

Traditional Crafts and Tourism Development and Promotion in Etim Ekpo Local Government of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Many Nigerian communities are richly blessed with their own indigenous crafts and industries, which could help them to grapple with their environment and progressively enhance their living. This paper seeks to identify and document some traditional crafts in Etim Ekpo, with a view to finding out how traditional crafts affects other aspects of the peoples' culture. The paper further examines how best to harness these traditional crafts/industries for tourism development in the area. Our interest on the study area arose due the fact that these traditional crafts/industries are fast being abandoned. It is our contention here that if these traditional crafts are not studied and documented, they will only be remembered in stories and myths as is obtainable in some African countries. Therefore, harnessing the potentials of Etim Ekpo traditional craft for tourism development will stimulate the growth of rural economy, serve as a vehicle for rural community development, create awareness of people's cultural heritage as well as generates employment.

Key words: Tourism, Development, Promotion, Crafts, Carving.

1. Introduction

The notion of authentic and viable cultural resources such as traditional crafts in Nigeria sound like a joke to most Nigerian communities. They are yet to understand the values of these cultural resources as well as the benefits of traditional crafts to the host community. Many Nigerian communities are richly blessed with their own indigenous crafts and industries, which could help them to grapple with their environment and progressively enhance their living. Among such notable industries/indigenous crafts and communities are the blacksmithing industry in Ogbomoso, Ebiraland, Ihima and Ekpodo communities; palm wine tapping industry in Umundu, Ukehe and Enugu-Ezike communities/towns; iron smelting/smithing in Opi, Orba, Owerre-Elu and Iejja communities, among others. The basic truth is that, no organized society can thrive without indigenous crafts and industries.

Traditional craft will be seen here as a traditional branch of business, which embodies the knowledge acquired by a particular people or society in their struggle to adapt to the natural environment. It is pertinent to note that these traditional crafts are always an important aspect of culture, because they constitute viable cultural attractions. Okpoko and Okpoko (2002) noted that, cultural attractions are indispensable components of tourism development schemes, they provide foundation upon which tourist trade should be built. There is need therefore, to identify and document cultural heritage resources as a basis for sustainable tourism promotion.

Our interests on the study area are due largely to the fact that the peoples' way of life and their early history are fast being abandoned. It is our contention here that if these traditional crafts are not studied and documented, they will only be remembered in stories and myths as is obtainable in some African countries. This paper seeks to identify and document some traditional crafts in Etim Ekpo, with a view to finding out how traditional crafts affect other aspects of the culture of the people. The paper further examines how best to harness these traditional crafts/industries for tourism promotion in the study area.

To prosecute the study, the researchers used ethnographic research techniques relevant for the study. These include key informant interviewing, oral tradition, documentary sources among others. To effectively cover the entire study area, six communities: Ikot Udodia, Ikot Odogmo, Ntak Inyang, Nto Edet, Utu-Etim Ekpo and Nkwot were earmarked and studied. The selections were based on the communities' key roles in aspects of traditional technology, economic, political and socio-cultural activities in the local government council.

1.1 The Study Area: Etim Ekpo

Etim Ekpo local government council occupying a definite geographical space, was formally known as Northern Annang during the divisional system of local administration, and was sub-summed under Abak Division. Etim Ekpo was one of the defunct local government areas created in 1961 during the civilian administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. Impressively, what is now known as "Etim Ekpo Local Government" was created out of Abak Local Government Area in September 23rd, 1991 by the military regime of General Ibrahim B. Babangida (Essien 2010).

Etim Ekpo as a distinct geographical expression is located 50km from Uyo, the capital city of Akwa Ibom State. It is situated within 4^o 51' - 5^o 03' North of Equator and Longitude 7^o 44' East of the Greenwich

Meridian. Etim Ekpo is bounded on the North by Essien Udim Local Government Area, on the South by Ukanafun Local Government Area; on the East by Abak Local Government Area, and on the West by Ika Local Government Area. Etim Ekpo occupies 183.3 square kilometers with Utu Etim Ekpo town as its headquarters (Essien 2010). Statistically, Etim Ekpo has a population of over 105, 418 people of which males are 55,771 and females are 49,647 (National Population Census, 2006).

Topographically, the land is flat with no part of it rising beyond 180 meters above sea level. Even in view of the rather uniform aspect of the landscape, river valleys constitute the major relief features particularly around Utu Etim Ekpo; the nature of the landscape creates low lands (Talbot, 1969:24). There are rivers and streams in Etim Ekpo, which are found in various villages, these include Qua Ibo River known as Utu Etim Ekpo River, Obong Ikot Akpan River, Ntak Inyang Stream, Uruk Ata Ikot essemin stream and so on.

The rainy season in Etim Ekpo commences in late March and lasts till October while the hot dry season is usually in the month of February and March. The chilly harmattan weather is often associated with fog. The influence of harmattan is severe and it lasts only a few weeks in December and January (Udo 1970 and Esu 1992).

Etim Ekpo is one local government in Akwa Ibom State that is known to possess some socio-economic activities, which has remain distinct with them through time. They are enterprising not only in the field of land acquisition for agriculture, but also in traditional crafts; the people are resourceful and productive. The farmland is called *Ekpene*, while residential land is called *Ndoon*. Notable crops in *Ekpene* are yam (*Dioscorea spp.*), cassava (*Manihot esculenta*) and cocoyam (*Colocasia esculenta*). Others are vegetables, fluted pumpkin (*Telfairia occidentalis*) pepper (*Capsicum annum*), giant garden eggs (*Solanum raddi*), plantain (*Musa sapientum*), banana (*Musa parasidiaca*), maize (*Zea mays*), among others.

Figure 1: Map of Etim Ekpo L.G.A Showing Communities Under Study

1.2 Methodology of Research:

In any research work, there are methods through which information is collected. In carrying out this research, the researchers made use of both primary and secondary sources of data collection. For the primary sources of data collection, participant observation, structured interview and key informants' methods were used in conducting this research. Our visits to four carvers' shops in Nto Edet community and five shops in Ikot Odogmo community helped us to gain insights into some indigenous industries/custodians of these cultural practices.

We visited these workshops to observe the processes of mask and figurine carving, drum carving, mortar making and canoe building in order to enable us appreciate and understand the creative skills involved as well as the socio-cultural contexts of the production, use(s) and economic implications of these traditional industries. Our observations revealed that different production processes were being used for different traditional industry, which goes to show the creative ability of Etim Ekpo people of Akwa Ibom state.

The secondary sources used in this research work came from both published and unpublished works, books and articles. Thus, the secondary sources provided useful information, which we used in clarifying some of our doubts.

1.3 Data Presentation: Traditional Crafts in Etim Ekpo

There are many cases especially in the areas of traditional crafts where African contribution revealed an understanding of the harmonious utilization of natural resources. This is evident in the practice of traditional crafts among Etim Ekpo people as will be discussed below. Notable indigenous crafts in the study area are mask and figurine carving, drum carving, mortar making and canoe building.

1.3.1 Mask and Figurine Carving

Carving of masks and figurines is prominent in Nto Edet community in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area. History has it that carving of masks and figurines in Akwa Ibom State originated from Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area. Ethnographic sources revealed that carving diffused to Nto Edet village through a carver known as Udo Usung, and that in the olden days, when there was crisis among the Ikot Abia Osum people in Ikot Ekpene, Udo Usung relocated with his family to find refuge in Nto Edet and through him the art of carving grew in the area. To the people of Nto Edet, the art of carving is indigenous and can be apprenticed. Among the tools used in carving are:

- a. File (*Aban idan*): This is used for shaping metal objects to acquire sharp edge for cutting purposes.
- b. Thunder stone (*Itiat idim*): This can as well perform the role of a file, as sharp edge is achieved by constant filing on the thunder stone.
- c. Axe (*ekud*): The axe is used at the initial stage to cut down trees, split and shape the log into desired size needed before carving.
- d. Paint: This is used after carving to give the mask a colourful outlook.
- e. Matchet (*Eka ikwa*): It is used to remove the bark of the wood before carving commences.
- f. Chisel: There are three types:

- (i) *Ndouoho*: This is a foot long chisel used in carving.
- (ii) *Okoro*: This is a type of chisel that has a wide head. It is used as a scrapper to give the mask a plain surface.
- (iii) *Ekikarak*: This type of chisel is narrow headed and it is 12cm long, it is used to carve the inner part of the mask that fits into the face. *Ekikarak* is also used to carve and design the outer part of a carved object to give it the desired shape.
- g. Wooden mallet (*Amma*): This is an improvised hammer used for striking the handle of a chisel so that it penetrates into the wood.

The handling and use of the carver's tools depend on each carver; thus the use of a particular tool is not restricted to a particular function, but manipulated and handled by the carver to suite his own choice and convenience.

1.3.1.1 Sources of Raw Materials

The basic raw material for carving is wood, and varieties of wood are available in Etim Ekpo. Wood is believed by traditional carvers to possess animistic powers. In other words, the reasons for using wood to carve are centered on suitability, availability and perceived spiritual powers of some wood. Among carvers, *Uno* softwood is the most preferred for carving because of its long lasting quality, and ability to dry to a remarkable lightness. This tree specie grown in the wild is harnessed indiscriminately by carvers. For *Uno* to be used in carving, it must be at least five years old. Another valued wood specie used among carvers of Nto Edet in particular and Etim Ekpo in general is *Eweweh Eto* (Ebony), it possesses the same quality with *Uno* to a reasonable extent. However, hardwoods such as *Eka eto* (Iroko tree), *Akana* (Oil bean tree) etc, can be used to carve figurines such as animal and human figures as well as other abstract figures.

1.3.1.2 Processes and Techniques used in Mask Carving

The carver does not dream about the particular type of mask he is going to carve, although, some are said to have divine inspirations during which masks are shown to them. According to Mr. Ini-Obong, before carving, he first conceptualizes the object and/or is guarded by an existing object, which the owner wants him to duplicate. Once the *Uno* tree is cut down, it is allowed to dry for weeks before being used. After the bark has been removed, the face is carved from the rounded portion of the block. A hollow is made at the back to accommodate the weaver's face.

The stages of production are as follows: In the first stage, the carver uses machete and chisels to rough out features of the mask and completes its back. Using the end of the machete, he first rounds the top of the block to form the forehead of the face then with mallet and chisel, he outlines the forehead designs if any. He shapes the eye and nose, the chin is done next and then the mouth and cheeks are formed with a chisel. Finally, the sides of the mask are shaped with the machete. The carver constantly checks with his fingers the thickness of the piece, not allowing it to be less 1.5cm. He then uses mallet and *ekikarak* to put on the finishing touches, after which he turns the mask and fashions the teeth and tongue (in the case of *Ete Ekpo*). The mask is then dried slowly to prevent it from cracking and to make the surface receptive to smoothening.

In the second stage, the carver takes the *Ekikarak* and a scrapper, positions himself comfortably on the ground or on a very low chair; holds the mask between his legs and works more slowly than in the first stage on the mask. Now, he carves the face, and features from top to bottom; seldom retouching a feature once it has been touched. After the carving and smoothening is completed, the eyes and nose will be pierced, then finally the mask is painted (usually black colour, except in cases of *ekong* mask or children's mask) and left to dry. It should be noted that a mask is carved in two stages depending on the size. Big objects can take a maximum of two days intensive carving, while objects that are miniature in size can be completed in a day.

Plate 1: Unfinished Mask

Plate 2: Finished Masks

1.3.2 Drum Carving

Tools used for drum carving are the same as the tools used for carving of masks and figurines in addition to the animal skin, *uduk akpan* and *idiud*. Ethnographic sources revealed that drum carving is indigenous to Nto Edet people, once initiated into the carvers' guild, one can start learning the art of carving.

1.3.2.1 Processes of Drum Carving

All wood carvings follow similar carving process and techniques in their initial stages. After the wood must have dried, the carver then removes the bark of the wood before using a machete to give the outer part of the wood the desired shape for the drum. Thereafter, he then uses the big and small chisels with the aid of a wooden mallet to make the wood hollow all through, usually in the form of a tunnel. Thereafter, he uses the adze to smoothen both the outer and inner parts of the drum before he paints the outer part and leaves it to dry. When this is achieved, he puts the unfinished drum in between his legs (for balance) and covers the head of the drum (usually the wider

end of the carved log) with a goat or sheep skin and then uses a well braid raffia vein to hold the animal skin tightly against the body of the drum so that it does not shift.

To ensure the tightness and further strengthening of the skin, the carver ties another raffia vein on the drum; this time, he brings the vein a lit lower from the mouth of the drum, and then uses *Uduk akpan* to connect the upper raffia vein to the lower one. Thereafter, he fixes a sort of wood tightener called *Ikpafak* in between the lower raffia vein and the body of the drum. Once this is done, the animal skin will not shift or weaken, no matter how hard its player beats on it.

Plate 3: A Carver at Work

Plate 4: Finished Drums

1.3.3 Mortar Making

The people involved in mortar carving are the Ikot Odogmo community. Mortar carving serves as an indigenous knowledge and cultural practice of the people. The art of mortar carving is strictly reserved for men; however, traditionally, Ikot Odogmo people do not forbid women from carving mortars. Therefore, it is our informed guess that women declined from participating in mortar production because of the tedious task involved and great deal of energy required in its production. The above statement is in conformity with ethnographic sources among male mortar carvers in Ikot Odogmo community. Perhaps, this explains why mortar carving rest solely in the hands of men.

Implements for mortar carving include machete, adze, file, wooden mallet, (i.e. improvised hammer) as well as different sizes of chisels. The raw material is mainly hard wood of different types like *Iroko*, oil bean, and *Ukana*. Presently, due to scarcity and the expensive nature of hardwood largely caused by deforestation, carvers sometimes use mango and native pear woods to produce mortar. Although, these types of woods are not reliable because of poor durability of products made from them. Hard woods are most times bought from people who fell down trees. Occasionally, mortar carvers go deep into the forest to cut down trees, which are communally owned and controlled by the local community council.

1.3.3.1 Process of Mortar Making

The first step is to cut these woods into desired sizes of log. Then the carver uses a machete to peel the bark of the log until the shape of the mortar is revealed. After this, he then uses an improvised hammer (mallet) and *Nduoho* (a foot long chisel with a heavy wooden head) to start digging out the mortar. Here, the carver puts the log in between his legs and holds it with his feet to maintain balance, after which he places the chisel on the part he wants to open and hits it with the mallet to penetrate into the wood. This process is continued until the wood is hollowed enough to use an adze on it. The adze is used to scrap out the rough shaft accrued from the activities of the chisel and mallet and when this is done, the carver uses *Ekikarak* to smoothen the hollowed part of the mortar, thereby giving it a finishing touch.

Plate 5: Mortar Carving

Plate 6: Finished Mortar

1.3.4 Canoe Building

In Etim Ekpo, there are two types of canoes, hallowed/dugout canoe, and constructed/clinker built canoe. The former is heavier and long lasting; while the latter is lighter in weight and cannot carry huge cargoes. Tools used during production are adze, clamp, chisel, machete, motorcycle chain, paint, copper rivets, saw, nails etc. The wood used in building dugout canoe is a massive, straight tree; while the clinker canoe is built with planks and wooden partitions.

The carving of a dugout canoe begins with the selection of suitable log of wood of a unique dimension. Sufficient wood needs to be removed to make the canoe relatively light in weight, but strong enough to support the voracity and cargo. A specific type of wood like *Iroko* is often preferred due to its strength, durability and density. The shape of the boat is then fashioned to minimize drag, with sharp ends at the bow and stem. The first step to create a dugout canoe is to remove the bark from the exterior. It should be noted that before the invention of metal tools, dugout canoes were hollowed out using controlled fires; the burnt wood was then removed using an adze.

Another method of production is by chopping off parallel notches across the interior span of the wood. This is then split out and the wood is removed from between the notches. Once hollowed out, the interior is dressed and smoothened with a knife or adze. After the carving is completed, water is poured in the hollowed canoe and left for at least four days for proper absorption. This is done to avoid shrinkage and cracks on the canoe. Dugout canoes are usually built in forest where the tree was felled down, and after the carving is completed, it is moved to the river. This type of canoe is common among farming folks of Etim Ekpo and used for transportation of farm products.

Plate 7: Finished Dugout Canoe

For the clinker canoe, the planks and partitions are usually bought from Etim Ekpo timber market. During the pre-colonial period in Etim Ekpo, carvers bought a standing tree (which was often cheaper), fell it and then sliced it themselves or pays someone to slice the fallen tree into planks and wood partitions, after which they were transferred to their work place at Utu Etim Ekpo fishing point. The pre-colonial steps in building a clinker canoe could be summarized as follows:

The planks are collected and securely set up. From the hog, the garboard and sheer strakes are planked up and held together using copper rivets. At the stem and in a big clinker canoe, the stem-post is formed. That is, in each case, the end of the lower strake is tapered to a feather edge as the end of the strake is screwed to the apron with the outer side of the planks. It should be noted that grips are used to hold the strake in position before screwing. This ensures that the planks affix to each other and thus, enables the canoe to be watertight.

With the timber all fitted, longitudinal members are bent in. The thwart risings are fastened through the timbers with its upper edge on the level of the undersides of the thwart. A motorcycle chain is usually fitted round the inside of each to strengthen it. These are removable assemblies, shaped to lie over the bottom timbers and be walked upon; they spread the stresses from the crew's weight across the bottom structure. Finally, the fittings such as swivels or crutch plate, painter ring, stretchers, keel and stem band are fitted and fixed with screws. The above process finishes the canoe builder's work, but the painter is yet to varnish or paint it. At various stages of production, the builder paints the timbers, when the canoe is completed; the builder cleans up the inside of the canoe and gets it ready for painting.

Plate 8: Clinker Canoe under Construction

Plate 9: Finished Clinker Canoe

1.4 Discussion: Values of Traditional Craft in Etim Ekpo:

Ethnographic studies revealed that Etim Ekpo is endowed with such traditional crafts as mask and figurine carving, drum carving, mortar making and canoe building. These traditional crafts contributed and still contribute immensely to the economic well being of Etim Ekpo people; while some have socio-cultural and religious values attached to them, which makes them highly revered. Thus, these art objects take interestingly organized forms or shapes to please the eyes and bestow beauty. For instance, the human figures (*Abia ibok*) are found in shrines and used by diviners. Such objects in shrines are believed to be the abode of the guardian spirit of the chief priest in-charge. While some carved masks are for sale, others are kept for rent. A central building in Etim Ekpo built by groups of carvers is used for the display/exhibition of carved objects awaiting buyers. In most cases, those objects for rent are kept in a separate place waiting for festivals and youth day celebration when interested individuals or groups would rent them for a token. Among carved masks mainly for rent in Etim Ekpo are *Ekpo* and *Ekong* masks. Therefore, whether carved mask are for sale or rent, they constitute an important source of revenue generation for the people under investigation.

Carved drums on the other hand serve purposes ranging from socio-cultural functions to religious roles. Four notable wooden drums produced are *Eka ibid*, *Nkron*, *Nkom* and *Awolum*. The *Eka ibid* is used mainly for occasions such as traditional marriages, *Uko Akpan* dance display, festivals and can also be found in churches too. This drum is played with the hand and it gives appreciable rhythm to songs. The *Nkron* is a small slim drum used in communicating with masquerades during their performance. It is generally believed that once the *Nkron* is played, the masquerades come out on their own with extra ordinary powers for entertainments involving acrobatic and magical displays. *Nkom* on the other hand, is used for communal announcement within the village. Once *Nkom* is beaten, people keep quiet to hear what the village crier has to say. Like the *Nkron*, *Awolum* drum is also used in masquerade dances, rituals and events that involves communicating with the gods or spirits of ancestors. It is a traditional drum in form of a vacuum box with small openings at the top. It is played with two moderate sized sticks and is believed to possess mystical powers that could call-up good spirits of dead members of the community.

Mortars are carved based on specific functions either for pounding yam, palm fruits or for grinding of cereals/grains. The size of a carved mortar determines the use it would be put to. These mortars, depending on their sizes have different prices; and again the wood from which it was produced further determines its price tag as well. For instance, a mortar for pounding yam made from *Iroko* or *Ukana* wood is sold from N2,000.00 and above; while those made from mango and pear wood could be sold as low as N1,000 to N1,500. Finished products are transported in large quantities to Port Harcourt where they are sold at reasonable prices.

The hollowed and clinker canoes are profitable in Etim Ekpo; and help to improve the living standard of the people. Carvers produce these canoes on concentric bases and in fewer cases; productions are made for personal uses. The hollowed canoes are mainly for transporting farm products like yam, maize, palm oil, cassava etc to neighbouring markets. It is also used in transporting traders within the riverine areas to their various destinations. The clinker canoes on the other hand are often used by Etim Ekpo fishermen in hunting aquatic

animals, which are sold in the market. Money generated is used to meet other domestic needs. More often than not, some portion of the daily catch is used as food for family members.

Apart from revenue generation, Etim Ekpo traditional crafts create employment directly and indirectly within the community as well as stimulate regional interactions and economic development. The improvement in the traditional crafts enhances not only the people's social life, but also acts as a catalyst to other investments, which contribute to sustainable development and inter-group relations within the region and beyond.

1.5 Implications for Cultural Tourism Development and Promotion

We have noted that Etim Ekpo people are endowed with various skills ranging from mask carving, drum carving, mortar making to canoe building that have the potential to attract a sizable number of tourists every year. The economic activities of the people, which constitute tourist marvels are their means of livelihood as these products are sold not only to tourists as souvenir, but also to the general public in popular markets. Therefore, traditional crafts of Etim Ekpo people will create an enabling ground for cultural tourism to thrive. Thus, the development of cultural tourism in Etim Ekpo will stimulate improvement in local infrastructure, which brings benefits to the host community. It will help in resuscitating the people's cultural resources that are going into extinction and encourage the production of cultural artifacts, which serve as souvenirs to tourists. The cultural products of Etim Ekpo people show that they are highly skilled and intelligent. Thus, cultural tourism if well harnessed in Etim Ekpo will attract more cultural tourists flow to the area.

Apart from traditional crafts, other cultural assets that can be harnessed for cultural tourism development and promotion are blacksmiths' products and festivals. Musical instruments produced by blacksmiths (such as metal gongs, metal drums, metal flute etc) are often showcased during traditional gatherings like marriage ceremony, burials, age grade meetings, chieftaincy/title taking etc. In the words of Fischel (1982) metal and wood, which are the artists' main materials per excellence have been intimately connected with the social and cultural histories of countless African groups. The above assertion is exemplified in traditional crafts of Etim Ekpo community.

Traditional crafts of Etim Ekpo can also encourage faith-based activities while guaranteeing cultural tourism. As earlier stated, the people's crafts are closely linked to religion as carvers create objects that are well recognized and appreciated in the context of religious worship. These objects include figurines, which are used in decorating shrines, charm figures, stools used for initiation into cults, dance staff, apparatus of divination, among others. Most of these religious objects provide insights into African traditional religion and religious genies. There are also many works of art such as figurines in Etim Ekpo which are made in honour of different deities. Ethnographic sources revealed that the people serve and worship these deities, which serve as intermediaries or representatives of the Supreme Being known as Abasi Enyong - God of Heaven. Among these deities are *Abasi* (earth goddess), *Ndom mmong* (god of the sea) etc.

It should be noted that most tourists embark on religious travel for the primary purpose of sharing faith and fellowship together as they explore the various religious centres of interest to them. Others still seek inspiration and desire to witness significant religious events... (Okonkwo and Nze 2009: 286). Indeed, there are several places that have assumed sacredness because of their religious importance in the life of their adherents. Such places become very important in the history of man; examples are the Omo-Ukwu temple in Ohiafia and Oshun shrines at Oshogbo. It is our belief that shrines in Etim Ekpo when properly harnessed for religious tourism will attract adherents and admirers from far and wide.

To effectively harness the potentialities of traditional crafts for cultural and religious tourism development and promotion in Etim Ekpo, the following issues raised below should be addressed in order to ensure maximization of the tourism dividends, while minimizing its negative effect on the host community. The first problem is that of poor government attitude towards promoting and encouraging the production of local crafts in local communities such as Etim Ekpo. Traditional craftsmen in Etim Ekpo do not receive incentives from the government in form of grants, soft loans and neither are seminars/workshops organized to encourage and facilitate the production of these traditional crafts.

Ecological problems such as erosion menace and landslides also hinder the practice of traditional crafts in the study area. Our investigations revealed that excessive rainfalls causes erosion, which in turn causes the decay of carved wooden objects. On the other hand, extreme dry conditions if poorly managed could cause cracks on carved wooden objects and this could lead to total disintegration of the objects.

Again, with the spread of Christianity, there has been a drastic decline in the production of some of these cultural objects that served religious purposes as they are considered fetish and objects of idolatry by Christians. If these problems are checkmated, there is no doubt, that the sky will be the limits for the local craftsmen in our study area and this will help to guarantee sustainable tourism development and promotion in Etim Ekpo community.

Conclusion

Cultural tourism is a factor of social development. This is so because it improves the standard of living of the host community and ensures the maintenance of local skills and crafts of the artisans. In Etim Ekpo, the wealth of cultural diversity available to tourists is quite enormous. Regrettably however, very little attempt has been made to structure and market these potentials. As argued by Inskip (1991:281) arts (such as painting and sculpture) and handicrafts are an important attraction for tourists. Their sales can be a significant source of income for residents, and they represent an important aspect of the cultural heritage of an area.

The basic concept in the management of arts and crafts of our study area is that they are authentic, at least in terms of utilizing local traditional skills, techniques, motifs and materials. However, to improve the authenticity of traditional crafts such as those of Etim Ekpo, Inskip (1991) has suggested that government should establish minimum quality standards for local handicraft; inspect all handicrafts submitted to them for approval and identify those items that meet the standards with some type of stamp of certification. It should also be noted that tourists should be informed of the 'stamp of certification' in order to enable them know whether they are purchasing authentic items. Again, such authentic items should be priced higher than non certified ones; thus, giving artisans and shopkeepers the incentive to make authentic crafts available.

Research has also shown that cultural tourism stimulates creativity and many artisans in local communities have gained inspiration from cultural travel. Howbeit, arts and handicraft making as demonstrated by artisans and craft persons in Etim Ekpo can be interesting and educational experience for tourists and may induce them to make purchases that they would not have otherwise made. Therefore, harnessing the potential of Etim Ekpo traditional crafts for tourism development and promotion will stimulate the growth of the rural economy, serve as a vehicle for rural community development, create awareness about people's cultural heritage as well as create employment opportunities.

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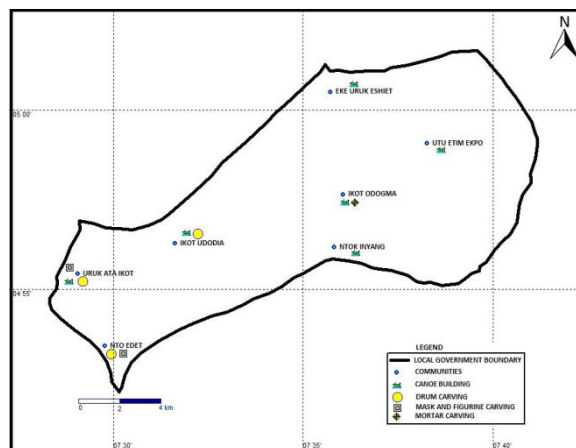


Figure 1: Map of Etim Ekpo L.G.A Showing Communities Under Study



Plate 1: Unfinished Mask



Plate 2: Finished Masks



Plate 3: A Carver at Work



Plate 4: Finished Drums



Plate 5: Mortar Carving



Plate 6: Finished Mortar



Plate 7: Finished Dugout Canoe



Plate 8: Clinker Canoe under Construction



Plate 9: Finished Clinker Canoe

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