

# EXPLORING THE TOURISM POTENTIALS OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF NUPE COMMUNITIES IN CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Tourism has been identified as one of the major socio-economic activity in the world. The importance of tourism has also seen it being promoted as a key driver for socio-economic progress of nations. Albeit cultural landscapes are uniquely constituted and thus they offer the premise for tourism attraction. The Nupe cultural landscape has been found to have rich cultural heritage, but with limited exposure to the global community the tourism potentials. More also is that tourism destinations are not limited to physical landscape but also includes the social transactions of the people who inhabit such environment. Markedly, the Nupe communities in central Nigeria are characterised with varying landscapes which includes riverine as well as the upland settlement. However, little studies exist on the cultural landscape transactions of the Nupe communities. More also is that tourism potentials of communities are enhanced through the understanding of how indigenous communities perceived their landscape. As such this research embarked upon a qualitative documentation of cultural landscape values of some selected Nupe communities in Central Nigeria which include Bida, Kutigi, Nupeko and Patigi local government in Niger and Kwara States respectively. This involved participants observations as well as the conduct of interviews on resident of selected riverine and upland Nupe communities. In the exploratory study, elicitation of data laid emphasis on both built and unbuilt features of the cultural landscapes which were perceived as valuable to the residents. The finding showcases a plethora of cultural landscape values of Nupe communities with inherent tourism potentials.

Key words: Cultural landscape, Heritage, Nupe, Space, Tourism

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## INTRODUCTION

Cultural landscape is about people's interactions with nature that surrounds them and in such transactions cultural values which are uniquely characterized are constituted (Muhammad 2017; Stephenson, 2010). As such cultural landscapes do hold the memories of long relationship of human and environment. This relationship does communicate the continuity of human evolution associated with natural environment. It therefore suggests that the physical character of the environment and how people interact with nature becomes an important tourism resource with inherent benefits in the development of any nation's economy. (Okhiria, Adebayo, & Usdame 2014). As such cultural heritage and biodiversity has become an increase phenomenon for the tourist attraction to destinations (Cobbinah, et-al, 2017; Khoshtaria & Chachava, 2017). The need for economy diversification and transformation has led government of various nations to key into the tourism sector as a valuable instrument for alternative development process. (Honey and Gilpin 2009). More also, tourism has been recognized as one of the key feature of major socio-economic activities in the world. The world tourism organisation (WTO) buttressed tourism as a key driver for social, and economic progress of the world. However, there is a wide gap between the tourism potentials and actual performance as most of the tourism resources are still left untapped. (King 2002). One of such untapped tourism resources is cultural landscape tourism especially in developing countries such as Nigeria.

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Culture and tourism have a unique and beneficial relationship which can increase the importance and attractiveness of region and other countries at large. (Franklin, 2015). Culture is an important key factor for tourism development which also manifest into a distinct global market place (Chidozie, 2014). By and large, tourism provide an important means of achieving cultural value, heritage and creativity leaving a strong relationship between tourism and culture, with an added value to various tourist's destination.

Nigeria is physically vast with abundant landmark of about 932.768 sqm with a total coastline of 853km and human demographic population of over 160million as at year 2006 census. This is a future which develop Nigeria as one of the most social and rich in cultural diversity in Africa having over 250 major and minor ethnic groups among which the major languages are Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, and other minor ones notably Fulani, Kanuri, Tiv, Edo, Ibibio Igala, Ebira, and Nupe and many others (Adedayo, Oyun, & Kadeba, 2010). These by implication implying that hundreds of cultures with individual unique characteristics (Bankole, 2013). As such it behoves that the tourism potentials of these cultural landscapes are studied especially the minority ethnic group such as the Nupes located in central Nigeria

This research therefore, purposively explored the rich cultural tourism potentials created by cultural landscape transactions of some selected riverine and upland communities of Nupe Kingdom in central Nigeria. More also is that the Nupe people have been identified with rich cultural landscape values but without much documentations of the tangible tourism potentials of the cultural landscapes (Muhammad & Said, 2015). More also is that the mapping of the cultural landscape tourism potentials will attract tourists to the area and create more job opportunities to indigenous people.

## **Culture Heritage and Tourism**

Cultural landscape is a manifestation of a collective wane of nature and manmade ideologies that showcase the transformation of human and its environment with an association of environmental advantages and social constrains concerned by the natural sources (UNESCO, 2012). Cultural landscape is about the physical characteristics of the environment and the collection of objects which constituted the appearances of the environment (Olayiwola, Ajala, & Sangodipe, 2014). While heritage in relation to tourism can be categorized as either cultural heritage or natural heritage. Heritage may be understood as a form of history, ideologies or belief customs and values, art and music and even the standard of living of a societal setup. While that of natural heritage can be traced to mean a landscape of a place in which people find themselves. Heritage can also refer to as instrument in determining the economic cultural or social value, which stands to be the concept that makes heritage an interpretation of history, (Gunery, 2008). This shows that heritage is a vehicle of thought in which people's beliefs translated into physical form and can be enjoyed by others.

As such, in cultural landscape tourism, man becomes the key player and central point of tourism activities, as such the unique transactions of each culture with their landscape become an avenue for enjoyment by others. In Nigeria, tourism sector has been neglected, until in recent times, and still, the development and the studies are still in its infant stage (Tunde, 2012). Several efforts by the government have been in piecemeal, hence, the need for documentation of cultural landscape more especially, that of the minority ethnic groups such as the Nupes in central Nigeria.

Cultural heritage is an integral elements of unique cultural tourism destination which consolidate the cultural values of that make those features and the immediate environment on historic and valuable place for tourism (Vanice, 2000). The establishment of cultural tourism is a vital tool which amend at consolidating the relationship between culture and tourism thereby improving the socio-economic value of a cultural setup. (Shismonova, 2006). Modern tourism development has a limitless challenge but only required some basic tourism features and infrastructures like scene instruction, placing weather, accessibility and even accommodation to facilitate the process and the character of stay. Most of these features are products of a cultural landscape and heritage of a place. It means that tourism in reciprocation should serve as a promotion and preservation of culture and historical elements. (Kraster, 2005). It therefore means that, a carefully located tourism destination with a good managerial policy within a settlement characterized with varying cultural landscape increases the value of the tourism activities.

## **Study Area and methodology**

The study area includes the famous Nupe communities with rich and historical lyrics and trace of tangible and intangible cultural factors, this communities cut across Niger, Kwara and Kogi state as shown in Figure 1.0. While the method adopted for the study dwells more on descriptive survey and written documents, personal observation and participation alongside with in depth interview with district head of various settlement and communities was carried out within the selected Nupe communities. Data's were collected based on the research question and interview guide administered orally, data collected were in Nupe language through mobile voice recorder, a digital photo camera was also used to capture some relevant images, the data were carefully translated to English language, and the photographs of the unique features were used to explain some of the tangible cultural landscape.

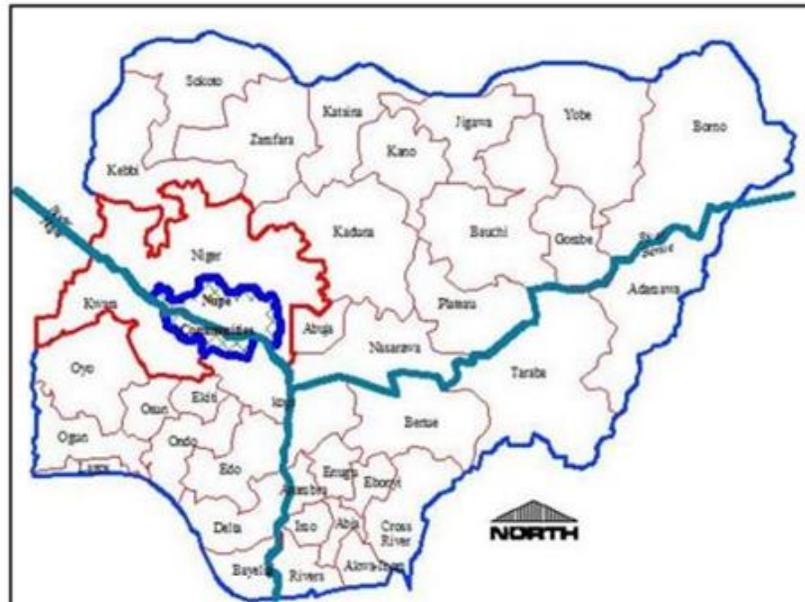


Figure 1.0: The Nupe Settlement Within Niger Kwara and Kogi state In Central Nigeria. Source: Muhammad 2017.

### The Nupe Settlement

The Nupe and their settlement are regarded to have been in existence since the early 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century with a define and unique cultural characteristics. (Sarki 2010). The communities are in the central part of Nigeria notably along the lower basin of River Niger and Kaduna (Muhammad 2017, Nadel, 1969). The Nupes settle in large villages called (*Ezhi*) and a small settlement known as (*Kangi*) the settlement pattern of Nupe communities are characterized with cluster compounds consisting of members and series of un-walled compound, (*Gwalazhi*) entrance halls (*Katamba*) forming a home stead (*Emi*). The collection of houses (*Emizhi*) to form a ward or (*Efu*) as in the case of big settlement the wards are separated by stretches of open spaces, land or farms which come together to form a village, the collection of two or more neighbouring village is known as (*Ekkah*) (Muhammad 2017).

### The study communities

The study communities include the famous ancient nupe towns with unique cultural landscape and heritage, this include Bida, kutigi, Nupeko, in Niger state and Patigi emirate in Kwara state. Bida is the capital of nupe kingdom rich of cultural and historical monuments, art and craft tourism centres as shown in table 2, such as *Masaga* brass factory, *Tswatamukun* aluminium craft centre and *Dokodza* blacksmithing and warfare manufacturing centre, Nupeko is the first founding place of nupe settlement, Kutigi the capital of Lavun Local Government, with rich and unique culture inherited from Sudan (*Ganni kutigi*). and Patigi the second resettled home of Nupe settlement in Kwara State after the Fulani jihad, with tourism potential at the confluence of River Niger and Kaduna and famous Regatta festival which always brings the surrounding Nupe communities together.



Figure 1.: The Remain of Town Fence Wall Source: Authors Field Work 2017.



Figure 2.: The Antient City Gate (Ebban) At Bida Source : Authors Field Work 2017.

**Table 1. The Historical Site in Nupe Community as Tourism Potential**

S/ No	Historical and Tourism sites	Location	Remark
1.	Massaga Brass and Glass Melting Centre	Bida town	Partially developed
2.	Twata Mukun Alluminium Craft Centre	Bida town	Partially and locally developed
3.	The Ancient City Gate and Remain Of Massive Town Fence	Bida town	Existing but gradually eroding

4.	Dokodza Warfare and Metal Fabrication Centre	Bida, and patigi	Existing and partially developed locally
5.	The First Nupe Settlement Town	Lavun local government (Nupeko village)	Existing with rich nupe architectural tradition, materials and decorative features
6.	The Confluence of River Niger And River Kaduna	Lavun/ patigi local government in Niger and Kwara state respectively	Existing but site not developed to enhance tourism activities
7.	Various Settlement Pattern And Unique Architecture Of Upland And Riverine Communities	Bida, Lavun and Patigi local communities	Existing and partially developed through community and self-efforts

Table 1 shows the potential tourism site in Nupe communities dominated in the capital and ancient town of Nupe Kingdom (Bida). While Patigi, Kutigi and Nupeko also possesses few of the sites. The result on the table revealed that most of those tourist sites were partially developed locally through individual and community effort except that of the ancient city gate and town fence wall which is gradually eroding due to urban expansion and constant urban renewal by the government.

**Table 2. Festival and Ceremonies in Nupe Communities**

S/ No	Festivals	Location/Venue	Remark
1.	Annual fishing festival	Patigi, Nupeko, Muregi and Gbaradogi	Still holding with little or less popularity
2.	The Mega Patigi Regata Festival	Patigi	Still holding but Gradually eroding with insufficient government intervention
3.	Ganni Kutigi	Kutigi	Still holding annually without government intervention
4.	Annual Masquerade Display	Patigi, and its Environs	Still holding with no government intervention
5.	Eyazhe (The Famous and Annual Nupe day)	Rotational among famous Nupe town	Still holding annually with partial government intervention

Table 2 shows the annual festival in Nupe kingdom with Patigi having the highest festival and event as it shows most of the occurrence. Although, Bida and Kutigi are also not left behind as the Mega festival (Eyazhe and Nupe day) is on rotational basis among Bida, Patigi, Agaie and Lapai emirate. The annual Regata mega festival which also feature masquerade display and offers the exhibition of the craftworks and trades takes place at the river bank of Muregi and Gbaradogi of Niger and Kwara State respectively.

**Table 3. Trade and Activities of the Nupe people**

S/ No	Trade and Activities	Location/Venue	Remark
1.	Spinning	Bida, Kutigi, patigi and Nupeko	Can be found in the circular bedroom of old woman
2.	Dying	Kutigi, Agaie and Bida	Existing
3.	Sculpturing (Egba)	Bida, Gbako	Bida kutigi and patigi and their sub urbans
4.	Hair platting	Bida, Lapai, Kutigi	Still existing in all Nupe communities
5.	Leather and Tyranny	Bida and patigi	Found in ancient Bida and Patigi resident of the inherent professionals
6.	Straw art making (Zongu and Marufa)	Bida, Agaie, Patigi, Nupeko	In the rural settlement of Nupe community
7.	Blacksmith (Tswachi and Gbagba)	Bida, Patigi and local environs	Mostly Found mostly in Bida and other famous Nupe towns

Table 3 reveals that Nupe people are rich in trade, art and craft work, which is dominantly applicable to almost all the upland and the riverine communities, but dominant operation of this can only be appreciated among the rural communities. Although, there is still trace of the established centres in the inherent sub palaces (*katamba*) of their title holders such as *Majin Kimpa*, *Masaga Nupe*, *Gbagba*, *Sokyora Gozan*, in their respective emirate especially Bida and Patigi. The exhibition and competition among the experts do add value to the festivals and ceremonies in Nupe Kingdom as the key element of tourism attraction. All these activities add value to the festivals and ceremonies and offers people within and outside, far and near to interact with each other and global world at large.

## Architecture of Nupe Settlements

A typical Nupe community consist of many round huts built of clay (*Eggun*) and vegetable or mineral fibre called *Dongoh* (Thatch) and surrounded by a high mud wall in most cases or vegetable basket weaved pattern of vegetable *Tsara* fence. However, new building materials such as galvanised iron roofing sheet could be seen to have replaced the use of thatch in roof covering as shown in Figure 3. Nonetheless, a prominent character of the Nupe compound is that it is comprised of several blood related nucleus families living together into form a large compound. Each of these compounds are headed by the eldest male family member called *Emitso* (owner of the house). Each of these small family units are identified through several rooms facing a courtyard.



Figure 3.: A Typical Nupe compound Source: Authors Field Work 2017.

The Nupe system of buildings are characterised with round entrance hall, constructed using sun-dried mud bricks conical in shapes, mud mortar and mud plaster mostly found in the villages.

## Cultural Landscape of Nupe Community and Tourism

Nupe people's life style and cultural transactions are shaped by two prominent landscape types, the upland and the riverine. The riverine Nupes are called *Kydy* while the upland Nupes are called *Kintsozhi*.

### The Upland Nupe communities

These are Nupe settlements characterized with flat, deeps as well as hilly and mountainous landscape. They are those which are a bit far away from the river banks. The landscape type offers them (*Kintsozhi*) the opportunity of cultivating staple crops like millet, guinea corn, yam, upland rice, groundnuts, cassava and sweet potatoes. The location and landscape of these area offer *kintsozhi* the unique architectural styles which also distinguishes them from the *Kydy*. These two types of landscape characters as illustrated in Figures 4 and 5 also influences the nature of traditional occupation of the nupe people.



Figure 4. Cultural Landscape of Upland Rural Nupe Community;  
Source : Authors Field Work 2017

The upland nupe settlements are mostly found to cultivate cereals such as millet, maize, cassava and rice on the flood plains, while the *Kydy* are found to engage in fishing as a source of occupation.

## The Riverine Nupe Community Cultural Landscape

There are a lot of Nupe communities that are located along the boundaries of River Niger and River Kaduna. They include communities like *Bachita, Jebba, Ketso, Lalagi, Muregi, Egagi, Nupeko and Nku*. Similarly, *Katcha, Baro Kippo, Tsonga, Lafiyagi, Lipkata and Chewuru* are also Nupe communities whose daily transactions are linked to the riverine landscape. It is to be noted that Nupe communities cultural landscape boundary extend to include Kwara, Niger and Kogi States.



Figure 5. The Settlement and Cultural Landscape of Riverine Community- Nupeko Village Niger State

The floods in riverine Nupe communities allows for a greater emphasis on rice cultivation, fishing, and sugarcane cultivations. The large-scale cultivation of sugarcane has led to the establishment of commercial growing and raising of *Bachita* sugar company.

The seasonal floods come with its inherent challenges on the architecture of the riverine communities. However, over time the Nupes have adopted some coping strategies such as the used of wooden frames which are then covered up with mud. When the flood comes, it only washes away the mud and leaves the wall frames and the roof intact. The flood for the riverine Nupes is - that which brings riches and not as a disaster. The flood brings in rich organic soil for the cultivation of rice and sugarcane as well as fish.

### Special Art and Craft of Nupe community

After the line of the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The main form of artistic expression includes spinning, weaving, dyeing, sculpturing and hair dressing by the women, other art form includes leather and ternary works (*Kimpa*) Straw art making (*Marufa*) hair dressers (*Gozan*) black smith (*Tswachi*) and Wood Carving (*Egba*).

### Masaga Glass and Glass Beats Centre

This is also another form of art and craft representing the occupation of Nupe community, it is a famous art and craft centre where glass and glass bottles are as a raw material, are melted to form other unique art and craft products, such as male and female beats, local bangus, cooking utensils and other forms of artistic and decorative glass products; one remarkable thing that characterized the centre to be an historic one is that till date it's the only local art and craft centre situated in Bida and course to work which males use it for at any other different locations, People within and outside the country do visit the centre to appreciate the unique local technology.

### Aluminium and Brass Art and Craft Centre (Tswata Mukun)

This is one of the famous art and craft centre in the ancient town of Bida, founded since the reign of King Usman Zaki, they are made up of a circular traditional Nupe house forms that house the manufacturing process of aluminium products; it has been a tourist centre as people both far and near do visit to appreciate the process and the uniqueness of end product produced such as aluminium spoon (*Kpantoro*) brass pots, aluminium cooking utensils and other forms of decorative products as shown in Figure 6



Figure 6.: Nupe Ternary and Blacksmithing as The Major Art and Craft. Source: Authors Field Work 2017.

## Festival and Ceremonies

Ceremonial event is a key event in the social life of the Nupe People (this include wedding, naming, coronation of new chief's Islamic school graduation, church events, sallah festival, and other traditional related events. this create a greater opportunities for people living far and near, for commercial transaction such as buy and sell of farm products, art and craft products, event exhibition, cultural demonstration and celebration, and above all offers them a greater opportunity to interact socially with outside world thereby creating an avenue for cultural exhibition, this tend to attract people from other places to witness the event; this alone by extension can be traced as the origin of tourism activities in Nupe kingdom.

### Patigi Regata festivals

The Patigi regata festival is one of the Nupe famous festival that connect other minor festival and cultural display among other riverine Nupe communities. The origin of the festival can be traced back to 1953 during the reign of late Etsu Jimada of Patigi, the festival features all kind of Nupe cultural display such as Swimming, masquerade, (*Gboya*) and canoe padding competition among the Nupe communities of Kwara, Niger and KOGI. It is a colorful colorful and mega festival that brings together all other cultural affiliation to Nupe tradition. This include.

#### General Horse Riding

This is a festival that feature all the emirates of Nupe kingdom chosen from Bida, Agaie, Lapai, from the upland area and Patigi, Tsonga, Lafiagi, on the riverine communities.

#### Canoe Peddling Festival & Swimming

It is another cultural display among the settlement on the river bank such as Muregi, Ela, Likpata, Gbaradogi, Chewuru Ketsho, Lalagi and Guzzan etc. It offers the young swimmers and the old fishermen to display their talent in the form of competition there by offering prizes to the deserving communities.



Figure 7: The Regata Festival Canoe Padling And Dancing Competition  
Source: Authors Field Work 2017.

## The Masquerade Display

It's a display by the nupe masquerade (*Gboya*) which is a tall cylindrical masquerade usually decorated with textile material (Muhammad 2017). they operate and display in response to the traditional drum with movement in a curvilinear and circler motion as show in the figure below this form of cultural transaction which are found among the upland communities like, Zambufu, Lade Gbaradogi and Nuwakota.

The upland festival are the traditional event that do take place and hosted among the communities of upload settlements the notable ones among them are Ganni kutigi festival Ebiko festival in Gbako and Eyazhe in Bida local government.



Figure 8: Masquerade Display At Regata Patigi Annual Festival;  
 Source: Authors Field Work 2017.

## Ganni Kutigi Annual Festival

Ganni kutigi is an annual festival usually celebrated by the people of Kutigi and other neighboring communities usually in the third month of Islamic calendar. It is a giant festival that attract people from different part of the country usually celebrated within a time frame of three days with different events ranging from cultural drum display, traditional boxing competition among the young men, and dancing competition such as zannabi dance, Ta'aka dance, and Guguyagi masquerade of Kutigi land.



Figure 9: Zannabi Dance At Gaani Kutigi Annual Festival  
 Source: Authors Field Work 2017.

But one remarkable thing about the festival is that it does not end without the recitation of the holy quran which is the central focus of the festival. The festival was ranked to be one of the important as it serve as revenue to foster unity among them and also a means of settling dispute in the land.

## Nupe Day and Eyazhe

This usually takes place in Bida the capital of Nupe kingdom in the first month of Islamic calendar usually last for two days, the day one which is known to be fire night (*woriwo* or *nanvun*) and the second day which is the fun fare where the king and other traditional title holders comes out immerse to celebrate on horse riding (*Dubbar*).



Figure 10: Horse Riding At Nupe Day Festival (Eyazhe) At Bida. Source: Authors Field Work 2017.

People come to witness this colourful event from far and near one its quite noted that the festival is one that connect all the Nupe communities of both the riverine and the upland communities, its strong and unique affection gave rise to its modification and upgrading to become the famous Nupe day which is usually celebrated annually among all the Nupe communities in central Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

The tourism potentials of cultural landscape of Nupe communities is unique, very rich and fascinating, in both upland and riverine settlement. The cultural values and tourism potentials of the settlements (upland and riverine) are shaped by the individual landscape types. The consequence of which is seen in the social, economic and cultural activities of the indigenous Nupe people. These cultural transactions include Architectural styles, historical sites and values the communities in both tangible and intangible forms. Some of these values are portrayed in special art and craft which include spinning, dying, sculpturing and plating of hair popular among them is known as (*Shikku*) which are mostly practiced by the females. While their male counterpart engaged in leather and ternary works (*Kimpa*) straw art making (*Marufa*) hair dressing (*Gozan*) black smith (*Tswachi*) wood carving (*Egba*), farm implement and war fare tools and weapons (*Dokodza*). Similarly, the Nupes do also have festivals and ceremonies that have the potential to attract tourist, this includes masquerade dance, horse riding and wrestling. The foregoing therefore showcases the rich cultural heritage of the Nupe community in both tangible and intangible forms and thus provides an avenue for tourism. It is therefore recommended that the tourism should shift from the limited focus on tangible values such as scenic beauty to also include the promotion of the intangible values which are imbedded in the cultural landscape transaction of the people.

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