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11 Indigenous Technology and Cultural Practices in Umundu, Nigeria

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Introduction
Traditional industries/technologies constitute an important aspect of people’s culture. They represent the adaptive mechanisms through which people survive in any ecological niche they find themselves. These include the mechanisms for sourcing tools, food, shelter, medicine and other necessities of life for sustainable living. Consequently, an understanding of the procedural issues in traditional technologies would enhance our appreciation of a people’s beliefs and worldview. It has been noted by some scholars that traditional technologies should serve as basis for technological development of any nation (Eze 1983; Okpoko and Ibeanu 1999). This paper posits that a proper study of the traditional technologies of any given society would help locate the growth points for sustainable technological development in contra-distinction to the obsession for technological transfer. However, the lack of interest in traditional industries among the youths of today who prefer white collar jobs in urban centres to indigenous skills; poor attitude/religious bias against cultural artefacts when combined with the the new educational system, which played down our traditional values etc. constitute serious impediment to the growth of these technologies.

A number of studies have been carried out on aspects of traditional industries by some scholars. For instance, Adesina (2004); Jegede (1995) and Ohiare (1995) studied blacksmithing in Ogbomoso and Ebiraland, respectively. These studies point to the dynamic nature of blacksmithing. Akinade (2004) studied the dynamics and socio-cultural context of blacksmithing in Ihima and Ekpedo; while Okpoko and Ibeanu (1999) x-rayed early metal-working in Nigeria. Similarly, some studies on aspects of indigenous technologies of Umundu community have been carried out by some scholars (Ugwuoke 2004; Anozie 1979, 1981; Ezugwu 1986; Okafor 1993; Okonkwo and Odum 2009). These studies were limited to early iron working and aspects of the history of Umundu people. Much of the traditional industries of the people have not been documented and studied. This paper therefore seeks to address this problem. It is important to note that the sustenance of these industries in the face of modernity/westernization is seriously in doubt as the traditional values are fast being eroded. An insignificant number of Umundu youths currently participate in this trade.

Method of Study
In the course of this research, we visited four blacksmith workshops, three palm wine tapers, three cashew nuts processing industries, two carvers’ workshops and two abandoned iron smelting sites. These opportunities enabled us to discover some indigenous industries and the custodians of these cultural practices. We used direct observation and unstructured interview to elicit information from key informants, who were purposively selected.

Two categories of people were used as key informants. They are people directly involved in the production process and the local historians. The local crafts men and women provided information on the production processes, the raw materials used in their individual trade. They also gave us insight into the pattern of demand, prices and categories of buyers; while the local historians provided useful background information.

Background Information
Umundu is located in the north-east of Nsukka, about three kilometers from Obollo-Afor. It is bounded to the North by Obollo-Afor, to the East by Ezimo and to the West by Igugu.
Umundu is made up of two villages – Ifuama and Umumeri. Ifuama village has more area of farm land than Umumeri. The latter were pre-occupied with the lucrative smithing enterprise, while others put their energy in clearing and acquiring more land for agricultural purposes (Ugwuoke, 2004). Umundu was originally forested, but due to human activities, the vegetation has changed to what could be described as derived savanna (Anozie, 1981). The geographical position and the physical features of the town make it a beautiful rural village endowed with natural drainage and aesthetic scenery blended with little savannah vegetation (Ugwuoke 2004).

Among the crops/economic trees found in Umundu are orange (Citrus sinensis), oil bean (Pentaclethra macrophylla), guava (Psidium guajava), mango (Mangifera indica), three leafed yam (Dioscorea dumetorum), water yam (Dioscorea alata) and cocoyam (Colocasia esculenta). Some of these economic trees are harvested for family consumptions; while others are sold in the local markets.

Traditional title-taking is an important feature in the social life of Umundu. Ori-Ihe-Oma and Onokoro titles are taken by well to do women; while the Oyima and Igwe-onyi are ritual titles taken by women chosen by the Omaba masquerade as its favourites. There are titles for men such as Ama, Onyishi and Ozioko. Apart from title-taking, the people in time past practiced female circumcision (ibeugwu) and infant mouth cleansing (Isa nwa onu).

Umundu is predominantly a Christian community; however, a number of people are adherents and admirers of traditional religion. This is evident from open and housed shrines devoted to deities within the villages. Generally, the people are mainly civil servants, farmers, traders, smiths, craftsmen and businessmen.

**Definition of Concepts**

**Technology** – According to Sherwood and Maynard (1989), technology is the systematic knowledge and action usually of industrial process but applicable to any recurrent activity. By application, technology utilizes knowledge acquired and experience gained to satisfy man’s needs. Therefore, technology is a scientific knowledge aimed at satisfying the basic needs of man. It is classified into three broad categories:

i. the human-embodied technology such as skills, knowledge and experience,

ii. the capital-embodied technology such as machines, equipment and tools, and

iii. the disembodied technology, which includes blue-prints, products and products specification.

For the purpose of our study, the first two broad categories of technology shall apply in our over-all examination of indigenous technology in Umundu.

**Traditional Technology/Industrialization** – This involves all systems of local production organized basically on a small-scale using home as the main centre of production. This type of industrialization occurred in every continent and culture, in different forms and intensities, at different periods from the metal age to modern time (Ohakwe, 2008). Mbagwu (1978) argued that traditional industries and crafts are founded upon the use of natural local resources in the home to produce articles of socio-psychological, aesthetic or economic values to the people.

**Indigenous Technology in Umundu: A Descriptive Presentation**

Man, from the earliest time has interacted with his physical environment and made use of what he finds in the environment to tackle the problems posed by the same environment. Umundu is endowed with natural resources, which are harnessed by the people for the production of traditional industrial and household products. The numerous traditional
industries in Umundu community range from smithing, wood carving, cashew nuts processing, palm wine tapping to trademedicine.

It would also be noted that Umundu practiced iron smelting; though, the industry has gone into extinction, but the debris are left behind. The town is blessed with deposits of iron ores known as *itoro* (heamities). And with the availability of hardwood and *itoro* for smelting, the Umuogaleka clan among other clans in Umundu engaged in the smelting of iron ores. Consequently, with the decline in smelting, *itoro* at present is put to other uses such as road construction and building of houses. This study briefly examines the local industries in Umundu.

2) Iron Smithing Industry

Umundu people possess specialized local industries, one of which is blacksmithing. This industry is very prominent among Umundu people as it supplies the farming implements, household utensils as well as weapons of warfare.

Blacksmithing is an act of forming iron artifacts from bloom/iron scraps. A blacksmith’s workshop includes: a pair of bellows, the fire point, an anvil and buried water pot/bowl. The bellows are used to quicken the combustion of charcoal in the fire point where pieces of metals are embedded and heated to a red hot iron. The smiths everywhere in the community use basically the same essential tools to produce a range of products that are needed for the subsistence requirements and beyond.

In Umundu, smithing is done in an open rectangular hut with thatched roofs and no walls on either side to allow for ventilation. The floors are neither cemented nor hardened with red earth; thus, are rough, sandy and dusty, and characteristically littered with tools, raw materials and products of the smiths (Ugwuoke 2004; Okpoko and Ibeanu 1999). The workshop is usually built near living houses probably from the smith’s main residential house(s). In general, the layout of the shed varies from one blacksmith to another; but basically, the composition in each shed is similar, while the construction depends on the locality and the origin of the blacksmith. The following characterize Umundu blacksmith’s workshop:

i. ‘*Onu Uzu*’ (Smithing Furnace): A semi-circular mud structure with depression at the centre and located at a corner of the workshop. This could also be referred to as the fire point. The *Onu Uzu* is usually filled with unlighted charcoal, which when lighted is blown with the bellows.

ii. ‘*Ifuama*’ (Anvil): This is where the red hot metal is placed and struck with a hammer. Iron tools are hammered and shaped on an anvil. Anvil is often situated in front of the fire point so that red hot metals could be immediately forged into the desired shape on removing from the fire.

Anvil varies among smithing cultures; but, with great similarities. A stone anvil often possesses a worn out surface following the repeated forging of object on it. Among the Yoruba and Agbor blacksmiths, the anvils are usually big stones. And in some cases, iron anvils fixed into wooden stands are made use of by the Yoruba and Agbor blacksmiths. The Nupe blacksmiths also make use of stone and iron anvils; while some Igbo smiths (e.g. Amube, Awgu, Awka) use the iron anvils (Okpoko and Ibeanu 1999:41). However, stone anvil ‘*akiti-okwute*’ was observed at Ugwuogu, Utulu Okigwe (Ibeanu 2000).

iii. ‘*Ottutui* (Hammer): There are two main types of hammers – the sledge and flattening hammers. The sledge hammer is used to beat the red hot iron to the desired shape and thickness; while the flattening hammer gives smooth surface finish to the object produced (Okpoko and Ibeanu, 1999:41).
iv. ‘Mkpa’ (A Pair of Tong): This is a scissors-like iron tool used for gripping red hot metal pieces from the fire to the anvil for forging operation. Mkpa are mostly fabricated by the blacksmith.

v. A Mud Wall: This is constructed in front of Onu uzu (fire point) and behind the tuyéré to prevent flying chunks of burning charcoal or palm kernel from hitting the blacksmith.

vi. ‘Ado’ (Tuyéré): This is a clay cylindrical pipe that links the Onu uzu and the bellows through which air passes to the fire point. Tuyérés in Umundu range between 31–33cm in length and 6 – 8cm in diameters.

vii. ‘Eko’ (Bellows): This is a wooden instrument designed to fit into the clay tuyéré, which directs the pumped air from the bellow to the fire point. In Umundu, blacksmiths made use of two bellows, which are made of hollowed wood, sometimes joined together with iron bar. Each of the bellows contains a tunnel, which narrows down gradually towards the end where an iron pipe is fixed. The tunnel and pipe control the amount of air entering the tuyéré. The top ends of the hollowed wood are covered with rubber. Two long sticks (one on each bellow) of about 36cm in length are attached to the rubber. The sticks (handles) are used to propel air from the bellow through the tuyéré into the forge.

viii. ‘Akere’ (A Clay Bowl): This is used in storing water into which the red-hot finished products are dipped immediately after production. It is situated at the side of the anvil for cooling or quenching the hot metal after forging. This as argued by Okpoko and Ibeanu (1999) helps to retain the smooth and shiny surface of the iron objects and to prevent their being harmful when stepped upon accidentally by the blacksmiths while doing other jobs in the workshops.

ix. ‘Abo-Icheku’ (Basket of Charcoal/Palm Kernel): This acts as the fuel for the fire inside the forge. The basket is usually placed by the right of the bellows, for easy access to the person pumping the bellows as he keeps the fire glowing.

x. Fire Stirring Iron/Stick: This is a long iron/stick used for stirring/poking the charcoal/kernel fire during forging and is also used to remove impurities in the forge. By stirring the fire, the ashes are displaced to the bottom of the fire and only the burning charcoal/kernels are left on the surface for heating.

xi. ‘Okika’ (Cutting Hammer): This is a flat and sharp hammer-like object used for cutting light and heavy red hot metals. The cutting edge is made repeatedly by hitting the edge with hammer and flattening it by using a sledge hammer.

The Forging Process

In pre-colonial time, bloom (iron ingot) was produced from iron ores by smelting, making use of charcoal from Okeyi tree. Presently, iron tools are made by smiths from iron scraps. Be that as it may, blacksmithing is a complex and tedious art. The moment the bloom/iron scrap is placed in the furnace (forge), smith or attendant starts to manipulate the bellows to pump air into the fire point. As soon as the metal turns to a bright red, it is brought out from the fire with mkpa and placed on the anvil and hammered until the iron becomes cold and difficult to be shaped. At this point, the piece of iron is put back in the fire for re-heating to red hot. This heating and hammering when red hot are continued until the desired perfect shape is achieved.

Before smithing, the iron will be measured and given a mark. This mark determines what it should be used for. As observed by Okpoko and Ibeanu (1999), the effectiveness of forging depends solely on the ability of the blacksmith to ensure adequate supply of heat and this is determined by the method of fire making. Okafor (1984) also cautioned on the need to
control the burning of the fire in the forge as too little supply of air can cause extinction, while too much supply can result into sparks.

Umundu blacksmiths take caution in controlling the fire supplied to the forge. The blacksmiths work the bellows steadily to heat up the whole chamber. However, as the charcoal begins to glow, burnt palm kernels are poured on the charcoal. This is to reduce the rate at which charcoal burns alone, otherwise it would be reduced to ashes. Another controlling factor is that the bellows are worked upon intermittently in order to maintain required level of heat/fire in the forge. It should be noted that in some parts of Nsukka such as Opi and Ede-Oballa, bellows are now mechanized to reduce the man-power needed for blacksmithing. Here, a motorized fan is connected to electricity and the air produced is channeled through a pipe to the tuyère to the forge.

Materials Produced by Umundu Blacksmiths

As a result of the importance of iron tools and implements, iron workers occupied enviable position in their communities from ancient times until the beginning of colonial period. Smithing in Umundu was sole prerogative of Umuashene clan, who produced farming implements like Ogu (hoes), Uma (cutlasses), axes heads, matches, diggers and sickles. Umukpa and Umuinegedu clans on their part used these implements for agricultural purposes. Perhaps, this explains why the two farming clans occupy the greatest areas of farm land, and by extension are known for agricultural production in Umundu.

Apart from agricultural implements, Umundu smiths produce hunting tools (spades, ukpakara- traps, dane guns), ritual/ceremonial iron artifacts (leg and ankle ornaments, iron staff of office for titled men, okpekpe- native razor blade, ogеле- gong), as well as utensils (door hinges and bolts, bicycle stands) for domestic uses. These products are produced either on request from a customer with specification or the smith produced them for sale in the local market. Generally, Umundu smiths produce varieties of iron works as identified above and sold them at Nkwo Umundu market located at Orege Umundu. Leftovers are further transported and sold at Afo Obollo-Afor market, Eke Enugu-Ezike market, Orie Orba Nsukka as well as Orie Igbo-Eze market.
2) Palm Wine Tapping Industry

Umundu is endowed with numerous palm trees, which also form a source of raw materials for many traditional industries in the area. For instance, the sap (palm wine) is used to produce local hot drink- *kaikai*. Different types of brooms, baskets and building materials are produced from palm trees.

There are two methods of tapping palm tree in Umundu – the inflorescence and felled palm tree tapping. The former (most preferred sap/drink from *Raphia vinifera* – the up wine) involves tapping living palm tree for the sap; while the latter from *Raphia hookeri* – the down wine is derived by tapping felled palm tree. Palm wine production in Umundu is seasonal – the peak and dry periods. Palm wine is surplus during the peak period, particularly between September and November and this leads to a fall in the price of palm wine compared to the time of scarcity or dry period, from December to August (Okezie, 2008).

**Palm Wine Tapping Process**

For the purpose of clarity, we shall examine the two methods of palm wine tapping prominent in Umundu.

i. **The Inflorescence Tapping Method (Ofugiri):** This involves regular inspection of palm tree in order to identify its emergence and growth. When a male flower bud (spadix) is selected, there is a preliminary clearing of older palm front leaves in order to expose the tapping point to the rays of the sun. To tap the wine, a triangular hole of about 2.5cm deep is made at the base of the male flower bud. This hole is usually kept covered and the place is enlarged every morning until about the third day when wine begins to ooze out. A funnel made of cassava stem is fixed to the hole and filtered to a bottle or calabash where it is collected.

ii. **The Felled Palm Tree Tapping Method (Ekpo):** The leaves of the felled tree are cut off and the innermost part of the palm tree is exposed and left for about one month. An opening of about 14cm deep is made on the terminal bud. This is covered and tied tightly with rope. Underneath it, a hole is made on the ground and a calabash is positioned. Under the opening is a hole through which a cylindrical funnel is fixed and directed to the calabash. The wine oozes out from the opening through the funnel, and is collected in a calabash.

Wine collected from a felled tree, locally called “Ekpo/Ngwo” – the down wine, is generally considered a low quality product than the inflorescence tapped up-wine (*Nkwu elu*). Umundu palm wine tappers have assumed professional names like *Otenkwu/Diochi* because of the socio-cultural and religious roles palm wine plays in the society.

The tools used in processing the palm tree for wine tapping include *Uma* (matchet) for cutting off palm leaves, *Obele* (calabash) for collecting and selling the palm wine, *Uma-ntu* (condemned iron file) for deepening and maintaining the hole (wine source), *Ogbu* (climbing rope) used to tie round their waist and connected to the palm tree for easy access to the top where the wine is collected, *Raffia* hat (weaned from *Raffia* palm) used to cover the head from intense sun and to an extent shield the eyes from contact with particles from the palm tree when cutting the leaves.
3) Wood Carving Industry

Carving is an art or process of making an art work with either wood, stone or metal. Wood carving on the other hand, is a process of constructing an art with wood. It is the end product of a tree trunk or its branches. There is a popular belief in the traditional Igbo society that carving is a sacred profession because of its involvement in the production of religious objects. Thus, it is considered an art, which has its origin in the remote past. The artist is a gifted member of the society whose human and spiritual endeavours are bound up with creative activities. This explains why traditional carvers are said to share equal social and religious status with the chief priests and diviners (Okezie, 2008).

Wood carving is practiced in Umundu due largely to the fact that hard woods like mahogany, Obeche, Iroko, Okwe etc. are available in their environment. For a carver to perfect his art, some tools are inevitable and must be present within his reach; thus, tools used in carving in Umundu include Uma (knife), Mkpa (plier), Anyu (axe), Okuka (chisel), Omu (file), Ncha (scissors), Ngwu (digger), Nsho (screw driver), Otutu (hammer) and Uma-odu (saw).

Processes of Wood Carving

In Umundu, carvers work mostly at the back of their houses and sometimes, at the shades provided by their houses or huts. They usually work individually also. However, before carvers start forming an object, the carver usually conceptualizes the purpose of the object to guide his production. This is achieved by scraping and peeling off parts of the wood.

Before a carver starts to work, he sets all the tools and materials needed conveniently within reach. The carver then sits comfortably amidst the log or trunk of wood and tools. The wood/trunk used for carving is usually dried under the sun to allow easy carving. Because carving depends on the thickness as well as the type of object the carver wants to form, he first draws the desired shape of the object he has conceptualized on the wood before carving. With the Okuka, he cuts the wood to the desired shape and continues to chip off the wood with his Okuka or Anyu if bigger parts of the wood need to be hewed off until he attains the required standard. It should be noted that Umundu carvers carve either on request (order) or local market demand. The products carved include musical instruments e.g. (Igba) wooden drum; (Ekwe) wooden slit drum; wooden seats, doors, windows, handles of farming implements like hoes, matchets etc.
4) Cashew Processing Industry

The cashew nut (*Anacardium occidentale L.*) belongs to the *Anacardiaceae* family. A cashew tree produces a fruit (apple) and a nut as well as valuable oil, which can be drawn from the nut shell. It takes two months for the cashew apple to ripen. When harvested, the apple can only be kept for twenty-four hours before it begins to ferment. Although, the fruit can be used for making many typical fruit products (Jams, Juice, Wine and Liquor), the apple is often discarded, in pursuit of the nut. If processed and stored properly, the cashew nut can be kept for a year or longer. Technically, the actual nut is the thick-shelled seed. The outer shell (coat) of the seed contains the poison Oak (allergen urush-oil), which may cause dermatitis in hypersensitive persons.

Many people avoid cashew nut because of their high fat content, though they are lower in total fat than almonds, peanuts, pecans, walnuts. Cashew provides essential amino acids, B. Vitamins, fibre, protein, carbohydrates, potassium and iron. It has a small percentage of saturated fat, but contains nutrients (highly nutritious food) when eaten in small quantity.

Processes of Production

Cashew nut processing is the prerogative of women in Umundu. Nevertheless, children render services during its production, such as collection of fire-wood and/or breaking of the nuts after roasting. The nuts (raw material) are bought from Obollo-afor market, a nearby community and are first spread under the sun for five to six days to dry. A good quantity of about 6-7kg is poured in a frying pan (*Agbada*) of about 64cm in circumference. The *Agbada* is then positioned on a controlled fire. Long stick (2m in length) is used to stir-fry the nuts intermittently. The nuts are adjudged well roasted when they catch fire and start burning inside the *Agbada*. Once this is done, the frying pan is removed from the fire and the nuts spread on a flat basket to cool before the blackened shells are removed to reveal the edible nuts. Ashes are spread on the roasted shells to dry the oil oozing out from the shells.

Cashew nuts are seasonal, with January to March being the peak period; and between November and December, the period of scarcity. The processing of cashew nuts in Umundu is controlled by women association formed by cashew processing members. The association is instituted to check inflation of price of cashew nuts, control the quantity to be produced on each market day, as well as maintain cordial relationship among members. They also give
loans to members in need, who in-turn pay back the loan on a stipulated grace period with reduced interest rate. Outside the limited quantities of cashew processed for sale in the market, the women can produce unlimited quantities on request by a customer. Discount(s) is often given to customer(s) who buy(s) in large quantities.

Plate 4: (a) Frying of Cashew Nuts in Progress and (b) a Basket of Unprocessed Cashew Nuts

Discussion: Implications, Values and Problems of Indigenous Technologies in Umundu

Traditional industries/technologies boost the economy of the people and also empower the local communities. In Umundu, local industries/technologies constitute an important source of revenue generation. It creates employment directly and indirectly within the community and stimulates regional interactions and economic development. The improvement in the industries enhance not only the people’s social life but also act as a catalyst to other investments, which contribute to sustainable development and inter group relations within the region and beyond.

Traditional industries encourage the sustainable use of natural resources and the preservation of cultural values. For instance, the ashes produced from cashew processing are used as manure in the farms; while the burnt shells serve as fire-wood. The industry serves as a source of income and the nut itself is a source of food. The products of black smiths, when sold, give sustenance to the smiths and their families. The various decorative motifs carved on wooded objects depict cultural continuity, which suggest that cultural materials of a given people say much about the people that made and used them. Palm wine plays an important role in many ceremonies in southeastern parts of the country and beyond. Guests at social gatherings, traditional weddings, birth celebrations, cultural festivals and funeral are served generous amounts of palm wine. Sometimes, the wine is infused with medicinal herbs to cure a wide variety of physical ailments. Breasting feeding mothers often take some dose of palm wine to stimulate the flow of breast milk. Religiously, as a mark of respect to the gods/ancestors, many drinking sessions begin with libation of palm wine (small amount of
palm wine spilled on the ground). Fermented palm wine is locally heated to produce the popular local gin known as ‘abo-five’. This is a popular choice among the low income earners.

These local industries did and still continue to leave archaeological imprints in the cultural landscape of Umundu. They include debris of iron smelting/smithing such as slags, broken pieces of fired clay - tuyéré, trenches for the production of charcoals, potsherds, refuse mounds etc. These material remains host valuable archaeological information useful for the interpretation and reconstruction of the past activities of man in the area. Again, archaeologists can make meaningful inferences about these material remains through their physical examination, description, and/or classification.

We have noted that Umundu people are endowed with various skills ranging from iron smelting/smithing to varieties of industries that have the potential to attract a sizeable number of tourists every year. As rightly argued by Okonkwo and Odum (2009:207) the village is blessed with plenty of iron ores (haematite), as evident in the proliferation of iron slags, which characterize the intensive iron smelting activities in times past. “Though, the remnants of furnace walls exist, they are endangered as the people convert these sites into farm land; …it is obvious that community-based tourism will thrive well in the area if given proper attention”.

The economic activities of Umundu people, which constitute tourist marvels are their means of livelihood as these products are sold not only to tourists as souvenir, but also to the general public in popular local markets. Therefore, indigenous knowledge and cultural practices of Umundu people will create an enabling ground for cultural tourism to thrive. Indeed, the development of cultural tourism in Umundu will stimulate improvement in local infrastructures and bring further benefits to host community. It will improve inter-cultural understanding; encourage the production of cultural products that serve as souvenirs to tourists. The various cultural materials of these industries are of interest to tourism with traditional touch. The producers of the cultural materials found in Umundu are highly skilled and intelligent; thus, cultural tourism in Umundu if well harnessed will attract more cultural tourists to the destination.

Again, these industries have in one way or the other affected the lives of the people of Umundu based on the fact that some of them (crafts) are associated with different deities and bias, which make them to be restricted to certain people in the community. For instance, it is a taboo for a non-descendant of Ashene lineage to practice smithing in Umundu (Ugwuoke, 2004:109). Thus, smithing is an inheritance that runs through the Ashene families. Furthermore, taboos, sacred laws and local sanctions have constituted conservation mechanisms that guarantee the continued survival of some of these cottage industries. In Umundu, women cannot cross the bellow in the blacksmith’s shop, most especially during menstruation. Secondly, women cannot remove object(s) in the fire during blacksmithing; and thirdly, stealing of a smith’s tools is highly prohibited.

Violations of these taboos attract severe sanctions and possibly culminate in death if solutions are not sought to appease the gods (Olisa/Ishi-ji). Yams, kola nuts and fowls (Okuko fifi) are the sacrificial items used in appeasing the god of iron in order to avert the impending danger(s)/calamity that will befall the offender(s) and by extension, the entire family.

In spite of the above, one cannot overlook the effects of the changed value system on these traditional industries and crafts starting from the period of colonialism. We had earlier reported that smiths in time past used the raw materials supplied by iron smelters for their handiwork, but colonialism brought a more accessible alternative to bloom (Ohakwe, 2008). Furthermore, the lowering status of the smith and the arduous labour of smithing without
commensurable profit have resulted in the present day apathy by the youth and the negative reaction to the profession (Ugwuoke, 2004). Problems such as modernization, westernization, and the influence of colonial masters and the concomitant introduction of imported equipments/goods, when combined with the increased deforestation and other environmental factors have led to the low patronage of these industries.

Umundu traditional industries and technologies can be resuscitated if the host community, government and tourism experts modernize the process and develop strategies for cultural tourism promotion. This will ensure that tourism attendant benefits such as good access roads, potable water, accommodation/catering services, electricity, security etc. are within the reach of the host community. Also, the packaging of food like cashew nuts will in turn bring economic growth and development to the community; which will in turn, improve their living standard; while creating job opportunities.

Conclusion

It is obvious that Umundu community is endowed with creative minds who used the available resources within their environment for survival. Starting from the iron smelting, which flourished between the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries, to the present wood carving, palm wine tapping and cashew nut processing industries, the people have shown great skills in these spheres thereby contributing immensely to the growth of traditional industries and technology in the sub region. Cole and Aniakor (1984) affirmed that local industries brought about skilled and professionals in some areas of occupations and also in the past divided the Igbo region into occupational zones.

Nevertheless, there is still need for the government to encourage them in modernizing the processes for effective and efficient output. Aremu (2004:81) argued elsewhere that a large number of people are still dependent on traditional crafts for their livelihood. Although, Umundu people had known smiths, modernization is now gradually suppressing the smithing activities. This is reflected in the three abandoned smiths’ workshops identified and the dilapidating roofs and wooden poles occasioned by termites’ attacks. We believe that with government’s encouragement, the production of traditional crafts would make Nigeria the hub of small scale industries (craftsmen and women) parts. Indeed, Okpoko and Ibeanu (1999) observed that an understanding of our traditional industries and technology hold the key to any meaningful and sustainable technological development in the country. They also argue that traditional industries and skills should form the bedrock of any home-grown and people-oriented industries or development. Thus, the way forward is to study and document available traditional industries and the techniques employed and take them into cognizance while planning and implementing policies for Nigeria’s technological take-off. It is this line of thought that informed the conception of this study.

References


