewed spiritually even more than an animistic concept.

For Iwe (1976): “Religion is natural to man and Religion is essentially characterized by quest for Supra Human power, the acknowledgment of man's limitations and self insufficiency and the formulation of a path doctrinal and practical – moral in life, in explanation and answers to the fundamental issues and problems of human existence” (p. 48). Iwe (1976) also states writes that: Religion is an essential and inseparable aspect of human existence itself...Religion and culture are twin, essential, inseparable and interdependent aspect of human life. (p. 58). Oron Traditional Religion is the indigenous Religion of the Oron people that was transmitted to them by their ancestors and is part of the Oron culture. Religion played a crucial and pervasive role in all aspects of Oron society, be it farming, hunting, fishing, marketing, social relations, and recreation were governed by religious laws and taboos. Man evolves codes of behavior between himself and the spiritual and natural environment. Okon Edet (1984) notes that the Oron people recognized a hierarchy of spiritual power culminating in the: Great, omnipotent, omniscient and allpowerful Abasi odung oyong...who lived in the sky from where he saw and judged all human actions, he was the creator of everything, he rewarded all good deeds and punished bad ones (p. 52). This proves the Oron belief in a supreme God, but he is represented by designated Abasi or gods which are Abasi odung isong (god of the earth) he sustains and is in charge of food, water, shelter, health on earth, Abasi Isong is physically represented in all villages by Abasi Utei (God of farm) to which everybody sacrificed at the beginning of the farming season to ensure safe bush clearing, plant, and bountiful harvest. Another in the hierarchy is Abasi okoro (god of the compound) the protector of house and property. And was sacrificed to on obribong day, a local market day, while Abasi Inam was in charge of prosperity.

Another notable importance is Abasi Esuk (god of the river) fishing folk in the riverine areas sacrificed to this goddess by throwing the head of a beheaded cow into a river to secure her blessing for an abundant catch.

Another strong belief and practice were that of the Ancestor or Ancestral cults which acted as an intermediary between these gods and man. According to Okon Edet Uya (1984):

“Each Oron family had its shrine where the carved wooden images made from oko tree representing each ancestral father was kept...or in the shed, obio udung” (p. 52). Apart from these family deities, each village in Oron had its central deity (Oluglu) and a shrine dedicated to her, some of them are: Abanga Nlak, Umume, Atiabang Okoko: Okpokim Edikor: Enweme of Ubutuong people and Etifit of Eyuyuk all in Enwang: Oluglu Ubuoho of Eyotong, Oluglu Mkpok Okwong of Okossi: and Otokporof Udesi these Oluglu were used to detect crimes and settle disputes and enforce village norms. There is also belief in deities found among the different clans; an example is the Ibighi who had Eke-Eme Oro who shrine was at Uya Oron. There was also a socio-religious institution in which Oron were members; some of them are Ekpe secret society, Awanadit, etc. In Oron traditional religion there is the practice of witchcraft, but it is not tolerated if discovered the person will be subjected to the esere beans treatment, there is also a wide belief in magic, this practice is divided into two: Homeopathic magic and contagious magic. The Traditional Religion of the Oron people before the advent of the colonial masters and missionaries, in particular, acted as unifying force of the Oron people. The Oron people had a traditional religion which they had developed as a mechanism used in explaining and adapting to their environment.

The Oron traditional religion has no sacred text unlike Islam (Quran) and Christianity (Bible), no single founder though it is believed that it was transferred to them by their ancestors and everything about the religion is documented in the Ekpo-oro and others were translated orally. Though the Oron people traced their ancestry to “Mediterranean world” in Egypt which they ran away from Islamic conversion to Cameroon. This migration was led by Abang who begat Do, Do begat Doni, and Doni begat Oro and Obolo (p. 10). The above fact of the Ancestral leader of Oron migration is not associated with their religion as it is believed that the religion was transferred to them by an older ancestor than Abang.

HISTORY OF ABABA FESTIVAL IN ORON

The Oron Ababa carnival is a religio-cultural festival of the Oron people. Akabom Inyang Ekpenyong noted that the Ababa festival is a religious and cultural play performed every 1st January of every year (Oral Interview). According to Bassey Kufre who notes that a festival is an event ordinarily celebrated by a community and centering on soul characteristic aspect of that community and its religion or traditions. It is often marked as a local or national holiday. (Oral Interview) The Oron Ababa is associated with the harvest, religious commemoration, and thanksgiving for good harvests. These festivals often serve to fulfill specific communal purposes, especially in regards to commemoration and thanksgiving. The celebration offers a sense of belonging for religious, social, or geographical groups contributing to group cohesiveness (Oral interview). They may also provide entertainment, which was particularly important to local communities before the advent of mass-produced entertainment. Chris

Abasieyo further adds that historically, the Ababa originated among the Eyo Abasi (Children of God) clan in Oron, who celebrates the New Year and bountiful harvest of fish in the past year, and in advance of the New Year. (Oral Interview).

Asuquo Aduak also added that the festival is celebrated at the beginning of a new year in appreciation and thanksgiving for surviving the hardship of previous years and for a better fruitful year ahead (Oral Interview).

ABABA SACRIFICIAL RITUALS

Sacrifice is one of the rituals that take place before the Ababa festival. It is a long ancient religious practice among the Oron people. Sacrifice is the essence of every religion. Bolaji Idowu (1968) writes that: It is a means of contact or communion between man and the deity. Sacrifice is how man maintains an establish relationship with his object of worship (p. 120). Among the Oron, the main purpose of sacrifice was to maintain the right relationship with the deities as offering sacrifice ensures the well being of the society or the individual. Items used and offered for sacrifice depends on the occasion and the taste of the divinity involved. Ekeng in an oral interview pointed out that the item offered for sacrifice by the Oron and Efiks were always the same since they both worship water goddess (Ndem) with different names. These sacrifices can be offered by the individual and sometimes depending on the type it can be by a priest. On the concept of priesthood, Essien Akabom Offiong (2001) writes that: The priest is the intercessor for the worshippers in traditional religion as this was the case in Oron and Efik traditional religion (p. 5). Essien Akabom Offiong (2001) also gave the types of sacrifice carried out by Oron and Efiks as follows:

1. Meal and drink offering
2. Thanks or gifts offering
3. Votive offering
4. Propitiatory sacrifice or Expiatory sacrifice
5. Substitutionary sacrifice
6. Preventive sacrifice
7. Foundation sacrifice

The above sacrifices just as their names imply, were made at times to appease, appreciate, request, prevent evil, the fulfillment of a vow, substitute or change of souls.

Ekeng gave some of the things used to carry out these sacrifices as drinks, snuffs, animals such as goat (he/she), sheep, cow, and in some cases human beings were offered. Though the use of humans for sacrifice was abolished by early Christian missionaries. Ekeng also added that “On human sacrifice there are two categories of human before and during the arrival of the Christianity in Calabar and Oron. One was for atonement of a great sin committed against God and man. It could also be appeasement of an angry goddess (Ndem) or deities. The other was to enable a chief or nobleman like an Obong, Offong, Etubom, Ada Idaha ke Efik Ebrutu or title holder a good passage into the land of the dead. Human sacrifice is a long traditional practice among the Efik and Oron which they historically came with from Egypt and

Usahadit their pre-origin to their present settlement. This tradition has been abolished though not completely as it is still being practiced in secret most especially in the rural areas (Villages).

On the performance of the rituals before the Ababa festival/carnival, Okpo Edim noted that before the festival/carnival takes place, the chiefs, clan heads, and the priest will go to the Ababa shrine in Esim Ufot in Eyoabasi). They will sacrifice cock, goats, sheep's as the case may be, and make incantation, libation and invocations with the use of hot drinks, after which if it is appreciated by the deity, the Ababa mask will come out of the water, which the natives

will jubilate and start the festival/carnival. He also noted that this process may take at times five to seven hours (5-7 hours) before the mask comes out of the water (Oral interview). Uno Isanghedit further explains that several laws govern the festival, that at the commencement of the Ababa festival/carnival the mask must be returned before dark. And most often because of the fun involved in the carnival they will return the mask around seven to eight or at times 9 pm which always angers Ababa deity and will inturn punish them the following year for the delay last year. He also noted that the mask is supposed to be returned on or some minutes past 6 pm or at most 6:45 irrespective of whenever the mask came out of the water (Oral interview).

ABABA AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ORON

Meaning, Forms and Tourism Development

According to Gössling et al., (2006) note that tourism does not only mean international travel for leisure or travel by air (p. 3). Tourism is the temporary short term movement of people to destinations outside the place where they normally live and work and includes the activities they indulge in at the destination as well as all facilities and services specially created to meet their needs (pp. 3-4). Tourism is centered on all the activities undertaken during a stay that is closely related to leisure and recreation (p. 4). According to Cumbria Tourism (2018) definition: tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their unusual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. Some disparities exist in the two-term of tourism and it is wrong to consider all the travels as tourism and some critical characteristics should be involved in the tourism:

- Duration: overnight stay can be considered or not
- Purpose of the journey: it should be done by a variety of goals
- Displacement: it has to be outside of the usual place and it is mentioned the most important factor of definition.

Soica (2016) explains that a person who travels and visits any place with the purposes which are mentioned in the tourism definition is known as a tourist and also the duration of travel should be at least more than one night. The concept of tourism is assumed as the mixture of some serious factors like food and beverage or transportation system or facilities and also accommodation and there should be provided for tourist who wants to visit a place, the industry of tourism is influenced by some changes and trends like fashion or even pleasure and tourism sectors must adapt themselves by these kind of alternations to survive in the market (p. 96).

Karen et al., (2018) described that the development of tourism is briefed in different stages. The stage of finding and targeting a suitable place to visit by tourists, broadcasting some news about the chosen place and response of the community to this kind of interest which can

be defined in some plans like the development of services or buildings. Surely, tourism development should be considered as a holistic and homogeneous process that so many factors have been playing an important role in these criteria. From an economic perspective, Tourism is supposed to be one of the most significant forces which crystalized our world, tourism brings prosperity and wealth for residents, it is the greatest earner of global export and foreign exchange and job opportunities will be provided by these phenomena. Also tourism influences culture, environment, and society. It helps people to improve their sense of well-being through travels,

journeys which help satisfy their human needs. Tourism has contributed to cultural preservation and protection and environment conservation is another impact of tourism nature.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the new trends appeared and ordinary people traveled to different places to visit and enjoy natural resources and nature and it was much easier for average people to provide money for traveling rather than before. Also, it should be mentioned that some technological development had positives effects on tourism development as well. For instance, by creating railways, people were able to visit different areas across the country. Davis (203) listed some critical changes which affected tourism development like the invention of the sewing machine, motorcycle, train, the automobile and airplane, etc. one of the other factors which created some positive changes was weekly holidays (Djordjevic & Jankovic 2015). By 1951, almost more than half of the English labors have 2-week holiday during a year and it was a good opportunity for these people to travel across the country and it also flourishes the tourism industry more than the past. This percent enhanced to 94% in 2000 and nowadays it became easier to travel to other parts of the country and even all over the world (Djordjevic & Jankovic 2015). Some factors have an undeniable and critical impact on tourism and tourism development and technological development has made a revolutionary alternation in the process of tourism and tourism growth, some evolutions in the field of industry, transportation and even in the level of income and population.

TOURISM TYPES AND FORMS

Tourism can be classified based on geography or based on the objective. In either case, there are different types. First, considering classification based on geography, Txarancov & Tkhangapsov (2014) identifies three types of tourism, namely domestic, inbound and outbound tourism. These suggest movements within and outside a geographical location, either as an indigene or as a foreigner. Tureac & Turtureanu (2010) also identified three geographical types of tourism but using different names apart from one. They are domestic, regional and international tourism. Another way of classifying tourism is to base the classification on intention or purpose. Page identified purpose as one of the factors for measuring tourism. Based on purpose also, Okpoko and Okonkwo (2005) mention five types of tourism, namely, cultural tourism, nature tourism, sports tourism, business/conference tourism, and religious tourism. As the names already preempt, these types specify the purpose for which the tourist undertakes the travel. In the world, many millions of people from different countries embark on touristic travels every year. Such travels take them to destinations such as Greece, Turkey, Brazil, Rome in Italy, Paris in France, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles in the U.S.A. England, Egypt, Israel, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirate and Kenya. People go to

these places for different purposes such as going to see the ancient or modern architecture, cultural archives, citadels of learning, ancient or modern technology, sports, archaeology, nature, and religion (pp. 14-19). As Page acknowledged, the question about what motivates people to travel is very relevant when tourism is discussed and religion is one of the things that motivate people (p. 92).

RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Travelling to sacred destinations is considered a component of religious experience and journey, it can be characterized as religious tourism. If religious tourism just considered a

religious journey, it would be impossible to pay attention to other dimensions and impacts of tourism such as economical or cultural influences. Therefore, this concept will be onedimensional as it is suggested it can be ranged from secular to pilgrimage tourism (Dadpour & Sirat, 2009). Tourism has been known as a suitable way for economic growth and development and the people's culture or religious attitude is fundamental to tourism which frames and formed the sector. Wilson posits that Religious tourism has been considered as the physical travel for finding the truth and in search of some sophisticated answers for some important questions such as what is the meaning of life or even more specific questions like what is the meaning of my life. According to Olsen & Timothy (2006) religious tourism has been assumed as the oldest form of noneconomic journeys and approximately 240 million people visit holy places annually. Most of these people are Christian, Muslims and Visitors are interested to visit holy places for different reasons, as a contribution to heritage or culture, for a sense of curiosity or even to enjoy the landscape of that place or site (p. 18). Drule pointed out that the concept of tourism happens based on two main reasons. The first one rooted in internal stimuli and that forces people to follow their motivations and try to gain what they desired such as pleasure-seeking or recreation, etc.

The second one occurs when people are fascinated by external factors and expectations such as the natural sources and quest for spiritual experiences and exercises. Even so, it should be mentioned that these two factors are intertwined and intertwined and they should be considered and defined simultaneously. However, motivation has an important role in the tourism process and travelling. In terms of pilgrimage and religious tourism, internal factors are considered as the main reasons and travel itself has fewer priorities for religious tourists. Drule et al., (2015) stressed that the sense of being a better human is the main factor of religious journeys. The main importance of tourism and especially religious tourism became manifest since humans experienced a sense of curiosity in terms of knowledge about cultures, natures, shrines, etc. The necessity of tourism has been appeared based on the purpose of tourism and according to this concept; a variety of this phenomenon has been formed. The concept of travel helps people to gain a better understanding of human values, common respect as long as economic growth and prosperity and religious tourism has been playing a deceive role for unifying humanity and bringing development in social scales and to build and reconstruct humans and human personality (p. 57).

Nowadays, the concept of religious tourism includes a journey for making a strong relationship with others with like mind and strengthening and improving the relationship and beliefs in a sophisticated way (Wong et al., 2007). Religious tourism which sometimes named as spiritual tourism has been achieved determinant role all around the world. Income and

technology are brought to countries that are planned in the field of tourism and people were able to gain knowledge about other religious cultures (Wong et al., 2007). Tourist behavior can be influenced by tourism and religious tourism; for example, destination and visitor product will be determined by the aim of a journey and also based on the form of tourism facilities must be provided for tourists. Religious tourism as any other form of tourism are seeking for customer and there should be competition for attracting more customers (Weidenfeld & Ron, 2008). According to Zamani-Farahani & Musa (2012), religious can be imagined as a sophisticated way to influence people's minds and their behavior. The concept of pilgrimage is formed and recognized in any culture of religious countries all around the world, for instance, Hinduism or

Islamic ideology; Judaism and Christianity are some of these well known religious ideas (p. 72). The concept of pilgrimage is described by Barber as "A journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding". Nowadays this concept has been changed and it consists of deeper issues and characterized in different forms and defined as modern and new secular travelling or traditional and old pilgrimage and this kind of concept is experiencing a serious juvenescence all over the world (pp. 12-13).

FACTORS THAT INHIBITS ABABA RELIGIOUS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ORON

Several factors hinder the development of Ababa's religious tourism in Akwa Ibom. This work identifies the following factors:

1. Inter-Ethnic Politics

Uma Agwu Onwunta rightly defines an ethnic group as a human group bound together by ties of cultural homogeneity. Complete uniformity, of course, is not essential but there does prevail in an ethnic group a high degree of loyalty and adherence to certain basic institutions such as family patterns, religion, and language (49). In Akwa Ibom state the Oron ethnic group differs and possesses distinctive folkways and mores: customs of food, dress, art, and ornamentation; moral codes and value systems, the pattern of religion and recreation from the Ibibios and Annangs. The division of Akwa Ibom state into three ethnic groups: the Ibibios, Annangs, and the Oron was not established for scientific anthropological, cultural, language and religious categories but simply to showcase the superiority, power, and dominion of the majority ethnic groups (the Ibibios and Annang) on the minority ethnic group (Oron).

The inter-ethnic politics of Akwa Ibom State has greatly hindered the growth of the Ababa festival as the Ibibio majority ethnic group, and Anang who have produced governors of the state in the person of Arc. Obong Victor Attah and Chief Godswill Obot Akpabio tend to develop festivals of Ibibios and Annangs which they Eka Ekpo festival is a typical example of such development and transformation which Akpabio gave to the Anang festival. The Ababa festival of the Oron people has been neglected and sidelined by all the previous administration just because it belongs to the Oron ethnic group, these inter-ethnic politics has blocked their interest, sights, and vision which contemporary leaders add to tourism as an engine room of economic, social, socio-cultural development and foreign exchange and revenue generation accrued to some state through tourism development. The government has also ignored and

neglected the rich geographical landscape and location of the Oron people. Inter-ethnic politics of ethnocentricism and tribalism has greatly hindered the development of the Ababa festival of the Oron people in Akwa Ibom State.

2. Government Sponsorship of Pilgrimage to Israel and Non-Patriotic Attitude of Ababa Festival

The government of Akwa Ibom State is guilty of directly and indirectly sponsoring faith-based travel (Pilgrimage) to Israel every year, with the budget of hundreds of millions of naira which is managed by the Akwa Ibom State pilgrimage board. The government by this neglects the indigenous festival in Akwa Ibom State with the Ababa as a case study. The

government also neglects the festival by not participating in it, thereby showing their nonpatriotic attitude towards the Ababa festival and other indigenous festivals in Akwa Ibom. Be this as it may, the government annually sponsors trips for, their family members, government officials, friends, well-wishers, political allies to pilgrimage and holidays in Israel, Rome, Paris among several others. If the government of Akwa Ibom State should channel 50% of the budget spent on foreign pilgrimage and faith-based activities to Israel, Rome, Paris among several others into indigenous faith-based festival such as Ababa which will in-turn attract tourists and researchers from all over the world thereby generating foreign exchange, revenue, employment and income to the natives and governments of Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria at large.

3. Lack of Partnership, Popularization, and Awareness on Ababa Festival

The natives, indigenes and paramount/ traditional rulers of Oron have also consciously and unconsciously hindered the growth of Ababa festival by not appointing qualified scholars of tourism management into the local planning committee of Ababa festival who will be charged with the responsibility of creating awareness through advertisement and billboards on prints media, social media, TV's and radios to the general public and world community at large. The local organizing committee have also failed in their bid to create and attract partners from international communities, government parastatals, NGOs, organizations and cooperate bodies such as banks, telecommunication companies among several others.

4. Lack of Basic Amenities

Lack of basic amenities is also the major challenge that tourists face during the Ababa festival as there are no accessible roads to Eyo-Abasi in Oron, the home place of Ababa festival. Accommodation also poses a threat. This work will look at these basic amenities in the following areas.

a. Accommodation

During the Ababa festival, there's always an accommodation problem as there is no standard hotel in Oron apart from the Bakibom beach hotel which is not even a three-star hotel. This challenge is major because Places of tourists' interest must be capable enough to provide good accommodation and catering facilities. Generally, tourism mostly prospers in those areas where good lodging and food facilities are available at reasonable prices.

b. **Amenities:** Growth of tourism at a particular place is also influenced crucial factors like; how well the site is maintained for touring activities like dredging of the rivers, power supply, pipe-borne water, good roads and bridges, boat competition, fishing, art, and crafts, etc. Whether emergency facilities are available or not, so on.

c. **Ancillary services:** If a tourist destination is equipped by ancillary (supplementary) services like banking and finance, the Internet and telecom connectivity, hospitals, so on, then such a place succeeds to hold (retain) more tourists for a longer time. This overall helps to boost the local economy to some extent. It is a fact that it must be expressed that Oron lacks these basic amenities to facilitate the Ababa festival.

5. Lack of innovations in Ababa Festival

The local organizing committee have also failed in bringing contemporary innovation into the Ababa festival such as boat regalia, masquerades and cultural institutional display, and fishing competition and bidding which will also attract tourists from far and near to grace the occasion. The local organizing committee can also give out scholarships to Oron sons and daughters who display and promote their culture with an intellectual test or examination, in all the disciplines to promote education in Oron.

CONCLUSION

Religious tourism is a growing global phenomenon and one of the world's largest and fast-growing industries with over 230 million jobs directly and indirectly and contributes to more than 10 percent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), (Roday et al., 2009). It helps man to live in harmony with nature (sacred places such as shrines, trees, streams, etc), through this faith-based activities, it exploits the environment and natural landscape by encouraging an excessive number of visitors and building adequate facilities that there is no natural wealth or scenic views left. The Ababa festival of the Oron people is a good means of using religion to develop tourism, as it is the phenomena and relationships arising from the interactions of tourists, businesses, host governments, and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourist and other visitors. The Ababa carnival in Oron lacks government support and basic amenities to stage it as a national and international carnival. It is a religious carnival and traditional festival of the Oron people.

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