

Intercultural and Hybrid Significations in Okumkpo Masquerade Performance of Akpoha-Afikpo

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Abstract

African indigenous performance forms have always been on the front burner in critical scholarship over the years. Scholars have examined their different aspects from varying points of view, ranging from the thematic approach, materialistic approach, ritualistic, religious and spiritual approaches to the aesthetic and functional approaches. However, there are hardly research efforts that have examined these indigenous performance forms from the approaches of interculturality and/or hybridity of cultures, in spite of well-known characteristics of culture such as fluidity, flexibility, adaptability, permeability and malleability. Undoubtedly, the migration theory enables cultural artefact to easily acquire the performance attributes of other cultures to enrich its performance forms. To this end, this study sought to interrogate the Okumkpo Masquerade Performance of Akpoha-Afikpo in relation to the elements that make it an intercultural and hybrid performance. It was established that several cultural artefacts and elements of other cultures come together to give the masquerade performance its intercultural and hybrid underpinnings. Considering such prominent aspects of the performance as performance aesthetics, structure, forms, dance, music, language, costumes and movements, the study observed that during performance, these elements do not exclusively belong to any particular ethnic group, owing to the prevalence of multi-cultural signifiers. It is within this premise that this essay concludes that the Okumkpo Masquerade of Akpoha-Afikpo is a performance of intercultural and hybrid significations.

Introduction

Traditional performance forms often trace their roots to the culture of the people. Every culture develops noticeable ideas and symbols that could be easily interpreted within them. In the case of Africa, the concept of traditional performance is located in its capacity to enliven the spirit of communal oneness, using the stage as veritable site to attain the requisite camaraderie for gratifying communal needs. In spite of colonial contact and its attendant legacy of individualistic proclivities, African indigenous performance forms abound in traditional societies. These are performances or cultural activities of the people that have resisted the onslaught of western civilization. They take into cognizance the progress and development of the human society: its aspirations and fears, its belief systems and moral ethics. These societal concerns are expressed through any of the following creative media of dance, costume, music, masking or masquerade, storytelling, drumming, acrobatics, gestures and other verbal and non-verbal codes.

Through migration, indigenous performance forms have gathered cultural materials which they appropriate and expropriate to soothe their performance aesthetics. This point is reinforced by Okoye's position that, "African tradition continuously renews itself by responding to both internal and external social encounters while still retaining its fundamental definitive form"(20).

One of the most challenging aspects of performance today is the relative ease with which cultures come into contact with one another and interchange expressive forms. This hybridizing tendency is visible in almost all cultures: indigenous/traditional, modern (literary/spoken), music, dress-codes, language, culinary and cuisine. The practice of culture blending manifests in the cases of exchange between indigenous cultures and indigenous and western literary or performance styles. Okoye articulates this when he states that:

African communities have vigorously subjected their contact with European and other foreign cultures to a critical process – questioning, accepting, rejecting and

appropriating practices and artefacts according to their needs, while still maintaining an underlying connection with their pasts. This "tradition" is exemplified in Igbo masquerade performance, which adopts an expropriatory strategy by which it subjects Euro-American cultural forms to a process of indigenization, stripping them of their original symbolic equipment and immersing them in entirely local ones. Thus, rather than producing a qualitatively new performance form, these pieces sustain the Igbo masquerade tradition (21-22).

The assertion above re-echoes the fact that, "in spite of the varying epithets used by theatre scholars to describe the (masquerade) theatre of a particular geographical setting, the origin, function and characteristics of theatre all over the world share similar traits" (Nwosu, 1). Over the years however, traditional masking theatre, following its cannibalising tendencies, has expropriated other cultural materials despite the sacredness attached to their performance.

African masquerade performance of even the most sacred and conservative kind functions within the tradition of modernity, appropriating and re-contextualising cultural elements from within and without for the enrichment of its expressive register. In the less sacred forms, the state of this tradition is more dynamic. Practically, every useable artefact or expressive mode is consistent with the rate at which they are socially encountered. Pieces obtained from foreign cultural forms are re-contextualised and inserted into entirely different symbolic systems, thereby deploying them in the making of meanings which are radically indifferent to the operational codes within which they operated in their natal environments. The point being made here is that the flexibility of culture has erased an authentic African indigenous art form be it music, dance or masquerade.

Nevertheless, masquerades remain revered entities in traditional African societies. Nwabueze notes that, "(Masquerades) exist in every African community as highly sacred, revered and often feared tradition" (3). In corroboration, Nwosu avers that,

Masquerade performance in Igboland is inextricably linked with the aspect of Igbo worldview that stresses the interaction between the world of the living and the world of the dead... Thus, masking concretizes the co-existence of man and his cosmic neighbours; facilitating in the process an interpretation of each other's realm. The mask and the mask-carrier...play vital roles in the concretization process (3).

Thus, mask-carrying is a process of deification. This explains why a mask-carrier forfeits his real identity and becomes a spiritual being that cannot be disparaged, attacked or unmasked. Little wonder Okafor (39) describes the mask as,

an instrument of disguise...(that) serves as the principal device for the invocation of the supernatural. As soon as an actor dons a mask, he is transformed on physical and spiritual levels. On the physical level, the mask conceals the identity of the wearer. The audience may guess or know the actor but such knowledge is not discussed in public.

Amankulor clarifies that,

It would be naive to suggest that the spectators do not know or cannot guess the identity of the masked performers. They do know and do guess at who are behind the masks, but that knowledge is not openly discussed. It is a convention not to discuss the identity of masked performers openly or else some evil could befall the culprit (54).

Indeed, Igbo masquerade characters are ancestors or spiritual forces that have taken on material form and returned to the human plane at the invitation of the living. Based on this understanding, we shall proceed by examining the intercultural and hybrid signification of masquerade performance.

Intercultural and Hybrid Signification in Masquerade Performance

Cultural appropriation, also termed "cultural theft" or "borrowing," used in contemporary intercultural performances, is traceable to the modern dance movement that began in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The ethnocentrism of that period helped to facilitate the use of non-Western theatrical forms (Heather, 23). According to Holledge and Tompkins, intercultural performance is

the meeting in the moment of performance of two or more cultural traditions, a temporary fusing of styles and/or techniques and/or cultures. Interculturalism is sometimes confused with theatre anthropology which analyzes another culture's 'theatre'...without a sharing of traditions (12).

In Africa, indigenous theatrical performances are expressions of various ethnic groups' attempt to comprehend and interpret nature. In the face of modernisation and change, they adapt their performance idioms to accommodate the appropriations. Cultures refract, reflect and perjure. Regardless of the appropriations in any masquerade performance, the natal culture remains preponderant in its performance aesthetics.

Asigbo opines that during cultural interchange, one's cultural background,

imposes on adapters, especially one's handling of cultural materials, the task of being as creative and as truthful as possible in his handling of cultural materials since it might become a drawing pool for anthropologists (38).

Similarly, Pavice cautions that,

One should avoid turning intercultural theatre into a vague terrain for comparing themes or cultural identities...or for contrasting ways of thinking. Instead, one should locate it as a crucible in which performance techniques are tested against and amalgamated with the techniques that receive and fashion them (63).

Hybridization, in the words of Banham (367), is "the practice of blending both indigenous and foreign literary or performance styles." The flexibility of culture explains this multifocal thrust. This is reflected in its quality of boundlessness which, in turn, is the hallmark of African theatre performances in the twenty-first century (Schechner, 266). The point here is that cross-fertilisation of cultures has become a critical index for the analysis of performance aesthetics. In substantiation, Okoye notes that:

Hybridity, whose most influential theorist is Homi Bhabha, is characterized as a mode of cultural resistance that shatters and reflects imposed European authority by producing its "double", which is "neither the one thing nor the other but a new form of knowledge or performance (21).

The flexibility and dynamism of the masquerade lies in its receptivity to change made possible through adoption of new idioms of performance, albeit interculturally. For example, when community encounters new experiences the masquerade effortlessly imbibes these experiences and reflects them in its form so that it continues to enjoy its status of an immensely popular

hybrid art. It is in this frame of mind that this study shall examine the major idioms or performance aesthetics borrowed by the Okumkpo Masquerade performance. Attention shall be paid to such key performance idioms as costume, dance, music, language and props.

An Overview of the Okumkpo Masquerade Performance

The term "Okumkpo" is an Afikpo word which literally means "stinger". Stinger, according to the first entry in *Encarta English Dictionary*, is defined as "something that stings," especially a hurting or critical comment (2009 Edition). Okumkpo's operations before the performance are akin to that of an undercover – the fourth entry of "stinger" in the same dictionary. Therefore, Okumkpo stings with its critical comments on the people. These salvoes are usually directed at both men and women whose behaviour fall below the socially accepted conventions.

Men who are effeminate, lazy, stingy, drunkard, gluttonous, stupid and even adulterers are usually the object of the masquerade's heavy criticism. It serves as a gadfly on the general members of the society who act in unconventional ways. Interestingly, these criticisms are only viewed as didactic. Even at the height of provocation arising from extreme criticism, no member of the audience dares to attack the Okumkpo Masquerade because it is a masked persona protected by the aura and mystery of the mask idiom. In addition, any attack on it is synonymous to questioning tradition and would usually be met with stern consequences such as grave ailments. And to be free, the victim would be required to propitiate the spirit 'behind' the mask. Therefore, the presence of the mask empowers the Okumkpo Masquerade actor with the poetic licence to compose, cajole, taunt and castigate individuals with its songs, mime and impersonations.

Indeed, this conforms to scholarly views on the secrecy attached to the art of masking in all African societies.

According Omezue Oka Agha, a member of the inner circle of Okumkpo Masquerade, the main reason for the institutionalisation and performance of Okumkpo Masquerade is to bring to the public ridicule the foibles of men and women who are mostly misfits, miscreants, never-do-wells and buffoons in the society, with a view to making them change. This stance, which doubles as the theme of the performance, is captured in one of the choruses of the performance of Okumkpo Masquerade, thus: "*onye na eme ehie okumkpo akpaya, la owalata bia mari'ihe, egwu ndi ogbo bu uka bul'ezi*." This literally means that one who engages in stupidity and buffoonery would change for the better when the Okumkpo Masquerade reveals and brings him/her to public ridicule.

The foregoing is in tandem with Ottenberg's assertion that, "the Afikpo Okumkpo is theatre par excellence" and that the "essence of the play is the direct ridicule and satirizing of real persons and topical events" (129). Okumkpo is a medium through which the young and the middle-aged adults express their feelings on elders whom they cannot engage directly in public" (32). Continuing, he states that it serves as "a tension-reducing mechanism for traditionalistic and progressive young men and for the elders watching the performances, in a social system in which generational conflicts are inherent" (135).

The socio-political objective and purpose of Okumkpo is made clearer in the following statements by Ottenberg:

The criticisms in the play serve to control the elders' behaviour, to cut down and level off the tendency of individuals to develop power to move toward a rank of individualism, which is considered destructive to the community (135).

In Akpoha, it is believed that Okumkpo eavesdrops on people's conversations and activities (Stinger or Undercover Officer), fourth

entry definition of Okumkpo in Encarta Dictionary. Therefore, people are conscious of their engagements to avoid featuring in the content of Okumkpo's criticisms.

According to Ottenberg, "the play falls into three broad categories: (1) the ridicule of persons who acted foolishly, (2) the criticism of leaders who do not lead properly, and (3) the maintenance of the relative roles of males and females" (129).

Having evolved from the folk-songs of women, the Okumkpo Masquerade also takes satirical swipes at women. It expounds themes on women who dominate henpecked men; women who are members of secret society – a taboo in Akpoha; beautiful girls who are forever selective of suitors; women who fail to conceive as a result of their diabolic engagements, among others. The performance encourages men and women to behave in conformity with the Akpoha's concepts of masculinity and femininity, respectively.

The Okumkpo Masquerade sings, dances and dramatises to conscientise and sanitise the society. Its essence is to search out transgressors or admonish members of the community to be decorous. It also serves as powerful sentries who keep watch at night. Okumkpo Masquerade can be classified perfectly under what Echeruo (137) terms "Igbo myth, ritual and drama that incorporate elements of song, dance and costuming which in various combinations have resulted...as heroic drama, burlesque, satire and ribald comedy." It is a total theatre, incorporating music, dance and drama.

The Okumkpo Masquerade performance obviously reveals that from the preparatory stage of mask-sculpting, through rigorous and painstaking rehearsal to staging (performance), an aesthetic of robust, full-fledged theatre performance evolved from the people's tradition, and this has been recreated, transposed and crystallised on the contemporary stage.

Intercultural and Hybrid Signification in Okumkpo Masquerade Performance

This section shall consider the concept of intercultural and hybrid signification in the Okumkpo Masquerade performance within such aesthetic qualities of performance as: performance structure, mask (ing), costumes, gestures, movement, dance, music/song, and rituals and or sacrifices, as well as the interaction of characters of the masquerade with the audience.

The performance structure of masquerade performances is an instance of cultural appropriation of the Aristotelian concept of beginning, middle and end. For instance, the Okumkpo Masquerade performance is structured into: opening glee, main performance and closing glee. In addition, this format can also be linked to the Renaissance Italian Commedia Dell Arte as far back as 15th Century, and Hubert Ogunde's Travelling Theatre which all used the performance structure of opening glee, main event and the closing glee.

The Okumkpo Masquerade establishes its presence through songs which serve the audience as a tonic to what lies ahead. This song is called *egwu oga la'uzo* (opening glee). Its closing glee follows the different episodes of role-play and impersonations (the play in action) with detailed expositions and is also laden with songs which often differ from those of the opening glee and even the performance proper.

Yet, they are geared towards a perfect and well-structured performance like the dramatic plot structure following the traditional format of beginning, middle and an end. Generally speaking, Okumkpo Masquerade employs this intercultural performance structure without any inkling but just because it soothes their outing. This writer thinks it is ideal to establish this fact that this performance structure in the masquerade could be read using the intercultural and hybrid indices as seen in other performance forms.

In traditional African performances where masks are utilised, there is an aura of significance attached to the mask with

its attendant ambiguity and anthropomorphism. The masked actor relies on the mask to mystify his audience during performance. This is because the mask serves as the principal device for the invocation of the supernatural. Spirits are believed to reside in masks and special sacrifices are made to them, as evident in the Dan of Liberia and the Ivory Coast, Fischer; the Ejagham of Cameroon; the Kalabari of South-South, Nigeria (Okafor, 44); and in the Afikpo (Akpoha) Okumkpo Masquerade performance (Ottenberg 139). From the foregoing one can conclude that the mask has an intercultural idiom of sacrifices and rituals that cuts across ethnic divides in Africa and beyond.

Masks also show elements of intercultural forms in both appearance and outlook. This clearly demonstrates a reflection of cultural proximity, since cultures dominate, reflect and refract. For instance, there is a lot of commonality between the masks of some characters in the Okumkpo Masquerade and those of the Ibibio, Anang and Efik masquerades in present day Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. In the words of Ottenberg "the Afikpo mask tradition appears to be a blend of Jones's Igbo-Ibibio and his Cross River styles. This mixture also reflects the village-group's geographic position and history" (14). The Cross River influence is probably best represented in Afikpo in performances where raffia and net costumes, along with masks of wood or netting, are worn.

The mysticism and fearful aura that come with masked performances in virtually all African societies is an established exemplification of intercultural phenomenon. A taboo protects the actor and aids the depiction of the supernatural quality with which the mask invests the character. In Okumkpo Masquerade performance, for example, the mask signals the "mystic emanation of the spirit" (Ugonna 1984:34). Among the Dan, spirits are believed to reside in the mask so that the performers who wear the

masks actually become the spirits, "not merely their impersonators" (Fischer, 18).

The mask is necessary for such role-changes since it imbues the wearer with a supernatural quality. For example, the legendary personage depicted in the Arochukwu ensemble, Nw'ekpe, is already invested with a mythical grandeur. Nw'ekpe is the returning spirit of a warrior hero who had sacrificed himself for the continuity of the community (Okafor, 126-31). There is a spontaneous jubilation on the part of the community when Nw'ekpe returns. Shouts, gun shots, and chants in praise of the hero are heard in all parts of the town. Similarly, the people of Akpoha also herald their performances or the appearance of masked characters with gun shots and varied ecstasy and ululations. All these are indications of interculturality in performance aesthetics as observed by other cultures' masquerade performances revealed here.

Costuming and characterisation are other aspects in the Okumkpo Masquerade and, indeed, African indigenous performances where interculturality is not only visible but is both aesthetically and functionally part of the performance. It is in costume more than any other aspect of the performance that "African communities scrutinize their contact with foreign cultures, accepting, rejecting, and appropriating practices and artefacts according to their needs, while still maintaining an underlying loyalty to their indigenous processes" (Okoye, 19). Ottenberg captures this view as follows:

Many players are dressed in costumes that make them appear as females. Some walk side by side as couples, dressed as man and wife, frequently in European-style dress. Other paraders are costumed as scholars, priests, or as Muslims (13).

Akpoha Okumkpo Masquerade performance is replete with masked performers costumed as described above and this shows the intercultural and hybrid signification in the Okumkpo

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Masquerade performance. In the performance of Okumkpo, there are masked actors in the mould of *Agbogho Lugulu* (girls), *Nne Omogho-Njagidi* (nursing mother with dangling breasts), *Nchekwa Lugulu* (newlywed with strapped wrapper over the shoulder). Each of these is masked and costumed to depict their roles and characterisations. The use of male actors in place of female roles has its roots in the Classical Greece. This practice was still in vogue in Chinese Theatre in the 21st century. Notable among them was the Chinese Actor, Mei Lanfang, who was voted the most popular Actor in 1924 because of his outstanding performances in art of female impersonation. Although the issue of male chauvinism arises here, critics easily debunk it, like the case of Chinese acting, as “a subtle triumph of nature over art” (Stanton and Banham, 117), which is an indication of the preference of men over women on stage. Its incorporation in the Okumkpo Masquerade performance is also an index of interculturality. To buttress this fact see picture below:



Figure 1 Maskers dressed as women with wrappers, blouses, umbrellas and dancing with feminine gaiety depicting intercultural performance in action.

Performances in Okumkpo Masquerade like dances, music, songs and dramatisations offer a clue on how interculturality functions as signifiers of cultures. The dance-steps of the dancers do not belong to the Okumkpo Masquerade. They are copied from other masquerade performances of Edda in Afikpo South, like the Isiji masquerade. Although Akpoha also produces this masquerade, it is believed that it is a transfer of culture from Edda to Akpoha to give the Okumkpo Masquerade the needed variation in dance spectacle. For instance, the feminine dance steps of the Okumkpo Masquerade are copied from the female dancers of the Akpoha Igurube. Instances abound in the performance where the use of wide gestures is indicative of different cultures. The *Nne Omogho* (nursing mother) Okumkpo usually alerts the rest of the masked performers to come to her aid when her son suddenly collapses and fails all entreaties to wake up or be revived. These gestures are

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reminiscent of the tradition of the Noh or lyrical drama of the Japanese as well as their popular theatre of Kabuki which are gesturally symbolic. The Japanese Noh performer uses mime, music, and stylised movement as techniques of representation in performance just as reflected in the Okumkpo Masquerade performance. In their free-flowing and highly lavish costume, the performers merely raise a tip of the costume from the end of the hand to indicate serious wailing. This, therefore, could be likened to the *Nne Omogho Njagidi* in the Okumkpo Masquerade raising her hands in total dejection to attract sympathisers to aid and revive her son.



Figure 2 Showing Mother Masquerade and Son exchanging pleasantries with Main Okumkpo Role-Player

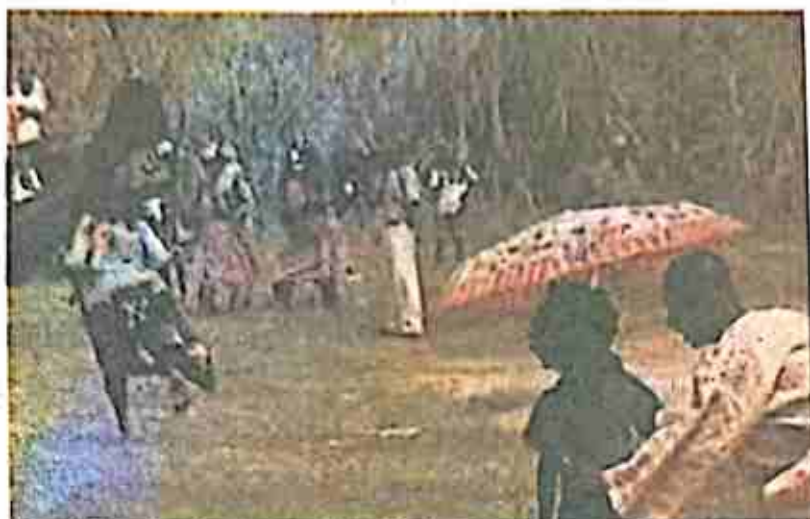


Figure 3 Shows child masquerade running after mother masquerade

Music and song in the Okumkpo Masquerade performance are also intercultural. Music is produced from drums that are hung across the shoulder or placed in between the legs just like the *gangan* and *dundun* talking drums of the Yoruba people (in size and in sound). However, rather than use bare palm, sticks are used to produce the sounds. In validation of the foregoing, Sadoh, citing Euba, affirms that "all known musical expressions in the world today are intercultural, be it African traditional music, Asia, Middle Eastern or European classical music" (636). Traditional music, he contends, is a product of intra-cultural interaction among various ethnic groups within the continent as well as other cultures.

The songs of the Okumkpo Masquerade performance are combinations of different languages and even a mutilation of the English language in the mould of Pidgin. The performance's tendency for hybridity is open-ended. In fact, every laughter-eliciting piece is employed as part of the performance idioms, unmindful of the natal culture. Whether it is readily accessible to them or not, it is employed in the performance to achieve a comic end. For instance, there was a man named Chief Nto Oboti who was famous for his corruptive tendencies. Okumkpo caricatured him in a song thus: "where them where them o, *bu ihe Oboti la suje libe okpogo ndi, ngari egbu o umuali mu odighi mu nma.*"

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Literally, it means "Where are they? Where are they? That's what Oboti speaks to scare his illiterate townspeople when money is involved."

Okumkpo performance has in the time past sung against unemployment in the country during the regime of Buhari and Idiagbon, thereby expressing the opinion of the Nigerian masses, thus:

Mgbe na bu onye gudua isii nwanem la ochota oru na aru na'eri ugwo l'onwa, ugbo e nde'nkanyi nguru koleji achitawo ekpawo na aga oo, nde sozu kwe moto o, ndi pazu kwe ugu wo na agha n'ime ohia oo, ozi zie Buhari unu kari Idiagbon'wo, Army Staff o la'wo dozie ra'anyi obodo ma o gari anyi na'ihu.

This literally means that:

In time past, those who passed standard six were able to secure employment with good salaries per month, but now those who are able to complete college (or university education) cannot boast of a meaningful job. Some have become Motor Park touts or conductors while others have taken to the bush path with their hoes to eke out a living. Okumkpo Masquerade is therefore, calling on Buhari and Idiagbon and the entire Security Council to look into the situation for a better future for all the citizenry.

The cacophonous yet topical revues and lyrics and the larger-than-life size of these four Okumkpo main players remind one of the Greek theatre at the acropolis where the tragic actors dressed exactly like the Okumkpo; padded costumes, ugly and expressionless masks and critical garbs are sign-posts of intercultural performance. See picture below:



Figure 4. The Main Okumkpo Role Players line up for role-play and impersonation acts. Note their larger-than-life sizes, reminding one of the tragic and comic actors of the Classical Greek theatre.

It is the belief of this writer that Akpoha socio-cultural milieu must have a genealogical attachment to Greece. This belief rests squarely on the performance tradition and structure seen in Okumkpo Masquerade performance. For example, the chorus of singers like in the Greek theatre is a visual spectacle and also functions as commentary before and after the role-play or impersonation of villagers by the main Okumkpo role-players. The structure of Okumkpo performance again reflects the Greek format. Instead of the modern division of plays into Acts, Scenes or Movements, Greek plays had prologue, parados, episode, stasimon, and exodos. In the same vein, Okumkpo Masquerade adopts the framework of acts and intermissions using prologue (opening glee), episode (main event), and exodos (winding up). Other aspects of the Okumkpo Masquerade that are intercultural

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especially with Greek theatre convention are in the following areas:

Open-air production (theatre at the Epidaurus; the Okumkpo Masquerade performs at the arena (traditional village square or market place), **No female actors allowed**; the African indigenous concept of masking abhors and denies women the knowledge of masking, **actors wore masks**; the Okumkpo Masquerade ensemble has over one hundred (100) cast members all adorning varied masks illustrative of moods, age and sex, social status, carriage and charisma etc., **specialized costumes for tragedy and comedy**; it is in costuming that Okumkpo Masquerade exposes its cannibalistic and expropriating tendencies. Each of the maskers is costumed to reflect characters such as old men, couples from Europe, India, Nigerian tribes, Asian, Juju chief priests, young girls, police officers, and so many others. And during the pandemonium dance for all, each character displays and acts as costumed. Therefore, beyond the weird and the opulence, costume indeed represents the acts in the art of Okumkpo Masquerade performance and conversely coalesces into its hybrid and intercultural performance indices.

The Okumkpo Masquerade performance, in masks, costumes and characterisation, performance and language, has demonstrated the interculturality of African indigenous performance forms with other cultures and has also aligned itself with the position of Okoye that: "Igbo masquerade performance practice adopts an expropriatory strategy by which it subjects foreign Euro-American (or any other cultural elements worth their aesthetic demands) (italics mine) cultural forms to a process of indigenization, stripping them of their original symbolic accoutrement and immersing them in entirely local ones" (20).

Conclusion

This study has reasonably established that Okumkpo performance, as an indigenous performance form, can adopt, adapt, modify, cannibalise, expropriate and even steal other cultural elements to enrich its performance aesthetics. From the different masks worn by the Okumkpo, its varied costumes, the peculiar characters and their attributive roles, performances, dramatization, music and songs to the dance steps, each has been considered within the locations of interculturality in culture proximity. One obvious feature is the tendency of cultural elements to permeate and refract, as well as the fact that the Okumkpo Masquerade has the right to cannibalise and expropriate cultural elements or artefacts to suit its aesthetics and functional undertones.

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