

# **HARNESSING CULTURAL RESOURCES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN DONGA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, TARABA STATE, NIGERIA**

By

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## ***Abstract***

*Donga Local Government Area holds vast tourism potentials. It is rich in traditional, historical and highly diversified cultural heritage, which embodied their traditions, religion and belief systems, festivals and ceremonies. The capacity of these symbolic representations of people's values, identity, and heritage to earn the people of Donga Local Government Area substantial revenue is not in doubt. However, the inability to harness these cultural heritages and transform them into tourism assets has been a major concern. This research work is an attempt at harnessing the cultural resources for tourism development in Donga Local Government Area, Taraba State. Tools for data gathering, using purposive sampling technique were used to elicit information from the respondents. Research findings revealed quite a number of cultural and heritage sites in Donga Local Government Area. The study is calling on more researches to be carried out in order to enhance the potential of cultural heritage for tourism development. The study recommended the identification and documentation of various cultural and heritage sites for tourism development and promotion. Also, it suggested laudable and implementable efforts from the government, private sector operators and host communities.*

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**Keywords:** Cultural resources, Tourism, Development, Donga, Taraba state.

## ***Introduction***

Tourism has a vital role in development of different destinations all around the world. Accordingly, culture is assumed as one of the primary beneficiaries and is regarded as a key asset in tourism development by promoting both tangible (i.e., cultural attractions, like museums and heritage centres, natural assets like beach, sun and mountain) and intangible i.e., promoting cultural events and festivals. However, the diversity of known definitions and a complex relationship between culture and tourism underlines the problem of defining cultural tourism. For instance, considering culture as a component in every single aspect of human life, it is possible to assume that everything is cultural, therefore all tourism is somehow cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism may be explained as the very nature of travelling in order to understand and become familiar with way of life and history of a specific location accompanied by a range of cultural factors which can be presented in the context of tourism, these factors may include the food, entertainment, architecture, drink, hand crafted and manufactured products or every element representing characteristics of way of life in a particular destination.

In view of the crucial role of the cultural sector in Nigeria's overall developmental scheme, proper harnessing and management of her cultural resources for tourism should be given adequate attention.

Economic opportunities created by culture through tourism has assumed greater prominence and importance, as economies transition from the industrial model, and work based on physical labor, to a new model in which knowledge and creativity drive productivity and growth.

Taraba state, particularly Donga town in Donga Local Government Area has a rich and varied cultural

heritage with huge potential to facilitate and promote tourism, social cohesion and sustainable development.

Recognizing the importance of cultural tourism in the national economy, this research is an attempt to investigate how the cultural resources and heritage of Donga, in Donga Local Government Area of Taraba State can be harnessed for the promotion of tourism.

#### ***Statement of the Problem***

Donga town has rich cultural tourism attractions. It is endowed with numerous natural, cultural and historic resources. These resources have received little or no attention from both the Taraba State and Donga Local Governments; including the local communities.

This study would emphasize mainly on cultural and heritage resources and how they could be harnessed to promote sustainable tourism development in Donga, as there is no previous studies conducted in this area of Donga rich cultural heritage.

It is important to stress here that the various cultural heritage and resources that abound in Donga for the promotion of tourism has not received adequate attention.

Since cultural resources are very important component of any given society, their proper preservation and development for tourism will not only help in sustaining the ecosystem, natural and cultural environment but will also serve as a means of generating foreign exchange for the host community. It must be stressed that one of the major attributes of cultural and natural materials that pull tourist to given sites is where the cultural heritage resources are located.

These factors and others prompted the researcher to study how cultural heritage resources in Donga can aid in sustainable tourism development when properly protected and adequately harnessed.

#### ***Aim and Objectives of the Study***

The aim of this study is to discuss the relevance of harnessing the cultural resources for tourism development in Donga town, Taraba State.

#### ***Objectives of the Study***

1. To examine the cultural heritage resources in Donga
2. To examine the potential contributions of the cultural heritage resources to tourism development in Donga.
3. To examine the challenges affecting the development of the identified cultural heritage resources.

#### ***Significance of the Study***

This study will generate data/information on the various cultural and natural heritage sites that will promote tourism in Donga LGA.

The study will be useful to various stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality and tourism industry.

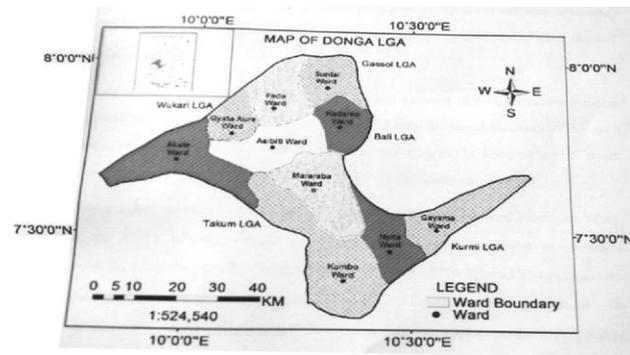
The study will also be a rich resource material for researchers and students of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

#### ***The Study Area***

Donga is a commercial centre, which attracts people from many parts of neighboring local government of the state like Takum, Wukari, Bali, Gassol. Not only that, it is also centre for administrative activities. Donga is well connected to the other part of the state with good transportation networks. These networks also give room for interstate trading in hide and skin especially fish business from River Donga.

The inhabitants of the local government are Chamba, Ichen and Kpazon, other ethnic groups are Hausa, Tiv, and others. These people are predominantly engaged in farming and some commercial activities.

Donga as a local government area has ten (10) political wards, which include; Asibity ward, Akete ward, Fada ward, Gyataure ward, Gayma ward, Kumbo Ward, Kadarko ward, Mararaba ward, Nyita ward and Suntai ward. The Map below shows the different wards that make up the Local Government.



*Map of Donga Local Government*

**Source: Ministry of land and survey, Taraba State. (2019)**

Donga town is a local government area in Taraba State; it was founded in 1830 by Nubunga Dozinga. It is situated in the southeast part of Taraba state; is bordered to the north by Bali, from the east, by Kurmi local government area and to the west by Wukari Local Government Area.

Donga's climate is classified as tropical. In winter, there is much less rainfall than in summer. According to Köppen and Geiger, this climate is classified as Aw. The average annual temperature in Donga is 27.1 °C. Precipitation here averages 1270 mm.

The Chamba people of Donga has very rich cultural heritage, which is reflected, in the people's way of life. This is vividly expressed in the colourful dances during their various cultural evident in all aspect of Jamaican present unique culture.

The research work on heritage tourism in Black River Jamaica also revealed that the promotion of heritage tourism ensures that important historic and cultural locations are preserved and protected.

The study examined the legal framework of developing Jamaica heritage resources to heritage tourism, declaring a site a national monument and designating a site protected national heritage.

Baily explained that the Jamaican Government instituted certain policies and laws to ensure that important historical and cultural location are protected. This explains the importance of cultural heritage resources as the raw material for cultural tourism development. Preservation of cultural heritage resources should be one of the government policies in Taraba State and Donga Town to be precise. Destruction or tampering with the cultural heritage resources alters the authentic nature of the resources and affects development of cultural tourism negatively.

#### *Research Method*

The Data for this research was obtained from two major sources: Primary and Secondary sources. The primary data sources include questionnaire administration, oral interview and direct field observation, while Secondary data for the study was obtained from already existing documented sources on heritage tourism in Donga LGA, such as pamphlets, news reports e.g. newspaper and magazines on cultural tourism in Donga LGA.

The study population comprises some title holders of Donga traditional council and officers of some cultural department in Donga LGA.

In this research the study was done by using purposive sampling to select some title holders under Donga traditional council and highly placed individual with historical proof, who had the opportunity of interacting

with elders on the issue at hand in their early life.

Field work documentary report and interview are the data collection instrument for the research.

**Presentation of findings Cultural heritage resources**

HERITAGE RESOURCES	LOCATION
Shrine	Gbaniyah located in Shinku, Nyakukaa located in Gartatiya, Nne Soo located in Jahu, Ndokuu located in Samunaka, Kawira located in Kapye
River	East of Donga
Grove	West Bank of the Donga by Gartatiya
Festival	Purma Festival
Blacksmith centre	Akete, AngwarSarki, Angwar Jahu
Lake	Suntai Road
Monument (Wall)	North of Donga town
Hill / Tree	North east of Donga town

The table above shows that heritage sites and resources are clustered into shrine, river, grove, festival, blacksmith centre, lake, monument and hill; with the following percentage 31.25%, 6.25%, 12.5%, 6.25%, 18.75%, 6.25% and 12.5% respectively.

**Classification of Heritage Resources based on origin**

NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Grove	2	12.5%
Hill	2	12.5%
River	1	6.25%
Lake	1	6.25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>37.5%</b>
CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Shrine	5	31.24%
Monument	1	6.25%
Blacksmith Centre	3	18.75%
Festival	1	6.25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>62.5%</b>

*Source: Author's Field Survey 2021*

**Classification of the heritage resources into major sub-sections, namely natural and cultural features.**

The research result revealed that the Purma Festival, the Donga City wall are seen here as cultural resources because of the associative values they have within the Chamba community. The information from the in-depth and key informant interview show that that Kaki Kwargi Hills as well as the Donga River and its Lake is of natural origin while Purma Festival site as well as the regalia, spears, drums and other instruments of war and the shrines where they are kept were of cultural origin.

*Donga City Wall*

The Donga City wall has been an integral part of the history of the Chamba people of Donga.

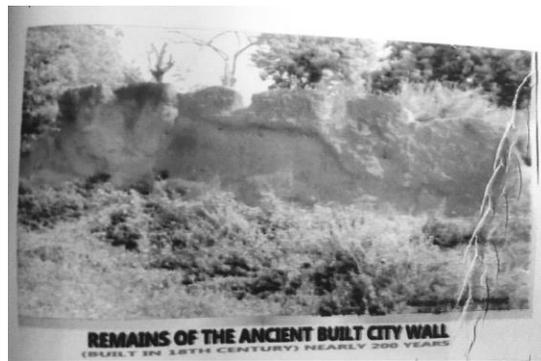
It was built in 1902 to ward off invaders and protect the community from attacks from other tribes as well

as constant foray by wild animals like Lion, Leopard, and Tigers that devour both human beings and domestic animals.

According to Ghana Donga who is the Chairman of Donga Kingmakers, Chief adviser to Gara Donga, His Royal Highness Dr. Danjuma Banyonga, the paramount ruler of Donga. He is also our guide and informant. He said that the city wall is very significant to the Chamba people of Donga, both physically and spiritually. It was built during the internecine wars as a defense against their adversaries and also against wild animals that devour both human beings and domestic animals.

It has eight (8) gates both as entry and exists; all gallantly maned and guarded by well-trained warriors. The remains of the city walls can be architecturally preserved and maintain as monument sites as tourist attraction and ultimately spur up local economy through handcrafts and souvenirs. The wall was built during the reign of Garkiye I and at the time, the city was called Donzomga, which was later shortened to Donga. At inception, the wall was 1.5 miles square but over the years, it has been left to deteriorate to its present relic.

However, it holds a lot of cultural significance to the chamba people of Donga and need to be preserved as a tourist site.



**Plate 1: The Relics of over 117 years old Donga City Wall**

#### *The Kaki Wargi Sacred Hills*

The KAKI WARGI Hills is a heritage site that is located along Suntai Road that lies in the Eastern flank of Donga Town. It is a mountain (hill-range) which is extended from the south towards Bantaje and Tutare town; set in a beautiful scenery. It has a waterfall and its vegetation is composed of a flattop shrubs and assorted species of flora and fauna, which give it a remarkable sight. There are also cluster of trees and forest around the hill range that contain many wild lives which are currently being hunted. Kaki Wargi Hills can be conserved and maintained as a heritage site for tourist attraction.

**Plate 2: Kaki Kwargi Hills**



### **Donga Boaba Tree**

There is also an ancient Boaba Tree located in Donga Town that is over 200 years old. Its historical significance and the rich history behind it and the spiritual and emotional attachment the Chmaba people of Donga has can also serve as a tourist attraction.



**Plate 3: The Ancient Boaba Tree that is over 200 Years old(Taraba State 2019)**

### ***River Donga***

River Donga, which has its Source at the Mambilla Plateau, is a fast flowing river that empties its waters into River Benue. It is 8000 meters long and between 250-400 meter wide. It flows throughout the year round regardless whether it is raining or dry season. It also has an ox- bowed lake that housed various species of fish and aquatic life. These can be developed to incorporate an annual or seasonal fishing festival that can attract visitors and tourists



*Plate 4: River Donga and Vegetation Purma Festival*

Purma Festival is an important cultural event in the cultural, social and spiritual lives of Chamba people of Donga. It's a time that is set aside, every decade to celebrate essence of the existences of the Chamba people, to mark their successes, harvest, triumph and victory over their enemies. It is also celebrated to assert their supremacy. They have fought so many battles to establish themselves during the course of their migration.

The Purma Festival is a time the Chamba people rehearse and showcase their legendary dexterity in warfare. It arrays its finest warrior's regalia in the Chamba traditional battle outfit with youths and women chanting war song and eulogizing the feats and celebrates various milestones in the history of their people. It also a time to keep relive the scared traditional rites and offer of sacrifices to the gods for their blessings and protection.

It is on records that the 7<sup>th</sup> Gara Muhammadu Bitemya Sambo Garbosa II kept records and dates of when Purma were celebrated as stated in Figure below.

PURMA ARCHIVES	
Recorded Purma celebratory Festivals in Donga by Their Gara (Kings)	
Gara Wangi II	— Celebrated Purma (1) Once
Gara Nyaga B. Garbasa II	— Celebrated Purma (3) Thrice
Gara Bitemya Sambo Garbosa II	— Celebrated Purma (6) Six times
Gara Danjuma Banyonga Garbosa III	- [redacted] in December 12th, 1936
	- 1938
	- 1942
	- 1944
	- 1947
	- 1956 Confirm
	Celebrated Mini Purma - April 2012
	International Purma - [redacted]

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1. M. S. Garbosa II - Diary	
2. History and Socio-political setting of the Chamba people by C. K. Meek	Published 1950 page 349
3. Labaran Chamba da Al-amuransu by M. S. Garbosa II	

**Plate 5: Shows the chronology of the PURMA Festival in Donga (Taraba State 2019)**

It is usually celebrated with great funfare and the seriousness the Donga people attached to it. Sons and daughters of Donga from far and near come home during this great event.

*The Potential Contribution of Heritage Resources*

The contributions of the heritage sites identified are social, economic as well as political. The findings revealed that grove, the sacred shrines and the blacksmith centres have great potentials for cultural tourism development. They provide the community a source of delight and wonder, which help to

preserve the culture of the people from generation to generation.

It also instills a sense of pride to the Donga people.

In terms of economic development, the blacksmith becomes a source of income for the blacksmiths in the community. Their contribution in olden days serves as a source of procuring their weapons of war for their defence, which made the community self-sufficient in defence.

The blacksmiths produce spears, knives, cutlasses, cooking pots and pans which are sold to their neighbors as well. Many young people are also employed and trained as blacksmiths, particularly. This serves as a source of employment.

The Purma festival also affords the community the opportunity to come together to discuss the development of the community in terms of self-help by providing the community with boreholes, assist in the procurement of farm implements and support schools through provision of text books, as well as building of classrooms.

The history of the various communities where the identified heritage resources are located and can be traced to the resources or are embodied in the heritage resources. This can help in satisfying the curiosity of a potential cultural tourist.

The identified heritage resources in Donga Town and adjoining communities have the potential of accommodating the numerous wishes of stakeholders, the various expectations of different tourist groups, to meet the needs of owners and serve on occasion as attraction "icons for the state government in national and international marketing strategies if properly developed. They also have the potentials of pulling tourists, meeting the needs of local residents and developing stronger tourism activities within the destination.

The findings from hard and soft data collected from the field survey and from observation heritage resources in the study area like Kaki wargi Sacred Hill, City Wall, the shrines, the Baobab Tree, the Blacksmith Centres; as well as the grove and the Donga River Forest are grouped as heritage attraction because they are capable of giving cultural tourists a good tourism experience of clear understanding of how others live and how they do things and also provide opportunities for new experience.

Other resources like the Donga River and its Lake as well as the Purma annual Festival are grouped as live entertainment because they can provide recreational experience to the potential tourists. This finding collaborates and complements the work of Cook *et al.*, (2006).

### *Conclusion*

This research studies how cultural and heritage resources can aid in sustainable tourism development in Donga Local Government Area. It provided a framework on how heritage resources located in Donga Local Government Area and its environs can be identified, properly documented; and the various ways the resources can be classified. The result of the study revealed that identified cultural/heritage resources in Donga have great tourism potentials and need to be harnessed and developed.

On the basis of the above findings, it is pertinent to make the following recommendations; Proper documentation of the heritage resources in Donga should be done by the various stakeholders in the tourism industry

There should be a comprehensive brochure and catalogues of the heritage resources in the state and the communities where they are located.

The community needs to take the initiative at the local level to invest in tourism by building hotels and resorts centres, especially by Donga Lake to attract local tourists

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