

Reconnection to your Ancestral Origin: A Case Study of Bimbiam Slave Trade Village

Evaristus Nyong Abam*

Department of Travel Agency, Tourism and Operation Management, College of Business and Technology, Catholic University Institute of Buea, Cameroon

Abstract

Slave trade and Slavery in Africa has not only existed throughout the continent for the past decades but it is still being witnessed today in different forms. Slave trade and slavery are both a crime against Humanity and a deep moral error. It has destroyed the lives of millions of Africans and the effect has continued to be felt by their descendants even today and all of those affected have lost their history. Some companies in the United States of America have been carrying out DNA test in an effort to try and unite those affected with their ancestral root. Motherland Facilitations Africa, a non-profit making organization in Cameroon and the Government of Cameroon through its Ministry of Culture have been working together to see the successful reconnection of these African-American with their families. Bimbiam, the slave trade port has seen the rehabilitation of the port through the collaboration of Cameroon's Ministry of Culture and the American Embassy in Yaounde.

Keywords: Culture; Cultural tourism; Cameroon; Slave trade

Introduction

Slavery in Africa has not only existed throughout the continent for many centuries, but continues in the current day. Systems of servitude and slavery were common in parts of the continent, as they were in much of the ancient world. In most African societies where slavery was prevalent, the enslaved people were not treated as chattel slaves and were given certain rights in a system similar to indentured servitude elsewhere in the world. The institution of slavery was both a crime against humanity and a profound moral wrong and it destroyed the lives of millions of enslaved Africans and continues to affect their descendants today [1].

Motherland Facilitations Africa tours took participants (those affected) to several cities and locations that carry slavery history or showcase Cameroon's beauty and culture. This included visiting the old slave port, participating in traditional welcoming ceremonies, and meeting with chiefs and senior government officials, such as the U.S. ambassador to Cameroon. Though the visitors shed tears, they were nonetheless too happy to have rediscovered for the first time ever the land of the birth of their fore parents. These emotional and informational trips raise cultural awareness about Cameroon, raise funds for the restoration of historical landmarks and inspire some Americans to return to launch development projects. Some of the Cameroonian-Americans who participated in the trips want to help Cameroon individually as well as plan to build a community centre at Bimbiam to educate children [2].

Eric Chinje added that results from the DNA tests have also revealed that about nine million or so black Americans could have come from Cameroon and Nigeria that, apparently, suffered the greatest toll of the number of slaves [3].

Background of the study/company review

Bimbiam was an independent state of Isubu people of Cameroon, in 1884 annexed by the Germans and incorporated in the colony of Kamerun. It lies in Southwest Region, to the south of Mount Cameroon and to the west of the Wouri estuary. Bimbiam is situated at the East coast of the Limbe sub division and consists of three villages: Dikolo, Bona Ngombe and Bona Bille. The slave village site located deep down the Bimbiam sea front and is yet to have that UNESCO recognition. The

former Ministry of Culture on the 11/09/2012 said that trespass into the slave trade village in Bimbiam, Limbe III sub-division declared the site is 'National land' and that she did not come to seize people's land but to let people know that the slave trade village is now State property. Mrs Ama said people and partner need to work hard to make this a World Heritage value, a place of universal value held and recognised by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee [4]. The restoration of the Bimbiam slave trade port has preserves the history of how slaves were captured and it also heals the past and paves the way forward. The association is also lobbying United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to name the port a World Heritage Site [2].

Literature Review

The word "culture" is derived from a French term which in turn is derived from the Latin word "colere," which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture. It shares its etymology with a number of other words related to actively fostering growth [5].

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts etc. There are different types of culture, but culture is generally divided into two types: material culture and non-material culture [5].

Cultural tourism destination takes strategic planning built on an understanding that there are different degrees of consumer motivation for culture and that most people are looking for a variety of things to do

***Corresponding author:** Evaristus Nyong Abam, Department of Travel Agency, Tourism and Operation Management, College of Business and Technology, Catholic University Institute of Buea, Cameroon, Tel: +237 6 56 09 20 17; E-mail: enyong@yahoo.com

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when they travel. Curiosity and education are the main drive of cultural tourists; they want to learn about other culture people and their culture [6].

Research Methodology

For this research work, the researchers used only secondary data that was information collected from the bulletins, books as well as websites.

Analysis and Findings

Motherland Facilitations Africa, a non-profit making organization in Cameroon reconnects people of African descent to their roots. This reconnection program has brought one hundred and fifty Americans to Cameroon in two trips, in 2010 and 2011, after they traced their DNA to the country. The Government of Cameroon on their part funded the 2010 trip so that the Cameroonian-Americans paid only for their plane tickets. This same association in December 2012 organized a trip for fifty-three Cameroonian-Americans to Cameroon. African-Americans who traced their ancestry to Cameroon say that discovering their heritage connects them to their once-lost past. These ancestry companies are promoting DNA tests to enable U.S. citizens to discover their Cameroonian heritage that their families lost during the slave trade.

Conclusion

Slave trade and slavery is both a crime against Humanity and a profound moral wrongdoing. The affected persons who came to Bimbia slave trade village shed tears, they were nonetheless too happy to have rediscovered for the first time ever the land of their ancestors, however all this was made possible by Motherland Facilitations Africa; a non-profit making organization in Cameroon that reconnects people of African descent to their roots. These ancestry companies are promoting DNA tests to enable U.S. citizens to discover their Cameroonian heritage that their families lost during the slave trade.

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