

SHOWING BLACKSMITHING AS AN ALTERNATIVE INCOME EARNER TO UNEMPLOYED NIGERIANS AND OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: ELELE ALIMINI BLACKSMITHING IN FOCUS.

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, observation shows that a good number of persons are ignorant of blacksmithing and its usefulness to mankind. This situation applies to many unemployed Nigerian graduates who do not know that blacksmithing could substitute for government and other employer's employment to earn a living. Even the Nigerian government seems to have minute understanding of the benefits of blacksmithing to the nation, a reason for which the challenge of unemployment of the youths, and their poor economic growth and development is on the increase. Axiomatically, revealing the importance of blacksmithing to people would have shown the trade as an occupation. It would have also shown its role in nation building. So also it would have shown the possibility of continuing the trade in Nigeria. This no doubt has created research gap and dearth of literature on blacksmithing. The study focuses on preventing the unemployed Nigerian youths from living in misery. The objective of this study is to examine the benefits of blacksmithing via the condition of life of Elele Alimini blacksmiths in Nigeria. The aim of the study is to establish the usefulness of blacksmithing to mankind with the view of recommending the trade to the youths as a substitute for government and other employers' employment in Nigeria and other parts of the world. The findings are based on biographical survey of qualitative research methods and research questions which tests the objective of the study. It adopts the historical survey technique which relies heavily on primary and secondary source of data collection. It was ascertained that the value of blacksmithing to mankind is enormous. Therefore blacksmithing to mankind has been established as a potential occupation in Nigeria and other parts of the world for sustainable development.

Keywords: Blacksmithing, Alternative Income Earner, Unemployed, Beyond, Sustainable Development, Elele Alimini.

Introduction

Unemployed Nigerians particularly graduates neglect engaging themselves in viable occupations that would substitute for the unpredictable government or another employer's employment to earn a living. They prefer to be employed by the above named sectors to taking-up self-employment. But waiting for those unpredictable employment opportunities would have delayed or robbed a lot of them of making better alternative income earning plans for future survival. It would have also evoked the feelings of disappointment and loss of

confidence in the graduate's areas of specialization. So also the graduates would have been uncomfortable in life and perhaps developed unruly behavior that would have made them become nuisance in the society.

However Nigeria government is luring the unemployed Nigerians into self-employment (entrepreneurship) through skill acquisition programme and other measures.

The government had established "Industrial Training Fund (ITF) by the provision of Decree No.47 of 1971. It also established "National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)" in accordance with Decree No.9 of 1977. Those Programmes were aimed at promoting and encouraging skills acquisition in industry and commerce with the view of generating a pool of indigenous trained manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the economy. It also subjected the students of vocational and technical education to practical work to encourage self-employment. The National Directorate for Employment (NDE) introduced in November 17, 1986 and launched on January 30, 1987 in the authority of Decree No.24 of 1989 was part of the programme. In it, unemployed school leavers were expected to acquire skills that they could work with if employed or take up self-employment. The (NDE) further expanded the programme to include the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme, National Youth Employment, and Skills Development Programme to enhance job creation. (Kanu, Njoku, and Nwachukwu, 2012)

In furtherance, the government had embarked on rural development programme aimed at developing the rural areas and encouraging entrepreneurs to set up industries in them. It had put in place agricultural loan scheme for young university graduates to encourage them to take up agriculture as a business. It had established mass transit scheme aimed at improving the means of transportation and providing employment opportunities for drivers, mechanics, account clerks, and managers. So also it created more new states and local governments as well as polytechnics and universities that have gone a long way in providing more job opportunities for Nigerians (Anamgba, and Azubuike, 2012). In spite of these efforts, one wonders whether those programmes are still functional and effective in Nigeria.

Kanu, Njoku and Nwachukwu (2012) citing Kanu and Nwosu (1997) concur with the ideas above that the youths would have acquired the skills and competencies needed by business and industry if they were guided and allowed to choose their courses and schools of interest. Bice (1980, cited in Kanu, Njoku and Nwachukwu, 2012) postulates that any ambitious young man with initiative, ability, and thrift can start a small business, and with diligence develop it into considerable size. All the ideas above in conjunction with the atrocious and pathetic condition of some of the unemployed Nigerian graduates swayed the researcher's sympathy to suggest blacksmithing occupation to them as an alternative income earner in Nigeria and other parts of the world for sustainable development.

Conceptual Clarification

Blacksmithing is the adjective of blacksmith defined in Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2013 edition) as a workman who works in or welds wrought iron. Sassoon (1962) describes blacksmithing as the smiting of local ores to make iron for tools and weapons. Elenwo (2021) defines blacksmithing as the art of fashioning goods from metal. Goods such as agricultural implements, technological tools, household utensils, weapons,

religious worshipping metal items and other metal decorative objects are of blacksmithing. Blacksmithing is also a traditional method of binding or joining metal materials like pieces of iron, steel, copper or lead by tying, gluing or welding to form a utilitarian object (Elenwo 2007).

Alternative Income Earner in this study is a word of three merged words that convey the meaning of a concept. It simply means a substitute for a popular source of fund. Anamgba, and Azubuike (2012) described unemployment as a condition in which people who are qualified, willing and ready to work cannot find jobs or paid work. The qualification is people belonging to the working age range of 15-64 years.

Sustainable Development is another merged word that conveys a meaning. Sustainable refers to something that can be continued at the same level of activity or pace without harming its efficiency, and the people affected by it. Development is the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advance or stronger (Hornby, 2010). Sustainable development therefore refers to the careful use of something that can support life for a long period of time irrespective of its future influence on the masses (Elenwo, 2021).

Nwombu, (2019) citing Brundtland Commission Report (2008) describes sustainable development as the development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Again, sustainable development is the judicious and planned use of available natural resources to equitable development to meet the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing that of the future generation.

Anyakoha, (2012) holds that the practice of protecting the environment while improving living standards for all is sustainable development. So also does a holistic approach to improving the quality of life which postulates that there are intrinsic links among economic, social and environment well-being refers to sustainable development because changes in one area will impact upon the other two domains. For instance, from a social perspective in particular, human well-being cannot be sustained without a healthy environment and is equally unlikely in the absence of a vibrant economy. Sustainable development is a pattern of resources use that aims at meeting human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also generations to come. Elele Alimini is the town in which the research was carried out.

Theoretical Framework

Showing blacksmithing as an alternative income earner to the unemployed Nigerians and beyond has been anchored on the theories of psychoanalysis, professionalism, and developmental/modernization. Blacksmithing-an economic and social-cultural activity that contributes immensely to nation building has been identified as an occupation that ought to be adopted as a modern practice in Nigeria. The theory of psychoanalysis holds that creativity wells up from unconscious drive; therefore the future artists should disassociate with real objects and fall in love with the world as a whole. Art historians should use biographical narrative approach which takes the idea of story, significant imagery, and provide information on the benefits of the art to mankind (Samuels and Samuels, 1975). This theory enabled the researcher to make psychological enquiry about the origin, practice, and importance of blacksmithing in Elele Alimini. It also enabled the researcher to document this

research finding as a historic record for further academic work. It notes that all information about creative expressions usually comes from oral story, memoranda and other materials. The aim is to produce rich descriptions of persons or conceptualize structural types of action which means to understand the action logics or how persons and structures are interlinked. The theory of professionalism postulates that professional group should apply their theoretical knowledge to their professional practice so that the narrative content, symbol, emotion, and politics contained in their creative forms can be deduced (MacDonald, 1994). This theory enabled the researcher to ascertain that blacksmithing is an occupation. The theory is more effective problem solving as it makes for more effective innovations, financial rewards, and ethical conduct. The theory of development and modernization posits that undeveloped countries can be developed if the social variables of development such as economic, social-cultural and political forces are adopted as modern practices (Max Webber, 1864-1920). This theory enabled the researcher to suggest to the unemployed youths that blacksmithing can make one to be successful in life if the blacksmith would be fully committed to the job.

The Origin of Elele Alimini Community

The history of the origin of Elele Alimini is still obscure because of its apparent contradictory views presented by oral tradition. However it is accepted by indigenes of Alimini that the town came into existence as a result of incessant inter-tribal wars which developed between Elele Okiniali (Omeneele) and her neighbouring village Ekpeye (Ahoada) in about fourteenth (14th) century (Ikpe-Elenwo and Isaiah-Ihua 2005) "Oral interview" The war, which lasted for years and took many lives and properties has been sought by many people to discover the remote and immediate cause of it, but to no avail-a reason for which there could be versions of what caused the war. Presumably it was told to have emanated from the ardent slave trade of the time. Elele Alimini- a renowned town of the Ikwerre clan of Rivers State was founded by a great and renowned hunter called Anyia Wabeeme of Omuokpirikwu village of Elele-Okiniali in about fifteen (15th) century (Ikpe-and Isaiah 2005). The discovery of Alimini by the hunter could be traced to the subjugation of the powers of the Ekpeye in the war by men of valour of the Elele Okiniali. Those men of valour were chosen from different villages of the Omeneele as representatives of each of the villages to face the Ekpeye challenges. The leader of each village representatives include: Anyia Wabeeme of Omuokpirikwu village, Ugu of Mgbuanyim village, Agnarna of Omuobiri village, Eke of Omueke village, and Dum of Omeneta village respectively. These names of the leaders were intentionally given to them to enable them effect disguise in the battle-field.

All the men of valour were led to the battlefield by Anyia Wabeeme (the great hunter cum war-lord). In the battlefield; they became thirsty and needed water to drink. Incidentally they discovered a stream and drank from it. In the process, they noticed that the stream was large and deep enough than they could cross easily. They decided to provide two boats to cross the stream. To achieve this goal, they cut down six sizeable light dried white wood called "Oru" in Omeneele language, tied it together in the ratio of 3 to 1, sat on it, used paddles and crossed the water, and continued the war.

In the war, one of them named Wosa Womah used his magical gun to locate the source of power of the Ekpeye. The source of power was a shrine decorated with demonic items so awful to look at. The shrine was invaded and the power neutralized. This singular act

weakened the strength of the Ekpeye and they surrendered. The men of Omeneele therefore chased them out and inhabited the area. To stop the Ekpeye from further encroachment on Omeneele land, Anyia Wabeeme stationed the five leaders of the Omuneele men of valour and their men including him at different points of entry into Omuneele territory and they settled permanently in the areas. The availability of the stream in the area was an added advantage to their victory and settlement. All this marked the cradle of the town Omeneele Alimini-meaning people of the land of water. To this end therefore, the name Omeneele-Alimini gradually changed to Elele Alimini following the pronunciation of the early Europeans Missionaries that had contact with the people of Omuneele and Ekpeye. Other migrants into the Elele Alimini Community who lived as tenants followed such pronunciation and the name “Elele” stuck as the name of the community.

This history reveals why there are two communities called Elele. One addressed as Elele Okiniali (Big Elele) and the other addressed as Elele Alimini (Small Elele). The two communities see themselves as one but are individually autonomous. They have similar culture including language; though they inter-marry. This history also shows that Elele Alimini is an offshoot of Elele-Okiniali. No community ever separates from her parent community without a cause. No cause of action is easily forgotten. No action is taken without an event, and events constitute a factor for the survival of history.

Geographical Location of Elele Alimini

Elele Alimini is an Ikwerre Community that is located in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State of Nigeria. The Local Government Area has her headquarters in Emohua, a town that measures about 21 kilometers to Port Harcourt and about the same measurement to Alimini Town. It lies along East West and South West border of Rivers State. At the East West border, it lies between Ndele and Ahoada town, and between Ahoada and Elele Okiniali in the South. The town is bounded by other towns in Rivers State such as Ndele, Obelle, Rumuekpe, Ahoada, Akpabu, and Elele Okiniali respectively. 343 Artillery Brigade Regiment of Nigerian Army is located in the community. The position of Alimini is strategic for business transactions. The 1991 National Population Census of Nigeria shows that the Community accommodates a minimum of 10,383 indigenes. In this number, 5,353 are male while 5,030 are female. At present, this population however may have increased due to the high birth rate occasioned by the imposed Healthcare Sciences sponsored by Nigerian government (Elenwo 2007). Elele Alimini consists of fourteen villages shown below in the order of seniority; (1) Omuokpirikwu, (2) Omuorihuru, (3) Mgbuanyim, Omuagnara (Omuobiri), (3) Omuohiaa (Omuobiri), (6) Omuohia (Omuobiri) (7) Omuadni (Omuobiri), (8) Omeke, (9) Omuigbuom (Omeke), (10) Omuordu (Omeneta), (11) Mgbuajahwiyee (Omeneta) that comprises Omumbnere, Omuezechi and Omunmaah, (12) Omusne, (13) Mgbuolelu (Omusne), and (14) respectively.

Alimini enjoys a good climatic condition such as a suitable temperature that conforms to the health of the inhabitants, minimized natural disasters like thunderstorms, destructive flood, hills, mountains, and others. Also to her advantage of the gift of nature are adequate rainfall and expanse of agricultural rich soil, etc. The indigenes of Alimini are predominantly farmers of subsistence level. They also engage themselves in other economic activities such as art and craft works including blacksmithing, trading, technicians, and civil service. A number of streams are found in the area and are good for drinking. Alimini is blessed with mineral

resources. The community is gradually assuming an urban status. She has electricity supply from National Electrical Power Authority (NEPA), a post office, a daily market, and a large but substandard local market for the sale of her farm products. Nigerian government state schools ranging from Primary to Secondary levels and a number of religious worshipping centers is located in the community. Elele Alimini is autonomous and has community boundaries with her neighbouring communities. She is a peace loving community. The Nigerian government knows the indigenes of Alimini for their support. The indigenes speak the Ikwerre dialect, Elele specifically. Alimini indigenes are good at maintaining the rich diverse cultural heritage of the Africans but the influence of Western Christianity on African culture has reduced their interest in those activities. New Yam Festival (Hnozuzu), Wrestling Competition (Ogba-Ute), and Dancing Competition (Ohnihio-eri), are good examples of the Alimini cultural activities influenced by Western Culture. (Elenwo, 2007)

The map of Elele Alimini showing all the villages in it, map of Rivers State showing Emohua Local Government Area, map of Nigeria showing the location of Rivers State, and map of Africa showing the location of Nigeria are employed in this study to show the geographical location of Elele Alimini in Nigeria. In the maps, the locations are indicated in shading for easy identification and understanding as shown in plates 1-4.

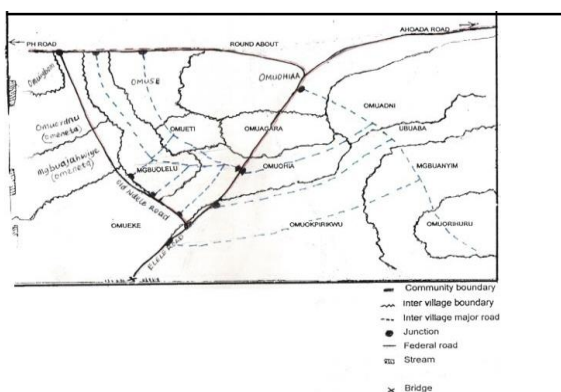


Plate 1: Map of Elele Alimini showing inter-village boundaries and Federal Roads.



Plate 2: Map of Rivers State showing its Local Government Areas

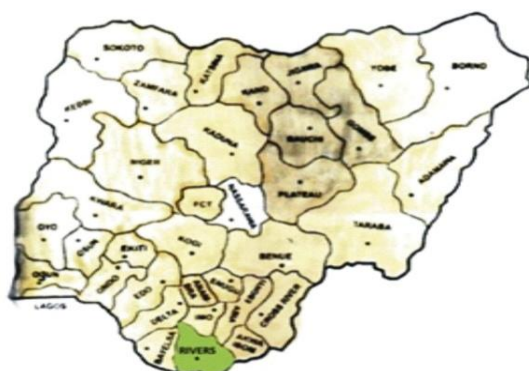


Plate 3: Map of Nigeria showing all the states of the Federation



Plate 4: Map of African Continent and its countries

Blacksmithing as a Traditional Art

Egonwa (2005) defines traditional art as the original art form and cultural practice of the Africans before contact of foreign culture or with other people of the world. Art forms and styles persist in Africa but the peculiarity in African style of expressing blacksmithing has not completely broken rather forces of modernization have had serious influence on it. Blacksmithing in Elele Alimini is one of the original art forms and cultural practices of the Nigerians prior to the severe Western influence on Nigerian culture. The art is associated with the moral and philosophical beliefs of the Alimini people. Okpara (2005) points that blacksmithing is one of the art forms and cultural practices of the Africans that have blazed the trail of indigenous Nigerian art nationally and internationally because of the Bronze and Brass cast objects excavated in Igbo-Ukwu by Thustan Shaw in about the middle of the 9th Century AD. The Elele Alimini blacksmiths practice the craft without the use of the conventional guiding principles of works of art. The working materials, tools, and equipment are mostly obtained from found objects of nature such as wood, animal skin, clay, charcoal, water, among others. The products look crude and are mostly used for traditional activities. Studying the trade is through apprenticeship training which does not require one to possess formal education. A newly trained blacksmith who has owned a smithy and is about to start production must perform some rituals for self fortification before commencing. Those blacksmiths have a little or no idea of expanding their business through art exhibitions, or other public enlightenment programmes. All of this classifies blacksmithing as a traditional art.

The Origin of Blacksmithing as an Art Form and Practice in Elele Alimini

Blacksmithing has been described as a traditional method of binding or joining metal materials like pieces of iron, steel, copper or lead by tying, gluing or welding to form a utilitarian object. In Elele Alimini, it is an old art form and practice that started in about late 1940, and early 1950s. History has it that its origin in Alimini is traced to the Awka indigenes of the Igbo tribe. (Wodah, 2020) The early indigenes of Alimini prior to the beginning of the craft had a little or no idea of blacksmithing until the Awka introduced the technology to them. The introduction of the craft was the consequent upon the migration of the Awka blacksmiths into Alimini town as tenants. The Awka being skillful and famous in the trade began to produce crude farming implements needed by the people of Alimini for their farming, hunting, and protection. Soon after the introduction of the technology in Alimini, it flourished. Notable among the early Awka blacksmiths in Alimini are Mr. Mark Okonye, Obi Okafor, James Chidokwe Nwonye, Journey Elukora, Onitsha Wosu, Fortunatus Anyanwu and others. These men had to train other Alimini indigenes interested in the craft by making them undergo apprenticeship training of five or six years depending on the trainee's ability to cope.

Among other early qualified Alimini blacksmiths are Mr. John Dimkpa Okwukwu (Dimkpa-Nwodanda), and Mr. Isaac Wodah (Akpura). Others with partial training who later became bicycle repairers and sporadically use their residual knowledge of blacksmithing to weld broken bicycle parts and produced minor metal works such as kitchen and fishing spear, javelin, short-put, and many other objects are Lazarus Nyekwere (Ndah-Nwuoakah), Mr. John Enyigbede Woke (Alete), Mr. Woka Okneh (Odiiche), Mr. Hillary Chianuka (Dulla), Mr. Peter Nwezenwo (Abel), Mr. James Dike (Acid), Mr. Christopher Chimara (Azubuikne), and many others of the time. The people of Alimini in different names of the Alimini dialect

acclaim those Alimini blacksmiths for their fantastic metal products. The trade names include: “Oji-igweh eme-eriri” meaning one who converts iron into rope, “Oji-akah eme-okah” one who beautifies things by hands, among other sorts of accolade.

In addition to those early Alimini blacksmiths is another set of Alimini indigenous bicycle repairers who emerged between 1990 and 2007 and work to the present day in similar methods and styles of their Alimini masters. These blacksmiths include Mr. Innocent Wosa (Lobo), London Ofuru (Londor), Silas Assor (Ogbordor), Smart Chukwu, Chukwuemeka W. Amadi (Emeka), and Saturday Johnson of Delta State, among others. The materials, tools, and equipment used for the artwork are named in Igbo language following the orientation of the Awka masters. Blacksmithing among other traditional art forms is an important and lucrative venture because as many as learnt and practice the craft are at least average Nigerians today. Again, the products possess the essential link between art and nation building. Okpara (2005) notes that those essential links include: creativity, aesthetics, utility and technology. The available photographs of the Awka and Alimini blacksmiths showing them at work with some of their products are as shown over-leaf.

The available photographs of the Awka and Alimini blacksmiths showing them at work with some of their products are as shown over-leaf. A few pictures of the bicycle repairers are also shown. The map of Nigeria showing the states in metalwork is shown and shaded. So also are the states in metal work arranged in their ethnic groups are shown in the table below.

Table 1: The states in metal work and their ethnic groups

States	Ethnic Groups
Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Lagos, Ondo, Ekiti, Kwara	Yoruba
Niger	Nupe
Kebbi	Borgana, Bariba
Kaduna	Gwari
Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kanu, Jigawa, Bauchi, Gombe	Hausa and Fulani
Yobe, Borno	Kanuri
Adamawa	Bura, Marghi, Longuda, Bata and Mumuye
Plateau	Birom, Katab, Jukun
FCT	Bassa
Kogi	Igbirra, Igala
Taraba	Chamba
Benue	Tiv, & Idoma
Edo	Bini
Enugu, Imo, Abia, Ebonyi, Anambra	Igbo
Cross River	Ekoi
Akwa Ibom	Efik, Ibibio
Rivers	Ikwerre, Mgbom, Ogoni, Ogba, Ekpeye
Bayelsa	Ijaw
Delta	Urhobo, Itsekiri

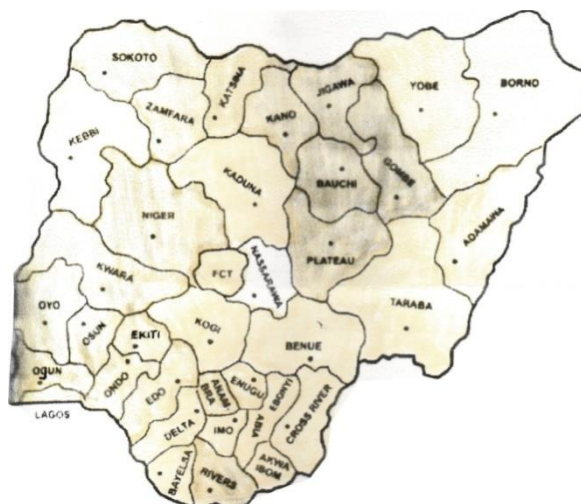


Plate 5: Map of Nigeria showing the states in metal work

The Practice of Blacksmithing in Elele Alimini

Blacksmithing is a three dimensional art work. The products possess height, length and breadth and are seen in the round. The materials used for the art production include; Brass, flux powder, wire, rod, pipe, discarded bicycle and vehicle spare parts, among others. According to Nwonye (2005) blacksmithing in Elele Alimini is a traditional art work that is associated with some mystical powers. In blacksmithing tradition, any apprentice who completes his course of training and owns a smithy must undergo some rituals for self-fortification before commencing production. The fortification is usually made at the smithy of the blacksmith a reason for which the Alimini blacksmiths forbid women on menstruation entering into their smithy when at work, and a non-blacksmith touching their anvil when at work, among other prohibitions. The smithy is spaced and built to accommodate the needed materials, tools and equipment of production. The size of a smithy is usually as desired by the owner. At a corner of the smithy is positioned an equipment called "Forge" for heating of iron. The forge is made of a low mud wall of about 4ft high, 3ft wide and 1ft thick. The wall is perforated at one end of the ground level for fire making. At the fire space is connected two clay tubes or two pieces of metal pipe of about 3ft long, 2 inches wide, and 4mm thick. At one end of each of the pipes is tied a small drum of about 9 inches high, with animal skin or rubber as the cover tied also to a long wooden handle. This device is referred to as bellows. Charcoal is usually piled at the fire space, and a fire is kindled with it as the readiness for production. The bellows are used for blowing air into the fire.

During production, a desired number of irons are put into the fire to heat to the degree of changing the colour of the iron into red. Blowing air into the fire through bellows produces the heat that changes the colour of the iron. The heat softens the iron to be easily shaped into a desired shape. The hot iron is picked out of the fire with a tongs and placed on anvil for shaping. The shaping is done through a process of striking and smoothing with hammer referred to as forging. In the process of forging, the object produced may further be decorated to satisfy the creative consciousness of the blacksmith. The items produced vary in style and size to suit the purpose for which they are made. The above processes of blacksmithing in Alimini are similar to those of other communities in Nigeria. The products are numerous and

are on daily demand in Nigeria. Some products of the Alimini blacksmiths and their purpose of production are as shown in the table below. The picture of a local forge and those of the blacksmiths at work and their products are shown. So also the blacksmithing tools and equipment named in English, Igbo, and Ikwerre (Elele) languages with their specific functions are shown below:

Table 2: The Blacksmiths Products and Their Purpose of Production

S/N	PURPOSE	PRODUCTS
1	Agricultural Implements	Hoe, machete, mattack, shovel, axe, iron-trap, head-pan, palm wine tapping chisel, rubber tapping knife, fishing spear etc
2	Household Conveniences	Hinches, Nail, Traditional iron pots, griddle, cloth pressing iron, bucket, bicycle frame, bicycle carriage, bicycle standing, kitchen pin etc
3	Ceremonial/religious worshipping instruments	Staff, metal gong, bell, flute, cannon, hunting gong, jingling pipe, etc
4	Sports equipment	Shot-put, javelin, etc
5	Engineering and Architectural tools	Hammer, chisel, pliers, hand trowel, tools box, chain, punches, saw, nail bar, etc
6	War Equipments	Dane gun, bows and arrow, knife and some explosives, etc

Showing a Local Forge, and an Awka and Alimini Blacksmiths at Work

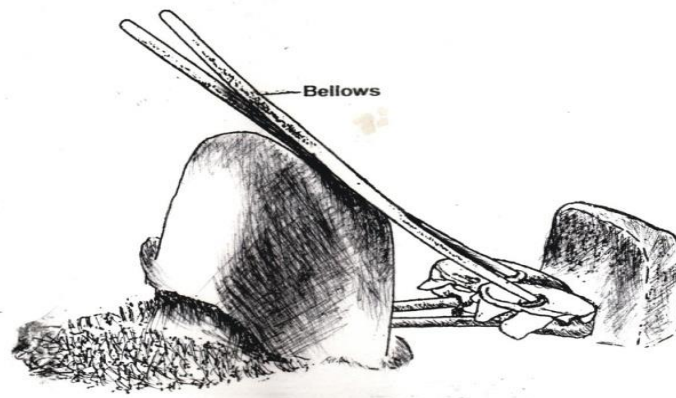


Plate 6: Local Forge
Drawing: By Elenwo Morrison

Awka and Alimini Blacksmiths at work



Plate 7: (Awka) James Chidokwe Nwonye at work in Elele Alimini (Oct, 2005) Born 1927



Plate 8: Nwonye J.C. Blowing air into the charcoal fire with bellows to heat a piece of iron into red colour in his smithy at Elele-Alimini (Oct, 2005)



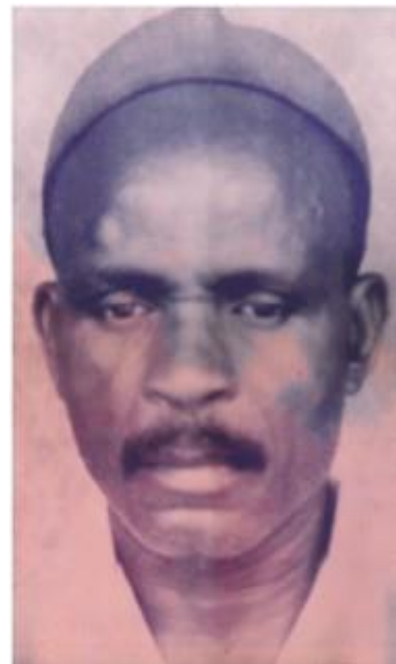
Plate 9: Emeka Nwonye displaying the available metal products of his father Mr. J.C Nwonye



Plate 10: Isaac Wodah (Akpura) Beating and shaping a heated iron into a desired shaped of a hoe on the anvil.



Plate 11: Isaac Wodah (Akpura) in his smithy pumping air into the charcoal fire with bellows to heat iron into reddish colour (Oct, 2005) Born 1953



*Plate 12: John Dimkpa Okwukwu Alimini Blacksmith 2005
 Born 1927 – Dec, 23rd 2003*

Showing samples of Alimini Blacksmiths Products

*Plate 17: Different types of simple farm tools
 Source: Ogieva, 1988:124*

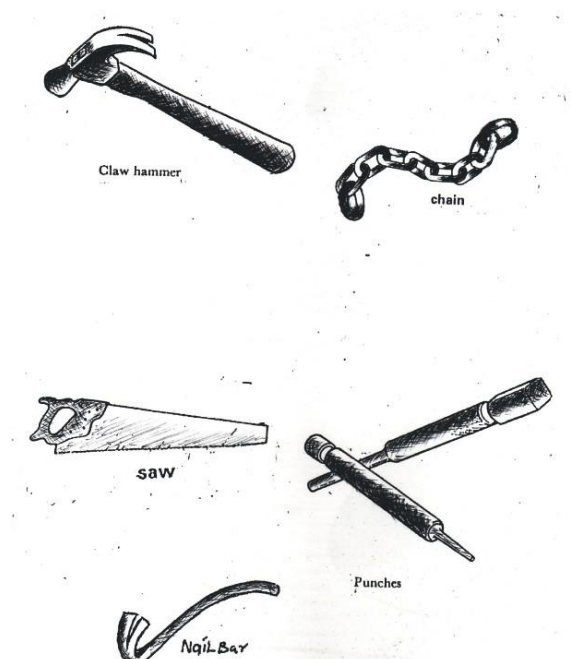


Plate 18: Engineering and Architectural Tools (Elenwo M. 2020)

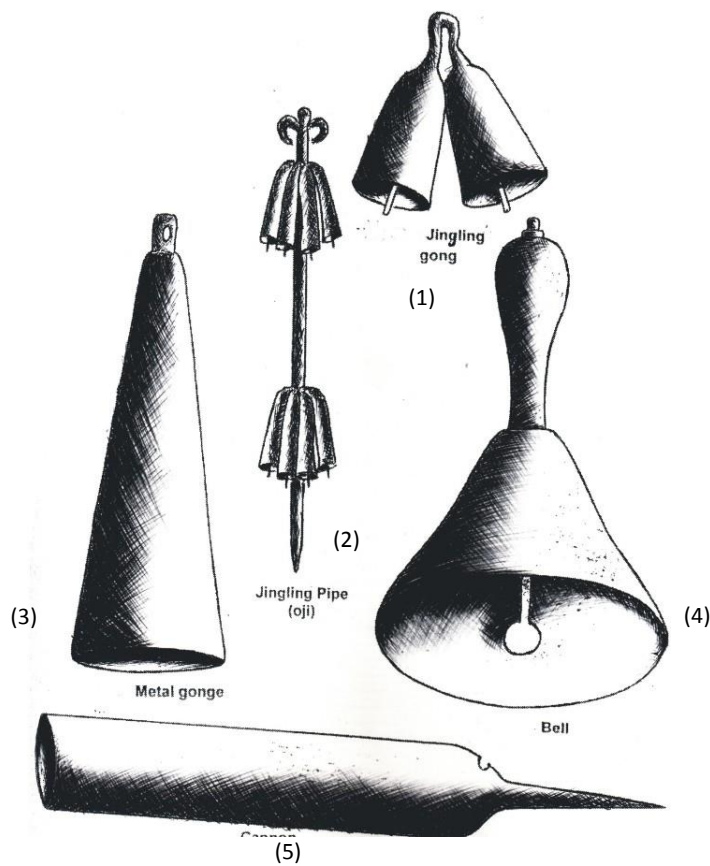


Plate 19: Ceremonial and Religious Instruments (Drawing: By Elenwo, Morrison 2020)

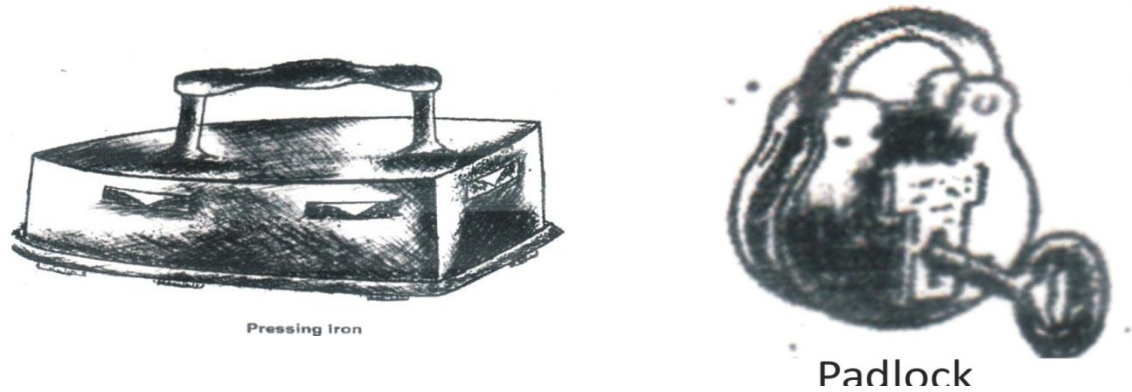


Plate 20: Household conveniences (Elenwo, M. 2020)

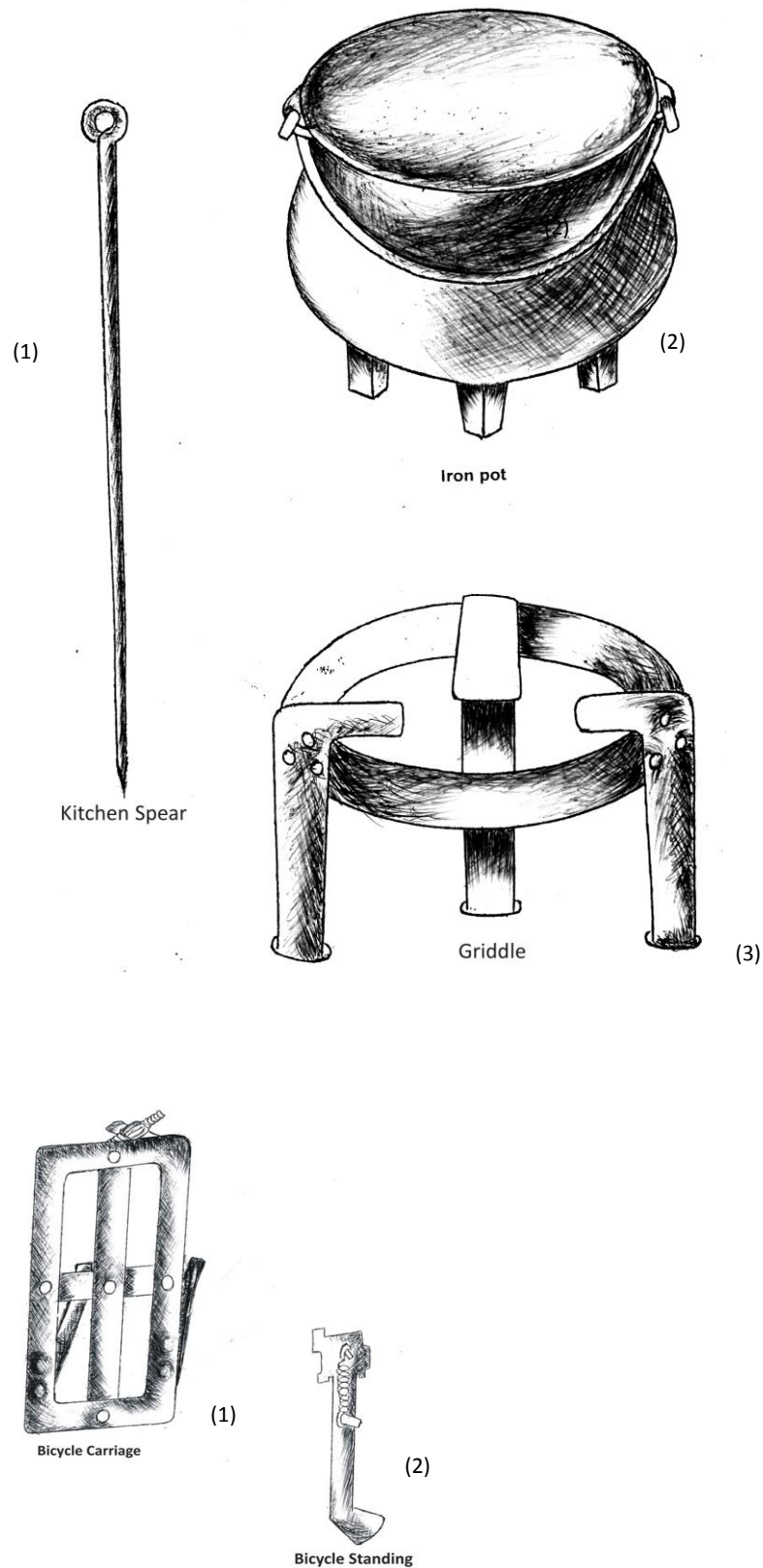


Plate 22: Bicycle parts (Elenwo, M. 2020)



Plate 23: Sports equipment (Elenwo, M. 2020)

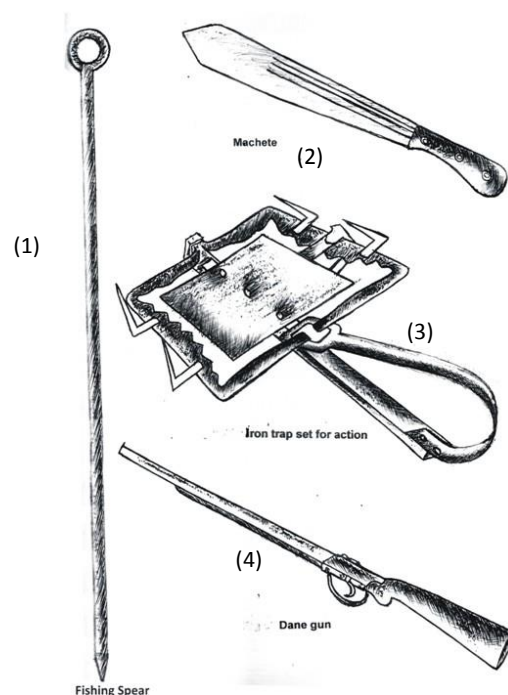


Plate 24: War Equipment (Elenwo, M. 2020)

Table 3: Tools and Equipment

English	Igbo	Ikwerre	Functions
Anvil	Osiamia	Usisi-Nkpor	Used for placing hot metal as to hit and shape it into a desired shape.
Sledge hammer with wooden handle	Otiti	Akni-igwegbe	Used for hitting and shaping a hot metal into a desired shaped.
Sledge hammer with metal handle	Anyonka	Amu	For leaning and smoothing a fashioned shape.

Tongs	Mkpa	Mkpa	For picking up hot metal from the forge
Chisel	Aku-koi-koi	Dinkwu Igwe	For cutting iron when hot or cold
punch	Ndudu	Agiga	For bowing holes
Light hammer	Hama or Otiti-Obereh	Amala or otiti-ogbede	Used for hitting the punch when bowing a hole on a metal. Also used for driving in nails, and tapping edges into shapes.
Smithy	Mbari-orzu	Obiri-orzu	The workroom or workshop of a blacksmith.
Forge	Eki-orzu	Ogidi-orzu	Used for firing or heating of metal.
Bellows	Ekno	Epupe-orzu	Used for blowing air into the fire in the local forge
Large shaft surface	Igweoche	Igwe-orzu	Used for placing thin bits of iron when cutting it with chisel.
Table	Oche	Ngodongokwu	Used for displaying the blacksmith products at the front of the smithy for sales.
Adze	Egbu	Egbugbu	Used for trimming protruding bits of hot metal

The blacksmith's tools and equipment named in English, Igbo and Ikwerre (Elele) Languages and their functions.

Blacksmithing as an Occupation

Occupation in BBC Dictionary of the English Language (1992) is defined as ones job or profession. Anyaele (2003) also defines occupation as legitimate activities in which people engage themselves in order to earn a living. Blacksmithing has been identified as one of the self-employed occupations that could contribute to confronting the issue of unemployment in Nigeria and elsewhere. It is an occupation because it possesses the qualities of occupation. It requires adequate skill or mental training to become a blacksmith. The job requires the blacksmiths to relate with their customers as well as show adequate commitment to it to be successful. Good attitude of the blacksmith to customers and commitment to be successful. So also does the practice require physical fitness of the blacksmith to undertake the responsibilities of the job. In Nigeria for example, blacksmithing is associated with the ethical conduct of moral and philosophical beliefs of the people. The products are capable of surviving whoever that associates with the trade. This implies that the non blacksmiths can trade on blacksmith products to earn a living. Joyce (2002:2) notes that in African Civilizations,

iron had become the key to their development and survival. Sassoon (1962:27) concurs with the ideas above that blacksmithing-a craft that yields money has contributed to the growth of many families in Nigeria. Those who embraced the trade are able to live a comfortable life with their families. The family of Djang Dung Rwangs in Birom village of Zawan in Jos among other communities in Nigeria is a living example.

Blacksmithing as an Alternative Income Earner

Blacksmithing is a self-employed business. Hornby, (2010) describes self-employment as working for oneself and not employed by any company. The researcher describes self-employment as the ability to fend for oneself without depending on the government or another employer's employment. Blacksmithing as a self-employed enterprise is usually owned, sponsored, and managed by one person as his source of income. The business seems to be profitable if managed properly and adequately. Listed below are the identified ways by which blacksmithing can generate income to a person.

1. *Sale of the Products:* Goods of metal materials are fashioned and sold to the people that need them. In Nigeria, household conveniences such as machete, knife, griddle, axe, padlock, cloth pressing iron among others are on daily demand. A blacksmith who specializes in this aspect of production would hope to fend for himself and his family.
2. *Hiring of the Products:* Most products of the blacksmiths classified as agricultural implements, technological tools, sports equipments, and war weapons are on daily demand. They are often hired from blacksmiths or the blacksmithing traders which generates income.
3. *Trading on the Product*
A non-blacksmith may choose to become a trader or dealer on metal goods. The money realized from the business of buying and selling of the goods is used for survival.
4. *Training of Apprentices:* A blacksmith or a dealer on blacksmith products would make money for a living if he includes blacksmithing apprenticeship training in his business. Those trainees would be charged some money for their training business. It is no doubt that the trainee would be charged some money for his training.
5. *Production of Variety of Metal Goods:* A blacksmith would make money from blacksmithing if he can produce different kinds and sizes of metal goods to the desire of his customers.
6. *Mass Production of Metal Goods:* A blacksmith would make money from blacksmithing is he can supply as much quantity of his products as needed by the consumers.

Showing the end use of some products of the Alimini blacksmiths

Spade: It has a D-shaped rectangular metal blade and a long wooden handle. It is used for lifting the soil from one place to another, turning of the soil, digging holes, transplanting of seeding, filling of holes in the farm, leveling loose soils, mixing concrete and weeding. The picture below shows how spade is used.



Plate 1: Men mixing concrete with spade

Hoe: It has a curved metal blade and wooden handle. There are two types, the West Indian hoe and West African hoe. The West African hoe has a short wooden handle while the West Indian hoe has a long wooden handle. It is used for making of heaps, preparing ridges, turning of the soil, transplanting of seedling, loosening of the soil surface, uprooting stumps, digging holes and harvesting of crops like yams, cassava, etc. See picture showing the end use of a hoe.



Plate 2: A farmer working with hoe in the farm

Axe: It has a short heavy metal head with a sharp edge and a long wooden or metal handle. It is used for felling trees in the farm, curing logs, uprooting stumps and splitting fire wood.

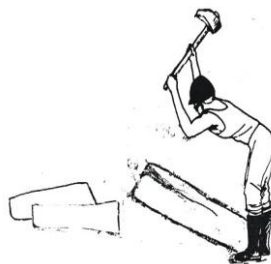


Plate 3: A man splitting fire food with axe

Head pan: It is bowl like, slightly spherical with two small handles. It is made of metal. It is used for collection of harvested crops, mixing of fertilizers, transporting soil in the farm, transporting compost from the reservoir to where necessary in the farm and packing weeds and stones out of the farm. See picture.



Plate 4: A farmer transporting soil in the farm with head pan

Wheel barrow: This has a large deep metal bucket mounted on a metal frame with handles, and on a tyre. It is used for transporting harvested crops, carrying of manure from one place to another and carrying tools in the farm.



Plate 5: A farmer using wheel barrow to transfer manure from one position to

Chisel: Is made of iron, it is flat and has some thickness. It is built in categories. One has wooden handle and the other has metal handle. Chisel is in sizes to suit what it will be used for. It is used for tapping of palm wine from a raffia tree, and for carving of wood among other uses. See picture.



Plate 6: A wood carver working with chisel

Saw: A tool with a blade with metal teeth used for cutting through wood or plastic. See photograph.



Plate 7: A man cutting a wood with a saw

Hammer: Made of iron with a short wooden or metal handle. The head is usually short, big and heavy. It is used for driving in nails into a wood, wall and other related objects.



Fig 29 A boy tacking nails into a wood

Plate 8: A boy tacking nail into a wood with hammer

Bicycle Carriage: It is made of metal with rectangular curved edges and two stands. It is usually fixed at the back of a bicycle. It is used for carrying loads. See photograph.



Plate 9: A boy carrying a basin of cassava on a bicycle

Bicycle Stand: It is made of iron with a flat and triangular shaped end representing a foot. It is usually fixed at the back corner of a bicycle and is used for standing the bicycle.



Plate 10: Bicycle standing with its stand

Metal Gong: As the name suggests, it is a hollow metal instrument with a triangular shape used for attracting people's attention when struck. It is also used for disseminating information mostly in small towns and villages. Its use extends to ceremonial activities such as dancing, wrestling, burial etc.



Plate 11: A town crier using metal gong

Cannon: Cannon is a short metal pipe with a sealed and pointed end used as gun in ceremonies and festivals. At the point of seal of the pipe is an opening which ignites fire into the pipe through gun powder.



Plate 12: A cannon shooter running away after setting fire on the cannon at a ceremony

Jingling Pipe (Oji): It has a long narrow pipe with a pointed end and a number of jingling gongs (ogna) attached to the body of the pipe. The gongs are attached at two or three points of the pipe to jingle simultaneously when struck on the ground. It is a ceremonial tool used for cultural dances and wrestling contexts. It is also used for traditional religious worship among other uses.



Plate 13: A man dancing with jingling pipe (Oji)

Jingling Gong: It is a small hollow metal object with a triangular shape, and contains a piece of iron that hits the gong side by side to make a sound when jingled. It can be paired or single depending on the style of production. Native doctors use it when consulting their oracles, so as it is hung on the neck of dogs by hunters when hunting animals.



Plate 14: A native doctor consulting his oracle in his chambers with a pair of jingling gong

Charcoal pressing iron: It is a cast metal object in a triangular shape with smooth bottom surface. It is for stretching rumples cloths.



Plate 15: A boy pressing cloth with charcoal iron

Padlock: It is a metal object cast with a base and a U-shaped bar on the top which locks and unlock with a matching key. It is used for the protection of a house and house related forms.

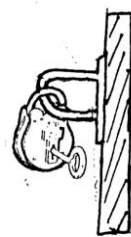


Plate 16: A Padlock with its key on the door

Short Put: This is a cast heavy metal ball of about 1700g in weight used for sports activities. It is usually thrown by hand to test the strength of the spot putter.

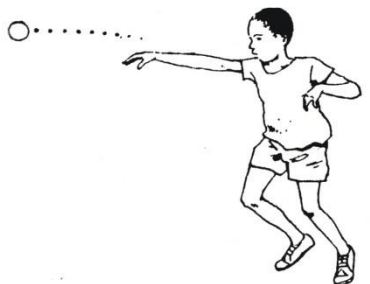


Fig 48 A boy throwing a short put

Plate 17: A boy throwing a short put

Javelin: This is a long metal pole of about 5 feet long with one end sharpened. It is used for sports activities.

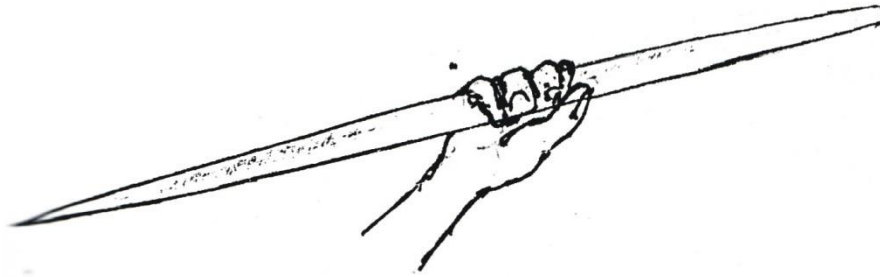


Plate 18: Throwing a javelin

Iron Trap: As the name suggests, it is a metal instrument entirely made up of iron. It has jaws, teeth and tongue. Added to the jaws are extra curved and sharp pins to support the teeth in gripping animals. A flat bar is placed down and the entire jaw is mounted on it. At the right corner of the tongue is an adjustable pin that cut across the down bar which holds the jaws open when set for action. On the down flat bar is attached another bar which can be pressed down and released. A part of the jaw is passed through an opening on the upper bar to enable the bar tightens the teeth when released. Iron trap is used for killing animals. It can also be used for self defense.

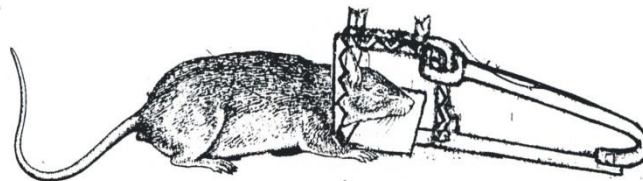


Plate 19: A giant rat cut in an iron trap

Dane Gun: It is a long metal pipe built with a wooden head and to fire bullets. It is used for killing animals. So also it is used for self defense.



Plate 20: A hunter holding the animal he killed with a Dane gun

The Role of Blacksmithing in the Development of Elele Alimini, and Nigeria in General

It is pertinent to this study to show the role of blacksmithing in Alimini and Nigeria in general. Those roles include:

1. *Employment Opportunity:* Blacksmithing is a self-reliant occupation. Over the years, a good number of Nigerians were known for blacksmithing in Elele Alimini and its environs. Those blacksmiths fended for themselves and their families and are rated as average Nigerians. The involvement of many Nigerians in such an occupation has helped to reduce the number of the non-working population in the country.
2. *It is a source of the availability of household conveniences:* In Nigeria, every family makes use of metal products as cooking tools such as pot, knife, spoon, griddle, axe etc, and other conveniences like bed, bucket, lamp, padlock, and cloth pressing iron among others which are of blacksmithing. Blacksmithing therefore provides enough goods that support life. The involvement of people in the craft is actually providing supportive measure to the growth of the nation.
3. *It is a source of tools and equipment for agricultural and industrial practices:* In Elele Alimini and other parts of Nigeria, blacksmithing constitutes the highest supply of the implements needed for agricultural and industrial activities. Ogieva (1998) asserts that “about sixty percent (60%) of the Nigerian population is engaged in agriculture”. So also does a few others work in factories where other things are produced. Their most needed implements of operations such as machete, hoe, axe, spade, rake, head pan etc, and technological tools like pliers, spanner, screw driver, chisel, nail bar, saw, hammer etc are blacksmithing. Obviously, blacksmithing is the pivot on which agricultural and industrial activities rotate. No nation exists without agriculture and industry. As such, blacksmithing is playing a vital role in building our nation (Nigeria).
4. *It is a source of market for metal products:* Blacksmithing in Elele Alimini creates the opportunity of buying and selling of metal products such as iron pot, griddle, charcoal pressing iron, etc in Alimini Community rather than traveling far and wide to get the same needed products. This development brings popularity to Alimini Community and Nigeria in general in outside world. It also enhances the popularity of the Nigerian blacksmiths in metal work.
5. *It is a source of the military defense of the country:* In Nigeria, most war weapon like bows and arrows, knife, spear, gun shell, bomb and other explosives used by the military personnel to defend the country in times of war are of blacksmithing. The availability of the war equipment and government has greatly brought peace in Nigeria and other parts of the world.
6. *It is a source of knowledge:* In Nigeria, blacksmithing is a traditional art. Its art form and practice is educating. The indigenous Alimini blacksmiths are good technicians today. Their products are often needed in the country for various end use including environmental and personal beautifications. Some of the blacksmiths have had jobs with reputable co-operate and private companies, public service and other private ventures, thereby exhibiting their professional acumen in so many respects.

Recommendations

Based on this research, the researcher proffers the following recommendations:

1. The youths should take advantage of this paper and develop interest in blacksmithing.
2. The unemployed youths including the graduates should also take advantage of this study and engage themselves in any business such as blacksmithing that would substitute for the unpredictable government or other employer's employment to earn a living.
3. The government should make blacksmithing a modern business by providing modern facilities for the blacksmiths to work with. Those facilities will enable the blacksmiths to produce their goods in large quantity and enjoy increased profit.
4. The government should include blacksmithing as a course of study in the department of Fine and Applied Arts of tertiary institutions. This strategy if met will lure students into choosing blacksmithing as school career.
5. There should be regular seminar and other public enlightenment programme on blacksmithing. Those programmes will also expose the youths to the benefits of blacksmithing to individuals, and to the government of any nation.
6. The government should provide fund via the companies, and other business establishments operating in the country to enable the blacksmiths obtain loan for their business.
7. The government should revitalize and possibly establish more skill acquisition scheme for the training of the youths for self-employment. This effort if met will go a long way in reducing the number of the non-working population in the country.

Conclusion

This paper has examined and discussed blacksmithing as an alternative income earner to the unemployed Nigerian youths for sustainable development. It establishes that no research has been carried out in this aspect of study. The paper ascertains that blacksmithing is indeed a lucrative business that could substitute for the unpredictable government or other employer's employment for the youths. It should therefore be made a modern business to enhance the growth of self-employment and cultural heritage in the country. The unemployed youths should take advantage of this paper and engage themselves in any business particularly blacksmithing that would serve them as an alternative income earner for sustainable development.

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