

Umulumgbe Contemporary *Odo* Masquerade Ritual Performance

Gloria Nwandu Ozor¹, Prof. Chesaina, Ciarunji² & Dr. Masumi Odari³

Abstract

Odo masquerade ritual is an oral tradition of the people of Umulumgbe, the South Eastern Nigeria, which is passed down from one generation to another through the word of mouth. Umulumgbe *Odo* ritual is a masquerade festival that is performed once in two years as a symbol of the people's belief in the afterlife and as a festival of community unification. However, this study sets out to investigate the effects of modernity on the contemporary performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual. The objectives of the study revolved around the question of the impact of modernity in the performance of contemporary traditional *Odo* masquerade ritual. Specifically, the study interrogates the extent at which the performance of the ritual has on the one hand, defied modernity, while on the other; it has also incorporated new symbolisms and horizon of meaning. These objectives were derived from the assumptions that, for the survival of significant traditional elements, the performance must defy modernity, while at the same time it has of necessity to incorporate new symbolisms of meaning for cultural dynamism and relevance.

Keywords: *Odo* masquerade, performance, contemporary, modernity, Umulumgbe, Nigeria

1. Introduction

According to *Odo* belief in Umulumgbe, the dead visit the earth every two years and live amongst the people for a period of six months, ostensibly, to see their loved ones and even settle scores with their enemies. The *Odo* festival is held at the end of each cycle to mark the "return" of the dead to their abode in space. The "return" festival which is known as *ezemaa* festival in Umulumgbe is the climax of the *Odo* season and also a signal of the end of their stay on earth. During the *ezemaa* festival, every member of the community participates. *Odo* festival is a public performance usually held in public arenas, normally the markets. The *Odo* actors execute their actions through masquerades characterized by elaborate theatrical acts and masks. An *Odo* moment is conceived as a secondary departure of the souls from the earth, and thus holds a very profound position among the people. Besides, it functions as a reenactment of the pain of parting with the visiting spirits. As a result, elaborate preparations are carried out for the event by both the actors and the whole community. This symbolic gesture is a sign of recognition and respect for the overwhelming influence of the ancestors which are represented on earth by the *Odo*.

This study examines the Umulumgbe contemporary *Odo* Masquerade ritual performance by focusing on the emerging trends on the discharge of contentious issues intertwined with the significance and practice of the ritual and the emerging horizons of meaning and worldviews. It also examines the extent at which modernity, as a social dispensation as well as an imaginative field, has shifted the institution and practice of the ritual and how it has impacted on the choices of enactment symbols and modes of symbolism characterizing the performance of the ritual. This study also goes further to examine the participants of this ritual and how they have over the years incorporated some elements of the alien system in its discharge which include, the structure of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual, the costumes, audience participation, space and time, and *Odo* as a symbolic representation of the people's belief system and worldview. The above area of focus is for a clearer understanding of the contemporary performance of the ritual and the extent modernity has impacted and shaped the value of the performance.

¹ Department of Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Nairobi, Kenya, E-mail: glo4sunny@yahoo.com

² Department of Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Nairobi, Kenya, E-mail: prof.chasaina@uon.ke.com

³ Department of Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Nairobi, Kenya, E-mail: modari@uonbi.ac

And what the participants and the custodians of this ritual have put in place for the reclaiming, revitalizing and for the continual survival of the performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual.

2. The Contemporary Performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* Masquerade Ritual

There is an Igbo adage that says if someone does not know where rain starts to beat him, that the same person will not know where the rain stops to beat him. Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade performance as a tradition which is passed down from one generation to another has tried and is still trying to stand the test of time which started at the arrival of the British colony in Umulumgbe and in Igboland in general. Their arrival marked a significant turning point in the performance and symbolic importance of *Odo* masquerade ritual in Umulumgbe. Although Nigeria gained independence from the British in 1960, but the psychological impact of this colonization has continued to grow to the present age and has also continued to have influence in transforming the performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual. Jay A. Ciaffa argues that “colonialism violently disrupted African cultural traditions and imposed with varying degrees of success, European forms of thought and social organization upon colonized Africans (121).” Kimberly Jill Parkash (1990) also opines that the culture of the colonizers was not “only introduced, but imposed on indigenous, traditional cultures (1)”, Maria Grazia Sindoni in the analysis of the extent of the physical and psychological effect of colonization on the Caribbean states that “the process of colonization involved not only physical occupation of the land and imposition of government (politically) on the colonized place, but also mental colonization (double colonization) (4). Hence, the outcome of colonisation still continues to have impact in the daily life of Umulumgbe and her *Odo* masquerade ritual performance even after gaining independence. Through some already established institutions of the Western cultures, such as education, Christianity, urbanization and modern industries, the psychological impact of colonisation continues to contribute immensely to the transformation of Umulumgbe contemporary *Odo* masquerade performance. And this is why Elísio Macamo (2005) opines that “the challenge facing African societies consisted in overcoming tradition in order, thereby, to gain access to the benefits of modernity. This is because colonialism had introduced into Africa the value of wage labour, entrepreneurship, individualism and empathy (2).” This is why Ron Eyerman in “Modernity and Social Movements” emphasizes that modernity is associated with a “new sense of freedom, awareness and an experience of time. For the modern, individual time involves process and duration; it also involves a sense of dynamic change that turns attention to the future rather than the past (37).” The reason is that the modern individual views himself as a creator of his world and believes that his future is in his hand and not in the hands of his ancestors.

Prior to the contact between the British colonizers and the people of Umulumgbe, the performance of *Odo* masquerade ritual has been the avenue for the remembrance and veneration of the dead, the reason being that the traditional belief system was then in oneness. But everything took a different dimension during the arrival of the British colonial masters. Before then the *Odo* ritual performance contributed immensely in the enforcement and maintenance of law and orderliness in Umulumgbe. It also served as the main avenue for the promotion of social relationship in the community. But the contact during colonisation exposed the belief in afterlife, which is the bedrock for the performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual to its initial process of transformation. Although the transformation of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual performance during colonization was a forceful one, but it is something that its process has continued to the present day. This is as a result of traditional negligence, abandonment, and denial for the quest for a more ‘civilized and modernised’ lifestyle.

Modernity has been defined as “a period marked by a questioning or rejection of tradition; the prioritization of individualism, freedom and formal equality; faith in inevitable social, scientific and technological progress and human perfectibility; rationalization and professionalization (<https://findwords.info/term/modernity>, print)”. According to Magdaline N. Wafula in “‘Tradition’ Versus ‘Modernity’: Generational Conflict in Vuta N’kuvute, Kufa Kuzikana, Msimu Wa Vipepeo And Tumaini”, “modernization refers to the overall societal process by which societies change technologically, socially, politically, economically and culturally (135).” Modernity as a shift from traditional way of belief system to a more ‘sophisticated and civilized’ way of life, did not discontinue the performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual but instead transformed some aspect of the performance of the ritual which include; the costume, time and space, the symbolic representation of *Odo* masquerade and audience participation. Ojukwu and Ezenandu in “A Paradigm Shift from Tradition to Modernity in Nollywood’s Projection of African Narratives”, argue that “some traditions can evolve and at some point be re-valued, rejected and abandoned or integrated with elements of an alien system (2).”

The process of change and transformation is evident in the structure of the contemporary performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* ritual, the costumes, and the symbolic value of the *Odo* ritual in the present age. The contact between the British colonizers and the indigenes of Umulumgbe, results into what Malinowski in *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa* calls culture change. Malinowski in the above text defines culture change which takes place through the contact of two cultures as follows:

Culture change is the process by which the existing order of a society, that is its social, spiritual, and material civilization, is transformed from one type into another. Culture change thus covers the more or less rapid processes of modification in the political constitution of a society; in its domestic institutions ...; in its beliefs and systems of knowledge; in its education and law; as well as in its material tools and their use... In the widest sense of the term, culture change is a permanent factor of human civilization; it goes on everywhere and at all times. It may be induced by factors and forces spontaneously arising within the community, or it may take place through the contact of different cultures (27).

Culture change or transformation is the dynamic process whereby the collective living tradition of a people starts to undergo some changes, and adapt to external or internal forces or influences. There are so many factors that can contribute to culture change and transformation and some of them are; colonization, religion, education, marriage, urbanization and migration. The process of culture change and transformation that the Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual performance is undergoing is as a result of external and internal forces and this can also be viewed as creolization. Creolization has been defined by Robert Baron and Ana Cara as cultural creativity in process (4). This occurs when cultures come into contact with another. Baron and Cara argue that as cultures come in contact with another, that new “expressive forms and performances emerge from their encounter, embodying the sources that shape them, yet constituting new and different entities (4).” In *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity*, edited by Kathleen M. Balutansky, Marie-Agnès Sourieau, creolization is defined as “the unceasing process of transformation of cultural elements constantly acting upon one another (21).” Although the contemporary Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual is still a performance for the dead through the art of representation by the living, but its current mode of discharge has imbibed a mixture and a blending of external cultural elements which is introducing new meaning and role to the performance, and this is evident in the performance structure, audience participation, actors, costumes, time and space, and language of the performance. However, the changes and the transformation which is evident in the contemporary performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual are as a result of the following forces which have come in contact with *Odo* tradition in the recent years.

3. Christianity and Its influence on Umulumgbe *Odo* Masquerade Performance

Culture and tradition have always been central to human existence and survival. Christianity as an alien tradition in Umulumgbe is one of the factors of modernity which has impacted so much influence on the performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual. During the period of colonization, Christianity was used as a weapon of psychological colonisation against the Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade performance. Elísio Macamo in “Negotiating Modernity: From colonialism to Globalisation” emphasizes that “Christianity was to a large extent an essential element of the colonisation (1).” In this sense, the British colonizers used Christianity as a weapon to destabilize and disorient the minds of the indigenes from their traditional belief system by making them believe that they can only be regarded as human beings that are able to represent the kind of European civilization which is expected from them, thereby creating division and discord in the community. So, Christianity becomes a yardstick that “marked the difference between Europeanness and otherness (Macamo 2005).” Moreover, the same way that the colonised African Christians view Christianity as a way of being civilized and modern, and the African tradition as an evidence of uncivilisation, is still evident in the way some indigenes of Umulumgbe view the performance of *Odo* masquerade ritual. Mrs. Ugwuotube during an interview states that, even being a traditionalist, she made sure that all her children were baptized, because the ‘light’ has come and she wants them (her children) to enjoy the benefits from the ‘light’. She goes further to say that their ‘time’ and the ‘present time’ is not the same, that so many things have changed and she does not want her children to be left behind.

Christianity continues to place a tension between the contemporary Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual performance, making the performance of the ritual seem outdated and Christianity as the trending culture which everyone wants or should identify with. On the other hand, Mrs. Ugwuotube laments that although the ‘present time’ may look more developed and wiser than theirs, but that during their ‘time’ there was respect for elders by the young ones, and these respect were genuine.

She also said that then it was hard for children to talk back at their parents because parents are like visible gods to their children. She goes further to say that during their time, that people hardly commit crime, especially within their 'land' (kindred and community), the reason being that there is a belief that the 'land' will curse or catch up with the offender, but that all those things have changed. In other words, she claims that there is more respect for parents, the elderly and for humanity during the 'traditional' time. In another interview, Mrs. Okechi believes that people 'run to Christianity' in order to continue their wrong doing. Her reason is that the land of Umulumgbe does not pity anyone that goes against its laws. She was then asked of the symbol of her red attire, and she said that the red attire is a uniform for all the women in Umulumgbe, who still believe in the performance of *Odo* masquerade ritual as part of Umulumgbe tradition. The red attire according to her, distinguishes them from the others and that the attire symbolises danger and death. She goes on to say that the red attire is another way of solidifying their membership and their belief in afterlife. This is because the return of *Odo* to the land of the living, does not only bring peace but also fear and death to those that have committed crime against the land and that a crime against humanity is a crime against the land of Umulumgbe.



Figure 1: Mrs. Okechi in her traditional attire

Mrs. Okechi's attire is different from the other women's attires because of her position as the princess of Umulumgbe tradition.



Figure 2: A group of Umulumgbe women in their traditional attire during Odo performance

Furthermore, in Egeoffia clan there is a complete acceptance of Christianity and a complete disassociation from the performance of Umulumgbe Odo masquerade ritual. Mr. Iffi, a member of Egeoffia clan, said that their great grandfather who was then the eldest man and the custodian of their clan's deity gave his children an order before his death that never should any of them (his children) participate in Odo masquerade ritual performance or venerate the ancestors. This is because he felt betrayed and abandoned by his friends and his fellow associates for abandoning the gods and their ancestors for Christianity. He also felt abandoned by the gods and the ancestors for refusing to bring them back or punish them for this sacrilege. As a way of getting back to the gods and the ancestors, he decided to give this order to his children with a threat that he will punish anyone of his lineage that disobeys it. He also instructed them to pass it down to their children, claiming that he wants to be the last to venerate both the ancestors and the gods. Hence, contributing negatively to the aspect of audience participation and the continuous sustainability of *Odo* masquerade ritual performance in Umulumgbe.

The contemporary Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade has incorporated some aspect of Christianity in its performance as a strategy for its continuous preservation and relevance in the modern world. The incorporation of Christianity is evident in the dialogue between a man from Amabor village and *Eleke Ojebe Odo* masquerade in his full costume. *Eleke Ojebe* is a masquerade from Amabor village in Umulumgbe *Eleke Ojebe* on his way for a visit to the family of Umu-ekamba in Akpator village sees a man from Amabor whom he calls the son of his in-law. Although this son of his in-law is a Christian, the difference in their belief system did not prevent them from recognizing and appreciating each other's presence. And this is evident in the way the masquerade and the man embraced each other. While the greeting is still going on, *Eleke Ojebe Odo* masquerade calls the Amabor man the son of his in-law and makes a joke of him for choosing to abandon his ancestors for Christianity. He goes on to tell the son of his in-law that although they have a separate belief system, that their relationship with one another will never change. Because he is ready to acceptance his "in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the holy spirit as long as they live in peace. During this dialogue, *Eleke Ojebe Odo* masquerade emphasizes that the change in the interest on traditional belief system by using the following figurative speech; "I am a squirrel that does not destroy someone else's yam or cocoyam. I am a squirrel that tells the erosion that as it wants to carry away the sacrifice, it should not carry away the squirrel with the sacrifice because he has never destroyed anyone's farmyard."

From the above statement, *Eleke Ojebe Odo* masquerade compares the Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade performance with the gentle, harmless, and accommodating nature of a squirrel, whose aim is to be allowed to leave in the tree and still be able to sustain its life from the crumbs that are still available. Erosion in the above statement signifies the forces of social change and the impact of modernity which is caused by culture contact. The carrying away of the sacrifice is the changes that have occurred and are threatening the existence of the performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual performance. *Eleke Ojebe Odo* masquerade also goes further to say that he is not very happy because his children have become wanderers in the forest. The word wanderer signifies the loss of direction, the loss of cultural identity and the loss of one's root. And the forest is the contemporary and the changing world, a place where someone can easily lose his way and forget his tradition if care is not taken.

The incorporation of Christian belief system in Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual is also evident from the statement from some of the escorts of some *Odo* masquerades during the *Ezema* performance in *Nkwo* market arena. *Nkwo* market is a market in Umulumgbe. According to Isaac Igwe Nwaozor Okoro – a respondent, the Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade performance is their Christmas, it is the period they appreciate their dead ancestors. It is also the period they promote what their fathers have done in order for their children to learn from them and then continue from where they will stop. The reason for the continuous performance of this ritual is to teach the new generation the importance of tradition. He further emphasizes that every community in this world has its own tradition because tradition is *iji mara onye* (what defines one as a person).

4. Urbanisation and its Effect on the Structure of Umulumgbe Odo Masquerade Performance

Traditionally, Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual is a "closed" performance that takes place within the community. As a communal performance, every clan reserved a special space for their *Odo* masquerades. This space is known as *Obamu*, it a sacred place which is regarded as the earthly home of the ancestors during their visit to the world of the human. It is also a very symbolic place because it is where the actors transform to the spirits of the ancestors. Although the place is usually used for farming during the "neutral" year, it becomes a sacred space during the performance of *Odo* masquerade ritual. In other words, the moment the performance of *Odo* ritual begins, these mapped places automatically transforms to sacred spaces.

Terry Gunnell also describes a performance sacred space as a “space that outsiders walk around, and feel wary about entering; an area which has simultaneously been bestowed with an element of “sacredness” that should not be disturbed (8).” This is because these sacred spaces acquire new meaning, such as; “different timescale, different behavior and speech registers different values, and different momentum (8).” During the period of the performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* ritual, the owners of any piece of land where the *Obamu* are situated make sure that no one farms on it. Unfortunately, these sacred spaces that were mapped out a long time ago by the founders of Umulumgbe are now being threatened by human encroachment and interference. Presently, new structures are being constructed on these sacred spaces. At the time of the fieldwork for this study, a residential building has been constructed very close to the *Obamu* of *Umorob Nwaezugwu*, an *Odo* masquerade from Umuowegu clan, thereby threatening the secrecy that protects and sustain the *Odo* masquerade ritual performance in Umulumgbe. According to one of the informants interviewed for this study, she says that it is an abomination for one to say that she has seen a naked *Odo*. In other words, as a performance of pretense and representation, it is the duty and the obligation of everyone in the community to keep the secret concerning *Odo* performance, even when the person especially the women, knows that the actors are human beings. This is because they see the spirits of the ancestors in physical and not the actors who are impersonating the spirits of the ancestors. Another sacred space that has been invaded by the living in the name of development is the *Obamu Ogbuike Odo* masquerade from Amawenu village. This is one of the feared and respected *Odo* masquerades in Umulumgbe, but due to development and economic reasons, the present generation sold the sacred space to a privately owned telecommunication house known as MTN in Nigeria.

The second space in the performance of *Odo* masquerade ritual takes place in the public space, these space are the two major markets in Umulumgbe. There are the *Nkwo* market and the *Ngwuogbu* market. These places are regarded as public space in Umulumgbe. These are where all the *Odo* masquerades in Umulumgbe gather together in order to perform to the admiration of the people, both indigenes, and non-indigenes. Previously during this public performance known as *Ezema*, which is also the last public ritual performance of *Odo* masquerades in Umulumgbe for the period they will be in the world of the physical, the women and the men in their traditional attires and with their traditional musical instruments escort their masquerades to these places with songs and dance. The women with their traditional musical instruments sit in a place previously mapped out for them to sing for their *Odo* masquerades, who in turn dance to the entertainment and admiration of everybody present. But at the time of the fieldwork research, so many shops have been constructed for business in this arena, the number of women that now accompany their *Odo* masquerades to these places have reduced significantly. The women still escort their *Odo* masquerades to these places but for lack of space, the women disperse from there and then the youths take over the duty of taking their *Odo* masquerades around for the entertainment ritual performance. The other factors that contribute to the decline of the number of women participants during the ritual of escorting *Odo* masquerades to the market are Christianity and death. Some of the women who previously participated in this escorting performance have been converted to Christians and some of them have also died, leaving only a few women.



Figure 3: A Picture of *Ngwuogbu* market

Looking at the above picture, one will see that the space has been encroached with shops and vehicles, leaving a little space for *Odo* masquerade to perform. Again, the *Nkwo* market has also been occupied with so many modern business structures, thereby making it difficult for *Odo* masquerades to entertain their people. But in order to fulfill the purpose of the ritual, all the *Odo* masquerade in Umulumgbe still attend the *Nkwo* market ritual performance. According to Obinna Ozoigwulugbeani – a respondent, “there is a great difference between the way we perform the *Odo* ritual now and the way our fathers performed it, but the most important thing is that *Odo* masquerade ritual performance still unites us and makes us feel happy. You can see how everybody is very happy to participate in it and even you as a foreigner, I know that you are very happy witnessing what is happening today in our community.” The above comment by Obinna Ozoigwulugbeani suggests that the continuous performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual is very important for its preservation despite the fact that there are a lot of changes and the emergence of new trends in its discharge.

Another emphasis is that it is still performed as the oral tradition of the community, because even as the contemporary *Odo* ritual performance incorporates new elements in its discharge, it has not lost its traditional artistic identity and functions, instead, it has been able to adapt to the changing environment in order to be able to still retain its function and continue to define and maintain the cultural features and the social identity of the community and the individual as well. Therefore, the contemporary Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade performance is a tradition that is able to adjust both to the external and the internal challenges of the contemporary environment.

Time is a very symbolic feature in Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual performance. Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade performance is structured within the Igbo calendar. The structure of this ritual is very important, this is because it is the period whereby the community ushers in what Victor Turner calls “communitas and anti-structure (vii)” in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. It is during this time of the ritual performance that even the ordinary places used as farmland during “the neutral period”, transform to sacred spaces. But recently, the time structure of the performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual performance has changed immensely. Mrs. Ugwuotube, one of the informants that were interviewed in order to ascertain the aspect where changes have occurred in the performance of the ritual, emphasized that the time structure of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual performance has changed immensely. She said that previously, women were not allowed to come out during the performance of *Odo* masquerade, especially during the sacred days that *Odo* masquerades perform naked. During these sacred days, the women are to stay indoors until the end of the ritual which can take several days. She also said it is a taboo for a woman to see a naked *Odo*, that is, an *Odo* masquerade that does not have his full costume on. But presently, the women don’t really feel the impact of the “indoor ritual” anymore. The reason being that “oyibo” (Western civilization), has come and no one prevents the other from moving freely anymore. The “indoor ritual” which lasts for days with women and their daughters hidden in the house, now takes place in the night when those who are not directly involved are all resting in their houses.

When asked about the factors that contribute to these changes and the effects it has on the ritual; she says that one of the factors that contribute to the change in the time structure of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual performance is education. According to her, “our children go to school early in the morning and come back very late in the evening. And as parents, no one will like her daughter to die because of tradition and because the contemporary Umulumgbe believe in *egbe bere ma ugo ebere* (let the kite and the eagle perch).” Another reason for performing the ritual in the night is because it is the only time when no human activity is jeopardized. This means that night is the best time for the performance of the sacred aspect of the contemporary *Odo* masquerade in Umulumgbe

The contemporary performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual is incorporating the element of tolerance and accommodation of other cultures in its performance and this is seen in the way they tolerate the People’s Democratic Party’s (PDP) political campaign which took place the same day and the same time of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade *ezemaa* performance.



Figure 4: The interference of a political party during the 2015 *Ezema* ritual performance in Umulumgbe

Previously, this type of act is regarded as a taboo and sacrilege to *Odo* masquerade tradition and the community as well, but things have changed and people now view traditions differently. However, because of the respect for traditions and the virtue of tolerance exhibited by these *Odo* masquerades, the audience and the escorts, the campaigners instead of going further with their campaign, joined in the performance, thereby adding more colour to the *ezema* performance.

5. Human Migration and Umulumgbe *Odo* Masquerade Performance

Migration is the physical movement of people or individual from one place to the other or from one cultural environment to the other. Kyaing Kyaing The has defined migration as a “global phenomenon” which is “caused not only by economic factors, but also by social, political, cultural, environmental, health, education, and transportation factors (1).” All these factors mentioned by Kyaing, lead to culture contact. During the process of migration, people interact with others who are from different cultural background and through this; their cultural values are in some ways transformed and influenced.

The transformational effect of migration is very pronouncing in the incorporation of Yoruba traditional attire in the costume of one of the *Odo* masquerades and most of the *Odo* masquerades have incorporated some trending fabrics, such as velvet, laces, and modern hand fans in their costumes. The most vivid colour which is incorporated in the *Odo* masquerades’ costumes is the colour of red. This colour symbolizes justice, death, and danger. There is also the incorporation of English in the contemporary Umulumgbe *Odo* performance. This is evident in the song below:

Iga n’ewukwe
ooo yes
Iga n’ewukwe
ooo yes

This song incorporates the English word “yes” in it. Although the contemporary performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual has adopted and incorporated some foreign materials in its performance, its “initial intent and significance” (Victor Ukaegbu, 1996) has not changed. Due to the effect of education, civilized way of living, some *Odo* masquerades now put on modern foot wears which were not previously included in their costumes. This is because, as spirits, they are expected to walk barefoot and also perform without inner clothes. But all of these have changed.



Figure 5: An *Odo* masquerade wearing a black shoe



Figure 6: An *Odo* masquerade wearing white sports shoes

Furthermore, Alex C. Asigbo in “Transmutations in Masquerade Costumes and Performances: An Examination of Abuja Carnival 2010” argues that the effect of climate change and technology which “cause the hot sun against a tarred road is very unfriendly to soles of the feet hence the attempt to make sure that performers’ feet are protected (8).” The incorporation of foot wears does not only protect the masquerades from getting hurt but also from exposing the secrecy which is concealed in the mask, the secrecy of the dead coming back to life. This is because it will be strange for a dead ancestor to bleed when he gets hurt, may be from broken bottles or nails, it will not also be good for the sustainability of the same secrecy if the dead cannot perform his duty as a result of any burn from the sun. This is because it is expected that *Odo* as the representation of the spirit of the dead ancestors should be able to surpass all human misfortune. Another interesting change is the use of money in the appreciation of the ancestors during their short stay with the living. This change and modification in the contemporary Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade performance is analysed by Obinna Ozoigwulugbeani as follows:

The performance of *Odo* masquerade ritual has really changed from the way it used to be performed. The reason is that some of the old men and women that used to perform this ritual the old way are no more alive, we don’t have many of them anymore, and we have more of the youths now. In the old days, the people used to appreciate *Odo* masquerades with cows, chicken, and goat, some will even bring baskets full of tubers of yam. They are able to afford these items because they were great farmers, so they give what they have. Nowadays, our youths do not engage in farming anymore they prefer the white collar jobs or any other job that is not farming. Most of the people you are seeing here today came home because of this celebration, after this is over, they will all go back to where they stay. So, they prefer to give money as gifts, because that is what they have.

The degree of the influence of modernity in the contemporary performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual is really a remarkable one. The only consolation according to Obinna is that the Umulumgbe *Odo* performance still brings the people together, thereby strengthening the bond between them as a community.

Furthermore, the state government interference in indigenous traditional ritual performance in Enugu state has also contributed to the modification of some of the elements of the ritual which include, time, the conduct of the actors of *Odo* masquerades and the roles of *Odo* masquerades in the community. But when asked about the effect of this on the performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* Masquerade ritual, Odonwangwuele, the custodian of *Egba* masquerade, presented the agreement of code of conduct in regard to *Odo* masquerade performance in Umulumgbe.

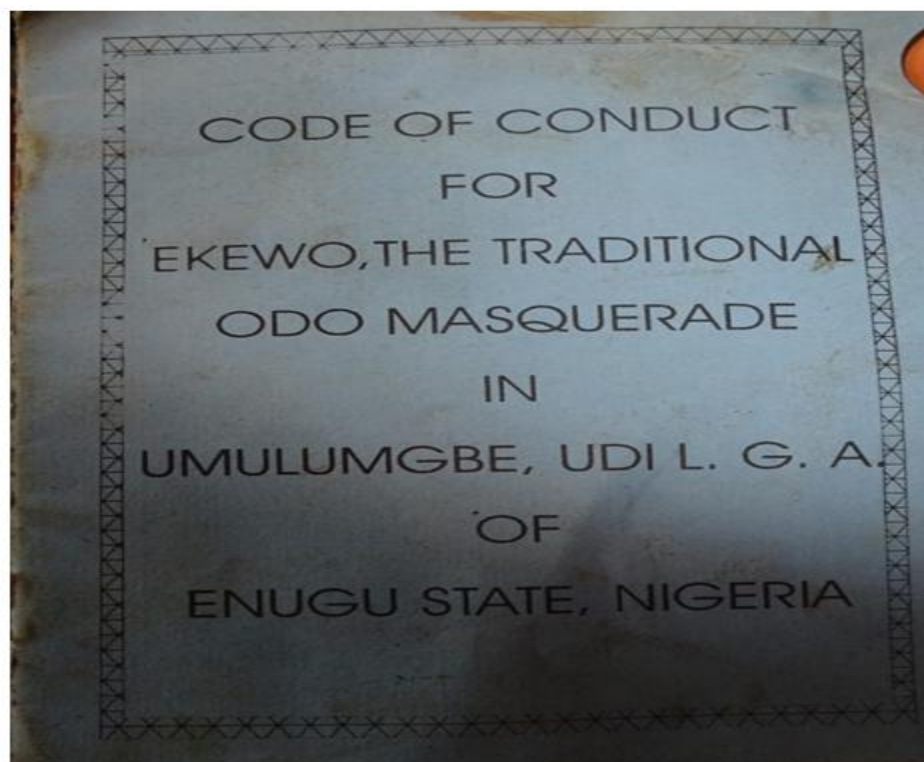


Figure 7: A Copy of the agreement on the code of conduct of all the *Odo* masquerades in Umulumgbe

According to Odonwangwuele, he was the person who initiated some of the changes in the contemporary *Odo* performance in Umulumgbe when he took over the custodianship of *Odo* masquerade from his father. His reason is that he has travelled to so many states in Nigeria, and has seen how things are done. Some of these things he tries to incorporate in the performance of the Umulumgbe *Odo* tradition.

After the death of his father, he was summoned to undergo the *ozo* initiation ritual which will qualify him as the custodian of the Umulumgbe *Odo* tradition. He goes further to narrate that the change being witnessed in *Odo* masquerade performance which was initiated by him, started during the process of his initiation ritual into the *ozo* cult. Previously, an *ozo* man does not suppose to wear a trouser of any kind again in his life after a successful passage into the *ozo* society. There are also certain foods that he does not suppose to eat again. But fortunately for him, the initiate has the right to disclaim the ones he feels that he still wants to keep or live with even after the *ozo* ritual performance. But most *ozo* men prefer to tie wrappers, because they feel that wrappers distinguish them from other men in the community. And during the initiation ritual, the initiate chooses three new names for himself which he will now become his name until the day he will die. The new names, the selected foods, and a red cap decorated with a bird's feather give him a new identity in the community.



Figure 8: Odonwangwuele in his *ozo* attire

According to him, he decided to do things differently from the way his fathers did theirs. His reason is that he was then a young man who just came back from Lagos state in Nigeria in order to fulfill the obligation of his family to the community, but even at that, he cannot imagine himself living the rest of his life tying wrapper like a woman instead of wearing a trouser like his fellow men and friends.

During the process of the initiation ritual into the *ozọ* society, he refused to accept the aspect of not wearing trousers again in his life. Hence, he has the right to choices of what he wears now, that is either to wear a trouser or to tie a wrapper. In other words, his different view about life which is as a result of his exposure and contact with other cultures and traditions, influenced the changes which he initiated during his initiation into the *ozọ* society, and this changes he also initiated in the performance of *Odo* masquerade ritual performance in Umulumgbe, which its effect continues to grow even to the present age.

Conclusion

Change is the law of life and the modern Umulumgbe people are creating their own world and reality in the contemporary performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual. The contemporary performance of this ritual embodies a lot of elements of modernism which have influenced it both positively and negatively. The embodiment of these elements which their influences is evident in the *Odo* masquerades' costumes, time and space, and many others, is generating new ideas which are actually ensuring the continuous importance of the performance of Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade in the contemporary world. And its continuous performance as a belief in afterlife according to Dani Cavallaro in *Critical and Cultural Theory Thematic Variations* is the "dominant ideologies" that "are committed to the promotion of a culture's aesthetic values as a guarantee of its excellence (15)." The modification in the Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual performance and its taking over by the youths is a positive indication that the traditional Umulumgbe *Odo* masquerade ritual will be sustained for the coming generations.

Works Cited

- Macamo, Elisio. "Negotiating Modernity: From Colonialism to Globalisation." *Negotiating Modernity: Africa's Ambivalent Experience*, edited by Elisio Salvado Macamo, UNISA, 2005. Modernity, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernity>, 2017.
- Wafula, N. Magdaline. "'Tradition' Versus 'Modernity': Generational Conflict in Vuta N'kuvute, Kufa Kuzikana, Msimu Wa Vipepeo and Tumaini." *Swahili Forum* 18; 2011, pp 135-162.
- Eyerman, Ron. "Modernity and Social Movements." *Social Change and Modernity*, edited by Hans Haferkamp and Neil J. Smelser, pp 37 – 54. Oxford, 1992.
- Ojukwu, C. Chris and Ezenandu, P.E. "A Paradigm Shift from Tradition to Modernity in Nollywood's Projection of African Narratives." globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume12/3-A-Paradigm-Shift-from-Tradition.pdf
- Malinowski, Bronislawi. *The Dynamics Of Culture Change An Inquiry Into Race Relations In Africa*. edited by Phyllis M. Kaberry, Yale University Press, 1945.
- Baron Robert and Cara Ana. "Creolization as Cultural Creativity" *Creolization as Cultural Creativity*, edited by Baron Robert and Cara Ana, University Press of Mississippi, 2011, pp. 3-19.
- Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity*. edited by Kathleen M. Balutansky, Marie-Agnès Sourieau, University Press of Florida; first edition, 1998, pp. 21.
- Gunell, Terry. "Narratives, Space And Drama: Essential Spatial Aspects Involved In The Performance And Reception Of Oral Narrative" <https://www.folklore.ce/folklore/vol33/terry.pdf>, pp. 34.
- Kyaing Thet Kyaing, "Pull and Push Factors of Migration: A Case Study in the Urban Area of Monywa Township, Myanmar." www.worldofstatistics.org/files/2014/03/Pull-and-Push-Factors-of-Migration-Thet.pdf pp. 1.
- Asigbo C. Alex, "Transmutations in Masquerade Costumes and Performances: An Examination of Abuja Carnival 2010," [//dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v13i1.1](https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v13i1.1), pp. 8.
- Macamo, Elisio. "Negotiating Modernity: From Colonialism to Globalisation." *Negotiating Modernity: Africa's Ambivalent Experience*, edited by Elisio Salvado Macamo, UNISA, 2005. Modernity, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernity>, 2017.
- Parkash, Kimberly Jill. "Cultural transition in colonial and postcolonial societies in three francophone West African novels by Ahmadou Kourouma, Francis Bebey and Mariama Ba." (1993).Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers. Paper 1960, scholarworks. umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2979&context=etd
- Sindoni, Grazia Maria. *Creolizing Culture: A Study on Sam Selvon's Work*. Atlantic, 2006.
- Ciaffa, A. Jay. "Tradition and Modernity in Postcolonial African Philosophy." *Humanitas* (10667210); 2008, Vol. 21 Issue 1/2, July 2008, pp. 121 – 145.
- Cavallaro, Dani. *Critical and Cultural Theory Thematic Variations*. Athlone; London, 2001. Modernity: <https://findwords.info/term/modernity>