

TINAPA BUSINESS RESORT AND THE REST OF US A CASE FOR YALA "IHI-ONIPPE" CULTURAL FESTIVAL The traffic of tourists to other parts of the world for business and leisure has since March 2007 considered Cross River State, Nigeria the preferred tourist destination.

For the first time, the land and people of this part of the world will begin to enjoy mention as one of the world's commercially viable tourist destination and this will automatically change its status as a dependent state on Federal Government allocation to a revenue generating state in the country.

This status is very unique as the people and culture in this area and others will enjoy a boom in their tourism potentials.

As the world starts coming to this state, their desire will be to take home a part of the people as expressed in their cultural heritage.

In this wise, the more than 50 cultural groups and dialect in the state must be adequately represented if the indigenes are to take full advantage of this Tinapa opportunity to explore their cultural endowment.

Among several other competing interests are the Yala speaking tribe situated at the extreme north of the state. The Yala, are said to have migrated to their present location as a result of a fall out with their Idoma brothers in present Benue state and from that period it has chose to chart its own destiny. The popular Ogoja has from time been a part and parcel of the larger Yala nation referred to as "Ogboja" a name derived from the fact that it was a "gift" to the present occupants. The Yala nation as at present have very little surviving cultural identity and it is not immediately visible to decipher their cultural attire or dressing when mixed with other tribes. The Yala instead is a kaleidoscope of several other cultures. This means that it has no immediate stake in the Tinapa tourism Project.

As stated above, the Yala have nothing to offer the teeming visitors who will visit places such as Obudu Ranch and other such attractive sites in Calabar and environs. The ancient "salt well" is almost dry, moreover, there has been no deliberate effort to turn this once upon a time wonder spot to a tourist relic.

When the world starts visiting Cross River State next year, the Yala nation without any deliberate programme on ground will be left out as usual. It will be labeled a "no interest zone" and therefore, cannot benefit from the state's new status as a world must visit tourism landmark and business resort. The Obudu Ranch is presently enjoying an unprecedented influx of visitors from within and outside the country a result of the present administration's foresight. The hospitality industry in Nigeria and particularly Cross River State will never be the same again beginning from next year when Tinapa Business Resort becomes operational. This development is no longer news; the question that is begging for answer is who and who will participate in this opportunity to attract the millions of tourists who comes visiting for business and leisure year in, year out?

From the foregoing it is true that those who will benefit are those persons or group who has something to offer the world particularly a product from their culture. One of the most exciting past-time of tourists is participation in cultural festivities and the Yala people can take advantage of this to modernize the "IHI-ONIPPE" festival and market it to the world. "IHI-ONIPPE" celebration has been an age-long cultural festival that brings all Yala people from far and near to celebrate and appreciate God for the beginning of her New Year which begins towards the end of the English month of August. The importance of the beginning of the year in any culture is often a high point in the calendar of that culture as most often there is a historical reason for such adoption. The desire to tell our own story to the world from a cultural perspective by taking full advantage of the Tinapa business resort in our state should be the concern of all and sundry. The "IHI-ONIPPE" festival is just one of several avenues to draw attention to our challenges and hoping that the Nigerian state hears our cry.

"IHI-ONIPPE" festival we believe will in 2017 become a world tourism stop over if we systematically develop programmes where other Nigerians and visiting tourists from all over the world will participate from 2010.

Make "IHI-ONIPPE" festival a world tourism reality by kindly indicating to sponsor any of the under mentioned event(s).