

**AN ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNMENT AND HERITAGE CUSTODIAN ROLES IN
THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to examine the role played by both the government and selected rural communities who are custodians of cultural heritages, festivals and artifacts. The objectives of the study are to identify tourism sites and festivals in the study area, to examine the developmental projects embarked on by government, look into the level of community participation in selected festivals and to determine the type of approach used by government when embarking on projects relating to tourism in this community. A total of 180 questionnaires were administered in target population of systematically selected rural communities while 20 questionnaires were administered on senior staffs of the Bureau of Tourism in Ekiti State. The theory of Demand and Supply was used as the basis of its theoretical underpinning. Data were collected from both primary (fieldwork) and secondary (Bureau of Tourism, Ekiti State) sources. The chi-square statistical method was used to test formulated hypothesis. The study finds out that the conditions of infrastructure at the host communities were not at their best and this tends to reduce the level of patronage of cultural sites and festivals. Furthermore, it was deduced from the study that host communities were not involved in decision making process on developmental issues relating to their heritages. The study recommends on the use of bottom-top approach by government before embarking on developmental projects. It also recommends the creation of awareness of these festivals, artifacts and other cultural heritages especially by government

Keyword: Cultural heritages, Cultural sites and festivals, Cultural Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is defined as a form of nomadism that encompasses homosapiens which at the right time and under the right condition always pleasurable. It involves the travelling outside one's immediate environment to visit places of attraction. It is important to note that the endpoint of all tourism activities is enjoyment. Tourism takes two forms viz: Ecotourism and Cultural Tourism. While Ecotourism involves visit to pristine environment, Cultural tourism embodies such activities as organised visits to historical sites, visiting other culture and people (Lawan, 2001). Cultural Tourism gives visitors the opportunity to understand and appreciate the essential character of a place and its culture as a whole including its: history and archaeology; people and their lifestyle (including the ways in which they earn a living and enjoy their leisure); cultural diversity; arts and architecture; food, wine and other local produce; social, economic and political structures and landscape (Pye, 2001).

THE PROBLEM

Nigeria is depreciating economically due to the imminent corrupt practices and the dwindling oil resources. It is no gainsaying that overreliance on the product has affected the country's economy thus diversification has been looked into as an alternative. In recent times, with the fact that the country is blessed with rich cultural artifacts, government has not been really proactive in the harnessing this cultural resources, no wonder, Afolabi (2012), raised a question when he noted that low economics have competitive advantages because they have huge tourism potentialities; 'are rich countries wealthy because they have huge tourist potentials or is it that their riches have brought them huge potential'? He further asserted that the seriousness of a country in harnessing, promoting research finding to action plans linger on sustainable ambitions projects in tourism. There are abundant natural and cultural resources for tourism industry to flourish in Nigeria, unfortunately, the organizational framework is still very weak and this aspect is too crucial to be wished away, if we really want to promote stable tourist business in this part of the world. The purposed against the background of collectivity orientation which brings together the government, the expert and the grass root people. It is wrong to assume that government policies on tourism industry coupled with the expertise of archaeologists, anthropologists, ethnologists, hoteliers and others will produce a positive result without sincerely recognising and appreciating the centrality of the grass root people. Indeed, much of the tourism development efforts in Nigeria has failed to bring about result basically because there remains a communication gap between the experts, on the one hand and the people (the of most, if not all, these resources) on the other. In fact, there are still many resources and /or potential tourist attractions in the rural set ups, which are yet to be known, let alone harnessed, by the government and it agents (Ogundele, 2001).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Tourism demand can be seen as a production of motivation of cultural tourism site, this is a product of the level of satisfaction that can be attained there. Sessa (1983) in his view considered tourism as the result of those productive activities that involved the provision of goods and services required to meet tourism demand and which are expressed in tourism consumption.

Sinclair and Stabler (1997) referred to 'tourism supply as a complex phenomenon because of both the product and the process of delivery. Principally, it cannot be stored (i.e, it is a perishable product); it is intangible in that it cannot be examined prior to purchase, it is necessary to travel to consume it, heavy reliance is placed on both natural and man-made resources and a number of component required, which may be separately or jointly purchased and which are consumed in sequence. It is a composite product involving transport, accommodation, catering, natural resources, entertainment and other facilities and services such as shops and banks, travel agents and town operators.

THE STUDY AREA

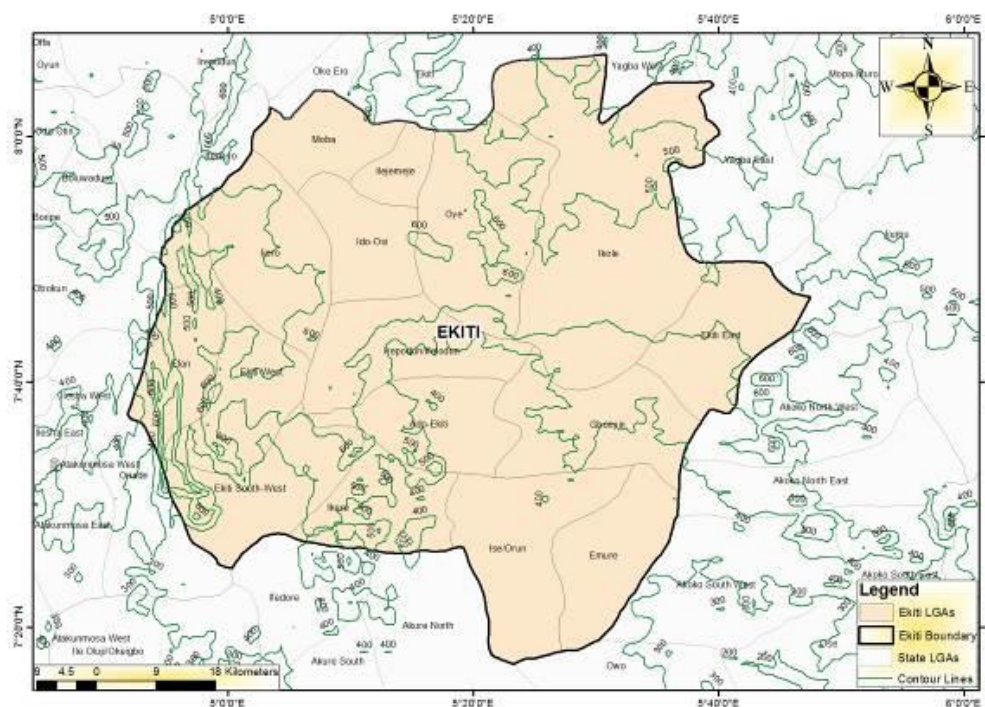


Figure 1.1: The Map of Ekiti State
Source: ArcGIS, 2016

Ekiti State is a landmass located between latitude $7^{\circ}15'N$ and $8^{\circ}14'N$ of Greenwich Meridian and longitude $4^{\circ}35'E$ and $5^{\circ}55'E$ of the Equator (see fig 1.1). It covers approximately $6,353km^2$ bounded by Kwara State to the North, Kogi State to the East, Osun State to the West and Ondo State to the South. The State is mainly an upland zone, rising over 250m above sea level and with rock outcrops. Ekiti State, like all Yoruba States, has a lot to offer in culture. Many cultural or traditional festivals are usually held at different time of the year in all towns and villages in Ekiti State. Apart from these festivals, there are many other many cultural attributes of the Ekiti people that must not be overlooked. The main staple food of the people of Ekiti is pounded yam and Vegetable soup. In areas like Ipoti-Ekiti, Ogotun-Ekiti and Ipole-Iloro Ekiti are known for the production of beautiful mat and mat-based products such as table mats, conference bags, purses, hand fans, cup covers e.t.c. also, in towns like Isan Ekiti and Ara – Ijero Ekiti, and Ire Ekiti because of the high quality of ceramics are known for the production of ceramic pots, candle holders, plates, spoons, cups e.t.c.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study is to look into the roles played by custodian of cultural heritage and government in the development of cultural tourism in Ekiti State. The objectives of the study are to identify some cultural tourism sites and festivals in the study area, to examine the

developmental projects embarked on by government, look into the level of community participation in selected festivals and to determine the type of approach used by government when embarking on projects relating to tourism in this community.

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant difference between community development and government involvement in cultural tourism in selected areas of Ekiti State.

RESEARCH METHODS

The descriptive research design was used in this research work thus, the research work was carried out in two (2) communities selected systematically due to their richness in culture. The two (2) communities; Ado Ekiti and Ire Ekiti were located at Ekiti Central Senatorial District and Ekiti North Senatorial District respectively. 180 Questionnaires were administered on the inhabitants of Ado Ekiti and Ire Ekiti. One hundred and twenty five (125) questionnaires were administered in Ado Ekiti while fifty five (55) questionnaires were administered in Ire Ekiti. The administration of questionnaires in these two communities was based on the projected population of their Local Government Areas i.e. Ado Local Government Area and Oye Local Government Area which stand at >300,000 and >160,000 respectively. Also, 20 questionnaires were administered on the workers of Ekiti State Tourism Board to get information on Governmental roles on the sustainability of cultural tourism in the study area. The questionnaires were retrieved and subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The percentage table formed the basis for descriptive statistics while the Chi Square statistical analytical method was used to test if there is no significant difference between community development and government involvement in cultural tourism in the selected area.

DATA PRESENTATION

Table 1.1 Ratings of Government Involvement in Cultural Tourism

S/N	Variables/Options	E	%	AA	%	A	%	BA	%	VP	%	TF	T%
1	Identification of sites/ festivals	5	25	7	35	8	40	0	0	0	0	20	100
2	Infrastructural development	5	25	5	25	7	35	3	15	0	0	20	100
3	Facial upliftment of sites/ festival	5	25	2	10	7	35	6	30	0	0	20	100
4	Financial support	6	30	0	0	8	40	6	30	0	0	20	100
5	Accessibility of sites	1	5	4	20	10	50	5	25	0	0	20	100
6	Publicity/Creation of awareness	2	10	2	10	8	40	7	35	1	5	20	100
7	Use of bottom-top approach	0	0	2	10	6	30	6	30	6	30	20	100

Source: Field work, 2015

Key: E= EXCELLENT, AA= ABOVE AVERAGE, A= AVERAGE, BA= BELOW AVERAGE, VP= VERY POOR, %= PERCENTAGE, TF= TOTAL FREQUENCY AND T%= TOTAL PERCENTAGE.

Table 1.2 COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES OF VARIOUS VARIABLES

S/N	VARIABLES	COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES			
		AGREE		DISAGREE	
1	IS DECISION MAKING BY COMMUNITY ON DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS ALLOWED	72	40%	108	60%
2	GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION ON CULTURAL TOURISM	76	42.4%	104	57.6%
3	INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF SELECTED COMMUNITY AS A RESULT OF CULTURAL TOURISM	45	25%	135	75%

Fieldwork, 2015

DISCUSSION

The host communities are the embodiment of different cultural heritages. The major disturbance faced with the cultural tourism is the intervention of government in the development of this site. There has been little effort by the government to promote cultural tourism as 75% of respondents noted that there has been no project by the government in a bid to sustaining these sites. Also the infrastructural facilities in the host community are nothing to write home about. It was also noted from open-ended questions given to the workers of Ekiti State tourism Board that most of them don't even know about some cultural tourism sites. This implies that government has extensively neglected the area of cultural tourism. It is also noteworthy that there are still many cultural sites that have been identified but yet to be explored. This is partly because the attention of government is not drawn towards this sector.

Similarly, it must be noted that cultural tourism in the study area has not really developed thus a need to extensively look into these sector as there is need to sustain these area so that it can help in boosting the economy in a long run. The study concludes that, the concept of sustainable cultural tourism development can be adopted as a strategy of developing especially at the host communities for cultural tourism. The concept noted that;

1. Tourism must be demanded by people, and it must be supplied either by government, individual or society.
2. The tourists needs must be taken into cognizance, cultural values should also not be negatively affected

3. Tourist behaviour must be taken note of, to know the level of satisfaction of tourists with the cultural values
4. Making sure that all development that will take place must take into cognizance the future generation.

Results of chi square analysis of the hypothesis which states that there exists no relationship between community participation and government involvement in developing cultural sites in the study area shows that there is still a wide gap between government and host communities. This was approved by the result which rejects the hypothesis because the computed value of 13.75 is greater than the table value of 5.99 at 0.05 level of significance. It was also revealed that the state of facilities needed to be improved as there is significant difference between the state of facilities and overall tourists' satisfaction. Also, it was revealed in the study that the level of awareness of these cultural tourists' sites is still very low, a reason why we have low patronage from outside the study area i.e. Ekiti State.

IDENTIFICATION OF DISTINCT CULTURAL TOURISM SITES AND FESTIVALS IN THE STUDY AREA

The Study Area is Ekiti State; Ekiti State is a state that produces unrivalled cultural events, festivals, rituals etc. Different town and villages have their own peculiar festivals which are celebrated at different time of the year. Ekiti is richly endowed with tourism potentials all of which has its own cultural characteristics. Among the notable cultural tourists sites and festival that were identified by the researcher in Ekiti State are: Ikogosi Warm and Cold Spring, Ikogosi Ekiti; *Arinta* Water Fall, Ipole Iloro Ekiti; *Olosunta* Hills, Ikere Ekiti; *Orole* Hills, Ikere Ekiti; *Ugele* Outcrop, Ikere Ekiti; Fajuyi Square, Ado Ekiti; Moremi Park and Tomb, Ado Ekiti; The Babalola Museum, Efon-Alaaye Ekiti; *Oni* River, Efon Alaaye; *Omi Olua*, Efon Alaaye (noted for the cure of guinea worm); *Agbonna* Hills, Okemesi Ekiti; *Erin Ayonigba* Sacred Fish River in Erinjiyan Ekiti; Osun River source (Elemi) in Igede Ekiti; Opa Aje in Emure Ekiti; *Osun Aigbede* in Igbara-Odo Ekiti; *Kosegbe* Stone in Ipole-Iloro Ekiti; Lord Lugard boundary at Ijero Ekiti; *Udiroko* festival of Ado Ekiti; *Ogun* Festival common to all communities in Ekiti State; *Airegbe* Festival in Emure Ekiti; *Epa* Festival, Isan Ekiti; *Ikereje* Festival in Ilawe Ekiti; *Alayere* Festival, Igbara Odo; *Oro Ibeji* festival in Igbara Odo; *Obanifon* festival in Ogotun, Are, Esure; *Elefon* festival in Ikoro; *Olua* festival in Epa, Eyio and Ilu Omoba; *Okudu* festival in Iyin Ekiti; *Olosunta* festival in Ikere Ekiti; *Egungun/ Imale Idiroko* festival (All parts of the State); *Ijesu*/ All part of the State; *Iluyonwa* festival in Emure Ekiti; *Oodun* festival in Iyin Ekiti; *Odun Opa* festival in Iyin Ekiti; *Amomo* festival in Ise Ekiti; *Iromo* festival in Igede Ekiti; *Eku* festival in Ikole Ekiti; *Isemole* festival in Ikole Ekiti; *Ebo Odun* festival in Ikole Ekiti; *Ifa Owa* festival in Ikole Ekiti; Ogunonire festival in Ire Ekiti; *Opa Oguru* festival in Emure Ekiti; *Ile Odun* festival in Emure Ekiti; *Ajale* festival in Emure Ekiti; *Etintin* festival in Emure Ekiti; *Ero* festival in Emure Ekiti; *Oladunwo* Masquerade of Oke Imesi Ekiti; *Orioke* War Centre at Ilupeju Ekiti; *Esa cave*, Iyin Ekiti; *Olosunta* cave in Ikere Ekiti (Authors' Compilation, 2015)

1 Efon Alaaye Hills

The Efon Alaaye hills consist of a range of big rocky hills spread over long stretch of land. The

hills are the water shed of some rivers in the State e.g, river Oni, Owena river and Olua river. The hills provide exciting experience for chambers, hunters and are good for hill-top relaxation

2 Agbonna Hills, Okemesi Ekiti

The *Agbonna* Hills are one of the hills that surround okemesi- Ekiti, the home of the famous Fabunmi, the generalism of the famed *kiriji* and *Ekiti parapo* wars in Yoruba land. They spread conspicuously on one side of the town, creating beautiful scenery for visitors and tourists to the town. The contain a cave and is believed to have provided shelter for the people that worship the hill during annual festival of ‘*Ebami gbomo oke*’ because they still believe that it can cure infertility.

3 Erin Ayonigba Sacred Fish River, Erinjiyan

This is a river that contains a colony of sacred cat fish that are forbidden to be cropped. The myth has it that a strange woman who migrates to the town metamorphosed into the river and that the fish are her children, hence, it is a taboo to kill the fish and that if this is done, the fish will not cook however long the period of cooking. Also the person who kills any of the fish will never be prosperous in life. Tourists visits this cultural site to see this strange fishes from time to time

4 River Ooni, Efon-Alaaye Ekiti

River *Ooni* flows out of the Efon-Alaaye hills. The river is believed to have power to cure worshipped every year by the believers.

5 Osun Aigbede, Igbara Odo-Ekiti

guinea worm and other water borne diseases. Because of the therapeutic power, the river is This is a mysterious swamp; anybody who dares to enter it will sink and die without any trace.

6 Kosegbe Stone, Ipole Iloro Ekiti

The *Kosegbe* stone is a strange small oblong stone located along the road leading to Arinta water fall in Ipole iloro Ekiti. The stone located in mins of an old palace of a king, cannot be carried above the head by anybody however strong the person may be.

7 Oladunwo Masquerades

The masquerades called Oladunwo are unique masquerades that come out every three years in Okemesi Ekiti. Their appearances normally end the annual *Egungun* festival in the town. The masquerades which come out in the form of husband and wife cannot be photographed or filmed. And they attract lot of tourists from within and outside Nigeria.

8 Elefon Festival, Iloro Ekiti

The *Elefon* festival is celebrate in Iloro-Ekiti in Ijero LGA. The festival is elaborate and colourful. On the last day of the festival, important masquerades called *Okotorojo* and *Asereke Oko Eye Oja* usually come out to add glamour to the festival. There is also the usual care fight among the old including the traditional ruler and his chiefs

9 Oroke Ewo War Centre, Ilupeju Ekiti

The *Oroke Ewo* centre is located about 2km to Ilupeju Ekiti. It is preserved site of war between

warriors from Ilorin led by the warlord, Ali and *Egosi* kingdom led by *Oloseru*, *Elesure*, *Olayagba*, *Olowotoranse* in 18th century. During the war, *Egosi* people displayed magical powers, turning warriors Ali to a stone (*Odidi-mode*) while his seat and calabash of charms were also turned to stones. The Ilorin warriors' big 'bembe' drum was also turned to stone (*Ojongbede*) while Ali's camel was turned to 'Ose' tree. All these stones are preserved at the *Oroke Ewo* site with the unique stone drum still sounding like a drum when beating.

10 Esa Cave, Iyin Ekiti

Esa cave is located in Ekiti, a town in Irepodun/Ifelodun LGA of Ekiti State. The cave is capable of containing about 34,000 people at a time. It was believed to have shielded the people of the town during the internecine wars of the Yorubaland.

11 Udiroko Festival, Ado Ekiti

Udiroko festival or Idiroko Festival is the most popular of the festivals in Ado Ekiti and it attracts tourists from within and outside during its celebration annually. It is celebrated in Ado Ekiti to herald the arrival of New Yam in the market. Udiroko festival essentially a by-product of *AJASE EWI*- "The Ewi's supernatural power of conquest" is also the New Year day celebration in Ado Ekiti. Originally, Ewi was not only a King; he was also the supreme military leader of his army. When his kingdom became extremely larger than the original settlement of Ado Ekiti, the administrative and cultural demands of his office did not allow him to go on military assignment and expeditions anymore, he therefore delegated his duties in the military to his immediate senior officers of the army. They were the three lords who later became traditional war chiefs.

It was the duty of each war chief to regularly report his military achievements to the Ewi. The arrival of each successful war chief was normally greeted with joy and various traditional songs among which was "*ERUKULELE OMO ADO DE*". Ado people would gather under *Iroko* tree in EWI's palace to welcome the military officers and also to rejoice with Ewi. At a point in time, Ewi decided to be meeting all his war chiefs once a year in a specific day for such post war-reports. Ewi picked "*OLORUNBORUN DAY*" for the purpose. The assemblage of people under *Iroko* tree in Ewi's Palace on *Olorunborun* day for the ceremony later became "*ODUN UDIROKO*" that the festival celebrated under 'Iroko tree' from which 'Udiroko' was coined out. During the ancient *Olorunborun* day, there was individual praise-worship with prayers offered to the heavens. Prayers were said in every home in the town. In the evening of the same day, entire members of Ado community would assemble in Ewi's palace to receive his blessings. Ewi was believed to have the power to make prayers accepted by the heavens. The *Iroko* tree is still in front of Ewi's palace located in the king's market (Oja-Oba) till date under where sacred materials are being sold. The Udiroko Festival usually witnessed a lot of tourists from within and outside the State. Also lot of varieties were included in the festival out of which are: The Sango Priest Display (see plate 1), the payment of obeisance to the Ewi by various groups (see plate 3), the virgin dance (see plate 2) and the display of the Ewi crowns (see plate 4)



PLATE



PLATE



PLATE



PLATE

Other festivals celebrated in Ado Ekiti are *Alaponmi*, *Oitado*, *Alafonyo*, *Ogun*, *Iwemoogun*, *Ade*, *Aeregbe*, *Orude*, *Epa* and *Odede* festivals. Traditional shrines were created for *Orisa Ojido*, *Ubalota*, *Ayoba*, *Oke Egbe (Ayunbo)*, *Odudu*, *Osun*, *Ose*, *Ogbese*, *Ajilosunn Isewese* and *Atan*, all of which are fertility deities.

12 Uluyonwa Festival and Other Festivals, Emure Ekiti

Uluyonwa festival in Emure Ekiti; marks the first day that the Oba eats yam in the year also called His Royal Majesty's Yam festival (see plates 5, 6 and 7). It is done every September and it is a cultural event that attracts tourists from within and outside Ekiti. Another festival is the prominent *Egungun* festival which is regarded as an 'all-saints' affair, when the ancestors 'return' as masked beings to visit their children. The *Egungun* festival is celebrated in the month of April. The masquerades go to the palace to pay homage to the King. The festival enjoys participation from the four quarters of the town: *Oke-Emure*, *Odo-Emure*, *Ogbontioro* and *Idamudu*. *Opa Oguru Festival* performances are sometimes used as corrective measures in society and *Opa Oguru* festival fits perfectly into this function. During the festival, through music and dance, people who had perpetrated one form of misdeed or the other are castigated and held up to ridicule or moral opprobrium. This serves as a deterrent to potential misconduct.



PLATE



PLATE



PLATE



Airegbe Festival is an age-grade dance group, which marks a sort of 'rite-of-passage' from maidenhood to womanhood. It is marked by dancing, singing, fashion parade, etc. **Ile-Odun** is an all-male festival, comprising of only indigenes of Emure-Ekiti. It is mandatory for all male indigenes as from the age of four. **Ogun** is celebrated in honor of Ogun, the god of iron. **Ajale** festival is in honor of Ajale, god of war. **Etintin** is a Female celebration. Participants are garbed in white wrappers, while bearing pots of water and peeled whips from Aro brook. **Ero Festival** is a rite of passage for men to mark passage from 'Gbamo' age group to adulthood. This festival is observed every nine years. All these festivals are always glamorous and attract people from all face of the Country and beyond.

13 Eku Festival and Isemole Festival, Ikole Ekiti

Ikole or Akole as it was originally called was founded by *Akinsale* – one of the princes of *Oduduwa*, the progenitor of all the Yorubas – who migrated from Ile-Ife. Ikole is a town blessed with as many cultural heritages/festivals as possible. Among these festivals are the *Ekú* festival and *Isemole* festival and up till date, out of the 365 days in a year, Ikole engage in one ritual or the other for 364 days in honour of *Obalufon* and his priests and 360 (*IJIDINRINWO*) deities sent to the Elekole by *Oduduwa*. Major festivals in Ikole Ekiti are *Ekú* festival, *Ogun* festival, *Isemole* festival, *Ebo Odun* festival, *Ifa-Owa* festival among others.

The ***Ekú* festival** which heralds the beginning of the festival season comes up in the month of April every year. It is celebrated in remembrance of preliminary training given the Ikole male youths in endurance and chivalry in preparation for military activities in those days. It is a contest between the two component parts of the town i.e. *Oke-Ode* and *Odo-Ode*. It is a contest in fighting with whips. The meeting places for the contests are *Odo-Awode* and *Oke-Oja*. After throwing words of challenges at each other, the two groups go into real fighting with their bundles of canes until one side surrenders, one interesting aspect is the *Emu-Ojo*, the *Oba* put down a keg of palm-wine, anybody either from *Oke-Ode* or *Odo-Ode* will come forward to drink it. As he drinks, experts in caning will move forward to rain numerous strokes on him. He will be a pride of his family if he does not show any sign of pain until the experts exhaust their canes and he too empties the keg. If he is declared a hero by the elders at last, members of his family and his section of the town carry him shoulder high and proudly lead him home.

The *Isemole* festival is another important annual festival at Ikole Ekiti. It lasts for three days. As the name depicts, the women-folk irrespective of age and status are kept in ‘confinement’ throughout the period. The traditional belief is that during this period, some deities who must not see women and who women must not see go around important places in the town to perform some rituals for the protection and prosperity of the community. Legends say that any woman who sees them or the *Iworos* (Chief Priests of the town) who go around physically would dry up on the spot like an electrocuted person.

14 Olosunta Festival, Ikere-Ekiti

The history of Olosunta Festival can be traced to ancient times. The first Olukere came from Ile-Ife and founded Ikere, much later, the first Ogoga, a hunter left his base in Benin and came to on a hunting spree. Reaching Ikere, he went and stayed with the Olukere at his palace. As time passed by, the number of people bringing cases to the Olukere for settlement started increasing by the day until it reached a point when he could not do everything alone. He then asked Ogoga to go and stay at *Iro* to attend to people on his behalf while he, the Olukere would continue with other traditional assignments. The Ogoga started carrying out the job assigned to him until he eventually attained the position of authority.

The Olosunta festival marks the day that the Olukere and the Ogoga meet once in a year. On that day, Olukere wears his crown while the Ogoga merely wears a cap as a sign of respect to the Olukere.

15 Iromo Festival, Igede Ekiti

The Igede people worshipped super-natural beings and man-made gods and goddesses. The name of the god worshipped at the *Iromo* festival is the *Obanifon*, its chief priests included *Oloro* and *Oloye*. Palm-wine, kola-nuts, salt, and palm-oil were used as sacrifice to the god. Prayers were offered to the gods, the *Elejoka*, *Oisangan*, *Eruku* and *Sapaye* usually appease the past warrior, *Aribaja* during the festival. The meeting place for the celebration of *Iromo* festival is the *Atiba* market centre at *Odogede* quarter. The festival attracts tourists from within and outside the community.

Other gods include *Osun*, *Elemi* and *Ogbese* among so many others. The gods and goddesses acted as a common bond of unity in the town. The *Ogun* festival is also well celebrated. The *Olulogbo* performs *Ogun-Ilogbo* during the month of August while the whole town performs *Ogun* in September. Masquerades make the festival interesting during this period. It was also noted that masquerade was brought to Igede Ekiti from Ado Ekiti in 1908.

16 Ogunonire Festival, Ire Ekiti

The *Ogun* festival is held annually in most towns in Ekiti State. In Ire Ekiti, the home of *Ogun* (god of iron), the festival is elaborately done for one week with a re-enactment of the arrival of *Ogun* in Ire after succeeding at wars. Historically, *Ogun* also known as the god of iron was born to and who are descendants of *Oduduwa* (the father of the Yorubas). *Ogun* happens to be machinery and he does go to war on behalf of people anytime they needed him. He gave birth to a son named '*Ogundahunsi*' and because of the hardwork of *Ogundahunsi*, he was given a title called '*Oni Ere*' known as the '*Onire*' of today. *Ogun* was the leader of the Ire people and *Onire* too was the leader of the people. Noting that his son, *Ogundahunsi* was now a leader like himself, he decided to settle him down in a region before going for war. And so, he settled him down at 'Igbo Irun' which is still in the Ire Ekiti of today.

After settling him down, *Ogun* (god of iron) went for war, on his way back from war, he was very famished, hungry and thirsty, so he met some people doing a ritual on the way with lots of food and palm-wine. He begged them for food and wine but none of them talked, he was very angry and beheaded all of them. People that saw these went to *Ogundahunsi*, to tell him the incidence, as *Ogundahunsi* realized that the killer was his father, he went to prepare him his favourite food and gave it to him. *Ogun* now realized that he had killed his own people, he struck his sword into the earth before disappearing but before that, he told them to call on him anytime there is war in the village.

After sometime, some group of people decide to know if *Ogun* would really help if called upon in time of distress, they decided to call on him and he eventually came out and killed lot of people who are his own. He regretted his actions again and re-disappeared in a secluded area (see plate 8) where only priests can call on him with his favourite foods which are dog meat, roasted yam, palm-wine, snail and even his best cloth; palm frond. These are still the things used in celebrating him up till date.

The *Ogun* festivals are two in Ire i.e. *Ogun Oba* and *Ogunonire*. The *Ogun Oba* is the *Ogun* festival that is meant for the *Kabiyesi* (Onire of Ire Ekiti) and his family. The reason why it is so is that the Chief Priest of *Ogun* and the King of Ire must not see each face to face, this is due to the fact that, the former and the latter are both rulers in Ire Ekiti and one must not bow to another. The two do send messages to one another anytime they want to go out so that they will

not meet each other. This was made possible in the olden days using their personal messengers but nowadays due to the advent of technology, they now make use of telephone or mobile phones. If the two should meet, it is very dangerous for the king of Ire as made known by interviewees.

The important masquerades that do accompany the *Ogunonire* during the festival are: *Olukege*, *Kosorogun*, *Orangun*, *Eye Ogun*, *Obuntun Ogun* among others (see plates 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15). All these masquerades have their followers and they whip themselves to the extent that blood would come out but they believed that the wound would heal at a very fast rate because of *Ogun*. It was also believed that indigenes and attendees cannot be involved in car accident because car is made of iron and *Ogun* is the god of iron. The *Ogunonire* festival is meant for everybody except the king of Ire Ekiti because the Chief priest of *Ogun* will surely be present at the festival. A special shrine was built for only the king where he can always worship *Ogun* at his own stipulated time (see plate 9). During the Festival, there are different varieties e.g, the display of power by the *Ogun* House Women as they use the common ‘*Eepin*’ Leaf (a carnivorous plant that scratch people a lot) as head tie (see plate 12).

Information from Ekiti State Bureau of Tourism shows that there is plan to make *Ogun* Onire a festival that will attract tourists from home and away as they witness the recap of the exploits of Great *Ogun*, the Yoruba god of iron.



PLATE



PLATE



PLATE



PLATE



PLATE



PLATE



PLATE

NB: The Source of all sites and festivals is the Ekiti State Bureau of Tourism, 2015. Explanation and plates on the various sites and festivals are from Authors' field survey, 2015

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy makers will need to support the development of cultural tourism in the study area. It has been made known by the respondents that there has been no meaningful development of cultural tourism sites, this may be as a result of not considering cultural tourism as a yardstick for development, thus, it is recommended that policies that will help in identifying and harnessing cultural tourism sites should be made as this will surely help in increasing revenue generation and even help in sustenance of our cultural heritages.

Infrastructures should be made available for both the host communities and tourists, apart from power supply, potable water, good roads and other social amenities that can make cultural communities to be functional. The sites itself must be made accessible. Up till now, most cultural sites in the study area are not accessible; this amount to neglect on the part of government. Also, other amenities that can aid the positive satisfaction of tourists should be provided. Majorly, accommodation, parking facilities, relaxation centre e.t.c. should be made available by both public and private sector.

Up till date, the type of democracy being practiced in the nature is still Autocratic in nature. This is evident in top-down approach used by almost every government ruling one State or the other. According to the study, table 1.1 (7) shows that the ratings of bottom-top approach is very poor

in the study area, this implies that the host communities are not carried along especially in decision making. It is noteworthy that these host communities are custodian of these cultural heritages/festivals, then, they should be allowed to decide on what should be put in place to ensure the development of these cultural tourism sites. A "Bottom-top" approach is one of that works from the grass root, there is no form of imposition from the government, no wonder, it was discovered that "Bottom-top" approach allows for what experimentation and a better feeling for what is needed at the bottom. Government should stop imposing on host communities instead; they should give the host communities chance to decide on what best can be done to develop the cultural sites/festivals they have in custody. Host communities should be actively involved in cultural festivals; their reactions to these festivals will tell to what extent cultural tourism will be developed in the study area. They could also be encouraged by provision of incentives to people living in the host communities.

"Information is power" "a person not informed is already deformed". Awareness should be created on TV stations (international and national), radio stations, billboards, and most importantly, social networks and the internet. This will surely allow more influx of tourists from all parts of the world to sites and festivals. Cultural festivals especially should be rebranded in such a way that it will meet international standard and at the same time, it will not affect any inch of elements of culture in it. Thus, it is of no doubt that if cultural tourism can be invested in, it will surely serve as a better substitute for generation of the country's foreign earnings especially at this stage of retarding economy and dwindling oil resources.

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