An Appraisal Of Some Weaving Traditions Among The Kolokuma Izon People.

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Abstract.

This paper attempts to examine how the Kolokuma Izon people have managed to survive in the forest, creeks, and swamp lands, and how they used available materials to create objects for utilitarian and religious purposes, and for protection from environmental hazards. This can be equated to their art, science and design to solve their human problems of survival. There is a general adage that, when fear is overcome, curiosity and constructiveness are free, and man passes by natural impulse towards the understanding and embellishment of life. In view of the major thrust of this research on traditional woven products, the study adopts the qualitative research methodology and employs the use of observations, interviews, books, descriptive and analytical research approaches to collect data on the traditional woven products. The study further discusses the aesthetic and religious values of the traditional woven products to the Izon people. However, the study reveals that, traditional woven products serves as the surviving means of the Izon people at the time prevailing. In addition, it further discovered that, most of the woven products were used in religious activities. Hence, this study recommends that, the Izon traditional weavers be encouraged by funding them adequately so as to develop their creative capabilities and talent just like their counterparts elsewhere.

Key words: Appraisal, Weaving, Traditions, Among, Kolokuma, Izon**.**

Introduction

According to (Owonaru, S.K, p. 6) the Izon people are one of the many ethnic groups in the Niger Delta Region with a distinct cultural heritage. They are mainly farmers, traders, tappers, fishermen and canoe carvers. This cultural distinctiveness is found in their art and in such ways as eating, dressing, religion and approach to life generally. As man is also very observant and influenced by nature's creatures, their forms and behaviour as well as their products, the Izon people's ideas of art products and technics are not farfetched. They have been adapted from the way insects, birds and other animals weave their nests. Izon

cultural environment which is endowed with these natural materials for the successful survival of its people be brought into limelight through documentation of its arts, religion, culture and of course its weaving tradition. But, in spite of the significance of this area to the socio-economic development through the arts, much is not known or documented about the art, religion and culture of the Izon people. (Note) In this study, the names of woven products and their translation is in Kolokuma dialect, as it is presently, the most central dialect in Izon land. We shall do a shift to others when perhaps, the whole Izon nation must have come together, and sit down to decide and unanimously agree on a particular dialect to use.

Theoretical Framework

Since the evolution of man, the urge to survive has become a fundamental instinct for every human being. The Izon group of communities is not an exception. The quest to conquer the environment, not necessarily to fight wars but for protection, preservation for comfort and security informed this. (Held, 1973, p.3) puts it that, "even before the prehistoric man emerged from the caves, he learned to device ways of making those crude abodes more comfortable and secure" Stressing further this importance, (Held, 1973, p.14) points out that, even when the anxiety to survive occupied his waking hours and life was precarious at best, man still found time to supersede mere functionalism and create beautiful objects such as baskets, fishing nets, mats with the use of available materials found in their environment like grasses, sinews, reed, and etc. Thus, against this backdrop, Darwin's "evolution" theory otherwise known as "survival" theory is adopted for this work. This theory states that, "all species of organisms arise and develop through the natural selection of small, inherited variations that increase the individual's ability to compete, survive, and reproduce"(1859, p.422). He further refer to it as a process whereby the members of a population become better suited to some feature of their environment through change in characteristic that affect their survival or reproduction.

Methodology

This research was accomplished through interviews, reading of text books, and a combination of observations. The historical facts and functions that surround the traditional weaving products obtained through interviews with elders and participant-observers of various Izon communities across the Niger Delta region, including culture keepers such as Chief Save.O.Ogboin, Chief Victor Meli, Pa Okringbo, all of Odi Community in the Kolokuma/ Opokuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, and paramount rulers like Chief J.B. Komonibo-The Amada-owei of Odi at the time of this research. Then, King Mozi Agara-The Ibe da-owei of Kolokuma clan, and many other sub-chiefs. Data on the preparation and actual weaving of the products were obtained through

a combination of covert, overt and participant- observations. The researcher's mother herself was a traditional weaver of some of the said products, such as; Zuye, Ingo, Ado, Ekete, Akparakpara and etc.

Historical Origin.

According to (Ọwọnarọ, 1943, p.1), Izon, the progenitor of the Izon tribes was the first son of Oduduwa, the son of Lamurudu. The name Lamurudu was a corruption of Nimrod (the mighty hunter), the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah. The descendants of Nimrod multiplied and increased to a large tribe in Canaan or Palestine. According to him, the Izon people are descendants of Oduduwa who emigrated from places like Upper Egypt, Iraq in Persia, Canaan (Palestine) and Mecca in Arabia and migrated to its present site of Ile-Ife where he met a man named Agbon-Niregun or (Seitulu) the founder of Ifa. Ọwọnarụ further stressed that, as survival for life and peace demands, the Izon group further migrated over the years to their present site, the Niger Delta. It seems that, ethnic conflicts must have contributed to their emigration to the Delta Swamp land where they could find peace and natural resources suitable for production and consumption. In addition, (Ikime, (1972, P.xviii) also confirms that, the area is exceedingly swampy and this accounts for the growth of raffia oil palm, canes and straws in abundance. The Izons, because of intermarriage and trade with the Isokos of the neighboring terrain, who are good weavers of traditional art products, eventually copied this indigenous weaving art which resulted from basic survival needs befitting their particular environment. Hence, they weave fish traps/nets, traditional sieves, trays, baskets for carrying and storing food and transporting harvests from the farms and other useful products. Historically: According to Chief. S. Ogboin of Odi Community, in a personal interview conducted in 28th July, 2018, responded that, "weaving satisfied two essential needs; that of clothing and shelter, and for the Izon people, weaving developed from the need to survive in their environments, provide utensils for household use and also to produce suitable local roofing sheets for shelter. Just as in other ethnic tribes, the art of weaving in Izon land responded positively to means of survival. This was confirmed by very well-known old men and historian/culture keepers, Chief Ogien-amaowei Agbereowei and Pa Okringbo of blessed memory while in a personal interview conducted on the duo on 28/7/2010 and 26/7/2015 respectively. These authorities argued that, because of the desire to survive in the midst of hunger, these woven products cannot be eradicated as far as human existence is concerned. It is basic that man must kill fish, produce food, sleep and be sheltered. Most of these problems are solved through these woven products, which they make use of. In fact, some of these products cannot be overshadowed by any foreign weapon. Hence, these woven products are for survival and cultural enhancements. Craft weaving in Izon land is a very ancient occupation borrowed from Isoko land in present Delta State. The influence of synthetic

fibre not-withstanding, the Izons are steadfast in the use of indigenous raw materials that grow widely in the swamp lands. The Izon people interact with their neighboring ethnic groups such as the Isoko, Urhobo, Ukwani, Ivrogbo, Asaka, Ndoni etc in present Delta State. Through trade, intermarriages and sociocultural activities, the woven products are bought and their art copied and techniques improved

Weaving types in Izon Land.

Generally, in traditional Nigerian society, two main types of weaving are used. They are; the looming and non-looming weaving. However, the most popular type of weaving used by the Izons and the riverine people are; the non-loom weaving known as "hand" or "finger" weaving. This particular type of weaving is manipulated with fingers technically without the use of a loom, (eg), cane or straw baskets, fish traps or nets, traditional sieves and trays, traditional mats or local roofing sheets. For the purpose of this study, the following woven products would be discussed and analyzed.

* Traditional woven sieves- Kpukpui, Ababala- for extraction of starch from cassava, and filtering of grain preparation, garri and etc. * Traditional trays and baskets- Ado, Ekete, Kana, Ẹtẹtẹ.
* Traditional fish/crayfish preservers- Gịdẹ, Akaba, Apan.
* Traditional fish traps/crayfish traps- Igogo, Ekere, Ikara, Atelei, Zuye, Ingo, Isusu.
* Traditional mats (big/small)- Akparakpara, Eseri, Ute.
* Traditional fan/fence- Azuzu, Babala and etc.
* Traditional woven coffin- Ogbudu

As mentioned above, the making of this type of sieve (traditional filter) "kpukpui" and" ababala" in Izon land employs the use of non-loom weaving known as hand or finger weaving. Cane ropes of both Hard and Weak (Ukpa and Apie) are the raw materials for use. The raw materials of Hard Cane (ukpa) are collected from the ukpa plant by men or women who cut the plant with the use of matchet or cutlass. The preparation is done by the weaver. The natural fibre from this hard, reliable, strong and does not shrink, until it is dried. It has a good tensile strength whether wet or dry. It also emits a smell of burning paper just like cotton which is also a natural fibre. It is left to dry before usage. The extracted cane may be set to size and sliced in a somehow flat manner as desired by the weaver.

The Mechanism of Weaving

Every non-loom weaving has its own mechanism of weaving, but what should be noted is that, the three basic motions (primary motion) of weaving are inherent in every non-

loom, no matter how simple or complex it is. That is, the shedding, picking and crisscrossing or interlocking with the hand. The frames of a sieve (Kpukpui) consists of four strong and fairly straight bamboo sticks (bumọụn or ukpa cane) cut for the crossing horizontal and vertical beans of the sieve. It is fixed in between the two flat surfaces in all the sides and secured tightly with 4 strands to prevent sagging. It is always positioned in a flat manner on the thighs of the weaver in a sitting position. The width and length depends on what centimeters you want to achieve. The four bamboo (bumoun) or ukpa cane (hard cane) sticks firmly secure both the vertical and horizontal ends of the sieve with the cane rope. The weaver makes sure that the area to be woven is between the space of her two legs and waist level so that, she or he does not strain self during weaving. The weaving is started by first firmly securing the four ends of the master sticks by tying the rope to create the first shed in which the hard canes passes through, to maneuver the crisscrossing with the hand or finger. The inner shed is then created leaving behind little spaces for filtering with the use of the hands or fingers. The actions are repeated as the weaving progresses till the finish of one. The sieve mainly used for the preparation of garri in 1 by 1 plain weave, has two kinds and is made from different canes. Those made of stronger canes known as "Ukpa" kpukpui. The type of cane used could affect the price and its durability. The sieve is used for filtering of fufu, melon and corn paste. Sieve is very much in use in all societies where garri is processed and eaten as staple food. Till today, there is no synthetic substitute for it.

Traditional Mats (Akparakpara, Eseri or Ute. Mat weaving is of different types and sizes and is made from various kinds of canes and straws. They are made for different purposes (eg) mats as dust pans, or foot mats, bed spread, carpets, roofing and ceiling sheets and fencing, especially in the market.

Big Mats (Akparakpara): Big mats are woven in a twinning or pairing technique. The materials used are fibre or straws from the bamboo tree, weak cane (Apie) or extracted cane rope from the raffia palm tree known as "Isinya". The flat and soft fibre or straws are lay down, doubled strong stakes of the sliced fibre are placed at both ends, side by side for securing the product. Then, either the weak cane rope (Apie bara) or (Isinya) ropes with the support of the hands technically passes it up and down over each fibre or straw till it gets to the end of the row. The starting point is always at the center of the mat. The weaver works from right to left and vice versa so that, spaces between each row are equal. Some of these large mats are dyed for aesthetic purposes, especially those fabricated from straws (bamboo fibre). They are used for sleeping, while the ones made from mid rib of bamboo sticks are mainly used as fences, drying of tapioca and as ceiling boards.

Small Mats (Eseri): This particular type of mat is quite small and is usually square in shape. It is used as a packer or dust pan. It is processed from a particular shrub or plant known as "Ute". Literally translated to be a small shady plant inhabiting the high land parts of a forest called; "Igbangi" in Kolokuma Izon. It is the mid rib of this 'Ute' plant that are used in the weave. They are cut, sliced, trimmed to size and dried into flat cane stakes and used. About twenty to twenty-five flat stakes are laid straight on the ground and the weaver sits on a small chair, bends upper part downwards to hold the stakes in position. She brings the weft stake to interlace in 2 by 2 twill weave in a diagonal progression to an extent, then changes the sitting position to the other side to weave in order to maintain the same width and orderliness. This product design is always dried for a day before it is trimmed with knife for size and solidity.

Foot Mat (Ute): This is another traditional woven mat, smaller in size than the ("eseri"). It is used as a foot mat (bụọ-kụọye). The materials for weave include; Shrubs extracted from the "ute" plant and raffia palm ropes. The shrubs/straws are sliced into tiny sizes and these strands would be laid flat on the floor. Then, the weaver now uses her hands technically to crisscross the shrubs and raffia ropes severally to thicken the weave, so that, it can clean off dirt on one's foot as soon as you match on it. When the product is finished, it is always placed at the front door step of a house. The mat could be either in a rectangular or square shape depending on how the weaver wants it on the step.

Traditional Baskets: (Ado, Ekete, Kana, Gịdẹ and Ȧkȧbȧ). Weaving these products are done in non-loom process by men and women. The materials needed include Weak Cane (Apie) or Hard Cane(Ukpa), matchet and knife for cutting and trimming. There are different kinds of basket weaving, depending on their function. For instance, in weaving of "Ado" (a traditional basket), the weak cane rope or stick known as (Apie gbasa) are cut, sliced into both (Apie yengi and bara) and trimmed to size. Then, the stakes or sliced and trimmed Apie yengi's are crossed alternatively over and under the warp stakes with the Apie bara (weak cane rope), very flexible to twist whichever way you want it. Research shows that, the weaver uses his foot as a support to hold the stakes together in position, puts the length of the cane (Apie yengi) which represents the Weft between two stakes (Warp) with the tip pointing inward to the left hand side. This tightly passed by using the hands technically to fixing it, living a little space in front of one stake and behind another until, the row is completed. When the bottom is wide enough, the weaver bends the canes upright and continues so that, where the cane passes in front of the stakes in the first row, it will pass behind it in the next row. The length, width and the nature of materials used in weaving the basket depend highly on its function. This method is known as rending. When a length of cane is finished, a new one must be added. To achieve this, the new piece is

crossed in front of the old one and behind a stake or pair of stakes at the back of the work, which is the inside of the basket. The end of each cane is trimmed so that, it rest against a stake inside the basket and is long enough so that, it will not slip through the front or outside wall of the basket.

However, for Ekete, the spaces are a bit open than the "Ado" and it is usually woven with Hard cane rope(Ukpa) as it is used for mainly carriage of heavier commodities such as yam, cassava and etc. The Hard cane rope known as (Ukpa) will be cut, and its mid rib sliced and trimmed to size in a flat posture. Allowed the stakes to dry, and then, the weaver forms the base with stakes of the Hard cane gushing out or protruding from the tightly fixed base and thereafter, with the hands technically, alternate by crisscrossing from over and under the protruding stakes until it is completed. And finally, the tip end will be used with double stake and tightly fixed to secure the basket.

Gịdẹ and Akaba: These are also traditional woven baskets for preservation or storage of fish and crayfish. It is woven tightly perhaps, because of infiltration of rats or cats and, are oval in shape. The materials used for both "Gide" and "Akaba" is the Hard cane (Ukpa).The Hard cane rope [Ukpa] will be cut, and its mid rib will be sliced and trimmed to size, forming the straws or stakes. A base will be formed to produce an oval shape, with the sliced and trimmed straws, the weaver uses its hands technically to pass the straws or stakes up and down or crisscrossing to get it fixed. "Gide" and "Akaba" baskets are attached with covers made from same materials at the tip. While the Gide functions as preservation or storage of dry crayfish, fish and etc, 'Akaba' serves mainly as baskets for putting fresh crayfish while in harvest to ensure safety of catch. "Gide" and "Akaba' are similar and woven in same manner that, a user could hardly differentiate the two.

Kảnả: This is another traditional woven basket for carriage of commodities, such as yam, cassava and etc. The material for use is the Weak cane (Apie). Sticks of the Weak cane known as (Apie gbasa) will be cut, its mid rib sliced to both (Apie yengi and bara) and trimmed to size. Two full weak cane ropes, cut and trimmed will be bend to form a round or circular shape at both ends. Then, a base will be formed at one end, and living the other as the tip. The weaver, with the support of his/her foot places the stakes,(the Apie yengi's) on a flat surface, and with the hands technically, fixes it tightly by interlacing it with the soft extract from the Weak cane rope known as (Apie bara). This continues till it gets completed, and the weaver now takes this woven flat product to wrap the round formed stand, and join the ends tightly with the flexible cane rope (Apie bara). This is also joined with two handles by its sides at the tip for easy lifting or carrying.

Traditional fish/crayfish traps: These are traditionally woven products for trapping fish or crayfish. They include; Ingo, Agbada-ingo, Igogo, Ekere, Atelei, Ikara, Zuye, and Isusu. The materials generally for use in the weaving of these products includes; Raffia palm tree, Weak cane (Apie gbasa), Hard cane (Ukpa). However, the use of the aforementioned materials depends on the weaver's choice on a particular product. These materials will be generally cut, sliced and trimmed to size for the desired weave.

Ingó: This is a traditional woven product by the Izons for trapping crayfish either in the river or streams. It is specifically woven by women. The materials for weaving include; Weak cane(Apie gbasa), "Isinya" an extract from the raffia palm tree and Boru. The Weak cane (Apie) otherwise called (Apie gbasa) will be cut, sliced to both (Apie yengi and bara) and trimmed to desired size. Then, the stakes which is the (Apie yengi) will be placed on a flat surface as many could be, depending on the desired size of the 'Ingo'. The weaver then, uses either the "Isinya" or "Apie bara" also sliced for this purpose as ropes, accompanied with the hands to technically fixing it tightly by passing it up and down. That is crisscrossing the straws either with the "Apie bara" or "Isinya", while adding new straws to the weave. After the completion, the weaver will lay the whole woven product on a flat surface and begin to lift one side and bend it against the other end to achieve a hollow shape, such that, no side or end exceeds the other. Thereafter, the weaver again uses its hands with the ropes to hold tight and join the bent to match ends. Sometimes, "Ingo" can have a little one at one corner as an attachment or extension for either plenty cash or security of cash. That one is called "Agbada-ingo" Agbada is the name for a big crayfish in Kolokuma Izon.

Igogo: It is also a traditional woven fish trap used till date. Usually, it is woven by men in the communities to trap fish for survival. Materials used are the Hard cane (Ukpa), Weak cane (Apie) and a stick. Like other woven traditional fish traps, the mid ribs of the [Ukpa] Hard cane is sliced and trimmed to desired size. The weaver then, places them on a flat surface with the support of his foot to press it down and begin to use its hand to tighten its fix by passing up and down with the Weak cane rope [Apie bara]. After completing the weave, usually, a flat part is also woven on the opening as a cover. The weaver then, joins the flat woven material loosely with "Apie bara" to the cone shaped open tip of the "Igogo". He places a somewhat flexible tiny live-stick to protrude from one end of the product, then, bend the strands to hold tightly with the stick and a loose cane rope fixed from inside which can be used to set the trap. The trap is usually set with a raw ripe palm nut to attract its victims. However, because of difficulty in extracting the Hard cane (Ukpa) ribs, bamboo mid rib slices are also used.

Atelei: This is a traditional fish trap that is woven by the people of Izon land, most especially, by the male folk. The materials used include; bamboo stick, Weak cane (Apie) Hard cane (Ukpa). Four stakes of an unsliced bamboo stick is cut to size and placed squarely on a flat surface. The weaver then, spreads sliced and trimmed to size Hard cane (Ukpa) or Weak cane (Apie) straws inside the squared space of the four bamboo sticks tightly fixed to each other. He then, like any other weave, uses his hands technically to pass it up and down with the weak cane rope (Apie) bara to fix it tight, until the whole space is completed. He then further fixes tightly the woven mat-like flat product to the squared bamboo stakes. A thicker cane rope is then tied to both ends of the squared product, and the other end tightly fixed to a canoe which is usually used for the fishing/trapping in the river. In this process, two able men at both ends of "Atelei" in the canoe, will match down the lined bamboo stakes accommodating the "Atelei" and flows along with the tide, and at desired time, they pull up the "Atelei" by releasing their legs, and raising it up such that, all fish trapped in that process falls inside the canoe. (Note), this trapping is usually done within the sides of canoes tied to their stakes in the water front of the community.

Ệkẹrẹ: This is another traditional fish trap among the Izons of the Niger delta region. The materials used in weaving Ekere are; Weak cane (Apie gbasa)Yengi and bara). The weak cane (Apie) can be sliced in to (Apie yengi and bara) and trimmed to desired size. A stake of an unsliced (Apie gbasa) will form the top in a round cone shape. Then, the weaver will use the sliced (Apie yengi) Weak cane stakes extracted from the (Apie gbasa), place them flat on the surface, and with the (Apie bara) cane ropes, then, use the hands technically with the aid of her foot to pass it up and down in a tightly fixed manner. This process will continue till the weave covers the open round coned space, with a somehow protruded bottom which will reserve the fish.

Ịkara: Like the traditional woven crayfish trap "Ingo", Ikara is also a traditional woven fish trap product. While, the Ingo accommodates minimal spaces in its weave, the Ikara is woven with a wider space as it is only meant for big fish. The materials used are; Weak cane (Apie) Hard cane (Ukpa), Boru and raffia palm extracts known as "Ịsinya". Either, the straws or mid- ribs of Weak cane (Apie) Hard cane (Ukpa) or Boru will be cut, sliced and trimmed to desired size, however, the slices are bigger than the ones of Ingo.

Then, like the Ingo, it will be placed on a flat ground as many sliced ones as could be, depending on the desired size. As it is applicable with the Ingo, the weaver then uses her hands technically to fixing it tightly by passing the sliced "Ịsinya" rope extracted from raffia palm tree up and down. In this, process, the weaver adds new straws to the weave. Then, upon completion, the weaver will keep the whole woven product on the flat surface

and like the Ingo begin to bend it into two equal ends, whereby, the weaver further uses its hands to hold tight the bent weave and join the ends together with Weak cane (Apie bara) or the "Isinya". Like the Ingo, a weaver of Ikara may decide to join little ones as an attachment to the normal big one for more catch.

Zuye: This is another traditional woven product used for trapping fish in lakes. It is usually woven and used by women. The materials for use include; raffia palm tree and weak cane (Apie). Leaves of the raffia palm tree would be cut, peeled and trimmed to size. Like the "Kana", two unsliced Weak cane (Apie gbasa) will be cut and bend to form a tightly fixed round shape with one side narrower and the other, wide. Then, the weaver will now place these peeled and trimmed to size stakes on the oblong shaped formation, by using the hands technically to pass it up and down with either the sliced weak cane ropes (Apie bara) or extracts from the raffia palm known as "Isinya" to fixing it tightly. After completion, the weaver finally uses more (Apie bara) weak cane ropes to join the interlaced weave to the rounded Weak cane (Apie gbasa) at both ends tightly for security sake, and then, it is ready for use.

Isuzu: This is also a traditional woven fish trap used by the Izons till date. It is a somewhat oblong and cylindrically shaped product with one end held and tied tightly with the rope of either Weak cane (Apie) or raffia palm tree extract, "Isinya" rope. It is a brand of "Ingo" in the "Ingo" family of traditional woven products, but specifically for trapping fish. The materials used in weaving include; bamboo sticks, Weak cane (Apie). The mid- ribs of a bamboo stick are cut, sliced and trimmed to desired size. The weaver then places the straws or stakes on a flat surface as many as sliced it could be, and thus, uses its hands technically to fixing it tightly by passing the sliced "Isinya" rope up and down, and where possible, adding new straws to the weave until it is completed. After that, then fold it to achieve an oblong and cylindrical shape, and thereafter tie tightly one end and living the other which has a detachable cover as entry for an unsuspecting swimming fish in the river or streams and canals.

Apản: This is another traditional woven product by the Izons: It is used to preserve live fish in the water. It has a normal weave like the "Ingo", but "Apan" does not attract either front cover or an attachment nor any other curve or design to lure fish into it. "Apan" is usually big in size as it is mainly for preserving live fish. Both, its sliced straws and woven spaces are bigger than that of the "Ingo". The material used is the Weak cane (Apie gbasa) yengi & bara). The weak cane (Apie), is cut, sliced into (Apie yengi and bara).and trimmed to size as desired. Then, the straws will be placed on a flat surface by the weaver, supported with his foot, matching them down, will begin to use its hands technically, with the sliced

weak cane rope "Apie bara" to fixing it tightly by passing it up and down, and if need be, adding new straws until it is completed. And once finished, will bend the whole woven product into two equal radiuses and begin to tightly join both ends together, producing a big hollowed space which serves as the preservation space. Note that at one end, a small portion will be loosely joined so as to put fish inside from there and thereafter, tie it back tightly as fish is putting and kept inside the river. The major users of this product are the fisher men on the river and seas.

Babala: This is a traditional woven product that serves as a fence in the Izon cosmos of the Nigerian nation state. It is woven similar to the traditional sleeping mat-"Akparakpara", only that this one has different materials in its weaving. Thus, the materials used include; bamboo stick and weak cane (Apie). Mid-ribs of the bamboo stick are cut sliced and trimmed to desired size by the weaver. He then lays the straws on a flat surface, uses its hands technically to fixing it tightly by passing the weak cane rope (Apie bara) up and down, whereas, adding new straws to the weave until completion. Once completed, the product can be used as a fence on door posts, shrine gates or entrance, yard fence to protect domestic animals or fish farms from attacks, and even can be used to dry fish or pepper in the sun. For a door post, two long sliced mid-ribs of the weak cane known as (Apie bara) will be tied to near two ends of the "Babala" and further tied tightly to the roofing frames and in the center, a big stick placed across the verandah suspended at the mid space, as a wage holding tight the fence.

Ogbudu: This is a traditional woven coffin by the Izon people of the Niger delta region. It is an oblong closed box in which dead person is buried. It is usually woven by two to three male or a group of concerned males as the case may be, since it relates to an urgency in burying a dead. The materials used include; Bamboo Stick and Weak Cane (Apie). Matured bamboo sticks will be cut and trimmed to desired size demanding of the corpse. Then, four stakes of the trimmed bamboo stick will be placed on a flat surface in a rectangular shape, forming the base. Another four will be hanged on top of the initial four by tying it securely with the sliced weak cane rope (Apie bara) to also form the tip, but living a space between the base and the top. Then, the weavers will now, with the support of hands, technically fix the bamboo stakes within the spaces by passing it up and down with the sliced weak cane ropes (Apie bara) to form the box. The box is always woven with a cover, so that, once the corpse is putting, it can be covered by tying the strings together before conveyance to the cemetery for burial. (Note) the inside of the box is usually decorated with either the traditional mat called "Akparakpara" or "Oro" to achieve softness for the dead body

Azuzu: This is a traditional woven product for fanning one's body in times of heat or sweat. In short, it is a traditional fan. The material used for this weave is "Ute" plant found in the forest of a high density area known as Igbangi. Mid ribs of the "Ute" plant will be cut, sliced and trimmed to size. Then, the weaver picks up these stakes and with his/her hands, technically fixes these stakes by crisscrossing them up and down to form a fan shape. Thereafter, he fixes a stick which will protrude from the center of the, either squared, rectangular or round woven product identified as an "handle". He then wraps round this "handle" with same materials to achieve aesthetic harmony.

Traditional Tray (Ẹtẹtẹ): Traditional trays have been in existence from time immemorial especially, when people found it necessary to look for a quick means of drying their fried extract from garri known as "tapioca" fresh pepper and melon. Materials used are the (Ukpa) shrub derived from Hard cane. This Cane could be cut to required length, scrapped, carved out to flat surface levels and dried. The warp canes are laid flat, the weaver sits on a part of the woven area to put them in position. It is trimmed out in a circular shape. A round hoop is placed at the end, and a strong soft strand of kenaf is used to secure the hoop firmly to the tray. This eases carrying, especially when it is used for hawking food items. The trays are also used for selling pepper soup condiments, dry pepper, melon and other domestic items.

Aesthetic Evaluation of the Traditional Woven Products.

As explained earlier in this paper, weaving tradition in any community is done basically to satisfy human needs. Most of these products are made for specific purposes which are normally utilitarian and not necessarily for their beauty. Nevertheless, aesthetics is involved in any art work. (Oyelola,2008,p.8) commented that, "most traditional design motifs are based on circles, triangles, squares, crossing lines, while others are based on birds, animals and plants". These elements and forms are highly applied to most of the traditional woven products in Izon land. The navy lines and the geometrical shapes on which the traditional tray [Ẹtẹtẹ] and the dust pan [Eseri] are fabricated are based on overlapping, step by step and twill patterns used in textile designing. These Navy lines or patterns suggest riverine environment, using the water waves for the sequential arrangement in their products. The woven structures of plain Weave on the Sieve, for preparation of garri (kpukpui) and that for the extraction of starch show strength and ability to withstand stress and tension. The Sieve for garri is reinforced by the strong canes used to barricade the sides of the products in a either circular or square manner. This also depicts the forest environment in Izon land which could still be penetrated, no matter the obstacles, to achieve one's desire. These plain Weave patterns are derived from birds. They are the formations developed into block repeat patterns by modern designers.

Most of the baskets woven for carrying food items such as tomatoes, fresh pepper, yam, cassava, groundnuts etc are derived from circular, oval and rectangular shape achieved by cutting through such fruits like oranges, pawpaw, pineapple, cashew and grape which are found in the natural environment. They are skillfully woven, generating strength from the tightly woven bottom area and radiating towards the top, thereby giving the impression of scale and repeat patterns, derived from the scales of a fish in the swampy environment. Again, most traditional sleeping mats such as "Akpara kpara" in Izon land are made of strong straight masculine lines, broken down by feminine lines which create some fine impression on the body whenever an individual lies on them. These impressions are aesthetically more visible when kaolin is robbed on the areas. It may likely be one of the derivatives of tattooing specific to areas of the body which are usually temporary marks. Meanwhile, some of the woven products are functional as determined by their sizes. The very small type of traditional tray (Etete) connote religious functions, while the big ones which are common are used for drying tapioca, fresh pepper and hawking of food items. The very large mat is used for sleeping or as ceiling board, while the moderate type (Eseri) is used as dust pan. The smallest (Eseri) is used for religious purposes as directed by the herbalist (Buruowei).

We are all aware that, tradition is not static, but dynamic and as such, most these woven products are used by artists in diversified ways (e.g, the traditional trays are used as surfaces for painting in other to achieve textures and effects that are unattainable with synthetic painting surfaces like canvas, panel or wall. Some of these traditional trays are painted and used as picture frames. The traditional mats are used to enhance relief sculptural background or projects. Textile designers select some of these indigenous materials and products to enhance their tapestry works.

Traditional Woven Products for Religious Purposes.

Most of the woven products in Izon land and other Nigerian Communities are a reflection of traditional religion and cultural functions required for easy survival in their immediate environment. However, some of them are not commercialized like those for utilitarian uses. In that case, if any is sold, they are held in custody of specific or specialized traders who deal on only traditional medicinal products. Thus, in most markets, where such products are found, items such as chalks, skulls of different animals, feathers, pieces of red, black and white cloth, etc are kept inside these woven products especially, the small traditional tray or earthen pots, also for religious functions. Nevertheless, most of the products are usually commissioned and made to their specifications. These objects are symbolic, small and easily recognized.

The small type of traditional trays (Etete) is mainly found with the herbalist (Buru- owei) or cult worshippers, e.g, Uzi cult and others involved in traditional ritual practices. Most of these traditional trays are used for playing oracle and consultation with their ancestors. Most of their traditional herbs, medicine, native chalks, white, red and black raffia materials and other consultative objects or Paraphernalia are kept in these woven trays. The small mat (Eseri) is also used for traditional religious purposes and as love charms, well known in the Izon land as ("Iberia") which literally means "inseparable". That is, cannot accommodate two. After a series of incantations and invocations, the mat is endowed with some spiritual powers and is finally handed over to the prospective user with the following instructions and mode of operation.

* That, the mat should be used in blowing air to rekindle the flame in the fire-side.
* Ashes from the fire-side should be packed with the mat.
* That, if the instruction is followed conscientiously, the rival (another woman intruding) would be forced to leave the husband without scuttle.
* The ashes should be scrubbed in the mat and thrown away.

The significance of blowing air into the fire with the mat is to rekindle the couple's love, to make it as strong as it was in the early days of their love life. The throwing away of the ashes symbolizes overpowering any rival and throwing her away. The action of scrubbing the ashes and all the debris of the wood from the fire-place and throwing them away, is to give a rapid result, so much so that, the other woman normally would run away for fear of being killed. It is an assurance that, with "Iberia" in the house, no other woman can penetrate the marriage. This serves as a security in the matrimonial home. Furthermore, some specific mats (small ones) are used for religious functions. These are tied across the front of the shrine. It is believed that, as the wind blows, the mat emits some powers out which bring good fortune, and attract customers to the shrine for consultation. It should also be noted that, in the ancient times, mats were spread under or bottom of a woven coffin as bed sheets before a dead person is putting and buried. In addition, dead children were wrapped and buried with mats too (specifically, the "Akparakpara") big mat. But today, only infants are buried with mats.

Small Products such as traditional mats, trays and fishing traps and are used as protective or defense mechanism. These objects are tied on a wood that runs across the front of the compound or house door and held in position by either two sticks dug on the ground or the two wall frames of a door. It is believed to have the power to protect believers from witch hunting and frequent deaths of children in the family or compound. These same paraphernalia can also be attached to a tree in front or middle of the compound to serve the same purpose. But, today Christian religion has influenced the life style of the Izon

people to an extent that, some of the traditional customs, ideas and norms are being set aside. However, there are also some traditional cultural rites, norms, and ideas relating to burials, marriages, birth, etc that cannot be abandoned no matter how religiously inclined an individual may be.

Conclusion

Weaving is an important economic occupation of the Izon people. Despite the modern invention of the different types of baskets, trays, sieves, traps, fences and etc, these traditional woven products are still very useful and cannot be totally replaced because of their peculiar functions which the modern products cannot achieve. Apart from enhancing the cultural heritage of the people, weaving affords them the opportunity of having substitutes when and where other modern products are expensive. Although, in Izon land, Christian religion has affected the traditional belief of the people, not all has been lost. This is also confirmed from the responses of (Prof. Kay Williamson, 2000) while granting an interview to this researcher.

Researcher:	Good day Prof.
Prof Kay Williamson:	Good day, my son. How are doing?
Researcher:	I am fine Prof.
Prof. Kay Williamson:	Yeah! So what brings you to my office?
Researcher:	Prof. Ma, I had been yearning to know certain things from you.
Prof. Kay Williamson:	Like what and what?
Researcher:	Sorry to bother you Prof.
Prof. Kay Williamson:	Oh no! Don't mind. Just go straight.
Researcher:	Thanks Prof. I appreciate. My enquiry goes this way, Prof. May I know whether since your sojourn to the Izon land, have you ever experienced traditional Izon life being altered by modernity?
Prof. Kay Williamson:	Oh yes! (Laughs) Ha-ha-ha! Actually, a lot has changed. There is no African culture which has not been affected in some ways by European contact, and there is none which has entirely given way before it. Take my self, for instance, I have also been influenced in some ways by the Izon culture, as a result of my residency here. So it is with any other culture.
Researcher:	Thank you Prof. I am done. This was what I wanted to hear. May your days be long on Mother Earth, so that, we can be tapping your knowledge.

Prof. Kay Williamson: (Laughs) Ha-ha-ha-ha! No problems. I am there any time. Good luck.

Researcher: Thank you once again and God bless you.

This is true of the cultural activities in Izon land. However, I am of the opinion that, if the weavers are encouraged and adequately funded, they may develop their creative capabilities and talents just like the Ibibio-Ikono, and Ikot-Ekpene weavers in present day Akwa-Ibom State, and Isokos in the Delta State.

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Chief. Save Ogboin- Culture keeper and sub- chief of Odi. Personal Interview. 28 July, 2018.

Pa Okringbo - Eldest man/ culture keeper of Odi. Personal Interview. 26 July, 2015.

Chief. M.V. Meli - Sub-chief in Odi. Personal Interview. 28 July, 2018.

Chief J.B Komonibo - Amada- owei of Odi. Personal Interview. 20 July, 2014.

King Mozi Agara- - Ibe da- owei of Kolokuma Clan. Personal Interview. 26 July, 2018.

Pa Ogien-ama-owei Agbere-owei - Elder and Historian. Personal Interview. 18 Aug, 2008.

Mr. Orubebe Timilaemi - Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Ijaw National Affairs. Personal Interview. 20 March, 2020.

APPENDIX



Appendix 1. ZUYE AGBADA-INGO



Appendix 2. ADO



Appendix3.



Appendix 4. INGO



Appendix 5. EKETE



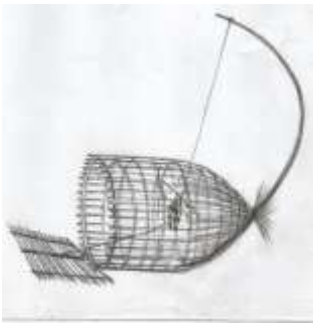
Appendix 6. KÁNÁ



Appendix 7. ỊCARA



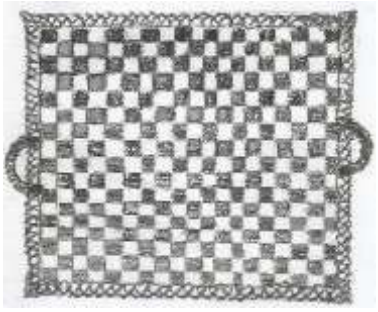
Appendix 8. KPUKPUI



Appendix 9. IGOGO



Appendix 10. AKPARAKPARA



Appendix 11. ẸSẸRI



Appendix 12. UTE



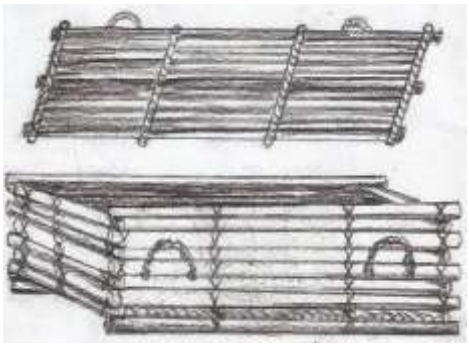
Appendix 13. ẸKẸRẸ



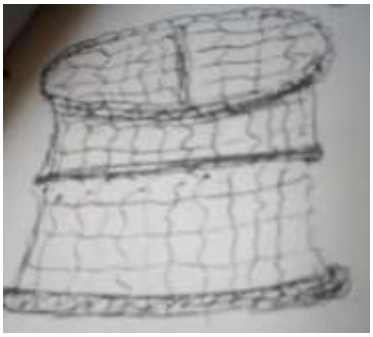
Appendix 14. GỊDẸ



Appendix 15. ISUZU



Appendix 16. DỤWEI-OGBUDU



Appendix 17. CÁNÁ