

A History of the Creation and Development of Benue State since 1976

Professor Sylvester Igbasue Ugbegili

Department of History
Benue State University, Makurdi
Ugbegili4u@gmail.com
08035098734

Gabriel Orfega Ortserga

Department of History
Benue State University, Makurdi
07031190050

orfegaortserga@gmail.com/gortserga@bsum.edu.ng
&

Joseph Ezekiel Obuje, PhD

Department of History and International Studies
Federal University of Lafia

ABSTRACT

The main thrust of this paper is to examine the history of the creation and development of Benue state since 1976. The study used the historical methodology of research which made use of essentially primary, secondary and tertiary data to achieve its objectives. A multidisciplinary approach was also used in its analysis because of the complex nature of the subject matter. The paper reveals that the journey to the creation of Benue state started with the creation of the Benue province as part of the Northern region by the colonial administration. Due to continued agitations by the minority groups in the Northern region including the

Middle Belt for a state, which would take care of their interest, the Benue-Plateau state was created. The paper however argues that, because of the inability of the newly created Benue-Plateau State to sufficiently address the dichotomy between the Benue and Plateau blocs of the State, it led to serious feud between these two, this culminated in the agitation and consequently, the creation of Benue State for the Benue bloc of the Benue-Plateau in 1976. The paper among other things examines the developmental strides in the state since its creation with a view of ascertaining its level of development. It also examines the development potentials that the state is endowed with including, agriculture, natural minerals, tourism, etc, and suggested for a proper harnessing of these potentials in the state to tackle issues of unemployment, poor infrastructure, poverty, etc, so as to place Benue state on the map of developed states in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Development, Agriculture, Mineral Resources, Infrastructures, and Cultural Heritage.*

Introduction

There are growing discussions on the level of development of Benue state since its creation for the past four decades. Naturally, the state is endowed with enormous potentials that could have propelled or accelerated its development to an enviable height if properly harnessed by successive administrations in the state. Like any other state in Nigeria, the pertinent question on the lips of many is that, why the retarded level of development in the state despite the numerous potentials that the state is blessed or endowed with that could have served as propelling drive for its socio-economic development? What has been responsible for the high poverty and unemployment levels in the state? Other areas of concerns include what is happening in sectors like agriculture, education, health, infrastructure

which are having direct impact on the poverty and employment levels in the State?

The name Benue as a matter of fact is synonymous to agriculture and food security in Nigeria. This is because; the state is naturally blessed or endowed with human-friendly physiographic and climatological attributes.¹ These favourable conditions and location therefore places the State in central part of Nigeria which supports massive production of crops, livestock and fish. It is the recognition of the State's contribution in food production that has earned it the status of the "Food Basket of the Nation".² In the light of the above therefore, the discussion here looks at areas like the geographical location of Benue State, the evolution of the State, and of course do an appraisal of the potentialities of the State and how successive administrations in the state have harnessed these resources vis-a-vis the level of development of the state. This will engender a bird's eye view of how the state has fared since its creation in 1976.

Conceptual Perspectives

To put this paper in a proper perspective, it is pertinent to clarify the concept of development which is very central and integral in this discourse. The term development is as old as human civilization. The concept has been defined or explained differently by different scholars; however for the benefit of this discourse it will x-ray some perspectives by some scholars to have a leeway into its thrust. Development is seen by Rist as "a constant evolution, based on the belief of human perfectibility and propelled by the continued search for societal well-

¹ A. Pine (ed), *Milestones in Leadership: Essays in Honour of Governor Gabriel Suswam*, (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2010), 53.

²² Oral Interview: Daniel S. Ortserga, 65 years, Lecturer, Makurdi, 20/2/2022

being”.³ According to this view therefore, development is a constant and non-linear process, targeted at achieving a common goal of well-being.⁴

Meanwhile, the United Nations (UN) Conference on the Environment and Development (ECO-92), which was held in Rio de Janeiro, brought back the issue of development on the front burner as a very sacrosanct topic that has to be the engagement of all and sundry on the international political agenda. The conference made advanced, concerted and broader resolutions by fronting the issues of environmental preservation and national use of natural resources as being very fundamental and imperative in resolving social and economic growth problems.⁵ Similarly, institutions like World Resources Institute and the World Bank also advocated for what they regarded as ‘Green Economy’ (green national accounting); this graciously advocated for the preservation of natural resources like rivers, lakes, forests, etc. The preservation of these natural resources or what is regarded as the green natural account can in no small measure contribute to the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of states up to 16% of these states’ earnings.⁶

The foregoing sees development beyond mere improvement of the well-being of the citizenry but also the

³ Rist cited in J. S. Jair and Q. H. Rogeris, “Measurement: An Analysis of Concepts, Measurement an Indicators” in Brazil Administration Review(BAR) an Online Publication ptt://www.anpad.org.br/bar, BAR Curitiba vol. 5,No. 2, 2008, 105. Retrieved on 23/5/2022

⁴ Rist cited in J. S. Jair and Q. H. Rogeris, “Measurement: An Analysis of Concepts, Measurement an Indicators

⁵ J. S. Jair and Q. H. Rogeris, “Measurement: An Analysis of Concepts, Measurement an Indicators” in Brazil Administration Review(BAR) an Online Publication ptt://www.anpad.org.br/bar, BAR Curitiba vol. 5,No. 2, 2008, p.106

⁶ J. S. Jair and Q. H. Rogeris, “Measurement: An Analysis of Concepts, Measurement an Indicators...p106

preservation of the environment and the proper harnessing of the natural resources could help improve the GDP of states that are endowed with these natural resources. For Schumpeter, development means the evolution, unfolding revelation and innovation.⁷ This view sees development as something that will come naturally as a consequence of economic growth. For Scholars like Smith and Ricardo, development is seen as conscious and deliberate steps or measures taken directly or indirectly in addressing what they term as 'economic problems' like poverty reduction of countries, tackling the issue of population explosion, bringing economic policies to enhance development, improving the economy and making available resources for the population that will be beneficial to the poorest in the country.⁸

Pearson argues that development means improvement in quantitative, qualitative or both, in the use of the available resources in any given country.⁹ He argues further that, development does not just entail the improvement on the social, political and economic well-being of the citizenry, but it also covers or encompasses the reduction in poverty, unemployment, inequality, etc.¹⁰ This position is also supported by Mahmoud as he posits that, development is an economic growth predicated on the per-capita income of citizens or the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a particular nation regardless of the people involved in the distribution.¹¹ Again, development

⁷ Schumpeter cited in J. S. Jair and Q. H. Rogeris, "Measurement: AN Analysis of Concepts, Measurement an Indicators...p107

⁸ J. S. Jair and Q. H. Rogeris, "Measurement: An Analysis of Concepts, Measurement an Indicators...p107

⁹ R. Pearson, "Rethinking Cender Matters in Development" in T. Allen and A. Thomas (eds), *Poverty and Development in the 21st Century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000,)p 103

¹⁰ R. Pearson, "Rethinking Cender Matters in Development

¹¹ F. Mahmoud, *African Women and Feminists School of Thought*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000,), 123

can be seen as a social condition within a state that the needs of the citizens/population of state are met or satisfied by the rational or sustainable use of the national resources available in the country based on the technology, which is the reflection and representation of the cultural features of the country.¹² According to this therefore, for any society to be regarded as a developed one the following must be present in that society:

- i. There must be availability of the basic needs like, housing, healthcare services and nutrition,
- ii. Economically, there must be availability of employment opportunities and redistribution of the state resources,
- iii. Politically, there should be in existence the law that regulates human conducts or behaviour in the state, etc.¹³

From the foregoing therefore, this section of the paper has consciously tried to look at various perspectives of scholars about the concept of development. This is to enable ascertaining or taking an informed position if Benue State that is at the centre of this paper has been able to achieve any of the parameters put forward by these scholars given the availability of the resources the state is blessed or endowed with.

The Evolution of Benue State

In trying to unravel the history of the creation of Benue State, it will not only be pertinent, but it will also be fundamentally important to give a background or examine the origin of the word Benue. There are various perspectives of the origin of the word Benue that would be interrogated. According to Yakubu Useni, the word Benue is a coinage of a Jukun phrase "*Beni whe*" which is literally

¹² G.E. Reyes, "Four Main Theories of Development: Modernization, Dependency, World-System, and Globalization" in Nomadas. Mediterranean Perspective/ISSBN 1889-7231

¹³ G.E. Reyes, "Four Main Theories of Development:

translated as “come and eat”.¹⁴ He argues that, the Jukun’s migration into the Benue valley region was done in phases or batches and not simultaneous. The first batch of Jukun that came to the Benue valley region first arrived at Abinsi, which were the Juku-Wanu, the Achoko people who after establishing themselves at the bank of the Benue river at Abinsi, invited their other Jukun brothers to come and join them as they settled at the Benue river bank at Abinsi, hence the name Benue.¹⁵ Another account has it that, the word Benue originated from a Southern emirate of Adamawa which is on the upper Benue. The emirate is found in south limestone near Gulba along Gongola, a tributary of the Benue River.¹⁶ Meanwhile, an interview with Igbudu Kusun also revealed that the name Benue is a derivative of Tiv expression ‘*Ber nor*’ which is literally translated as river of hippopotamus.¹⁷

Meanwhile, George T. Goldie, a British explorer cum administrator in 1897 argued that, the word Binue is traced to Garoue in the Northern Cameroon region which is predominantly occupied by a minority group who speak Bata (Gbwata) language. It is a language that is spoken by natives of the border areas around Adamawa and Garoue area in Cameroon.¹⁸ According to him, the natives consider the Benue River as the source of Cameroon, meaning, “Mother of Waters”. This implies that the word Benue

¹⁴ Y. Useni, “The Historical Antecedence of the Jukun People of Benue state” in <http://nigeriazipcodes.com/10525/history-of-Benue-state>

¹⁵ Y. Useni, “The Historical Antecedence of the Jukun People of Benue state

¹⁶ A. Omigbodun, “Cameroon, the river Benue and Nigeria” in Vanguard Newspaper of July 13th, 2013.

¹⁷ Oral Interview: Igbudu Kusun ,98 years, Agasha, Traditional Ruler, 04/02/2022

¹⁸ George T. Goldie, *The Niger and the West Sudan*, (London: MacMillan and Co, 1897), 245.

comes from the present day River Benue.¹⁹ Be that as it may, the naming of Benue State after River Benue was predicated on the predominance of the river as the main geographical feature in the area.

The journey to what is today known as Benue State started with the creation of the Benue Province as part of Northern region. Thus, the state is a surviving legacy of an administrative entity that hitherto was in the protectorate of Northern region. It was regarded as the Munchi province until the 1918 when the prominent geographical feature, river Benue was adopted as the name of the province.²⁰ In 1967, when the then Head of State, Gen. Yakubu Gowon created States, the Benue Province was part of what was created as Benue-Plateau State.²¹ Be that as it may, the euphoria that a new State in the middle belt region would help address the yearnings of the minority groups in the area like the oppression and marginalization of the middle belt region by what Adagba Okpaga refers to as the “Northern Oligarchy.”²² Ordinarily, one would expect that the creation of the Benue-Plateau State would sufficiently address most of the developmental needs or challenges of the minority groups in the area as championed or canvassed by notable personalities in the region in the likes of, J.S. Tarka, Pastor Lot, Patrick Dokotri, etc.

Against the backdrop of the emerging feud between the Plateau and Benue blocs/components on one hand and the group which Mvendaga Jibo described as the

¹⁹ George T. Goldie, *The Niger and the West Sudan...*246

²⁰ M. Jibo, *Tiv Politics Since 1959* (Katsina-Ala: Mandate International Ltd., 1993), p22-25

²¹ M. Jibo, *Tiv Politics Since 1959* (Katsina-Ala: Mandate International Ltd., 1993), p22-25

²² A. Okpaga, “The Politics and Development of Sub-Cultural Groups in Benue State” in A. Lyam, Y.A. Ochefu, J.A. Sambe and A.M. Adejo (eds) *Benue State in Perspective*, (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2005.), p149

Kwara overseas, on the other, the Murtala regime came up with a workable solution to the feud by creating a state known as Benue state in 1976 to help solve this problem.²³ Relatedly, Gomwalk who was the first Governor of the newly created Benue-Plateau state significantly contributed in the already existing dichotomy between the component units of the state as he glaringly embarked on policies that were not targeted at bringing meaningful development to the Benue bloc of the state that was notably made of Tiv, Idoma, Igede, etc.²⁴

As a State, Benue is a state in the North-Central Nigeria region or what was formerly known as the Middle-Belt region. The state is named after the Benue River and was carved out of the defunct Benue-Plateau State on the 3rd of February, 1976 along with the Igala and some parts of Kwara State by the then military Head of State, Gen. Murtala R. Muhammed, who increased the number of States in Nigeria from 12 to 19 states.²⁵ Makurdi municipality houses the state capital city. The State boundaries however were affected by the creation of Kogi State in 1991 as this creation brought about boundary re-adjustment as the Igala were taken out of Benue State to the present Kogi State.²⁶

Benue state is predominantly inhabited by the Tiv, Idoma and Igede, who speak Tiv, Idoma and Igede languages respectively. The state also has other minority ethnic groups like, Akwaya/Akpa, Etulo, Ufia, etc, with a population of 4,253,641 according to the 2006

²³ M. Jibo, *Tiv Politics Since 1959...*26

²⁴ M. Jibo, *Tiv Politics Since 1959...*28

²⁵ A. Okpaga, "The Politics and Development of Sub-Cultural Groups in Benue State" in A. Lyam, Y.A. Ochefu, J.A. Sambe and A.M. Adejo (eds) *Benue State in Perspective*, (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2005.), p149

²⁶ A. Okpaga, "The Politics and Development of Sub-Cultural Groups in Benue State"

census.²⁷The State shares boundaries with Nasarawa to the North, Taraba to the East, Kogi to the West, Enugu to the South-West, Ebonyi and Cross-River to the South, Enugu and Kogi to the West, and has international borders with Cameroon to the South-East.²⁸The state is made up of 23 local government areas. These include:

	Name of Local Government	Headquarters
1.	Ado	Igumale
2.	Agatu	Obagaji
3.	Apa	Ugbokpo
4.	Buruku	Buruku
5.	Gboko	Gboko
6.	Guma	Gbajimba
7.	Gwer-East	Aliade
8	Gwer-West	Naka
9	Katsina-Ala	Katsina-Ala
10	Kwande	Adikpo
11	Konshish	Tse-Agberegba
12	Logo	Ugba
13	Makurdi	Makurdi
14	Obi	Obarike-Ito
15	Ogbadibo	Otukpa
16	Ohimini	Idekpa
17	Oju	Oju
18	Okpokwu	Okpoga
19	Otukpo	Otukpo
20	Tarka	Annune
21	Ukum	Sankera
22	Ushongo	Lessel
23	Vandeikya	Vandeikya

²⁷ *National Population Commission Census 2006*

²⁸M. Kwanga and T.A. Kerenku, "Land and Peoples of Benue State" in Y.A. Ochefu, J. Iyo and T.A. Varvar (eds) *A History of the Peoples of Benue State* (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007), p1

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2022

Table: List of Military Administrators/Civilian Governors of Benue State since 1976

S/N	Name	Title	Took Office	Left Office	Party
1	Abdullahi Shelling	Governor	March 1976	July 1978	Military
2	Adebayo Lawal	Governor	July 1978	October 1979	Military
3	Aper Aku	Governor	October 1979	December 1983	NPN
4	John Kpera	Governor	January 1984	August 1985	Military
5	Jonah David Jang	Governor	August 1985	August 1986	Military
6	Yohanna Madaki	Governor	August 1986	September 1986	Military
7	Ishaya Bakut	Governor	September 1986	1987	Military
8	Idris Garba	Governor	1987	1987	Military
9	Fidelis Makka	Governor	December 1987	January 1992	Military
10	Moses Adasu	Governor	January 1992	November 1993	SDP
11	Joshua O. Obademi	Military Administrator	9 December 1993	22 August 1996	Military

12	Aminu Isa Kontag ora	Military Administra tor	22 August 1996	August 1998	Militar y
13	Domini c Oneya	Military Administra tor	August 1998	May 1999	Militar y
14	George Akume	Governor	29 May 1999	29 May 2007	PDP
15	Gabriel T. Suswa m	Governor	29 May 2007	29 May 2015	PDP
16	Samuel I. Ortom	Governor	29 May 2015	29 May, 2023	APC/P DP

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2022

The State Capital

Benue State capital city is located in Makurdi, which came into existence in the early part of the 20th Century, that is, about 1927 when it became the headquarters of the Benue Province.²⁹ Due to its location on the bank of the Benue River, it attracted a lot of trading or business or commercial activities from trading companies like, John Holt PLC and the United African Company of Nigeria.³⁰ Also, the construction of the Railway Bridge across the Benue River in Makurdi in 1932 tremendously propelled commercial status of the town as

²⁹ S.I. Ugbegili, "Makurdi Town: From Colonial Period to Second Republic" in A.M. Adejo (ed) *Makurdi: A History of its Rise and Development up to 2010*, (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2013), p23.

³⁰ S.I. Ugbegili, "Makurdi Town: From Colonial Period to Second Republic"...p32

it attracted people from other parts of the state and country to come to the town for different commercial activities. Fundamentally, by 1976 when the town became the capital town of the newly created Benue State, it also doubled as the headquarters of Makurdi local government area and this also promoted its growth.

The town is divided by the Benue River into the North and South bank connected by two bridges, the Railway Bridge built in 1932 and the new bridge commissioned in 1978.³¹ There are several wards in the southern part of Makurdi. These include the Central Ward, old GRA, Ankpa ward, Wurukum (Low-Level), High-Level, New GRA, etc. This part of Makurdi also houses many establishments and offices like, the State Secretariat, Government House, the Central Bank Regional Headquarters, Commercial Banks, Railway Station, Post Office, Federal Medical Centre, Nigerian Correctional Services, Radio Benue, NTA, Benue Hotels, Benue State University, Aper Aku Stadium, etc.³² Meanwhile, the Northern part houses other establishments like the University of Agriculture, Nigeria Army School of Engineering, the 72 Special Battalion Force, Custom, etc.³³

Entry into Makurdi is in tripartite form, it can be by road, by air or by water. To the north of the town, the major road into the town is the Makurdi-Lafia-Jos road. While the Southern routes are, Makurdi-Otukpo-Enugu and Makurdi-Yandev-Adikpo-Calabar road. To the west, there is Makurdi-Naka-Adoka-Okene road, and from the East, there is Makurdi-Yandev-Katsina-Ala-Wukari roads.

³¹ S.I. Ugbegili, "Makurdi Town: From Colonial Period to Second Republic...32

³² M. Kwanga and T.A. Kerenku, "Land and Peoples of Benue State...1

³³ M. Kwanga and T.A. Kerenku, "Land and Peoples of Benue State...2

The Makurdi Railway Bridge links the Northern and Eastern parts of Nigeria.³⁴

Geography and Location of Benue State

Benue State lies on the lower river Benue trough in the middle belt region of Nigeria. The geographical location of Benue State is Longitude 7° 47' and 10° 01' East. Latitude 6° 25' and 8° 8' North, and has a landmass of 34,056sq KM.³⁵ The koppen climate classification puts the State within AW climate and it experiences two seasons, the wet/rainy and dry seasons. The wet/rainy season starts from April and ends in October with an annual rainfall range of 100-200mm. While the dry season starts from November and stops in March.³⁶ The temperature in the state fluctuates between 21-37 degrees Celsius in a year. While the southern part that borders Cameroon experiences a cooler weather similar to that of plateau State.³⁷

Settlement Pattern and Urbanization in Benue State

Largely, the population of Benue State is predominantly domiciled in the rural areas mainly in tiny compounds or households, whose inhabitants' range from 630 people who are largely farmers.³⁸ The emergence and development of towns in Benue State can be categorized into three main groups. Group one consists of towns with a population of 80,000-500,000 people. Towns that belong

³⁴ M. Kwanga and T.A. Kerenku, "Land and Peoples of Benue State...2

³⁵ M. Kwanga and T.A. Kerenku, "Land and Peoples of Benue State...2

³⁶ A. Lyam, "The Benue Environment in the Twentieth Century" in A. Lyam, Y.A. Ochefu, J.A. Sambe and A.M. Adejo (eds) *Benue State in Perspective*, (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2005.), p97

³⁷ A. Lyam, "The Benue Environment in the Twentieth Century...98

³⁸ A. Lyam, "The Benue Environment in the Twentieth Century

to this group include towns like, Makurdi which is the state capital, Gboko and Otukpo, the headquarters of the dominant ethnic groups (125,944 and 88,958 people respectively). The second group is made up of towns with a population of between 20,000-50,000 people, and the group is made of towns like, Katsina-Ala, Zaki-Biam, Adikpo. While the third group consists of towns with a population that ranges from 10,000-19,000 people. Towns in this group include towns like, Vandeikya, Lessel, Ihugh, Naka, Aliade, Adoka, Okpoga, Igumale, Oju, Utonkon, Ugbokolo, Otukpa, Ogbokpo, Ugba, Korinya. Most of the towns in this group are the headquarters of local government or market areas. Some of the headquarters of the local governments that were created recently have a population of less than 10,000 people. These include towns like Tse-Agberagba, Gbajimba, Buruku, Idekpa, Obagaji and Obari-Keito. Aside earth roads, schools, periodic markets, chemists, the economic activities of the populace are predicated on farming. The distribution of social amenities in the state are centered in the three major towns (Makurdi, Gboko and Otukpo) at the expense of the smaller towns, resulting to faster growth of these older towns than the newer or emerging towns.

Traditional Institution in Benue State

Benue State traditional architecture is a highly respected institution between the state government and the Benue populace because of the role the traditional rulers play as custodians of the cultural values of the people. The traditional rulers play vital roles in enhancing peace and order in their domains. In recognition of the contributions of the roles of the traditional rulers, the Benue State government has established a third tier traditional council system that is made up of local government traditional councils. Area traditional council

and the state councils of chiefs have the Tor-Tiv (Tiv King) as the chairman.³⁹

The two area traditional councils are the Tiv traditional area council, with the Tor Tiv as the chairman of the Tiv traditional council and the Idoma traditional council, with the Och' Idoma (Idoma King) as the chairman of Idoma traditional council. Meanwhile, the Benue State traditional council has Tor Tiv as the chairman, the Och' Idoma and all the Second Class Chiefs (chairmen of respective Local Government traditional councils) as members.⁴⁰

Development Potentials in Benue State

Benue State is one state in Nigeria that is endowed with a lot of material and human resources that if properly tapped or harnessed could tremendously drive the State to the part of development that would have been immeasurable or inestimable. The pertinent question however remains, why has it been so difficult to locate Benue State on the map of development in spite of the abundant material and human resources? This work therefore will want to take a cursory look at the various potentials that if properly harnessed could put the state on the path of development. These include,

Agriculture: Benue State has agriculture as the main stay of the economy. Over 75% of the population is engaged in farming or agriculture. Agriculture has made Benue State one of the major producers of food for the nation which earned the State the title of "Food Basket of the Nation." Unfortunately, farming in the State is carried out with the use of crude implements or it is done manually. Agricultural mechanization in the State still remains a far-cry as well as farm inputs like, fertilizers, improved seeds,

³⁹ J. Wantu, "New Dawn as Tiv Crowns Prof. James Ortse Iorzua Ayatse King" *The Guardian-Sunday Magazine*, March, 2017. Retrieved in June, 2021,

⁴⁰ J. Wantu, "New Dawn as Tiv Crowns Prof. James Ortse Iorzua Ayatse King

insecticides and improved technologies are difficult to access.⁴¹

Benue State is known for the cultivation of important food and cash crops like, soya beans, rice, mango varieties, groundnut, citrus, pepper, yam, cassava, beans, millet, guinea corn, maize, oil palm are cultivated in large quantities. There is also the presence of animal husbandry which include, pig, poultry, chicken, goat, sheep, etc. There is however no irrigation practice in the state despite its potentials in the presence of two major rivers in the state (Rivers Benue and Katsina-Ala).⁴²

Mineral Resources: The state's status as the nation's food basket is due to its richness in agricultural production. That is, the state is known for the production of agricultural products like yam, maize, soya beans, sorghum, millet, sesame, cocoyam, groundnut, etc. Apart from agriculture being the main stay of the economy of the state which engages over 75% of the state's population, the vegetation cover of the southern part of the State is characterized by forests that can yield trees for timber, hence a good potential for lumbering. Also, the state possesses potentials for the development of viable forests and wildlife reserves.⁴³ The state is also endowed with a variety of untapped solid mineral resources. Some of these mineral resources that are found in Benue State include:⁴⁴

S/N	MINERAL RESOURCES	LOCATION	STATUS
1	Limestone	Mbatyav, Igumale, and Mbayion in Gboko	Mbayion Cement Co
2	Coal	Owukpa	Unharness
3	Lead	Eha-amafu near Igumale	Unharness

⁴¹ <https://acresal.gov.ng/?states=benue> Retrieved 16/09/2024

⁴² A. Pine (ed), "Agriculture in Benue State Since 1976" in *Milestones in Leadership: Essays in Honour of Governor Gabriel Suswam*, (Mkurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2010), p.69-72.

⁴³ <https://acresal.gov.ng/?states=benue> Retrieved 16/09/2024

⁴⁴ <http://www.iambenue.com.untapped-mineral-resources-in-benue-state/> Retrieved 16/09/2024

4	Anhydride	Abundant in various parts of the state	Unharness
5	Natural Gas	Some parts of the state	Unharness
6	Petroleum	Some parts of the state	Unharness
6	Salt	Some parts of the state	Unharness
7	Koalin	Otukpo	Unharness
8	Gypsum	Some parts of the state	Unharness
9	Barytes	Some parts of the state	Unharness
10	Magnetite	Some parts of the state	Unharness
11	Gemstone	Some parts of the state	Unharness
12	Calcite	Some parts of the state	Unharness
11	Zinc	Some parts of the state	Unharness
12	Coal	Uwukpa	Unharness

Commercial Industries: There is the presence of commercial banks in the state with their branches across many towns in the state. There is also the presence of the Dangote Cement Company which operates in the State and provides employment to a little percentage of Benue state. Thus, the State has a capacity of accommodating a wide range of industries because of its endowments in agricultural and other mineral resources or potentials that are not properly harnessed. The propensity of private commerce and industry by indigenes is on a very small scale limited to carpentry, shoe repairs and making, small scale rice mills, leather and plastic industries, weaving, printing, catering, block making, food processing, etc.⁴⁵ The operationalization of commerce and industries in the State is majorly affected by the inadequacy of funds, basic infrastructure and the frequent political changes.

Infrastructure and Transformation: Benue State is a major cross-road of this country because of the presence of two major highways that provide a connection between the Northern and Eastern states. There are bridges across the two major rivers (Benue and Katsina-Ala) that

⁴⁵ <https://acresal.gov.ng/?states=benue> Retrieved 16/09/2024

traverse the State. The State government has a task of building roads across the State to help ease navigation of the nooks and crannies and inter-connectedness of parts of the State. This can help cushion the effect of not assessing the abundant resources in the State. Secondly, the only airport in the state even though is a military airport should be remodeled to a cargo airport. This is will go a long way to improve commercial activities. Similarly, revamping the railway transport will help the movement of people and goods in and out of the State. Finally, the dredging of the two rivers in the State and building a modern river port in Makurdi can also help make Makurdi and Benue an economic hub in the country.

Tourism and Recreation: Benue State is endowed with immense tourist potentials to be harnessed. In harnessing these tourist potentials, the State government needs to embark on massive infrastructural development to attract investors in the tourist sector. There should be a roadmap programme for the development of the abandoned abundant potentials of the tourist industry. The development of hotels, telephone, email services, electricity, portable water, recreational facilities, etc, can help open the tourist industry in the state.

The amusement park or Zoo in Makurdi located in Benue State University and the wildlife park at Ikwe is very significant tourist sites that can be harnessed by the government. Conference hall and chalets can be built to serve tourists. This will in no small measure boost the tourist industry; it will also take the status of natural scenic, historical monuments and festivals in the state. Natural tourist attractions in Benue include, Ikyogen Cattle Ranch, Abande, Ngokugh, Mkar, Ushongo and Harga hills. The wooded natural trench in Tse-Mker has pythons.⁴⁶ Similarly, historical monuments in the State include Royal Niger Company trading stores in Makurdi

⁴⁶ “Cultural and Tourist” nigeriaembassygermany.org. Retrieved 8 February, 2022

and Gbeleve near Katsina-Ala, the Tombs of the first Dutch missionaries at Harga and Sai in Katsina-Ala. The Tomb of J.S. Tarka in Gboko local government area, the Trench Fortification in Turan district of Kwande Local government area, which was dug by the Tiv to ward off Chamba invasion in the 19th Century. A Swem shrine site located at the foot of the Cameroon range in Kwande local government area which is considered as the cradle of the origin of the Tiv.⁴⁷ Also, the Utonkon forest of giant trees, used as the centre of slave trade market during the flourishing era of the slave trade is now a shrine and a periodic market.⁴⁸

Cultural Heritage: Benue State is richly endowed with diverse cultures expressed in their colourful cloths, exotic masquerades, music and dances. The State is known for winning national and international awards/trophies in cultural festivals. These include *Ingyough*, *Anger*, *Anchanakupa*, *Swange*, *Kwagh-Hir* (the puppet dance), *Ogrinya* and a host of others.⁴⁹ The state's rich cultural heritage is also expressed in the socio-cultural festivals like, colourful dances, dresses, songs. Amongst the Idoma, the *Alekwu* festival which is believed to be an occasion that the locals believe in the re-establishment of contact between the living and the ancestors inform of masquerades.⁵⁰

While the Igede celebrate the *Igede-Agba* Yam festival, which is carried out every year in September by the people who occupy Oju and Obi LGAs of the state. While the Tiv celebrate Tiv Day, marriage ceremonies and dance competition like *swange* and *kwagh-hir*. Also, there

⁴⁷ "Cultural and Tourist" nigeriaembassygermany

⁴⁸ "Idoma International Carnival Gradually Reviving into Cultural Hub" *The Guardian Nigeria News-Nigeria and World-Wide News*, 28 January, 2018. Retrieved 2 August, 2021.

⁴⁹ Cultural and Tourist" nigeriaembassygermany

⁵⁰ Idoma International Carnival Gradually Reviving into Cultural Hub

is the availability of other aspects of social life in the State. There are a number of hotels in Makurdi, Gboko, Otukpo and other towns in the state, the golf clubs, Makurdi Club, police club, Air force club, where games are played apart from the drinks and snacks associated to them. Other edifices like the Arts Theatre Complex, a sporting complex like Aper Aku stadium and other smaller stadia in towns like Gboko, Otukpo, Katsina-Ala, Adikpo, Vandeikya, etc.

Conclusion

Consequently, this paper reviews the development of Benue State from its creation since 1976 by reflecting on the potentialities that if properly harnessed could position the state on the map of development. As it was clearly pointed out in this paper that agriculture is the major sector of the economy of the state and it engages over 75% of the Benue population. The contributions of agriculture to the food security in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized as it is noticeable in the quantity of domestic food produced in the state.

However, there is a great deficit in the development of infrastructure that could have given Benue State the desired level of growth that is commensurate to the potentials the state is endowed with. Though successive administrations in the state have taken certain strides in trying to establish companies like, the Agricultural Development Company Limited (ADC), Benue Breweries Limited (BBL), Benue Cattle Ranch, Ikyogen, Taraku Mills Limited, Agro Millers Limited, etc, that would have given the state the desired industrial base if the establishments were sustained. It is therefore very imperative for the Benue State government to take proactive measures in revamping all the moribund companies in the State and also exploring the possibilities of establishing others to boost the economic development of the State.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PROFESSOR SYLVESTER IGBASUE UGBEGILI, GABRIEL ORFEGA ORTSEGA
& JOSEPH EZEKIEL OBUJE, PhD

- Adejo, A.M. (ed) *A History of its Rise and Development up to 2010* (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2013).
- Allen, T, and Thomas, A. (eds), *Poverty and Development in the Twenty First Century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Jair, S.J. and Rogeris, H.Q. "Measurement: An Analysis of Concepts, Measurement and Indicators" in *Brazil Administrative Review* (BAR) online <http://www.anpad.org.br/bar>, BAR Curitiba vol 5, no 2, 2008.
- Jibo, M, *Tiv Politics since 1959* (Katsina-Ala: Mandate International Ltd., 1993).
- Lyam, A, Ochefu, A.Y., Sambe, J.A. and Adejo, A.M. (eds) *Benue State in Perspective*, (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2005,)
- National Population Commission Census 2006*
nigeriaembassygermany.org. Retrieved 8 February, 2022
- Ochefu, A.Y., Iyo, J. and Varvar, T.V. (eds) *A History of the Peoples of Benue State* (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007),
- Omigbodun, A. "Cameroon, the River Benue and Nigeria" in *Vangurd Newspaper* July 13th, 2013.
- Pine, A. (ed), *Milestones in Leadership: Essays in Honour of Governor Gabriel Suswam*, (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2010
- The Guardian Nigeria News-Nigeria and World-Wide News, 28 January, 2018. Retrieved 2 August, 2021
- Useni, Y. "The Historical Antecedence of the Jukun People of Benue state" in [http://nigeriazipcodes.com/10525/history-of-Benue state](http://nigeriazipcodes.com/10525/history-of-Benue-state)
- Wantu, J. "New Dawn as Tiv Crowns Prof. James Ortese Iorzua Ayatse King" *The Guardian-SundayMagazine*. March, 2017. Retrieved in June, 2021
- Wikipedia.org/wiki/Benue state

