

From mystification to ‘cultural openness’: gearing local communities for ‘tangible and intangible’ rural tourism development among the Bwatiye, North-eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

Since the pre-colonial era, cultural heritages in many rural communities in Nigeria have been shrouded in a lot of mystifications. These deny such activities of necessary exposures that enhance the development of rural tourism. It also became a major hindrance to the participation of local communities in sustainable tourism development. The Bwatiye peoples of Adamawa North-eastern Nigeria are examples of rural communities that are havens for the cultural heritage of great tourist attractions. But community participation which seeks to promote a ‘bottom-up’ rather than ‘top-down’ approach to rural tourism have become difficult tasks, making people-centred development unachievable due to the over mystification of cultural heritage activities. The study investigates the role of ‘cultural openness’ in the transformation of rural communities to achieve tangible and intangible results, focussing on the growing importance of socio-economic advancement in cultural heritage tourism. Cultural heritages are the hallmarks of rural communities and these have positioned them as powerful stakeholders in tourism development for tangible and intangible benefits. The paper draws case studies from two twin wrestling festivals, *Vunon* (*Farai*) and *Kwete* (*Lamurde*) in Demsa and Lamurde Local Government Areas of Adamawa State, Nigeria. What participatory roles and management frameworks can enhance the involvement of local communities in rural tourism in Nigeria? The paper concludes that demystification and openness of cultural



heritage may prove an effective way for gearing local community participation in rural tourism to enhance socio-cultural and economic development.

Keywords: wrestling festival, mystification, cultural openness, Vunon, Kwete, community participation, tangible and intangible benefits.

1 Introduction

Cultural heritage tourism is gradually becoming a powerful way of attracting both local and international tourists the World over. Tourists now want to go and interact with local communities to experience their ways of life and material cultural products. This has made rural communities powerful stakeholders in the planning and development of sustainable tourism, leading to the emergence of such concepts as “pro-poor tourism, fair trade tourism and community-based tourism” [1] to demonstrate a shift from government and industry control to community control of tourism. As local communities are custodians of their cultural heritage, they are in a strategic position to lead cultural heritage rural tourism development and hence becoming ‘controllers’ of the ‘new’ tourism development [1]. But as efforts are being geared towards the new tourism development which emphasizes ‘bottom-up’ rather than ‘top-down’ approach to rural tourism, cultural heritages among the Bwatiye communities of North-eastern Nigeria are shrouded in a lot of mysteries which block the necessary exposures of cultural activities that enhance the development of rural community tourism. This has become one of the major hindrances to participation of local communities in sustainable rural tourism development in Bwatiye enclaves. However, over the past two decades events were unfolding in the form of and cultural openness, where cultural activities which were hitherto mystified were being demystified.

This paper examines the role of demystification and ‘cultural openness’ in the transformation of rural communities in the bid to achieve tangible and intangible benefits in terms of socio-economic advancement in cultural heritage tourism. The paper draws case studies from two twin wrestling festivals, *Vunon (Farai)* and *Kwete (Lamurde)* of the Bwatiye communities in Demsa and Lamurde Local Government areas of Adamawa State, North-eastern Nigeria. The central theme of the paper is to demonstrate that cultural bearers and heritage sites as found in the local enclaves are capable of attracting local and international tourists with cultural openness as opposed to the traditional mystification of cultural activities. The questions are: how can cultural openness serve as an effective tool for enhancing the participatory role of local communities in rural tourism in Nigeria? Put in another way, can cultural demystification and openness prove an effective way for gearing local community participation in rural tourism that would enhance their socio-cultural and economic development? How can we relate the phenomenon of cultural openness to the increasing importance of wrestling festivals among the Bwatiye communities, and especially the *Vunon* and *Kwete* festivals as multipliers of tangible and intangible benefits of rural tourism development? The main proposition in this study is that cultural openness and de-mystification can largely be explored as a powerful tool for

attracting as a tool for attracting tourists to cultural heritage sites and as a major propeller of rural tourism development among rural communities based on the principle of co-management.

2 Materials and methods

The study is in line with qualitative research which examines sustainable cultural heritage management sites as a tool for rural tourism development. Theoretically, therefore, the study reflects on the post-modernist and neo-populist theories that recognize “that locals are not at all passive participants in tourism, but can instead be positive change agents” [1]. The methodology is explanatory and case study approach is chosen and applied to two popular annual wrestling festivals out of the over 30 other cultural heritage festivals that abound in Bwatiye enclaves in Adamawa State North-eastern Nigeria. With the advent and penetration of Christianity among the Bwatiye rural communities, cultural openness and demystification begun to set in leading to the growth of powerful tourism destinations where local communities begin to accept near and distant visitors. The study attempts to assess the extent to which such cultural openness can be transformed into the notion of corporate responsibility that would affect the human dimension, especially in the area of local community development. The choice of qualitative, explanatory and case study methodology is anchored on desk study combined with unstructured interviews, participant observation and historical analysis as grounded in the peoples’ history and traditions.

3 Socio-economic set up of the Bwatiye

Historically the Bwatiye claimed to have migrated first from Baghdad through Egypt, Sudan, and Chad to Sokoto, North-west Nigeria, before further migrating to their present locations in Nigeria and parts of Cameroon, probably between the 15th and 18th centuries [2]. Prior to the Fulani Jihad and the British colonial conquest, the Bwatiye kings had ruled over large territories in the present day Adamawa and Taraba states as well as the Garwa Region of Cameroon [3]. It is historically noted that “the Bwatiye authority was a huge empire which lie roughly in an area that today run from Numan to Garwa and from Song to Vere Hills in a circle round modern Yola” [4]. In the 18th and 19th centuries they established pre-colonial states which “were more numerous and each was independent, politically and spiritually” [4]. Today the Bwatiye are a heterogeneous group of communities that occupy the upper Benue valley from the areas north of Garwa in the Cameroons to the east, up to a settlement called *Bang* in the present day Numan Local Government area of Adamawa State in the west. They can also be found in the plains north of the Benue from Song in the west to *Holma* in the East in Adamawa State. The groups are generally divided into three, the *jirai* or hill people, the *Batta* and the *Bachama*.

The plains or hill people occupy the plains and hills north of the Benue and found settlements such *Nzumo*, *Malabu*, *Kofa*, *Holma*, *Bolki*, *Song*, *Muleng*, *Murke*, etc. The second group occupy the regions around the Benue and Faro

valleys north of *Demsa-pwa* in the Republic of Cameroon, to *Demsa-Mosu* in Nigeria. This group is traditionally referred to as the *Batta*. The third group is known as the *Bachama* who occupy the Benue plains from *Kangling* to east to *Bang* in the west. All these three groups speak various dialects of Bwatiye Language. According Phillips Stevens (Jr.), their language belongs to the Chadic branch of the Afro-Asiatic family [5]. The first and second groups are known as the Eastern Bwatiye (*Batta*), while the third group are the Western Bwatiye. The case studies of this paper are located in the Western Bwatiye land.

The weather situation in the Western Bwatiye land is similar to what obtains in most parts of Adamawa state of North-eastern Nigeria. The wet or rainy season begins from April and ends in October, when precipitation nears zero while the humidity of the riverine areas drops from 95 percent in September to less than 30 percent in February. In September, daily temperature increases from 86°F to a mean of 105°F in April. However, between November and February daily temperature can drop as low as 55°F in the night during the harmattan period.

The main occupation of the people are farming, fishing and hunting. The Benue and its tributaries provide valleys, lakes, swamps and ponds for farming and fishing grounds, while the tall guinea savannah grass vegetation serve as good haven for a variety of game for hunting. However, hunting as part-time occupation has become almost extinct due to overgrazing and desert encroachment. Three main socio-cultural activities of tourist attractions are practiced among all Bwatiye communities. They are the wrestling, hunting and fishing festivals. All these festivals are tied to the peoples' traditional ways of life, cultural heritage and as well shrouded in a lot of mystifications. While the hunting and fishing festivals have over the decades been on the decline, the wrestling festivals have continued to wax stronger with cultural openness and demystifications, thus paving ways for new types of socio-cultural life.

4 Wrestling festivals

Wrestling festivals among the Bwatiye communities are some of the socio-cultural activities of the people which were retained as a cultural heritage since time immemorial. Each community organize a number of them each year leading to a 'confederal' *grand finale* which takes place in the small village of *Farai* known as the *Vunon Festival*. *Vunon* marks the beginning of the farming season. Wrestling festivals in Bwatiyeland are known with different names in different communities. The most popular of such names is the *vayato*. Other names include *kwete*, *poto*, *kwapodye*, *ggdulwulto*, etc, and in fact all wrestling festivals are a form of *vayato*. Others take different names simply because the types of rituals that take place in them are more or less greater or lesser than *vayato*. All wrestling festivals have agricultural rituals as a common affinity with the *Kufe* or *vayato* as symbols of the cults and serious agricultural and religious motives underlying them [6]. *Vunon* and *Kwete* are the most popular of these wrestling festivals; hence our two case studies.



The wrestling aspects of these festivals are also derived from a common history found in Bwatiye folklores in which a one-legged wrestler (*Nzu-kudi-hidong*) came from the east and kept challenging every village to a wrestling bout promising a ram and a *kufe* to anyone who defeated him. All villages in which wrestling festivals takes place claimed victory over the one-legged wrestler hence the commemoration of the original event. The origin of the wrestling festivals as rooted in the story of the one-legged wrestler in Bwatiye history and folklores still remain uncertain. According to Demean Bitrus Dati: The wrestling festivals were thus a rain cult with a possibility of Kanakuru origin although by the end of 19th century that tribe no longer had anything closely similar to it. Because of the belief in the potency of the cult, especially in its supposed ability to secure rain, it came to be incorporated into the Bwatiye corpus of religious activities and to spread in a society that was basically agricultural. Thus, the historical development of the wrestling festivals among the Bwatiye could be traced to socio-economic factors [6].

4.1 Vunon wrestling festival

Our first case study is the Vunon wrestling festival. Vunon is the most important and the last of all in the annual cycle of festivals which marks the beginning of rainy/farming season rites. The festival is the greatest, longest, most attended and truly confederal festival of the year that draws attendance from Bwatiye and Mbula communities far and near. Although many activities including wrestling take place during the festival, the central theme has do with the paying of homage to the ancestors, thanking them for the previous harvests and seeking rainfall in the ensuring season for eventual bountiful harvest. The festival is named after the Nzeazo's mother, Vunon, the most revered of all Bwatiye gods/goddesses [7]. According Bwatiye beliefs, the festival is organized to mark the second burial (*folshe*) of Vunon during which she is honoured and commemorated. The festival is held at the end of April or end of March. The activities marking lasts for ten days but the last three days are the most active. The days preceded by the festival are marked by some rituals and networks of visits by priests to both Bwatiye and Mbula lands to disseminate information on the festival and to collect materials for use during the festival. The last trip is that of the Chief Priest (*Kusahome*). The number of days for the festival is counted following the return of the Chief Priest from his trip.

The first activity after the return from the priest is called *Ni-Kpe* (Calabash Inspection), while the second day activity is the Calabash Polishing (*Hokou-Kpe*). The third day activity is the *Rik-Kpe* ('darkening' or decoration of the calabashes). On this day the Queen of Fare (*Mbamtu Fare*) inspects the polished and decorated calabashes to ensure that the work is done to the satisfaction of the rituals to be carried out with the calabashes during the festival. On the fourth day the Fare community dig the water well (*Pusa-gwe*) in the outskirt of the village to be sure that there would enough water for beer making and for guests to drink during the festival. The final announcement of the festival is done on the 6th and 7th days when the *Kusahome* and *Mbamto*, respectively, visit the nearest paramount ruler, *Hama Batta*, to inform him of the final preparation for the

festival. Both *Kusahome* and *Mbamto* return from *Hama Batta* with the traditional attires to be won during the festival.

4.1.1 *Ngurto*

The 8th day which is the beginning of the festival proper is called *Ngurto*. *Ngurto* means “ascending” or “climbing” which simply describes the first day activities which take place at the hilly shrine house or bush house (*Hodyi-kake*) also known as *Hafure* (‘the place of plenty’) east of the village. *Hodi-kake* is situated in a grove of an elevated area, so going to the shrine house is like climbing a hill.

Three major activities take place in the shrine house – ritual ‘farming’, wrestling/wrestling dancing and women spirit dancing (*bwe-pule*). The ritual farming or hoeing depicts the symbolic tilling of Nzeazo’s farm by *Kusehomye* and the youths. The ceremonial farming begins with a corresponding slow steps of the farming to quick beats and steps moving northwards towards the village to about 70-80 metres from the shrine. At the end of the farming, a proverbial ritual of breaking of the hoe takes place where the farmers form a tight impregnable small circle within which the hoe is quickly broken and the mound raised up where the wooden pieces of the hoe is buried. The braking of the hoe indicates the seriousness and vigour with which Nzeazo’s farm was tilted.

The second activity at *Ngurto* is the wrestling and wrestling dance at *Goto*, the wrestling arena. At *Gotoi* in front of the shrine several dances including those of the various *kusehomye*, *Mbamto* and other liturgies before a switch to the wrestling tune for wrestling dance and wrestling to begin. All wrestling bouts are preceded by wrestling dance and every three consecutive throws from any one side in the wrestling competition would attract at one round of celebration wrestling dance. One of the most attracting dances at *Ngurto* is the women spirit dancers (*Jibwe-pule*) also known as the ‘horses of Nzeazo’ (*douye-da-Nzeanzo*). They dress bare to their waist in different colours of *patari* marching up and down singing songs of praise to *Nzeanzo*. The central theme of their songs over dramatizes *Nzeazo*’s contest with death and how he will finally win over death when human beings will no longer die. Demean Dati recorded an English translation of the ‘horses of *Nzeazo*’s sons in the following words:

Nzeazo says, let horses in plenty be assembled on morrow, that he may mount them and drive away death. For death shall be put to flight and no longer shall he deplete the land. Nzeazo is like a father of a son. A father permits no one to chastise his offspring and Nzeazo will not permit death to chastise mankind. Aforetime death was among us but a thing will happen and men shall no longer die [6].

Thus, *Jibwepule* are a set of women worshippers who sing worship and praise songs in honor of *Vunon* the late mother of *Nzeanzo*. The women adorn themselves with colorful attire and regalia of veritable wax, lace materials, asofoke and george clothing. The women also wear pleated skirts and beaded necklaces. During their worship and praise sessions, they carry in their right hands staff adorned with colorful materials that look fanciful. Only the spiritually filled and ordained by the priest carry the staff. Their positions and ranks are noticed on the number of colorful materials tied on the staff they carry.

Whenever there is conflict in *Wodikake* (the shrine house) the moment *Jibwepule* come into the scene, the matter is resolved silently and everybody disperses. *Jibwepule* represent the peace makers and security agents during the festival. They are believed to be soothsayers.

4.1.2 *Vunon-tu-hodye*

Vuno-tu-hodye simply means ‘*Vunon* at home’. The activities at the shrine or bush house are rounded up at about 2–3 pm with all the dancers and the spectators receding to the village to conclude the different activities of the day. Against the sad and mourning mood of the activities at *hodi-kake* (bush house), the activities of the second and third days of the festival are carried out with a lot of gay, joy and fanfare in the village. A traditional market featuring decorated calabashes, pots, seeds, farm and hunting implements, assorted drinks, etc. is held in the market square of the village right from the first day of the festival till the third and final day. *Vunon-ti-hodye* mainly features marketing and picnics, main wrestling for two days, dances from different communities and speeches by the priests. In the speeches many appellations were recited for *Nzeazo* who is esteemed above other gods.

At the village square near the home shrine house (*Shafe*), the Chief Priest (*Kusahome*) welcomes the dancers and leads them to where the paramount rulers (*Hama Bachama* and *Hama Batta*) and elders are seated. Here the young men will take over with their dance steps to entertain the gathering with wrestling while the drummers beat the drums. *Nzobyalato* (the Spokesman) will then address the audience to mark the end of the day’s activities, but dancers and all other fanfare continues till dawn, while other side attractions like picnic, marketing of various products and wares and purchases continue in different stands.

4.2 Kwete wrestling festival

Kwete is another wrestling festival of the Bwatiye communities which is held annually at Lamurde late February or early March. Like *Vunon* the festival assumed tourist significance in recent years since seceding kings of Bachama adopted strategies of cultural revival based on the principles openness to revitalize cultural activities in the kingdom. The festival is also the last in the annual cycle after all ‘shrines are closed’ (*gbo-kwa-vonye*) [6]. It is another form of *vayato* though organized in a grand style. *Kwete* literally means ‘hold your peer and hold him strongly’ (*kurnduwang kwitan*), traditionally shortened as *kwete* [7]. Unlike *Vunon* too the activities in *Kwete* are limited to Bachama Kingdom whose traditional headquarters is Lamurde.

The formal announcement comes from *Ndewodi-Tika* one of the topmost title holders of the Bachama kingdom. Preliminary rituals are carried out by *Kabe* (Kingmakers’ clans) and *Nzomye* (ruling clans) to be followed by successive rituals by people from Rigangun, Waduku and Mbemun, *jikake* and *Kpe-lagbe* of Gyawana. The preparatory works of all participating villages examined and approved by *Nzohubo* before presenting Hama Bachama for formal announce of the date of the festival. *Kwete* is the most esteemed festival of Hama Bachama



(the King) and so many gifts are brought to preparatory for the festival including that of a 'slave' either from Gyawana or Mbemun.

The main activities in Kweteh are wrestling and various dances for three days. The major dances are the wrestling dance (*wesobore*), the Queen's dance (*wuro-mbamy*) led by *Ndewody-Mbamy* (Queens' Guard), *Nzohubo's* dance and finally the King's dance. The festival is rounded up with successive speeches by prominent title holders from *Nzopwato*, *Ndewodi-Gosobon*, *Ndwamwata-Bulle*, *Kpana-Rigangun* and finally the state of the nation's address by *Hama Bachama*. Like *Vunon* Kweteh is also an agricultural right, as the subject of the speeches are mostly thanksgiving ceremonies in which the gods are eulogized for providing good harvests, good health and other blessings of the land as well as solicitation for rain for the coming season. Unlike, *Vunon* too, which transnational and confederal, *Kweteh* is a strictly Bachama Kingdom affair in terms of its traditional set up. Moreover, the organization of the festival has been highly modernized to the extent that its tourism attraction in terms pulling of local, national and international tourists has made the festival a leading one not only in Bwatiye land but Adamawa State and Nigeria in general.



Figure 1: The two paramount rulers at Kwete 2013.

5 Cultural mystification

Mystification surrounds all Bwatiye pantheons. This has to do with the deification of their cultural activities and ways of life. Prominent among which is the deification of the most High God who is regarded as the creator and the source of all spiritual power but inaccessible to the people directly [5]. There are other gods or spirits (*pule*) which are directly accessible to people. Phillips Stevens (Jr.), rightly pointed out that directly accessible to people are the *pule* which include: *pule kake*, nature spirits; *pule bware*, ancestors; and the *pule kpankpanye*, the major deities. These latter are deified cultural heroes who lived earthly lives in the times of the beginnings. Many of them played important

roles in the migrations and settlements of the people, and were the originators of certain customs and the founders of certain institutions [5].

In this respect the Bwatiye distinguish between two bodies of oral tradition. The first is the *gbamito* (*gbamiye*, plural) which are folktales which deal with the times of the beginning and *pule kpankpanye* often feature in them. *Gbamiye* are public property, with defined limits of time of presentation from village to village and settlement to settlement, and their main function is for entertainment.

The second is the *dyemshi vrato*, 'songs of the world' [5], which are myths about the origins of the world and Bwatiye customs and traditions. *Dyemshi vrato* are true accounts of the founding of the society and the lives and deeds of the founders. They constitute the sacred history of the people and their recitations and activities associated with their recitation are strictly controlled. This has enforced strong elements of mystification in Bwatiye cultural activities. Thus, all cultural activities related Bwatiye wrestling festivals are traditionally shrouded in mystification, exclusion and restriction. This has to do the history derived one-legged wrestler, *Nzu-kudtii-hidong*, and the way and manner every community tells their success story over him.

At both Vunon and Kwete wrestling festivals the rites related to *Nzu-kuditi-hidong* are highly mystified such that the citations of *deyemshi vrato* are traditionally recited silently not to the hearing of the audience in the arenas. In Vunon the rites at *ngurto/wodi-kake* are highly mystified to the extent that most spectators hardly make meanings. In fact, the village of Fare, the festival town was traditionally mystified that in the past nobody was allowed to build a modern zinc house close to Fare let alone near the festival area. The control of rites and activities is carried out strictly by the traditionalists and all outside interference was strongly resisted. Unlike Vunon, Kwete is the festival of *Hama Bachama* (the King) and so most rites and activities are carried out in his honour. The royal dance and the *mbamye* dance as led by *Ndewodi-mbamye* and other modes of dances and processions must be done to the King's pleasure [7]. (*Ndewodi-mbamye* who must come from a particular clan in Lamurde, is the king's housekeeper and chief custodian of the palace queens; traditionally he had to be castrated to be trusted with such a huge responsibility.) For example, the *dore* dance (*wuro dore*) from Gyawana enters the wrestling arena and quickly dance round the arena; the first five dancers carry *kufe* or *vayato* (iron spear), while the remaining dancers dance with swords (a form of *wuro sunga*, sword dance) and actual wrestlers follow in a form of march pass. As the swords dancers dance pass *rhuto* (the traditional stool where the King is seated), they return the swords into the sword shield in a form of salutation.

6 'Cultural openness' for tangible and intangible benefits

Cultural openness is a philosophical position by which the decision-making process recognizing the communal management of cultural activities by distributed stakeholders rather than centralized authority. Cultural openness is also "considered as a specific type of communication infrastructure which reduced the existence of subjective distance" [8]. In terms of tradition it is linked



to the establishment of expanded participation in cultural activities. As a purely interpersonal term, it fosters an atmosphere of acceptance of those who are not traditionally linked with certain cultural activities. Cultural openness if aloud to penetrate all activities associated with cultural heritage can transformation of rural communities to achieve tangible and intangible benefits. Vunon and Kwete wrestling festivals thus provide good case studies.

Over the past two decades, the elites have shown interest in mobilizing the rural communities for tangible and intangible benefits. The small village of Fare has been electrified and connected to the national grid, and the activities especially at *Wodyi-kake* (the shrine house) have been modernized in such a way that spectators could attend and watch the events with their clothes on; hitherto spectators attend *wodyi-kake* half naked. A lot of modern buildings also sprang up in Fare village as a result of the cultural openness. In the past the construction of zinc houses were prohibited in Fare. With cultural openness the extended festival arena where cultural market take place has been filled with modern buildings making Fare one of the fastest growing ward in Demsa local Government Area.

Vunon market which was hitherto meant for exchange of mainly local seeds and artefacts has now grown to a big trade fair ground, where various companies come to showcase their products. Tourists both from far and near not only come for picnics but also come to exhibit their products and make purchases. Pavilions were annually set up entrance gates were constructed and gate fees of about one dollar per car were collected by the local community to enhance the organization of the festival. With cultural openness Vunon has thus emerged as market tourism where marketing of products has taken precedence over cultural activities.

In the case of Kwete of Lamurde, demystification and cultural openness have widened the festival to assume the status of cultural revivalism. In this respect cultural practices that were becoming extinct as a result of the influence of western culture were being revived. The monolithic character of Kwete, being the sole prerogative of the Hama Bachama has placed the festival at an advantage over Vunon festival despite the wider and more geographical extensity of the later. Since the 1990s Kwete was being organized under the centralized authority of the Hama Bachama.

As other rituals mentioned earlier are being organized preparatory to the festival, the Hama Bachama sets up a Main Organizing Committee (MOC) which oversees the planning and execution of the festival. The Committee holds a press conference and places radio and television announcement to sensitize the general public about the festival and the needs and necessity for cultural revival. In the new spirit of cultural revival and cultural openness, cultural activities not related to wrestling were included in the organization. Among the new openings are organizing a Nigeria-wide scrabble competition, traditional archery (*nzasoto*), *fukude* (boys' games), *fwakato* (girls' games), *sudato* (traditional stone grain grinding) and traditional singing and dancing competitions. Bwatiye Women Association also organizes cultural exhibitions to showcase different aspects of womanhood among the Bwatiye communities. They display a pro-



type traditional home of Bwatiye and display traditional food and prepared dishes. The grand finale of Kwete festival is the wrestling contests among the youths after which the state of the community's addresses are delivered by various title holders in succession and rounded up by the Hama Bachama. Several contingents were then awarded consolation prices and honoraria. Consolation prices cover cars, bulls and plows, water pumping machines for irrigation and cash. In all consolation prices and honoraria that rural participants take home annually sum up to more than one million US dollars. With this type of situation evidences of evidences tangible benefits manifest clearly on the rural communities. These are infrastructure, pipe borne water, medical services, promoting the development of leisure facilities such as sports complex, entertainment facilities, cultural heritage sites to mention but a few.

7 Conclusion

The exposition in this paper promotes the thesis that demystification and cultural openness could be of greater advantage to rural communities in terms of planning and management of cultural activities. Despite the new emphasis on "pro-poor" approach and co-management, rural communities are themselves helpless except properly mobilized and guided. In the process of mobilizing and guiding the rural communities, there seems to be elements of power play among the stakeholders, particularly between the rural communities and the elites. From the two case studies, the rural communities that embrace cultural openness and accept co-management appear to gain more tangible and intangible benefits. Kwete seems to be more open than Vunon: Vunon, for example, seems to be more closed than Vunon despite the fact that the latter attracts larger number of tourist attraction than the former. Vunon takes place in the village of Farai located on a major highway between Numan and Yola the state capital. Participation in Vunon and organization of the festival is more confederal but the Farai community continue to insist on some level of mystification and cultural closeness.

Two factors inform this development. First, power play sets in as the rural community becomes suspicious of the elites as they consider the elites as trying to straddle between them and their cultural activities to reap the benefits at their utter disadvantage. To this end they insist more on some level of cultural mystification than openness. This limits elite involvement and denies the rural community of the tangible and intangible benefits that follow cultural openness. The second is that lack of centralized political authority over cultural activities. Centralized authority plays a very important role in the mobilization of rural communities and gears them to be prone to cultural openness than over-mystification. Vunon has no centralized authority over cultural activities that take place in Farai and so the local community holds on to their cultural mystification and closeness and this limits elite involvement in cultural activities. Thus, the less elite's involvement in cultural activities, the less openness and the less benefits rural communities can derive. This explains why much of the elite involvement in Vunon is limited to marketing, picnics and involvement in



unwanted immoral activities as against morality that the traditional virtues of *bwaraune* teach.

The above factors affect our first case study (Vunon) more than Kwete. The organization of Kwete which has a central authority in Hama Bachama seems to exhibit commonality between the rural communities and the elites and so the degree of demystification and openness and hence tangible and intangible benefits to the rural communities are higher than Vunon. That is why the of resources being expended in planning and organization of Kwete and whose direct benefits go to the rural communities, far supersedes that of Vunon despite the fact that the latter is the foremost festival and enjoys higher attendance than the latter. To enhance the viability of Vunon as a cultural festival, all stakeholders must re-strategize to open a comprehensive new chapter for its planning, organization and management based on demystification and cultural openness.

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