



Bakor Standing Stones and Tourism Development in Cross River State, Nigeris

Chris A. Diminyi

Department of Tourism Studies,
University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract

In addition to their social and cultural values, cultural heritage resources have emerge in recent years as instrument for tourism development that is capable of solving seasons problem and boosting regional economies. By using qualitative method to elicit data, this study evaluates the potentials of Bakor stone objects for cultural tourism development in Cross River State. Key informant in-depth interview, focus group discussion and field observation form the main instruments for data collection. A total 18 key informants from nine communities were carefully selected using snowball sampling technique. Content and SWOT analysis techniques were used to analyze and evaluate potential monoliths for tourism development. Findings revealed a total of 127 monoliths identified in 12 sites across six clans. Result also showed that Bakor standing stones have high potentials for cultural tourism development in the region. Although challenges that bordered on remoteness and poor accessibility of sites were identifies, there are greater opportunities that the communities stand to gain if these sites are fully developed. The study therefore recommends government full commitment, provision of required funding, education and training of human capital and conservation of sites.

Key words: Bakor, standing stones, tourism, cultural tourism, development

1. Introduction

Tourism is an-invaluable asset in the socio-cultural and economic development of man including the conservation of environment and the preservation of man's historical and cultural heritage. More than ever, man has begun to remold his habits in line with nature with the aim of conserving the natural and cultural environment. There is a growing recognition that the conservation of any heritage is culturally driven and recognition must be given to the cultural values of heritage, particularly those of indigenous people. The core issue that surrounds sustainable development, particularly with respect to cultural heritage which form the major cultural tourism product; is that it is a balanced form of development that encourages conservation of natural and cultural environment while allowing it to be exploited for economic growth.

Artificially shaped rock fragments and boulders are found in many parts of the world wherever suitable rocks occur. Stone sculptures representing the human figure are at present known from very few locations out of all the rich artistic regions of West Africa. The existence of nearly 300 artificially shaped rock fragments in Bakor Community of Cross River State was first reported by an officer-of the British administration in 1905 and by Philip Alison in 1961 (Abu, 1997). Locally known as Akwanshi or Atal, the main groups are found in the region between Ogoja and Ikom Local Government Areas. The sites ar e mostly around Bakor speaking group of the Ejagam people namely: Ekajuk, Abanyom, Nnam, Nselle, N'de and Nta.

It is important to note here that the astonishing and uniquely carved stone figures at Bakor are of considerable importance to tourism. The traditional symbols attached to Bakor one figures, which are reflections of the people's social and cultural values are of great interest to tourists. Okpoko (2010) noted that, each artistic element of Africa has a cosmologic interpretation, explanation and designation, apart from its material form. According to him, myths and legends attached to material heritage features also help to promote their cultural value. Therefore, an evaluation of Bakor monoliths for cultural tourism development in Nigeria is imperative.

Cultural tourism will be of immense economic value to Nigeria and Cross River State in particular if the tourism potentials of Bakor monoliths are fully exploited. The conservation and advertisement of designated archaeological, ethnographic and sacred Historical sites in the area as centres of cultural excellence backed by the provision of adequate infrastructure, facilities to make them appealing to visitors are quite necessary. Through the establishment of museums, the

very best of African creative ingenuity could be propagated while also realizing monetary gains from payments from both local and international visitors. This research hypothesized that the current understanding of Bakor standing stones (monoliths) is insufficient to assess their potentials for tourism development. It is conjectured that lack of understanding about the unique features and total number and sites of Bakor heritage resources (monoliths) have effect on the development of these heritage sites.

II. Literature Review

The tourism industry is seen in most parts of the world, especially in such countries that plan objectively for tourism as a major part of their economy and foreign exchange, no matter what their mineral, agriculture, and manufacturing resources may be. To a considerable extent, the above mentioned resources are perishable sectors with diminishing and fluctuating returns, which in recent years have been identified as unstable sources of national income (Alabi, 2017). Smith (2015) noted that 'tourism and travel have been part of the human experience for millennia', describing it as a form of nomadism that characterizes Homo sapiens, which is both normal and under the right conditions, pleasurable. However, in the last 30 years, most certainly with the rise of the jet aircraft, tourism has grown in significance and emerged as a global phenomenon, affecting an increasing range of environment and attracting new markets as opportunities for travel have widened (Page 2009).

Considering the fact that tourism products are both natural and cultural resources, the natural and cultural environment of Bakor remain excellent tourist's attractions. Abu (1997) describes Bakor standing stones (monoliths) as unique historical monuments, which when properly developed for tourism can contribute greatly to economic and social wellbeing of the host. According to him, the basalt monoliths of Bakor are decorated in the form of human beings and are regarded as ancestors. This makes them unique and different from monoliths in other parts of the world and therefore, will generate tourists' attention.

Monolith refers to a large single upright block of stone, especially one that was shaped into a column by people living in ancient times, and that which may have had some religious meaning. The word monolith derives from the Latin word 'Monolithus' and the Greek word 'Monolithos', meaning 'one' or 'lonely stone'. They are geological features such as mountain, consisting of a single massive stone or rock, or a single piece of rock placed as, or within a monument.

Charles Partridge, who was district commissioner at Obubra on the Cross River during 1903 and 1904 was the first to report the monoliths (*Akwanshi/Atal*) of Bakor. In his book titled "Cross River Natives" (1905), he mentioned the groups at *Agba, Alok, Eti-Nta, Nkrigor, Nselle, Eja* and *Nkwn Ekpambe* on the left bank of the Cross River (Allison 1967). A carved stone mentioned by Partridge at Okuni was subsequently removed to the district office at Ikom and later to the Lagos Museum. Talbot (1926 in Allison 1967) mentions the groups already reported by Partridge and quotes some vague reports of others, some of which have been impossible to trace today. He states: "the finest stone circle seen by me is in the country of Nnam at Nyerkpor..." consists of three stones indifferently carved in a shelly limestone. Diminyi (2009) reported on the monoliths of *Nta*, described the *Akwanshi* of *Etinghi-Nta* and *Nnebrokpa* as unique. He proposed a plan of development for the two groups based on their tourism potentials. Marshall (2016), in another official report mentions eleven groups on Nnam land, but in some cases the names of abandoned village sites where the groups are located do not tally with the present names of sites the *Akwanshi* are located. He also mentioned two groups in *Ekajuk* land.

Although *Akwanshi* stand for dead people, it also referred to a family stone circle in some context. These circles are found in the tradition of *Ekajuk, Nnam, Nde, Nta, Abanyom* and *Nta*. Whenever someone died in those areas, the survivors will go and drop a stone in memory of the departed. For unknown reasons, the tomb stones were dropped in such a way that after a while, a circular geometric pattern evolves, according to Chief *Olando Akong*, a traditional religious practitioner. The newsletter of the Calabar Museum society (2019), reveals that "over 450 of these cylindrical monoliths (*Akwanshi/Atal*) are located in 34 sites in Niger's' southeast part." These antiquities weigh between 50kg and 800kg and measure between 30cm and 2m in height (<http://www.sudanvisiondaily.com>).

The stones are regarded as representations of ancestors by members of the central Cross River communities (*Bakor*) where *Akwanshi* are found. In fact, it is believed that *Bakor* monoliths hold the key to unlocking migratory routes of many ethnic groups in Nigeria. Furthermore, the stones bear special scarifications, which can be found among tribal marks on aborigines of various Nigerian ethnic groups. It is also believed that some contemporary hair styles come from graveyards in *Alok* and environs. Cultural tourism embodies such activities as organized visit to such historical sites as well as visiting other cultures and peoples. *Ejikeme, Okpoko, Chinwe & Diminyi* (2020) observed cultural tourism resources as "those rich material and non-material attributes acquired within the society and transmitted through generations. Included among them are the diverse beliefs, festivals, diets, architecture, dance, drama, iron working, wood and stone carving" etc. It is argued that because human beings generally modify the landscapes in which they live and because they attach names, myths and affective value to features of the territory they inhabit, the landscape of the past culture may also qualify as cultural resources (*Okpoko and Okpoko* 2002). *Lipe* (2018) defines cultural resources/heritage as "cherished and preserved tradition", whereas traditions are those past materials and non-material culture handed down to us by our forefathers. The cultural assets, especially festivals and stone carvings are among the most fascinating tourism products in the world. The land of a million dances with museums of finest collections of arts and crafts, palaces, heritage sites, marriage ceremonies, funeral celebrations, indigenous technology (iron working, pottery making weaving, building and roofing patterns, dietary pattern) and monuments etc constitute cultural tourism resources great number of tourists to host communities (*Okpoko & Okpoko* 2002).

Shaped stones have high tourism appeal particularly when they are developed and managed sustainably. Esu and Ukata (2012) observed that "the stone circles of Kerr in Gambia are of great economic value to the government and the local people." To complement the main attraction, the site also embodies a museum containing information about the people, traditional medicines, hunting tools, cloths making tools and religious masks. The economic benefit of the site is realised through entrance fee (UNESCO World Heritage centre, 2010 in Esu and Ukata, 2012). Obatala (2011) in Esu and Ukata (2012) opines that "because of the cultural value of Bakor monoliths to culture loving tourists, its market value in international tourism market is significantly high". It is important to note that if fully exploited, Bakor standing stones with their unique features can satisfy the curiosity of both local and international culture driven individuals.

III. Methodology

Bakor ethnic group is in the middle of Cross River State between Ogoja and Ikom Local Government Areas. It is located between longitude 80.300 E and 80.400 E and latitude 60.00 N and 80.200 N. The group comprises of eight clans: Abanyom, Ekajuk, Nde, Nkim, Nkum, Nnam, Nselle and Nta. Six clans and communities were purposively selected because of the distribution of monolith within the area. The population of the study constitutes all monolith sites and communities within which monolith are distributed. Snowball sampling method was used to select a total of 18 key informants who were considered to be knowledgeable in the history and functions of the monoliths.

Primary data was collected through in-depth interview, focus group discussion, field observation as well as the identification and physical counting of shaped stones and sites. Measuring tape and digital camera were also employed to measure the heights and take photographs of monolith and sites, while secondary data were elicited from a review of relevant literature. Data was analyzed based on qualitative method of data analysis using content development. First, the data were coded based on the research questions and later transcribed into transcripts in the original words of interviewees and narrated accordingly.

IV. Result

Description of monoliths and sites by clan

Nta Monoliths

Nta is one of the clans with the culture of stone carving in Bakor community of Cross River State. It is politically found under Ikom Local Government Area and located approximately at latitude 4 N and longitude 27 E. It is about 12 kilometers from Edor from where it can be reached through a motorable road during the dry season. The road to Nta from Edor is untarred and almost looks like a bush track in some parts, particularly from Njimetop i.e. the last village in Nselle clan. It takes about two hours to reach Nta from Edor by means of a motorcycle. Nta is made up of seven villages with Etinghi-Nta, where the present Ntoon-Nta (clan head) lives, as the headquarters. Other villages are Odo-Nta, Eganga, Oyenghe, Odoratam, Ofunatam and Nneprokpa. Of the seven villages, only five have monoliths- Etinghi-Nta, Eganga, Odo-Nta, Oyenghe and Nneprokpa. Nevertheless, Odoratam and Ofunatam are of great importance to visitors that may wish to enter the clan through the river as they serve as entry points to the clan from the southern part. The two villages are located at the Cross River bank.

Apart from Odoratam and Ofunatam, which are linked by a motorable road from central Nta, Nneprokpa, Oyenghe, Eganga and Odo-Nta are accessed through bush tracks useable by motorcycles and bicycles only. Twenty-six monoliths/Akwanshi are found in Nta of which Etinghi-Nta hosts thirteen (13), Nneprokpa seven (7), Oyenghe three (3), Eganga two (2) and Odo-Nta one (1). The monoliths in Etinghi-Nta stand along the old path which leads northwards from Etinghi-Nta to Nneprokpa in an old settlement. Out of the thirteen monoliths found in this site, only seven are carved and have the potential to attract visitors. The heights of the Akwanshi range from two to five feet.

At Nneprokpa, six out of the seven monoliths found are carved. They are arranged in a segment of a circle at the village entrance with the exception of one which is found at the old residence of the former Ntoon-Nta. The three monoliths in Oyenghe are found in an old settlement about three kilometers (3km) from the village centre, while those at Eganga are found around their playground together with a shrine, which according to Chief Egam Alaka Nfono (village head of Eganga), has been abandoned following the influence of Christianity. The only one Odo-Nta is situated in the village square.



Plates 1&2: Sample monolith of Nta clan (Nnaprokpa and Eganga sites)

My informants revealed that the Akwanshi represent their ancestors who fought for and are therefore the custodians of Nta land. In support of this assertion, Mr Egede Njan (a primary school teacher) at Odo-Nta puts it as follows:

"Our Akwanshi are not just stones but our forefathers. They fought for this land, they have been here, they are here and they will continue to be here. They protect this land physically and spiritually that is why we were able to defeat those beasts (the Obubra people) who dared us eleven years ago."

A group of elders at *Eganga* told me at their playground that the *Akwanshi* brings good tidings to the land, including the protection of the land and people, bumper harvest, children, fertile land and general unity and peace among the people of Nta. The following deities viz: *Ekpe*, *Ebrakam* and *Mbu* are associated with Nta Monoliths. Sacrifices are made to the monoliths every three years using pounded yam mixed with salt and palm oil, goat, hen, cock, chicken eggs, palm wine, palm frond, *Eroono* leaves, clay plate, and cola nuts. Sacrifice is done in two phases and the process is as follows: on the first day of the first phase, the women appoint a young virgin who decorates the monoliths with different colours of chalk stone after which pounded yam mixed with native salt and palm oil is thrown around the village and on the monoliths including those at Njin. When this has been completed, men and women as well as youths will then dance round the monoliths to express their happiness and to mark the end of the first sacrifice. Three months later a day will be fixed for main sacrifices. It is on this day that a goat will be slaughtered for the feast, while the hen and cock will be killed and used to appease the female and male gods associated with the monoliths. An egg is placed on top of each monolith along with a cola nut, while palm wine is poured around it. Palm fronds are then tied around the monoliths. Suffice to say here that, the second sacrifice is solely led by the chief priest that is the chief village head. To mark the end of the sacrifice, the chief priest and an old woman will grind *Eroono* leaves on a clay plate and sprinkle round the village and on everybody. This according to chief Anoka Mbeh brings success to the entire community.

Monoliths of Nselle

The monoliths at Nselle are located at Njemitop village seven kilometers west of Edor town. Njemitop is the central village of Nselle and this is where the clan head lives. The road to Njemitop is untarred and becomes motorable only in the dry season. This is because some parts are usually marshy due to the nature of the soil. However, periodic grading is done on the road to ease movement particularly during dry season.

The monoliths stand in a semi-circle in a group of seven in the village playground. Their heights range from 1ft 5 inches to 6ft. The monoliths were said to have been transferred from an old Ekpatana farm settlement (one of the villages in Nselle) to their present location. Unlike Nta where the chief or village head performs sacrifices on the Akwanshi/Atal, the chief priest of the Akwanshi at Nselle is a separate priest and he is not chief. It is important to highlight here that the chief priest refused to provide information about the monoliths and all the kind of sacrifices performed.



Plates 3&4: sample monoliths Nselle clan (Njimetop site)

Nde Monoliths

Nde is located along Ikom-Ogoja highway on the north of Ikom about 3km from Ikom town. The clan is made up of eight villages. The clan head lives in Central Nde which can easily be reached on the highway from Ikom or Ogoja. However, the Akwanshi can only be found at Abonatik forest, an area said to have been abandoned due to persistent inter-tribal war and the desire of the inhabitants to move to the new Nde Central following the construction of the road link from Ogoja-Ikom to Calabar. Abonatik is located in the low land of the Cross River Basin about 9km from Nde Central.

The two volcanic rocks (monoliths) at Abonatik are surrounded by heavy concentration of thick shrubs with under-storey creepers and grasses. Forest trees interpose a barrier between the atmosphere and the ground surface thus, absorbing most of the extreme heat from direct sun light on the monoliths which could cause excessive weathering. The monoliths are between 1ft and 6ft tall. The most important point about the site is the existence of the evergreen forest and the interaction of the ecosystem.



Plates 5&6: Sample monoliths of Nde clan (Abonatik site)

Abanyom Monoliths

Nkarasi is located along Ogoja-Ikom-Calabar highway. It lies north of Ikom town and takes about forty minutes' drive by car to and from Ikom. From Ogoja, Nkarasi lies about 38km south of the town and can be reached from both ends by a motorable road. My informants expressed the view that "Nkarasi is regarded in Abanyom clan as the seed of indigenous technology especially in the area of artistic design. This is glaring in the rock art demonstrated in our monoliths". The stone art exemplified in their monoliths signifies a typical scientific and technological advancement

of the people of Nkarasi and Abanyom at large which is used to mark the beginning of their civilization. They maintained that Nkarasi monoliths were carved by their forefathers through spiritual motivation several thousands of years ago and that their spirits are still with the stones up till today and that is why they are being worshipped. They represent the good spirits of Nkarasi land that protect the people and bring good fortunes to the land.



Plates 7&8: Carved specimens of Abanyom clan (Nkarasi site)

The Akwanshi of Nkarasi stands in a circle under a canopy of large forest trees behind the clan head's house. The monoliths are arranged in a definite order following their responsibilities in the family functions. At the centre of the circle is a large engraved stone called Nsopta Egaga, which, according to elder Bassey, is the head of the family and a hero who is believed to have fought for the land of Nkarasi. The monoliths are carved in the same way with depressions to indicate the eyes, mouth and ears. The beard is also indicated below the mouth to give a vivid identification of male and female. Other remarkable features are novel and scarification marks.

Monoliths of Nnam

Alok Site

The site topography is characterized by undulating terrain with gentle slope which allow gentle water drainage. Alok site is about 250 metres from the village playground with white trees of which the most popular one is silk cotton. The site is fenced with blocks and an iron door at the entrance attached to the guide's office. The monoliths consist of shaped and decorated basalt boulders which vary in size and shape ranging from 30 centimeters to 2 metres.

Direct interview with an informant revealed that the custom of planting trees on Monoliths site is common among the people of Alok and other Nnam villages. This tradition lives on most vividly on silk cotton trees, which represents the people's tree, the source of inexhaustible life (Olando Akong, personal communication). The evidence of blood (animal blood) sacrifices on the monoliths and the great *Nyamangbe* shrine indicates that the objects have played an important role in the ritual life of successive generations of members of local communities; their original purposes can only be conjectured. They may represent the spirit of deceased ancestors. It is also possible that they were created as memorials to important political and historical figures. However, local people maintain that the stones were created by otherworldly powers and emerged out of the ground like trees.

Like related style of other Bakor monoliths, Alok monoliths bear a form of writing and a complex system of codified information. Although they seem to share the same general features, each stone, like the human finger print, is unique from every other stone in its design and execution. The geometric images on the monoliths suggest that their makers possessed more than a basic knowledge of mathematics, not only because they are geometric, but also because of the obvious implication that there were computations and numbers on the layout of the stones.



Plates 9&10: Sample monoliths of Nnam (Alok site)

Emanghebe Site

Emanghebe is 2 kilometers east of Alok village in Nnam clan along Ogoja-Ikom-Calabar highway. Emanghebe monoliths are arranged in a circle behind Emanghebe health centre. These objects, according to elder Moses Nnang (residence guide), are part of Alok monoliths under the care of National Commission for Museums and Monuments. The monoliths are well fenced with concrete blocks together with a shrine, which indicates ritual activities. The arrangement of the objects is a clear indication that they were moved from elsewhere. Emanghebe objects also bear a form of codified motifs, which range from single to double spiral.



Plates 11&12: Carved monoliths of Nnam (Emanghebe Site)

Ekajuk Monoliths

Era Site

Era is about 3kilometers from Egbung community, located at a major highway linking Mbok, Yahe and Abakaliki in Ebonyi State. The road from Egbung to Era is not tarred but well graded to allow free movement of vehicles and motorcycles. The village is located in an undulating terrain with a gentle slope that encourages free drainage. The standing monoliths of Era are in a circle (though not very perfect circle) facing each other. The motifs that appear on Era monoliths include a single spiral, double spiral, concentric circle, diamond, and triangle. There is a clear differentiation between the sculpture's front and back, with the rear being devoid of inscription. The marks themselves

refer to cicatrisation patterns, which comment upon the wearer's level of initiation, ethnic, clan, and family identity. These markings may also relate to symbols that would have been painted on the body during festivals and annual sacrifices. These monuments from basalt stones vary in size ranging from around two to over six feet in height and stand in an imperfect circle facing inward.

Chief Paulinus Agu (chief priest/custodian of the monoliths) says the monoliths were carved by their forefathers in accordance with the technological drive of the people of Bakor during their time. Specifically, he maintained that the monoliths were carved for spiritual purposes, which is still in practice till date. Thus, annual sacrifices are performed on the monoliths to appease the spirits in them, which are believed to be custodians of the land. Failure to perform such sacrifice at the appointed time of the year, the monoliths cry like human beings causing a lot of disturbances coupled with the strange things that might happen in the land.



Plates 13&14: Sample monoliths of Ekajuk (Era site)

Esham Site

The standing stones at Esham are poorly carved in lime stone. They are scattered around abandoned cemetery along the old track road that connect Esham to Nwang. The site is about one kilometer from the village playground and can be accessed via a motorable road that link the village to the highway at Ekpugrinya junction. Elder Ngbantul Moshe, aka 'the Elephant' (chief priest to Esham monoliths) explained that the monoliths were carved from natural stones by their ancestors to represent certain gods, which up till date are still worshipped. According to him, the monoliths are seven in number but only four (4) were brought to Esham, the remaining three (3) are still at Nshagaraganti where they originated. Elder Ngbantul further explained that all the gods the presented in the monoliths serve the common purpose of protecting the people.



Plates 15&16: Monoliths of Ekajuk (Esham site)

V. Discussion of Findings

The 127 carved stone objects (Akwanshi) recorded occur in six different clans in twelve different locations/sites. The stones mostly stand in groups of up to forty four (at Alok), arranged in a circle, which varies in diameter from thirty to fifty yards. Several of these are incomplete, but the most perfect circle is that at Alok, Emanghebe and Nkarasi.

Bakor monoliths consist of shaped and decorated boulders, which vary in size and shape ranging from 1.6 metres long to columns over four metres high. The physical appearance of many of the monoliths shows that they were derived from basalt rocks that were subject to weathering, and which turned them out in columns due to poor joining and fracture. Such boulders were commonly used for the carving of the monoliths. The extent of modification of the boulders varies depending on the rock size, shape and the skill of the producer. In all the sites except at Esham, partly shaped boulders stand side by side with highly carved and decorated ones. Carved features were observed to appear mainly on the front- facial features, breast and navel were prominent decorations. The carving consisted mainly of engraved lines of surface decoration with depression to form the beard and prostration to form the navel.

The common features of the monoliths are that they are hewn into the form of a phallus decorated with carvings of geometric and stylized human features, notably two eyes, an open mouth, a head crowned with rings, a stylized pointed beard, an elaborately marked navel, two decorative hands with five fingers, a nose and various shapes of facial marks. At Alok the stones bear a form of writing (*Nsibidi*) and a complex system of codified information. Although they seem to share the same general features, each stone, like the human finger print, is unique from every other stone in its design and execution.

From the inspection of the monoliths, it is evident that some drops of blood stains and feathers are on top of some monoliths indicating that they are still worshipped. This is in line with the views of all my informants that the monoliths represent the good spirits of their forefathers, which are served through their annual sacrifices. In most sites, the stones are found in circles, sometimes perfect circles, facing each other and standing erect, except where they have been tampered with by man or affected by weather etc. In some cases, the stones are found at the centre of the village or at the central meeting place of the village elders, as in the case of Eganga, Odo-Nta and Njimetop communities. The Akwanshi at Etinghi-Nta and Nnabrokpa stood in an area of uncultivated forest, numbering between 7 and 13, respectively. The fourteen specimens at Nkarasi are arranged in a segment of a circle near a small stream behind the clan head's house about 200 metres from the village playground. At Esham, four monoliths are standing separately in an abandoned cemetery near the village, while the twelve at Era are found in an abandoned playground. The two specimens of monoliths at Abonatik are in a deserted village. Alok and Emanghebe have forty-four and eighteen monoliths, respectively located in a fenced area near the village meeting place and behind the clinic.

The one hundred and twenty seven (127) monoliths found in the twelve sites within the six Bakor clans with monoliths are contrary to those recorded earlier by Partridge (1903/04), Talbot (1926), Marshal (1932) and Philip Allison (1962). However, this is not unexpected given the occasional movements to new habitations, weathering and the recorded stealing of some monoliths. Even in 1904 Partridge found that some of the stones at Alok were moved to an unknown location. However, it is conjectured that some of the sites mentioned are deserted to leave unrecognized

traces of human habitation, while some monoliths have been stolen and others have weathered away. The numbers of visitors to the six monolith sites in Bakor within three years (2008, 2009 and 2010) have been shown above. We now proceed to evaluate the potentials of the sites for cultural tourism.

VI. Evaluation of Potential Monoliths/Sites for Cultural Tourism Development

Although Bakor has many monoliths sites, their development to serve cultural tourism purpose is largely dependent on the strengths and opportunities of such sites compared to the weaknesses and threats. Thus, in evaluating the monoliths sites in the study area for tourism development, the researcher employs SWOT analysis technique which provides a framework for developers (government and private sector) and other stakeholders to assess the potentials of existing tourist products in the light of their development objectives.

SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. SWOT analysis is a basic straightforward model that provides direction and serves as a basis for the development of any planned project. To determine the feasibility of cultural tourism in Bakor, SWOT analysis was used to assess the strengths (what the monoliths can offer touristically or their tourism value) and weaknesses (what the monoliths cannot offer touristically) as well as the opportunities (potential favourable conditions towards the development of Bakor cultural monoliths for tourism) and threats (potential unfavourable conditions for the development of Bakor cultural monoliths for tourism purpose). During this process, the data collected were separated into internal issues (strengths and weaknesses) and external issues (opportunities and threats) to determine if the proposed development will accomplish its objectives or desired result. The results are presented as follows:

Strengths:

- Unique cultural and historic heritage (excellently carved monoliths),
- Friendly culture and hospitable people,
- Distinctive and exotic environment (mangrove forest with abundant bird life),
- Good accessibility of sites (particularly those at Alok, Emanghebe, Nkarasi and Era),
- Electricity and good markets for tourists shopping at Alok, Emanghebe, Nkarasi and Era sites,
- Good health centres at Alok, Emanghebe, Nkarasi and Era sites,
- Location within Cross River State and proximity to Obudu, a popular tourist destination in Nigeria,
- Good conservation practices and protection of monoliths, and
- Unique sites for educational tourists (Archaeologists)

Weakness:

- Remote and largely outside the average tourists' consideration set of attractions,
- Widely dispersed and therefore expensive to develop,
- Extreme seasonality, which largely conditions the visitation of tourists/visitors to monoliths
- Poor accessibility of most monoliths sites (all Nde, Nselle and Nta sites)

Opportunities:

- Excellent development opportunities for specialist interest markets including green tourism and natural history enthusiasts,
- Opportunity to link all sites with good roads and provide the local people with social amenities,
- Opportunity to create jobs for local people and reduce the negative impact of agricultural practices on the ecosystem,
- Opportunity to showcase the rich culture of Nigerian people and promote cultural identity
- Opportunity to communicate to the world that Nigeria had a past.

Threats:

- Difficulty of finding funds to harness, promote and market the attractions, and
- Competition with other attractions with high tourism appeal.

The above evaluation shows that the strengths and opportunities for cultural tourism development in Bakor outweigh the weaknesses and threats. Again the percentages of inflow of visitors to monoliths per clan as presented in the above pie chart gives a vivid explanation of potential monoliths sites with excellent tourist appeal when fully harnessed. Therefore the development of Bakor cultural monoliths and sites is imperative given the fact that most tourists today are motivated by such in situ cultural heritage.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is obvious that to harness the tourism potentials of a place, there is need to package its resources into viable tourism products that can be promoted. This will help tourists know the content of the available products and take the right decision on which to patronize. Nevertheless a number of factors must be considered if the tourism potentials of Bakor monoliths are to be enhanced and promoted as effective cultural tourism market.

First, there is need to provide fund for the development of the sites. The development of tourism in any given area and its promotion is capital intensive and requires a huge amount of money. Governments at all levels, the private sector, voluntary organizations and other stakeholders are encouraged to release funds for the development and promotion of Bakor cultural heritage for tourism purposes.

Second, despite the uniqueness of a tourism product, if it is not properly conserved and protected from both human and natural agents of destruction, it will soon lose its taste for tourist consumption. The significance of monoliths remains in their values, one of which is the continued use of the sites by the present communities inhabiting the landscape. It is clear that Bakor monoliths have been in continuous use through the centuries and evolved a sense of historical continuity. The religious and spiritual values of the sites can be seen in the cultural traditions of the communities. Trees and herbs that are found in the sites have economic, social and medicinal values to the communities, thus providing cultural and natural link to the sites' physical integrity and value. Therefore in addition to indigenous laws guiding monoliths sites, legislative and ethical measures should be put in place to safeguard the monoliths and sites from deterioration.

The need for tourism education follows. The host communities should be enlightened on the benefits of tourism and how to relate with visitors. They should be made ready to receive and appreciate the cultural characteristics of the visitors and treat them hospitably. This will encourage return visit and serve as a tool for marketing their community, and showcase the true picture of the benefits of tourism through increased tourists' arrivals. Host communities should also be encouraged through tourism education to form community-based tourism organizations to assist in communicating their rich tourism resources to the appropriate bodies for onward development. Such community-based organizations should also help to maintain tourism resources and carry out community projects within their capacity that are geared towards tourism development.

Furthermore, facilities that serve the needs of tourists directly or indirectly in a destination and which determine to an extent the patronage and consumption of a particular tourism product should also be provided. Such amenities like electricity, good roads with comfortable and cheap means of transportation, good water, shopping malls/markets, communication facilities etc. do not only service the tourism industry, but also meet the needs of the local residence. Apart from the above, government should also create a favourable environment for private sector participation so as to develop potential tourism communities to meet both domestic and international standard.

The development of any tourism product is a big task that requires both human and material resources. Bakor is blessed with unique cultural tourism resources typified in her monoliths. When properly harnessed, cultural tourism in Bakor community can help to achieve substantial revenue to supplement whatever is generated from agriculture, which is their main source of income. For Nigeria and Cross River State in particular to have its fair share of the global tourism market and have high visitor arrivals, there is need to invest on cultural tourism development in Bakor, which have unique cultural resources (monoliths).

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