

Religion and Tourism in Nigeria

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Abstract

The task which this article sets off to explore is religious tourism, the way it is practised by Nigerians whether on the domestic, regional or at the international level. This kind of tourism in general involves faith-based activities, but in a heightened form it involves pilgrimages to holy places. Nigerians are so much involved in faith-based activities and travels either as adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR), or as Muslims, or as Christians. This has made it become a point of concern for this paper while questioning whether the faith-based movements by Nigerians are inspired by faith or something else. The methodology and materials used in this research were sourced from the libraries, the internet and personal observations. The phenomenological method of looking at and analyzing things from how they appear was employed. The findings indicate that the positive effects of faith-based travels are yet to be seen in Nigeria. Again, government sponsors individuals and particular religious groups on pilgrimages, in a country which defines itself constitutionally as secular and in a country where many face abject poverty. Finally, it has been discovered that African Traditional Religion is marginalized or not attended to. The result of this is a state of marginalization and injustice which provokes agitations in parts of the country. This article concludes by calling on the Nigerian government to stop sponsoring pilgrimages and other faith-based travels for its citizens so as to maintain balance and achieve lasting peace.

Keywords: : Religion, Tourism, Pilgrimage, Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religion, Justice, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Many disciplines, as Okpoko and Okpoko (2008) acknowledged, such as geography, sociology, economics, management, anthropology, and archaeology discuss tourism. This means that on the one hand tourism has a role to play within such disciplines and vice versa. The impact given to tourism by a particular discipline depends on what the discipline basically communicates to society as its priority. Since sociology, anthropology and archaeology exercise impact on tourism, by inference or by extension also religion shows impact on tourism. In some universities religion is studied in the faculty of social sciences, like at University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). In some other universities, it falls under the faculty of Arts or humanities. Wherever it is placed however, it shows the various ways various institutes and people see the role played by religion in society. Religion does not practice itself and tourism does not practice itself either. Both are practised by human beings. Even though Okpoko and Okonkwo (2008:8) point out that "tourism is about pleasure and enjoyment," they however acknowledge that the subject is growing and expanding in Nigeria, and so it is already showing off social problems associated with growth. For this reason they hold that the time has come for a deeper understanding of tourism so as to be able to contain problems it could possibly pose to society.

Considering this fact then, tourism assumes a meaning far beyond what has been given to it as being about pleasure and enjoyment. Tourism raises academic questions for different branches of study, including religion. This is the reason for this paper. What is the impact of religious tourism on Nigerians? What is the place of religious tourism in nation building? This is the basic question that will be discussed in this paper. In order to discuss it, the writer will discuss the types of tourism, religious tourism, Africa and religious tourism, the place of religious tourism in Nigerian national development, African Traditional Religion and tourism, Islam and tourism, Christianity and tourism. The research will also try to discuss two major national questions. The first is whether the faith-based travels done by Nigerians either at the international level or at the local level are always motivated by faith and piety. The second is whether government should be sponsoring pilgrimages, favouring some religions at the expense of others and thereby promoting injustice. This will lead to recommendations and conclusion.

2 Types of tourism

Tourism can be classified based on geography or based on objective. In either case, there are different types. First, considering classification based on geography, Rodgers (2001:3-4) identifies three types of tourism, namely domestic, inbound and outbound tourism. These suggest movements within and outside a geographical location, either as an indigene or as a foreigner. Okpoko and Okpoko (2002:2) also identified three geographical types of tourism, but using different names apart from one. They are domestic, regional and international tourism.

Another way of classifying tourism is to base the classification on intention or purpose. Page (2009:19) identified purpose as one of the factors for measuring tourism. Based on purpose also, Okpoko and Okonkwo (2008:14-19) mention five types of tourism, namely, cultural tourism, nature tourism, sport tourism, business/conference tourism, and religious tourism. As the names already preempt, these types specify the purpose for which the tourist undertakes the travel. In the world, many millions of people of different countries embark on touristic travels every year. Such travels take them to destinations such as Greece, Turkey, Brazil, Rome in Italy, Paris in France, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles in U.S.A., England, Egypt, Israel, Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirate and Kenya. People go to these places for different purposes such as going to see ancient or modern architecture, cultural archives, citadels of learning, ancient or modern technology, sports, archaeology, nature and religion. As Page (2009) acknowledged, the question about what motivates people to travel is very relevant when tourism is discussed. And religion is one of the things that motivate people.

3. Religion and tourism

Like every other type of tourism, religious tourism projects religion or faith as the motive for the particular travel. The Wikipedia describes religious tourism as “faith tourism” or “faith travel” according to Hirani (2007-2013). As Okpoko and Okpoko (2002) remark, religious tourism is “aimed at gaining spiritual satisfaction.” Okpoko et al (2008:20) described religious tourism as “the movement of people to sacred sites or shrines to witness or participate in one or more religious activities”. On a precise note, when one talks about religious tourism, reference is made to faith. The major religions which embark on large scale faith tourisms, otherwise known as pilgrimages, are Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. As the Wikipedia informs the most famous holy cities in the world are Jerusalem, Mecca and Varanasi. Jerusalem is important for Jews, Christians and Muslims; Mecca is uniquely important for Muslims, and Varanasi is uniquely important for Hindus.

The first faith travel mentioned in the New Testament of the Christian holy book was not done by Christians but by three men of the priestly class of the Zoroastrian religion called Magi, who came from Iran to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus (Mt 2:1). The bible also informs that the parents of Jesus who were Jews went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem every year for the feast of Passover (Lk 2:41). Jesus himself was said to have been going on pilgrimage with his parents (Lk 2:41, 2:43) and later as an adult he was going on his own. Apart from going to the Middle East, many Christians also embark on faith travels to Fatima (Portugal) and Lourdes in France. The statistics supplied by World Tourism Organization which is in turn given by Wikipedia shows that about 300 to 330 million people undertake pilgrimages to religious places every year. And the statistics given by Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA), which is published by Wikipedia shows an increase of more than 10 million people who attended religious meetings in 2006 (14.7 million attended) as opposed to 4.4 million who attended in 1994.

4. Africa and religious tourism

History tells of the former Seven Wonders of the World which includes the pyramids of African Egypt. The pyramids contain the tombs of the pharaohs. Kemp (1983) described pyramid temples as one of the ‘pious foundations’ of the Old and Middle Kingdoms of ancient Egypt. According to him, the purpose of the pyramid temples was to enhance ‘the royal statue cult’ (p. 85). Egypt is very outstanding when one discusses religious tourism in Africa. Even though many people who undertake travels to Egypt in order to see the pyramids do that for either social or cultural curiosity, it is important to note that the pyramids carry a religious import. Kemp is the first to have alerted caution concerning this way of understanding the pyramid. It is not just a ‘mortuary’. It is not just a tomb. Kemp calls for a reversal of understanding.

He suggests that “ they be regarded first and foremost as temples for the royal statues with a royal tomb attached to each, which, acting as a huge reliquary, gave enormous authority to what was, in essence, an ancestor cult and an important factor in the stability of government” (p.85). Its place in ancestor cult shows its determinant role in religion and its role in the stability of government shows the close relationship between religion and society in the ancient world. In essence, the pyramid was more than a tomb. It was the religion of the people in an edifice. The present writer had firsthand information about the paintings inside the pyramids which depicted the dead on a journey to another world and with a wishful desire for a better life at reincarnation. Egypt is one of the few places in Africa that promote tourism for religious motives, for Egyptian traditional religion in terms of the pyramids, for Christianity in relation to Mount Sinai, the place where Jeremiah died, the house of the Holy Family during the Flight to Egypt, and for Islam in relation to the big mosque at Cairo. Concerning the place of Egypt in the world of tourism, Okpoko and Okpoko (2002:30) mention that as early as the Roman period, before the Common Era, visitors from foreign countries were already embarking on travels to Egypt to see the great pyramids.

It does not end with Egypt. Notable Africans at one time or the other undertook pilgrimages to holy sites. Concerning this also Okpoko and Okpoko (2002:31) tell about the pilgrimage embarked on by the Emperor of

ancient Mali Empire, Mansa Musa in 1324, to Mecca. Many historians talk about that pilgrimage. In fact, Mackay et al (2007) made the telling remark that “the most celebrated event of Mansa Musa’s reign was his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324-1325, during which he paid a state visit to the sultan of Egypt” (p. 272). It is important to know that today many Africans take religious tourism seriously either for leisure or for piety.

5.The place of religious tourism in Nigerian national development

The presence of ‘religion’ in the title ‘religion and tourism’ makes a big difference in the meaning of tourism. It defines the kind of tourism in question. Tourism cannot be only for leisure. Religion presupposes faith. This is why religious tourism is also called “faith-based tourism”. Faith has implication for the faith-based tourist. The implication ranges from his/her individual person to his/her immediate environment. However, the question remains this: does visit to holy places indicate faith? A visit to Notre Dame Cathedral at Paris would show thousands of tourists streaming into the Cathedral, moving round and round inside of it and taking photographs, admiring artifacts, mosaics and other decorations.

Similarly, it is questionable to assume that faith is basic for religious tourism, especially when one places a country like Nigeria on focus, a country where government sponsors people to pilgrimages and ironically one does not see the positive result in the spirit of patriotism of the people. Perhaps one could say that that is a deviation from what ought to be. The word ‘religion’ in ‘religious tourism’ makes the motive of the particular tourism specific. Even though Okpoko and Okpoko (2002:23) affirmed that the aim of religious tourism is to gain spiritual satisfaction, they hastened to say also that a tourist may have more than one objective when he/she travels. For this reason, it makes demands on the ‘tourist’ said to be faith-based. It is based on this that one asks about the place of religious tourism in national development. This is a question which has been slightly adapted from the fundamental concern expressed by Iwuoha (2003) when he discussed the place of Christian pilgrimage in nation building. The author recalled that prior to their departure to the Holy Land for pilgrimage in 2003, they were given a seminar in which they were told that “their pilgrimage to the Holyland was not going to be a mere tourist jamboree” (p. 150). To discuss religion and tourism in Nigeria, one must make reference to the three major religions in Nigeria, namely, ATR, Islam and Christianity.

6.African Traditional Religion (ATR) and tourism

ATR is the oldest religion in Africa and it is the indigenous religion of Africans. In this vein, Kitause and Achunike (2013) point out that, “this indigenous religion is what Nigerians have been practicing before the advent of Christianity and Islam” in Nigeria. Like Christianity and Islam, ATR fosters tourism. This shows itself in the various religious and cultural festivals of the different parts of Nigeria which take place at different seasons of the year. Okpoko (2008:74) makes reference to the New Yam festivals in Igboland, the Argungu fishing festival in Sokoto State, the Masquerade festival in different parts of the country, the Ofala festival in Onitsha, etc. These are not just social or cultural festivals. In traditional society, religion permeated every part of the culture such that it was difficult to dissociate one from the other. Those festivals attract people from other parts of the country and in some cases, wealthy Nigerians invite their foreign friends to witness those festivals when they are celebrated. This encourages international tourism.

Here it is important to mention the most popular staple food in Nigeria, yam. Yam is more than a food item and a crop for the Igbo people. In ancient times in traditional Igbo society, a man was counted rich or poor based on the size of his barn for yam. In order to increase one’s barn (by implication one’s wealth), one married many wives. By marrying many wives one hoped to get many children who would help in yam cultivation. At the end of the day the man would take a title such as Ezeji (master of yam). Yam became deified and the god of yam (*Ahijoku*) was worshipped, and a festival was set aside in celebration of yam till today. Okpoko and Okpoko (2002) recall how in Igboland sacrifices were offered and the blood of victims was shed to placate and make prayers to the god of yam popularly known as *ifejioku* or *Ahijoku*.

Another cultural festival in Nigeria that attracts visitors from near and far is the masquerade (*mmonwu* or *mmuo*). The mask is carried by a human being but within it there is the belief that it is the spirit (*mmuo*) of the land. Masquerades are very popular in Anambra and Enugu States of Nigeria. Many parts of Nigeria exhibit the masquerade festival at different seasons. In some places like Nsukka, particular masquerades appear once in every three years. Different peoples in Nigeria have different socio-religious festivals they celebrate and at given times. But the cultural festival in Nigeria as Okpoko and Okpoko (2002) also confirmed, which attracts tourists from many parts of the world is the yearly celebrated Argungu fishing festival, celebrated in Sokoto State. This is only surpassed by the festival of art, the Carnival Calabar, which is organized by Cross River State every year. In ATR there is the belief in a supreme being. This is variously named according to the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. For instance, the Yoruba call it Oluwa or Olorun; the Hausa call it Ubangiji, while the Igbo call it Chukwu or Chineke. Traditional religion also acknowledges the existence of priesthood, oracles, divination, spirits (gods), ancestors, medicine, medicine- persons, magic or sorcery. In Igbo traditional religion, the supreme being does not communicate. He communicates through deities or oracles.

The oracle, according to *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, is the medium by which deities were consulted like in ancient Greek and Roman kingdoms. However this explanation is silent about some other elements that can be essential for oracle. For this reason the present writer presents an oracle as a deity with a shrine and also a priest or priestess who ministers to it and plays the intermediary between it and human beings who come to consult it. Okafor (1989) has identified notable oracles in Nigeria such as Ifa (in Yorubaland) and Chukwu (in Igboland). In Igboland, the Chukwu oracle is found at Arochukwu and it is called Ebini Ukpabi. It was the colonial masters who named it "Long Juju." According to the information from Okafor, Ebini Ukpabi was destroyed by the British in 1902 because of their belief that the Igbo derived power from it that made them to resist colonial subjugation. Today international tourists still visit it. However much is not known about domestic tourists who go there. Nri (in Anambra State) which is believed to be the ancestral homeland of the Igbo people does not have any shrine that could provoke faith visits to it. Instead, for inquiries, the people of Nri go to Aguleri (Anambra State). At the extreme south of Nri town is found Agulu, both in Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambra State. It is the Agulu lake that has a popular shrine attached to it and a priest who ministers to it. Some popular oracles in Nigeria include Okija Shrine, Ala Ogbaga and Amadioha Ozuzu. Others are the Oshun Oshogbo shrine and the Omo-Ukwu temple (Okpoko and Okpoko, 2002:40).

Apart from shrines and temples, in Igboland, caves and rock shelters are considered to be repositories for Chukwu. According to Ibeanu (2006), caves are formed "as a result of the differential erosion of the sand stone cuesta" (p. 323). They were believed to be the house of the supreme being Chukwu. Ibeanu argues that it is possible that caves were places of worship and sacrifices in ancient times. According to him, the names given to some caves such as *Okpuchukwu*, *Uhuchukwu*, or *NNemchukwu* suggest that ancient people believed that God lived in the caves and so had recourse to them by offering sacrifices there. Ibeanu therefore saw as his aim in the study, to project the role of the caves in Okigwi (Okigwe) in cultural tourism shown in the people's oral tradition and how they can be made to play a role today as a way of developing tourism in Okigwi area and its surroundings (p.324). The caves he was referring to are Okpuchukwu in Otamkpa, Uhuchukwu in Ahaba Imenyi and Isi-Ume cave in Uturu, all in Okigwi surroundings. A notable cave in Igboland which captures the admiration of tourists is the Ogbunike cave in Anambra State.

A lot of domestic tourisms flourish in the above named places of faith and often people who visit those places are people who are in search of justice. Okpoko (2013: 11) rightly points out that in Igbo traditional religion, God is conceived as a judge, as the God of justice. From the earliest time, as King ((2003:32) observed, "people believed that they were governed by the gods, represented by their priests." The shrines and oracles that have been mentioned here so far have almost developed into myths and from generation to generation people keep on talking about them. In this way King is right in contending that it is worshippers who created myths, stories about the gods so as to explain things that happen in the world. This writer asserts that it is those myths and stories which continue to trigger off in people the curiosity to embark on tourism to those places.

7. Islam and tourism

In Nigeria, Islam is known for promoting religious tourism in the way of pilgrimages. Every year a good number of Muslims go on pilgrimage to Mecca. This is religious tourism at the international level. At the domestic and regional levels, religious tourism is observed in Nigeria mostly during the major Islamic festival, Id el Fitr. According to Okafor (1989:70), it was King Muhammad Rimfa of Kano who introduced the feast of Id al-Fitr for the first time in Northern Nigeria. During this feast, Muslims do a lot of movement from one part of the country to the other, both for prayer and for social celebrations to mark the feast. During the feast, a lot of rams are exported from other African countries to Nigeria to facilitate the celebration of the feast. This idea is expressed by Page (2009) when he said that "low economic benefits are traded off against the profits" while "economic benefits of tourism development are expropriated to the country of origin" (p.25). This brings economic prosperity to the exporting countries. Another way in which one observes faith activities within the circle of the Islamic religion in Nigeria is in the area of conferences from time to time of Muslim youths, Muslim women and other Islamic groups for religious reasons.

8. Christianity and tourism

In Nigeria, every year good numbers of Christians also undertake pilgrimage to Israel and to other major Christian holy sites. This is also religious tourism at the international level. At the regional and domestic fronts, unlike Muslims, Christians devote much time to faith- based travels. Various Christian denominations have their various programmes and places for faith- based activities. One cannot easily forget Prophet T.B. Joshua and his church's activities. The Redemption Camp close to Lagos is also another place that attracts great attention. In the Catholic Church the adoration grounds of Fr. *Oku na- ere ere*, Fr. Mbaka, Fr. Edeh at Elele and the Awlum Monastery at Udi are places to reckon with. The cave and waterfall at Awlum is a natural wonder and it is said to be potent for healing. Many other Christian groups and individuals have uncountable programmes that foster faith travels from one part of the country to the other. It has been noticed that many people come from outside of

Nigeria to attend those religious activities, especially that of prophet T.B. Joshua and his Synagogue Church of Nations. However, at the end of the day what is said about faith-based travels is the same question being asked about religion in general: Is it relevant for national development? Is it motivated by faith? Does it promote justice in society?

9. Are faith-based travels by Nigerians motivated by faith?

The pertinent question remains, what motivates the people who travel for faith? Do all these people come because of faith or something else? From what is popularly said about Africans, they are a highly religious people. Nigerians in particular are a highly religious people. Every Nigerian is first and foremost born into ATR, either implicitly or explicitly. What is seen as a high level display of religiosity in Nigerians today, whether among Muslims or Christians cannot be explained away from their natural connection with ATR. Therefore, to respond to the question whether the level of religious tourism and faith-based activities of Nigerians, whether international, regional or domestic is motivated by faith, the answer can be said to be both 'yes' and 'no'. 'Yes', in the sense that religion permeates every part of the life of the African person. 'No', because not every 'faith-based travel' is motivated by piety. Or, to express it in another way, as Okpoko and Okpoko (2002:23) pointed out in discussing the place of objectivity in tourism in general, "a tourist may travel with the aim of satisfying one or more of the above objectives. His purpose of visit may even alter upon reaching the area of destination." This remark is important in evaluating the place of religious tourism in Nigerian national development. Every year many Nigerian Muslims are air-lifted from our international airports to Saudi Arabia. Similarly with Christians, every year a good number of them travel to Israel and other Christian holy sites for pilgrimage. At the end of it all, one does not see a patriotic sign of the government-sponsored travels to the holy places. Internally also, it is not unusual to hear about anti-religious and anti-social activities that go on in the places where religious activities are carried out in Nigeria, ranging from stealing to promiscuity. Even in the traditional religion, masquerades are often seen extorting money from citizens and assaulting them. The news about the heinous crimes that were going on at the Okija Shrine divulged by Senator Ngige was devastating to Nigerians. All these go to point out that not all faith-based travels by Nigerians are motivated by faith and piety. Here lies the reason why they are not producing any fruits for national development.

10. The call for justice and fair-play

Islam became remarkably present in northern Nigeria before the 13th century and with jihad launched by Usman dan Fodio in 1804, the Northern Nigeria became an Islamic state. Right from when Islam came to Nigeria, northern Muslims have been going on pilgrimage. As a matter of law, going to pilgrimage at least once in a Muslim's lifetime is one of the five basic pillars of Islam (Nguvugher, 2013). However, even though it is one of the doctrinal pillars of Islam, Nguvugher remarks that it was not meant to inconvenience the individual pilgrim who embarks on it not to talk of inconveniencing his family, relatives or the government of his nation. The person has to be able "to do it personally rather than relying on government funds..." (p.2).

As for Christians, going on pilgrimage is never an essential part of the religion. As has been indicated above, Jesus was making pilgrimages to Jerusalem in the company of his parents. It was binding on them as Jews. This does not make it binding for Christians. For Christians, it is not a command as opposed to what Solomon (N.D.) tried to show by referring to texts in the bible. Nguvugher remarks that the history of pilgrimages in Nigeria dates back to the arrival of Islam in Nigeria. If individuals travelled on their own means, there would be no problems. Today government's association with and government sponsoring of religious pilgrimage has become an issue that gives concern to patriotic Nigerians.

More and more Nigerians are worried about government sponsoring of Muslim and Christian pilgrims to their holy places. The discrimination and unfair-play involved in the whole affair intrigues everyone. About two decades ago, Enwerem (1995) denounced government's policies used to discriminate against Christians in favour of Muslims in Nigeria. Enwerem evoked government sponsoring of Isa Kaita on pilgrimage to Mecca in 1954. This was the first time government started to sponsor individuals and groups on pilgrimage, and this was still on the Northern Nigerian regional level, before independence in 1960. In 1958, Obafemi Awolowo in his capacity as premier of the defunct Western Region created the Pilgrim Welfare Board for Muslims (p. 138). This sparked off agitations from Christians who felt that constitutionally speaking Nigeria is a secular state. This means that government should not be partial in dealing with the religious groups in Nigeria, and that "should the State choose to render such assistance . . . it should not be denied to Christians who may wish to go on pilgrimages to Christian holy places in Rome and in Israel" (p. 138). In 1975, the Pilgrim Welfare Board was transformed to Nigeria Pilgrims Board (NPB), thereby creating a situation which caused agitations in Christian circles and other citizens. Describing the feeling of non-Muslims about the formation of the Pilgrim Boards, Enwerem (1995) remarked that, non-Muslims were only denouncing "State support and subsidy of the pilgrimage" (p. 138). Finally, in 1989, a decree was passed to establish the Nigerian Pilgrims Commission. It is important to note that these pilgrim boards were established to favour the Islamic religion and Nigerian Muslims.

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) spoke until the government of Nigeria promulgated a law to establish Pilgrim Commission in the Federal, State and Local Government Area levels. In fact, the Nigerian Christian Pilgrim Commission (NCPC) was only established during the administration of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua (Solomon, n.d.:107). Enwerem (1995) remarked that even though government established a pilgrim board for Christians, the latter were not enthused by that, acting 'on the principle of the constitutional provision for the government's non-interference in religion" (p. 140).

Today Christians as well as Muslims go on pilgrimage every year to the holy lands. In 2013, the Nigerian government sponsored almost 30,000 Christians and about 76,000 Muslims for pilgrimage (Ndagi, 2013:1). However, what is clear is that the craze among Christians for pilgrimage is only provoked by the way Nigerian government sponsors many Muslims to Hajj every year. The question is this: why should government sponsor religious groups for pilgrimages in a country that is defined to be secular? In union with people like Osewa (2013), Uka (quoting Governor Martin Elechi of Ebonyi State's statement. 2013), Chilee (2013) to mention but a few, the present researcher highlights again the concern raised up by Enwerem (1995) twenty years ago, 'why should Nigerian government sponsor pilgrimages'? Why should this happen in a country where there is an eclipse of education and where universities have been shut down for months? Why should government sponsor pilgrimages in a country ravaged by terrorists and kidnappers? In a country where as Osewa pointed out from the findings of the United Nations 'over 70% of the population live below poverty level' (para. 2) and many youths are unemployed? Oyedele (2011) is among the many Nigerians who are disquieted because of the growth of the population of Nigeria and its consequences.

Following the national head count of 2006, the population is 167,912,561. The population of Nigeria is said to be increasing with 5.6 million people annually. It is then projected by the Samu'la Danko Makama - in his capacity as chairman of national Population Commission (NPC) - that by 2020 the population of Nigeria attain 221,392,163. With such a demographic elevation and the number of people to be hit by poverty, no responsible government would continue to sponsor people to pilgrimages when many of its citizens have no jobs. Pilgrimage is a private and group affair. It is not a national affair. The present writer joins voice with Adetayo (2013) to call that government should stop funding pilgrimages. The Editorial Board of Punch Newspaper described the action of President Goodluck Jonathan of embarking on pilgrimage with some governors as a display of 'profligacy'. The Board informed that a few States like Kano and Edo have stopped since early 2013 to subsidize pilgrimages. What is so troubling is that in all this African Traditional religionists are being left on themselves when they go for their own religious activities. Nigeria is a secular state. Iran can afford to sponsor its citizens on pilgrimage because it is an Islamic State by definition. When government begins to sponsor one group or some groups for faith-based travels while leaving others, it is a show of injustice. This impression makes it pertinent to proffer recommendations in this study.

11.Recommendations.

- a. State governments should help to develop places of tourism that enhance the growth of religious tourism in relation to ATR, for instance the site of Ebini Ukpabi in Arochukwu, the caves, etc. Such places speak a lot about a people, their origin and their worldview than Christianity and Islam.
- b. Considering the concern whether faith-based travels done by Nigerians are motivated by faith, faith-based activities should produce positive results in Nigerians both individually and collectively, especially in relation to the spirit of patriotism
- c. Nigerians who intend to go on pilgrimage to holy places outside Nigeria should be given a good orientation as to what the aim of their journey is.
- d. Considering the fact that Nigeria is a secular State, government should put a stop to the sponsoring of people to pilgrimages whether to Christian or to Muslim holy cities.
- e. Justice and fair-play should be the watch word of the Nigerian government when handling issues that concern the three major religions in Nigeria.

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In Nigeria, every year good numbers of Christians also undertake pilgrimage to Israel and to other major Christian holy sites. This is also religious tourism at the international level. At the regional and domestic fronts, unlike Muslims, Christians devote much time to faith- based travels. Various Christian denominations have their various programmes and places for faith- based activities. One cannot easily forget Prophet T.B. Joshua and his church's activities. The Redemption Camp close to Lagos is also another place that attracts great attention. In the Catholic Church the adoration grounds of Fr. *Oku na- ere ere*, Fr. Mbaka, Fr. Edeh at Elele and the Awlum Monastery at Udi are places to reckon with. The cave and waterfall at Awlum is a natural wonder and it is said to be potent for healing. Many other Christian groups and individuals have uncountable programmes that foster faith travels from one part of the country to the other. It has been noticed that many people come from outside of Nigeria to attend those religious activities, especially that of prophet T.B. Joshua and his Synagogue Church of Nations. However, at the end of the day what is said about faith-based travels is the same question being asked about religion in general: Is it relevant for national development? Is it motivated by faith? Does it promote justice in society?

9.Are faith- based travels by Nigerians motivated by faith?

The pertinent question remains, what motivates the people who travel for faith? Do all these people come because of faith or something else? From what is popularly said about Africans, they are a highly religious people. Nigerians in particular are a highly religious people. Every Nigerian is first and foremost born into ATR, either implicitly or explicitly. What is seen as a high level display of religiosity in Nigerians today, whether among Muslims or Christians cannot be explained away from their natural connection with ATR. Therefore, to respond to the question whether the level of religious tourism and faith- based activities of Nigerians, whether international, regional or domestic is motivated by faith, the answer can be said to be both 'yes' and 'no'. 'Yes', in the sense that religion permeates every part of the life of the African person. 'No', because not every 'faith-based travel' is motivated by piety. Or, to express it in another way, as Okpoko and Okpoko (2002:23) pointed out in discussing the place of objectivity in tourism in general, "a tourist may travel with the aim of satisfying one or more of the above objectives. His purpose of visit may even alter upon reaching the area of destination." This remark is important in evaluating the place of religious tourism in Nigerian national development. Every year many Nigerian Muslims are air-lifted from our international airports to Saudi Arabia. Similarly with Christians, every year a good number of them travel to Israel and other Christian holy sites for pilgrimage. At the end of it all, one does not see a patriotic sign of the government-sponsored travels to the holy places. Internally also, it is not unusual to hear about anti-religious and anti-social activities that go on in the places where religious activities are carried out in Nigeria, ranging from stealing to promiscuity. Even in the traditional religion, masquerades are often seen extorting money from citizens and assaulting them. The news about the heinous crimes that were going on at the Okija Shrine divulged by Senator Ngige was devastating to Nigerians. All these go to point out that not all faith-based travels by Nigerians are motivated by faith and piety. Here lies the reason why they are not producing any fruits for national development.

10.The call for justice and fair-play

Islam became remarkably present in northern Nigeria before the 13th century and with jihad launched by Usman dan Fodio in 1804, the Northern Nigeria became an Islamic state. Right from when Islam came to Nigeria, northern Muslims have been going on pilgrimage. As a matter of law, going to pilgrimage at least once in a Muslim's lifetime is one of the five basic pillars of Islam (Nguvugher, 2013). However, even though it is one of the doctrinal pillars of Islam, Nguvugher remarks that it was not meant to inconvenience the individual pilgrim who embarks on it not to talk of inconveniencing his family, relatives or the government of his nation. The person has to be able "to do it personally rather than relying on government funds..." (p.2).

As for Christians, going on pilgrimage is never an essential part of the religion. As has been indicated above, Jesus was making pilgrimages to Jerusalem in the company of his parents. It was binding on them as Jews. This does not make it binding for Christians. For Christians, it is not a command as opposed to what Solomon (N.D.) tried to show by referring to texts in the bible. Nguvugher remarks that the history of pilgrimages in Nigeria dates back to the arrival of Islam in Nigeria. If individuals travelled on their own means, there would be no problems. Today government's association with and government sponsoring of religious pilgrimage has become an issue that gives concern to patriotic Nigerians.

More and more Nigerians are worried about government sponsoring of Muslim and Christian pilgrims to their holy places. The discrimination and unfair-play involved in the whole affair intrigues everyone. About two decades ago, Enwerem (1995) denounced government's policies used to discriminate against Christians in

favour of Muslims in Nigeria. Enwerem evoked government sponsoring of Isa Kaita on pilgrimage to Mecca in 1954. This was the first time government started to sponsor individuals and groups on pilgrimage, and this was still on the Northern Nigerian regional level, before independence in 1960. In 1958, Obafemi Awolowo in his capacity as premier of the defunct Western Region created the Pilgrim Welfare Board for Muslims (p. 138). This sparked off agitations from Christians who felt that constitutionally speaking Nigeria is a secular state. This means that government should not be partial in dealing with the religious groups in Nigeria, and that “should the State choose to render such assistance . . . it should not be denied to Christians who may wish to go on pilgrimages to Christian holy places in Rome and in Israel” (p. 138). In 1975, the Pilgrim Welfare Board was transformed to Nigeria Pilgrims Board (NPB), thereby creating a situation which caused agitations in Christian circles and other citizens. Describing the feeling of non-Muslims about the formation of the Pilgrim Boards, Enwerem (1995) remarked that, non-Muslims were only denouncing “State support and subsidy of the pilgrimage” (p. 138). Finally, in 1989, a decree was passed to establish the Nigerian Pilgrims Commission. It is important to note that these pilgrim boards were established to favour the Islamic religion and Nigerian Muslims. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) spoke until the government of Nigeria promulgated a law to establish Pilgrim Commission in the Federal, State and Local Government Area levels. In fact, the Nigerian Christian Pilgrim Commission (NCPC) was only established during the administration of President Umaru Musa Yar’adua (Solomon, n.d.:107). Enwerem (1995) remarked that even though government established a pilgrim board for Christians, the latter were not enthused by that, acting ‘on the principle of the constitutional provision for the government’s non-interference in religion’ (p. 140).

Today Christians as well as Muslims go on pilgrimage every year to the holy lands. In 2013, the Nigerian government sponsored almost 30,000 Christians and about 76,000 Muslims for pilgrimage (Ndagi, 2013:1). However, what is clear is that the craze among Christians for pilgrimage is only provoked by the way Nigerian government sponsors many Muslims to Hajj every year. The question is this: why should government sponsor religious groups for pilgrimages in a country that is defined to be secular? In union with people like Osewa (2013), Uka (quoting Governor Martin Elechi of Ebonyi State’s statement. 2013), Chilee (2013) to mention but a few, the present researcher highlights again the concern raised up by Enwerem (1995) twenty years ago, ‘why should Nigerian government sponsor pilgrimages?’ Why should this happen in a country where there is an eclipse of education and where universities have been shut down for months? Why should government sponsor pilgrimages in a country ravaged by terrorists and kidnappers? In a country where as Osewa pointed out from the findings of the United Nations ‘over 70% of the population live below poverty level’ (para. 2) and many youths are unemployed? Oyedele (2011) is among the many Nigerians who are disquieted because of the growth of the population of Nigeria and its consequences.

Following the national head count of 2006, the population is 167,912,561. The population of Nigeria is said to be increasing with 5.6 million people annually. It is then projected by the Samu’la Danko Makama - in his capacity as chairman of national Population Commission (NPC) – that by 2020 the population of Nigeria attain 221,392,163. With such a demographic elevation and the number of people to be hit by poverty, no responsible government would continue to sponsor people to pilgrimages when many of its citizens have no jobs. Pilgrimage is a private and group affair. It is not a national affair. The present writer joins voice with Adetayo (2013) to call that government should stop funding pilgrimages. The Editorial Board of Punch Newspaper described the action of President Goodluck Jonathan of embarking on pilgrimage with some governors as a display of ‘profligacy’. The Board informed that a few States like Kano and Edo have stopped since early 2013 to subsidize pilgrimages. What is so troubling is that in all this African Traditional religionists are being left on themselves when they go for their own religious activities. Nigeria is a secular state. Iran can afford to sponsor its citizens on pilgrimage because it is an Islamic State by definition. When government begins to sponsor one group or some groups for faith-based travels while leaving others, it is a show of injustice. This impression makes it pertinent to proffer recommendations in this study.

11. Recommendations.

- a. State governments should help to develop places of tourism that enhance the growth of religious tourism in relation to ATR, for instance the site of Ebini Ukpabi in Arochukwu, the caves, etc. Such places speak a lot about a people, their origin and their worldview than Christianity and Islam.
- b. Considering the concern whether faith-based travels done by Nigerians are motivated by faith, faith-based activities should produce positive results in Nigerians both individually and collectively, especially in relation to the spirit of patriotism
- c. Nigerians who intend to go on pilgrimage to holy places outside Nigeria should be given a good orientation as to what the aim of their journey is.
- d. Considering the fact that Nigeria is a secular State, government should put a stop to the sponsoring of people to pilgrimages whether to Christian or to Muslim holy cities.
- e. Justice and fair-play should be the watch word of the Nigerian government when handling issues that concern

the three major religions in Nigeria.

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