

An Ethnographic Excursion to Orumba: A Preliminary Report on Ufuma Cave and Its Tourism Potentialities

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Abstract: *In the recent decades, tourism development has expanded. Natural beauty, the climate, the culture and the history of a given place have often led to this tourism expansion. One is always quick to point at Ogbunike cave when it comes to caves in Anambra State. But there are other caves, known and unknown. These include Ajalli cave and Owerre Ezukalla cave in Orumba North Local Government Areas of the state. But hardly does anybody mention Ufuma cave. We have decided to take an ethnographic study of this cave and what it offers to the tourism profile of the state. The general relevance of caves to tourism development will be underscored and some proposals made as to how to harness it to boost nature tourism and general tourism development.*

I. Introduction

Cave has served as man's home before the development of modern house. In some societies it is being worshipped and taken as abode of the gods. Presently, caves have attracted a lot interest due to artifacts that are found in them, paintings on its walls, and species of animals living therein. It has generated a lot of income to countries that have documented theirs and developed them like France, Italy, Australia, United Kingdom, United States ecetera.

It has become of great interest to archaeologists, environmentalists, geologists, zoologists, artists etc. This is because it houses a lot of evidence about man's relationship with his environment and recently a source of interest to tourists/visitors. In places where there are they properly harnessed, they have helped in conservation of the environment. Studies done by scholars like Murty (1985), Ibeanu and Umeji (2001) on caves reveal information on Paleolithic hunter-gatherers, environmental changes that occur in an area during the paleo-ecological and paleo-climatic changes.

Many scholars have done some studies on caves in eastern Nigeria, precisely Anambra State. Ogbunike cave has been studied by Okani (1996) x-raying the religious use of the cave, Odum (2011) highlighted the deified section of the cave and Odum (forthcoming) recorded high pollution of the cave with white coloured bowels of sacrifice; Itanyi, Okonkwo and Eyisi (2013) studied Owerrezukalla cave showing its tourism merits while Oguamanam and Nwankwo (2015) studied Ajalli cave and their reported was in consonance with Odum (2011), the cave is in a neglect state, swampy and dark nature of the cave made it inaccessible.

Cave as ecotourism potential attracts tourists especially due to its beautiful scenic view, undisturbed vegetation which are usually primary flora in the locality and in most cases it possesses waterfalls like Ogbunike and Owerre Ezukalla caves in Anambra State, but the cave under study here has no such feature. Secondly, it is unknown to most people in Orumba and Anambra State government, and their citizens and Nigeria at large. This has led to its neglect in terms of attention, development and attracting tourist flow. Therefore, our sole interest in this cave is to bring it to limelight so that it can be listed among the caves in the state, what are the uses of the cave, showcasing other tourism potentials in Ufuma and call for immediate development of this cave and other caves in Orumba North and South Local Government Area of the state. Lastly, recommendations and suggestions will be made towards developing the cave.

The study used key informant interview (KII) as the main source of data collection, photographic documentation, and direct observation and on the spot assessment (in the course of one of the authors' Ph.D field work in August, 2012), while written literature related to Ufuma was also consulted through library and internet resources.

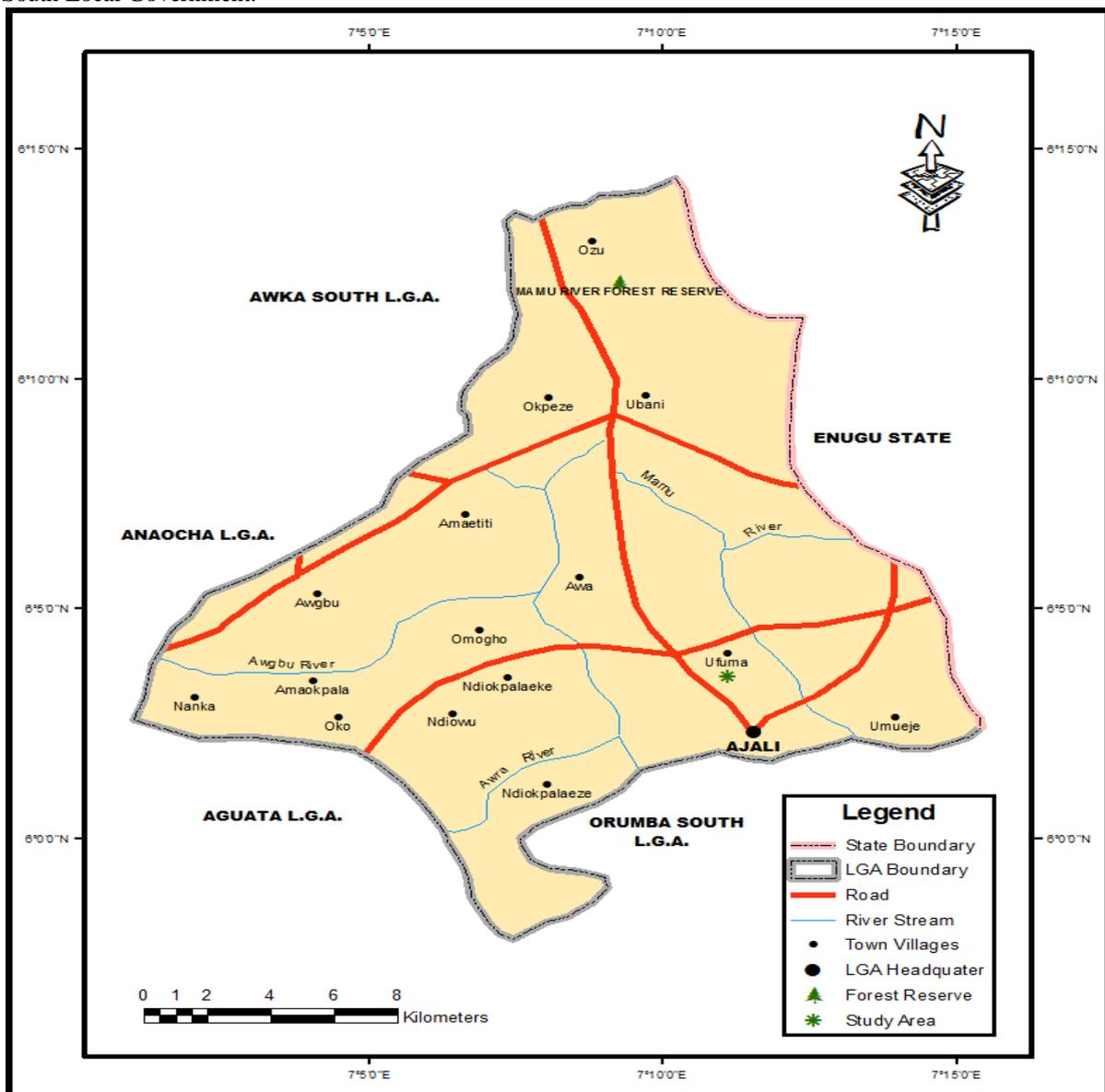
Cave

A cave is a natural underground space large enough for a human being to enter. They are formed naturally by the weathering of rock and often extend deep underground. Exploring a cave for recreation or science may be called caving, potholing (<http://www.wikipedia/cave>), while others call it speleological study. Caves house archaeological evidences and therefore, are of huge archaeological and tourism importance. They are basically used as shelter, burial sites and at times center of worship and a place of refuge in times of war. In

some cases it is strictly for religious use. Ibeanu (2006) is of the view that caves might be possibly used for ritual activities and serve other purposes to their host communities in the past. For instance there are evidences of traditional and celestial churches using Ogbunike cave for ritual and spiritual purposes and water from the cave is termed to be 'holy' and a section of the front part of the cave is deified under a living *Ogilishi* tree (*New bouldialaevis*) (Odum, 2011). While a recent visit to Ogbunike cave in June, 2015 shows evidence of white bowels used for rituals and sacrifices. A cave is a unique natural phenomenon that presents a visitor or tourist with a particular sense of awe. It is a common feature in parts of Nsukka and Udi plateau of Enugu State and in Orumba North and South Local Government Areas of Anambra State.

II. Background Information

Anambra has twenty-one Local Government Areas namely: Aguata, Awka North, Awka South, Anambra East, Anambra West, Anaocha, Ayamelum, Dunukofia, Ekwusigo, Idemili North, Idemili South, Ihiala, Njikoka, Nnewi south, Nnewi North, Ogbaru, Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Oyi, Orumba North and Orumba South (the last two local government are the locations of three caves in Orumba axis and Ufuma is a town in Orumba North which is the interest of this study). Figure 1: Showing the location of Ufuma in Orumba South Local Government.



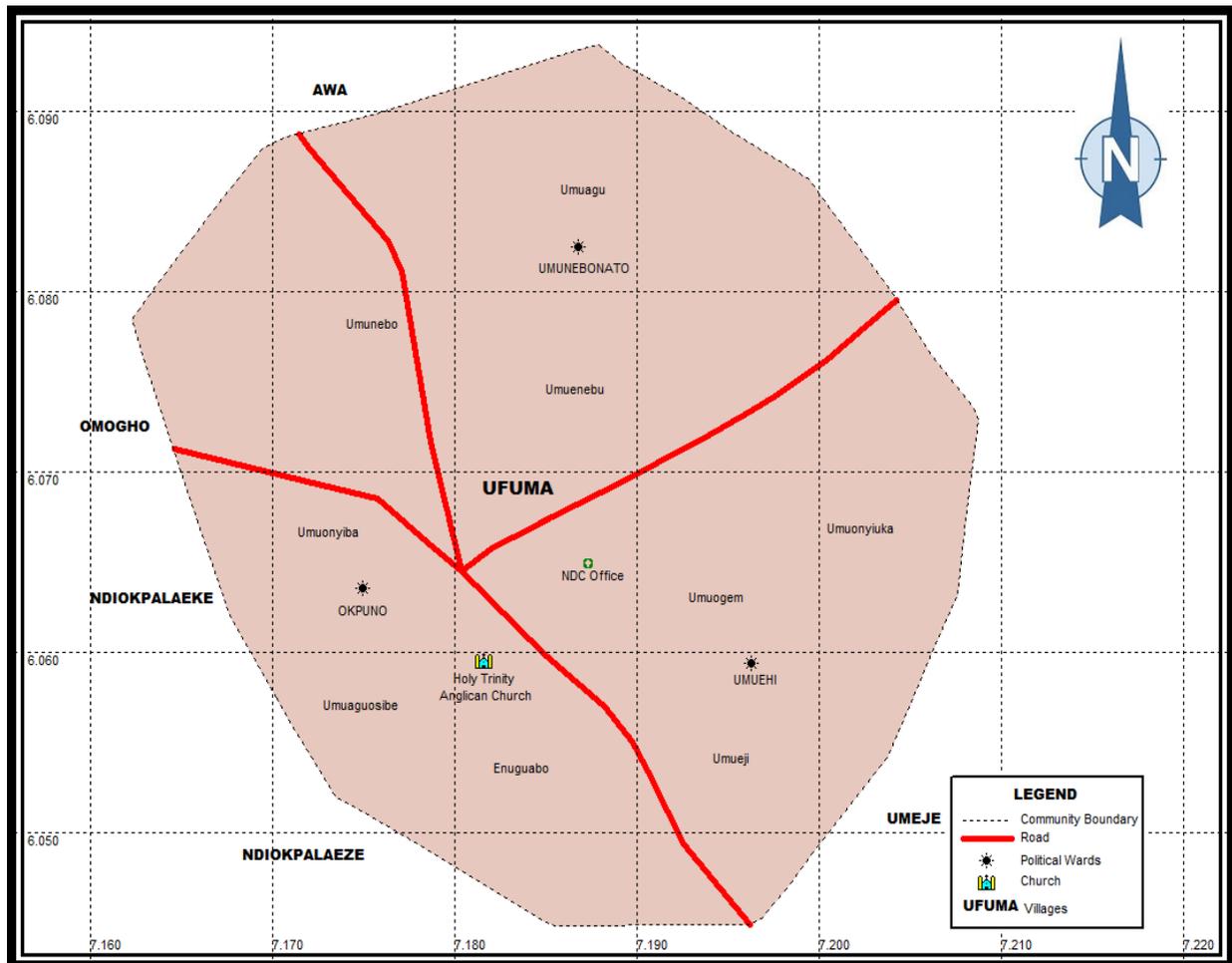


Fig.2: Map of Ufuma indicating villages and political wards

Ufuma

Ufuma is one of the sixteen major towns that make up the geo-political area called Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State. Its geographical coordinates reads thus: 6° 5' 0" North, 7° 11' 0" East. Historically, Ufuma traces its origin to a man called Uvume who is one of the two sons of Egbe. Egbe is the only son of Ngada. Egbe was usually referred to as Diji (because he was a famous yam farmer and was said to have had large barns of yam). Uvume had a strained relationship with his only brother Nkwere after the death of their father. This is as a result of Nkwere's jealousy towards Uvume because Diji (Egbe) loved his brother more and it was gathered that Uvume looks exactly like their father.

After their father's death, Nkwere decided to go and settle somewhere else. He crossed the Mamu River and lived at the present day Orosiama in Oji River Local Government Area of Enugu State. The descendants of Uvume form what is today known as Ufuma. Ufuma is made up of the following villages: Umugu, Umuenebu/Ozegu and Umunebo in ward one; Umuonyiuba, Umuaguosibe and Enuguabo in ward two and Umuogem, Umeji and Umuonyiuka in ward three having ten villages in all. These three wards are aligned to the three family blocks namely Umuebonato, Okpuno and Umuehi (<http://www.wikipedia/ufuma>) (See figure 2). The traditional head of Ufuma is called the Diji, probably derived from their progenitor Diji (Egbe).

Ufuma is an agrarian society like other towns in Orumba. Rice fields are seen near Ozi River in Ufuma and other villages near Mamu River, see plate 1.



Plate 1: Rice field in Ufuma



Plate 2: Oil processing machine Ufuma

The people equally produce oil in commercial quantity and the process is now mechanized see plate 2 modern oil mill. One can easily see these oil mills in the town and the people call it *Igwe-akwu*. This *Igwe-akwu* is equally observed in neighboring towns like Ndikelionwu, Amaokpala, Omogho etc. There are also garri mills in Ufuma and these other towns.

Other agricultural produce in Ufuma are yam, cassava, plantain, banana, maize etc. Mba (2012) added that the town can boast of major agricultural projects like World Bank River Project, Anambra Fishing Project, ADA palm project and Pokobros rice project among others. It is pertinent to state here that most of the oil and garri mills are privately owned and this is a source of employment to the youths and generate money for the owners; while itinerant farmers from Enugu State cross the Mamu River during farming season to assist indigenous farmers for pay.

Ufuma has the largest market in Orumba called Afor-Ufuma. Traders from neighbouring towns come to this market on daily basis while the Afor-day holds once in four days and is usually the thickest. Roads leading in and out of Ufuma to surrounding towns are beautifully tarred with asphalt. This has given the economy a big boost and leads to free flow of goods and services to the community with a lot of economic benefits.

Tourist Attractions in Ufuma

1. All Christian Practical Praying Band (The popular *EkpeleNwaanyi Ufuma/Ekpere Ufuma*)- This has attracted a lot of religious tourists/visitors to Ufuma.
2. Mamu water fall- Mamu River is the water body that separates Enugu from Anambra on the South-east axis of the state and Ufuma is one of the towns along that axis.
3. Naomi Resort and Suites- an accommodation establishment that is in Enugu-abo village in the Community.
4. Oko Polytechnic, Ufuma campus- this is a campus of the Federal Polytechnic in Oko a nearby community.
5. Ozi River- this is one of the major ecotourism potential of Ufuma. The rice field in plate 1 is located along the bank of Ozi River.
6. Ogbannehi (Ufuma cave)-is also an ecotourism potential in Ufuma which is the subject of interest in this write-up.

Ogbannehii (UFUMA CAVE)

Ogba as it is popularly called by the people is located in Ozegu/Umunebu village, Ufuma. This cave, in pre-colonial days, was a place for worship of a deity called *Nnehii* situated close to the cave. The celebration is coordinated by the chief priest of *Ogba* who is usually from the family of Nwosu-Nwafor. A 100 year old *Ogba* priest, Dennis Nwosu, who is also one of our principal informants, told us that it is a place where people go to ask for different favours from the deity. There is usually an annual festival in the cave between January and February called *Ori-okochi*. During this festival, people gather at the cave site with different items for merriment which include foods and drinks of different kinds and gifts. The chief priest will first thank *Nnehii* (the deity) for protecting them and ask him to sustain the favour and to grant each person his or her heart desires. After this, the priest will kill a fowl as a sacrifice, break kola nut and people will cook and eat, dance and enjoy themselves. Hunters from the community usually come to this shrine to collect charms that will protect them in their hunting expeditions.

Informants claim that these hunters turn to lions which make it easy for them to operate freely in the bush and to kill large number of games and other bigger games especially carnivores like wild cats, hyena, leopards etc. They return to the cave and turn to human beings as soon as hunting is over. Though these

practices have stopped as a result of Christianity, some of the earthenware (ritual pots/plates) for this ritual are said to be hidden inside the cave. Plate 3 shows the front view of the cave.



Plate 3: Front view of Ufuma cave

The cave has one entrance and two entry tunnels inside it. Nwosu Dennis explained that the left tunnel is the entrance for animals like porcupine (*Ebiogwu*), antelope (*Mgbada*), hyena (*edi*) while the right hole is for lions, tiger, leopard and other dangerous carnivores. He said that the presence of dangerous animals makes it difficult for people to come near the cave except on festive occasion like that of *Oriri-Okochi*. The cave is only visited on Afor and Eke market days. One has to come with a kola nut that will be used to offer libation to the deity in charge of the cave which is *Nnehii*. It was the son of the 100 years old priest, Amaechi that performed the ritual when our team visited in 2012 and the same process was repeated in June, 2015 (*during the second authors visit to the cave for his PhD field trip*).



Plate 4: Mr. Amaechi (on black singlet) making incantations at the entrance of the cave.

In front of the cave there was evidence of footprints of animals we cannot identify showing that animals still live in the cave as we were told. Within the environment, we picked the quill of a porcupine (*Ebiogwu*).



Plate 5: Quill of a porcupine found at the entrance of the cave



Plate 6: Showing untouched fallen logs of woods.

The forest surrounding this cave features economic trees like *Ngwu* (*Albizia ferruginea*), *Ube* pear (*Dacryode edilis*), *Ukpaka* (*Ricinus communis*) *Oji* (*Chlorophora excels*), *Egbu* (*Alastoniaboonei*), *Ukwa* (*Treculiaafricana*), mango (*Magnefera indica*). There were lots of fallen logs of woods which are not tampered with (being fetch for fire wood, taken for sale) confirming that the people were not allowed to fetch firewood from the forest probably because of fear of the deity and dangerous animals there (See plate 6).

Ufuma cave has a peculiar feature different from other caves in Orumba and that of Ogbunike in Oyi local Government. First, there was no water course around the cave. Secondly, the environment is undisturbed (see plate 6). Oral tradition has it that animals live in the caves. To affirm this, Amaechi, our tour guide, was always wielding a long machete/muttering some words to scare away any wild animal around. He also made some incantations at the entrance of the cave addressing the animals and asking them not to harm humans at the end of which he struck the entrance wall with the machete and declared the environment safe. It was observed that the cave is caving-in, the phenomenon which Mbah (2012 per. Comm.) described as a result of denudation. There were block-like stones in front of the cave that fell from the upper part of the valley near the cave. He further added that the cave is about 5 kilometers away from that of Owerre-Ezukalla. There is no clear cut entrance or track to the cave. All members of the team have to search their way through the bush/forest with the help of Mr. Amechi and till date (June, 2015) the road to Ufuma cave is covered with bush and thorny leaves.

Other caves in Orumba axis

There are other caves in Orumba (North and South) axis. These are Owerre-Ezukalla, Omogho and Ajalli caves. Owerre-Ezukalla cave is called *Ogbaukwu*. It is located in Owerre-Ezukalla in Orumba South Local Government Area and believed to be the biggest cave in West Africa. It has an escape route in time of danger leading to Awlaw in Oji River, Enugu state. There was evidence of man's past activities in the cave like carved artifacts like gun, automobile spanner, among other things (Osiberoha, 2012). Osiberoha (2012) gave the following information about Owerre Ezukalla cave:

“There are also proofs of multiple upstairs inside the cave with stone steps, some of which lead to an exclusive hide-out which can hardly allow a human head to enter. A leg of an elephant (ukwuenyi) can be viewed by a tourist through a tunnel. A royal throne signifying existence of a palace, wardrobe, store rooms, pit toilet, spanners and guns of stone as well as numerous compartments for the households like kitchen, moulded salt and other utensils” (Osiberoha 2012:27).

The community attested that lions used to live in the cave. This cave might have served as a hideout for the inhabitants of the area in time of inter communal clashes while its importance during the Nigeria/Biafra Civil War cannot be over emphasized. It was reputed to be a hideout for Biafran children and women. The water fall in Ogbaukwu has the capacity to generate hydro-electricity (Okorie, 2012).

Ajalli is one of the towns in Orumba that equally has a cave which is called Ogba by the indigenes. This cave is located in Obinikpa village in Ajalli. It is accessible from the main roads with cars of any kind. The surroundings of the cave have been tampered with as a result of man's activities (Nwankwo, 2006). The cave is the source of water for the people of Obinikpa but at present it is no longer used as a result boreholes that are drilled in different areas of the villages of the town (Oti, per.comm.2009 in Odum, 2011). One claim that could not be verified is that the three caves (Ufuma, Ajalli and Owerre-Ezukalla) are linked to one another through underground. The geologists could take it up from here because this assumption is beyond the scope of this study, and calls for intensive speleological study in Orumba North and South Local Government Area of Anambra.

III. Importance Of Caves And Discussion Of Findings

Cave is an ecotourism attraction. Ecotourism is being propagated because of its ability to conserve the environment, while most developing countries pursue ecotourism. Scholars such as Obot (2008) added that it is sensitive to the environment, and aids conservation, while Christ, Hillel, Matus, and Sweetings (2003) are of the opinion that it leads to biodiversity protection. Weaver (1998) gave credence to ecotourism as leading to new development in communities.

Destinations where caves are offered as a tourism products abound. In Northern part of Central Vietnam, the Phong Nha cave offers special domed grottos with unique rock formations; Harrison's cave on the Caribbean Island of Barbados offers many larger tunnels and chambers filled with smooth and colourful rocks; the Barton Creek Cave in the central American nation of Belize showcases interesting human remains and guided canoe cruises through the cave; the Waitomo Glow-worm cave in New Zealand shows boat trip through the grotto chamber providing an up-close look at the unique and natural light show; while in Africa, the Congos' caves offer something for novice and more experienced spelunkers alike (Lew, 2012 in Itanyi, Okonkwo and Eyisi, 2013). Meanwhile in Nigeria Marshall cave in Yankari Game Reserve, Bauchi state is equally an attraction of its owns inside the reserve. And in Anambra the State government has recently shown concerted interest in Ogbunike cave by flagging of road construction to the cave.

The vegetation of Ufuma cave has been preserved as a result of the people's belief system that is an abode of the gods. Outside this, no other concerted effort has been made in preservation of the attraction. Moreover, tourists/visitors write their names on the front walls of the cave leading to defacing, while natural factor (denudation) cum anthropogenic factors on top of cave have led to caving-in of the cave.

Besides, the activities of overzealous Christians have affected the preservation of the festival that was usually celebrated in front of this cave. This has now been labeled idol worship. If not for this, by now it would have been attracting a lot of tourist/visitors. Eventually, the remaining trees that make up the vegetation of the scenery are being cleared as a result of disregard for traditional norms. The effect of population growth and development in terms of building houses and roads might equally affect the cave surroundings. As at June, 2015, there are evidences of farming activities coming close to the cave.

IV. Conclusion

Ufuma cave needs to be listed among other caves in Orumba axis and Anambra State at large. Its unique features need to be further explored by geographers, geologists, archaeologists, environmentalist etcetera. The community has other tourism attractions that can be developed alongside with the cave. Developing these attractions will contribute to income generating and employment opportunities especially second jobs for the rural farmers. This is the reason United Nation World Tourism Organization in 2013 sees tourism as one of the most effective means for alleviating poverty, a sustainable income option and a major source of foreign revenue and employment, at the disposal of developing and least developed countries (UNWTO, 2013). While in 2015 the UNWTO tourism day was tagged: One billion tourists, one billion opportunities. Ufuma cave is a hidden treasure waiting to be explored and its opportunities abound in terms of financial rewards and job creation. The community will definitely benefit from their tourism attractions if developed.

V. Recommendations/Suggestions

We recommend that the remaining patches of trees surrounding the cave others in Ajalli, Owerre-Ezukalla have some flora and fauna which can make them to be harnessed and kept as reserved community gardens, and it will be a very big asset for the local governments (OrumbaNorth/South).

There is need for community management and ownership of these caves. Scheyven (2003 in Odum 2011) gave the reason why the management of tourism resources should stem from the host community where he said "there is a strong rationale for host communities to play role in managing tourism since they are the ones who feel the direct consequences of poor planning and management". Mismanagement of tourism resources has a lot of direct consequences which may lead to desecration of these caves, over-visitation and other environmental degradation. Most of these communities may have protected these caves and its environment with their bye-laws, norms and beliefs such as prohibition of fetching of fire wood around Ufuma cave. All these should be upheld during the development of these caves.

Secondly, since there is concentration of caves in Orumba axis, a feasibility study is needed to know which attraction should be given priority by the state government. This may be line with Odum (2011) where he suggested that since some local governments have more attractions than others, they should develop what they have more so that it will attract people in the area who will still visit the unpopular sites. This will give identity to each local government and towns so that private and state government can see where to fit. It is, therefore, suggested that development of tourism attractions in Orumba should be concentrated around these caves including lakes and rivers which can be developed as a resort area.

Concerted efforts are needed from both private sector and all arms of government for Ufuma cave to be developed but the community should make the vital moves for such. There is need for the creation of Ufuma Committee for Environmental Preservation (UCEP) in partnership with Anambra State Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Anambra State Ministry of Environment, and Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC).

Notes:

Both authors appreciate the assistance of Mr. Sam Mba any time any of us visits Ufuma. We are grateful and indebted to you. Thank you Sir! This cave was stumbled upon in 2012 during Dr. Onwudufor F.O.F (First author) doctorate field work (in conjunction with Mr. Sam Mba, Odum Chigozie Jude and others) in Orumba axis and the draft of this work was prepared the same year, then in June 2015, Mr. Odum Chigozie Jude (second author) a PhD student of University of Calabar revisited this cave as part of his doctorate field trip. Direct observations and insights was drawn from other caves like Ajalli, Owerrezukalla and Ogbunike caves which he visited between the months of June and July, 2015 during his field trips. Majority of the fund for this study was provided by the first author.

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List of Informants

S/no.	Name	Mode of Communication	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Occupation/Status
1	Nwosu Dennis	Direct	Male	100+	Married	Chief Priest of Ogbaneehi/Farmer
2	Mba Samuel	Direct	Male	Adult	Married	Civil Servant (Geographer)
3.	NwosuAmechi	Direct	Male	Adult	Single	Farmer