

TOURISTIC ATTRACTIONS IN THE BAMENDA GRASSFIELDS: THE KEDJOM KEKU NATURAL LANDSCAPES.

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Abstract

Natural landscapes are outstanding sites that serve as shrines for community incantations and have the potential for tourism development. This paper examines natural landscapes such as natural scenic views, caves, waterfalls, indigenous mass graves and the Abongphen forest in Kedjom Keku Fandom as an attraction for tourists. Tourism is a temporary movement of persons from one destination to another with a specific objective designed. The facets of visiting could be for a holiday, sightseeing, visiting a site, picnics with friends and relatives, going to a sporting event, for cultural purposes and ritualistic performances. The study argues that natural landscapes must be conserved for Kedjom Keku tourism. This will satisfy national and international tourists as it will go a long way to influence rural tourism. Data was gleaned from primary and secondary sources to achieve this goal and then analysed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Besides, over 70% of the information for this study was obtained orally. The study revealed that tourism activity will greatly benefit Kedjom Keku as tourists keep visiting for diverse purposes as mentioned earlier. Also, natural landscapes play a very important role in cultural richness which is a seat for tourist attractions. Based on the findings, the investigation submits that the study area is known as a tourist destination in the Bamenda Grassfields.

Keywords: Natural Landscapes, Tourism, Attractions.

Introduction

Kedjom constitutes one of the chiefdoms of the Bamenda Grassfields. It is important to indicate that the area known to be the Bamenda Grassfields was also referred to as the Western Grassfields (Nkwi & Warnier, 1982). Big Babanki (Kedjom Keku) is found in Tubah-Subdivision, located in Mezam Division in the North West Region, Cameroon. Kedjom Keku is situated along the Bambui-Fundong Highway, some 25km from Bamenda City. The fondom is located in the Tubah Sub Division of Mezam Division in the present-day North West Region of Cameroon. Today, the Kedjom Keku people are known as the Babankis (see Figure 1).

This name originated when the Bali Chamba and Bamum referred to them as Banki (Vubo, 2001). To this, the affix “Ba” (people) was added to give Babanki meaning “the people of Banki”. The community occupies contiguous territory between latitude 6° 10’ North and latitude 5° 55’ South and longitude 10° 20’ East and longitude 10° 10’ West (Vubo, 2001). Kedjom Keku shares boundaries with Kom to the North, Babungo (Venngu), Bamessing (Nsei), and Oku to the East, Bambili, Bambui and Awing to the South and Bafut to the West. Also, Kedjom Keku shares dynastic relations with Bafut, Bamunka, the Ekwi royal clan in Kom, and Fingie fondom located to the South, said to have been founded by one of the fon’s deputies following a major dynastic split (Vubo, 2001). This relationship fosters social, economic, cultural and political cohesion to strengthen their harmony and peaceful co-existence.

Kedjom Keku has a population of between 25000 and 30,000 inhabitants (Mutan, 2001). According to the 2001 population census as indicated by Hubau, Kedjom Keku Fondom had a population of 22,000 people (Hubau, 2020). The location of Kedjom Keku is strategic and serves as a road junction and meeting point for villages in Boyo Division. Therefore, the location of Kedjom Keku Fondom will be a tourism centre if the natural landscapes are well preserved and improved for tourists. Landscapes are sceneries of nature, according to Omon, landscapes are the configuration of the earth’s surface especially the classification, description, nature and the development of the different surface features. These surface features include hills, valleys, lakes, high and low lands, rivers, sand bars and dunes (Omon, 2014).



Figure 1: Map of Babanki Showing Kedjom Keku. **Sources:** Wuwih (2019).

Research Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to give value to natural landscapes as a signal for tourist attraction. Besides, these natural landscapes have interesting messages and meanings which divulge useful facts about the history of the Kedjom Keku people that could be told in a clear way by exploring and exploiting these natural landscapes. Also, the absence of accommodation center in this polity cannot be offered quality services such as hostels and restaurants for the tourists visiting Kedjom Keku. These are recognised attributes of the hospitality sector. Equally, tourists will have access to explore the human potentials in the fendom such as art objects, traditional festivals, royal museum and traditional architectures.

A Contextual Background of Tourism

According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism is one of the most important economic, social, cultural and political phenomena of the twenty-first century (Hayward, 2000). Tourism brings frequent interaction among the people and continues to sustain peace and harmony. In Europe, tourism has greatly contributed to the globalization of the world as tourist sites attract the movement of tourists from one nation to another. In a country such as Britain, tourism plays an essential part in the development of the economy. In 1999, research revealed that over 25.5 million people visited Britain for tourism purposes and making tourism expenditure grow to about 61 billion pounds and the total jobs created in the tourism-related business were estimated to be nearly 1.8 million (Fatai, 2011). In addition, in Greece, tourism has contributed immensely both economically and socially to the growth of the country and is well-known as the world's most visited country in developed country (Fatai, 2011). To boost the tourism sector around the world, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) was created in 1975 to promote sustainable and universal access to the tourism sector across the world (Hubau, 2020).

In Asia, tourism plays important social and economic roles. It was commonly seen as an important form of community economic development with the pace and scale of tourism placing significant pressure on heritage resources such as their arts, parks, natural landscapes, and handicrafts (Jamieson, 2000). Managing and planning for tourism in Asia is compounded by the incredible growth and problems that existed in many cities. The level and rate of poverty in both urban and rural areas present a management challenge. The lack of funding is an important issue that has a significant influence on how and where tourism is developed within the region (Jamieson, 2000). Therefore, the growth of tourism in most countries has been plagued by numerous socio-economic impediments.

Tourism in Africa is an important economic activity. It is proven that tourist interests in the African continent lie in the scenic landscapes, historic monuments, religious centres, ethnographic resources, modern festivals and arts and crafts which are essential in promoting Africa's rich cultural

heritage. In East African countries where tourism thrives, it is based on equable climatic conditions, eternal sunshine, and rich flora and fauna. Also, in West Africa, the presence of multifarious cultures and rich cultural resources which could be packaged and "sold" to potential tourists has attracted them to Nigeria (Okpoko, 1990). The World Trade Organization (WTO) recommended that Africa could more than double the number of tourist arrivals from 50 million in 2010 to 134 million in 2030 (Okpoko, 1990). To this effect, historic relics such as the Egyptian Pyramids, the rock churches of Ethiopia, the South African Robben Island prison where Former South African President Nelson Mandela was incarcerated for 27 years, the Island of Goree in Senegal (a symbol of the memory of slave trade in Africa) as well as the Safari parks and other valuable sites of the Africa continent (Okpoko, 1990).

Cameroon is one of the cradles of tourism in Africa. She has several touristic sites such as national parks, game reserves, beautiful lakes, coastal beaches, waterfalls and mountain peaks. These sites have brought in tourists from Africa, Europe, Asia, South America and North America. Therefore, there is no gainsaying that Cameroon has received tourists from all over the world. The growth of the tourism industry in Cameroon has contributed to socio-economic development. Therefore, there is no contradiction that Cameroon is often described as Africa in miniature based on human and physical features. Historically, on the 3rd of December 1974, the former president, Amadou Ahidjo issued an order to improve airports, railways and hotel accommodations for tourists. Still in this line, Law No 91-8 of 30 July 1991 was passed to improve the Cameroon heritage and management. The objective was to call for the protection and promotion of monuments, objects and artistic interests (Csapo, 2007).

In the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, the advent of tourism remains an economic pull factor for the population. This is because the region is unique with physical and human features which are a centre of attraction to tourists such as Lake Awing, Oku, Bambili, Royal Palaces, Museums (Private, public, community), landscape, waterfalls, Presbyterian Handicraft Centre (Prescraft), Festivals and many more. In Kedjom Keku, tourism remains an indispensable cultural heritage because it represents their identity, enables communication and participation and has a fundamental understanding of their beliefs, values, ideologies and other intangible aspects of their culture. This study is prompted by the fact that little attention or nothing has been done to preserve and document these potentials which attract tourists. In this light, touristic attractions in Kedjom Keku have been uncared for by the local community. However, the features are still lying dormant or untapped but if probable documentation and protection are established, Kedjom Keku will be a circuit of tourist attractions around Cameroon and remains a place for social interaction and entertainment.

Findings:**Tourist Attractions in Kedjom Keku Fondom: Natural Landscapes**

Natural landscapes could also be represented as physical features. Since the inception of human societies, natural landscapes had always been indispensable for tourism. Here, the natural environment offered an advantage to the Kedjom people as the community received tourists from worldwide. In this regard, Kedjom Keku could be considered a seat of numerous attractions ranging from places of natural beauty to cultural and historical heritage. This has made the Fondom become a hub of tourist destinations of the Bamenda Grassfields, a place for leisure and relaxation which entertained tourists through its natural landscapes such as natural scenic views, caves, waterfalls, indigenous mass graves and Abongphen forest as will be examined. Certainly, the above-mentioned natural landscapes/potentials make the fondom a welcoming place and the local customs and values combined with the harmonic environment; combined with their friendly nature, makes Kedjom Keku a unique touristic destination. According to Tchindjang & Etoga (2022), the beauty of natural landscapes is only equalled by its charm and fascination produced by the features which attract tourists.

Natural Scenic Sites

The beautiful natural landscape of Kedjom Keku comprises many features that are of interest to many tourists. Examples of this landscape are Kefem and Abongphen hills which are impressively covered by natural savanna vegetation. These hills are mostly occupied by graziers who practise livestock rearing. Most tourists who visit Kedjom Keku undertake guided tours of most of these hills and mountains to experience nature. Equally, the valleys are made up of corridor forests comprised of trees and to a greater extent raffia palm. Therefore, these are sites that tourists often visit when they come to Kedjom Keku. In relation to this, Agbaje-Williams (1990) explains that African countries are highly blessed not only with human resources but also with natural resources and art factual materials which attract tourists from across the globe.

Also, these natural scenic sites have been used to organize mountain race competitions in 2018 sponsored by a Non-Governmental Organization called Conservation Association for Sustainable Development (CASUD) to protect, and conserve these attractive sites (see plate 1a-c), (Ntoh, I., Per. Com. 2019). This competition always pulls many tourists to Kedjom Keku because it is often exciting and interesting. Furthermore, these natural scenic sites bring back a memory of where the Kedjom fighters took refuge as self-protection in the battlefields among the neighbouring ethnic groups (as illustrated in plate 1a-c), (Ntoh, I., Per. Com. 2019). A glaring example was the nine years of war between Kom and Kedjom around 1887 (Mutan, 2001). The cause of this war was Fon Yuh's (Kom) arrogance. Yuh's plan of

subjugation of Kedjom was hatched when a hunter (a Kedjom man) caught “Kwifon’s animal” (kebo) a leopard and Kedjom Kwifon skinned the animal and Fon Yuh of Kom challenged the autonomy of Kedjom to do so (Mutan, 2001, p.41). As a result, the Kedjom Kwifon was forced to declare war with Kom under Fon Vugah I in about 1887 (Mutan, 2001).

In addition, the natural scenic hills like “Phen Néné or phen-e-Ntuh” in Kedjom Keku were used to announce the death of a Fon in the early hours (4 am) by serious gun-firing. The purpose of gun firing up on the hills was to announce to the neighbouring villages like Bafut, Kom, Fengie, Bambui, Bambili, Nkwen, Kedjom Kektinguh, and Jung that the “light has gone out” in Kedjom Keku. In the Bamenda Grassfields Fons never die but they are “missing” or have “passed away” because traditions insist that life exists after death in even spiritual or other transformed forms (Mundi, J. T., Per. Com. 1990). The “Manjong” known as war groups were responsible for the gun firing on the different hills like “phen-e-Ntuh” behind the palace (Mundi, J. T., Per. Com. 1990). Therefore, the valorisation of these natural scenic sites in the study area creates awareness and educates the tourists on the indigenous past and their present-day values.



(a)

(b)

(c)

Plate 1a-c: Natural Scenic Hills. **Source:** Fieldwork (2019)

Caves

Kedjom Keku has a good number of caves which could encourage tourist activities. These caves would rapidly increase economic, socio-cultural and environmental benefits to the community which occur through interactions between the indigenous people and tourists during tourism experiences. The cave at Abongphen is used for rituals during the annual dance festival called *Kebeng-ndong* (dance of the flute). This dance is a very special ceremony, hosted by the Fon, often to commemorate the loving memory of all princes and warriors who had died as well as a special celebration of the death of the brave and kind Fon Mbwuain (Mbwungeng), who passed on without leaving a successor. Thus, the dance

is characterised by prayers for the protection of citizens and prayers for a hitch-free planting season (Toh, N. S., Per. Com. 2019).

According to Bumuh, in the reign of Fon Philip Vubangsi, the dance attained international recognition attracting tourists from Switzerland and the United States of America. In this light, the dance attained and maintained the status of a cultural festival worth national recognition and promotion (Viyu, B. M., Per. Com. 2019). Oral tradition holds that around the reign of Fon Kebeng (1770-1805), (Tsongwain, G. C., Per. Com. 2015) there were impending attacks from the Bali-Kumbat at Fekeng-Monkam's men raiding for wives and slaves. The old and disabled who could not run fast and who if captured would be tortured to release war secrets were sequestered in a house and roasted alive. Most of the art treasures gotten from this old and disabled home were rushed to the caves at the edge of Mbuangang and preserved in charcoal. These artefacts can only be recovered after the performance of complex rituals whose procedures may already have been lost in memory (Viyu, B. M., Per. Com. 2019). Significantly, this cave acted as a storehouse where some cultural artefacts were protected against defacement from the enemies who raided the fondom. This cave held great historical importance to the people's heritage.

More so, these caves are natural attractions that animate the minds of tourists because they are naturally inherited features. Apart from being used as refuge points during inter-tribal wars, the insides of the caves harbour all kinds of bats, reptiles and spotted animal bones (Ndifondam, I., Per. Com. 2019). According to Kemie, the animal bones prove that the cave was a safe place for animal socialization. The presence of these bones could be explored and studied by palaeontologists to know the type of animal that lived in the cave (Kemie, C., Per. Com. 2022). In the present day, the most visible bird is the bat. When these bats hear strange sounds, they fly and produce shrilling sounds (Ndifondam, I., Per. Com. 2019). Culturally, the spirits of bats are used as a protective charm to protect warriors against pandemics such as flu, cold, virus and other infections (Ndifondam, I., Per. Com. 2019). As earlier mentioned, the rituals performed here make the site not harmful to the visitors who abide by the rules and regulations of the cave as affirmed by our informants. Therefore, carved stools with bats are among the animal species represented in artistic objects in Kedjom Keku which tourists could explore to understand the people's history and way of life. In this light, most of the prestigious caves in Kedjom Keku promote cave tourism.

Similarly, in the Bamenda Grassfields, caves have been indispensable to almost all fondoms. A glaring example is Bafut fondom where the "Abuhngo'oh" and "Ndenghoho; uh" caves found in Niko-Bafut hold great historical importance and experience to the people's heritage. These caves served as a hiding place for the Bafut people during the inter-war years with a focus on the German-Bali wars against Bafut (Ngongfi, 2013). Okonkwo et al agree that cave tourism is a multifaceted form of tourism ranging from natural areas, historical attributes of a place, archaeological sites, scenic

landscapes, traditional architecture, local cuisine, and music, to arts and dance. He adds that tourism conserves the environment and enriches the economy of a place (Okonkwo, Afoma and Martha, 2017). It is in this niche that caves have good ecotourism attributes with unique geological features that can attract tourists and at the same time sustain the environment, cultural heritage and the well-being of the residents if properly harnessed for tourism development. The residents have also seen the potential of the cave for development as the community youths manage the site and offer it to the public as a tourism product. The historical experience and psychological thoughts of this cave project the tangible heritage of the chiefdom that attracts tourists.



Plate 2: Front View of the Abongphen Cave. **Source:** Fieldwork (2019).

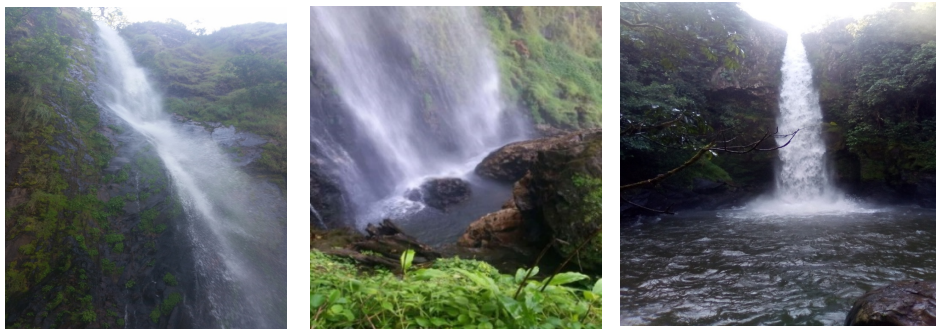
According to a Kingmaker, each year sacred rites were performed at the cave to appease or feed the gods of the hills with food such as oil, cooked corn flour and egusi. The Kingmakers who visit the cave must be 50 years old and above. Inside the cave, no one could make three steps forward as a sign to respect the gods of the hill (nyì-ngùtə'tán). The purpose of this rite was to seek the protection of the land and end all calamities affecting the land (Njuh, S., Per. Com. 2022). In this light, traditional manifestations carried out by the kingmakers to communicate with the god of the hills will attract tourists to Kedjom Keku.

Waterfalls

The magnificent view of waterfalls in the Kedjom Keku is part of the immovable cultural heritage which attracts tourists for adventure, education, research, socialization and recreation. These waterfalls have become sacred sites because cultural practices were carried out and performed in and around the waterfalls such as Nchuyise refer as the *ntangsu* waterfall and Mbawse refer as the *Vutugh* waterfall. The origin of these waterfalls was unknown as testified by the inhabitants but before Kedjom split¹ into Kedjom

Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh these waterfalls existed. Some of the informants postulated that *Nchuyise* waterfall had a deity called *nyingong* (god). This deity could be in the form of snakes, human beings or animals which played the role of purification, consultation and appeasement. This deity is not harmful to visitors when they abide by the norms of the sites. More so, the myth surrounding these waterfalls as explained by the people confirms that in the early 1940s and 1950s sounds of xylophones were heard played on market days when the waterfall experienced high flow (as shown in plate 3a-b). The overflow indicated that the important elite of the community would die which was probably a coincidence (Tiambom, J., Per. Com. 2022). Thus, tourists were forbidden to visit this waterfall on market days referred to as “country Sunday”.

Also, the Mbawse waterfall is a center of attraction and is surrounded by beautiful rocks (see plate 3c). It can be affirmed that some traditional doctors used this waterfall as their traditional ground to cure the sick. Usually, libations were poured and sacrifices were made to the ancestors of the land during the annual festival dance at this waterfall. This ritualistic performance was done to the god of the gun (*nyì-ngù zhi*) because they were seeking the protection of hunters and those firing guns during the death celebration. In addition, it is believed that this waterfall is considered as that world beyond where the rulers of Kedjom live when they “disappear” (die) from this world (Tiambom, J., Per. Com. 2022). In addition, the broad surface of the waterfall allows swimmers especially the tourists and inhabitants to entertain themselves in the open pool during leisure moments. However, most waterfalls are considered shrines because libations and sacrifices are offered to the ancestors of the land. According to Ndifondam, healing rituals are performed at the foot of the waterfalls to cure the sick by praying to the gods of water, and bathing the sick with the water while the spirits heal the sick ones (Ndifondam, I., Per. Com. 2019). Tatah (2018) postulates that in most waterfalls or immovable cultural heritage sites, purification rites and rituals are performed after offering gifts such as salt and palm oil to the gods of the site through the intercession of a permanent caretaker.



(a)

(b)

(c)

Plate 3a-c: Partial view of the Waterfalls. **Source:** Fieldwork (2019).

Mass Graves (Pfenə Mbvimə)

In the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, some societies have traditional mass graves where indigenes that died of contagious diseases (leprosy, epilepsy, syphilis, and tuberculosis among others) and those who committed evil practices were buried. In Kedjom Keku, a portion of the scenic landscape at *Kephem* was an indigenous mass grave (bottomless pit). In 1913, one of these graves was found in Kedjom Keku at Kefem while the Kwifon society was responsible for all the burial rites. Kwifon is a secret society group peculiar to most of the Tikari groups with its aim to govern and maintain the laws and order in their communities (Asoh, P. M., Per. Com. 2022). As recounted by Vuzhung, the burial practice at *Pfenə Mbvimə* ended in 1947 when hospitals were established, Christianity was introduced and the demise of a royal masquerade called *mobuh* (Vuzhung, P. A., Per. Com. 2016). This site is a crowd-pulling crowd center for tourists as they seek to understand the burial practice and cultural rites performed before the dead bodies were buried.

A piece of the oral tradition narrated through stories was the main source of information in societies where there was no documented evidence. In Kedjom Keku, those that died of dreadful diseases were described as *pfu bighə* (bad death) and needed the attention of *pfəmsi* or *pfemse*. These were special elders from the community who prepared the mortal remains for burial and places where abominations happened while the *leum* have the power to exhume corpses for special treatment like wizards (Vusi, G., Per. Com. 2022). Here, the tourists will be eager to understand how the corpses of people who died of dreadful diseases were treated and removed from the house for burial. A strict order was passed by the *Kwifon* society which instructed *pfəmsi* to pin a spear in front of the deceased person's compound. This spear signified that only special elders could view the corpse before it was removed from the house when *pfəmsi* had performed the burial rites and manifestations attached to the corpse. Usually, strict order was passed by the *pfəmsi* that the corpse was not to be praised and considered it evil because it was frightful, contaminated and needed to be avoided as a result of risks and uncertainties as the tradition announced (Vuzhung, P. A., Per. Com. 2016 & Vugah, E. N., Per. Com. 2017).

In addition, to remove the corpse from the house, *mpfəmsi bva'a bəngəŋ* made a hole in the wall of the house through which the corpse was removed at night and taken for burial at *pfenə mbvimə* (Wihbongale, C. V., Per. Com. 2017). Lang (2015) explained that rituals were intended to cleanse the community when there was pollution and misfortune. The corpses were transported with *ku'* (ladder) at the site. Notifications were used as a signal to inform the community of who had died (Virsi, V. A., Per. Com. 2015). A glaring example was the case of leprosy when the excreta of goats was thrown on the roadside on their way to the burial site. Also, when a person died of swollen stomach and swollen legs, *fəu' mbu-mbu* (leaves) were lined up on the footpath with the excreta of goats on the leaves by *ngangse* for the

corpse transporter to walk on it to the burial site (Vubangsi, Y. M., Per. Com. 2016). The delegation was led by *Lii moh bii* (royal masquerade) which comprised the bereaved family members and mourners.

Also, the *kəbvəm* (boundary stick) as shown in plate 4 was planted beside the grave which signified the danger of the site (Bansu A. D., Per. Com. 2016). After the burial, the *ngangse* announced to the community that everybody who had a calabash (*kətyəm*) should fill the water half inside it and pour the water on the ground. This signifies that the diseases had been driven away while the bereaved family's head would then shout as a way to announce their loss in front of the calabash before the water was poured out on the ground in front of their home (Lobte N. R., Per. Com. 2015). In this light, tourists would be attracted to this indigenous story attesting to the cultural richness of the fendom.



Plate 4: Mass Grave (Pfenə Mbvimə). **Source:** Fieldwork (2019).

Abongphen Community Forest

In the 17th century, Kedjom people settled at Abongphen. Abongphen means suitable mountain or beautiful hills situated east of Tubah-Sub Division. Kedjom Keku got her name from this forest. Kedjom Keku means people of the forest. Today, the forest is called Misty Mountain Forest, Afro-Montane or Cloudy Forest which lies in a volcanic mountain area (1500-2500m alt), (Kemie, C., Per. Com. 2022). This forest has been a great touristic destination and a wonderful research ground from time memorial till date. The Abongphen forest was part of a biodiversity hotspot in the 30's across the world and was a place with the highest priority to be protected because of its high level of endemism and endangered species of fauna and flora. The Abongphen forest (as illustrated in plate 5) hosted lots of endemic and endangered species found on the International Union for Conservation (IUCN) red list (Kemie, C., Per. Com. 2022). For example, the Nigerian-Cameroon Chimpanzee (*Pan Troglodytes ellioti*), as well as Touraco bannermani and platystera laticincta.

Also, the forest has a multitude of biodiversity reptiles (amphibians) and plants such as *Newtonia camerunensis* (massive tree) which were also medicinal plants. In addition, the forest harbours species of trees for diverse purposes. For instance, *Prunus Africana* or *Planticam* are used for the treatment of prostate cancer, *fueh* (*Cordia Africana*) is an outstanding specie of wood in Kedjom Keku used for royal carvings such as drums, bowls, statuettes and spoons. It has hard and heavy-brownish. It is scarce, and can mostly be found in the Abongphen forest far up in the hills as well as *feshu* (*cordia platithyrsa*, boraginaceae) equally used for carving objects such as royals' beds, thrones, stools statues were gotten from this forest (Knöpfli, 1997). There is Sapele or whitewood (*fuchih*) used for carvings and roofing of houses. According to a conservator, this Sapele tree spotted in the forest grows up to 50m high and with a circumference of about 3 - 4m (Kemie, C., Per. Com. 2022). In addition, there exist fragmented forests within the community owned by indigenes for their private use who promote forest conservation within the locality. Forests also serve as hunting grounds and abodes for the spirits or shrines.

This forest has attracted a lot of tourists for research purposes as a result of its rich biodiversity hotspot harbouring an enormous amount of fauna and flora diversity. The Kedjom Keku people were known as great hunters and their games included monkeys, antelopes, deer, leopards, rodents, rat moles, rabbits, and grass cutters among others. They only used traps as non-professionals. The hunted products were sold to travellers on the Bamenda-Fondung highways. That notwithstanding, hunting has seriously declined as the hunting grounds are extinct due to the immigrant Fulani. Subsistence hunting exercise is practised only in the bushes around and mostly by children during the dry periods. From the sales of these hunting products, they make money to take care of their needs.

Historically, within the forest, there is the Mbi Crater Lake considered the main water catchment for the people of Kedjom Keku and the whole of Tubah Sub-Division supplies water directly to localities as the forest lies between two great river basins (Sanaga and the Niger Basin), (Josehpe, 1970). According to the conservator in 1986, this crater was declared a game reserve because it was home to some endemic species of fauna and flora. Culturally, this Crater Lake is the main traditional shrine for the people of Kedjom Keku. As explained by the Head of Kwifon society, once a year the Kedjom Keku spiritual notables' (*ngangse*) visit the site with gifts to offer sacrifices to the gods and in turn, the gods reveal to them secret messages to the people as well as bless the entire community. This Mbi Crater Lake was used by blacksmiths in cooling their objects during the era of the United Kedjom (Ngong, J., Per. Com. 2019).



Plate 5: Cross Section of Abongphen Forest. **Source:** Fieldwork (2019).

Discussion of Findings

Given the growing importance of tourism sectors in the Bamenda Grassfields, tourist sites in Kedjom Keku have received little attention due to socio-political upheavals and the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, tourist sites in Kedjom Keku, particularly natural landscapes, are suffering as people become more reliant on farming and other entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, despite having interesting histories, these sites have not been exposed to wider audiences for the past six years due to the Anglophone crisis. To protect natural landscapes in Kedjom Keku fendom, a combination of traditional and government approaches should be used. In this light, proper management and protection of these physical landscapes will be implemented, and indigenous peoples will benefit from the community's socioeconomic development. Again, in order for these sites to gain scholarly attention, there is a need to raise awareness and implement resilience strategies to manage and protect Kedjom Keku's natural landscapes for touristic purposes. As a result, the study reveals that, in addition to natural landscapes as a focal point for tourist attractions, human factors are also important circuits for tourism activity in the study area.

Conclusion

This work has significantly discussed the core objective with succinct examples to prove that Kedjom Keku was a tourist center. The physical attraction remains a priority to the tourists who visit the community. The area is endowed with a variety of touristic potentials ranging from the natural scenic sites, caves, waterfalls, indigenous mass grave and Abongphen forest. All these have attracted many tourists to the area, both of national and international origin, while recently the number of visitors has reduced over the years as a result of socio-political upheavals in the community and North West Region. However, with proper management and preservation of these tourist attractions, the community is likely to benefit from socio-economic development such as lodging facilities, an extension of electricity,

restaurants, shops, and employment. This study generally concludes that not every aspect of tourism potential in Kedjom Keku has been exploited. In this light, the current paper remains a reference point for other researchers in the field of tourism as the topic remains open for further research.

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