

1 Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Development: A Case Study 2 of the AvatimeAmu (Rice) Festival in Volta Region, Ghana

3 Franklin Bormann¹

4 ¹ Ho Polytechnic

5 *Received: 6 April 2015 Accepted: 2 May 2015 Published: 15 May 2015*

6

7 **Abstract**

8 This article seeks to evaluate and document the Ava time Amu (Brown Rice) Festival; one of
9 the renowned cultural and artistic festivals in the Volta Region of Ghana. An attempt to
10 bring to light the relevance of the festival towards sustainable tourism development is made.
11 African traditional festivals are relevant mostly in their aesthetic arts and African art is great
12 art, worthy of a place among the other great arts but materials on the subject are hardly
13 accessible. The work is centered on the use of descriptive survey method and written
14 documents. The Festival, as a conduit of cultural tourism showcases the rich cultural heritage
15 of the indigenes. It exhibits variety of traditional events including puberty purification rites
16 and dishes using Amu (brown rice). The artistic ingenuity and innovation of the communities
17 are displayed. It is a festival that would be well cherished by tourists because it creates an
18 avenue to display African culture and art. Christianity seems to have had a negative influence
19 on the rich cultural value of this Festival. It is concluded that relevance of the Amu Festival is
20 in the display of African aesthetics, the showcasing of the rich and dynamic African culture for
21 the correction of societal ills and sustainable development.

22

23 **Index terms**— amu, festival, rice culture, tourism, sustainable.

24 **1 Introduction**

25 Among the various types of tourism in Ghana, cultural tourism is the largest in the tourism industry. Festivals
26 of all kinds, an offshoot of cultural tourism are celebrated within the ethnic communities. If "sustainable"
27 means to acquire plenteous in the present generation that would give room for plenteous for the future without
28 compromising them, then the Amu (brown rice) Festival, the festival of the people of Ava time Traditional State
29 stand to bean area which would be harnessed to shed off its old look in order to serve as a sustainable means
30 of development in Ghana. The Amu festival, fully supported by stakeholders, would stand as a major driving
31 force behind economic advancement in Ghana. It would foster job creation, stimulate economic diversification
32 and boost foreign exchange earnings ??IPU, 1999). What is Amu? How is it celebrated, what is its relevance to
33 cultural tourism and sustainable development?

34 The paper examines the role of Amu festival as a mechanism for sustainable development in Ghana.

35 **2 II.**

36 **3 Methods of Research**

37 The method of this study dwells on descriptive survey and written documents. Ali (1996) posits descriptive
38 survey as events as they are without manipulation of what is being observed. The study (Personal observation &
39 participation alongside random in-depth interviews with visitors and residents alike) was carried out at Vane the
40 traditional capital of the Ava time Area in Ho West District, Volta Region. This community is noted for hosting

5 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

41 the festival in the Ava time traditional State. Sequel to this, data was sourced from key/official personalities
42 in the community including the Ok usie (chief) of Vane, the chief fetish priest and the senior linguist of the
43 traditional area purposively. Data were collected based on the research questions administered orally. Data
44 collected were in the siya & Ewe language through tape recorder which were carefully, translate din to English
45 language. Relevant scenes during the festivity were captured digitally.

4 III.

5 Result and Discussion

48 Results of the findings are in a descriptive format below: a) Amu festival: History and Concept According to
49 ethnographical sources Amu festival (Amu fest) is celebrated in lieu of the agricultural activities forming the
50 major economic activity of the Ava time Traditional Area with Amu (brown rice) cultivated as a staple. The
51 people migrated centuries ago from ancient Ahanta a locality in present day Western Region of Ghana to Oxuloso
52 a site in present day Ava time, the last stoppage and initial settlement of the "Kedorne" as a group. It is believed
53 that it is from this site that the cultivation of Amu (brown rice) the only crop seed carried and preserved in
54 containers called 'cupim' or 'lugo' from ancient Ahanta begun. It is the peculiarity of this Amu (brown rice)
55 to Ava time that gave rise to its Festival. The crop serves is a staple one and portrays their true that they
56 spread out in the area first as families which have grown into seven communities each with a different name:
57 Amedzofe, Gbadzeme, Vane, Dzogbefeme, Biakpa, Fume and Dzokpe. The festival aims at fortifying the kinship
58 /ancestral links between them. Itemphasizes the commonality of the rice culture as a heritage and identity. The
59 festival is mainly associated with farming / rice farming with farmers as the major celebrants. They are the brain
60 behind sustenance of the rice cultivation culture since it is celebrated to mark the harvesting of the staple. Not
61 only farmers celebrate, artisans, traders and scholars also celebrate. It is jointly celebrated every year through
62 the week leading to, and on the first weekend in the month of November by the seven communities with the
63 aim to collectively take stock, development-wise. In the contemporary time, the quest for tourism boom has
64 enhanced renowned festivals such as the Fetu Afakye of Cape Coast and Homowocultural festivals to modify
65 to international standard. Amu Festival (Amufest) is another rich common heritage and agricultural festival
66 that has international quality which needs to be retouched by stakeholders due to tourism activities. Amufest,
67 instead of celebrating to appease the god of fertility (Ayamapor) for successful rice cultivation in the past, is
68 now celebrated for sustainable development activities. The change is to incorporate people of all persuasions
69 to suit with modernity. The world today is not static; hence 'Kedorne' cultural festival is also no longer static.
70 "The fastest way to destroy tradition is to leave it unchanged" ??Awedoba 2001:19) Before the planting season,
71 the fetish priest's orbunetee must perform certain traditional rites and formally announce the beginning of the
72 sowing season. The priest of Ayamapor and Gadzo receive the signal from the priest from Dopome-Amedzofe who
73 is regarded as the custodian of the land. He watches the movement of the stars and the moon and announces to
74 the priests when the new moon appears in June or the middle of the year.

75 When the new moon is sighted, the priest pour libation with fresh palm wine at the shrines to announce the
76 imposition of silence and ban drumming, felling of trees and shouting in the land for four weeks. When asked
77 how residents react to their orders this is what the Ayamapor priest has to say: These days because of democracy
78 and Christianity a few Pentecostal churches flout our order and we are rendered almost powerless. Figure ??
79 : A typical Rice (Amu) Field in Ava time At harvest time, similar customary rites are performed by the priest
80 of Ayamapor and Gadzo. The chief priest of Ayamapor is the first to harvest some of the rice from his farm.
81 After the performance of the rites, he hangs a bundle of some of the harvest at the entrance of his shrine. This
82 rite is similarly performed in all royal stool houses called 'ligbolekukame'. The harvest season is climaxed with
83 a rite performed in the Asafo shrine in Amedzofe followed by an Asafo dance traditionally performed at night.
84 The dance is symbolic as it ushers in new grain and New Year of prosperity. Besides, it spiritually cleanses the
85 community of all evil spirits. The Festival itself is a period of merrymaking and a way of uniting the people of
86 the Ava time community through the festival. c) Amu Festival as a Mechanism for Sustainable Socio-Economic
87 Development Tourists are curiosity seekers, looking for what to snap and take home. African heritages and
88 similar cultural heritages are laudable and unquantifiable. African culture of the past is classified as heritage
89 industry and is used in both tourism industry and in making available the medical, agricultural and technological
90 experiences of past societies, some of which are relevant to the present (Renfrew and Bahn, 2000:542). The
91 relevance of Amu cultural Festival is in its touristic opportunity as well as the enactment of some vital virtues
92 in the field of socio-economic drifts, religious attributes, technological experiences and educational glide.

93 i. Touristic Opportunities Amu Festival of Ava time, with its laudable cultural content, has its footing with
94 the aim of Agenda 21 Global Earth Summit Conference in Brazil. The Summit emphasizes the achievement of
95 sustainable development and the continuity of improving the living standard. It requires and mandates nations
96 to make a revolution into economic and social policies in order to tourism product which operates in harmony
97 with the local environment, community, and cultures become the permanent beneficiary not the victim of tourism
98 development (WTTC, WTO, EC 1995). Amu Festival is one of the tourism products in Ava time that stands as
99 an option in sustainable development. It is a cultural festival that was inherited from Ava time ancestor's and
100 projects with the dynamic outlook and performance in this present era. The packaging of the celebration has also
101 changed to shade the fetish practices of the past. Figure ?? : A cultural display at the festival ii. Socio-Economic

102 Drift Bakudie (2006) observes that the Amu Festival accords people a nice forum for interaction and peacefulco-
103 existence The truth about Bakudie's observation is that the festivity happens to be the period that the sons
104 and daughters of Ava time community returns en-mass from far and wide, as well as friends, inlaws and other
105 dignitaries from various parts of the country and beyond. The visitors are welcomed because of the Ava time
106 hospitality gesture. Festivals serve as a means of fostering love, brotherhood and hospitality among the various
107 ethnic groups (Kofigah 2008). Hence the Amu Festival can be used as tourism imperative for development. What
108 is needed is support of the Stakeholders. Economically, the Festival has helped to strengthen the wealth of the
109 community and it's environ. The gate fees collected from the entrance of the arena of some fascinating events
110 including the beauty pageant contest is profitable and local products in the form of crafts and arts works made
111 by the indigenes of Ava time and neighboring towns are sold to tourists. The Amu Festival is a festival that can
112 be seen as a vehicle for cooperation. People are encouraged by the micro-finance bank in the form of soft loans
113 to produce attractive products for tourists.

114 iii.

115 6 Technological Experiences

116 Technology brings continuity of culture to endless situation. Traditional costumes and artifacts of the past have
117 some economic lessons and advantages. The techniques of the past, especially in the case of Adewu (battle dress)
118 had been modernized to serve as one of the decorative objects of the present time. Other artistic inclinations
119 featuring masking during the Amu Festival depicts a highly organized and cooperative society. Music and dance
120 from the beaten instruments are also highly technical which moves the environment in high density as well.
121 Inspiring also at this time is the charged atmosphere created by the beating of drums and the corresponding
122 ovations and movements generated from songs coupled with the firing of musketry (Bakudie2006). Tourists are
123 seen in a frenetic mood through dances and chanting of songs and dramatic acrobatic displays. The Amu Festival
124 portrays iv. Religious attributes This is part of yearly observations made by the writer during the festival; that
125 is clash between Christi and enomination's and the traditionalists. Oral traditions revealed that a threat from
126 Christian believers was revealed to boycott the Amu Festival. These days, the conflict was stopped by a colloquy
127 on "Religion and Culture" made by Osie Adjatekpor VII (sitting paramount Chief) during his outdoing. After
128 his colloquium, the insurgence was controlled and the festival features peacefully. But somehow the Pentecostal
129 fraternities still subtly resist the featuring of the Amu Festival because according to them it is fetish.

130 v. Educational glide Amu fest lectures from eminent citizens and traditional rulers of the area are seen as a
131 catalyst to cultural revival of the traditional state. A colloquium is held to brainstorm on culture and tourism.
132 The festival attract tourists, dignitaries, students and people from far and near as a result of the colloquium.
133 The 2014 edition of the festival attracted thousands of people to the community which has helped deepen unity
134 and coexistence. The festival will also help researchers who wish to research Ava time culture, especially as it
135 pertains to cultural systems and processes. It has also helped students in the tertiary educational institutions
136 mostly studying humanities and culture to document Ava time culture and Anthropology. Here, oral tradition
137 will serve as a methodological approach in gathering information (Okonkwo, 2007).

138 IV.

139 7 Conclusion an d Recommendation a) Conclusion

140 Amu fest has a bright future based on the active role of the citizenry in its celebration. The result above shows it
141 has inspired awareness from all walks of life. It offers leisure and happiness and helps to relieve onlookers of the
142 burden of the bustle and hustle of life. It has also act as an aspect of national integration and wealth creation
143 through culture. In essence, it has helped to boost Ava time cultural heritage, thus acting as a viable vehicle for
144 social mobilization and sustainable development.

145 8 b) Recommendation

146 It is suggested that the organization of the festival should be broadened beyond the Ava time Traditional
147 Council to effectively include the Ho West District Assembly, the local business community, the Ghana Tourism
148 Authority, development agencies, and civil society organizations lovers of culture to help promote it nationally
149 and internationally and raise its standard. They should see the cases of China's Festival, Fetu Afakye Festival
150 etc., so as to reap the benefits accruing from tourism. The current community park used for the celebration in
151 Ava time should be renovated with recreational facilities, museum and cultural Coliseum. The transport system
152 and lodging facilities should be erected and maintained in all Ava time Communities. These amenities would
153 help to accommodate tourists during the weeklong festival. Tapping the rich local cultural heritages/products
154 would aid in the promotion of a viable tour is mind us try in Ghana hence, Christendom should be educated on
155 the values of the rich cultural heritage as well as civic roles towards our heritages. If our heritage is cherished
156 then conservation and management becomes the watchword and so as to avoid cultural extinction. ^{1 2}

¹© 2015 Global Journals Inc. (US)

²Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Development: A Case Study of the Avatimeamu (Rice) Festival in Volta Region, Ghana



Figure 1:

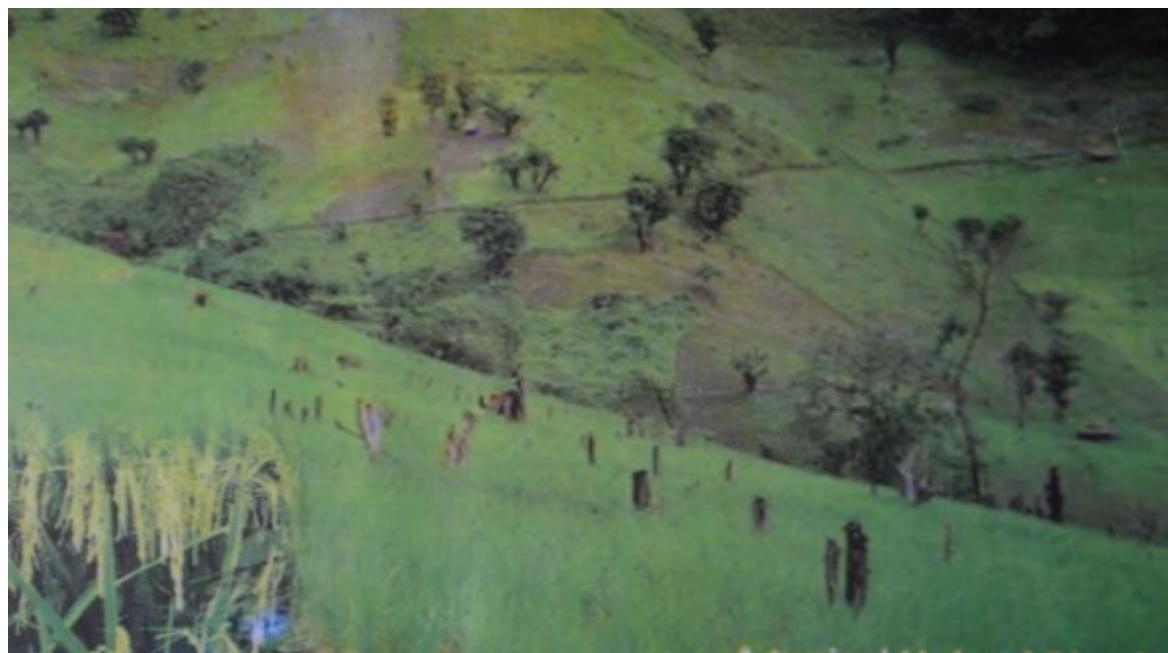


Figure 2:



Figure 3:



2

Figure 4: Figure 2 :

8 B) RECOMMENDATION

157 [MargaretT ()] *Classical African Culture*, MargaretT . 1970. London.

158 [Awedoba ()] *Culture and development in Africa: with special reference to Ghana : some basic issues*, A K
159 Awedoba . 2001. Legon; Legon. Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana

160 [Anwar and Sohail ()] 'Festival Tourism in the United Arab Emirates: first time versus repeat visitor perceptions'.
161 S A Anwar , M S Sohail . *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 2004. 10 p. 160170.

162 [Ali ()] *Fundamentals of research in Education*, A Ali . 1996. London.

163 [Kankpeyeng and Corse ()] 'Ghana's vanishing Past: Development, Antiquities and the Destruction of the
164 Archaeological Record'. B Kankpeyeng , De Corse , C . *African Archaeological Review* 2004. 21 (2) p. .

165 [Kofigah ()] *Ghana: A visitors guide*, F Kofigah . 2008. Accra: Woeli Publishing Pervice.

166 [Asiedu ()] 'Making Ecotourism more Supportive of rural development in Ghana'. A B Asiedu . *West African
167 Journal of Applied Economy* 2002. 3.

168 [Asamoah ()] 'Policy Implementation: A tool for enhancing Tourism Development in Ghana'. K Asamoah .
169 *Journal of Law, Policy & Globalization* 2013. 10.

170 [Okpoko ()] *Sustainable Tourism As a Development Option for Nigeria*, P U Okpoko . 2005.

171 [Abanga et al. ()] 'The Socio-cultural significance of the Kakube Festival of the Dagara of Nandom Traditional
172 Area in Ghana'. J Abanga , R Adongo , J W Kuuder . *Ghana Journal of Development Studies* 2012. 9 (2) .

173 [Bakudie ()] *The tourism potential in the Ava time Traditional Area (Bachelor of Arts long essay)* University of
174 Ghana, H Bakudie . 2006. Legon.

175 [Tourism and the Imperativeness of Sustainable Development] *Tourism and the Imperativeness of Sustainable
176 Development*, IPU Brussels (Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) (1999))

177 [Assihene ()] *Understanding the Traditional Art of Ghana*, E V Assihene . 1978. London: Associated University
178 Press.