

“*Igba-Boi*” Apprenticeship System in Igboland: Re-examining the Igbo informal technological transfer

Abstract

Okafor Sochima Peppertus

Department of History and International Studies

University of Nigeria Nsukka

sochima.okafor.250369@unn.edu.ng

The economic underpinnings of the Igbo people of Southeastern Nigeria have been built upon the Igbo apprenticeship system (*Igba-boi*). The system which has survived through pre-colonial times and still thrives is rooted in the socio-cultural values of the people. This structure has not only promoted trade, urbanization, migration, and infrastructural development but has developed multiple businesses in Igboland and beyond Africa. This form of informal education and skill acquisition was not based on narrow specialization rather apprentices were trained in different fields such as wood carving, cloth making, iron making, weaving and technical repairs. With the coming of the Europeans, these apprentices were able to make handcuffs, repair rail tracks, and fix mechanical devices with the use of local tools. The guns that were brought by the Portuguese that spoiled easily were repaired by traditional craftsmen and were improved upon. Building on the works of scholars such as Njoku and Ekundare who have examined African pre-colonial and colonial economic systems, the work sets to examine *Igba-boi* not just for its contribution to the economic development of Igboland and its continental implications, but for its evolution as a technological system. This research examines the *Igba-boi* technical mechanisms, technological ingenuity and how it incorporated the Igbo people into Western modern technology. The study finds that despite the influx of Western ideas, Igbo technological ingenuity has been sustained and improved upon through the popular *Igba-boi* system. The research adopts ethnographic methods of historical writing through the use of oral sources, archival materials, books and journal articles for a thematic pose on how the indigenous technical system metamorphosed to modern technologies in Igboland. Nevertheless, the study through its findings concludes that Africans had been ‘technologically advanced’ before the incursion of colonial authorities with their infrastructures of economic motives.

Keywords: *Igba-boi*, Apprenticeship, Technology, Igboland, Economy.