

INTERPRETING COSTUME AND MAKEUP IN ADANMA DANCE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: Costume is the clothing a dancer wear to enhance his appearance before an audience. It is symbolic especially to African traditional dance theatre. It reflects the cultural heritage of the origin of the dance. Make up is the application of cosmetics to the face and body of a performer to communicate meaning and create visual aesthetics. Thus, culture is the way of life of a people. It can be expressed through the theatrical performance of a people. Costume and make up help to identify the cultural background of a society. Thus, Adanma masquerade dance is no exception. Adanma dance is indigenous to Igbo people of eastern Nigeria and it represents their rich cultural heritage. Through its costume and make up, the cultural significance of the dance is revealed to the audience. The researcher observed that due to Western influence through colonization and social media, cultural dance and other performances stand to lose its relevance in Indian society. Therefore, this study seeks to evaluate the meaning of costume and in Adanma dance, by analyzing the Adanma dance performance of Chukwuemeke Odumegwu Ojukwu University Theatre Arts Department as a case study. The study finds that culture and costume and make up influence the theatrical performance of a society. It is concluded that costume and make-up are indispensable in African and Igbo traditional performance.

Keywords: Adanma, dance, mask, costume, makeup.

INTRODUCTION

Dance is an integral cultural element that differentiates a particular people from another. According to Humphrey Simpson, the identity of a people is usually expressed through their songs and dances, by showing the philosophical predisposition of their society"(178). For decades, dancing has been used as a tool for teaching good social values, and promoting the culture and tradition of the people. James Joyce added that; "...apart from oral history and other recitations, the history and tradition of a people is recorded in their numerous dance performances and other cultural performances like masquerading, funeral rites, marriage rites and initiation into age grades(Molokwu, & Uchime, 2020)..

Dance is an artistic expression as well as sensual, evocative art, that serves as a means of communication and entertainment in every society. Today, we find dance in all aspects of culture: in gestures we use every day, in religious ceremonies, in popular culture, in entertainment, in fitness, and in fine art. Dance styles are closely tied to the cultures in which they are developed, and they change over time in correspondence to changing society. For instance, Nigerian contemporary dances like Zanku, Azonto, Shaku-shaku, Shoki are typical examples of dances that changes over time due to the influence of the internet and trend in popular culture which is influenced by popular musicians and celebrities. These dances reflects the social trend of that period.

According to Pearl Primus, "dance is a form of non-verbal communication because every gesture and move has its own

meaning and cultural derivation"(122). She adds that, "a wave, a handshake, a thumbs-up: these can all be thought of as forms of dance used in everyday life"(123). The way a dancer move and communicate with our hands and bodies are both expressions of our culture and identity. Traditional dance can be defined as any local dancing tradition, often strongly connected with local musical forms and local beliefs of a particular society. Pearl Primus, "...traditional dance is a dance that reflects the life of the people of a certain country or region. They are usually held in gatherings or social functions by people with little or no professional training, who often dance to their traditional music" (79). Dike John defines traditional dance as "...dancing for which there is no governing body or dancing for which there are no competitive or professional institutions" (46). Traditional dances are dances that are choreographed by a particular person or people for a special occasion. Traditional dances are used for entertainment during festivals and ceremonies in different communities,countries, continents, and geographical locations of the world.

In the theatre, costumes are clothes worn by actors and performers to cover their body and create aesthetics to their performance. Costumes communicate meanings to the audience through the presence and appearance of the performer. Costume is employed in theatrical productions that are dance, drama and other. It may be custom specified for use in a certain dance or theatrical works. Costume designs can reflect the cultural background of a dance, such as those used in traditional dances. Typically, dance costumes are designed to influence the performance of the dancer by harmonizing with the dance and not hindering the movements

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of the dancer. A dancer's costume may be designed to expose or enhance the lines formed by the dancer's body, in order to express the choreographer's artistic vision, or to engage the audience, or maybe a combination of all these. A costume may portray or relate to some characteristic, mood, or theme of the dance. It may fit loosely or it may be form-fitting to emphasize the form of the dancer's body. Costumes are designed in accordance with aesthetic requirements, the anticipated movements of the dancer, and budget. Various people may collaborate in designing a costume, including the choreographer, costume designer, costume maker (seamstress), and dancer.

Costumes are generally employed in musical performances, play and movie productions, dance, as well as other theatrical events. Therefore, costume enhances the appearance of the performers and actors and also distinguishes them from the rest of the society. This is achieved through the various roles of costume as mark of cultural identity, status, background, mood, signs, symbols, age, emotional and psychological background. Historical accuracy in costume is essential in traditional dance, aiding in maintaining authenticity and representation.

Akas Nicholas posits that;

Dance costume is not just outfits, it is pivotal in dance as a storytelling tool that helps shape the narrative of the performance. They give insight into the dance's cultural background, and circumstance before they even move a muscle. This is the power of costume design; it is a language of its own, speaking volumes about the dance, the setting, and even the plot (56).

Costumes play crucial roles in dance, as they help to enhance the visual appeal and narrative of the performance. Costumes can be used to convey the mood, style, and theme of a dance, as well as to distinguish between different characters or groups within a performance. Over time, dance has evolved, and the costumes reflect the social and cultural changes of the time. Cultural dances, like traditional dance, have their unique costumes that reflect their cultural heritage. Costumes are often based on traditional clothing and are designed to be functional and allow the dancers to move freely. Costumes may represent cultural symbols, differentiating between dancers, adding visual appeal, and showcasing regional differences. They help to preserve cultural elements and create a sense of identity and pride within communities. They can also help to visually convey the story and meaning of the dance. Costumes often reflect the history, values, and traditions of the culture from which the dance originates. This usually found in traditional dances such as the Adanma dance as well as other traditional African dances. Here colourful, elaborate and with intricate patterns and designs. For the African dancers in traditional dances costumes are usually made of materials such as animal skins, feathers and beads which are of significant roles, depictions and meaning in African cultures. In addition to their aesthetic value, costumes also serve practical purposes in dance. They are designed to allow for ease of movement and provide necessary support and also protection to the dancers.

Daniel Appiah-Adjei defines makeup as:

The instrument, material or substances used to design the face, head and other exposed part of the body of an actor of an actress. Makeup, thus, create

physical likeness of the character being played, by enhancing or changing the actors feature (5).

The origin of makeup in theatre can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians who are recorded as the first people to apply makeup. The use of charcoal, dye and Powdered copper is known to the ancient Egyptians. From Egypt, the use of makeup spread to Europe. The Greeks introduced face paint makeup later in their theatre performances due to the inclusion of women in acting and other theatrical performances. Makeup is used to enhance, alter or improve the appearance of actors so as to enable them interpret their roles and characters. Make up is the application of certain substances to a character's face or body in order to give a proper interpretation of such characters and also enhance the character's appearance on stage or set. During the Renaissance era, actors were creative and resourceful when making over their faces. They used lamb's wool for false beards and flour as face paints. Makeup in this study is the application of colours or cosmetics on the body of an actor on stage in order to look like the character being played. Makeup helps to cover all other parts of the body the costume could not conceal. Makeup helps the actors on stage and film to look like the character they are to portray. Make up transform an actor into the character he is playing by altering the physical appearance of the actor. Make up can be simple make up or special effects make up that are used to create effects on the body of the actor.

Nigeria is a country with a lot of ethnic groups – each of them varying in culture and tradition. The way the Nigerians dance is different from other countries due to various aspects of cultural differences (Molokwu, et al. 2023). Most of the traditional dances like the Adanma dance symbolically represents the religious and philosophical aspects of the Igbo culture. Abigail Chime observes that "...One major aspect of culture which Indians love a lot is dance" (56). Traditional dances have a way of unifying the people in one way or the other because it cuts across cultural dimensions through storytelling via accompanying music that entertain the audience. These stories may differ from tribe to tribe and most often reflect on victory, beauty, honesty, love, war and the likes. Due to the multicultural nature of Nigerian society the study picked out the Adanma cultural dance and explore the history and costume about the dance. Traditional dance has played important roles in many societies throughout the world. Almost every culture has their typical form of dance. Hence, dance can be religious, social, spiritual, and psychological. Dance is used to foster peace, co-operation and encourage community-development. This is because it unites the people together through the act. Dance is a major tool for cultural expression and a means of expressing one's cultural identity.

Costumes and make up can set the tone, give visual references, evoke emotions, and subtly guide the audience's perception of the dance. That is why costume is an integral part of storytelling in dance. Due to technological development around the world, costume designers, are constantly aware of the global influences on costume design. They are therefore, not just designing for characters but for interpretation of the cultures, eras, and movements of the dance. Dances styles and patterns have had significant impacts on costume design as they determine specific styles and designs for the culture they are representing. Tracie UtohEzeajugh notes that "...the importance of cultural sensitivity and diversity in costume design distinguishes one culture from another; thus, costumes are not just about aesthetics, but about

authenticity and respect" (28). This diversity therefore distinguishes the Adanma dance from other African dances.

The role of costume in dance productions goes beyond aesthetics, but are rather determined by the dance form which involves the style, pattern, culture and genre. This therefore becomes the necessary determinant for designing costumes and make up in dance productions. Costumes designers for dance productions are confronted with challenges that require proper costumes, accessories and make up which identify with the said dance they often neglect but rather focus attention on aesthetics and spectacle. It is against this background that this study focuses attention on the influence of costume in dance using the Adanma dance production as its study.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. It analyses the Adanma masquerade dance performance presented by the 2024/2025 100-level students of the Theatre Arts Department, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria, which serves as the primary source of data. Secondary data are drawn from scholarly journals, textbooks, internet sources, and other relevant materials.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Semiotics is the science of signs, and it covers the analysis of signs and the study of sign systems. A sign is something that stands for something else. Therefore, semiotics can also be understood as the study of meaning-making or semiosis. According to Asa Berger, "Culture is the system of daily living that is held together by a signifying order, including signs, codes, texts and connective forms" (67). In theatre practice, semiotics is based on the philosophy and system of communication of people. This is expressed through the costume and makeup of the performers. Berger further observes that:

Semiotics has a positive application when focusing solely on the formal, explicit and visible structures of language or other sign systems or else it may take a more interpretative approach when focusing on the dynamic and transformative nature of the same sign" (7).

Semiotics in dance is as diverse as the cultures from which it emerges. Daniel Okoye observes that "dance is a signification of words through gesture and movement, representing an analogical code that further highlights humanity's determination to understand its environment and express inner feelings of fear and joy" (Okoye, p. 41). Semiotic expressions in dance are therefore deeply rooted in the cultural history, values, and social attitudes of a people. As a communicative system, dance functions as a language through which meaning is transmitted from the performer to the audience, reinforcing collective consciousness and cultural identity (Essi, 4).

In masquerade dance, semiotic indicators such as costume and make-up, movement patterns, spatial formations, and choreography are deliberately employed to signify and communicate meaning. Essi David's studies on symbolism and performance emphasize that theatrical elements function as cultural signs through which societies encode ideology and social critique (Essi, 4). Through these indicators, dance becomes a medium for expressing communal identity, with the human body serving as a metaphorical site for cultural representation. Specific semiotic

movements often reveal aspects of a people's history, including occupational practices and immediate environments. For instance, among riverine communities, bodily shapes, angles, costumes, music, and colour symbolism in dance performances reflect their close relationship with water and nature. Such performative choices align with Essi's argument that African performance aesthetics are inseparable from lived social realities and indigenous worldviews (Essi, 5).

Traditional values embedded in dance performances function as repositories of historical memory and cultural continuity. Within the framework of semiotics, bodily gestures in masquerade performances—such as those associated with the Adanma and other masquerades—encode and transmit symbols of love, respect, leadership, and communal unity to the audience. Essi and Akas (6) contend that meaning in performance is achieved through symbolic actions that resonate with shared moral and ideological frameworks. Consequently, signification in dance provides the foundation upon which the morality and ideology as a given culture are constructed and sustained. Many scholars, including Essi (4), have therefore examined semiotics as a powerful tool for cultural preservation, social instruction, and ideological engagement.

Efforts at dance preservation and propagation aim to safeguard these semiotic indicators, maintain distinctive dance forms and styles, and ensure the continuity of indigenous performance traditions. According to Essi, sustaining traditional performance practices is not merely an artistic exercise but a cultural responsibility that reinforces identity and historical consciousness within rapidly changing societies (4).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Historical evidence suggests that some of the earliest recorded theatrical performances in Africa date back to around 2600 BC in ancient Egypt—predating the Greek rural Dionysian festivals often cited as the origins of European theatre. One notable example is the *Abydos Passion Plays*, discovered in the tomb of Pharaoh Amenhotep II. Records indicate that these plays were written by the chief priest Ikhanetfert and were likely performed, as evidenced by mural depictions on the walls of pharaonic tombs. These performances dramatized Egyptian creation myths involving deities such as Osiris, Horus, and Anubis, narrating the origins of evil through the god Seth and the emergence of the Egyptian pantheon. Essi notes that such early ritual performances laid the foundation for theatre as a medium of myth, ideology, and communal instruction in Africa (4).

In contemporary contexts, costume and make-up in performance have continued to evolve due to increased global interaction and intercultural exchange. Despite these influences, Igbo traditional theatre remains richly endowed with elaborate costumes and expressive make-up, which function as potent semiotic devices. Essi argues that costume and visual symbolism in African theatre are not merely decorative but are essential signifiers of status, spirituality, leadership, and social order (5). Thus, within Igbo masquerade traditions such as the Adanma, costume and make-up remain central to meaning-making, reinforcing the cultural and ideological significance of dance performance. The Igbo theatre expresses values, norms, cultural heritage, emotions and experiences through costumes. Tracie Utoch-Ezeajugh, affirms that,

Generally, traditional African culture is characterised by symbolic representation of history, events, experiences and beliefs with the use of natural elements or man-made objectives in visual and performance arts which include contextual festival theatre, dance, music and drama. The import or relevance of such symbolic elements lies in the values that are attached to them as a result of significant happenings and experiences that are later moulded into philosophies, ideologies, myths and believes. (24)

The choice of costume and make-up is fundamental to the construction and expression of cultural identity in Nigerian dance performances. Each dance tradition is associated with symbolic costumes that facilitate the accurate transmission of cultural codes and meanings. Although many Nigerian dance costumes today can be categorized as modern-traditional or contemporary—largely due to the influences of modernity, technology, and globalization—they continue to embody indigenous aesthetics and values. Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh argues that such costumes “evoke an autonomous authenticity that is inherently African in style and design concept” (Utoh-Ezeajugh, p. 3). This suggests that, despite external influences, African dance costumes retain symbolic depth and cultural specificity.

Accordingly, the selection of appropriate dance costumes and make-up maintains a symbolic relationship with the message a dance conveys about a particular cultural group. The accurate choice of costume and make-up is therefore essential to faithful cultural representation in dance performance. Conversely, inappropriate or careless selections may distort meaning and lead to the misrepresentation of the cultural identity a dance seeks to portray. To ensure authenticity, factors such as material, colour, texture, and overall design must align with the cultural context and functional purpose of the dance.

While cultural identity remains dynamic—shaped by globalization, modernity, and technological advancement—costume designs also continue to evolve in response to these changes. Such transformations often modify original forms and aesthetics, giving rise to new visual expressions that carry fresh meanings and functions for both the dance and the community it represents. Nonetheless, these evolving aesthetics must be carefully negotiated to preserve core cultural values.

Masquerade Costume

In dance performance, the primary function of costume is to visually communicate character and meaning, particularly since dancers cannot verbally explain their roles to the audience. Essi opines further that costume is not ornamental nor is it for aesthetic purpose only, but rather, costume conveys symbolic and iconic import(5). For example, in Essi's work titled *Iconic Symbols in Femi Osofisa's Once Upon Four Robbers*, He holds that the market womens elaborate costume of expensive and colourful wrappers and buba as well as their expensive head-gears portrays the market women as rich, shrewd and extortionists who arbitrarily inflate the prices of their commodities in the market (5).

Adanma masquerade dance, like other traditional African performances, relies heavily on colourful and symbolically charged costumes. Costume plays a crucial role in shaping the overall aesthetics of the dance and is one of the major components of African performance practice. Through costume, performances are

enhanced, conceptualized, and contextualized within the cultural realities of the society in which they are produced and performed.

Costumes therefore serve as markers of identity, helping to define and distinguish a people within their cultural landscape. They embody social values, spiritual beliefs, and historical experiences, enabling the audience to interpret meaning beyond movement alone. In this regard, costumes do not merely decorate the performer but function as semiotic instruments that reinforce cultural narratives. As Akas Nicholas critically observes, costume in African performance operates as a visual language through which identity, authority, and communal values are symbolically articulated and communicated to the audience:

Costumes serve as a vibrant medium of performance, a tool for cultural expression which apart from its feature as an item of clothing worn by the performers to make a statement serves a great purpose of cultural identification. It showcases the cultural aesthetics, artistic styles and traditional representation of a people (122).

In masquerade dance, costumes function as metaphor of cultural space, providing an identity and consciousness among the people. The costume reveals both the abstract and literal symbolism of the dance. Pearl Primis observed that, "costumes worn by people of a tribe reflects them, even as it preaches the aesthetics and artistic nature of that tribe" (89).

In Igbo land, masquerades wear colourful, flowing garments made from raffia, cloth, feathers, and beads. Each material and design often has symbolic meaning, tied to the spirit being represented. For instance, in some Igbo communities raffia costumes represent the spirits connected to nature, while bright colours symbolize joy or celebration. Costumes serves a vibrant medium of performance, a tool for cultural expression which apart from its feature as an item of clothing worn by the performers to make a statement, serves a great purpose of cultural identification. It showcases the cultural aesthetics, artistic styles and traditional representation of a people. A metaphor of cultural space, providing an identity and consciousness among the people. It is a known fact that costumes worn by people of a tribe reflects them, even as it preaches the aesthetics and artistic nature of that tribe. To support this Mark Twain, as quoted by Julie Umukoro says; "What would a man be without his clothes? Without his clothes, a man would be nothing at all. The clothes do not merely make the man...clothes are the man. Without them he is a cipher, a vacancy, a nobody, a nothing". (68). This means that people are known with their dress culture, costumes goes beyond covering the body rather it is a means for beautification and communication.

Makeup

Make-up plays dominant roles in most African theatre. It is one of the most visible and dominant elements in a performance. Make-up is the use of created enhancement of either liquid or solid to transform a character or an actor to fit into the specification of an act. It is also applied to give an identity and form to a character in a performance be it traditional or modern. Shuaib Safiatu substantiates this that:

Makeup has always been perceived as a means to an end. Where the human body is primarily conceived and adopted by man through his indigenous artistry as canvas for inscriptions and

adornment of cosmetic substances by the artist in diverse religious, secular, and theatrical activities, performed by man in the bid to understand, master and even coerce cosmic nature and his environment to his advantage.

Essi avers that in Osofisan's play *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Aafar's makeup which consists of grey hair, beards and long grey goatie portrays Aafar as a wise, old and all knowing Muslim imam (*Iconic Symbols in Femi Osofisan's Once Upon Four Rubbers* 6). In the same vein, the market women's make-up in the aforementioned play which consist of Yoruba tribal marks on their faces, as well as their elaborate lipsticks indeed explains their tribal location (Essi, 5)

In masquerade dance, the masks play the role of makeup. The mask depicts the role and character of each masquerade. The mask also shows the gender of the masquerade just like the Adamma. Through the mask, the audience can determine the spiritual essence of the masquerade.

FUNCTIONS OF COSTUMES IN IGBO TRADITIONAL DANCE

Dance is an integral cultural element that distinguishes one people from another. According to Humphrey Simpson, the identity of a people is often expressed through their songs and dances, which reveal the philosophical predispositions of their society (Simpson, 178; Eze, et al, 2026)). For decades, dance has functioned as a medium for teaching social values, promoting cultural continuity, and preserving communal traditions. In support of this view, James Joyce observes that, apart from oral history and recitations, the history and traditions of a people are documented through their dance performances and other cultural expressions such as masquerades, funeral rites, marriage ceremonies, and initiation rituals. Alice Joyce further explains that dance employs polyrhythm and bodily articulation to give meaning to movement and communicate effectively with the audience (Joyce, 47). She emphasizes that dance is fundamentally communal, requiring active participation and sustained interaction between performers and spectators, thereby fostering social cohesion (Joyce, 48). Traditional dance, therefore, refers to indigenous dance forms transmitted from one generation to another, deeply rooted in the history and worldview of a people.

Pearl Primus defines traditional dance as one based on indigenous rhythms and musical traditions, originating from early religious, ritual, celebratory, and communal activities. She notes that its development is closely linked to the historical, cultural, and folkloric experiences of societies (Primus, 196). Primus further asserts that in ancient times, traditional dance served as a major means through which people expressed emotions, cultural beliefs, and communicated with their ancestors (Primus, 201). Over time, traditional dance has evolved into a distinct art form, with continuous developments in movement style, music, costume, and visual presentation.

Within this context, costume performs a fundamental role in traditional dance. One of its primary functions is to reflect the cultural background, thematic focus, and symbolic meanings of the dance. Costume also enhances the expression of movement, as dancers are constantly in motion. For this reason, dance costumes must be flexible, functional, and well-fitted to the performer's body. Appropriate costumes accentuate fluidity of movement and contribute significantly to the aesthetic pleasure of the audience.

Costume in African performance functions as a visual language, encoding cultural identity, ideology, and social values that might not be verbally articulated during performance.

FUNCTIONS OF MAKE-UP IN TRADITIONAL DANCE

The importance of dance in society cannot be overstated. Dance serves as a powerful agent of social interaction, drawing people together and fostering communal bonds. Enekwe affirms that dance plays a vital role in achieving social cohesion, liberating individuals from isolation and reinforcing a collective sense of belonging, especially in societies where traditional values remain intact (Enekwe, 11). Through dance, language, music, costume, and make-up become vehicles for preserving and transmitting cultural values.

Make-up in traditional dance enhances characterization and conveys beliefs, norms, attitudes, and worldviews. In masquerade performances especially, make-up transforms the human performer into a symbolic or spiritual entity. It's imperative that such transformations are essential to African performance aesthetics, where visual symbolism enables performers to transcend individuality and embody communal or metaphysical meanings . Dance also contributes to physical well-being, as it engages the entire body and promotes health. Beyond this, traditional dance is believed to possess mystical and therapeutic qualities. Enekwe observes that dance is often used to promote fertility, attract good fortune, and ward off evil influences (Enekwe, 188).

Masks used in Igbo masquerades are hand-carved by skilled artisans and regarded as sacred objects. They often depict human, animal, or mystical forms: antelope horns symbolize strength and vitality, while human facial features represent wisdom or ancestral presence. Masks in African theatre are not decorative artifacts but symbolic conduits of spiritual authority and cultural memory.

The Igbo people of Nigeria are renowned for their rich cultural heritage, particularly their masquerade tradition known as *Mmanwu*. Masquerades transcend entertainment; they are complex performances blending art, spirituality, ritual, and communal identity. Masquerades are believed to embody ancestral spirits, deities, or natural forces, appearing during festivals, funerals, initiation rites, and ceremonies such as the *New Yam Festival*. They function as mediators between the physical and spiritual realms, enforcing moral codes, settling disputes, and offering protection or blessings (Eze, & Molokwu, 2025).

Ifegbo Chima affirms that masquerades serve as spiritual bridges between the living and the spirit world (Ifegbo, 89; Eze, et al, 2025)). Some masquerades, such as *Ekpo*, are believed to ward off evil, while others like *Ojionu* enforce communal laws. Ifegbo further notes that the authority of masquerades is unquestioned because they are regarded as representatives of the divine (Ifegbo, 19). Masquerade performances embody ideological power, reinforcing moral order and collective discipline within African societies.

Masquerade performances are visually striking, accompanied by drumming, singing, incantations, and energetic dance movements. *Nwanna Patrick* notes that masquerades add glamour to festivals, serve as entertainment, and function as tourist attractions (Nwanna, 27). *Opusuji Okafor* observes that masquerade costumes constitute a major visual attraction, often featuring symbolic colours such as red, yellow, green, blue, and white, which reflect indigenous worldviews. Similarly, *Omosule*

highlights the visual aesthetics created by the apparel worn by Egwugwu masquerades and their attendants (Omosule, 288).

Olatunji Taiwo describes masquerade festivals as displays of diverse masquerade types, ranging from fearsome and powerful figures to playful and colourful ones, all designed to entertain and instruct the community (Taiwo, 188). He further notes that head masks, headdresses, mask cloths, and accessories collectively define the aesthetic value of masquerades (Taiwo, 18). Ukaegbu Kalu concludes that Igbo masks express mysticism, power, beauty, aggression, masculinity, and spirituality, making them highly expressive and responsive cultural symbols (Kalu, 22). Scholarship reinforces this position that masquerade aesthetics operate as semiotic systems through which communities narrate history, assert identity, and negotiate social values .

BRIEF HISTORY OF ADANMA DANCE

The Adanma masquerade has become a cultural symbol of pride and celebration among the Igbo people. Originating in the Enugu-Igbo region, it has gained widespread popularity across Igboland and even beyond. Its elegance, strength, and joyful character have made it a prominent feature at cultural festivals, weddings, and community events. The precise origin of the Adanma masquerade remains unclear; however, two popular accounts explain its emergence. One account holds that the

masquerade was inspired by a young woman named Adanma, who was renowned for her beauty and kind-hearted nature. According to this narrative, Adanma was abducted by men from a distant village and suffered years of hardship before eventually escaping and returning to her community. Although she survived the ordeal, the experience left her emotionally withdrawn and deeply affected. To honour her resilience and celebrate her return, the village elders created the Adanma masquerade to symbolize her beauty, grace, and inner strength. Over time, the masquerade came to represent endurance, beauty, and triumph over adversity.

Another account traces the origin of the Adanma masquerade to Ala, the Igbo goddess of fertility and morality, who is highly revered for her benevolence and blessings. According to this version, the masquerade was named after Ala's first daughter, Adanma, as a symbolic expression of gratitude for the goddess's favour and protection. Through this association, the masquerade embodies reverence for fertility, prosperity, and communal well-being. Although the exact beginnings of the Adanma masquerade cannot be definitively established, its significance in Igbo cultural life is well recognized. Unlike many other masquerades, Adanma is not associated with secret cult groups or ritual oaths. Instead, it is open and accessible to all members of the community, functioning primarily as a form of entertainment and cultural expression.

Plate 1: Adanma's costum



Adanma's costume is usually colourful to show the feminine features of the masquerade. The costume is made with light fabrics which enables the masquerade to dance and move freely during

performance. The colours of the costumes celebrate youthfulness and beauty of an Igbo lady.

Plate 2: Adanma's



In plate 2 above, Adanma is seen holding a hand fan which it uses for performance aesthetics. It also wears an ankle shakers which serve as decoration and additional musical instrument due to its sound when Adanma is performing.

Adanma's mask is a representation of a young maiden. Although worn by a male dancer, the appearance of the mask is feminine, hence the name Adanma which translates to beautiful first daughter. Adanma's mask represents the beauty of young maidens and as such, it still carries a makeup kit during its performance. The masquerade changes its style of costume to make it more appealing visually when it makes an appearance. Same goes for the use of colours in its costume design. Any colour can be used to design its costume. The aim is to create spectacle and enhance aesthetics.

CONCLUSION

Globalisation is an inevitable phenomenon, its impact on Adanma masquerade dance performance in Igboland has made the dance more appealing and popular. The impact of globalisation on Adanma masquerade dance performance can be seen in the costume and choreography of the dance. This has made Adanma dance unique thereby differentiating it from one community to another. As an artistic expression of the Igbo people, Adanma masquerade dance serves as a medium of promoting Igbo culture. The study recommends that efforts should be made to document the masquerade performance in order to preserve the masquerade from extinction. The study also recommends that custodians of the

dance should retain the indigenous elements of the dance in order not to lose its originality and relevance. The government at all levels should aim at promoting the culture of the people through sponsorship of festivals where masquerade performance is used to showcase the arts and crafts of the people.

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