

CULTURAL EMBELLISHMENT OF WATER BODIES, REGATTAS AND FISHING FESTIVALS IN NIGERIA'S RIVERINE COMMUNITIES SINCE 1895

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Abstract

This paper explores cultural embellishment of water bodies, regattas and fishing festivals in Nigeria's riverine communities since 1895. It highlights the concepts of cultural embellishment, water bodies, fishing festivals, and regattas. It stresses that the embellishment of water bodies has continually played important roles in the maintenance and sustenance of aquatic lives and building healthy livelihoods, transportation, and provision of drinking water, aquatic foods, etc, to the riverine people and beyond. And that embellishment of water bodies is necessary before fishing festivals and regattas can be celebrated. The paper also discusses the effects of fishing festivals on the lives of the people and the visitors to the area including: an environment for celebration, bringing the people to nature and promoting the fishing skills of the people. In the same vein, the paper explores the historical significance of regattas and its present relevance. A historical method of quantitative and qualitative objective content analysis of primary and secondary sources was adopted in this paper. The findings of this paper have revealed among other things that the cultural embellishment of water bodies has continued to play significant roles in these communities; that fishing festivals has continued to be used as a means to celebrate great events and tourist attractions; and that regattas in the past played security, sports, and entertainment roles, but in the contemporary period are used for sports, celebrations, and entertainment roles. The paper concludes with the view that the trio have continued to play significant roles in the socio-economic development of the riverine communities.

Keywords: Cultural Embellishment, Water Bodies, Fishing Festivals, Regattas, and Festivals.

Introduction

The word "festival" originates from the Latin term "festa," meaning "a religious holiday." The adjective "festivalis" was used to describe anything pertaining to a religious feast. Over time, the term evolved from "festival days," which referred to specific days of festive celebration, to simply "festivals," encompassing both religious and secular festivities.¹ Festivals are community events that celebrate historical milestones, coronations, and cultural traditions. They provide a time for rest, relaxation, visitations, and honoring those who have made positive contributions to the community. Festivals also offer opportunities for community members to reunite from various walks of life, engage in discussions, and pool resources to tackle local challenges or promote development. Additionally, festivals are periods of merriment and tourism, attracting visitors to the community. They offer a break from work, fostering unity and cultural pride. Some festivals occur seasonally, while others are biannual or perennial, reflecting the unique customs of each community. In traditional societies, festivals are deeply intertwined with cultural practices, including wrestling, new yam celebrations, hunting, traditional retirement ceremonies, masquerades, fishing, boat regattas, and water embellishments.² Certain festivals, such as regattas, hunting, fishing, and new yam festivals, are unique to specific peoples and regions. In contrast, others like masquerades, wrestling, New Year, and Christmas are more universally celebrated. The geography of a community significantly influences the festivals it observes. For instance, communities with fertile land often celebrate new yam and hunting festivals, while regattas, and fishing festivals are mostly celebrated by communities that have water bodies.

Water bodies consist of rivers, creeks, oceans, and lakes, are vital sources of water, food, and habitat for humans and the ecosystem alike.³ Riverine communities actively work to preserve and protect these "blue spaces" through cultural embellishments. These endeavours not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of rivers but also aim to support recreational activities like fishing festivals and regattas. In the same vein, cultural embellishments of waterbodies play a vital role in keeping the river and its environs clean and promoting the visual and cultural experience of regattas and fishing festivals, thereby transforming these events into grand spectacles that celebrate the community's heritage. It includes the following: the construction of Floating Structures and Platforms, Shoreline Decorations, Lighting and Visual Effects, Floral and Aquatic Decorations, Symbolic Sculptures and Altars, and Eco-Friendly Decorations.³ Water bodies embellishment is one of the prerequisites for a successful regatta or fishing festival.

Fishing festivals are events that celebrate a community heritage, held in riverine areas around the world. These events often feature competitions where participants use traditional fishing methods to catch the largest or most fish. Beyond the competitions, fishing festivals offer a rich tapestry of cultural activities, including music,

dance, and local cuisine, showcasing the community's unique traditions and economic opportunities. The Argungu Fishing Festival in Nigeria, held annually in Kebbi State, is a prime example of this, attracting thousands of fishermen and visitors and celebrating the community's fishing skills while promoting unity, tourism, and economic development. Fishing festival is hardly celebrated without regatta.

Regatta in its Venetian meaning refers to "strife, struggle, or contention."⁵ This does not imply in any way that the riverine communities of Nigeria learnt regattas from Venice. Regattas is a vibrant water-based event that seeks to recreate historical periods, showcasing the endurance and valor of warriors from riverine communities. It features a rich display of cultural expressions, including choreographed dancing, dramatizations, singing in unison, and visual arts such as canoe and paddle carving, boat painting, and unique decorations. There are three main types of regattas: Rowing Regattas, featuring human-powered rowing boats; Sailing Regattas, involving sailing boats; and Canoe Regattas, celebrating traditional canoes, which are commonly held in Nigeria's riverine communities like Iboku, Nembe, and Port Harcourt. Additionally, other notable regattas take place annually in locations like Abuja, Calabar, Lagos, Osogbo, and Uyo, each highlighting the prominent cultural heritage of the people through these colorful waterbody events.

Numerous studies have explored regattas and fishing festivals; however, there is a notable lack of research on the embellishments of water bodies. Additionally, no scholarly efforts have examined the combined significance of water body embellishments, regattas, and fishing festivals. These gaps in knowledge are what the current study aims to address. Against this backdrop, the study investigates the embellishments of water bodies, regattas in riverine communities, fishing festivals, and the relationship between cultural embellishments of water bodies, Regattas, and fishing Festivals: a synopsis.

Cultural Embellishments of Waterbodies in Riverine communities of Nigeria

Cultural embellishments of water bodies involve the practices, traditions, and artistic decorations that local communities apply to natural water features like rivers, lakes, and oceans. These embellishments aim to enhance the aesthetic, spiritual, or symbolic significance of these water bodies. They might include decorative structures, rituals, landscaping, or artistic displays that reflect the community's cultural values, heritage, and identity. These embellishments are often linked to festivals, ceremonies, and other social events that celebrate the close relationship between the community and its water sources.

Embellishments of waterbodies play vital roles in the visual and cultural experience of regattas and fishing festivals, transforming these events into grand spectacles that celebrate the community's heritage. Canoes and boats are often adorned with vibrant colors and intricate carvings that represent marine life, community symbols, or mythological figures. Boats are decorated with flags or banners representing different clans, communities, or participating teams, adding splashes of color to the water. Boats may be decorated with flowers or palm fronds, symbolizing prosperity and paying homage to the water spirits. Floating structures and platforms are set up on the water, decorated with colorful fabrics, plants, and carvings. These are used for performances, ceremonies, and award presentations. Decorated rafts were used for processions or ceremonies, with spiritual leaders or performers positioned on them, enhancing the ceremonial aspects of the event. Spectators and participants are sheltered under intricately woven bamboo or palm-frond structures that were often adorned with vibrant textiles and cultural motifs.⁷

Sculptures or arts that reflected the community's connection to the waterbody, such as representations of marine life or historical symbols, are placed along the shore for visual appeal. Lighting and visual effects such as lanterns and floating lights were also put in place to give light during the night: In the evening, the waterbody is illuminated with lanterns, floating candles, and torches. These lights create a magical ambiance, reflecting off the water's surface. Fireworks Displays: Some events incorporate fireworks, which light up the night sky over the water, adding a festive atmosphere. Floral and aquatic decorations like Water lilies, lotus flowers, and other aquatic plants are arranged in the water, symbolizing beauty and tranquility while honoring the natural ecosystem. Palm fronds and tropical leaves are used extensively to decorate boats, platforms, and shoreline areas, blending nature with the festive environment. Statues of water spirits or deities are placed near the water or even in the water itself as symbols of protection and blessing for the event. Small altars, decorated with flowers, candles, and symbolic items, are set up by the water as part of traditional ceremonies before or during the event.⁸

Elaborately decorated boats or canoes parade along the waterbody, with dancers, drummers, or community leaders onboard, dressed in traditional attire and performing rituals or dances. This transforms the waterbody into a floating celebration of culture. Furthermore, eco-friendly decorations materials which includes biodegradable and environmentally friendly decorations, such as bamboo, leaves, and natural dyes, to ensure that the waterbody remains pristine after the event were carefully selected and used in the embellishments of water bodies. It cannot be overstated that the embellishments of water bodies set the stage and its environs in festive, celebrative and appealing mood for fishing festivals and regattas.⁹

Regattas in Riverine communities of Nigeria

Historically, when the Portuguese, Dutch, and English arrived in the Niger Delta in the 15th, 17th, and 19th centuries, they observed that the kings and chiefs of the region traveled by boat to visit their counterparts in neighboring city-states. These rulers also used boats to transport trade commodities from one market to another. Such journeys were often accompanied by war boats and armed escorts. African regattas during this period functioned as civil defense and patrol units, protecting trade routes for European merchants throughout the 17th to 19th centuries.¹⁰ An account has it that the Akassa War of 1895 involved canoes from Nembe, Akassa, and nearby territories. And that:

for over three hundred years before the 25th century, war canoes were most times deployed to provide security and ensure that super-cargo boats of European traders reached their destinations while traveling through the creeks and high seas from the hinterland markets. Non-corporation in these duties earned the displeasure of the Europeans and led to suspicion and hostilities. The kings and chiefs of the oil rivers protectorates thus deployed wars canoes to police trade routes and city-state.¹¹

With the emergence of colonialism in the 19th century, traditional war regattas in Nigeria gradually lost their military significance and were restructured for ceremonial and entertainment purposes. It is on record that, a contingent from Iwopin in Nigeria participated in a boat regatta at the 1896 Olympic Games in Paris. In 1920, Lord Lugard, the first Governor-General of Nigeria, was received with a regatta in Bonny. A similar regatta was held in Lagos in 1937 to commemorate the ascension of King George VI of England. In 1956, Queen Elizabeth II was greeted by a fleet of canoes and gigs during a colorful regatta in Port Harcourt. When the British granted independence to Nigeria in October 1960, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria's first president, along with President Nyadema of Togo and the Prince of Wales, were honored with a regatta in Lagos. Similarly, Prince Charles and Lady Diana were welcomed with a grand regatta in Port Harcourt in 1990.¹²

Although regattas in Nigeria began as communal events, over time they have attracted government interest as social, recreational, and tourist activities since the 1970s. Regattas have since been incorporated under the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), established by Decree No. 3 of 1975.¹³ The NCAC serves as the coordinating body for Nigeria's cultural and artistic activities, promoting events like regattas as part of the country's rich cultural heritage. As a result, the federal government established a National Center for Boat Regatta Research in Uyo to further support and studies this cultural practice.

In recognition of the importance of regattas in the cultural life of Nigeria's riverine peoples, these events were part of major attraction at the Second World Black Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Lagos in 1977. A total of 200 boats from eight states of the federation, with over 4,000 participants, took part in the show. Adding to the spectacle, a command unit of seven canoes, manned by 136 officials, coordinated the activities, enhancing the event's grandeur.¹⁴

Regattas involve different types of watercrafts, with events tailored to the community's traditions and environmental conditions. There different types of regattas namely:

1. Boat Types: Rowing Regattas: Human-powered rowing boats compete along a specific course, requiring teamwork and stamina.
2. Sailing Regattas: Sailboats, propelled by wind, race in a specified route or pattern across lakes, rivers, or seas;¹⁵ and
3. Canoe Regattas: Traditional canoes, particularly in riverine regions like Nigeria, race in calm waters, often with teams of rowers. Races are typically set along a predetermined course marked by buoys or flags. Competitors aim to navigate the course as quickly and efficiently as possible, often facing natural obstacles such as wind, currents, or waves. In riverine communities in Nigeria, regattas are much more than just races they portrays the rich culture of the people.¹⁶

For instance, the Nembe people of Bayelsa State are renowned for their impressive regatta celebrations, which evoke nostalgia for the community's military history. Their war canoe, known as Omongu-Aru in the Nembe dialect, is prominently displayed during regatta competitions, where young men simulate battle maneuvers in the boats. Specific costumes, typically in black and blue, are worn to symbolize battle readiness. The canoe's interior often contains representations of the chief's court, mystics, and armed warriors. Adding an entertaining dimension to this coastal warfare reenactment, the war canoes are equipped with talking drums positioned at the rear, used to rally the warriors, similar to the role of trumpets and gongs in other regions. Camouflage is sometimes necessary to enhance the battle atmosphere. Regatta festivals have become important homecoming and gathering events for coastal communities. In Nembe Kingdom, regattas are central to the installation and burial of kings, chiefs, and nobility, often serving as the concluding event of major celebrations. A regatta can stand as a distinct event or be part of larger cultural ceremonies. Notably, regattas are organized by "houses," with each group representing the military achievements of their respective war houses, a tradition deeply rooted in Nembe history.¹⁷

The event includes dancing, display of Traditional music, and dramatizations are performed both on the water and on shore. Canoes are elaborately decorated with local designs, carvings, and painted in vivid colors,

reflecting cultural symbols and regional identity. The entire communities gather to cheer for their local teams, making it a festive celebration that fosters unity. Safety and Organization: Regattas are organized by local committees or cultural groups, ensuring safety protocols are in place. Officials monitor the races, and prizes are often awarded for the fastest boats, best-decorated canoes, or most skillful maneuvers. For instance, The Iboku Regatta of Cross River is an age-old tradition that has evolved from a local communal event to a state-wide celebration. It is a 30-minute rowing competition typically held in the Calabar River by the Efik people. Originally organized purely for the joy of competition, camaraderie, and the promotion of Efik sport and culture, it later became integrated into the annual Calabar Carnival.¹⁸

Historically, the regatta also commemorates significant socio-cultural events such as victories in war, funeral rites, and coronations. The competition usually takes place among the 12 ancestral clans, with the event serving as a platform to showcase the athletic skills of young men while celebrating ancient culture, historical reflections, and the competitive spirit. The Iboku Regatta is always conducted with great pageantry and spectacle. The competing boats are adorned in traditional Efik attire, adding to the visual splendor of the event. To ensure fairness, all participating boats, known as "Ubom Mbuba," must be of consistent weight and size, guaranteeing equity in the competition.

Each boat consisted of 12 carefully selected men. At the front of the boat sat a charismatic and elegant figure, responsible for safeguarding a cannon gun and carrying the symbolic Ekpe leaves and flag representing his clan. This man plucked a leaf from the opposite side of the Calabar River, which was often the location for the competition, and then directed the boat's return to the starting point. At the rear of the boat, another equally charismatic individual, known as the boat commander, was positioned. His role was to guide the boat against the tide, keeping it steady within its rowing lane to avoid collisions with other competing canoes. The commander directed the crew on when and how to row, determining the frequency and speed of rowing. If water began to flood the boat, he alerted the crew to remove it, ensuring their success wasn't jeopardized. The remaining ten males were split into two groups of five on either side of the boat, paddling in unison to propel it forward. The rowers maintained a consistent rhythm, which was crucial for achieving the necessary speed.²⁰

In addition to the competing boats, there were beautifully decorated boats, known as "Ubom Mbarakpa," positioned along the river. These boats featured cultural dances, invigorating songs, and loud drumming, all designed to inspire, cheer, and motivate the competing boats towards victory. It is worthy to emphasize that regatta was and still is an all-male, clan-based competition within the Efik Kingdom. A team of cultural dancers was also displayed alongside the "Ubom Mbarakpa," a beautifully decorated boat. The event featured masquerades and traditional dances performed inside the boat during the contest, adding excitement and appeal to the occasion.²¹

Regatta competition involved 12 traditionally decorated wooden boats, each representing one of the 12 ancestral clans of the Efik Kingdom. These boats were manned with the purpose of showcasing the participants' paddling strength and masculinity during the 30-minute competition. Before the start of the event, the Obong of Calabar or a traditional ruler representing him would pour a symbolic libation to appease the gods and goddesses of the water. Each clan was responsible for adorning their wooden boat with cultural antiquities and regalia specific to the Efik people. Competitors would pluck a leaf at the far end of the river before returning to base as a symbol of victory. Additionally, the regatta included a display of other decorated boats, strategically positioned alongside cultural dances. The event was filled with intense singing and drumming to inspire and cheer on the regatta participants.²² Another segment of the Regatta was called "Ubom Mbarakpa," which featured numerous masquerades. Though not part of the main competition, this cultural display served as a side attraction, adding to the festive atmosphere before the primary contest. The entire event was charged with joy, as everyone basked in the euphoria of this historical and memorable celebration. Each moment spent at the regatta was highly treasured by both the Efik people and their visitors. Some of the features in this Efik regattas are common to all other Regatta communities, however, there were also areas of uniqueness.²²

Fishing Festivals in Riverine Communities of Nigeria

Fishing festivals focus on fishing competitions and cultural activities. These festivals are typically rich in traditions that celebrate the community's connection to their waterbodies. Fishing festivals occur in rivers, lakes, or lagoons where the local fish population is abundant. The waterbody is often temporarily restricted before the event to ensure plenty of fish for the competition.²³ During fishing competitions, participants use traditional fishing methods like casting nets, traps, or even hand fishing, especially in Nigeria's famous Argungu Fishing Festival. The person who catches the largest fish or the highest quantity of fish wins a prize. Competitors often use simple tools such as nets, gourds, or baskets. A notable example is the Argungu Fishing festivals celebrated by the people of the Northern town of Argungu in Kebbi State, Nigeria. This festival, dates back to the 1930s, was originally established to celebrate the end of a century conflict between the Sokoto Caliphate and Kebbi kingdom. The Argungu Fishing Festival is an annual four-day cultural event, typically held in February, marking the end of the farming season and the beginning of the fishing season. The festival begins with an agricultural produce exhibition, followed by regattas or water sports displays, and traditional Kebbi cultural performances, culminating in a grand fishing competition. At the sound of a gunshot, numerous fishermen race into the Mata

Fadan River, aiming to catch the largest freshwater fish within a one-hour timeframe to win the grand prizes (reaching up to \$7,500). Prior to the commencement of the festival, offerings are made to the river gods to ensure a smooth and successful event. This event garners international attention and draws numerous sponsors and partners each year.²⁴

Another example is the Unyeada Fishing Festival, known as Ijok-irin in the native Obolo language. This annual event, hosted by the people of Unyeada in Andoni, Rivers State, is a centuries-old tradition deeply rooted in the community's cultural heritage. The festivities begin in the early morning with the firing of a traditional cannon, marking the start of the event. A lively parade of young men, symbolizing their transition into adulthood and entry into the 'ogbo-anange,' showcases energetic displays of singing, chanting, and dancing that reverberate throughout the town. On the second day, beginning at noon, traditional fishing tools and rare species caught by Unyeada fishermen are put on display. Spectators witness impressive sights, including live, mega-sized fish, large dolphin teeth, water antelope tusks, and other unique sea treasures, all of which highlight the remarkable fishing skills of the local community. One of the cultural highlights of the festival is the ceremonial presentation of the traditional dish, 'ogo,' to visitors. Elderly women perform an enchanting dance as they carry trays of spicy, palm oil-drenched fish to the king regent, who stands in for the king of the Unyeada Kingdom. This ritual, rich in heritage, is a gesture of respect and honor, as the 'ogo' is then presented to dignitaries in attendance.²⁵

Cultural activities, Singing, Dancing, and historic Storytelling are some of the side attractions during fishing festivals. Participants and spectators enjoy cultural performances that honor ancestral fishing traditions, accompanied by traditional music and dance along the shores. Before and after the fishing competition, ceremonial offerings are made to the water spirits or deities. This is to ensure good fortune and protection for the fishermen. After the competition, the fishes caught during the festival are often cooked and shared among participants and spectators, reinforcing the communal spirit. It also serves as a celebration of the bountiful natural resources of the waterbodies.²⁶

Illuminating the Relationship between Cultural Embellishments of Water Bodies, Regattas, and Fishing Festivals: A Synopsis

The intricate relationship between cultural embellishments of water bodies, regattas, and fishing festivals underscores the deep connection between local traditions, water resources, and communal celebrations. Cultural embellishments, such as decorative rituals, symbolic artifacts, and artistic designs, highlight the profound cultural and spiritual significance that water holds in various communities. These embellishments are not merely for aesthetic purposes but embody the values, history, and identity of the people who depend on these water bodies for sustenance and recreation. Cultural embellishments play a crucial role in the successful celebration of regattas and fishing festivals. Without these decorations, the marine environment would appear plain and uninviting, stripping the events of their cultural richness. These embellishments, including symbolic artifacts and artistic designs, enhance the visual appeal and reflect the community's values and traditions. They create a festive atmosphere and foster a deeper connection to the water, making the celebrations more engaging and meaningful. Furthermore, Community engagement is central to these events, driven by the active participation of people from the surrounding villages or regions who unite to celebrate their bond with the water. These gatherings play a crucial role in cultural preservation, offering a platform to pass down traditional skills such as water body decorations, canoe building, navigation, and fishing techniques to the younger generations.²⁷

Furthermore, these events provide significant economic advantages by drawing visitors, which in turn supports local businesses, including artisans, boat builders, food vendors, and tour guides, helping to boost the region's overall economy. Moreover, the presence of cultural embellishments ensures that the environment is vibrant and appealing to both participants and spectators. These decorations transform the setting into a lively and culturally rich space, emphasizing the community's heritage and traditions. The absence of such embellishments would result in an unkempt and less attractive environment, diminishing the overall experience of the events. Thus, cultural embellishments are integral to maintaining the cultural richness and visual appeal of regattas and fishing festivals.²⁸

Conclusion

The paper extensively discussed the cultural embellishment of water bodies, fishing festivals, and regattas in Nigeria's riverine communities. It highlighted that the cultural beautification of water bodies is a prerequisite for regattas and fishing festivals, as it prepares the environment to be clean and appealing for these activities. The paper also emphasized the communal effort involved in cleaning and decorating these water bodies. Additionally, the paper revealed that regattas were prevalent in pre-colonial riverine communities, which would later become Nigeria and up till the present age. These regattas served various purposes, including warfare, security, and entertainment. The uniqueness's of the Nembe and Iboku Regattas were also highlighted. The paper further examined fishing festivals in Nigeria's riverine communities, focusing on the Unyeada Fishing Festival of Andoni and the Argungu Fishing Festival. It stressed that these festivals not only brought community members together but also attracted visitors from far and wide, similar to regattas, which drew spectators to witness the

events and competitions. Finally, the paper shed light on the relationship between the cultural embellishment of water bodies, regattas, and fishing festivals, discussing their economic potential for empowering host communities. It stressed that these events are often interconnected, with one rarely occurring without the other.

EndNotes

¹"Festival," Accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.oed.com>. See also Harper, D. "Festival," Online Etymology Dictionary. Accessed May 10, 2024 <https://www.etymonline.com>; Merriam-Webster.; Festival. Accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com>

²All the people interviewed are of the view that festivals are work free days and are cultural activities.

³Findings revealed that cultural embellishments or decorations must happen before fishing festivals or Regatta in the riverine communities.

⁴Ikomi, S. A. "Water-Based Cultural Celebrations in Nigeria." *African Heritage Journal* 11(4), (2019):321-338.

⁵E. O. Ekanem, "The Argungu Festival: Nigeria's Iconic Fishing and Cultural Festival," *Tourism and Culture Review of West Africa*, 12(1), (2018): 55-68.

⁶"The origins of the Venetian regatta," Accessed May 15, 2024, <https://suntradition.com/Venise/en/la-ville-de-venise-en-italie/histoire-de-venise>.

⁷M.A. Okon, "Decorating the Waters: The Aesthetic Embellishment of Canoes in Riverine Festivals." *Journal of Maritime Heritage Studies*, 9(2), (2017):145-157. See also W. Nzeda Tagowa, "The changing patterns of the boat regatta as maritime heritage in Nigeria," *WIT Transactions on the Built Environment*, Vol 79, 2005:143-151. Regattas decorations takes a lot of materials, resources and time.

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⁹J. I. Ekwe, "Floral Arrangements and Visual Aesthetics in Nigerian Water Festivals," *Cultural Studies Review*, 21(2), (2018):9167-180.

¹⁰W. Nzeda Tagowa, "The changing patterns of the boat regatta as maritime heritage in Nigeria," *Transactions on the Built Environment*, Vol 79: 2005: 141-153

¹¹A documentary of the Rivers State Council of Arts and Culture (RSCAC) on the occasion of a boat regatta artistic display at the Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA) wharf, Port Harcourt, 2000,4

¹²Tagowa, "The changing patterns of the boat regatta as maritime heritage in Nigeria,"

¹³Bello (ed), *Ibid*, Culture and Decision making in Nigeria, (NCNC:Lagos, 1993),41

¹⁴Tagowa.

¹⁵"Regattas," Accessed May 20, 2024, <https://worldrowing.com/events/rowing-and-pararowing/olympics/olympic-games/>

¹⁶Njoku, U. K. "Cultural Symbolism in Traditional Canoe Decorations in Nigeria's Delta Regions," *African Arts Quarterly*, 17(3), (2020):122-135.

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¹⁸Eneyo, V.B., Attah, F.A., Ekong, M.O., Offiong, E.E., Ekpo, E.E., Antai, A.S., ObiF.B. & Essien, D.A, "Marketing Strategies of Niche Tourism Products: A Case Study of Iboku Boat Regatta Practised by the Efik People of South Eastern Nigeria. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*," Accessed May 10, (2022). DOI: [https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.241,11\(SE1\):541-554](https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.241,11(SE1):541-554)

¹⁹Eneyo, etal, "Marketing Strategies of Niche Tourism Products: A Case Study of Iboku Boat Regatta Practised by the Efik People of South Eastern Nigeria. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*."

²⁰*Ibid*.

²¹Aniekan Umem, 65, Local historian, and Monday Udom, 60, trader interviewed at Calabar.

²²*Ibid*

²³S. A. Ikomi, "Water Based Cultural Celebration in Nigeria," *African Heritage Journal* 11, (2019):321-338.

²⁴E. O. Ekanem, "The argungu Fishin Festival:Nigerian Iconomic and Cultural Festivals," *Tourism and Culture Review of West Africa* 12 (2018):55-68

²⁵Prince Japer, 50yrs, Lawyer, Interviewed at Portharcourt, on 27/09/25

²⁶*Ibid*

²⁷Jesse Williams, 51yrs, Historian, Interviewed at Portharcourt, on 5/07/25

²⁸ Prince Japer and Jesse Williams