

Enhancing the Cultural Tourism Experience of Wogada Kingdom

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Abstract: Tourism is a catalyst for development if properly managed and as well have policies that stand as a benchmark for a sustainable development. The kingdom of Wogada is richly blessed with numerous attractions, and masquerading is commonly associated with the people which when properly managed can create employment opportunities, generate income, and improve the standard of living of the host community. In view of this assertion this study highlights the attractions of the destination such as Oluborgor Lake, beach, stone carving (monolith), rocks as well as different types of masquerading with emphasis on Etor, to mention but a few, that can be used as attractions if fully developed. Etor dance is a dramatic expression of the people of Ebo Yala in Yala LGA which is conveyed by regal dance movements sometimes accompanied by dialogue and chants. The mere size of this masquerade is daunting and because masquerading is associated with the people of Ebo, it is believed that if well harnessed and planned the community can leverage on its touristic benefits in the tourism value Chain advantage to impact lives and attract tourists alike. A lot of time it is believed that the Etor masquerade that is staged during the funeral of great men act as veritable ferryman to the great beyond. As a unifying factor during performance this didactic theatre is revered and capable of attracting authentic tourists. Tourism in Yala local government has not been given full attention wogada to be precise. Historiography was the method used in obtaining information for this study and oral tradition.

Keywords: Etor Masquerade, Wogada, Cultural Tourism, Development

1. Introduction

Masquerading is a widespread indulgence of Africans and serves as expressions of the confession and communal essence of domestic groups who fool with masking or masquerading. Masking is, therefore, a firm mode of artistic expression in Africa. Beyond the communal portrayal of the artistic impulse of African communities, masquerades and masks have deep symbolic meaning that one has advantage of the surface beauty of the artistic creations. Among the Yoruba of south western Nigeria, the Igbo's austral east, the Binis and Ibibio's and Efiks austral south zones effete Nigeria, masks and masquerading remain pleasant features that represent unique ideas and cultural beliefs of land. The Yoruba's, Ibibio's and Binis, outside of masking for entertainment purposes, believe that the masquerade is an indisputable representation of phyletic cocktail renovation. The masquerade is therefore believed to be blessed with

spiritual or supernatural powers meant for the execution of certain collective duties for the enhancement of intimate protraction. The Igbo, second, believes, instead, that the masquerader, when he wears the mask, undergoes a transformation which gives him the power to mean over spirits though he himself remains soul. The mask becomes a physical stuff which manifests the inner transformation of the wearer. The Ekpe or Mgbe masquerade among the Efiks and Ejagham is a physical representation of "mgbe", the leopard from whom the masquerader derives strength and authority which serve for adjudication and sustenance of order and harmony in society. Masquerading is therefore, just a common situation happening in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular though there are several masquerades meant for pure entertainment and on to feat. Masquerades evoke deep emotions in the identity where they are found and serve several functions in the societies where they exist ranging from convention to initiation, judicial and entertainment

functions. They also serve as a unifying experience among the people. The masks themselves are either beautifully sculptured or decorated to reflect different aspects of communal life and experience best known and interpreted by the users of the masquerades. [7].

2. Background of the People

The people of wogada hold unique traditions, the kingdom is blessed with numerous tourism sites and have a reserve tradition to mention but a few. Woleche ebo is located within the coast of river popularly called *onwu wole*, it has beach for picnic and other tourism activities, also the community is surrounded with rocks that prevent the river flood from the community, *Oluborgor* lake in *Ebo Ipuole*, Odey Okwe secret glove (shrine) and different types of masquerading which include *Wohi*, *Otabala*, *Achi*, *Ekipatuma*, *Ogrinya*, *Ayita*, and ofcourse *Etor* also known as *Iyin- wa-yero* [2]. The community is endowed with numerous natural and man-made attractions, and is known for farming. The economic activities of the people are farming, such as yams, rice, cassava, and leaf vegetables, fishing, as well as hunting. Currently almost every household engages in farming activities of the mentioned above, with few petty traders and civil servants. The socio-political organization and activities cannot be left out, the kingdom has one time the executive chairman of yala local government in the person Hon, John Eyikwaje as at the then governor Donald duke, and many local government legislature, the political ward, is yahe, the kingdom has six (6) polling units out of the thirteen (13) polling unit in the ward.

2.1. Method of Data Collection

The method used in gathering the data is historiography which is the systematic and objective inquiry into events, developments and experiences of the past. Although this design was developed and is used more in the field of history, it has in recent times, come to find useful application in the investigation of certain types of educational problems, such as tracing the development of certain programmes in education or bringing to limelight the contribution of notable figures, or establishments to the development of education [10], the data gathered are subjected to evaluation so as to determine the validity or otherwise some logical conclusion are drawn based on a proper synthesis and interpretation of the data. Historical research differs from other forms of research in the sense that it is always concerned with the past and call for the more different types of interpretation of data.

2.2. Discussion and Findings

In some parts of West Africa, especially Togo, Benin, and Nigeria, masquerading has religious undertones and are celebrated during ceremonial rituals, ancestral worship sessions, and funerals (e.g., Doris, 2005; Esu & Arrey, 2009; Picton, 1990; Rea 1998, 2007). In Ghana, this is not the case; masquerading in Winneba and, indeed, the country as a whole, has no religious, metaphysical, or mythical

connotations; it is celebrated solely for its entertainment value, though unlike the rest of the country the merry making in Winneba is underpinned and sustained by the intense rivalry among the competing groups.

Igbo masquerade tradition is patterned after the people's belief system and cosmology; masquerades also form a link between the living and the dead. Often time's dead ancestors will visit their living relations in the form of masquerades. These masquerades transform the spirit and make them visible to the living. Cole and Aniakor remark that, "masks are worn to give a real tangible form to the spirit world, here they could be beautiful or terrifying in outlook and worn with a variety of attachments. [4]". Mmanwu is a very fearful cult among the Igbo and their origin dates back to the ancient period. Membership of Mmanwu is male, although one still finds out that the secrets of Mmanwu are not hidden from Nne Mmanwu (Menopausal women) [3, 4].

Particularly yala masquerades' could be categorized into (a) Entertainment or ceremonial masquerades which include Wohi, Akataka, Ekipatuma, Otabala to mention but a few. (b) Warrior masks or masquerades which include Ayita, Ebalambi, Achi among others while (c) Ritual masquerades which include Ogrinya, Achuku and Etor as it is only within wogada clan. These masquerades can be invited to perform at ceremonies which include funerals, weddings, initiation to manhood, coronations, and in recent time's church ordinations. Warrior masks and masquerades usually appear only in celebration of brave exploits in inter tribal warfare or at the funerals of deceased members of the warrior groups.

2.3. Etor Masquerade and the People of Wogada

ETOR is a masquerade of wogada kingdom of yala local government area of cross river state it is also known as INYI WAYERO literally translated to be 'elephant in the farm', etor masquerade come out in very important occasions usually funeral of the elderly men, coronation or wogada day celebration, most at time, it usually come out in funeral of a deceased member of the cult, the mask of the masquerade is made of wood with horn, and fresh grasses in its mouth depicting elephant head which means mighty and strong. Etor dance is a dramatic expression of the people of Ebo Yala in Yala LGA which is conveyed by regal dance movements sometimes accompanied by dialogue and chants. The mere size of this masquerade is daunting and because masquerading is associated with the people of Ebo, it is believed that if well harnessed and planned the community can leverage on its touristic benefits in the tourism value Chain advantage to impact lives and attract tourists alike. A lot of time it is believed that the Etor masquerade that is staged during the funeral of great men act as veritable ferryman to the great beyond. As a unifying factor during performance this didactic theatre is revered and capable of attracting authentic tourists. Etor masquerade has assumed a very important position with the advent of tourism even though westernization and Christianity have threatened to erode some traditions. In the festival mentioned above etor masquerade comes out in very bright and colourful costumes

and is usually led by the elders of the cult group or in some case its being led by a messenger of the cult. The gong by a drummer calling ebe gruru, gruru meaning BIG animal, because of the big nature of the masquerade [1, 2, 9]. He moves majestically toward the direction of the gun that is being shoot, the guns are position by the side of trees, as soon as the masquerade put or bend his head toward the tree the gun is shoot, etor masquerade display very fearful and frighten when he is on stage, and when is moving to and fro the entire body is covered with costumes of tiger colour.

At this point the masquerade session becomes dramatic activities which entice the entire community and visitors become involved in the entertainment, the uniqueness of the masquerade attracts the interest of everybody in joining to sing. Once Etor masquerade is coming out no other masquerade is allowed to come out again and in any of the occasions mentioned above if etor is to come out he will be the first to come before any other masquerade follows [7].

2.4. Belief Associated with Etor Masquerade/Spiritual Powers

Like in many other African countries the people of wogada are of the belief that etor masquerade plays a significant role in the lives of the indigenes, perhaps it is necessary to commend etor regarding the healing he provides for the sick child and babies. To the yala man, wogada to be precisely whenever a child is defile or sick and have been administered several treatment without healing, they pray for, when etor is coming, once the sick or defiled child is been given to etor the child get healing from there, and if the masquerade resist or reject carrying the child it is believed that the child will die. No man or woman crosses the masquerade when it is performing or displaying, it is believed that whoever crosses the masquerade will fall sick of all manner of sickness of the masquerade costumes colour and later die as such precaution is take by the audience who are enlightened for the visitor not to double cross the masquerade [1, 2]. The masquerade sees the invisible immediately the costume is being worn and on display or during performance as the mask and costume have transformed him into the spiritual realm. Human society only has significance and meaning in relation to the invisible world, etor masquerade serves as a link between the world of the physical (living) and the world of the (dead) ancestor [7]. Etor masquerade has been accorded with many social aesthetic wants in wogada kingdom, Etor socio-cultural and religious belief of wogada (yala) kingdom life is a representative of their predecessor from this perspective, masquerade constitute a major component of yala tourism product. Hence the demand for etor masquerade and audience in any of the festivals is high.

2.5. Performance and the Relevance of Etor Masquerade

Allied most fresh african boondocks there inhabit several masquerades in yala wogada primarily, outstanding is etor that fact is regarded conjoined of the maximum in ranking and serves both socio-helpful and religious concern, it is regarded

as a royal masquerade. Notwithstanding the insurgence of modernization and christianity for unloose of routine loss, etor is deathly quiet stress for posterity in wogada kingdom [9, 7].

Inyi-wayero (etor) is a royal masquerade, something else, colourful, with elephant final and quiet majestically, gills godforsaken and right astern and front toward the sound of a gun. it is one of the biggest masquerades in west africa, his lack to move round the playground and also turning to the sound of gun and followed by audience singing behind him eehh inyi-wayero, oh, inyi-wayero, eehh inyi-wayero, oh, inyi-wayero, ebe kpaa...chi, At once everybody will wave and beat his/her leaves on the ground at once. A messenger is at the front smearing slimy gel (etro) cleaning and clearing every opposing power and spirit [1].

2.6. Audience Experience

A show without an audience is incomplete; attendees come from and beyond yala, the audience are dominated by the youth and women. Interview with most of the attendees reveal that the masquerade has existed for years, while other are of the view that it hardly comes out except in the funeral of a aged man of 80 yrs and above, adult, children and youth of the community were excited with the masquerade as it has been long most witnessed it [2, 9, 7]. The ardent patrons are the residents (communities) of wogada kingdom and same visitors as enthusiasts of the masquerade are the indigenes of the neighboring community and other local government area who may be lucky to witness its performance as one in a lifetime experience.

3. Conclusions

The people of this kingdom have a reserve tradition and tourism potentials that if properly harnessed and managed will propagate the tourism activities of the people. Since tourism is regarded as the fastest growing industry, by this it can create employment opportunities for the host community, and improve the livelihood of residents through leakage. Point to above masquerade, etor is a BIGGEST masquerade in the whole of West Africa, and promotion or publicity of any kind has not been done to enlighten the audience and cultural tourist patronage, whenever etor is on display.

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