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Conflict and Change in Ogene-nkirika Festival Performance in Oguta.

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Abstract

Traditional societies are characterized by festivals of various kinds and dimensions. Some distinctly manifest aspects of the community rituals or worship, some celebratory; yet others function towards social change. Irrespective of their types, underlying the different forms of community performance is likely to be found the central element of ritual associated with one aspect of community belief or another. Among the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria, Omerife is a festival associated with the ritual of new yam celebrations. In a sense, the ceremonies of the new yam are thanksgiving activities whereby the gods are propitiated with sacrifices for a bountiful harvest as well as for a peaceful farming year. However, the festival also embodies different community forms of performances such as the Ogene- nkirika. Ogene-nkirika is the first part of the two-tiered festival. This paper examines the aspect of conflict that motivates the process of social change on the theoretical premise of Theatre for Reciprocal Violence (TRV) to foreground conflict as pertinent for change in the performance. Case study approach of qualitative research method was adopted for data collection and analysis. The study reveals that Ogene-nkirika festival performance is capable of engendering social change for the people through conflict as reflected in the analysis. **Keywords:** Oguta, Omerife, Ogene-nkirika, Change, Conflict, Theatre of Reciprocal Violence, Festival performance

Resume

Les sociétés traditionnelles sont caractérisées par des festivals de différents types et dimensions. Il y en a qui distinctement révèlent quelques aspects manifestes du rituel communautaire; certains sont de fête, cependant, d'autres encore s'intéressent au changement social. Malgré leurs types, mettant l'accent sur les différentes formes de performance communautaire peut être probablement l'élément central du rituel associé à un aspect de la croyance communautaire ou à l'autre. Parmi les Igbo du sud-est du Nigeria, Omerife est un festival associé au rituel de nouvelles célébrations de l'igname - un rituel où, jusqu'à la célébration des nouvelles ignames, personne, littéralement, n'est permis de manger de la nouvelle igname. Dans un sens, les cérémonies de la nouvelle igname sont des activités de remerciement par lesquelles les dieux sont gratifiés avec des sacrifices pour une récolte abondante et pour une année agricole paisible. Cependant, le festival incarne aussi l'aspect de différentes formes de performances communautaires telles que l'Ogene-nkirika. Celle-ci est la première partie du festival à deux étapes. Cet article examine l'aspect du conflit qui motive le processus de changement social s'appuyant sur la prémisse théorique du théâtre de violence réciproque pour théoriser le conflit comme pertinent pour le changement dans la performance. L'approche de l'étude de cas de la méthode de recherche qualitative a été adoptée pour la collecte et l'analyse des données. L'étude révèle que la performance du festival Ogene-nkirika est capable de faciliter le changement social pour les personnes a

travers le conflit tel que reflète dans l'analyse.

Mots-clés : Oguta, Omerife, Ogene-nkirika, conflit, theatre de violence reciproque, festival performance

Introduction

Two writers have published their accounts of the history and life of Oguta people of present day Imo State. The authenticity of their accounts are in tandem with the oral account that has been on from the time events of history started coming up as told by griots, grandmothers and grandfathers. Hence, the writers' version cannot be regarded according to the Igbo proverbial saying as "Agwo ofu onye huru bu eke"(the snake that an eye saw is a python).

Oguta or "ugwuta" is a small but beautiful Island town in South-eastern Nigeria, precisely, Imo State which has a population of about 3,927,563 people (National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria¹). They are said to have migrated from the Old Benin Kingdom, a claim which could only be justified by cultural and linguistic evidences. Oguta is popularly known for its lake, the Oguta Lake, locally known as the Uhamiri (with a super river goddess named Ogbuide that is said to be married to the Orashi (Urashi) river god and who is also in the character of marrying both women and men with living evidences of human spouses now). The lake is said to be the largest natural lake in the state fed by the Njaba river and empties into the Orashi river with a bubbling confluence that catches the attention and fancy of visitors due to the huge variation of the water colours which mixes well with muddy Orashi in their act of viplent romance or resistance. As justified by Ndupu, "the river meanders through many towns from its source before it cuts the lake at its mouth to form a sort of confluence or river capture where colours of the two bodies cannot be differentiated" because the two have become one. It is surrounded by others rivers like Obana, and Okposha, and it is geographically bordered at the North by Egbu-oma and the East by the section of communities known as Oguta ii, iii, iv. According to A.F. Mockler- Ferryman in Ndupu " The lake looked simply glorious in the golden light of the rising sun as we left... and made our way down the Orashi River" (8). Oguta is made up of 27 villages. It is the administrative seat of Oguta Local Government Area.

The OgutaLake serves as a commercial nerve centre for collection and transportation of local food stuff for trade route for inter- state commerce as could be gleaned from the statement' " We left the Boussa off Ndoni and started down the small river at day break,... and like all these minor water ways, thoroughly tropical in aspect. On reaching Orashi, we turned up northwards and got into Oguta lake"(9). The lake is believed to protect the indigenes from evil. That was why the Nigerian ship that tried to penetrate the Igbo during the civil war through the lake sank. This made the relics of the Nigerian army provisions available to those who were not bom then to enjoy the whiskies and gins supplied to help the soldiers. The lake's content supplies zinc which is very helpful for the river side women and equally the men projecting its tripartite signification of beauty (physical and metaphysical), entertainment and love; a complementary reflection of the fun and freedom

¹ Population Census 2006, National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria. May 2007

the people enjoy in the present. The major occupation then was fishing, farming and trading (see Flora Nwapa's "Efuru" and "Idu").

Oguta people are said to have migrated from the old Bini kingdom during the reign of Oba Ewuare the great settled finally in their present abode due to the exploits of three great brothers; Osu, Dei and Amam (oral history). They are a religious people with the first form of religion they embraced been the traditional religion which moves them to worship the water goddess- the guardian of the Uhamiri river and then her husband Urashi. According to Ndupu: " This religious attachment to the goddess...comes from the belief...that Ogbuide is the protector and defender of her children..., the giver of wealth and health... parents name their children Ogbuide(12) or Iyioma, (*pet name of the goddess*) and Urashi.(her husband). They go to the extent of bringing the presence of the goddess into their homes by using earthen pot or metal basins to fetch the water and institute a shrine. One can then say from the foregoing that Oguta people are loving and appreciative of their environment and unseen presences. This equally defines why the show gratitude and love towards other nature through festivals and ceremonies. One of such is the Omerife festival.

The Omerife/Ogene-nkirika Festival

Omerife is a festival connected with the celebration of the ritual performance of the new yam celebration- a ritual whereby until the new yam celebrations are held, no one, literally, partakes of the new yam eating. In a sense the ceremonies of the new yam are thanksgiving activities whereby the gods are propitiated with sacrifices for a bountiful harvest as well as for a peaceful farming year. Ordinarily, the festival is characterized largely by the spirituality of worship and is virtually designed to extol and reify the deities of the people. According to A.A. Azogu: it lasts for twenty-one days beginning from the local calendar of the Oguta people-Afor Ukwu and ends at Afor Ogbube Ekwensu (108).The festival is in two stages: one is the Okika Omerife or the Ogene-nkirika which is the start of the entire Omerife festival while the second part is known as Etiti-Omerife or Ogene-Oma. The Ogene-nkirika is the secular aspect of the Omerife festival because the sacred content of Omerife is contained in Etiti- Omerife. The name Ogene-nkirika is consequent on the costuming and role-play of the performers. Nkirika in Oguta means indecent. Example of such is seen in a man wearing a female cloth, acting the roles of some important personalities, other gender types among other acts. Since the festival lampoons any act of indecency, some men costume as women; or any act considered indecent. Ndupu writes that the origin of the festival is not known but it is believed to have been brought by the villagers that first settled in the present day Oguta from Obodo-akpuruekwe when Eneke Okitutu from Umuamam village of Oguta discovered the Imo State settlement (248).

Performance

At the start of the festival, the okparas (the *eldest men in the twenty seven villages that form Oguta*) open the gate of the performance: They do this by forming a group at the east end of the town, singing and dancing few yards to the next village (Abatu) where they end the song at ebo-Abatu (a kind of ritual gate) and then they proceed to their individual homes(248). The song they sing:

Awa ogu eh-eh- Awaogu eh-eh
Awa ogu eh-eh Awa ogu eh-eh
Eriri mari nma na udenguma, Eriri mari nma
The fine rope in Nguma's bossom, the Fine rope
Sokwa umuaka ibeyi
Join your mates
Eriri mari nma na ude nguma, eriri mari nma *The fine*
rope in Nguma's bossom, the fine rope (248)

This is a call to the young people to join their mates in the festival. Ogene-nkirika is performance of “inversion”, it is eamivalesques, serious and full of conflicts but more oi process of change. Satires, innuendoes, proverbs, songs, dance, drama, music, role pis mime, pantomime, puppetry, pageantry, effigies among other theatricalities embellish t enactment in the festival.

The performers in Ogene-nkirika costume as females, aged, professionals, religioi students, those with political authority, in fact diverse roles including embracing nudity.



A youth dressed as an old man



Men dressed in female attires performing Igbuefi- a title taken strictly for women



A male who is dressed like a bride

They make effigies of their characters and satirize and mimic personalities and culprits of social vices. The festival performance enacts a distinct form of representation in which the audience may be adjudged as actors, thus the choice of spectators. Women join in as spectators by clapping, singing choruses and answering questions and innuendoes thrown at them by the performers. These spectators comprising men and, women, girls and people of all ages sit by the side of the street which serves as the venue for the performance and watch, enjoy the jokes and respond practically to the jokes and issues they identify with and thereby boosting the whole performance with their contributions. The jokes and the innuendoes they throw are dialogic and to enter into the dialogic space is to accept the

dualities of the spectating alternative form of representation. The performances exist at the level of reality that is ultimate to the people. It is a period that the community makes use of their metaphorical court where topics concerning sons, daughters, leaders of the land indigenes and non-indigene residents in a secular over-arching and provocative experimentation.

Umar-Buratai referring to Berkermann's opinion stated that:

"the act of spectating is seen not only as an organized event, but one that requires the presence of one or more human beings, separated in time and space in order to present themselves to another or to others"(124-5).

Thus if the spectator decides that the performance is of central significance to his or her ideology. and then such choice implies a commitment, this commitment becomes the source of the efficacy of the performance which appropriates the element recognized as conflict. (Goodman et al, 139). According to Egwuda-Ugbede:

"In African indigenous theatre, audience constitute part of the performance...A member of the audience who is so fascinated can get up , execute dance steps, join the songs, release a measure of ululation or "spray" the performers with money".(44).

Audience are not alienated, this audience freedom is why the paper uses the spectator terminology. By way of clarity, by employing these elements, its interest surrounds and articulates the many issues that are linked to the community which is identified and then broadly tabled to critical evaluation through its discursive nature.

The arena of the performance is a free theatre space with varying performances from all who are performing, unlike the Mmonwu and Owu festival displays that have strict performance styles, performers and venue; the later for Owu. In summary⁷, Ogene-nkirika is a performance which appropriates the space of entertainment to interrogate the views and values of the members of the society- a function grounded in absolute expression and maintenance of its social realities. Thus, the performance is referred to as theatre because of its performative, communicative and space components. Umar-Buratai noted that "so strategic is the interface between the theatre and society that the history of social formations and human development is... as features that span the width and breadth of time and space"(125). Thus the festival casts clear expression upon the reason the African theatre resolves around the needs of the people and functions for the purpose of unifying the human environment. Though, according to Ndupu's record, "Ogene-nkirika is the playing of practical jokes (bally rag) by the youths along the streets of the town" (248). Beyond his description, Ogene-nkirika transcends the borders of play into handling topical issues. This is why Ndupu's description of the festival does not explain the festival in all its totality. It is in this effort that the paper apprehends the element of conflict in the festival as vital for change especially as it is placed within the framework of Theatre for Reciprocal Violence (TRV).

The festival enacts a distinct form of representation in which the audience may be adjudged as spectators. While the performers at Ogene-nkirika are only male actors, female audience act as spectator by reacting to issues that are of concern to them. It is in this effort

that the papers apprehends the element of conflict in the festival as vital for change especially as it is placed within the framework of Theatre for Reciprocal Violence.

Festival Performance and Theatre of Reciprocal Violence (TRY)

Performance is an inclusive term, it is about participants, the space, and the event to be enacted often involving ritual but is liminal involving arts and acts. Justinian Ssaalongo Tamusuza in responding to Sam Kasule on what is performance simply puts it as "singing and dancing"(12). To him, when people are excited they start giving performances singing and dancing. To define Performance, "it is important to know its context and social function. Although the performance may not be in the original context, you enjoy it when it is set in the indigenous ritual context."(11). Ogene-nkirika highlights the structure of performance from the angle of contestation because it is not only the act of the people, but an act of entertainment, featuring all theatricalities as well a functioning towards the needs of the people socially, politically, economically, religiously without any undercut. This paper locates in philosophical terms, Ogene-nkirika within festival performance, the implication of this is because it is an art of the people, rooted in their ritual which functions to provide them with palliatives that help them to model their activities dynamically. It entertains, sensitizes, corrects, repudiates and boldly espouses the dynamics of the peoples' challenges. But above all it is an act that validates their relationship with nature and life's essence. According to Egwuda-Ugbede: "Festival period is a moment of union between the mortals and the immortals.. .In Africa there are sacred or religious and secular or social festivals(21) Ogene-nkirika is the social angle of the sacred festival known as Omerife. He further states that "Man from inception of time uses festival to build a strong foundation for his existence" (22). The strong foundation is maintained by the way man confronts issues in his environment and the ones affecting him. Most times, traditional festival is ethnic in nature as it evolved out of the people's spiritual and social needs, In traditional Africa, festivals are celebrated to meet various injunctions such as honouring the spirits of plenty and harvesting, consecrating, farming implements, observing rituals, celebrating birth or..(22)...As they also carry within them strong social and indeed, political meanings and overtones (24). This observation implies that Ogene-nkirika describes a process that could be referred to as performance. This thus is the basis that the paper seeks to underlie the fact where the relationship between conflict and performance is synthetic. TRV thus would be considered the best framework for the discussion.

Theatre of Reciprocal Violence (TRV) is a coinage by Foluke Ogunleye(2015). It refers to activism because the women use it to talk about their plight. It is legislative, it is a theatre through which the feelings of the affected is brought to life through the power of presentation of the very act that affects them in a liminal way. The theatre sees no difference between literary texts, stage performance and inhumanities meted on the same set of people because of their social status may be as female. According to Ogunleye, TRV is a theatre that functions as a tool of re-socialisation (2). The sense here suggests a re-socialisation approach through the process of attrition in order " to destroy 'en-caging' propensities of long held fallacies...by raising our collective voices, -male and female-through the theatre and media"(2) in the areas where the woman has been ignored, discriminated against, legislated against, and oppressed. This could happen through the " Theatre of Reciprocal

Violence-devoid of stones and cudgels, of reversed discrimination, of hatred nor blood and gore, but through rationality and articulations of needs of women, wants of women and freedom to exist in their own nature, to be free to express themselves and be comfortable in their own skin"(7).

TRV in particular emphasizes artistic and social context towards the creation of new frontiers for handling violence. In TRV, Ogunleye propounds a tool- a baton which is no less lethal the course it is posed to defend than a stationed nuclear arm in readiness against a threat by a super power. The question is what is the link between a theatre that advocates the weapon of art for women and a performance that seeks to involve men in a seeming totalitarian presentation? Thus it will be wise to explain that the paper is not any article on gender issue thus the addition-supplementation braid of her idea is appropriate. First, it is at theatre that gives power to the less powerful, it is a theatre that connotes conflict through confrontation, it is a theatre that searches for solution, its structures is not blood-spilling weapon rather it is essentially related to a structure of substitution that equal what is received. It is an effort to bring to life the tyranny meted out to a set of people by the seeming powerful which must be addressed within the environment of all involved. In the case of this work, the people affected, like Ogunleye's women are the ones using this an within their environment. Before the very culprits whose uncanny actions affects them Looking at the foregoing, it will not be wrong to say that TRV and Theatre for Development (TFD) are similar, the glaring difference is the fact that the former is a tool for women while TFD is for all and sundry. The forum for Ogene-nkirika is a forum that arouses the condition which TRV consciously protects against its targets- that of conflict immersed in artistic aesthetics, imbued with political power, delimited to the premised of the entertainment space but triggers beyond the events it occasioned.

The premise of conflict and change in Ogene-nkirika performance

Arguments, tension, violence, fights, natural and unnatural disasters among other unbridled situations are often the physical characteristics of conflicts. This makes the idea of conflict inevitable among humans and the environment. This is because our lives rotate around pursuits which oscillate between different interests making us create threats that could affect others in the society. This view reflects how the many conflicts in Ogene-nkirika braid with the entertainment phenomenon of the performance. Some have viewed conflict as occurring when two or more values, perspectives and opinions are contradictory in nature and have not been aligned or agreed about yet, including within oneself when one is not living according to ones values. Conflict thus helps people learn how to recognize and benefit from their differences.

The search for an appealing perspective of conflict to interpret the meanings in this paper lends one to agree with Lewis Coser's reference to Dewey's definition of conflict as "the gadfly. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates to invention. It shocks out of sheep-like passivity, and sets at noting and contriving...Conflict is a sine qua non of reflection and ingenuity(198)The conflict to be addressed in this paper is the socialisation process where people come in contact with forced personal consideration for a change- a social change in a homogeneous society.

Change is all about moving from one position, direction, state, level and so on into

another. It is to be different or make something and someone into another, possibly a better one. The need to confront increasing threats that tries to conflict with our social and political expectations. These are wrong doings, even existing rules and attitudes which are no longer in tandem with the current flow of ethics in the society. It is a way of meeting public moral acceptance for all and sundry. It is a new way of life, trying to change from old systems, habits, behaviours, that conflicts with the present morality. One of the tools that engages to produce better result or stimulate the things we want better is theatre. It confronts, it is this confrontation that creates the conflict. One can say that due to the type of environment we have created in this country, the capability of the ordinary man to interrogate and contribute meaningfully to politico-social conditions is almost non-existence. According to Slachmujlder(8) “ if change within a community was going to occur, it would happen only when a community is given a forum for sharing their own ideas , understanding one another and developing ways of affecting change together” . In this instance theatre becomes a tool that can stand to help the people to generate information, analyse and initiate conversations on how to make a change, be it social change or any other...

The power depravity is all more widened when those that are supposed to boost the spirit of the voiceless work against them for their own satisfaction. The case above becomes problematic when one considers the future of his constituent in the society by the ruling powers. This will all more hinder our desire and energy to identify, voice out in challenge of politically and socially unhealthy situation. Using the Igbo adage, "Enwe kwo nwaana enedi anyan'azu" (The monkey that cuddles its baby doesn't look backward) so that the enemy doesn't snatch the baby. This paints the lack of capability ground that the ordinary man has been damned into and which is absolutely not so in some nations. This makes the voice the people less heard and shut against glaring injustice- a mentality that have engulfed our society. In other words change venues are remote controlled in most cases. Therefore, the only avenue to address issues is to use alternative system- the performance acts to shield real characters from possible vendetta.

Analysis of Conflict and Change in Ogene-nkirika

Having now elucidated the factors of conflict, social change and the place of TRV, it remains to clarify how these feature in the festival performance. The most crucial issue is to elucidate that the thesis of this study is to demystify how the various performance in Ogene-nkirika can generate conflict among the spectators and thereby galvanize change. Base on this, three cases will be used to situate the claim within the horizon that entails exposing some of the conditions in the performance that excites conflict and which implication is efficacious of social change.

Instance 1

A group of performers lampoons a lady who escaped through the window of her lover's apartment as soon as she heard the woman of the house knock on the door. Once the woman noticed what transpired, she shouted the name of the culprit and in the next festival, some group of persons have already composed a song using the woman's words and the culprit's name. When the song was sang before the relations and even the culprit, this

confrontation stirs an expected conflict when one of the relations begin to sing in response to the initial song about the vicious act committed by a relation of one of the performers.

The Ogene performers' song:

Osina ebea osina ebeaonaa x3ice

She left from here and escaped right now x3ice

Ashawo sina window gbalaga

The whore jumped out through the window

Nwadasina window gbalaga.

Our daughter escaped through the window

This was a situation where performers confront spectators with a fact and it happens that the natives of the moral culprit were present. This invariably elicited anger among them, thus clash of forces of opinions and retaliatory ideas. It could be a disapproving look, raised voice to the point of yelling face to face or staging a reprisal act which was the immediate action taken that resulted to a second song.

Second song: a reaction

Oyen nye ono n'ukwu guava dia kuje

Oyen ye(Lyrics) she who stays under the guava shift

Ka X ezhi onyi dia kuta.

Let X my best friend draw closer

Another reaction from an audience member who is not related to any of those but knows the story of one of the performer's aunty starts his own song.

Third song: a reaction

Omeme na m nga duhu m ana eme m

He is doing it the way my husband does it to me

Meshi me maya ike

Do it harder

Oga na asogbu m

It is blasting...

The two reactionary songs are equally cases of infidelity-adultery. Those are the conflict situations produced by the performance. Conflict is an interface of encounter and communication. It is the audience reactions that transform the dialogues of the performance into a conversation. It remains a salient point that even though that the conflict happens in a situation in which such performance is seen as appropriate because it is a theatrical creation and a condition where these experiences remain permissible to public show and absorption, the spectators may be held sway to the stimulation it unleashes on them and react as they felt it. Umar-Buratai notes that the impulse to perform and to spectate has not often manifested in commensurate proportion(126) because the actual thing is that the spectators who respond to the issues may not be versed in the intricacies of the festival and/ or of presence and thus raise up a conflict situation that could exceed the festival. However, the reaction of the spectators demonstrated to me the presence of the conflict within the festival performance. The reactions continued without fight making it to fall within the TRV realm devoid of stones and cudgels, of hatred nor blood and gore but through rationality and needs of the users.

Considering the reactions, which came out of concern of why the actors should stand as moral judges elicited the spectators' reaction... This stance taken by spectators will open pathways for the issues to be addressed. For example fans of the character despite the defence which came out of a deep relational stance will take further steps to ensure that such vice by the character never happens again. Even the character herself will learn from the performance that nothing is hidden forever that is done under the sky and retrace her steps in order not to be ridiculed again. Social change answers to any modification in the individual or a community in its pattern of social roles. Therefore the functions that conflict plays in Ogene-nkirika and the role of the festival can be understood as a whole pattern of the social system than of personal interest. This lends hands to the performers and the attacked to endure the consequences of the interaction and communication of change as well as the social structure and its functionalities. The above are reactions that nest the issue of conflict. It is this audience reaction that transforms the dialogues into the performance conversation. In an instance, an act is enacted; take for example a situation where a performer confronts an audience with a fact and it happens that the relations of a social culprit is present, it will invariably eliciting anger among them. Thus it is good if it happens in a situation in which such behaviour is seen as appropriate toward the person or relations of the person confronted to avoid a post conflict situation. The act is permissible within the space of the festival which creates social change. Social change answers the question of any modification in the social organization of a society in any of its social institutions or patterns of social roles: it is a significant change behaviour or change in some large social systems rather than to minor changes within the group. In this case the spectating parties are influenced to respond to the confrontation whether they are personally involved in the situation or not. They readily take sides based upon the current perception of the issues presented to them prepared or not. The thrust of this can be diagnosed through Kershaw's explication on the issue of the community and culture. It means that "the audience for alternative theatre did not come ready made. They, too, have to be constructed , to become part of the different constituencies which the alternative theatre choose to address, thus addressing another way of highlighting the ideological nature of the movement's overall project(137). The quality of the Ogene-nkirika Performance is interwoven with the seriousness of the ritual-a-ritual of change through which resonates around Victor Turner's (4) concept of *communitas*. Basically "a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities. According to Turner; *communitas* is the foundation of community cohesiveness, the paradox of rule breaking within-rule-keeping "which is crucial to the efficacy of performance in its contribution..." (139) to social change. Participants in conflict tend to respond on the basis of their perception of the situation, rather than reviewing it objectively, which makes the concept of conflict and confrontation as aggressive style of communication. So the Ogene-nkirika performance encounter is used as a tool to communicate the problems of the society. It is an entertaining channel for expressing problems and concerns of the people, of misdeeds and also impacting on the people whatever that is available. The function of conflict in this regard is to bring to consciousness all the issues good or bad revolving around the community to enable people cut off from vices and also to embrace goodness for fear of being exposed afterwards.

Another illustration of the Ogene-nkirika performance eliciting conflict is that of a group of regular performers at Ogene-nkirika who use mostly songs, innuendoes and

costumes to drive home their message. One of the innuendoes immersed in song:

Anyi na-agbani afo ime oso

We cannot be intimidated with pregnancy

Anyi n'atuma, anyi n'eshikwe

We are the ones that impregnates, we are the ones that aborts

Anyi na-agbani afo ime oso

We cannot be intimidated with the incident.

How is conflict reflected here? This song brings out two issues: first is the message that girls self-impose themselves on their boyfriends with the news of being pregnant for them. Most times the young men are of school age and jobless and end up dropping out of school to face the burden of their temporary excitement. Some of the girls use this medium to create colonies in the young men's life or extort money from them. Another problem is that of chauvinistic differentiation. Here the 'young men flaunt their biological nature as the advantage they have over the girls. Even though the act involved the two of them, they have more advantages because they cannot be pregnant, and if they impregnate, they have halting strategy of evacuation no matter the effect of such acts on the girls. While trying I investigate why they sang that song, as a spectator, since I cannot readily decipher why was sang. The above was the simple explanation I got. Mothers and women were mothers irked by this expression. Many abused, yelled at, and booed the performers while other express pity on their gender. It was said that this issue of teenage pregnancy, pregnancy outside wedlock and abortions took a centre stage among women during the August meeting. The Igbo women are known for holding the August meeting- a forum whereby women come together to address the issues of the land and society in general. This becomes a challenge to mothers and females. After the festival, and subsequent deliberation of that during the August meetings and possibly in homes, mothers were irked by this song and guarded the female children even to the point of anger and frustration. Any girl who stay outside her home a bit longer than usual is a figment of the imagination of having gone to a man's house. While more-reserved boys move into the act erasing the fear that they don' have much to suffer. The performers have used the medium to confront their "oppressors" use it to sensitize the people about the prevailing ills in the community. Though the confrontation is not in any form direct to an individual, but it is a confrontational instance, in the sense that the confronted are present and real. This is one of the features of Ogene- nkirika going to the last extent with the legitimacy of "play" to address topical issues, in which in ordinary life may seem difficult to handle. This presentation is a development aimed at correcting, questioning, classifying, exposing and at the same time addressing the issues of imbalances found in the community. So the artistic transcendence of this encounter into the real life of the people acts as justification that the festival performance spawns conflict and in line leading to a process of collective moral resolve to change.

The last illustration in this paper is a performance by a group of actors who use satiric words, effigies and dialogues to drive down their message. An effigy of a well-known uniformed man who was humiliated officially for embezzlement bribery and corruption was made and with the satiric inscription like: Mr Y honoured for cheating the poorest to beatify

his rich status in his poor community” Mr Y. the man of the night “ Don’t insult our eye in government” etc. They used all the allegations levied against him to vulgarize moral issues of the people they know.

This act of bringing to limelight a real life experience known just too few in the community is an act that can lead to conflict. This offers a chance for others who delight in their type of performance to join in singing and exposing more ills committed by others. While some spect-acting elders will trivialize the issue, some will put up a feigned ignorance and go home to admonish their wards and children on issues that tarnishes family image. Most times, as in a case I witnessed, they affected wait for the performers to get on them after the festival is over. This however leaves the liminal border associating itself to open confrontation, or domesticated cold war between peoples, families and friends.

Conclusion

Conflict is unavoidable and inevitable process in Ogene-nkirika performance. Through this process, the festival is able to challenge the vices, expose ills and communicate messages to the people. The potentials of conflict in Ogene-nkirika are such that engender relevance to the people, since they are not after such groups that are always available to thrill the elitist audience. It gives them voice, sets out way for social change by revealing the clandestine activities of the political-power people. It is not wrong to say that Ogene-nkirika from the foregoing has logistics characteristics of profanations, conflict and conscientization which in most cases transcend the conflict to create change. The nature of the encounter at the Ogene-nkirika magnifies conflicts through its performances. Some of these performances in Ogene-nkirika are meant to amuse, enlighten, inform as well as showcase new ideas. From the forgoing, one will not doubt the appropriateness of TRV in the discussion of the festival, because it a clear avenue for even the weak to address their concerns. Ogene-nkirika encourages re-socialisation and it is a theatre of activism. Thus it is recommended that traditional festivals should be appropriated as an arena where change issues are presented for discussions in whatever way it could suit the situation without discord that cannot get the immunity of such avenues.

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