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# Faith-Based Activities and Tourism: Exploiting the Possibilities for Religious Tourism Development in Anaocha Local Government Area, Nigeria

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Over the years, people have travelled for various motivations, giving birth to various types of specific interest tourism. The result is that various scholars have devoted their research to these specific areas of tourism. One such area of tourism that has grown exponentially is religious tourism (which some scholars also called spiritual tourism). This type of tourism explores travels motivated by the desire to visit places that inspire an individual's belief system and to meet with people that share the same faith. Our study aims to understand the faith-based activities and religious centres in Anaocha Local Government Area (LGA) of Anambra State, Nigeria that could be harnessed for tourism development. Four months of ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in the area to identify the important religious and cultural sites. Shrines/deities, groves, cultural centres and mythical lakes were identified as places of religious worship which could be harnessed for tourism development. Unfortunately, these sites are still not harnessed for tourism, though tourists still visit them for various religious purposes. The study concludes that the local people should be sensitised to the tourism potential of these sites, while government and other stakeholders should create an enabling environment for tourism development to thrive in the area.

**Key Words:** faith-based activities, religious tourism, development, sustainability, Anaocha, Nigeria

## Introduction

Can tourism develop sustainably? If yes, how can this be possible? If no, what can be done to remedy this situation? Can all tourism planning and development be positive and beneficial?

These questions are summarised in the sentence: tourism does not occur in a vacuum; it involves people and environment and has both positive and negative impacts which influence how tourism grows. The awareness of these impacts has led to the emergence of specific interest tourism, which is a shift from the earlier advocacy for conventional tourism, and instead, a pursuance of more sustainable types of tourism. This explains why Gunn (1994) quipped that the traditional notion that all tourism planning and development are positive is only a half-truth. Such a belief is a paradox because tourism has a propensity for both benefits and costs. Thus, the ability to manage tourism effectively lies in understanding by various stakeholders that no one possesses all the skills needed to develop tourism in a positive manner (Jamal and Getz, 1995).

However, in practice, tourism sustainability studies have shown more concentration on the economic contributions of tourism, probably because of the relative ease regarding its measurement when compared with the socio-cultural and environmental (Andriotis, 2007). This trend led to neglect of these two parameters of sustainability, particularly, before the publication of *Our Common Future* in 1987. The implication is that many countries and governments that earlier accepted tourism-focused more on the economic benefit, without due consideration of the environmental and socio-cultural consequences. A realisation of the negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism resulted in a paradigm shift, with more emphasis on the holistic understanding of tourism. This led to the tourism platforms of advocacy, caution, adaptation and knowledge-based (Jafari, 2003).

Arising from the seminal work of Jafari, many scholars shifted attention to more sustainable types of tourism, which also recognised the importance of community involvement and collaboration. This gave rise to types

of tourism such as ecotourism, agritourism and green tourism (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005). Other types include alternative tourism, soft tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism, indigenous tourism, wine tourism, dark tourism, film tourism and community-based tourism.

One aspect of specific interest that has grown rapidly over the years is religious tourism, which is one of the fastest-growing types of tourism. As the UNWTO noted (cited in Tomljenović and Dukic, 2017), about 300-330 million international tourists visit major religious sites worldwide annually. Asi, Blanco, Castillo, Lacorte, Lumbea, and Moneda (2015) on their part noted that religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism, with about 600 million religious and spiritual tours recorded yearly. Such visits include missionary travel, retreats, pilgrimage, monastery visits and religious conferences. The primary motivation for the traveller is to fulfil their religious and spiritual desires (Tomljenović and Dukic, 2017).

This study therefore, explores religious tourism as special interest tourism by identifying the faith-based activities and cultural sites with religious importance that could be harnessed for tourism development in Anaocha LGA of Anambra State, Nigeria. These sites include shrines / deities where people visit to get solutions to their problems, cultural centres where people visit for spiritual powers, mythical lakes where people make sacrifices and sacred groves belonging to the gods of the land. There is a fear that if these sites are not harnessed for tourism, they may become extinct in Anaocha LGA; her religious centres will only be remembered in stories, songs and myths like most African phenomena of this type. This explains why there is need to document this tradition and creates awareness.

## Research Methods

Primary data are new data collected explicitly in the proposed research by the researcher (Veal, 1997; Eboh, 1998). Three instruments were designed to gather primary data for this paper: Unstructured in-depth interviews; semi-structured interviews with key informants and thirdly, the recording of Oral Tradition. In addition to these formal approaches, the research also included various forms of Reconnaissance Survey. These instruments are all employed within a frame of ethnographic research methodologies.

Ethnographic research has its roots in social and cultural anthropology where an ethnographer is required to spend a significant amount of time in the field. Ethnographers immerse themselves in the life of the people they study (Lewis, 1985) and seek to place the phenomena studied in their social and cultural context.

In-depth interviews entail the collection of semi-structured or unstructured data through interviewer-interviewee verbal interactions or conversations. As noted by Okpoko and Ezech (2005) in-depth interviews provide opportunities for respondents to talk freely about their experiences, beliefs and attitudes as they relate to the research problem. An in-depth interview is an indispensable tool where a relatively large amount of information has to be collected in a short period and from a small number of respondents. The variant of the in-depth interview used in this research work was 'unstructured' or 'open-ended' interviews. Interviews were conducted in an informal or conversational manner. This involves asking significant questions whenever opportunities offer themselves. There is no formal, structured instrument or protocol and the interviewer is free to move the discussion in any direction. The aim according to Beal, *et al.* (1979) is not primarily to secure answers to the questions, but to stimulate the subject to talk; in the hope of learning what the subject thinks is essential. The unstructured or open-ended interviews ranged from casual informal interviews with unselected individuals to key informant interviewing (Okpoko and Ezech, 2005).

The second variant of the in-depth interview that was used in this research was semi-structured interviews, which are more systematic than the unstructured interviews. The semi-structured interview requires the preparation of interview schedules or guides. It involves

*a conscious effort to guide and steer the discussion towards the particular interest of the researcher by either using a series of written or memorised prompts, or a carefully planned interview guide consisting of a list of items, which must be covered during the interview (Obikeze, 1990:13).*

Interviews were conducted with carefully selected people. We identified 25 key informants among knowledgeable persons in the selected towns (see The Population/ Sample Population). The selection of these people was based on their status and position within and outside the towns. We used a non-probability sampling of snowball/chain sampling in identifying

these informants. The researchers identified one member of the population of interest and interviewed him/her and after that asked him/her to suggest another interviewee(s) that the researchers would contact. Thus, six chief priests, fifteen elders / titled men, five community leaders, and twelve youth / women leaders were identified and interviewed using an interview guide. As per the theoretical literature about this form of sampling, this snowball approach lead the researchers into many realms that they knows little about.

Oral tradition, is undocumented material that is transmitted from generation to generation. Through the use of crucial informant interviews and the collection of oral traditions, relevant data useful for the subject matter was elicited from our respondents. The data were collected with tape / video recorders as well as field notes. Photographs, secondary documents and field observations were also used during the fieldwork. The field research was conducted with the support of five assistants (one indigene from each of the selected towns) who acted as the researchers' guides in identifying sites and knowledgeable people to interview. Pre-Fieldwork consultations and arrangements were made for the smooth flow of the research. The actual field research lasted for four months. However, for verification and clarification of collected data, the researchers regularly consulted the informants via follow-up phone calls.

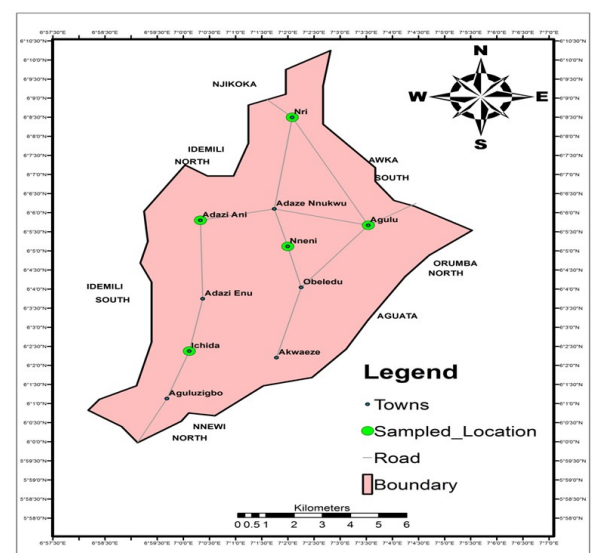
The secondary sources of information were mainly library materials. Among these are textbooks, journal articles, magazines, newspapers, conference papers and internet materials. Information collected from secondary sources were used to supplement the primary data.

### The Population/ Sample Size

The population of Anaocha Local Government Area is quite large. For us to cover the entire local government area was difficult because of financial challenges and limited time. The researchers therefore, carefully selected a number of towns with the view to obtaining relevant information that would be used to generalise in the development of an opinion / analysis.

The population of this study, that is, the target population, is made up of ten towns in the local government area. However, because of the large number of people, the need to employ sampling technique became unavoidable. According to Nwogu (1991), samples are used in studies that involve large populations. The sampling method is adopted to adequately deal with the enormous population and reduce the error arising from calculations of large numbers and to reduce the exorbitant cost of covering the entire population.

**Figure 1: Map of Anamra State (left) and Anaocha Local Government Area Showing Towns (right)**



[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/Nigeria\\_-\\_Anambra.svg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/Nigeria_-_Anambra.svg)

Source : Authors' Fieldwork, 2015



In determining the sample size of the study, the researchers used a simple technique to select five towns. The rationale behind their selection was based on their long-standing history of faith-based activities and attractions. Thus, the towns that were identified for the study were: Neni, Ichida, Adazi-Ani, Agulu and Nri. These areas were intensively studied and information useful for this study were obtained and thematically analysed.

## Background Information

Anaocha Local Government Area is one of the twenty-one local government areas that make up Anambra State, south-eastern Nigeria. Anaocha is located within Latitude 6.1 and Longitude: 7.05. The LGA is bounded on the North by Awka South Local Government Area and on the West by Njikoka Local Government Area. Anaocha has a landmass of 171.62 square kilometres and had a population of 284,215 in the 2006 census. Towns that make up the district are Aguluzigbo, Agulu, Neni, Ichida, Adazi-Ani, Adazi-Enu, Adazi-Nnukwu, Akwaeze, Nri and Obeledu. (Source: Handbook Anaocha Local Government Area, 1999). Anaocha lies within the semi-tropical rainforest belt of the South. Its natural physical features and vegetation range from tropical rainforest belt to open woodland and savannah land. Nowadays, Anaocha local government area is characterised particularly by the presence of oil palm trees (*Elaeis guineensis*), breadfruit tree (*Treculia africana*), pears (*Dacryode edulis*), oranges (*Citrus Sinens*) and mangoes (*Mangifera indica*).

## Presentation of Findings

### Deities/Shrines in Selected Towns

Nine significant deities were studied in Anaocha:

- *Oye* deity (god of harvest),
- *Otoogwe* deity (the god of righteousness and fairness),
- *Eke Ngwu* deity (the god of justice),
- *Ogwugwu Okpoku* deity (the god of fire),
- *Eke* deity,
- *Nkwo* deity,
- *Uku* deity,
- *Ududonka* deity and
- *Haaba* deity.

Additionally, two worship and / or sacrificial sites were identified (Idemili cultural centre and rest house, and

Plate 1: *Oye* Shrine in Etitinabo Village



*Ofia Ndu*). The worship and reverence of these deities and uses of these worship sites by traditionalists provide the faithful with the theology, cosmology and worldview of Anaocha people. Thus, human beings in their quest to understand the universe and the unknown gave rise to the belief in these gods.

### *Oye* Deity in *Oye* Neni

The first shrine (Plate 1) belongs to *Oye* deity and is located northwest of Etitinabo village in Neni town. It is at a strategic point (roundabout) in the centre of the village. The deity is owned and maintained by the village. *Oye* is a male deity and yams are usually brought to the shrine during the feast of *Oye*, usually on the last 'Orie' market day in September. All participants at the shrine share the meat of a sacrificial goat. The shrine houses the regalia of masquerade ('*Oye*' masquerade) that is displayed during the *Oye* feast. Ethnographic sources reveal that youths are mostly in charge of the shrine's maintenance alongside the chief priest.

### *Otoogwe* in Ichida

*Otoogwe* is a female deity locally known as the god of righteousness and fairness in Ichida town. The shrine is located southeast of Mgbudu village in Ichida town. Iral tradition holds that the deity is connected to the sole daughter (*Otoogwe*) of *Eke Nri* in Ora-Eri (a neighbouring town). A visitor came to Eke's house and after spending time with him requested that Eke should ask his only daughter to escort him. Ajamuo-Okpuro at Ora-Eri was the spot where the daughter got to and decided to go back. The visitor then told her that on her way back, if she heard any big sound, she should not look back. As the visitor turned into the water with a

Plate 2: *Otoogwe* Deity's Shrine(a) *Otoogwe* Shrine(b) *Otoogwe* Grove(c) *Otoogwe* Sign Post

massive sound, Eke's daughter ignored the warning and turned back. At that moment the water mysteriously took her and formed a lake there. When the mysterious lake started swallowing people the villages requested the exit of the lake via an Oracle / diviner's mandate. As the villagers were driving the Lake away, *Otoogwe* held on to a '*Mgbodu*' tree so that the water would not carry her further away. Hence, to this day, at the '*Mgbodu*' spot remains the shrine of *Otoogwe* Ichida with a grove (*Ohia Otoogwe* – up to 30 plots of land) and her water called *Obu-Agbaja*.

*Otoogwe* deity is believed to be the major source of protection for the Ichida people. The chief priest of the shrine explained to us that no adherents or admirers of *Otoogwe* deity could die in an accident, be kidnapped, infected with diseases such as influenza or smallpox and there are no cases of infertility in her followers. Ichida people do not kill a python. The deity is associated with a festival called '*Igbankpu Otoogwe*'

which is celebrated on a biennial basis in November. The duration of the celebration, is one '*Oye*' market day, and it is a period for merriment and thanksgiving to the deity for her continued protection. Masquerades like *Ulaga*, *Ojuonu*, *Ijele* are in attendance during the festival.

### *Eke Ngwu* in Ichida

*Eke Ngwu* deity is located southwest of Ihe village in Ichida town. The deity is known as the god of justice and truth. The deity acts as the traditional customary court where injustice is addressed and truth sought for. Our informants revealed that in times past if a murder was committed and the culprit confessed the crime, he was tied to a tree called '*Ukpaka*' (*Pentaclethra macrophylla*) (located northwest of *Eke Ngwu* shrine—see plate 3) at the shrine. The person remained there till death. However, it takes only a titled man (*Eze-ani* or *Duru* title holders) or the chief priest to save the

Plate 3: *Eke Ngwu* Shrine and Its Grove (The big tree is the *Ukpaka*)



**Plate 4: Ogwugwu Okpoku Shrine and its Grove**

person. If for instance, an *Eze-ani* title holder saved the person, he (the culprit) would automatically live with the *Eze-ani*. Because of the impact of modernity, a contemporary court has been built beside the shrine to serve the indigenes, especially Christians. Court sessions are held only on 'Eke' market days by community elders (*Umuohia*).

*Eke Ngwu* deity is generally known as a deity associated with peace and justice for the host village. The deity has a grove (*Ukpaka Eke Ngwu*) and a festival associated with it. The festival – *Igba-Nkpu Eke Ngwu* is celebrated annually in October on an *Eke* day.

#### **Ogwugwu Okpoku Deity in Ichida**

This deity is located southeast of Nnurukwu village in Ichida (Plate 4). A tree called 'Okpoku' is significant for *Ogwugwu* deity because the deity manifests its powers through *Okpoku* seed. Perhaps, this explains why the deity was called *Ogwugwu Okpoku* deity. One

of the informants explained that in the olden days if the seed of *Okpoku* tree was inserted in one's property and the property was stolen, once the case was reported to the deity, the deity would ignite a fire in the house where the said property was kept. Thus, to the admirers and adherents of *Ogwugwu Okpoku*, the deity polices their property. Because of *Ogwugwu Okpoku*'s fame in Nnurukwe village, stealing was not a common practice within and around the village. *Nkpu Ogwugwu* festival is celebrated in honour of the deity, and it is celebrated annually in November on 'Afor' market day.

#### **Eke Deity in Adazi-Ani**

The *Eke* shrine (Plate 5) is located southwest of Adazi-Ani market square in Ede village. *Eke* deity is owned by Adazi-Ani town and is the supreme deity in the town. Presently, there is no chief priest-in-charge of the shrine, probably because of the influence of modernisation and Christianity.

The deity (*Eke*) is married to 'Nkwo' deity whose shrine is also situated within the market square. According to our informant, there used to be an *Eke Umuona* in Ezioha clan of Asano village as well as other *Eke* deities in other villages, but each of them has waned. The *Eke* Adazi-Ani supremacy is authenticated in its longevity and the common maxim '*Enwem ka eke nwe Adazi*' (I am loyal to *Eke* the owner of Adazi). Some of the feasts organised for *Eke* deity include: '*Chi Eke*' (the highest feast), Ita '*Ukwa-aja Eke*' (celebrated by young spinsters) which comes four days before the celebration of *Chi-Eke*, '*Igbu odu nke eke*' (done by different villages with cows) and '*Akwukwa Eke*' (done by families at the *Eke* shrine).

**Plate 5: Cross Sections of Eke Shrine**

**Plate 6: Entrance Gate to *Nkwo* Shrine**

The supremacy of *Eke* deity in Adazi-Ani is exemplified in his nine commandments. Thus, in time past, the infringement against any of the laws of the deity might lead to religious and village / public sanction against the offender, and in some cases, may even have lead to the execution or sale of the offender to slave traders. These commandments are:

- stealing of yam,
- stealing of sheep,
- espionage against Adazi-Ani especially during warfare,
- kola nut theft,
- arson,
- selling of Adazi-Ani citizen without the approval of either his relations or the '*Nzeseremmanya*',
- homicide,
- hiding a thief and
- Secretly hindering or preventing a normal marriage.

*Eke* shrine is now dilapidated. Parts of the building was pulled down during construction work in the area. Inside the chamber are gongs and wooden doors. At the entrance are bundles of bones, mainly from sacrificial animals e.g cows. The entrance to the chamber was covered with a tender palm frond (*Omu*); perhaps, to restrict indiscriminate entry. The shrine is situated along the expressway, near the *Eke* market square.

### ***Nkwo* Deity in *Eke* Adazi-Ani**

*Nkwo* shrine is located at the centre of *Eke* Adazi-Ani market square. *Nkwo* deity was formerly a significant deity in Adazi-Ani, she, however, relinquished this status when she became married to the *Eke* deity. She is a goddess of love and fertility. Of all the four market days, only '*nkwo*' was not represented in any of the three villages of Adazi-Ani (*Asano*, *Umuru* and *Ede*). It should be noted that more villages were created to make up fourteen villages now in Adazi-Ani town.

Only titled men of the highest category (*Nzeseremmanya*) can enter *Nkwo* shrine. The rest of the *Ozo* titled men were not allowed until 1956 when the custom was abolished by the masses of the titled men who sang in unison '*kwenu kwenu na iyi egbuna oha*' meaning that oath cannot destroy the masses. '*Etedanaghi*' is a festival in honour of *Nkwo* deity and is celebrated in the form of a traditional wedding. Any newly engaged woman who became pregnant before her wedding day is excluded from the ceremony. Such a lady must first cleanse herself through the '*Itu-nri*' ceremony, after that; an old female goat will be sacrificed to the '*Ajana*'. The shrine of *Nkwo* deity is fenced and burglar-proofed with an iron protector to restrict unauthorised entry. The walls are a

**Plate 7a&b: Views of '*Eke*' Adazi-Ani Market**



combination of mud and cement; while the shrine is built with mud and roofed with corrugated iron sheet. Within the compound are 'Ora' trees, flowers and other herbal plants.

### **Uku Deity in Adazi-Ani**

*Uku* is another important deity in Adazi-Ani, and the shrine is located at the southwestern end of the town in a place popularly known as 'Ama-uku'. It is situated about 1 kilometre away from the market square immediately after entering the town, at *Ikenga* village in Asano quarters. *Uku* is the local name in Adazi-Ani for the mahogany tree. *Uku* is regarded as the god of war and is a totemic tree. Before the Nigerian civil war, the *Uku* tree was neither cut nor used as firewood and it is believed that cancerous sores would befall anyone who contravenes its taboos.

*Uku* as a god of war was the most potent external image of Adazi-Ani, before its wane in the early 1970s. The seed of the *Uku* tree was used as a powerful charm; they could be dropped in an enemy's farm as a punitive measure. *Uku* is represented through a figurine called '*Ighalamigha uku*' – a combination of four figures personified in one. Our informants explained that the figurine has two heads upwards and two heads downwards with bent arms and legs. This figurine is believed to be awe-inspiring and a sophisticated piece of artwork. Illegal traffickers stole the *uku* figurine in times past. Most of the mahogany that constituted the colony of *Uku* trees in Adazi-Ani was cut at the end of the civil war and the timbers sawn and sold for community development.

### **Ududonka Deity in Agulu**

*Ududonka* shrines are located in Amorji and Isiamigbo villages respectively; with its 'Obu' (headquarters) in Amorji village. According to the chief priest of *Ududonka* deity, nobody knows the origin of *Ududonka* deity. However, some stories showed that *Ududonka* deity was brought from Arochukwu in Abia State to Agulu, and for ages, the people have been serving the deity. Another version of the legend holds that a fowl-like figure appeared to a native of Amorji village in Agulu (a long time ago). The creature requested from the man a dwelling place. The man took the figure to a spot at '*agu*' (faraway farmland); there, the man dug a hole and put the figure inside. After few days, the native went back to see the figure and the creature revealed itself as *Ududonka* and asked the man to invite Agulu. Agulu honoured the invitation and *Ududonka* addressed them and presented its request. Thus, from that day, *Ududonka* sends messages to Agulu through the man. Until the present day the man's descendants, known as Mgbunu people (a clan in Amorji) carry the clerical staff of the deity. The descendants perform sacred rites of *Ududonka* deity.

*Ududonka* deity chooses its priest. No matter how faithful or royal a follower is, if one is not called, one cannot feed the deity. The deity does not have a preference for first sons.

The deity has eight functional outlets namely, the *Obu Ududonka*, the *Ikolo Ududonka*, the *Ududonka Okukolo*, the *Ududonka Eke*, the *Ududonka Ogwugwu*, the *Agwu Ududonka*, the *Ududonka Agu* and *Ududonka Inyi*. The *Obu Ududonka* is located in

**Plate 8: to *Ududonka* Shrine**

**(a) Entrance Gate to *Ududonka* Shrine**



**(b) Divination Section of the Shrine**



**(c) The *Ikolo Ududonka***



Isiamigbo village and is the head of the *Ududonka* shrine from where other outlets take source. Within this *Obu* is the *Udo*, a spirit represented in *Ngwu* tree on which palm frond is tied together with a piece of white cloth. A chicken is sacrificed to *Udo* spirit every year.

*Ikolo Ududonka* derived its name from '*Ikolo*' (a large wooden gong dedicated to *Ududonka* deity). The *Ikolo*, when beaten, calls for a gathering of the twenty villages that make up Agulu town. The *Ikolo* is used to remark the nearness of the feast of *Ududonka* as a prelude to the feast. The wooden gong is usually beaten in July. A ram is sacrificed here every year before the main feast. *Ududonka Okukolo* is located within an eroded gully site between Amorji and Isiamigbo villages in Agulu. The deity handles difficult matters / cases. The deity has the following offshoots: *Akpu Oshimili* – this acts to protect people; *Agwu mmiri* – this induces rain when wine is dropped in front of it; *Ngwu* – this gives protection (i.e. it is a protective device for an innocent man). A chicken is usually sacrificed to the deity.

*Ududonka Inyi* functions as a '*dibia*' (native doctor), curing illnesses such as malaria and stroke through the use of herbs and roots. The deity also has *Ngene* and *Ogwugwu* as its children (*Umu mmuo*). In *Ududonka Eke* shrine, features like *Isiokefi*, *Agwu-ekpu*, and *Agadi nwanyi* can be found. *Ududonka Ogwu* is also located not far from *Ududonka Eke* and also protects people. *Agwu Ududonka* has various plants representing the spirits. These are *Agbala*, the *Isiagwu*, *Ekwensu* and *Oliseh*. All these are represented by plants such as '*Echichii*' (thorny plants), raffia palm bamboo on which a piece of white cloth is tied, and '*Ogilisi*' plants representing *Ekwensu* and *Oliseh*. Small earthenware containers (ritual pot and *oku*) with '*nzu*' (local chalk) are also to be found. A cock and a hen are sacrificed here.

Finally, *Ududonka Agu* referred to as '*Ochi ife n'agu*' is known for protection. There is also the *Mmiri Ududonka* known as *Ogbansiegbe* located within the gully, which is not very far from the *Ududonka Okukolo*. Here, there is a spot for '*Aja mmiri*' i.e. 'unworthy' water sacrifice and '*Aja-enuani*' i.e. 'unworthy' land sacrifice. *Mmiri Ududonka* flows and contains some fauna, which is sacred. There is also a section which provides drinking water.

*Ife Ududonka* is a festival in honour of the deity; it is celebrated annually in November. During the festival, sacrifices of he-goats, cows and fowl are

offered to the deity. The sacrificial items are gifts and thanksgiving offerings brought by an individual. The female group is known as '*agbakwumakwu*' women who present local dishes like *abacha ncha*, *ona* and *ighu* as '*nhu*' to the deity. This is known officially as '*nhu mmuo*'. The deity is peaceful and generous, and very difficult to be aroused to anger. *Ududonka* deity gives protection to the people, sees to their welfare, gives a child to the childless and helps people that are in difficulties. The deity settles disputes; serves as a mediator and as a court of justice. People go to *Ududonka* to take a binding oath.

### **Haaba Deity in Agulu**

*Haaba* shrine is located at Obe village (Plate 9). The deity has shrines in other villages including Nkitaku and Obeagu. This deity is a goddess and is known to have a strong sway on her worshippers both within and outside Agulu. The deity is regarded as '*Nne*,' i.e. mother of Agulu town. This expresses her kindness, patience and tolerance. *Haaba* is popularly known as '*Nne anyi*' (our mother) and it is believed that she acts like a real mother until she is aroused to anger. Legends hold that she is very fond of her children and protects them in times of adversities. The shrine of *Haaba (Obu)* was originally built of mud with a thatched roof, the walls rubbed and decorated with red clay, white chalk (*Nzu*) and charcoal. Different designs were painted such as snakes, tortoise, cows, gourds and a well-designed lady. Today, the shrine is reconstructed with blocks and cement and roofed with zinc sheets.

The compound of *Haaba* shrine is vast with various sections. Significant features found in her shrine are The Shrine '*Okwu*' which is a mound-like structure covered with feathers and the blood of sacrificed animals. From the heap of feathers and the quantity of local white chalk, one can infer that the shrine has been in existence for a long period. Under the roof are the skulls and bones of animals such as cows and goats sacrificed and eaten in the shrine. In front of the '*Okwu*', one can see the '*Ofo*' also covered with blood and feathers. '*Odu*' (Ivory) can also be seen hanging over the temple and signifies her title as '*Iyom*'. It explains why the deity is known as '*nwanyi gba odu*'. '*Odu*' and '*Aka*' are seen as a symbol of women in Agulu; while *Obejiri* is a kind of machete sword kept in the shrine. The sword is enclosed in a red sheath and is referred to as '*mma oji eje ogu*' – her war sword. There is a dane gun (*egbe* - a type of flintlock) in the shrine, and this signifies that she is a warrior. All these materials are not to be used or touched by anybody.

Plate 9a&b: Replica of *Haaba* and the *Obu Haaba Mmiri*

They are kept there to show her might in battle. Palm fronds (*omu nkwu*) are kept in the shrine to show its sacredness and blessing.

Sacrificial animals must be tied with a palm frond before any sacrificial activity or rite. If this is not done before killing a sacrificial animal, the priest must not take part nor partake in the eating. He will either throw it entirely into the *Okwu* or give it to some other persons in the shrine. Empty bottles of beer and wine can be seen heaped on one side of the shrine as well as used to decorate the frontage of the '*Obu Haaba mmiri*'. People brought these bottles of beer and wine either for thanksgiving or request. A basket—'*Ukpa*' is used to carry sacrificial items down to the shrine. *Nwa obene Haaba* is used for carrying wine over to the shrine on ceremonial days.

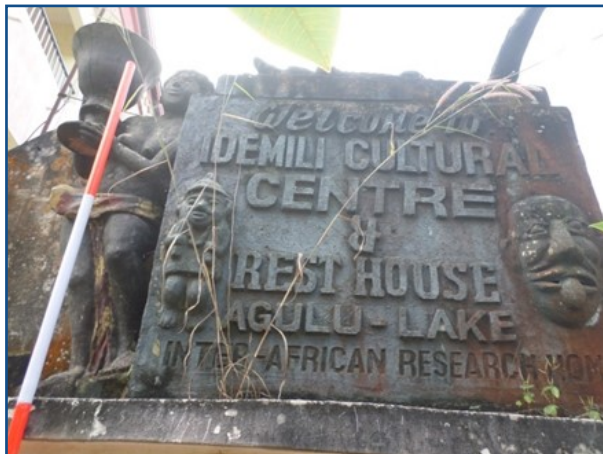
The statues of '*Ifo*' *Haaba* or '*Nkwu Mmuo*' are of different sizes. They are carved out of wood in her honour by carvers from Isiamigbo and Ama-Ezike villages in Agulu. Most of her statues are carved with wood and in rare cases, moulded with clay. This is contrary to what is obtained in places like Benin where bronze and terracotta are used to mould shrine symbols and signs. The high priest in each village keeps some of these statues. Some others are kept in the store, i.e. the inner apartment of the shrine and are only brought out on rare occasions.

Other objects of worship that can be seen are the clay pots (*ite*) and bowls (*oku*) of different sizes, with different motifs and techniques of decoration. Others include objects of worship such as '*Nzu*' (native chalk),

small earthenware objects, e.g. bowls, '*mpata*' (a kind of seat used by the priests), wooden mortar (like a plate) used to serve food to the deity. '*Okpenshi*' (a statue-like object) made of *Ogilisi* plant, and pieces of kola nut. The breaking of kola nuts is the first thing in the shrine before any sacrifice, request, or offering is carried out. *Haaba* has a forest grove dedicated to her. According to Ngwu (1985) in the general physiognomy of shrine, it is rare to find a shrine without a forest attached. These forests are revered and kept sacred just as the shrine itself. Plants found in this area are mainly climbing plants with small trees, shrubs and herbs, '*Utu*' and '*Icheku*'. Animals found in the shrine are tortoise, python, Iguana, Lizard, grasshoppers and other creeping animals. Found within its water are fish, alligators, crocodiles and turtles. Fishing is forbidden within *Haaba* lake.

There are two feasts held in honour of *Haaba* yearly. The *Mmii Haaba* and the *Ogbugba Haaba*. The former is held in March to mark the beginning of the farming season. This feast is performed to solicit protection and good health throughout the farming season and in expectation of bountiful harvest. Though dance troupes feature during this feast, it does not attract as big a crowd and congregation as the *Ogbugba Haaba*. *Ogbugba Haaba* is also held annually between November and December. In the past, this feast demanded the mass return of all Agulu indigenes. The date for the feast is fixed by the '*Umu Okwodu*' (*Haaba* priest). There is much eating, drinking, singing, drumming and dancing. This attracts people from far and near, both adherents and non-adherents alike. On the feast day proper, women sweep



Plate 10: Cross Section of *Idemili* Cultural Centre Entrance Post

the shrine early in the morning and prepare delicacies. The feasts begins in the midday, to give time for visitors from far places to arrive. The men-folk provide the wine, music and masquerades. The women dress in their traditional attire, tie '*Obi akwa*' with '*Jigida*' beads around their waists and '*aka*' beads around their necks. Those of them that have title, wear '*Odu*' (Ivory). Some of them wear rope on their ankle (which signifies the *Ozo* title of their husband) during the festival.

*Haaba* deity ensures that the people live in peace and harmony with each other, and serves as a medium for settling disputes. The deity also grants favour to people such as wealth, health and freedom. People also go to *Haaba* shrine to take binding oaths and oaths of the covenant.

### *Idemili* Cultural Centre and Rest House

This is a cultural centre and a rest house located Southwest of Umuowelle village, beside Agulu Lake. The cultural centre is located over three plots of land dedicated to *Idemili* goddess inhabiting Agulu Lake. The centre is adorned with impressive religious figurines and artworks representing both traditional religion and Christianity (Plate 10). Due to the sacredness and sanctity of the area, three chapels were constructed to accommodate traditionalists, Christians, and Muslims. Thus, no matter the religious denomination that an individual belongs to, the person will still find spiritual fulfilment when visiting the temple. The rest house (a two-storey building) offers free bed accommodation to visitors that come to pray in the chapel. Therefore, *Idemili* cultural centre is a conglomeration of all religious sects (Plate 11), drawing powers from the Supreme Being (God) and his messengers (gods).

Plate 11: Different Sacrificial Spots Near the Lake



The chief priest of the cultural centre demonstrates his spiritual powers by calling out and assembling the crocodiles of the Lake which are believed to be the 'children' of the *Idemili* goddess. This shows the enormous powers derived from the *Idemili* goddess. Informants explained that spiritual leaders including priests/pastors, diviners, chief priests of various deities and traditional medicine men (*Dibias*) frequently consult the water goddess (*Idemili*) for powers to perform miracles, cure infirmities and for wealth creation and success in their various fields of endeavour. This necessitated the erection of structures representing the three major belief systems in Nigeria. Thus, in the cultural centre, there is a mosque, chapel and shrine for admirers and adherers of these religious beliefs. Structural symbols representing these faiths are also found in the centre (see plates 10 & 11).

### Discussion

Our presentation of results from our ethnographic research offers insights into the tourism potential of the faith-based activities and religious sites in Anaocha LGA. Further in-depth study of the religious tourism potentials in the area will provide more insight into the culture and religious activities of the people, that could be harnessed for tourism development. One condition is necessary for such an accomplishment which is the interaction with, and cooperation of the local people. Tala and Padurean (2008) noted that the local people are one of the key stakeholders in developing religious tourism in any destination site and should be involved in the planning process. Authors have also observed

that the support and goodwill of the local people are seen as a pre-requisite for the development of any tourism (Ap and Crompton, 1998; Javier, 2016; Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004). Thus, there is need for awareness creation to sensitise the local people of Anaocha about the potential of these religious sites and practices for religious tourism development.

These tangible and intangible heritage resources that serve as cultural attractions, which also have religious importance, provides an opportunity for local people to revamp their social and spiritual solidarity. For instance, Jawabreh (2017) noted that in Jordan, the presence of shrines and holy places has motivated various researchers and believers to visit the country, whether motivated purely by religion or in part. This has led to a wide acceptance that religion has a key role to play in tourism development if planned correctly through the involvement of key stakeholders. The ability to empower and sensitise the local people on the importance of these faith-based activities and religious sites will translate to their sustainability, which is essential for religious tourism development (Asi *et al.*, 2015). Since millions of people travel annually to sacred sites around the world, in search of spiritual fulfilment, specific interest tourism will continue to grow and religious tourism is one area that should be explored.

Since ancient times, people have travelled for religiously motivated reasons (Durán-Sánchez, Álvarez-García, Río-Rama and Oliveira, 2018). However, Tala and Padurean (2008) averred that in the beginning,

**Table 1: Statistics of Tourists Arrival at Shrines and Sacred Attractions in the Study Area from January to December 2016**

Months	Ududonka and Haaba Shrine	Atoogwu Shrine	Idemili Cultural Centre	Ogwugwu Okpoku
January	81	20	36	19
February	96	17	56	14
March	48	32	42	10
April	39	19	20	12
May	27	10	24	19
June	19	12	16	18
July	28	14	20	18
August	6	7	8	7
September	52	11	30	16
October	10	14	20	20
November	19	14	60	13
December	101	19	94	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>1441</b>

**Source:** The statistical data were populated from the pledge booklet at Shrines while other data were from visitor notebook and oral information.

**Table 2: Statistics of Tourists Arrivals at Worship Centres from January to December 2017**

Months	Ududonka and Haaba Shrine	Atoogwu Shrine	Idemili Cultural Centre	Ogwugwu Okpoku
January	65	3	8	17
February	55	0	7	6
March	60	2	40	31
April	20	6	60	10
May	8	0	0	0
June	0	0	0	1
July	0	0	0	0
August	4	0	3	2
September	0	0	0	0
October	70	8	0	0
November	79	10	24	6
December	100	44	54	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>86</b>
Grand Total:				1088
<b>Source:</b> The statistical data were populated from the pledge booklet at Shrines while some data were gotten from visitor notebook and oral information.				

religious leaders did not accept the union between religion and tourism because, from an economic point of view, they failed to admit that pilgrims were tourists. That said, both tourists and pilgrims need to eat, sleep and travel; which are all elements of tourism. Hence, it becomes imperative to develop these religious sites in Anaocha LGA for religious tourism development.

If properly harnessed, the religious sites identified in our study area demonstrate opportunities for providing a multiplier effect in areas of job creation, revenue generation, socio-cultural integration and poverty alleviation. These benefits could be achieved on the recommendation that some of these religious sites be improved by providing tourism infrastructure and superstructure for religious tourism development. While tourism development in this area is still at a pre-development phase, specific interest tourism such as religious tourism is a viable strategy for economic development and a means to diversify the present Nigerian mono-oil economy. We present a statistical representation of these religious sites to aid our discussion.

### **Statistical Analysis of Tourism Potential in Anaocha LGA: Tangible Tourism Potential**

Table One illustrates the number of visitors to religious centres in Anaocha LGA from January to December 2016. this shows that Ududonka and Haaba sacred grove and shrine in Agulu received 526 tourists, Atoogwu shrine in Ichida 189 tourists, *Idemili* cultural centre in Agulu 426 tourists and *Ogwugwu Okpoku* in

Ichida 194 tourists respectively; bringing the total to 1441 tourists. Thus, Ududonka and Haaba sacred grove and shrine in Agulu received the highest number of tourists. This is because of its essential religious services such as its ability to administer quicker justice for its adherents and admirers, protection for believers and also highlights the popularity of the site beyond the immediate environs. Table Two shows a significant decline in the number of tourists that visited the worship centres in 2017. From the table Ududonka and Haaba Sacred Shrine in Agulu received 461 tourists, Atoogwu Shrine in Ichida received 73 tourists, Idemili Cultural Centre in Agulu received 196 tourists and *Ogwugwu Okpoku* in Ichida received 86 tourists respectively making a total of 1088 tourists.

This decline in the number of tourist visits from 1441 in 2016 to 1088 in 2017 is attributed to a lack of awareness resulting from improper promotional strategies in marketing the potential of the sites. Inadequate funding by the local government tourism committee and lack of tourism infrastructure contributed to a decline in the number of tourists in the study area. However, we argue here that a truly successful visitor destination is one that is concerned more with visitor quality than quantity. The quality visitor is the one that is most likely to repeat the visit and to respect the visited environment– natural, cultural and human-made. For a quality visitor, the attractions need to be repositioned for sustainable tourism development through the provision of adequate tourism facilities, good access, pleasant environment/atmosphere as well as achievable tourism policies.



## **Harnessing the Potential of Faith-based Activities for Religious Tourism Development and Promotion in Anaocha L.G.A**

Before embarking on any developmental project, there is a need for impact assessment of the proposed project on the environment. Therefore, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should be the first step to be carried out. EIA is an approach used to identify the critical attributes of the natural environment and natural system of a region (Baurly and Lawson, 1998). The objective is to identify in advance, factors that may affect the ability to proceed with a desired development or be affected by the proposed activity. The results can then influence the decision whether or not to proceed; the choice of design and phasing and identify the need to mitigate unwanted effects.

Environmental impact assessment is aimed at predicting the consequences of proposed projects on the environment (both natural and human created) in order to allow an informed decision on project design and implementation. The assessment helps to identify alternative means of livelihood, which these attractions would provide for the local area. For instance, the lake near the cultural centre is a source of water for the host community. The same thing also goes to the groves and the trees around the shrines. Therefore, to harness these religious activities for tourism, the following elements must be adequately addressed if development of the religious tourism fabric is to proceed:

### ***1) Accessibility***

All the roads leading to these religious / tourist attractions should be graded and tarred to make them accessible to visitors. An easily accessible area is usually more attractive to visitors. In other words, areas that can be visited by road with relative ease and comfort are likely to attract more tourists than the remote area. For 'erosion sites,' they should be reinforced and the road should also be graded, tarred and maintained to avoid further damage.

### ***2) Communication***

Communication is another important factor in tourism development and promotion. Tourists will want to visit an area where they can communicate with their families or workplaces without difficulties. This can be achieved by providing G.S.M (Global System of Mobile Communication) networks and internet services at these sites. There should be adequate water

supply, electricity, health care and education centres for the workers, children, and other religious centres for both Christians and Muslims. These infrastructures should be installed to benefit tourists and local people.

### ***3) Publicity***

Aggressive advertisement has played a prominent role in various business circles today (Ashipa, 2002). The general public and most importantly the contiguous states need to be made aware of the importance of these attractions. These religious / tourist attractions can also be publicised through literature that will be updated yearly, indicating popular attractions and prices. This can be done with the aid of billboards that will be placed at every local government council in Anambra State, or through radio jingles and television. It is noted that the development of tourist attractions is something that a local government can do alone. Though, they still have their role to play, the development should involve the state government, private sector, NGO's (Non-Government Organizations), and the community members. For tourism activity to succeed, the tourist, the businesses providing tourist goods and services, the government of Anambra state and the host communities must all have a positive attitude towards the industry. Without this attitude, development and promotion of tourism will be hampered (Falade, 2001).

### ***4) Role of Government***

Tourism cannot thrive without necessary infrastructure and facilities, such as good roads, clean water, constant electricity supply, communications, safety and security systems. The provision of these essential social facilities is the responsibility of government. The government should also create a conducive investment climate / incentive. The government should enact laws and regulations that will govern the activities of the categories of people involved to ensure that their conduct is not detrimental to the objectives of the industry and the security of the host community, as well as tourists.

### ***5) Role of Host Communities***

The local people are important for the location and identification of tourism potential in their areas. They should also serve as local police and tourist guides. Their main role is to maintain and preserve these attractions. As aptly argued by Eze-Uzomaka (2006), any programme of tourism which does not actively involve the members of the community is bound to fail. This author further explained that for tourism to be

successful, it must affect the local population both cost-effectively as well as culturally. Cultural configuration of the community can also form a kind of attraction for the tourists. Due to the fact that we live in a global village and a world of interdependence, one can say that the public-private sector partnership is a vital / indispensable component of sustainable religious tourism development.

### Conclusion

The people of Anaocha are highly religious. Despite the advent of Christianity, traditional religion is still practised by some people. The people believe in one Supreme God known by various names such as *Chineke* (God), *Chukwu* (the big god) and *Chukwu Okike* (the creator). There are also minor gods and spirits in parts of the district, like *Idemili*, *Haaba*, and *Ududonka* deities in Agulu town; *Atoogwe*, *Eke-ngwu*, and *Ogwugwu Okpoku* deities in Ichida town and *Eke*, *Uku* and *Nkwo* deities in Adazi-Ani town. Closely tied with the peoples' belief systems are festival observations. Festivals in Anaocha LGA are occasions set apart by communities or groups of individuals for the commemoration of significant events in the life of the community or individuals. Thus, a journey across Anaocha LGA yields a vibrant and rewarding insight into Igbo life.

It still remains to be seen, how and when these cultural values and practices, which have religious elements, can be harnessed for religious tourism development. While tourism is still at a pre-development stage, these faith-based activities and religious sites should be preserved appropriately as a matter of urgency, to safeguard them from decay and deterioration, as well as the effects of modernisation. The various stakeholders should actively get involved in harnessed these resources for religious tourism, to tap into the global wave that is sweeping across the world and make Anaocha LGA a religious destination just as Mecca, Israel and Saudi Arabia. This way, Anaocha would become a renowned destination for religious tourists both within and outside Nigeria.

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