

Masked Iconoclasm: The Guerrilla Socio-Performative Traditions of *Gelede-Efe* and *Pirate-Efe*

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Abstract

Cosmically, *gelede-efe* masques, personifying the nocturnal sign, and *gelede-ajogi* masques, representing the diurnal sign, reinforce Yoruba's correspondence principle as symbolised in the edan Ogboni. Thus, order is integral to the total *gelede* carnivalesque.

Communal rejuvenation defines, more profoundly, the African artistic or performative value. *Efe*'s construction of social order privileges didactic entertainment over spectacular artistry, which the *ajogi* emphasises. Though *gelede*'s popular art-identity owes more to its reformatory potency than its entertainment potential, previous investigations have side-lined its influence on contemporary performance art. Convinced of this strong impact, a certainty of its popularity, my purview is the aesthetic dialogue between *gelede-efe* and a modern Nigerian protest art – the *Pirates Confraternity*'s sally culture.

Conceptually grounded in the satiric and guerrilla artistic theories, the paper reveals radical dissension and reform as ideological platforms of *efe* masking. This indexes the performer's non-conformist temperament and formally crystallises the performance as a guerrilla art, thus an engagement guided by a functionalist intention.

The *gelede-efe* guerrilla performance theory is then applied in interrogating the subversive and invective art of the *Pirates Confraternity* – a socio-humanitarian group that commands a robust repertoire of satiric and correctional songs. A parallel is established between Yoruba indigenous *gelede-efe* masker and this Nigerian contemporary paradigm: both are guerrilla artists, iconoclasts and social performers.

Introduction

Gelede masked-satire: an indigenous iconoclastic performance in theory

Art and mythology are major dominants of, and collaborators, in the African total existence. Both phenomena are crucial factors in the psychical confluence of the African being. The continuity of art is an assurance for the continuity of myth, and vice versa. This symbiosis is integral to the African complex worldview. The artistic and mythological forces, in the socio-spiritualisation of existence, are the two major streams of ritual. And man's everyday living is the usual host to their phenomenal reality. In ritual art, the African social thinking; spiritual thinking; and aesthetic thinking interface remarkably.

One of the media, which provide the space for this rigorous interplay of the socio-aesthetic and mytho-psychic hemispheres of the people, is the Yoruba *gelede* ritual masking art. *Gelede* presents for the community an artistic and religious ambience for ritual performance to attain its objective of stimulating material plenitude and aiding harmony with the Spiritual Primary. It is an apt semiotic action with symbolic implication for existential catalysation, understanding and projection. The *gelede* is a communal mask.

As a ritual performative art of order, *gelede* is masking an aesthetic activity of social control, which functionalist tool is satire. This opinion is theoretically affirmed by Lawal's *The Gelede Spectacle: Art, Gender and Social Harmony in an African Culture* (1996) in such Yoruba philosophical constructs as 'ifogbontayese' (remaking the world with wisdom), 'iwa' (character), 'ewa' (beauty) and 'irepo' (harmony). These four ethico-aesthetic paradigms directly confirm *gelede*'s practicality and centrality to the perpetuation of community within the construct of the aims, processes, and achievements of art, ritual

and religion. Thus communal functionalism is pivotal to the *gelede* performance and aesthetics.

Yoruba existentialism is bi-culturally knowledgeable -- exoterically and esoterically. The *gelede* tradition is modelled on these two cultural knowledge flanks. Its exotericism radically signifies its nocturnal and socio-ritualistic nature, while its esotericism conservatively signifies its diurnal and communo-ritualistic nature (Lawal, 1996). The former informs the necessary foregrounding of this essay on the conceptual strength of the *gelede-efe* tradition in combination with the guerrilla and satiric artistic formulas. This provides a formidable platform for the derivation of the *gelede-efe* guerrilla performance theory and its subsequent application in the analysis of the contemporary subversive *sally* performance of the Pirates Confraternity.

The mask usually evokes an ambience of supernaturalism, and this makes its exploitation for socio-communal control effectively possible in traditional African societies. As both a concrete (tangible) and psychical (intangible) image, the mask functions as an aural balancing formula for man's corporeal and celestial hemispheres. It is symbolic of man's cosmic relationship. The mask is crucial to the promotion of social collective unity because, by nature, the mask is an idiom of concealing, screening, and shielding the collective secrets of the community, thereby preventing it from being eroded. Within this context, *Nmonmwu* among the Igbo, *Ekpo* among the Efik, and *Gelede*, *Egungun*, and *Epa* among the Yoruba, are central to the construction, preservation and protection of the peoples' normative, historical, and mythological sanity and communo-mystical sanctity. In its most functional element, the mask veils the spirit of the race from profanity.

In pre-colonial Africa, satire was a strong tool of enforcing social conformity. Through its lavish application of the element of ridicule, irony and invective in exposing and punishing "antisocial elements" and "antisocial behaviours", it emerged as a normative paradigm of constructing moral integrity. Satire essentially invents hypothetical contexts for subtle social confrontation and moral

reorientation through pungent comedies (see Brink, 1977: 62-63; and Lawal, 1996: 11). The *gelede* aesthetics is a catalyst of society's ethical productivity and a challenger of individual social responsibility. By fusing art and female power together (Drewal and Drewal, 1990), the *gelede* performance system not only presents a typical forum for the interface of ethics and aesthetics, it is equally an affirmation of the essence of art in Africa. A major reason for human involvement in art in Africa is the continuous assessment of *iwa* (ideal character) on both individual and collective planes. This is why Lawal (1996) sees *iwa* as a metaphor of the Yoruba existential dialectics. Dialectically, *iwa* is the active principle in *asuwada* (togetherness/community); it makes the individual (singular) central to the collective. Logically, good character, which is positive contribution, sense of restraint and control, is a catalytic agent to communal harmony and continuity.

In the Yoruba moral universe, good character is elevated to the pedestal of deityhood. The adage – *iwa lorisa - bi a ba ti hu u si ni i fi i gbe ni si* (good character is orisa – the more we cultivate it, the more it favours us) (26), philosophizes the Yoruba constructive elevation of ideal character, and metaphorically parallels it as an act of worship, service, sowing, etc. Ideal character is the central ingredient of social stability and, subsequently, society's progressive continuity. *Iwa* is the unit-sign of the individual within the context of *asuwada* (communal beinghood/ collective creation/ harmonious existence). *Iwa* and *asuwada* dialectically link one and all together, thereby justifying Akiwowo's (1986) submission that "all things continue-in-being as communities...It is this community of creatures that is the substance of goodness" (352).

Within this scope of dialectics, then, both the single unit and collective group in human community must be continuously charged and re-oriented towards the attainment of the principal aim of community – continuity. This can only be ensured through

individual and collective harmony engendering social behaviour. Transgression of the codes of togetherness in *iwa* will, certainly, erode the basic infrastructure of community in *asuwada*. So, the society devises its own structures of ensuring and perpetuating good *iwa* as well as the rectification of bad *iwa* both on the parts of the individual and group, since the types of social personality and leadership personality determine the type of society. Satire is one of such orientation and re-orientation strategies of cultivating "the ethically positive behaviour of a being, distinguishing its existence, lending it beauty and making it more admirable" (Lawal: 29).

Dialectically, community signifies a society of civilised human beings whose togetherness is guided by specific cardinal rules and laws binding the units to the whole. The African spiritualisation of Being respects the unique identity of individuals; and the "diversity in human conditions and potentials", which "often generates behavioural impulses sometimes at variance with the *asuwada* principle, threatening the corporate existence of a given community" (23). Humanity's diversity is cosmically preordained by the "dynamic interplay" (23) of eternally corresponding opposites. The constructive complementarity of two opposites engenders cosmic balance while the destructive correspondence of one with the other engenders cosmic imbalance. This paradigm justifies the imperative of inventing rectificatory anti-conventional, non-conformist artistic performance groups such as the Pyrates Confraternity and the *gelede* in trying to institute equilibrium in their respective dis-equilibrium worlds.

Underlining the *gelede* performance are two impulses - ethical and aesthetic - that are explicit in its two-part presentational formula. While the *efe* night concert portrays the ethical impulse, the *ijo osan* (daylight performance) signifies the aesthetic impulse. The ethical precedes the aesthetic in the *gelede* presentational. The *efe* concert is a night of supplication, didacticism, and satire while the afternoon ceremony is a display of colourful costumes and beauty of dance and choreography. The nocturnal concert is superintended by the *efe* mask's principle of

social correction, while the afternoon ceremonial performance is directed partly by *gelede*'s principle of spiritual cleansing.

Drewal and Drewal (1983), Ibitokun (1993) and Lawal (1996) locate the origins of the *gelede* in both mythology and history. My reliance on Lawal's rendition is basically for conceptual consistency. However, finding the mythological theory more fascinating owes to the conflicting accounts proffered by the historical theory and the emphasis of the former on the mythical construction of the *efe* and *gelede* characters, as well as the oracular institutionalisation of the principle of disguise in relation to satirical engagements. Two *Odu* – *Iwori Meji* and *Osa Meji* – locate the antecedent of *gelede* in the *Ifa* Oracular Corpus, thereby confirming the mythical origin of the *gelede* social art and communal spirituality (Lawal: 38).

The accounts of both *Odu* converge on the point that *gelede* as a practice later evolved as a potent means of placating the *Aje*. Both *Odu* present instances of covenant. In *Odu Iwori Meji*, *gelede* performance became a socio-spiritual covenant with the *Aje* through Yewajobi, the originator of the *gelede* art-cult, who equally is, mythically, the spiritual matron of the *Aje* cult. The metaphysical covenant established in *Odu Osa Meji* by Orunmila, with the *Aje*, is a spiritual pact intended for the voyager's physical protection. Thus, the *Odu* affirmatively concludes that *gelede* is a ritual activity of both appeasement and prevention of destruction.

The distinct emphasis of *Iwori Meji* on the two concepts central to the ritual-art is noteworthy. Both names, *gelede* and *efe*, are the products of the rite embarked upon by Yewajobi. This myth validates the origin of the names and the principle that led to their establishment as well as their different forms, though as related performances. It presents the principle behind the nature of the *gelede* mask as a performative art triggered by the instinct of man towards the essentialisation of aesthetics of religion as a device of gaining spiritual oneness with the cosmic through ritual practice. It

equally establishes the *eŋe* mask as a performative art occasioned by the ethical impulse of man towards the functionality of the art of humour in secular social purification. Both justify the principle of disguise as a necessary protection formula for the satirist, a re-ordering agent, against evil forces. Orunmila, an archetype of the satirist, must execute his mission with wisdom by protecting himself through mask-disguise. The *Aje*, upon the abuse of its divinely endowed power, personifies the negative and anti-life force. It metaphorises anti-life and de-ordering agents, for instance bad leaders, noticeable in contemporary society. The entire *gelede* package then unites art and ritual to neutralise evil through aesthetics.

Two major signs work in tandem to establish the reality of cosmic order and both are embedded in the total *gelede* performative experience. They are night and day. From a metaphysical semiotic angle, the *gelede-eŋe* masque indexes the nocturnal sign of the cosmic, while the *gelede-ajogi* masque personifies the diurnal sign of the cosmic. The significance of the night-day principle is equally symbolically expressed in the *edan-ogboni* image, a symbol that existentially ties the human element to the earth-source. While the *edan-ogboni* conveys the unity of the male-female opposites in their relationship with the earth, it also establishes the dialectics of order in the Yoruba existential worldview. Therefore, integral to the *gelede* carnivalesque is order, whose degree is non-negotiable. Entertainment is not the primary goal of the *gelede-eŋe* masque (Ibitokun, 1993: 100). By privileging the construction of social order through didactic entertainment, over the *gelede-ajogi*'s emphasis on spectacular artistry, *Eŋe* comfortably reifies the functional residence of the African artistic and performative value in the quest for communal rejuvenation. And satire is *Eŋe*'s major performance motif of reinstating order in society.

Pragmatically, the *Eleŋe* (humourist) or *Oseŋe* (performer of humour) or *Oloro Eŋe* (one with humorous rhetoric) is a key functionary of the *gelede* performance cult. "A one-man actor in a drama of worship and entertainment" (Ibitokun, 1993:100), he is of

strategic significance to the entire *gelede* art-society because "he represents the collective voice of the people." He can ridicule the Oba (king) of the town during his performance with no fear of reprisal" (Lawal, 1996:83). "*Efe's* words have the power of *ase*, the power to make his assertions, with communal assent, come to pass" (Drewal and Drewal: 1983: 38). But, like all critical artists, the *gelede-efe* performer's life is imperilled for his audacity and iconoclasm. Since he "is the only one who can voice in public what no other person in community would dare to say, he is an object of open or surreptitious vengeance. Unless he is well protected with personal charms, he may not live long...(84). This means he is, functionally, a scape goat. In his socio-performative context, the *efe* mask-satirist is a shock therapist in whose verbal quiver, poisonous arrows, in form of invectives and curses directed at society's enemies, are stocked. In self-preparation for a possible reprisal attack from them, the *efe*-mask himself develops a counter-attack strategy. In an essentially spiritual and ritualistic society, the best mechanism is to seek metaphysical protection, most especially since such reprisals themselves would most likely be supernatural. The *ofo*-prologue method adopted by the *efe*-mask serves as a preemptive mechanism via the cocooning of the self in the magical power of The Word, the same element whose potency is the exploited art of attack. *Ofo* here functions as a counter-spell before the satirist actually begins to discharge his social spell. The *efe* masker is thus like Archilochus, that 7th Century Greek satirist (Elliott, 1960: 3).

Siting *efe's* performance arena in the marketplace in most *gelede* performing societies symbolically confirms the pop-art-culture status of the *gelede* act. Since in African socio-cosmology, the market is the pulse centre of community; a unique spatial symbol of unification of sense and essence, and the gravitation point for all, being the most neutral and active space, *gelede's* mission as a cleansing mechanism becomes better foregrounded.

Metaphorically capturing the *eŋe* occasion itself in the expression: *oja eŋe*, that is, market of *eŋe*, is highly instructive of the neutrality and anonymity of the *eŋe* mask as well as the neutrality of his space of performance.

The entire society within the province of his knowledge validates *eŋe*'s constituency. His poetry comes in two modes – chant and song. In either mode, *eŋe* poetry is loaded with humour – ridicule (*yeye*), jokes (*awada*), and jest (*apara*) (130). These sub-forms and key devices of the *eŋe* satire are themselves mask strategies – hiding the really serious behind the mask of the seemingly unserious – and manifest the aesthetics of shock and relief, simultaneously. *Gelede-Eŋe* is really aware of his far-reaching powers, especially as a public opinion-moulder, thus a social agenda setter. He, therefore, applies them as devices of pretence about the enormity of his artistic licence and the lethal power of the weapon in his arsenal. They serve him as mechanisms of subterfuge.

As watchdog, the *eŋe* masker is his community's diarist and human repository of major events. This makes him inquisitive, observant, adventurous, historical, journalistic, and a hunter of human follies. His poetry is "composed around newsworthy events such as thefts, sex scandals, corruption, wickedness, abuses of office, and political oppression. If the events happened a long time ago, the *Eŋe* not only refreshes the people's memory but also livens up his presentations with rich metaphors. More often, the public learns about an episode for the first time from '*Eŋe's market*', to the embarrassment of the characters involved" (Lawal: 132). He influences "public opinion on social, religious, cultural, economic, and political matters" (Lawal: 132; and Ashiwaju, 1975: 204-5).

Lawal's categories of *Eŋe*'s social banter, the actual contents of the performance, are presented as: *oro t'onlo* (current affairs); *orin idanileko* (song of moral instruction); *orin iyenisi* (praise singing) and *orin iranti* (commemorative singing). Apart from the third, the three remaining categories present apt instances in which the *Eŋe* satirist wields his licence as a community's spokesperson to compose and render chants and songs for purposes

of moral edification, ethical revolution, historical recall and lampooning. But when the *eife* mask functions as a social reformer, his praise singing art is exclusively reserved for renowned members of society with proven moral track records and genuine achievements only. Social intransigencies, regardless of the committer's social status, attract *Efe*'s unsentimental reprimand. The *Gelede-Efe* satiric act, indeed, is a pre-modern society's guerrilla artistic tradition.

**Guerrilla socio-performative traditions and the rhetoric of
change**

Gelede-Efe masking justifies the aims and intentions of the socially committed art, and satire is one potent creative formula capable of justifying the artist's social commitment. As a barometer and artistic device, the artist, not only engages satire in social communication and objectification, he, more importantly, uses it to "widen and enrich the human territory" (Vasquez, 1973: 115) of reason. Satire's ultimate goal is to prick society's conscience and compel self-assessment, self-condemnation, self-recrimination, and self-rectification. Robert C. Elliott (1960), while tracing the evolution of satire, connects its magico-ritualistic beginnings to its socio-artistic phase. Satire would be nothing then without its function of social objectification, as stated below:

...the satirist is a public servant fighting the good fight against vice and folly wherever he meets it; he is honest, brave, protected by the rectitude of his motives; he attacks only the wicked...a moral man appalled by the evil he sees around him... (Elliott: 265).

It is within this purview that the *Gelede-Efe* masker and the Pirates Confraternity, traditional and modern user of subversion and invectives respectively, are adjudged iconic satirists. In

conceptual conformity with the *efe* mask's topical poetics of *oro t'onlo* (current affairs); *orin idamileko* (song of moral instruction) and *orin iranti* (commemorative singing) sub-forms, their various artistic involvements are open platforms of critical pronouncements. Both satirists know and believe in the changing power of art and so turn their chosen forms into inventions that destroy the destructive elements in the social system. Taking up the fight on behalf of his community, the satirist's art becomes a functional imprecation and curse on those who, through speech and deed, break the implicit rule of order meant to preserve the collective fold.

The Afro-Yoruba classical *Gelede-Efe* act shares a similar vision with the satiric performance form of the Classical Greeks, the pre-Islamic Arabs and the pre-Christian Irish, as detailed by Elliott (1960). In all the cases, the satirist is well established as a communal moral, security and spiritual *warmonger*. The *efe* masker's verbal missile is comparable to those of the Arab and Irish satirists. Within the *Gelede* carnivalesque context, *efe*'s nocturnal battleground, where the weapon of satire, like the weapon of war, is freely deployed against the stupidity and evil of men, is, apparently, a social imperative.

It is exactly on the concept of war as policy and practice that satire and guerrilla warfare are in accord. Right from its primitive beginnings, theatre has been a site of war and disagreement because of the centrality of conflict to its true realisation. War itself is an essential arena for the inter-expressivity of ideological, political, religious, social, racial, gender, emotional etc., differences. It is a zone of action and counter-action. War, on one hand can constitute the problem, and on the other, the solution. Like art, it can be likened to the proverbial sword of Damocles. Art, then, symbolically yields itself as a creative battlefield that plays host to anti-polar opinions, ideations and visions. The art of war and the war of art are both rooted in the very nature of man and society since they are conditioned to feed, ambiguously, on human clashes and collaborations. Depending on their usage, war and art are instruments of attack, defence, vengeance or, simply,

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insistence on a particular principle, by man. If the subjects of satire and guerrilla theatre were to be comprehended from this fringe, the liberative impetus of both becomes clearer and more profound.

Richard Schechner (1970) proffers this description of the guerrilla art and how it became a registered practice in the theatrical art discipline:

Guerrilla theatre is symbolic action. It is called "guerrilla" because some of its structures have been adapted from guerrilla warfare – simplicity of tactics, mobility, small bands, pressure at the points of greatest weakness, surprise (163).

He goes ahead to cite Ronnie Davis, who originally adapted the term from war to theatre:

The motives, aspirations, and practice of...theatre must be readapted in order to teach, direct toward change, be an example of change...The Guerrilla company must exemplify change as a group (163).

The guerrilla theatrical option employs the facilities and resources of the theatre in its quest to destroy the nihilism and philistinism embedded in the human society. Its essentiality traverses both the under-developed and developed societies. Constant dosages of the guerrilla artistic model are necessary for every society where the human factor, a fundamentally imperfect phenomenon, is in control. The guerrilla combatant-artist will always have a cause to intervene in society's process. Conventionally, the prosecution of war, by military establishments, relies on two arsenals: intelligence and weapon. The goal of military intelligence is the planning of strategies for competent application of the weapons in its armoury; execution of psychological attacks on the enemies; spying on the enemy; etc.

Just as in conventional warfare, the guerrilla artistic performance cannot be effective without an arsenal of intelligence and tangible application of strategies. The intelligence quotient of guerrilla theatre is, usually, satire, which composes its content, while its tangible weapon is the act of performance itself with its sparse technical aesthetic tools such as symbolic props, costumes, make-up, set pieces, etc. The guerrilla art is a socially engaging art whose major purpose is social battle for change. On another level, therefore, satire can be understood as the arm of guerrilla artistry, while ridicule, abuse, humour and direct lampoon, are its ammunition.

Satire, within the guerrilla artistic performative context then, is the rhetoric of change. The guerrilla performance intellectually and physically engages the investigative, memorable and expositional tendencies of satire to fulfil its communal mission of social re-direction and moral prescription. At times, it thrives on serious but common symbolism, which can be easily decoded by the public whenever it *attacks*. If the guerrilla art's purpose as humanity's enhancer must be fulfilled, it must obey the description of the subversive art and culture as contained in the Argentine Coordinating Committee of the Revolutionary Imagination's 1969 *Subversive Culture: A Manifesto*: "Art is any message, which transforms, which creates and destroys, which breaks the boundaries of the system's tolerance". Thus, artists "should design and organise an alternative cultural strategy which will be totally independent and systematically oppose...coercion and terror" (CCRI, 1970: 100). In essence, the justification of the art in the guerrilla satiric theatre lies in the truth that "art is all that mobilises and agitates. Art is all that categorically denies our ways of life and says: let's do something to change it" (CCRI, 1970: 102).

Performance – through primitive, classical, modern and post-colonial frames – is a cultural action. Performance is the activation of the living energy in a particular cultural sign. The performative nature of an action, therefore, is the *presentational quality* of the action beyond its mere status as a cultural sign, the degree to which the action itself is exploitable for the

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communicatory and objectifying effect of the art in question; the extent to which the action lends itself to artistic presentation. Since it strategically occupies the social and political space of society, Jean-Jacques Lebel's (1969) reflection on political theatre enactment on the streets of Paris in the late 1960s, and Baz Kershaw's (1999) conceptualisation of "radical theatre as cultural intervention", befit guerrilla theatre's nature as radical, subversive, and *agit-prop* performance.

Satire is a stratagem and weapon of warfare. The satirist's adoption of the guerrilla performance mode reveals satire as an act of war. Both satire and guerrilla performance as weapon, strategy and warfare are conceived by this paper as the rhetoric of change. They are both artistic devices for communal mediation whose goal is change. Appropriation of the aesthetics of both devices by a particular art form in its performance mode usually results in an objective radicalisation of the art form itself to withstand the necessity of change according to the society's present circumstance. Individually, satire and the guerrilla performance underscore the essence of art as a medium or agent of change. Their collaboration speeds up the process of their action and effect on the target social circumstance. In this sense, therefore, the arts of *Gelede-Efe* mask and the Pyrates Confraternity can be conceived as circumstantial responses to society's need. The combination of satire and guerrilla artistry in their different courses of intervention is strategically meant to catalyse a speedier, more immediate, and more radical process of change. It also indexes their performative iconoclasm and artistic temperament.

Gelede's reformatory potency authenticates it as folk art and popular theatre. Though the *Gelede* art-ritual-performance is a total semiotic complex, its influence on contemporary performance art reflects more in the realm of functionality. This strong impact is a certainty of its popularity, no doubt. The aesthetic dialogue between *Gelede-Efe* and modern Nigerian protest art and culture is

cemented through the appropriation of aesthetics of satire, masking and guerrilla tactics. In the world of masked satiric performance arts, the *Gelede* is an ancestor of the Medieval Italian Commedia dell'arte whose innovation extended, like *Gelede*, beyond Italian borders onto the French, Viennese and German stages where its comic character types and improvisation have variously flourished (Berthold, 1972: 460). Just as the Commedia dell'arte became "the leaven in the dough of the theatre", so also has *Gelede* provided "a timeless form of play-acting" whenever the Nigerian performance space "needs a new breath of life" (Berthold: 460). As a matter of fact, a closer study would reveal that the *Gelede* comic-satiric art is the classic root of that popular twenty-first century speech/talk-show known in Nigeria as *Stand-up Comedy*. The same guerrilla theatricalism that characterises *Gelede-Efe* and Commedia de'llarte unites them, aesthetically, with *Pirate-Efe*, their post-colonial Nigerian 'cousin'. *Efe* mask's sparse design and artistic simplicity, in contrast to *Gelede-Ajogi*'s detailed and complex carving and intricate artistry, parallels the Grotowskian poor theatre, one of the theories that have further given form to *agit-prop* guerrilla theatricalism. Subscription to the aesthetics of minimalism by *Gelede-Efe* and *Pirate-Efe* while performing the *epe* poetry and *sally* music, respectively, validates their emphasis on reason than emotion, didacticism, protest, and subversion.

Subversive sally and guerrilla masking: the *Pirate-Efe*'s satiric sing-sang tradition

The Pirates' principal mandate comprises social re-engineering, community re-ordering, and global transformation as spelt out in their 4/7 doctrinal construct. They are driven by the moral gate-keeping need of society. Historical and ideological perspectives on the organisation have been offered by Amata and Awe in Adelugba (1987), Adeniran (1994), Onyearu, et al (2006), Owodiong-Idemeko (2007), Makanju, et al (2008), and Awosanmi (2013). The National Association of Seadogs has also evolved a radically alternative socialisation strategy to the stiff western culture-informed elitism. Though intellectual and ideological in

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orientation, the Pirates indulge in the fellowship of wine, banter and revelry – a *joie de vive* attitude. Three forms of sacraments are common to them: wine, dance and music (medicine, freedom and poetry) – symbolic *Dionysian/Apollonian* and *Ogunnian* properties that emphasise the group's tactical synergising of serious intellect with (un)serious artistry as evident in its brainstorming sessions and the corresponding *sally* performances. Thus the guards of conservatism are loosened, verbally and psychologically, and the performers are plunged into an atmosphere of boundless freedom. Adoption of the art of music by the group, therefore, is crucial for two reasons: to serve as therapy for the members against the barmy effect of anti-egalitarianism and retrogressive social developments, and to publicly comment on unfavourable leadership policies and citizens' anti-social behaviours.

The confraternity engages, over the years, in subversion, deconstruction, identity switching, neutralisation and radicalisation by evolving an iconoclastic musical art whose repertory is rich in satirical songs. Rendering of pyratrical *sing-sangs* is what accords the *sally* – Pirates' moment of unwinding – its performative essence. Pyratrical *sallies* are normally performed during Friday gatherings, members' wedding ceremonies, Seadogs' burial ceremonies, monthly, quarterly and annual meetings, society interface programmes, and common parties. Satire and subversion, then, are as important to the Pirates as they are to the musical arts of Soyinka, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and Lagbaja. During their iconoclastic guerrillar sessions, art is aesthetically masked for social confrontation, just as in the *Gelede-Efe*.

Sing-singing among the Pirates, a culturally, socially and thematically contextual practice, thrives on their organisational impulse of collective creativity, critical temperament, resistance, protest, and a radical humanist commitment which is codified in the *Four-Seven Creed* – a cryptic doctrine that celebrates the

humanitarian ideal as an unconventional alternative to philanthropy.

Radical dissension and the reformatory vision are ideological platforms for *efe* masking. Appropriation of a space as *sally* ground, though physically unmasked, transforms Seadogs into a band of *Efe* maskers. This identity is endowed through the *sally*'s socio-psychological objective as performative dissension and group/individual therapy. Artistic masking, then, through *sing-singing*, becomes indelibly registered as radical political and cultural intervention, efficacious for instigating actual communal change (Kershaw, 1999: 5). Effectively, the apt atmosphere for a thriving performative protest as undertaken by these social "engineers of the imagination" (Coult and Kershaw, 1997), could only have been a designated *oja efe* (*efe* market) typified by the *sally* arena. Scathing criticisms are then unleashed like bombs and gunshots originally masked as mere songs. In this context, Pyrates play-act as Medieval Pirates invading, or avenging on, an intransigent island or a rival ship. Ideologically, the name-transposition dynamics involving the transformation of the colonial identity, *Pirate*, to the post-colonial identity, *Pirate*, is itself, a masking device, a *difference* demonstration tactic, and an iconic radicalisation of identity, which underscores the dialectics of change in the human society.

Pyratism is the consciousness that being an agent of change is a communal obligation. *Sally* performance is a strategic socio-cultural response of pyratism. Dissenting through *sally* music is a means of socio-guerrilla warring and the operative methods are appropriation, subversion, and deconstruction. These are evident in the major sources of the *sing-sangs* in the Pyratelical repertory, their transformational procedure, as well as the resources that go into their final products as pieces of satirico-guerrilla musical art. Though there are original compositions, thematic and formal templates are equally adopted from traditional folkloric forms cutting across ethnicities and races, and the archives of Christian gospel choruses and hymns, as well as Nigerian contemporary music such as juju and highlife. Pidgin English, which is the

official language of Pirates, is central to the radical origin and nature of the *sing-sang*. The Pidgin's nature as a deconstructed modern folk language makes it effectively amenable to deconstruction of ideas and forms, especially in a guerrilla performative arena. The Pidgin unites classes, breaks social boundaries, aids social commentary, and profanes popular secular and religious songs, but reconstructs them into socially constructive songs.

Owodiong-Idemeko (2007), applying the critical social theory, had rightly attempted a categorisation of the pyratival *sing-songs* along the content/thematic fringes of the organisation's Four Compass Points' philosophical construct – against moribund convention; against ethnicity; for humanistic ideals; for comradeship and chivalry. This quadripartite doctrinal structure may superficially parallel Lawal's four-pronged *Gelede-Efe* satiric content-categorisation, but they are poles apart, ideologically. However, Lawal's classification can be considered a rather functional model, useful for the explication of the Pirates' *sally music* tenuously composed to reflect their chagrin for all counter-humanistic structures of conventions, racism and other socio-attitudinal principles which erode the ties of comradeship and chivalrous acts in the society.

The *sing-sangs*, therefore, reflect three of the four constructs of *Efe*'s functional preoccupations and social re-ordering vision as exemplified in Lawal's categorisation into *oro t'onlo* (current affairs); *orin idanileko* (song of moral instruction); *orin iranti* (commemorative singing) and *orin iyenisi* (praise singing). There is a clear departure between *Gelede-Efe*'s and *Pirate-Efe*'s disposition to the fourth – *orin iyenisi* (praise singing). The pyratival temperament is apparently more radically disposed than the *Gelede-Efe* on this. While the latter praise-sings community's aristocrats, acclaiming their philanthropic deeds, the *Pirate-Efe* does not. And whenever he does, sparingly, its

deliberately reductive and pretentiously inverted substance is directed at the Confraternity's leadership. For instance, an occasion whereby the Capoon (head) manifests irrational absolute power is thus subtly remonstrated:

*Capoon no dey lie, Capoon no dey lie,
Unless he rum o*

(The Capoon does not lie unless he's drunk!).

In the organisation's performative culture, songs like this are referred to as *dissident sing-sangs* which evolve into *dissident sallies* – rebellious *sub-sallies* formed parallel to the legitimate *sallies* to protest internal leadership indiscipline like Capoon's late arrival at meetings. Such could lead to his *mutiny* (impeachment) if not managed with experience and wisdom. Instructively, the organisation's development of such internal satirico-critical mechanism is very relevant for its public-watchdog duty.

It is in relation to the first three types of *Efe*'s satiric songs: *oro t'onlo* (current affairs), *idanileko* (morality/didactic songs), and *iranti* (commemoration), that the *Pyrate-Efe* satirist wields his licence as community's vintage performer of iconoclasm through songs that are themed along moral edificatory, ethical revolutionary and historically sanctioning lines. Vocalising the Pyritical Four Compass Points, *sally* music's repertory and pedagogical barometer traverses local politics, social ethics, domestic attitudes, international politics, terrorism, racism, democratic advocacy, Africanism, anti-human health hazards, military dictatorship and civilian despotism. Its commentary's canvas encompasses corruption, poverty, insecurity, injustice, leadership mediocrity, destructive politicking and religious intolerance.

This network of global ills that this protest art genre criticises reinforces the interface of Lawal's *iwa-asuwada* dialectics and Pyritical humanism/*sally* music nexus. *Iwa* (character) is the unit sign and the enabling factor of the corporate

asiwada (communality of people). *Asiwada*, therefore, is the psychical and philosophical ingredient of humanity. As humanity's watchdog, Pirates are sworn enemies of individual or corporate conventional *iwa* that undermines humanity's *asiwada* framework. While in theory, the pyratival doctrine pedagogically empowers the mind for this, the pyratival *sally* provides the practical outlet for its verbalisation and activation.

Though the Pirates Confraternity has chapters in all continents of the globe, about sixty per cent of its membership resides in Nigeria, being its originating country. It is, therefore, not surprising that most of the *sing-sangs* performed by the *Pirate-Efe* are satiric compositions that interrogate the decadence of universal humanity through the prism of Nigerian humanity. The brief analysis that follows, then, shall be based on a few samples of such *sing-sangs*.

The confraternity was involved in the struggle against the military's iron fist rule in Nigeria in the 1990s. Apart from the members' involvement as members of various pro-democracy groups (Awosanmi, 2013), Seadogs also furthered the fight in guerrilla fashion at *sally* performances where government-related extra-judicial killings perpetrated under the various military Heads of State between 1985 and 1998 were satirised:

1. *Oppressor, oppressor / oppressor, kill Abiola.*
E kill Dele Giwa / E kill Saro Wiwa / Opio kill Abacha
Oppressor.
2. *I waka for road / I come see dis woman*
The woman tell me say her name na Kudirat
Kudi tell me say she no dey find trouble

I surprise say Kudi don die oh
I ask her pickin, na wetin kill am oh?
Her pickin tell me say na Abacha kill am oh

Eh le le ku le oh / Na wetin kill am oh?
Eh le le ku le oh / Na Abacha kill am oh.

3. *Ogoni people don suffer,*
For Saro Wiwa wey dem kill.

The *sing-sangs* above yoke together grades of assassination committed by three successive military regimes. The letter-bombing of Dele Giwa in 1986 opened the floodgate of sponsored assassinations in Nigeria. Kenule Saro Wiwa, an environmental activist, was the leader of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) who was hanged in 1995. M.K.O. Abiola won the June 12 1993 presidential election which was annulled by General Babangida, got arrested by General Abacha for declaring himself president, and later got killed in circumstances that revealed the complicity of Nigerian government under General Abdusalam Abubakar and some American government officials. That most unwholesome era also witnessed the state-sponsored murder of the likes of Alhaja Kudirat Abiola, the pro-democracy activist wife of M.K.O Abiola; Pa Alfred Rewane, a NADECO chieftain; Chief Layi Balogun; Alhaja Suliat Adedeji; etc.

The *sing-sangs* audaciously condemn as oppressors, all the military rulers, during whose reign these illustrious Nigerians died. An interesting thing is the streak of ridicule contained in the songs. In the first, though the oppressor succeeded in killing the progressive people's heroes, he finally died in the hands of ordinary prostitutes, locally called *opio* – referencing the general rumour that Abacha died as a result of sexual indulgence with specially imported Indian prostitutes, on an overdose of *viagra*, a libido enhancing drug. The defiance in the second sample is obvious for having Abacha's name openly mentioned in a *sally* song in an era when the demented dictator himself was still alive.

An aesthetic quality of the Pyrates' *sally* music is its automatic folk-historical updating mechanism. The examples aptly serve as a formal template, which content and referents are subject

to change in the light of new and relevant historical realities. In other words, all names on Nigeria's list of hired assassinations through military to democratic governance could be inserted into the melodic frame already created. This is the flexible nature of most of the *sing-sangs* with socio-political themes. It is equally noteworthy that these samples capture three out of *Gelede-Efe*'s four-tier satiric coverage: current event, morality and commemoration.

The period between 1993 and 1998 in the annals of Nigeria's history under military terrorism was a most traumatic one. Human rights were flagrantly violated and many perceived enemies of the ruling force escaped into exile on hints of official assassination attempts. One of them was Wole Soyinka who was later declared a treasonable felon on the basis of a suspected guerrilla war attack on the military junta using the organisation's structure. Meanwhile, some others like Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military Head of State; journalists like Kunle Ajibade, Chris Anyanwu and Osa Director; as well as human rights activists like Beko Ransome-Kuti, Gani Fawehinmi and Femi Falana who chose to remain, were either framed up in a fictitious coup or simply arrested and detained without trial. Below is one *sing-sang* that captures this most unfortunate era:

*Sanni Abacha say Soyinka dey exile / Even Diya talk'say
Soyinka dey exile*

*Many lubbers talk say Soyinka dey exile / Rugged
Seadogs say CB dey Zero Meridian*

*Will you be ready when CB shall come? / I will be
ready, I will be sailing*

I will be rumming when CB shall come.

Soyinka was the most primed target hunted by Abacha's goon squad in this despotic phase. The *sing-sang* tactically dismisses the

military propaganda machinery's thesis of Soyinka raising a guerrilla army in exile and predicts an optimistic future when the philistinism of the military would be over and, the political exiles shall return home.

The *sally* song below is a further commentary on the gross denial of people's rights during military dictatorship. As a result of the manhunt occasioned by the government's suspicion that the group might be planning a guerrilla attack, their club houses were variously raided throughout the country, and members were arrested, detained, tortured and dismissed from public service. In a tone and thematic bitterness similar to the famous Fela Anikulapo-Kuti's *Unknown Soldier* metaphor, that season of anomie is still lamented in *sing-sangs*:

*We do dem nothing / We do dem nothing
MOPOL carry us give army people / For nothing
Dem turn us into sampling materials.*

(We didn't do anything. We did nothing to them.
Mobile Policemen arrested and handed us to the
Military. For nothing, they turned us into objects of
torture and battery.)

One notable anti-progressive socio-cultural attitude adducible for African countries' failed democratic states is the moral and material corruption of their civilian leadership. Corruption, especially the pecuniary type, is one of the most pervasive conventions, which the *Pyrate-Efe* lampoons at the regular *guerrilla sally performances*; a mode of *Gelede's oja-efe* – market or arena of *efe* satire:

*Okadigbo flesh our toes / Enwerem get im
problem
National Assembly make una wake up
Una wey dey make law dey lawless pass.*

The *sally* song lampoons two past Senate Presidents in the present Republic that were disgraced from office. Okadigbo was impeached for corruptly enriching himself, and Enwerem was impeached for having been convicted in the past. The *Pirate-Efe*, then, bluntly satirises the National Assembly members for being ‘lawless lawmakers’ (*una wey dey make law dey lawless pass*) and exhorts them to wake up from their moral slumber.

The Nigerian legislature and civil service – where rots like budget padding, brigandage, and certificate forgery are pervasive – are rich sources of raw materials for the *Pirate-Efe*. Certificate forgery, simply known in Nigeria’s lexicon of public officers’ shame as *Toronto* has produced topical *sing-sangs* for the pyratival archive of musico-satiric subversion:

1. *Ha ha, ha ha ha / Hey hey Mr. Speaker*
 Buhari na forger / Toronto hey hey, university
 Abi you no know?

2. *Toronto, Toronto /*
 Buhari don go o Toronto.

In the Nigerian public where examination malpractice is rife, *Toronto* has become an apt metaphor for forgery, falsification and lie. Both *sing-sangs* capture the *Toronto culture* in an *Efe* playful fashion. The first ridicules a certain Salisu Buhari, a former Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, who was discovered to have declared a fake certificate from a Canadian university for false academic achievement. The second celebrates his inglorious impeachment from office. By implication, then, upon impeachment, the forger has gone back to his counterfeit *Toronto world*. Forgery, indeed, has become a metaphor of living, as the conscience of the entire nation has remained dangerously

forged. And, in a nation of forged conscience, mediocrity is the law, the religion and life.

After the military forces and politicians, the most distrusted organ in Nigeria is the police force. A typical Nigerian policeman is seen as a villainous effigy of the shameless extortionist practice of public and private corruption, which has become a deified policy of living. The sally song in jest of the police conveys this idea:

Every junction / Police dey /Wey your particular
Every junction / Police dey / Wey your particular
Boma Boma Boma / Boma Boma Boma Boma yeh
Every junction? Police dey / Wey your particular?

The *sally* song has a universal appeal as the Police Force is a reputedly corrupt government organ almost everywhere in the world. The Nigerian road block phenomenon in which the language of corruption is expressed in terms of *kola*, *particular*, etc., signifying bribe, is not actually peculiar to policemen alone. It is a disease common to all forces and para-military departments like Army, Navy, Air Force, Traffic Wardens, Customs, Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Federal Road Safety Corps, Immigration, War Against Indiscipline (WAI) Brigades, etc. The Nigerian lawlessness has also transcended the official limits of uniformed men and now replicated in groups of 'unofficial officers' in the images of area boys, political thugs, and garage touts. In extension, the *sally* song captures the off-roadblock big stealing normally perpetrated by the senior officers in all of the organisations mentioned. The roadblock anti-culture is a sign of a society under siege; thus it is typically Nigerian to seek divine intervention. Actually, the *sing-sang* is a deconstruction of a popular Kalabari Christian song in which Boma, God, is called upon to intervene in the affairs of men instead of men effecting the needed radical change themselves. Nigeria remains one of the most paradoxically wealthiest but poorest, most religious but most godless societies in the world. So the topicality of the *sing-sang* is evident.

Election rigging and ‘godfatherism’ are two major strands of corruption currently terrorising Nigeria’s democratic landscape. These two vices are satirised in the following *sing-sangs*:

1. *INEC do election for Nigeria / Morris Iwuh don rig election.*
2. *OBJ carry Andy Uba put / Supreme Court come jazz odas say na lie o*
Bunka Bay, make we yoro / Unity konverge Zuma deck
Iyoh, iyoh, iyoh o.
3. *Anambra na wetin? / Anambra na wetin*
Godfada jazz odas / Ige loot Ngige
PDP siddon dey look / Anambra na wetin?

Both songs musically parody some of the abnormalities of the Fourth Republic, which commenced with Olusegun Obasanjo’s (OBJ’s) presidency in 1999. The second satirically summarizes the usual flagrant disobedience of the rule of law. Two scenarios are depicted. The first *sing-sang* chastises the Nigerian reality in which real life actors like INEC, Morris Iwuh, and OBJ are conspiratorial metaphors of the election malpractice anti-culture. It was an occasion when the judiciary, under the Supreme Court, showed courage and restored order in Anambra State, notoriously known for the disastrous operations of the godfather syndrome. The second is a satirical continuation of the Anambra political instability narrative. It queries the rationality behind the unparalleled madness displayed by a notorious godfather, Chris Uba, who masterminded the kidnapping of a serving governor using the apparatus of the state, the police. The deputy commissioner of police on ground, Mr. Ige, led the unwholesome operation in which the governor, Dr. Chris Ngige, was kidnapped. Note the poetic interplay on the names: ‘*Ige loot Ngige*’, as ‘*godfada jazz odas*’ – Chris Uba the ‘godfather gave order. PDP,

the political party concerned, then declared, through the Presidency, that it was a "family affair" – "*PDP siddon dey look*". Thus, "*Anambra na wetin?*" – Anambra State, what is the problem?

The formation of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and its activities under Nuhu Ribadu gave Obasanjo's tenure as president some anti-corruption image. Two *sing-sangs*, then, exist in the Pyratival archives with EFCC in mind:

1. *Tafa, Osomo / Osuji, Wabara*
Wey una dey go? / EFCC go find you come.
2. *EFCC / ICPC*
Leave the shadow / And follow the substance.

The first celebrates the fearlessness and effectiveness of EFCC in exposing corrupt government officials – Tafa Balogun, a former Inspector General of Police; Chief Mrs. Mobolaji Osomo, a former Minister of Housing; Professor Fabian Osuji, a former Minister of Education; and Mr. Adolphus Wabara, a former Senate President – for various levels of corruption ranging from stealing to money laundering, bribery, unfair allocation of government houses, etc. The four were ingloriously dismissed from office at different occasions for compromising their positions. Normally, newer figures of corruption will feature in the continually updated versions of the songs as time progresses. But the second, in a sharp twist in attitude, subtly condemns the same celebrated EFCC and another organ – the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) – for suspected "selective arrest and justice" by excluding some principal actors in the Nigerian movie of corruption for being closer to the presidency, thus becoming guilty of the offence of nepotism and the subversion of the due process in the discharge of their duties (see Owodiong-Idemeko (2007:25-28), for further analysis).

*Tunde Awosanmi:
Masked Iconoclasm: The Guerrillar Socio-Performative Traditions of
Gelede-Efe and *Pirate-Efe*

Political engagement of society through the social art of guerrilla *sally* music is not the only focus of the *Pirate-Efe*. Like the *Gelede-Efe*, his interest also stretches to the domestic domain. This gives the *Pirate-Efe*'s performance a wider thematic coverage. In a world currently in the grip of abuse of drugs and other forms of social abuse detrimental to people's health, the *Pirate-Efe* warns on the deleterious effects of 'irresponsible drinking'. *Ogogoro*, the national name for local gin, in the song below, metaphorically conveys an idea of any excessive social habit and its effects on the human body, the family and society:

*Ogogoro don cause confusion / Ogogoro don cause
confusion/ Ogogoro biko o/ Ogogoro biko o / Ogogoro
dey cause confusion.*

Excessive consumption of *Ogogoro* is hazardous, health wise. It is also a potential cause of domestic brawl at home and in the larger community. These dimensions have been metaphorised as confusion in the *sing-sang*. It is equally a form of self-censorship by the confraternity itself that frequently engages in internal and external advocacy programmes, in form of workshops and lectures, to preach against habits that could lead to drug dependency. But it also openly criticises a certain government promulgation, which banned the trade in local gin in Nigeria in the 1970s under General Yakubu Gowon in favour of *ogogoro*'s foreign counterparts. Pirates resented such thoughtless legislation that promotes the growth of foreign spirits like schnapps, champagne, brandy, rums, etc. to the detriment of locally produced hard drinks. The violence and contradictions that ensued from the witch-hunting of local people who engaged in "illicit drinks and trade" by law enforcement agents, themselves great secret consumers of *ogogoro*, are what the *Pirate-Efe* has metaphorically lampooned as confusion.

As a censor, the *Pyrate-Efe* also concerns himself with the theme of sexual promiscuity and and body bleaching. The group of *sing-sangs* below satirises these age-old universal trade in human body and sexual promiscuity:

1. *How we go tori am o? / How we go tori am o?*
Hosanna, how we go tori o?
Elizabethi geti belle when she go for Youth Corp.
Hosanna, how we go tori o?

[How do we tell this story? Hosanna, how does one tell this story?

Elizabeth got impregnated when she went for youth corps.
Hosanna how do we tell this story?]

2. *Caro, yellow sisi / Caro, yellow sisi*
Caro take my money marry oyinbo o
Oyinbo run away, Caro dey cry.

[Oh the light complexioned Caro.
Caro took my money and went to marry a white man
But the white man ran away and left Caro crying]

3. *E don porogodo, e don paragada*
Because of Tura and Dermovate,
Alao Akala, your body don porogodo.

[It has spoilt, oh it has finished
Because of Tura and Dermovate,
Alao Akala, your body has spoilt]

The first lampoons girls whose sexual recklessness leads to unwanted pregnancies, especially some Nigerian graduates' expression of sexual exuberance during the National Youth Service. In the second, the iconic character, Caro – the contracted form of 'Caroline' – is adopted as a point of reference for criticising infidelity in relationships, especially girls who swindle

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men. The social syndrome of half-caste children with untraceable paternity, fast evolving in the Niger Delta region, also addressed in Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* (2006), is universalised. The third satirises a civilian governor's (Alao Akala's) body bleaching routine with high-density chemical soaps – *Tura* and *Dermovate*. Pyratrical songs' compact discs feature tracks like *Oguni, Oguni, Agaracha; Sisi Jane; Tura Tura; I waka for road*; etc., which deal with these various themes.

Nigeria is highly productive in creating conventions, slogans and policies, which only pay lip service to true development and progress. The cynicism and hopelessness arising from the mediocre implementation of most government policies is the butt of the following *Pirate-Efe*'s satire, that condemns all as mere *bobo* – deceit and empty rhetoric:

*Mamser mobilization / War against indiscipline
All of dem na bobo / Oriyo.*

*Poverty alleviation / Structural adjustment programme
All of dem na bobo / Oriyo.*

*Green revolution / Ethical revolution
Operation feed the nation
All of dem na bobo / Oriyo*

*Federal quota system / Federal character system
All of dem na bobo / Oriyo
Sayling today o / We are sayling today oriyo, etc.*

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti's famous album, *Shuffering and Shmilling*, which satirically paints Nigerians' resilience in the face of abject poverty, was waxed way back in the 1970s. While it has become even more relevant today, the *Pirate-Efe* has further extended the dimension of Fela's concern:

- 1 *Fuel increase for dis country oh / Fuel increase for dis
country oh
Your mama go cry, eh oh / Your papa go tell you not to
come home
Fuel increase for dis country oh.*
2. *Suffer don dey go / Suffer don dey go .
IBB step aside / Shonekan run away / Sani Abacha must
to go
Suffer don dey go.*

The first song-text above adopts the metaphor of fuel as a contact point to dwell on the issue of collective suffering. It portrays how over-dependence on, and instability in the supply and pump-price as well as the perennial scarcity of, the staple product has determined national life, up to the extent that parents wish their children 'brain-drained' away. Focusing on Ibrahim Babangida, Ernest Shonekan and Sani Abacha – three former rulers – the second song, like another one titled '*Nigerian Government na Wah o*', aptly depicts the Nigerian leadership as a mass hardship generating institution. While hope in a democratic future is paradoxically expressed, call for collective socio-political action against the present national condition is implicit.

Religion is opium of escape from socio-psychological frustration. The *Pyrate-Efe* humorously relieves himself of this trauma by echoing the mass-illusion of Nigerians expressed in the prevailing Christo-Islamic Pentecostalism by way of invoking a supernatural force to clear the Augean stables through lyrics of imprecations:

*Holy Ghost fire you se dem. Holy Ghost fire you see
dem.
Holy Ghost fire you see dem. You see dem. Come burn
dem.*

'Tunde Awosanmi:
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Suffering and underdevelopment are further metaphorically masked as "Tsunami" in the following *sing-sang*:

Tsunami konverge / Bunka don come again o
Tsunami no dey for Nigeria lai lai.
Hunger don kill us for Niger o / OBJ.
NEPA don kill us again o / OBJ.
Poverty don kill us for Niger o / OBJ.

Traditionally, the confraternity's Annual Congress is themed after a current local or international social experience. The August 2005 edition in Lagos, a city located on an island set apart by the Atlantic Ocean and the Lagoon, was therefore, appropriately themed the *Tsunami Converge* to preserve the memory of that great December 2004 South-East Asian natural disaster. While the song subtly warns that Nigeria is not immune from such tragedy, it concurrently wishes it must not occur in Africa where there is apparent lack of infrastructure to manage it. All indices of Africa's underdevelopment are paralleled by the *Tsunami* metaphor. The leadership, then personified by President Olusegun Obasanjo, is charged to be more responsible in stemming Nigeria's perennial social, political, economic, and mental Tsunami.

Since the Second World War, it could be averred that one of the few incidents that really threatened world security was the celebrated unexpected attack on America's World Trade Centre and Pentagon – both respective symbolic sites of America's economic and security intelligence – in 2001. After the Pirates Confraternity had demonstrated its abhorrence of violence by preserving the memory of the dastardly terrorist attack by symbolically naming its New York branch the "Grund Ziro Deck", the *Pirate-Efe*, then, proceeded to document it as an historical fact in its repertory of iconoclastic musical compositions:

Who bomb America? / Na wah o!
Who bomb America? / I no no
Dem say, na Osama Bin Laden ni, Osama
Osama Bin Laden ni, Osama.

The questioning of the rationale for terrorism – either for political or religious reason – unmistakably underlines the song. Reference to the coordinator of the famous attack, one Osama Bin Laden, a chieftain of an Arabo-Islamic terrorist group known as Al-Qaeda, not only depicts *Pyrate-Efe*'s satiric streak, the song itself testifies to the internationality of his themes. This *sing-sang* is aptly exemplary, therefore, of the confraternity's status, not just as an organisation, but the *Pyrate-Efe* itself as a global satirist.

Performing iconoclasm: art as mask

In the performance of iconoclasm, the art, being a flexible revolutionary instrument and an easily adaptable mask, is a dependable ally. Pirates are transformed into disguised *eŋe* maskers the moment they hit the *sally* ground – a subverted *oja eŋe* – with their instruments of performance. Actually, performing iconoclasm through the arts is a creative acceptance of the challenge of *difference* in a world where the *omoluwabi* quotient in the *asuwada* ideal has been truncated. The human society, thus, groans desperately for revitalisation through revolution. The *pyratical eŋe sally* performance is an intended revolutionary action for its obviously protest-laden and convention-challenging form.

The creation and toleration of the *Gelede-Eŋe* and the *Pyrate-Eŋe* guerrilla socio-performative traditions by the Yoruba pre-colonial and Nigerian post-colonial societies, respectively, confirms the drastic need, by the human community, of censorship. Some of the modern day Yoruba travelling theatre companies, as noted by Jeyifo (1984), may have imbibed a certain dosage of their characteristic protest traditions and "iconoclastic irreverence" (116) from the *Gelede* and *Egungun*. The persistence of iconoclastic temperament in the creativity of the Pirates, then, is a matter of necessity and choice.

The social mediation content and agitation profile of the satiric *sing-sangs* is the artistic revelation of the *raison d'être* for this choice. Having brainstormed at series of meetings, they go ahead to observe their own peculiar mode of relaxation, which is the *sally* – a parody of conventional party and merry-making in which satire is the main formula. While artistic engagement, therefore, becomes an extension of the group's intellectual engagement of society, as well as a mask for the performance of social being-ness, satire emerges as a masking formula for the spoken word. For both *Gelede-Efe* and *Pirate-Efe*, masking is crucial in the performance of "iconoclastic irreverence". As a result of the risk involved in "acting out forbidden themes", "people don masks and costumes and protest, often by means of farce and parody, against the oppressive, ridiculous and outrageous. Such playing challenges official claims to authority, stability and sobriety" (Schechner, 1970:46). This unavoidable danger to which the iconoclastic performer unwittingly exposes himself is explicitly discussed in Femi Osofisan's essay, "Playing Dangerously: Theatre in a Postcolonial State" (2001). Though the very mild and expansively entertaining *Gelede-Ajogi* operates diurnally, the nocturnality of the *Gelede-Efe* is a masking device for its protest agenda and so is the *Pirate-Efe* whose major *sallies* also unfold in the night. As a re-ordering agent, masking and darkness are necessary protection formulae for the satirist's ritual act of performative dissension.

The Pirates' iconoclastic performance stage strategically extends beyond the *sally* grounds to 'emergency islands' owing to their socio-political interventionist rallies. For instance, resistant *sallies* are infused into regular public protest actions. At different times, between 2006 and 2008, members in Nigeria, Great Britain, USA, Ireland, South Africa, Canada, Netherlands and Japan organised lectures, seminars, peaceful walks, and protest sieges at the Sudanese embassies and the United Nations to protest the inter-

racial, genocidal killings in Darfur. On such occasions, *sally* songs are strategic medium of communicating grievances while the satiric content serves as the functional language of resistance.

The iconoclastic musical performance heritage of the Pyrates Confraternity has been taken beyond formal meetings and *sallies* into non-Pyratical environments, as individual Pyrates adopt the art of the *Pirate-Efe* as mask for their various artistic performances in society. Some of the *sing-sangs* were adapted by Chuck Mike's Collective Artistes in spicing road safety guerrilla theatre campaigns and Theatre-for-Development outreaches in the late 1980s and 1990s. The late Akin Sodipo appropriated some tracks from the *Pirate-Efe*'s repertory for his folk musical jams. In the same breadth, some of the musical compositions in Wole Soyinka's guerrilla theatrical sketches and full-length political dramas are influenced by the rhythm and spirit of pyratil satiré. Also, branches in Benin, Owerri, Aba, United Kingdom, etc. have done studio recordings of the songs while the compact discs are internally and externally distributed. For a society of the Pyrates Confraternity's intellectual suasion and composition, the ritual of diurnal and nocturnal celebration of subversion is a significant element of unconventionality and intellectual masking. The *sally* performance rhetoric deconstructs rigid conservative approach to change-making via polemics and theorisation.

The concrete mask reifies the *Gelede-Efe*, especially on the part of the society that is aware of its mythical origin and socio-spiritual significance, and extends "the sense of the possible through the imaginative attention lavished on it" (Emigh, 1996: 13). The unconventional mask of the *Pirate-Efe* consists in his selection of the *sally* experience as a convenient and strategic disguise for the performance of satire. This is because donning the regalia and frolicking with others in a celebrative stiff-legged dance *sing-singing* subversion, involves the transformation of identity from 'a real permanent Self mode' to 'a temporary Other mode'. This interplay of Self and Other intensifies the act of playing with the identity – an exchange between the ritual self and the ritual other (Emigh, 1996) as conditioned by the relevant social

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or spiritual necessity. For the members of the *Gelede* cult and the Pirates Confraternity, spirito-physical masking and psycho-social masking through action, helps in "maintaining group identity" (13). A parallel is established, then, between *Gelede-e*fe and *Pirate-Efe* 'maskers': both are guerrilla artists, iconoclasts and social performers.

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