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**Empowering Youth through Preservation, Technology and Promotion of Traditional
Woodcarving in Oke Ogun Area, Oyo State, Nigeria**

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**Empowering Youth through Preservation,
Technology and Promotion of Traditional
Woodcarving in Oke Ogun Area, Oyo State, Nigeria**

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study was to examine the empowering youth through preservation, promotion, technology and promotion of traditional woodcarving in Oke Ogun area, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Methodology: The methodology employed for the study is qualitative (art historical approach). Primary and secondary sources made up the data. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with purposively selected ten practicing woodcarvers in the selected towns of three local government areas in Oke Ogun, Oyo State., Nigeria. Participant and critical observation where necessary, among the purposively selected woodcarvers were adopted. Photographs of woodcarving objects available at the time of visit were taken. Carvers at work also were captured in photographs. Scholarly references on the related study such as books, magazines and internet were consulted for secondary source of information for the study.

Findings: The study revealed that traditional woodcarving is capable of providing sustainable economic livelihood for youth if technology is fully integrated into the apprenticeship training system. There is heavy influence of modernization on the woodcarving practice in Oke Ogun area of Oyo State. Also most of the youths are not aware of the potential benefits embedded in traditional woodcarving practice. Most carver lack documentation of their past works, once sold out that's all. Involvement of youth in traditional woodcarving practice in Oke Ogun area of Oyo State promotes cultural heritage and identity. Also the participation of youth enhances skill development, innovation, self-confidence which leads to self-reliance. It was also observed that woodcarvers are facing challenges such as limited market access, inability to blend, improve or fully integrated technology for massive production.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study contributes to existing scholarship on cultural heritage preservation, indigenous knowledge system of apprenticeship and youth empowerment by developing a framework that integrates traditional woodcarving practices with contemporary innovation. It provides practical strategies for sustain woodcarving traditions and increasing youth participation through technology The study proposes evidence based recommendation for cultural preservation, youth empowerment, creative industry development heritage management in Oke Ogun

Keywords: *Cultural Heritage Preservation, Indigenous Knowledge System, Traditional Woodcarving, Youth Empowerment, Technology*

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INTRODUCTION

Yoruba, one of the largest cultural groups in Africa, has several cultural heritages in various communities that have significant value in the society. Some of these cultural heritages are cultural festivals, weaving tradition, traditional woodcarving, body decoration or adornment and blacksmithing to mention a few. In Yoruba land, these cultural traditional heritages have specific crafts or vocation attached to each. Each of these crafts is lineage based, handed down from generation to generation. These traditions are attached to religion, socio-economic, societal norms and values (Phoebe, 2004). Traditional arts and crafts constitute an important aspect of cultural heritage and identity across many societies of the world. They serve not only as expressions of creativity and cultural values but also as means of preserving indigenous knowledge and promoting socio-economic development. In many African societies, traditional artistic practices have historically functioned as channels for transmitting cultural beliefs, social norms, and technical skills from one generation to another (UNESCO, 2022).

Like other traditions in African setting, woodcarving tradition has been the art that is passed down from generation to generation. It is a lineage tradition (Adepegba, 1995). Other lineage traditions in Yoruba land are body decoration, blacksmithing (Ogunbameru, 2017), cloth-weaving (Adedeji, 2018), tie and dye (Adedeji, 2020), calabash /gourd carving, leather works (Ogunbameru, 2019), pottery (Adewale, 2012), Ifa divination, drumming, traditional medicine and others.

Among the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria, woodcarving occupies a prominent position as one of the most enduring artistic traditions, reflecting the people's religious beliefs, social organization, political structures, and aesthetic philosophies (Abiodun, 2014).

Yoruba woodcarving has a long history dating back several centuries and is recognized for its sophisticated craftsmanship and symbolic representations. Carved objects such as doors, masks, veranda posts, divination trays, royal staffs, stools, and shrine figures have played significant roles in religious worship, palace administration, social ceremonies, and domestic life (Drewal, Pemberton, & Abiodun, 1989). The production of these objects has traditionally been sustained through lineage-based apprenticeship systems in which knowledge and skills are transmitted from master carvers to younger generations. This indigenous system of knowledge transfer has ensured the continuity and preservation of woodcarving traditions despite social and cultural changes. The thrust of this paper centered on youth empowerment, technology and preservation of traditional woodcarving which plays significant roles, both in religion, socio-economic and dynamic culture of the Yoruba.

The Oke-Ogun region of Oyo State, comprising communities such as Iseyin, Saki, Okeho, Iwere-Ile, Igboho, Kisi, Otu, Igbojaye, Tede, Ado-Awaye, Oje Owode, Ago Amodu to mention a few (Owolabi, 2017). The region possesses a rich cultural heritage and a long-standing tradition of woodcarving. Historically, woodcarvers in the region have contributed significantly to the production of utilitarian and ceremonial objects that serve religious, social, and economic functions within Yoruba society. The practice has also provided employment opportunities and served as a source of livelihood for many families. However, the sustainability of this artistic tradition is increasingly threatened by modernization, urbanization, changing religious orientations, formal education pressures, and declining interest among younger generations (Ogunduyile, 2014).

Youth unemployment remains a major developmental challenge in Nigeria. According to the International Labour Organization (2023), limited access to sustainable employment

opportunities has continued to affect the economic well-being of many young people across developing countries. In response, scholars and policymakers have increasingly emphasized the need to explore indigenous knowledge systems and creative industries as alternative pathways for youth empowerment and economic development (UNESCO, 2022). Traditional woodcarving presents a viable opportunity for skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, and self-employment, particularly in rural and semi-urban communities where access to formal employment may be limited.

In recent years, technological advancements have transformed the production, promotion, and commercialization of traditional crafts globally. Digital technologies such as social media platforms, online marketplaces, digital documentation systems, and virtual exhibitions have enabled artisans to reach wider audiences and access new markets beyond their immediate localities (Li, 2022). These technologies offer opportunities for preserving indigenous artistic knowledge while enhancing the economic viability of traditional crafts. For woodcarvers in Oke-Ogun, the integration of technology can facilitate product innovation, digital marketing, customer engagement, and cultural documentation, thereby making the craft more attractive to younger generations.

Promotion is another critical factor influencing the sustainability of traditional woodcarving. Cultural festivals, exhibitions, tourism initiatives, heritage centres, and media campaigns have been identified as effective mechanisms for increasing public awareness and appreciation of indigenous arts (Richards, 2018). Through strategic promotion, traditional woodcarving can be repositioned as both a cultural asset and an economic resource capable of generating income and employment for young people. Furthermore, increased visibility can attract government support, private investment, and international recognition for local artisans and communities.

Despite the cultural and economic significance of woodcarving, existing studies have largely focused on its historical, religious, and aesthetic dimensions, with limited attention given to its potential as a tool for youth empowerment through preservation, technology, and promotion. There is therefore a need to investigate how these interconnected factors can contribute to sustaining traditional woodcarving while simultaneously creating opportunities for youth development in Oke-Ogun, Oyo State. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the role of preservation, technological integration, and promotion in empowering young people through traditional woodcarving practices in the region

One of the vital aspects of Yoruba culture is traditional woodcarving. Over the years, there had been a kind of decline in this vocation due to the influence civilization and cultural erosion. In Oke Ogun area of Oyo State, there are woodcarvers who are skilled in this vocation. The study examined how woodcarving can be preserved in the area, its promotion and how youth can be empowered through this neglected vocational skill. Three local government areas were selected for the research. They are Iseyin, Iwajowa and Atisbo lcoal government areas. Primary data were collected by the researchers and three research assistants from each local government. Selected woodcarvers in the areas were visited. Observations were made on woodcarvers and woodcarving objects. Photographs of the objects being carved were taken.

Problem Statement

In Oke Ogun, there is lack of awareness of the significant cultural heritage, artistic potentials, and socioeconomic advantages of handcrafted woodcarving objects among the carvers. The craft suffers financial support on the art practice from the financial institutions, educational sectors, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other private bodies to preserve and

promote this tradition among the youth (Adekunle, 2018). In the light of the above, the study is necessary to address these gaps so as to arrest the risk of woodcarving practice being freeze out and totally lost to the future generation of our rich artistic heritage in woodcarving practice and at the same time serve as economic revitalization to the youth for another source of sustainable economic self-reliance.

The study of some scholars on woodcarvings art practice in Oke Ogun, Oyo State, Nigeria assert that the vocation has been facing some difficulties/problems in terms of its promotion, preservation and continuity in the lineage/intergenerational skills transfer of knowledge and technologies (Ojo, 2020, Babalola & Ayodele, 2022). Nowadays, lineage youngsters are not favorably inclined to the art practice. The resultant effect is seen in the decrease in the art practice of woodcarving which is of vital importance to our cultural practice and heritage in the region. The recent trend in face lifting/modernisation of the communities and socio-economic policies had influence on the demand for traditional woodcarving objects and the youngster generation. Most of the carvers in the region are not technological incline, still adhere to manual production (Babalola, 2024). The woodcarvers are restricted to market access. Field investigation revealed that there are no organized, systematic or step by step tutelage/training techniques which younger members of the lineage could follow. All is just training by observation which does not help the youth of nowadays. The study therefore set to fill the gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The research is based on two theoretical frameworks. They are the theory of Iconography and theory of Social Constructivism. Both theories were developed by Panofsky Erwin and Lev Vygotsky respectively. The theory of iconography identified the physical motifs, themes and object used by the carvers of the selected towns. Photographs of woodcarving objects that were observed at the field investigations were analysed by describing them in types, sizes, shapes, cultural and functional uses. Akande & Abiodun (2022) and Babalola & Ayodele (2022) have successfully applied this theory in their scholarly work on woodcarving objects of their studies. The study used the theory to categorize woodcarving objects into religious or ritual, decorative/ aesthetics and utilitarian objects. Theory of Social Constructivism by Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) was first to propound the theory while others are building on the laid foundation. He is of opinion that knowledge is passed or instructed through social interaction; also that learning is best achieved with guidance. Learning or skill acquisition is by inheritance which comes with cultural identity. Learning in the context of woodcarving practice in Oke Ogun region takes place in compound, courtyards or designated place for crafts or the workshop centres. The theory is applied to this paper shows that Oke Ogun region of Oyo State, Nigeria especially woodcarving art practice are being passed from generation to generation through learning by practice, social interaction and cultural identity. The master carver guides the apprentice in the socio-cultural context of the craft, lineage styles, cultural heritage preservation and promotion

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is anchored on the assumption that the preservation of traditional woodcarving heritage, technology integration, and promotion of woodcarving practices are critical factors that can enhance youth empowerment in Oke-Ogun, Oyo State, Nigeria. Traditional Yoruba woodcarving represents an important repository of indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and artistic skills transmitted through lineage and apprenticeship

systems (Abiodun, 2014). Preservation of these traditions ensures continuity of cultural heritage while creating opportunities for younger generations to acquire specialized artistic skills.

Preservation involves safeguarding traditional carving techniques, indigenous motifs, lineage histories, and apprenticeship systems that have historically sustained Yoruba woodcarving practice (Drewal, 1989; Abiodun, 2014). Through preservation efforts, young people gain access to cultural knowledge and practical skills that contribute to self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Technology integration serves as a complementary factor that enhances the sustainability of traditional crafts. Digital technologies such as social media, online marketing platforms, digital documentation, virtual exhibitions, and e-commerce have transformed the ways cultural products are produced, promoted, and consumed globally. The application of these technologies can increase the visibility and marketability of traditional woodcarving products while attracting younger practitioners to the craft (Li, 2022).

Promotion of traditional woodcarving through festivals, exhibitions, tourism initiatives, cultural centres, and media publicity further increases public awareness and market opportunities. Effective promotion enhances the economic value of woodcarving and encourages youth participation by demonstrating the commercial viability of indigenous artistic practices (UNESCO, 2022).

The interaction among preservation, technology, and promotion is expected to result in youth empowerment through skill acquisition, employment generation, entrepreneurship development, income creation, cultural identity reinforcement, and community participation. Thus, the framework suggests that sustained investment in these three dimensions can contribute significantly to the revitalization of woodcarving traditions and youth development in Oke-Ogun.

Review of Related Literature

Olusola (2019) in *Youth Empowerment through Traditional Crafts: A Study of Woodcarving in Oke Ogun* explains the prospects of traditional woodcarving in empowering youth in Oke Ogun, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study examines the present state of woodcarving traditional in Oke Ogun; skill acquisition, employment generation and difficulties being faced on the art practice.

The main focus of Ojo (2020) is on the importance of preserving traditional woodcarving techniques in Oke Ogun, Oyo State, Nigeria, as a means of preserving cultural heritage. He opines that traditional woodcarving practice is not without threats; it not only preserves but promotes cultural traditions and norms in the society.

Adekunle (2018) examines how traditional crafts such as woodcarving contribute to the understanding of how it can provide sustainable means of livelihoods for youth and promote socio-economic development in native societies.

Oyedele (2017) and Babalola (2024) examine the impacts of civilization, globalization and modern technology on traditional woodcarving practice in Oke Ogun and Iseyin respectively. These scholars are of the view that civilization, globalization and modern technology had led to some woodcarving lineages to opt out of the practice due to low patronage and the use of imported materials which are more durable than wood that can be destroyed easily. They posited that the coming of foreign traders and missionaries to the region had great influences

on traditional woodcarving art practice. The effect of civilization and globalization has also brought about emergency changes in woodcarving art practice in Oke Ogun, that is, it has reshaped the vocation. This serves as an eye opener to the potentials in the craft.

Ogunbile (2020) writes on how cultural entrepreneurship can be integrated and used to empower youth, and how it also promotes sustainable development, through traditional lineage woodcarving practice in Oke Ogun communities.

Babalola and Adelowo (2010) examine the history of wood sculpture in Yorubalands. Works of some scholars such as Tom (1966), Carroll (1967), Beier (1960), Kalilu (1992), Adesanya (1999), Adepegba (1995) and others were recognized in woodcarving practice. Lineages practicing the arts were identified.

Akande (2015) studies existing Yoruba religious woodcarvings in Oyo, Ife and Sabe. He makes a comparative analysis of the iconographic similarities and variations in the woodcarving traditions of Ife and Sabe to that of their surviving colleagues in Oyo community. The study investigated on the functional use of Yoruba traditional carved wood objects like *Ifa* wooden objects *Esu* figures, *Ibeji* figures, *Ogboni* wooden objects, house posts and door panels, *Sango* ritual objects and others.

Ayodele and Babalola (2019) in their scholarly work discuss about woodcarving tradition in Yorubaland with a specific reference to Iseyin. Various objects carved were studied. Emphasis was laid on shift in artistic culture and their attendant implications such shifts as in socio-economic, globalization, technology and modernization. They are of opinion that lineage woodcarving apprenticeship system can be maintained if modern method is integrated.

The research work of Babalola and Ayodele (2022) reveal the traditional woodcarving art practice in Iseyin, one of the largest towns in Oke Ogun area of Oyo state, Nigeria. The study opines that woodcarving practice in the town has been changed from what it used to be. The influences of technology, modernization and globalization of 21st century have affected the practices, apprenticeship system as well as functionality of the objects carved.

The objectives of this study were to investigate present status of traditional woodcarving practice in Oke Ogun communities.

- i. Examine the difficulties or challenges being encountered by woodcarvers in preserving, promotion and transferable of skills in the art practice of woodcarving among the youth of today.
- ii. Identify the influence or impact of modernization or civilization on the transmission of handcrafted woodcarving practice in the communities.
- iii. Educate the youth of this and future generation to key into the woodcarving art practice and be empowered financially.
- iv. Enlighten youth of the potential benefits that await them as they are empowered in woodcarving art practice

Research Gaps

Geographical Gap

Existing scholarship on Yoruba woodcarving has concentrated primarily on major artistic centres such as Ile-Ife, Owo, Oyo, and Abeokuta (Drewal, 1989; Abiodun, 2014). Comparatively little scholarly attention has been devoted to the woodcarving traditions of the

Oke-Ogun region, despite its rich artistic heritage and long-standing carving lineages. Consequently, empirical knowledge regarding the challenges and prospects of woodcarving practice in Oke-Ogun remains limited.

Youth Empowerment Gap

Most studies on Yoruba woodcarving emphasize aesthetic values, symbolism, religious functions, and historical development (Abiodun, 2014; Pemberton, 2000). Few studies have examined woodcarving as a mechanism for youth empowerment, employment creation, and entrepreneurial development. As youth unemployment continues to be a major challenge in Nigeria, there is a need to investigate how indigenous artistic practices can contribute to sustainable livelihoods.

Technology Gap

Traditional woodcarving studies have largely focused on cultural preservation while paying limited attention to the role of digital technologies in sustaining indigenous crafts. Contemporary heritage studies suggest that digital communication and technological innovation can facilitate cultural transmission, market expansion, and youth engagement (Li, 2022). However, empirical studies investigating technology adoption among traditional woodcarvers in southwestern Nigeria remain scarce.

Knowledge Transmission Gap

The apprenticeship system has historically served as the primary means of transmitting woodcarving knowledge from one generation to another. However, declining youth interest in traditional apprenticeship and increasing modernization have threatened the continuity of indigenous artistic knowledge (Abiodun, 2014). Existing literature provides limited understanding of how traditional and modern approaches can be integrated to sustain knowledge transmission among younger generations.

Promotion and Market Development Gap

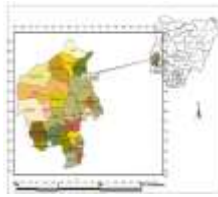
Many studies emphasize heritage preservation without adequately addressing issues of market development, cultural entrepreneurship, tourism promotion, and digital commercialization. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence on how strategic promotion can enhance the economic viability of woodcarving and encourage youth participation in the craft.

Theoretical Gap

Previous studies have generally examined preservation, technology, promotion, and youth development as separate issues. There is limited research that integrates these variables into a single framework for understanding the sustainability of traditional woodcarving. This study addresses this gap by proposing an integrated framework that links preservation, technology adoption, and promotion to youth empowerment in Oke-Ogun.

METHODOLOGY

Oke Ogun comprises ten local government areas of the thirty three Local Government areas in Oyo State (Figure 1). It is situated in the north western part of the State (Fato, Omolayo & Fakoya 2017). The ten local governments that constitute Oke Ogun are: Atisbo, Irepo , Iseyin , Itesiwaju., Iwajowa, Kajola, Olorunsogo , Oorelope , Saki East and Saki West (Figure 2) . Three local governments out of the ten enumerated were selected for the purpose of this research. They are Iseyin, Atisbo and Iwajowa local governments. These local governments were purposefully selected because of concentration of woodcarvers in their communities.



*Fig 1: Map of Oyo State showing 33
Local Government Areas
Source: Research Gate*



*Fig.2: Map of Oke Ogun Area of Oyo State
showings Ten Local Government Areas
Source: Research Gate*

The methodology employed for the study is qualitative. Primary and secondary sources made up the data. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with purposively selected ten practicing woodcarvers in the selected towns of three local government areas in Oke Ogun, Oyo State., Nigeria. Some of those targeted woodcarvers were lineage principal woodcarvers and youngsters in the art practice. Participant and critical observation where necessary, among the purposively selected carvers were adopted. Photographs of woodcarving objects available at the time of visit were taken. Carvers at work also were captured. Scholarly references on the related study such as books, magazines and internet were consulted for secondary source of information for the study.

FINDINGS

Woodcarving Tradition in Oke Ogun Area of Oyo State

Like other Yoruba communities, Oke Ogun area of Oyo State is also rich in cultural heritages as well. Cultural heritages and traditions that exist among them are pottery, weaving, music, medicine, arts, tie and dye, embroidery, folklore, woodcarving, leather works, blacksmithing to mention a few. All these and other vocations are tied to socio-cultural belief of the people in the region. The woodcarving practice the in the region served economic importance and at the same time preserves religious activities in the community and Yoruba at large.

Woodcarving practice in Oke Ogun is of historical and cultural significance. They serve religious, decorative, and functional necessity. The region has produced a lot of religious woodcarving objects such as twins figure ere ibeji, Ifa divination tray opon Ifa, Sango dance wands ose Sango, masks of various shapes and types. Apart from historical and cultural relevance, the profession is of both socio-economic and tangible heritage to the community. The profession is linearly hereditary and exclusively for male gender. This is done to preserve the sanctity of the craft and the lineage tradition attached to the practice. Aremu (2013) in his scholarly work on woodcarving lineage in Iseyin affirms that woodcarving is traditional family occupation.

Existing studies have identified some woodcarving linages in Iseyin. The works of Aremu (2003) and Babalola (2024) identified more than six prominent lineages practicing woodcarving in Iseyin. From the field work, some are practicing the craft on full time and part time basis while some have stopped. Existing lineages in the town are Olumole, Ayelade, Pete, Atena, Jagun Erin, Obadirere, Oluwo Oba and Ogbená. The history of the craft differs in each lineage. Most of the lineages in the town claimed that the origin of the craft in their respective

lineage is of Iseyin. It was corroborated that the craft is as old as the town. Field investigation in Iseyin revealed that the lineage woodcarvers are still committed to carving objects. Majority are still using manual tools which are somehow laborious and stressful while few have introduced the use of machines that are powered by electricity (Fig.3 and 4). Impact of modern tool is not much introduced as expected.



*Figure 3: A workshop at Iseyin,
Woodwork machine for
drum frames*



*Figure 4: A workshop at Ekunle quarters, Iseyin
Circular machine for cutting logs into drum
shapes*

In Iwajowa local government area of Oyo State also exist woodcarving tradition. Woodcarving art practice is also as old as farming occupation in the area. Ojekunle (2005) studied some lineages who are woodcarvers in the area. Principal woodcarvers are found in Ayelau lineage in Iganna. The lineage can be found in in Owodo compound which is situated very close to Balogun quarters in the town. Ewe lineage woodcarvers of Iwere Ile claimed to come from Iganna long years ago Ojekunle (2025). Woodcarvers in Elekoka claimed that their art of woodcarving practice is from their forebears who migrated from old Oyo. From the field investigation, all these lineages of woodcarving are no longer practicing the craft. The art of woodcarving thrives well in Ijio Meso town. There are two lineages in the art of woodcarving in the town. They are Alubata and Olofa lineages which were named after the compound called *agbo ile*. in Alubata lineage is found a prolific young woodcarver Afolabi Moses, among his woodcarving objects are in *ope, ere ibeji*, walking stick staff of office, *ose Sango Sango* dance wand and others (Fig. 5-11).



*Figure 5: Twin Figure carved
by Afolabi Moses, Ijio Meso*



*Figure 6: Ose Sango carved
by Afolabi Moses, Ijio Meso*



*Figure 7: Staff (Opa) carved by
Afolabi Moses, Ijio Meso*



*Figure 8: Staff (Opa) carved by
Afolabi Moses, Ijio Meso*



*Figure 9: Carved Figure by
Afolabi Moses, Ijio Meso*



*Figure 10: Staff (Opa) carved by
Afolabi Moses, Ijio Meso*



*Figure 11: Carved Figure by
Afolabi Moses, Ijio*



*Figure 12: Drum frames from Olofa
compound, Ijio*



*Fig. 13: Set of images carved by
Yussuf Aeez Olofa, Ijio Meso*



*Fig. 14: Set of drum frames
from Ayelade, Iseyin.*

At Alubata compound is another notable woodcarver Yusuf Afeez. He carves religious and utilitarian objects (Fig. 12 & 13). In the same local government is another town, Ilaji Ile near Ijio Meso town. A prominent and only woodcarver in the town is Kazeem Yusuf (Fig. 16). He is from Apena lineage of the town. His woodcarving art practice is a bit different in the area in that he uses electric powered machine to carve wood. He claimed that he has carved various objects. As at the time of visit, during the field work only two objects were available (Fig.15). All the carvers in the area are committed to traditional themes.



*Fig 15: Figure and Mottar
Ilaji Ile, Iwajowa, local
Government*



*Figure 16: A woodcarver from
Ilaji Ile, Iwajowa local
Government*

Owo Toro is a town in Atisbo local government area of Oyo State Nigeria. There exists woodcarving tradition. There had been less documentation on the woodcarving practice in the community, the town still retain a confined woodcarving art practice which serves the communities both far and near. Woodcarvers in the town produce mostly agricultural tools such as mortal, pestles, handles of hoes, adzes and axes of different sizes to serve the community needs (Oyo State Ministry of Information, 2012). Houlberg (1973) in her work on twin memorial figures among the Yoruba, provided insight into woodcarving in Owo Toro and some towns in Atisbo local government area at large. From the present field investigation, there had been shift from religious woodcarving objects to utilitarian items that serve everyday

usage for the people of the area. The present woodcarvers in the town claimed to carve different objects such as religious figures, game board, and other utilitarian objects

Commonly Woodcarving Objects in the Region

The types of woodcarving objects in the region are broadly divided into two. They are religious / ritual woodcarving and Utilitarian, decorative/ aesthetics or functional objects.

Religious/ Ritual woodcarving objects: these are figural objects which are representation of certain deities in Yoruba. These are twins figures which are always in free standing objects (Fig. 5 & 17). Ifa divination tray which is always in bas relief either circular or rectangular in shape (Fig. 18). Sango dance wand may be either carved in relief or free standing depending of the carver's discretion and the demand of the devotees who will use it (Fig.6). Mask and sacred drums are also carved. Sacred drums are always in the round but a times images or other objects are a time sunk into it (Fig.12,14, 21, 22 & 23). Other object that may be religious or ritual one is the staff office which may not be used openly except on religious outings (Fig.7, 8 &10).



*Figure 17: Twins Figures Alubata
compound Ijio Meso*



Fig. 18: Opon Ifa from Iseyin

Other woodcarving objects are utilitarian, decorative and functional items. They are objects carved for daily household usage while others may serve as either tools or equipment to work with in a particular vocation. Others are purely decorative purposes. Utilitarian objects that serve functional uses are shuttle (Fig.19) mortar, drum frames, pestle and game boards (Fig. 15, 16, 20, & 23).



*Figure 19: Set of Shuttle Oko Aso carved
by AbdulRasheed Atena, Iseyin*



Figure 20: Set of mortar carved in Iseyin



Figure 21: Drum frame at workshop in Iseyin



Fig 22: Drum frames



Fig 23: A set of mortar from Owo Toro, Atisbo Local Government Area

Despite the fact that there is decline in demand for traditional woodcarving objects in the area, woodcarving tradition is still being sustained, preserved and equally promoted by the family and lineage apprenticeship system which is basically hereditary transmission of technical knowledge by the master carver of the lineage. The tradition is still in place. There are still continuous demands for woodcarving objects at both local and outside the immediate community. Also, among the carvers, some make use of digital tool to document their works. This also serves as means of showcasing their past works to the clients who may demand for them. Some woodcarving objects remain of spiritual importance in the worship of some deities in the community which cannot but made available always for certain traditional ceremonies and cultural festivals. In the light of this, there is continuous patronage which sustains preserves, and still promoting woodcarving in the community. Picton 1994: notes that the art of African is being sustained by its significance in the contemporary times.

Woodcarving tradition is being preserved promoted by technological innovation. Some years back, introduction of imported carving tools boost its practices. Today various innovations and the use of technology and technological tools have shaped it largely. The use of digital tools such as photogrammetry to record and document decaying woodcarving objects in some local community. Also, there have been documentations of cultural festivals which are sent to social media. The integration of hybrid crafts which appeal to the taste of the people in the community, this in turn aid in preservation and promotion of traditional woodcarving in the region

Technology, Preservation and Promotion of Woodcarving Practice in Oke Ogun

Since art is dynamic, in an attempt to be relevant in the woodcarving practice in Oke Ogun, technology has changed the production (Ayodele, 2005, Babalola & Ayodele 2022). In the cutting of the logs of wood up to the workshop, it has shifted its ground, not as it used to be. The use of chain saw machine against manual use of axe for purpose. There had been the use of invented industrial machine to carve drum and mortar (fig 3 & 4). This helped a lot in mass production of those woodcarving objects.

Woods and woodcarving objects are being treated with chemicals to withstand termites rotten of any form or being decayed. The use of wood vanishes and sand paper had promoted woodcarving practice a lot. Some resort to internet to get their source of inspiration for the work which is technology and directly promoting the craft.

There is also an increase or effort on woodcarving practice being integrated to vocational and technical education. This serves as a source of viable vocation. Also, it is reshaping the craft for the present economic reality. The effect of this is that the woodcarving is no longer more for community patronage alone but for the global market.

The woodcarving practice in Oke Ogun region is preserving Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS). This is done in hereditary transmission of knowledge in family compounds or courtyards. Apprenticeship system and lineage hereditary styles (Owolabi, 2017). Cultural conservatism and isolation are observed in Oke Ogun among the woodcarvers. The

conservation is rooted in cultural orientation and identity. They are attached to tradition which is helping in the preservation and promotion of woodcarving practice in Oke Ogun.

In spite of influence of Christianity and Islamic religions in the region, there is continual patronage of woodcarvers. There is persistent demand both at local and regional demand for woodcarving objects which serve spiritual obligations. There is also family belief that, whatever you do, you must be connected to the lineage vocation of woodcarving. This made woodcarving to be reinforced, preserved as well as being promoted. The cultural heritage reforms in the Oyo State and in Oke Ogun also strengthening the art of woodcarving (Salawudeen, 2025, tribuneonline.ng) The use of woodcarving objects in shrines, traditional worship centres (*Igbale* or *Ilemole*) and many of the cultural festivals such as Egungun, Oro, Sango, Ifa and others are largely depend on the woodcarving objects for these activities.

There are observable challenges or difficulties facing the woodcarver in the promotion, preserving and transferable of skills in the practice of woodcarving among the youth. From the field investigation, some youths engaging in the art practice maintain the artistic legacy of the lineage. Some modify as a result of exposure, to be relevant and satisfy the demand of the patronage. It was also observed that some are not fully committed to the art practice due to low patronage and the reality of socio economic situation of nowadays. In some woodcarving lineages, there are heavy promotion, preservation and transferable of skills. Some lineages are face with extinction due to the fact that the vocation can no longer sustain their livelihood.

All over Oke Ogun, there is heavy influence of modernization in the transmission of handcrafted woodcarving practice in various communities. In the three local government areas selected for the study, civilization played major roles. There are individual creative innovation in styles and techniques. In Iseyin and Ilaji Ile among some lineage carvers, there are production of utilitarian objects in industrial form (Fig.14). There has been digital documentation of some woodcarving objects especially utilitarian ones while those that serve spiritual function are sacredly kept for certain belief.

Woodcarving has taken a new look. The art is being rebranded to make the youth to key in into it. And at the same time make it viable for economic empowerment. Some combine the craft with furniture since they are related so as to sustain livelihood. There are emerging opportunities such as online marketing and sales, demand for woodcarving for decorative purposes, tourism, cultural festivals and other social events.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study examined the role of preservation, technology, and promotion in empowering youth through traditional woodcarving in the Oke-Ogun area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The research was motivated by concerns about the declining interest of young people in traditional woodcarving despite its cultural, artistic, and economic significance among the Yoruba people. The study explored how the preservation of indigenous woodcarving knowledge, the integration of modern technology, and the promotion of woodcarving products and practices can contribute to youth empowerment and sustainable cultural development.

The study established that traditional woodcarving remains an important aspect of the cultural heritage of Oke-Ogun communities. However, modernization, urbanization, inadequate documentation, limited government support, and declining apprenticeship participation have

threatened its sustainability. Findings revealed that preserving woodcarving traditions through apprenticeship systems, documentation, and community-based cultural programmes can facilitate knowledge transfer to younger generations.

The study further found that technology can enhance the production, documentation, marketing, and visibility of traditional woodcarving. Digital platforms, social media, online exhibitions, and e-commerce provide opportunities for young woodcarvers to access wider markets and improve their economic prospects. In addition, the promotion of woodcarving through festivals, exhibitions, tourism initiatives, and media engagement can increase public awareness and create employment opportunities for youth.

Overall, the study demonstrated that the combined efforts of preservation, technological innovation, and strategic promotion can contribute significantly to youth empowerment, cultural sustainability, and economic development in Oke-Ogun.

Conclusion

Traditional woodcarving remains a valuable cultural asset and a potential source of livelihood for young people in Oke-Ogun, Oyo State. The study concludes that the sustainability of woodcarving traditions depends largely on effective preservation strategies, the adoption of appropriate technologies, and continuous promotion of the craft at local, national, and international levels.

The findings indicate that preserving indigenous knowledge systems through apprenticeship and documentation is essential for safeguarding woodcarving heritage in Oke Ogun area of Oyo State. Furthermore, integrating technology into traditional woodcarving practices enhances productivity, market access, and youth participation. Promotion through cultural tourism, exhibitions, and digital media increases awareness of the craft and strengthens its economic value.

Therefore, youth empowerment through traditional woodcarving is achievable when cultural preservation is combined with technological advancement and effective promotional strategies. Such an approach not only protects indigenous heritage but also contributes to employment generation, entrepreneurship development, and community growth in Oke-Ogun and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Traditional woodcarving apprenticeship programmes should be strengthened through collaboration between master woodcarvers, community leaders, and educational institutions to encourage greater youth participation.
- Government agencies at federal, state, and local levels should provide financial assistance, grants, and soft loans to young woodcarvers to support skill acquisition and business development.
- Digital technologies should be integrated into woodcarving practice through training in social media marketing, digital documentation, online sales, and e-commerce platforms.
- Cultural institutions and heritage organizations should establish digital archives and databases for documenting woodcarving techniques, motifs, oral histories, and lineage traditions in Oke-Ogun.

- Regular woodcarving exhibitions, festivals, competitions, and cultural fairs should be organized to showcase local talents and increase public appreciation of traditional woodcarving.
- Traditional woodcarving should be incorporated into vocational and entrepreneurship education programmes in secondary schools, colleges, and universities to attract younger generations.
- Tourism development agencies should promote Oke-Ogun as a cultural tourism destination by highlighting its rich woodcarving heritage and artistic traditions.
- Partnerships should be encouraged between woodcarvers, technology experts, cultural organizations, and private-sector stakeholders to develop innovative approaches for preserving and commercializing traditional woodcarving.
- Community leaders and policymakers should formulate policies that recognize and support traditional woodcarving as an important component of Nigeria's creative economy and cultural heritage sector.

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