

## Therapeutic Indigenous Medical Technology among the Emu People

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### Abstract

*The first method of healing ever known to humanity is herbal medicine which gave birth to “modern’ medicine. This paper has provided an analysis of the efficacy, availability, effectiveness, and the economic advantages of African traditional medicine. It encourages the orthodox medical scientists to embrace African traditional modes of health care delivery system. This should be done against the contemporary scientific critique of its use. Rather than critiquing it, it is better to encouraged research in this area in order to develop it to an enviable height as those found in Asia and North America. This study examined the various scholarly conceptualization of herbal medicine, its origin, challenges and relevance as well as reveals that herbal traditional mode of medication in Africa are scientifically motivated.*

**Keywords:** Herbs, Herbalism, Traditional Medicine; Indigenous Medical Technology, Traditional Health Care System

### Introduction

Man in Africa has used traditional medicine in the form of animal parts, flower, leaves, roots, rhizomes and the bark of trees for treating various diseases. There is also no indication that this form of handling the disease that afflict humanity has abated in recent times. On the contrary, traditional medicinal practices are carried out in different parts of the world with great success. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has also estimated that about 80% of rural dwellers depend on traditional medicine for their all-round health care delivery system. This is therefore the time for African scientists, either medical or para-medical, to contribute their expertise in raising the standard of traditional medicine. The objective of this paper, therefore, is not only to bring to our knowledge the efficacy availability, effectiveness and the economic advantages of traditional medicine, but also to encourage our medical scientists to embrace African traditional medical practices, thereby lifting it to such enviable heights as those found in some southern Asian countries and North America, among other countries of the world.

### Traditional Medicine

Medicine refers to substance which people utilize for the treatment or prevention of disease. As Anele (1998, 219) has observed, the health and welfare of people are promoted through preventive and curative medicine. Again, medicine could be said to refer to the art or science of prevention and cure of diverse diseases. This becomes synonymous with traditional charm and medical power. In whatever way medicine is defined, it is an important ingredient of African Traditional Religion. The purpose of medicine is essentially to help the body to help itself. It is curative and preventive. The *Webster’s Dictionary* defines medicine as the “Science and art of diagnosing treating, curing and preventing disease, relieving pain and improving and preserving health ... any drug or other substance used in treating disease, healing or receiving pain”. *Chamber’s Twentieth Century Dictionary* sees medicine as, “Any substance used for the treatment or prevention of and cure of disease”. Dapamu (1985) defines medicine as the “art of using the available resources of nature to prevent, treat or cure disease (67). Medicine can be described as the total combination of knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing, or eliminating a physical, mental or social disease and which may rely exclusively on past experience and observation handed down from generation to generation, verbally or in writing. Traditional medicine is the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practice based on the theories, beliefs, and experience indigenous to different culture whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness’ (WHO, 1978, 1991 and 2005).

Sofowora (1984) defines traditional medicine as “the total combination of knowledge and practice, whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing or eliminating a physical, mental or social disease, and which may rely exclusively on past experience and observation handed down from generation to generation, verbally or in writing (21). He further asserts that Traditional medicine is the total combination of knowledge and practice whether explicable or otherwise, use in diagnosing a physical, mental or social disease and which may rely exclusively on past experience and observation to particular generation, verbally or in writing (1). It is the transmission by word of mouth and by example, the knowledge and practice based on customary methods of natural healing or treatment of disease (Murnen, 27). Dopamu (2003, 443) has also described traditional medicine as the tradition, art or science of the prevention and cure of disease. It is the use of natural substance to prevent, treat or cure disease. It can also mean medicament used internally or externally. In recognizing the importance of traditional medicine, Ajadi (2003) opines that “scientists all over the world are resolutely engaged in an expedient task of bringing their training and expertise to bear on the study of herbal remedies in order to fully enjoy the creature power of nature’s medicine in the contemporary world stressing the relevance of herbal treatment” (520).

The term “complementary medicine” or “alternative medicine” are used inter-changeably with traditional medicine in some countries. They refer to a broad set of health care practices that are not part of that country’s own tradition and are not integrated into the dominant health care system (WHO, 2005). The term “native medicine” is a derogatory version of what should be termed “traditional medicine”. It is a term passed down from the colonial master. Unfortunately, this terminology is still used to describe traditional medicine by many educated people, including indigenous scholars.

### ***Medicinal Plant***

A medicinal plant is a plant which, in one or more of its organs, contains substances that can be used for therapeutic purposes or which are precursors for the synthesis of useful drugs. The WHO consultative group that formulated this definition stated also that such description makes it possible to distinguish between medicinal plants whose therapeutic properties and constituents have been established scientifically, and plants that are regarded as medicinal but which have not yet been subjected to a thorough scientific study. A number of plants have been used in traditional medicine for many years. Some do seem to work although there may not be sufficient scientific data (double-blind trails, for example) to confirm their efficacy. In the author’s view, such plants should qualify as medicinal plant. The term “crude drugs of natural or biological origin” is used by pharmacists and pharmacologists to describe the whole parts of plants which have medicinal properties. A definition of medicinal plants should include the following.

- a. Plants or parts used medicinally in galenical preparations (e.g. decoctions, infusions, etc.) e.g. Cascara bark;
- b. Plants used for extraction of pure substances either for direct medicinal use or for the hemi-synthesis of medicinal compounds (e.g. hemi-synthesis of sex hormones from diosgenin obtained from *Dioscorea* yams).
- c. Food, spice, and perfumery plants used medicinally e.g. ginger.
- d. Microscopic plants, e.g. fungi. Actionomycetes, used for isolation of drugs, especially antibiotics. Examples are ergot (*Clavicepspurpurea* growing on rye) or streptomycetes;
- e. Fibre plants, e.g. cotton, flax, jute, used for the preparation of surgical dressing.

### ***Theoretical Origin of Herbal Medicine***

Although it is not known exactly when the first men practiced herbalism in African, a number of theories have been advanced by scholars and traditional medical practitioners alike to explain the acquisition of this knowledge by early man. One such theory is that the early man deliberately selected specific plant materials for the treatment of his ailments since man had the ability to rationalize rather than to rely on instinct as do animals. The choice was certainly not based on knowledge of the plant’s constituents. Some anthropologists state that the early man lived in fear, and that in order to allay this, he indulged in mystical and religious rituals. Humanity in quest for relief from disease experimentally discovered the chemical components inherent in herbs (Harduye, 2000, 123). Thus, it could well be that the initial selection of plant material for medicinal purposes was influenced by religious thoughts and its collection was accompanied by a magic ritual. Some plants are still used in the rituals of traditional religion in many parts of African today.

It has also been proposed that knowledge of medicinal plants was gained by accident, although this theory has been refuted by a number of traditional medical practitioners who claim that information on such plants was communicated to their ancestors in various ways (Akpata, 1979: Lambo, 1979).

However, early man could have gained some scientific knowledge by watching the effects produced by various plants when eaten by domestic animals. Even today, some herbalists try out remedies on domestic animal, especially when testing for toxicity, and on themselves or their relations. Such confirm to the patient that the preparation is harmless and sometimes also confirm that the dosage prescribed is justifiable. Such information on African medicinal and toxic plants has been passed orally from generation to generation and today, there are herbal cures which have not been written down.

According to some traditional practitioners (Akpata, 1979; Ogunyemi, 1979), another possibility is that knowledge of traditional cures came from wizards and witches. It is believed that some witches, whether living or dead, attend village markets in strange forms: as goats, sheep, or birds. If their presence in this disguise is detected by someone very shrewd or gifted, such as traditional medical practitioners, the practitioner is promised some useful herbal cures in return for not exposing the witch. The same reward would be offered if a real-life witch was caught in the process of performing an evil act. Hunters, especially in African countries, have been reported as the original custodians of some effective traditional herbal recipes. Such knowledge could have been acquired when, for example, a hunter shot an elephant. If the elephant ran away, chewed leaves from a specific plant and did not die, it is believed the hunter noted the plant as a possible antidote for wound or for relieving pain. Similar observations were made in villages where, for example domestic animal chewed the leaves of a specific plant when that animal was ill and later recovered; or when another animal accidentally chewed a leaf and died.

Traditional practitioners also claim that, when in a trance, it is possible to be taught the properties of herbs by the spirit of an ancestor who practiced herbalism. Spirits are said to sometimes assume various forms, e.g. an alligator, or a human being with one leg and one arm, using walking stick. If one encounters such a creature in the dead of the night, it can be a useful source of original information of herbal cures (Makhubu, 1978; Elewude, 1980). In whatever manner early man gained his knowledge of the curative power of plants, one must assume that he was able, thereafter, to recognise the plant, since the detailed floras available today were non-existent then.

### ***Herbalism: A Form of African Traditional Medical Technology***

Herbal medicine gave birth to orthodox medicine (Babalola, 2003). Prior to the advent of orthodox medicine in Africa, herbal medicine is one of the available medical systems in the continent (103). E. G. Parrinder (1969) observes that medicine in the African context includes healing agencies such as leaves, shrubs and roots (156). To Owete and Iheanacho (2009), medicine in the general African view includes everything that can be used to heal, kill, to possess power, health, fertility, personality, to maintain order or cause disorder (131). Writing on the efficacy of herbs in the traditional health care system in Africa, Owete and Iheanacho (2009) refer to herbs as natural healing agencies (132). Ikenga Metuh (1985) in Owete and Iheanacho (2009) explains the practice of herbal medicine, as well as, psychotherapeutically and spiritual techniques-herbal mixture, ritual objects, incantations and rites capable of changing the human condition for better, or for worse (162). Herbal medicine is an aspect of indigenous medical technology.

In his taxonomy and types of therapy, Ubrurhe (2001) remarks that the use of herbs in the treatment of disease is the oldest form of therapy. Its origin is coeval with the evolution of mankind. It was used by the ancient Greeks, Egyptians, Chinese and Romans. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, employed herbal remedies in his treatment of ailments (43). Long before the discovery of sciences, medical science and the development of modern chemical drugs, plants, animals and herbs were the basis for most forms of medical treatments. Natural medication was and is still a means of remedy for any disease and sickness. The explication form of traditional medical healing uses different types of traditional medicine whose certain actions and potentials can be scientifically investigated and pharmacologically explained through experimental animal modelers. This includes the use of herbs, roots, flowers of plant, bark of trees, honey, and other materials for healing and treating disease. The inexplicable forms of traditional medicine involve the use of mystical, magic psychic practices in the healing process. This form of traditional medicine cannot be proven scientifically in the laboratory. Amanze (2010) sees this as the most dreaded and controversial form of traditional medical practices because it is shrouded in secrecy. Mysticism, sorcery, and spiritism are all involved in this kind of traditional medicine. Medicine is closely associated with religion (260). So long as it came directly from the Supreme Deity and operates through divinity or spirit. The basis of medicine cannot be dissociated from religion.

In the practice of medicine in many parts of African, ancestors are involved. As a guarantee for the efficacy of the medicine; God, the divinities and ancestors are all given their due honour.

In his study, *Communicating with Herbs: an Aspect of Urhobo Medicine*, John Ubrurhe (2007, 20) states that in Urhobo medicine, there is communication between medical practitioners and the herbals, which they collect, prepare and administer as medicament. He observes that African communication modes have been put into three broad categories, namely, the verbal the esoteric and physical mythical non-verbal. The verbal modern employs the mouth and the spoken work (dialogue conversation). The non-verbal modern employs body language (various movements of the body to convey meaning), symbology (arrangements of artifact to express meanings) dance, music and song. The esoteric/psychomythical mode involves interpretation of dreams divination, telepathy, rituals and miscellaneous interpretation of nature.

Herbal communication process is based on the African's understanding that the concept of vital force or dynamism in nature: nature possesses physical force, energy or dynamism. Smith (1975, 21) in Ubrurhe (2007) defines dynamism as "the belief in and practices associated with hidden mysterious, supersensible pervading energy, powers, potencies and forces: "Often times medicine men/women are said to be directed by the dynamism to know the herbals to pluck for each type of disease (21). The medicine men/ women speak to each herb by appealing to the life force in it. Ubrurhe (2007) further explains that in the collection of herbs, the medicine man/woman usually utters some incantation evocation by calling the proper name of the herb and making his/her intention known to it. In case of herbs with high potent life force, he asserts that the mode of communication are both verbal and esoteric/psychomythical. Sometimes sacrificial offerings are performed (22). The essence of this communication is to appeal to the herb to permit the medicine man/woman to collect the necessary parts. It should be stated that communication is also employed in the preparation of the herbs; this is meant to activate the dormant life in the herb.

### ***Challenges of Traditional Medicine in Africa***

The followings are the problems adduced to traditional medicine:

1. It is non-scientific i.e. its methods and preparations are not science oriented; however, it has often brought our good results despite this problem.
2. It lacks measurement and unattractive in appearance.
3. It has low preservative measures.
4. The taste is not inviting.
5. Some Christians see it as a linkage to spiritual forces, this is because they believe that the various spirits play a part in health.
6. Its methods are considered anti-Christian, thus, traditional healers were regarded as heathens because of their involvement in African Traditional Religion.

Despite these problems, traditional medicine is still patronized mainly because the costs are relatively cheaper compared to orthodox medicine. It is also readily available in villages, towns and even in some urban areas. In Nigeria today, out hospitals are ill equipped and the attitude of the medicinal practitioners discourage people to patronize them.

### ***The Relevance of Herbal Medicine***

Africans believe that diseases are often caused by natural or physical factors; supernatural or preternatural, or mystic. Dopamu asserts that "when mystical and supernatural causes are detected, treatment must take place on different levels. In most cases, the healer will diagnose to find out the causes."

Indigenous psychotherapeutic approach in the total management of patient, and herbs is usually recommended. Among Africans, herbal medicine has survived today, playing different roles and adapting themselves to new situations. Salako (1998, 24) observes that herbal treatment is more readily accessible and cheaper than the orthodox one, and many patients seek treatment from traditional physicians. In another vein, the WHO traditional medicine programme was established in 1997 "to give adequate importance to the utilization of traditional system of medicine, with appropriate regulations, as suited to their national health system (Zhang 1996, 4).

It is a known fact that there is an acute shortage of medical doctors and pharmaceutical products. As a result of this, the teeming populations in Africa rely mainly on local herbal products and the services of herbal physicians, traditional bone setters and birth attendants. Zhang (1996) reports that in Ghana, the ratio of modern medical doctors to the general population is 1/20,000 while that of traditional practitioners is 1/200. Various African governments have demonstrated their national interests in alternative forms of treatment which include herbal medicine (40). It should be stated that the traditional physician is a keen observer. (Stenn 1975: 30). The traditional physician approached his patients just like the orthodox one. A history of the illness is made and an examination is performed. Such things as skin, character of speech, character of quit and rapidity of pulse are recorded. Palpitations of wounds and of the abdomen are observed. There are various ingredients which go into the preparation of an efficacious medicine. It is not just a simple herb, but must be prepared, mixed with other elements, and have a spell uttered over it. Herbs are essential ingredients to most medicines, and gods have particular herbs that they favour (Parrinder, 1997, 159).

Traditional modes of medication are scientific. Science has been defined as a unique knowledge acquired by careful observation, through deduction, of the laws which govern changes and conditions, and by testing these deductions by experiment. It also means a branch of study which is practically concerned with facts, principles and methods. Elujiba (1999) sees it as:

The total combination of knowledge and practices-whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing or eliminating a physical, mental, or social disease. These knowledge and practices may be based on past experience and observations which have been handed from one generation to another wither verbally or in writing. The practices are further based on materials from nature, sociological environment and metaphysical forces of the universe (6).

Based on the above definition, it is evident that there are two forms of traditional medicines, namely, the explicable and the inexplicable.

### ***The Emu People***

Emu is one of the six Ukwuani clans in Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. It is above 100 kilometers by road away from Asaba, the capital of the state; 200 kilometres from Benin and about 60 Kilometres from Warri. The town is situated between latitude 5<sup>o</sup>38-4<sup>o</sup>2N and longitude 6<sup>o</sup>13-6<sup>o</sup>25 E of the Greenwich Meridian. The clan shares boundaries with Utagba-Ogbe (Kwale) on the North; Ozoro on the South; Abbi on the West; Ogume on the Sourthwest and Ashaka on the East. Its land area is approximately 44 square Kilommetres and spans about 36 kilometers along Abraka/Kwale Road. The clan with annual rainfall of about one metre lies mainly in the flat rain forest belt of Niger Delta and less than 100 metres above sea level. The climate is humid with mild temperature in the two distinct rainy and dry or harmattan season. Demographically, its population ranks amongst the highest in the local government area. The 1973 national census placed Emu as the ninth most thickly populated community in the Ndokwa region. Since then the population has increased many times over (Peas Associates, 1992, 13).

There have been diverse versions of locally circulated stories concerning the origin of the Emu people. One of the versions holds that the founder of this Clan was a man called Olor. Olor and his wife, Emu, migrated from Onitsha, presumably following an alleged homicide that Olor committed. As the couple fled, they took with them the *Ofo* (the household god). The *Ofo* is of a great religious importance amongst the Igbo and it is always in the custody of the heir of the family of Clan. The heir is usually the eldest son of the family. The Onitsha people, who were very incensed by the disappearance of the *Ofo*, went after Olor and his wife to recover their god. Olor and Emu in an attempt to escape crossed the river on a mysterious log. History holds that the log was later identified as an alligator. This miraculous escape that was wrought by the alligator made it a totem animal. It was henceforth associated with the religious practices of Olor and Emu.

Olor and his wife settled in Emu. The name of the settlement was thus derived from Olor's wife's name. They had two sons named Ikosa and Ebilige. While they were in Emu, some other people migrated from Isoko and Ndoshimili to join them. These were the Ogbolum family from Emevor in Isokoland and Umuodio family from Akarai in Ndoshimili. Oral tradition further says that Emu expanded with time following a population explosion in that settlement. This led to the funding of Emu-Obi-Ogo; Emu-Obodeti; Emu-Ebendo; Ekpu-Ikpe and Iyasele. The last two later integrated and became known as Emu-Iyasele (Ogolime, 2001). Another version of the origin of the Emu people, posits that they migrated from Benin kingdom to settle in the place they are found today.

The much that could be said is that Emu is a high breed of Edoid and Igboid extratraditions. Most Emu people are large-scale farmers. Rubber and palm oil extraction have been the major source of income. Indigenous arts include basket weaving, metalwork and sculpture (*Okpu-Uzo*). They remain a socially tight-knit group. Community unions and clubs are the rule, even among those who have emigrated to North America, Europe, or Asia. The people are deeply religious: like other African societies (Mbiti, 1969), they believe in the Supreme Being (*Chukwu*), pantheon of divinities, myriads of spirits, the ancestors (who play vital roles in their lives) and magic.

The social life in Emu is punctuated with various festivals at specific intervals during the year. The particular months are February, June, November and December. Prominent among these festivals are the *Ukwuata*, *Ikenge* and *Ime Eze Emu*

### ***Therapeutic Medicine in Emu Clan***

Therapeutic medicines are preparations used in connection with diseases, sicknesses and is used in general to steer away evil forces. The efficacy of this medicine was cited by my sources as the reason why modern medical services in the Emu Community are hardly patronized. The number of clients that the *dibie* receives relative to the number that visits the hospital lends credence to the above assertion. Lack of use ultimately leads to the closure of the dispensary. Moreover, the people believed that most diseases and sicknesses, apart from the physical manifestation, have a spiritual cause that requires spiritual intervention in the form of therapeutic medicine. The range of this medicine is vast, it includes the following: *OgwuEfo-Olinwa* (medicine for stomach ache). According to the information obtained from oral source, Oliver Abanum (1990), the following ingredients are employed in the preparation of the medicine for stomach ache:

1. *Uda* (spice)
2. *Nwata-tunimeesu* (translation withheld by oral source)
3. *Nzu* (local white chalk)

The ingredients are put together in a mortar and then pounded until it turns into a liquid substance. Before this, the *nwata-tunimeesu* must be taken from the tree with a cutlass and not by hand. After pounding, the medicine is put into a bottle and mixed with some local gin. However, the patient for whom the medicine is prepared must pay certain amount of money as demanded by the local custom. This payment is called *panyileeogwu*, “rising of the medicine”. For immediate result, the patient is advised to drink half a glass of the mixture at 5 a.m. in the morning and half a glass at any other time as the patient wishes. The patient takes the medicine and recites the following: “*Emonau dine efoobuluolinwaniafuogwuna, kuogwukpoluosansogbu dine efotufukuogwukeluolu.*”<sup>1</sup>

It is believed that when this medicine is ingested early in the morning, and the incantations uttered, the belly ache will be cured immediately. Usually, the medicine is prepared only once for a patient. Any other subsequent administration of the medicine would lack the ritual power, unless the patient ties two *ego ayaka*, (cowries), to the neck of the bottle that contains the medicine. It is only then that the potency would be retained even with subsequent addition of local gin into the ritual medicine in the bottle (Abanum, 1990, 112).

### ***Ogwuefoolinwa: Medicine to Cure Belly Ache***

According to our informant, Oliver Abanum, one of the subjects, the goal of this medicinal rite is to cure belly aches. In the ritual procedure of *Ogwuefoolinwa*, there are two ingredients that carry symbolic meanings. These are the *uda*, a spice, and the native white chalk. The *uda* may symbolise peace or trouble, depending on the circumstance of use. The symbolism of the *nzu* has already been explained, it represents sacredness, power, seal or agreement in the spiritual realm. The important stage of this particular rite is the *ipayi lee ogwu*, “the activation of medicine” This is the ritual custom where the client pays the *dibie* a token fee, as part of the ritual processes of making the medicine work. This aspect of the ritual represents the people’s belief that you have to give something to possess anything of value. It is more so when acquiring spiritual powers. With this token, it becomes obligatory to the *debie* to acquiesce to clients’ demand even if such is against his wishes.

<sup>1</sup> This sickness that is in my belly, be it gonorrhoea, be it poison. even bellyache, when I drink this medicine, let the ritual medicine remove all the problems. Let the medicine work.

### ***OgwuIbeleOrenu-ku: Medicine for Venereal Disease***

This particular ritual medicine is believed to serve a dual purpose. The first and most common purpose is for the cure of venereal diseases. The second is to cure miscarriage. In this latter function, it works in a peculiar way that baffles the client. According to Oliver Abanum (1990), the ritual medicine, when administered correctly, would first help the womb of a woman to hold a baby and preserve it from being aborted; the woman eventually delivers the baby. The medicine is also said to ease labour pain and make birthing painless. Usually, at the time of labour, the woman is given some quantity of the mixture in a glass to drink at intervals. The following are the ingredients and prescription for this medicine:

1. *Ayamba* (translation withheld by oral source)
2. *Mgbalaguekobo* (root of coconut tree)
3. *Uda* (spice)
4. *Mgbalaguobo nkilishi*(lime root)
5. *Nwatatunimenesu* (translation withheld by oral source)
6. *Mgbalaguububa* (translation withheld by oral source)
7. *Migbalaguabasioji* (root of kola-nut tree)

The above listed items are collected together and washed thoroughly. They are then cut into tiny bits with a knife that is not used for domestic purposes. The chopped items are gathered and put in a bottle along with some quantity of local gin. The *Ego ayaka* are then tied with a string to the mouth of the bottle. The concoction is stored overnight. After then, the medicine is ready for use. This particular medicine can be ingested at anytime. However, like most curative medicines that are orally ingested, it is advisable according to my informant, to drink this medicine in the morning. It is believed that at this time of the day, diseases or sicknesses are at rest. *Ogwuibeorenu-ku* according to Abanum differs from *Ogwuefoolinwain* the sense that, the only function of the latter is to cure stomach ache while the former serves the dual function of curing venereal diseases and preventing miscarriage. In the usage of *ogwuibeorenu-ku* one does not only depend on recited words for its efficacy but also with the *Ego-ayaka*, tied to the mouth of the bottle. This is to keep the powers of the medicine and make it possible to be used again. But for *Ogwuefoolinwa*, a string of cowries is tied to the mouth of the bottle as part of the whole procedure before the medicine is used. A negation of this process mars the efficacy of the ritual medicine. The general principle guiding the selection of medicinal properties in the preparation of therapeutic medicines in Emu community is the idea that behind physical ailments and diseases there exist, as the root cause, spiritual agencies. Therefore, roots, barks of trees, leaves and herbs used in the preparation of these ritual medicines are believed to contain spiritual forces that could be instigated to fight off those malevolent forces that are responsible for such ailments. Studies by pharmacists affirm the medicinal properties of the the root, leaves and barks of trees that are involved in the preparations made by the *dibia* (Abanum, 1990, 122).

Lastly, there are some other ritual medicines unlike the ones described above, whose ends are not designed to cure a particular disease or sickness *per se*. These particular ritual medicines are best described as medicines to control natural forces or as the Emu people would see them, evil forces. These ritual medicines have formed part of the heritage of the people, they are used purposefully and are approved by the community; therefore they are productive in a sense.

### ***OgwuEmoUkuIgbele: Medicine to Cure Venereal Diseases***

This is another therapeutic medicine used to cure venereal disease and prevent miscarriage. In the ritual proceedings for this rite, the *dibia* gathers appropriate ingredients that are pounded to produce the medicine. Prominent among these ingredients are the root of a coconut tree, the root of a lime tree, and the root of a kola nut tree. The root of the coconut tree symbolises energy, prosperity and fertility. In the olden days, the coconut fruit is eaten as food alone or mixed with other foods. The water from the coconut is sweet and serves as drink to refresh the body. The lime root signifies strength and curative power of the divine. The lime tree symbolises mystical powers that are active in all the properties: roots, bark, leaves and fruit. Its presence in medicinal ritual indicates the presence of the mystical curative power of the spiritual world. The root of the kola nut tree denotes abundant life, the physical and spiritual abundance of life. Thus, it is believed that since it stands for life, it will not co-exist with sickness or things that threaten life. Also, the kola nut tree symbolises sacredness and holiness in the community. The kola nut can never be used for poison or destructive purposes; it is the symbol of God's presence, goodness, wellbeing and happiness.

Therefore, anything that threatens these characteristics, ultimately threatens the divine. The cowries tied around the opening of the bottle, containing the ritual medicinal substance, indicate the presence of the divine, sanctity and spiritual sanction. According to my informant, without the cowries tied around the top of the bottle, the spiritual forces active in the medicine will dissipate after the time allotted for its operation has expired (Abanurn, 1990, 123).

### ***Mmo Ni MmaluAfuEnya: Medicine to Keep a Dying Man Awake***

1. *Mba-alibuzoto* (translation withheld by oral source)
2. *Mbaoketu* (translation withheld by oral source)
3. *Ntu-egbe* (gun power)
4. *Alida* (translation withheld by oral source)
5. *Nzu* (local white chalk)

The first three items are to be put together in a mortar and pounded. Then the leaf called *Alida* is then added and pounded together with the other ingredients. The last item to be added to the mixture is *Nzu*; this is sprinkled on the pounded substance. The concoction is then mixed thoroughly and moulded into a “medicine ball” ready for use only when a sick person is dying. Getting to the dying person, the medicine ball which is held with the left hand is crushed in the right palm and mixed together with water. It is then rubbed sparingly on the body of the dying person. Emu people believe that rubbing the substance on the body of the ill person makes them invisible to the people in the spirit world and vice versa. Consequently, the dying person will not hear nor heed the call of death. This belief is within African conceptualization of death as evil that intermittently visits the physical world. According to my informant, the efficacy of this ritual medicine could be reduced if oil is brought near where the medicine is prepared (Nwabefa 1990).

### ***MmuoniMmaluAfuEnya: Medicine to Keep a Dying Man Awake***

In the view of Nwabefa, my informant, this particular ritual medicine is used to keep a dying man alive and conscious until all arrangements pertaining to his estate have been concluded. This medicine can sustain such a man for a short period of time. The symbolism involved in this preparation cannot be determined by isolating single ingredients and examining them for meaning, as has been done for other ritual medicines that have been discussed thus far. The goal of the medicine is to sever contact between the man and the pending spiritual world. The ritual ingredients consist of leaves, roots, gun powder and local white chalk (*nzu*). The leaves together with the roots which must not be separated symbolise the existence and source of strength. It is believed that death occurs when the original source of strength (breath) is cut off spiritually. This is why the roots, together with the leaves, which must be in one whole are used for medicinal preparation. The gun powder symbolises a break, a blackout on the spiritual world. It shuts out the physical world from the spiritual world, making it temporarily invisible to the spiritual world. This means that the personification of death will be blind and unable to deliver the message of death to the victim. Lastly, the use of local white chalk indicates a seal, a sacred bond on the part of spiritual forces to keep to the goals of the ritual, which thus guarantees the efficacy of the medicine.

### ***OgwuEnyaEnu: Medicine to Cure the Mentally Sick***

Emu people have ‘medicine’ to cure madness. The ingredients for this preparation are:

1. *Eddo* (translation withheld by oral source).
2. *Ncha-oji* (local black soap).
3. *Efifiakepuniniinyimmalu* (leaves got from grave).
4. *Eyakepuni no ofi* (sand collected with closed eyes).
5. *Efifianiisiomi* (leaves from the mouth of the well).
6. *Mmiriinakpo* (snail water).
7. *Nkplu ego osisor* (old form of money).

In the order of preparation, the listed items are pounded together in a mortar except for the last item on the list. These ingredients must be pounded with the snail water. When the ingredients are thoroughly mixed from pounding, then the last item *nkplu ego osisor* is added and pounded again together until the constitution turns into a medicinal paste. For use, this paste is rubbed in the eyes of a mentally ill patient in the mornings and evenings while muttering the following incantations: “*Enyaluaani, enyaluaani*” (be calm and regain consciousness). This particular ritual medicine is used only for the mental patients.

***OgwuEnyaEnu: Medicine to Cure the Mentally Ill***

The purpose of this medicinal ritual is to cure mental illness. The mentally ill person must not be a chronic case, the one who has been mentally ill for a long time. This medicine is to reverse to normalcy somebody who had recently become mentally ill. There are symbolisms in some of the core ingredients of this medicine which include: black local soap, leaves from a grave, sand from a burial ground, grass obtained close to a well, and snail water. There are taboos associated with collecting these items. For instance, when collecting the sand, one must close his eyes before scooping some sand into his hand, so also with grass next to a well. The dibie must not be seen by anyone when collecting these items. The black soap symbolises spiritual cleansing of the body from all evil forces. Since the colour black symbolises evil, so it is believed that the black soap would clean away the spiritual evil that might be causing the mental condition of the person. The leaves from the grave of a dead person symbolize the active presence of the spirit world which is believed to be responsible for what goes on in the visible, physical world. Among the people of Emu, it is a tradition to make a grave for only those that died a good death. Those who died a bad death, usually as a result of evil deeds, are buried or thrown into the bad bush.

The earth represents the collective presence of the visible and invisible powers. The earth is believed to be alive with powers and in this case represents the spiritual world of the dead which are believed to inhabit the earth. Also, the grass from around a well symbolises the source of being, life and health. The well in the community is the main source of water for domestic purposes. It is a meeting point for everybody, since each makes daily trip to it for water. Therefore, the grass connects with health, life and the source of being. The snail water symbolises purity, impotence and powerlessness in the visible and invisible realm. The water stagnates, nullifies and reduces the efficacy of negative spiritual powers that come in contact with it. The liquid from a snail nullifies all negative forces and thus activates the curative powers of the other ingredients in the medicine

Writing on the symbolism of African people, Mbiti (1969) says, "The invisible world is symbolised or manifested by these visible and concrete phenomena and objects of nature. The invisible world presses hard upon the visible: one speaks of the other, and the African people 'see' the invisible universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world. This is one of the fundamental heritages of African people (27). Thus, the black soap would clean away the spiritual evil, the leaves from the grave world, through the goodness of the spirits and ancestors, will cure the mental illness, the sand will bring in the invisible world to sanction the purpose of the ritual, the leaves from the well will restore normalcy and good health and the snail water will counteract all negative and opposing forces.

***Conclusion***

Every society in the world possesses one form of technology or the other which is used to satisfy the basic needs of such a society. At the level of environmentalism, there is the unique nature of technology that is available in every society via-a-vise the local environment. From time immemorial, man has used traditional medical technology in the form of animal parts, flower, leaves, roots, rhizomes, and the bark of trees for treating various diseases. This study reveals that this form of handling the diseases that afflict humanity has not abated in recent times. Finally, this study has brought to our knowledge the efficacy, availability, effectiveness and the economic advantages of traditional medicine. It has also encouraged our medical scientists to embrace African traditional medical practices, thereby lifting it to such enviable heights as those found in some southern Asian countries and North America.

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