THE MASQUERADE IN ABUJA AND CALABAR CARNIVALS

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by Mr. Bernard Eze Orji in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan.

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DEDICATION

The fading past: **My Mother, Mrs. Mercy Aluma Ezi**, who's almost going but hanging on to hear this feat of her son. She keeps asking; when will you end this continuous journey? I heard it's about reading. Will it ever finish? Nma, it's over! Thank you, for your motherly prayers and for making me believes in hard work.

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ABSTRACT

The masquerade, conceived as embodied spirits of ancestors, is one of the most popular indigenous performing art forms in Africa. Its popularity has increased in recent times due to its appropriation by emergent festivals or carnivals in Nigeria. Existing studies on the masquerade have focused on its theatrical, ritualistic, socio-cultural, anthropological and dramatic dimensions, with little scholarly attention given to its adaptation in carnivals. This study was, therefore, designed to examine the growing incorporation of the masquerade into street carnivals, with a view to underscoring its visual, kinetic and aural dynamism.

Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of carnival and the carnivalesque, and Jennie Jordan's Festivalisation Theory were adopted. Ethnographic design was employed. Abuja and Calabar carnivals were purposely selected because they are state-sponsored and de-ritualised in nature. Five masquerades, namely Ijele, Agbogho Mmuo, Ugomma (Anambra State), Ekpo (Akwa Ibom) and Ekpe (Cross River), were selected based on their popularity and consistent appearance at these carnivals. Performances were complemented with the video recordings of the carnivals. Data were subjected to performance analysis.

The masquerades' spectacular performances displayed visual, kinetic and aural dynamism which aligned with the processional format of the carnival. Like Carnival Revelers and their elaborate costumes, the Abuja and Calabar carnival masquerades were magnificent in their shapes and striking in their costume decorations. The Ijele, Agbogho Mmuo and Ekpewere adorned with tassels and headpieces of various types; human, animal and creative abstractions. In dance patterns, the Ijele, a visual architecture of diverse images, colours and designs, danced with slow steps which depicted royalty and opulence. The light-footed Agbogho Mmuo, equally dressed in a resplendent costume with brilliant geometric applique patterns in multi-colours, exhibited adroit footwork with brisk steps, sharp turns and twists in space. Ugomma, designed as a giant bird with immaculate white feathers and a contrasting red beak, strutted and hopped elegantly in its dignified dance routine which climaxed with the laying of its giant white egg. Ekpo, a grotesque and black figure with an oversized mask, performed serpentine, discordant and aggressive movements. It often created great excitement by charging menacingly at the audience. Ekpe, adorned with the Ekpe society's trademark of red, black and yellow raffia, glided and executed semi-circular turns with its graceful and free-flowing dance movements peculiar to the riverine performance culture. The designs in costumes and masks were an accentuation of creativity amplified by colour and spectacle. The musical accompaniment was predominantly fast in tempo and dexterous in instrumentation. In general, the masquerades featured an amalgam of resplendent performance delivered through dance, music, song, acrobatics, costume and mask.

The masquerade's enlistment in Abuja and Calabar carnivals is occasioned by its visual, kinetic and aural dynamism which fitted easily into the carnivals' de-ritualised design and performance aesthetics. This accounts for its popularity with the audience of the carnival.

Keywords: Abuja and Calabar carnivals, Masquerade art, Carnival and carnivalesque
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page - - - - - - - - - - i

Certification - - - - - - - - - - ii

Dedication - - - - - - - - - - iii

Acknowledgement - - - - - - - - - iv

Abstract - - - - - - - - - - vi

Table of contents - - - - - - - - - vii

List of Plates - - - - - - - - - - ix

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study - - - - - - 1

1.2 Statement of the Problem - - - - - - 10

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study - - - - - 12

1.4 Research Methodology - - - - - - 13

1.5 Scope of the Study - - - - - - - 14

1.6 Significance of the Study - - - - - - 15

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction - - - - - - - - 17

2.2 Carnival and the Carnivalesque - - - - - - 18

2.3 Masquerade Performance in Africa - - - - - - 23

2.4 Dynamism and Eclecticism in the Masquerade Art Aesthetics - - 32

2.5 Theoretical Framework - - - - - - - 42

2.5.1 Performance Analysis Theory- - - - - - - 42

2.5.2 Bakhtin's Carnival and the Carnivalseque - - - - - 43

2.5.3 Festivalisation Theory - - - - - - - 49

Chapter Three: The Masquerade Art in Africa

3.1 Anthropology of Masquerade Performance - - - - - 53

3.2 Dance and Music in Indigenous Masquerade Performance - - - 62

3.3 Space and Audience in Indigenous Masquerade Performance - - 68

3.4 Design Elements in Indigenous Masquerade Performance - - - 75

3.5 Indigenous Masquerade Art as Total Theatre - - - - - 82

Chapter Four: The Masquerade in Abuja and Calabar Carnivals

4.1 History of Carnival - - - - - - - - 86

4.2 Introducing Carnival as New Nigerian Festival - - -- - 91

4.2.1 Abuja Carnival - - - - - - - - 97

4.2.2 Carnival Calabar - - - - - - - - 105

4.3 Masquerade in Abuja Carnival - - - - - - 110

4.4 Masquerade in Carnival Calabar - - - - - - 127

4.4.1 Audience - - - - - - - - - 133

4.4.2 Masquerade Venues and Spaces of Performance - - - - 138

4.4.3 Mask, Costume and Makeup Designs - - - - - 143

4.4.4 Designs in Mask, Costume and Makeup in Performance - - - 155

4.4.5 The Performance: Procession, Acolytes and Drumming - - - 160

4.5 Appraisals of the Arts of the Masquerade in Abuja and Calabar Carnivals - 169

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 The Future of Masquerade Art - - - - - - 175

5.2 Conclusion - - - - - - - - - 177

5.3 Observations and Recommendations - - - - - - 179

References - - - - - - - - - 182

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: Ijele Masquerade in Abuja Carnival - - - - - 117

Plate 2: Motorized motif of Ijele masquerade - - - - - 118

Plate 3: Agbogho Mmuo Masquerade in a flirty warm embrace with a foreign tourist 120

Plate 4: Agbogho Mmuo Mask and a braided headpiece - - - - 121

Plate 5: Agbogho Mmuo Masquerade showcasing a wigged headpiece - - 122

Plate 6: Ugomma masquerade at the Abuja Carnival - - - - 123

Plate 7: Ekpo masquerade in Abuja Carnival - - - - - 124

Plate 8: Ekpe masquerade in Abuja Carnival - - - - - 125

Plate 9: Ekpe masquerade performing at the Zoo Garden during Carnival Calabar - 129

Plate 10: Ekpe masquerade in a procession along the carnival route in Calabar - 130

Plate 11: Ekpo masquerade in a procession along the major carnival routes in Calabar 131

Plate 12: Ekpe masquerade on its street procession in Carnival Calabar - - 132

Plate 13: A mix of audience and masquerade procession along ShehuShagari way, Abuja 137

Plate 14: Audience watch Ekpo and Ekpe masquerades perform at Zoo Garden, Calabar 138

Plate 15: Ashama masquerade of Nassarawa State along carnival route in Abuja 140

Plate 16: Devil masquerade of Abia State performing at Area 3 Bridge, in Abuja Carnival 141

Plate 17: Angel and Devil masquerades perform at a construction site at Area 11 in Abuja 141

Plate 18: Host of Spirits of ancestors gather to perform at Three Arm Zone, Abuja 142

Plate 19: Eyọ masquerade of Lagos State costumed with its peculiar immaculate white 146

Plate 20: Elephant masquerade (Enyi-ohia), with its massive stature creatively depicted 147

Plate 21: Terrifying and terrorizing Ekpo masquerade of the violent typology - 148

Plate 22: Okemma masquerade of Ebonyi State - - - - - 149

Plate 23: Leaves masquerade of Plateau State - - - - - 150

Plate 24: Hippopotamus (Akum) masquerade of Anambra State in Abuja Carnival - 151

Plate 25: Lion masquerade (Odum) in its majestic fearsomeness - - - 152

Plate 26: Mask of abstract creativity - - - - - - 153

Plate 27: Another mask of abstraction depicting creativity - - - - 154

Plate 28: Masquerade of fibriform: fiber material - - - - - 155

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Nigeria can be regarded as fertile ground for diverse indigenous cultural festivals. Festival is the commemoration and celebration of an important event in the life of a community. It is communal inclined and therefore, enjoys an influx of people who participate in the merriment, funfair and spectacle which this special occasion affords them. In a typical indigenous Nigerian community, festivals are celebrated during New Yam, New Year, Christmas, Coronations, Cult membership outings, and Initiation rites. Each of these festivals are marked with other cultural art forms like dance, music, drumming, mime and elaborate costuming. These components of the festival have served as cultural signifiers for these communities from time past. Thus, these festivals are as old as each of these communities which they represent. In the same vein, most of these festivals also feature masquerades aside other indigenous performing art forms identified above. Masquerade is one performing art form that enjoys an amalgam of performative nuances like dance, music, drumming, mime, acrobatic and drama in one unified performance. These arts of the masquerade, are what sets it apart from other indigenous art forms. The masquerade from time has utilized its arts in these indigenous old festivals thereby making it indispensable even in recent times. As observed, more performance outlets have emerged to incorporate these arts of the masquerade. For instance, State Art Councils, National Festivals and the latest addition, the Carnival, have become emerging new street festivals where the masquerade has translocated its arts. The ubiquity of the masquerade in these new festivals only points to the ever popularity and spectacularity of its arts. The African Encyclopedia (1974:329) explains that masquerade refers specifically to the traditional masked dancing which has a very important religious and social meaning. It notes that its most serious level is when a man puts on the

head or face mask and special dress and is believed to become the spirit which he represents. From the African worldview, masquerade is regarded as spirit manifests of the dead ancestors. Ordinarily, it can easily pass as a masked figure dressed in weird costumes. Masquerade typologies abound in Africa. A masked character can be anything from a human figure (couples, police officers, girls, boys), an imbecile (Onuku, Ojionu, Drunk), animals (Elemma, Atumma, Akum, Magbada), birds (Ugomma, Akpaka) to an abstract creation (Agaba, Okumkpo, Omabe, Odo, Ekpe, Ekpo, Egwugwu, Tinkoriko). Enekwe (1987: 56) sees masquerade as:

> The incarnation of the dead ancestors who continue to take active interest in the affairs of their living descendants and relations. Their appearance at festivals as well as during other periods of the farming year is a manifestation of the general well-being and prosperity of the community. Their emergence at funerals and similar occasions reassures all about lineal continuity and social solidarity.

The African masquerade, despite its shape or form, whether symbolically or realistically represented, whether in the image of an attractive European face, a beautiful village girl or an abstract creation shares the same attribute of ancestral personages. They are visitors to the physical world who are summoned by due ritual process and libation. They come with all mystic forces and awe. They are highly revered, often dreaded as powerful and all-knowing and inventors of knowledge. They are sacred, weird, perfidious, perplexing, beautiful, ugly, violent, mysterious, and possess magical and spiritual forces. These are the attributes the masquerade comes with into the forum, arena, village square or any other venue of the performance.

Masquerade is one indigenous art form that its preponderance in African performance space is boundless and also an ageless practice in many African communities. It enjoys among other things, durability and continuity over time made possible by community inheritance

across generations. In general, masquerades are identified with individual and group concerns in their social, political, vocational, ritual, religious and ethical lives. They have therefore, continued to be identified with communities, in relation to ceremonies, festivals that are in connection to marriage, procreation, death, sacrifice, continuity, survival, conflict resolution spanning the entire socio-cultural, entertainment and religious worldview of the people. Masquerade in traditional African communities is seen as spiritual symbol that reflects the people's social and religious lives with deep ritualistic, sociological and entertainment functions and meaning.

Masquerades are generally identified with their masks. These masks set them apart from human beings as they are regarded as spirits rather than people (Ottenberg, 2006:50). Though most masquerades are individually recognizable by their manner of dancing, walking, singing, and in other ways, yet the fiction and myth are maintained that they are not really humans at all, but a specific form of spirit. Even if people know that the masked spirit is after all a human being, they keep such knowledge to themselves. To reveal that the masked spirit is a human being is regarded as an abomination. As Chinua Achebe observes in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (1975), people in a masquerading community in Igboland can tell who carries what mask, but they never talk about it. The glory and power of the masquerade seem to be constructed partly from the secrecy and sacredness accorded to cult knowledge. Achebe (1958) in *Things Fall Apart* presents this condition of cultural reinvention of knowledge:

> Okonkwo's wives, and perhaps other women as well, might have noticed that the second egwugwu had the springy walk of Okonkwo. And they might have also noticed that Okonkwo was not among the titled men and elders who sat behind the row of egwugwu. But if they thought these things they kept them within themselves. The egwugwu with the springy walk was one of the dead ancestors of the clan (63-64).

The mask is the most important part of the masquerade's performance, for it turns the man into a spirit and enhances its performance in other ways beyond the jurisdiction of a normal man. Mask and costume designs take several weeks of manual labour of intense dexterity before the performance can be adjudged ready for its audience. Masquerade, spirit being, incarnate being, masked ritual or whatever appellation that is ascribed to it, have periods of performance. Like Okagbue posited:

> Most African cultures south of the Sahara have a masking theatre tradition of one kind or another. It became clear in the course of looking at African masking that across this vast geographic landscape and different contexts, the practice show very close similarities in terms of their stories of origin, organizational structure and support, actual performance processes, and social and aesthetic functions (2007:14).

This peculiarity of masking tradition as posited by Okagbue is as a result of the universality of masquerade cultures in Africa. These festivals have both religious and social and entertainment values. The festivals are religious in concept and practice because the celebrations are essentially aimed at honouring and creating a reunion with the ancestors with the intention to achieve a desired result. Based on the belief that ancestors guard and protect them every day of the year, these festivals are designed for purposes of appreciating the ancestors and, in some cases, the gods of the land. This is why offerings and sacrifices are made to them for reverence and propitiation. It is also social because the festivals are entertaining with merrymaking, processions, eating, drinking, visiting and exchanging of gifts and general relaxation. This is where the relevance of the masquerade in the affairs and social realities of African people have continued to resonate even in the face of change in societies and among peoples. The masquerade has continued to adapt and shed off its ritual undertones in order to continue to serve the purposes of entertainment to a society in dire need of entertainment.

Masquerade seasons, functions and meanings can be deduced from its typologies. In a typical African society, there is social, initiation, violent, night and ritual masquerades. The social masquerades perform largely entertainment roles. The initiation masquerade is used for induction of boys who have come of age into adulthood. The violent masquerade is used as mechanism for the settlement of disputes, as communal sentry and also as age grade emissaries. The ritual masquerade is used to appease the gods, to celebrate the funerary rites of an old man and as messengers of the dead to the living. The night masquerade functions as a gadfly on social deviants. It satirizes, lampoons, caricatures and ridicules misbehaviours of people who are social misfits. Masquerades can perform at any period as deemed fit by its people. But generally, dry season is the major period for most masquerades. However, most initiation masquerades like Isi Iji, appear during the rainy season in Edda, Akpoha and some parts of Afikpo in Ebonyi State. Others appear during cultural events in communities, coronation of kings and in recent times during political rallies. The masquerade has also been classified based on its facial appeal as either good or bad.

Okoye identifies them as the 'good and the bad' (1986:27). The bad are malevolent and charmwielding masquerades whose nature of badness is usually manifested graphically in their physical outlook. Their facial and bodily features are terrifying. Their costumes are weird and in their hands is a club or machete used in their 'chase-and-run' performances. They wear all sorts of hideous and ridiculous costumes on which are attached charms and odious objects. Some of them are not to be seen by non-members of its immediate cult, non-initiates or women and children. These generally fall under the category of religious or ritual masquerades. On the other hand however, 'good' masquerades fall under the general category of the secular or entertainment masquerades. This does not mean that they have no religious or ritual underpinnings.

But generally speaking, they are good looking, with opulent and exotic costumes. Their major function is to dance and entertain the audience. However, all masquerade characters are primarily 'dead ancestors' and should be seen and respected as such. Rituals, in the form of prayers are usually performed before any masquerade character adorns its mask and appears before the audience (townspeople). This action is carried out to appease and propitiate divinities who are acclaimed custodians and protectors of the maskers. The differentiation observed in Okoye's assertion shall lead this study to pitch its tent within the good masquerade category, due largely to the fact that the continuous popularity attributable to the masquerade is not because of its bad attributes but due to its goodness enlivened in dance, music, mime, drumming, costumes, masks and other aesthetic features. Onuora Nzekwu avers that the masquerade has 'become an entertainment and a source of amusement in the lives of the African people' (1981:133). To understand this new development, one has to look back at Okoye's description of the bad masquerade above. Achebe also describes the masquerade as:

> looking terrible with the smoked raffia body, a huge wooden face painted white except for the round hollow eyes and the charred teeth that were as big as a man's fingers, with two powerful horns on its head. The performance was anything but friendly and entertaining (1958:105)

Nzekwu (1981) describes the atmosphere surrounding its performance as terror stricken that sent men, women and children scampering into the house and slamming the doors behind them.

Performance is a major attribute of the masquerade. A masquerade must necessarily perform before its audience. A masquerade is usually appreciated partly by its physical appearance, as this resonates the artistic talent and ingenuity of its creator, and more by the nature of its performance which gives its identity. Most performances are inherited from older members

of the masquerade group within the same clan. Some are learnt from other skilled master artistes from another village in the course of exchange of visits during festivals and on the satisfaction of agreed conditions. Masquerade performances are of various types but the most dominant are those that perform aesthetically using music, dance, drumming, mimicry, acrobatics, mime, magic and are costumed resplendently. While the music, song and dance are detailed, entertaining and highly expressive for some masquerades, in some, they are only supportive to other dominant artistic performance of the masquerade. As part of the performance, the masquerade could, to accompaniment of music and song, satirizes, dramatizes, improvise, impersonate, keep order, gossip, settle cases or legislate over quarrels.

Performances are usually rehearsed in the moonlight over a long time, at secluded venues, away from the prying eyes of women and non-initiates, in a bid to give the presentation the desired secrecy and form. According to Nwabueze (2011:84), in ancient African society, precisely in Igbo land, "the masquerade performances were intended to accomplish results." The intension of the natives was to communicate their wishes to the ancestors in order to change the state of things. The Igbo believed in the efficacy and impartiality of the masquerade. By invoking the masquerade as a final judge, the Igbo believed that they were invoking the ancestor who was symbolized in the masquerade. In many cleansing and appeasement rituals involving the masquerade, the natives were expectant of positive results at the end. The masquerade ritual, as carried out in pre-colonial African societies, did not of necessity require human audience. In the masquerade performance, especially in rituals performed to cleanse the society or request some help from the ancestors, the audience are the supernatural powers being addressed. The masquerade, the dancers, and the performers present at the ritual ceremony are the same in the sense that their intentions are the same – to communicate with supernatural forces in order to change the course of events for the better. The people who stood at the shrines during the performances should not be seen as a passive

audience but as passive actors. Their major intention, along with that of the active performers, was to woo the ancestors in order to achieve specific results. The demands of the living were thus clearly communicated to the supernatural forces through the ancestral spirits who, in this case, were masquerades.

Masquerade art has therefore changed and developed with its society and its peoples, appropriating extensively from virtually every aspect of their lives and domesticating in its strides western and oriental cultures (in the use of elaborate costumes and masks) and forms of entertainment to enrich its performance idioms. Its masks, costumes, dances, music, orchestras and spectacular performance seen recently in other festivals like festivals of arts and culture, rallies and carnivals attest to its transmutation from ritual to entertainment and from its groove cum arena space of performance to the road through processions. This steady introduction of the indigenous masquerade art into such new festivals like carnival, a new form of street festival theatre, reveals a marked shift from the norm and the acceptance and recognition of masquerade as an art form which can stand in competition with other art of its kind. This is based on its aesthetic and entertainment values and no longer on ritualistic functionalities of the old festivals. With the masquerade trying to adapt to the realities of the contemporary times, its performance nuances and styles have since changed to incorporate what the society accepts as the ideal.

Change is a phenomenon that is not akin to human beings alone. Art and more precisely, performing arts is more susceptible to change. As humans change so does their art. This change is well pronounced in the masquerade art. It is worthy to note that the amenability and social nature of the masquerade afford it the freedom to appropriate elements of other cultures to enrich itself in performance. There is no medium more closely associated with the masquerade art than the Carnival. The popularity of the carnival as a new genre of a popular

theatre tradition stems from its deployment of various performance forms characteristic of the indigenous festivals of Africa; music, costuming, masking, dancing, drumming, singing and processional style of entertainment on the go. These are the major attraction between the masquerade (an indigenous performance art form) and the Carnival (a new street festival recently added to the Nigerian cultural calendar). Carnival, a new brand of street festival was officially imported from the Caribbean Island of Trinidad and Tobago in 2005 by both the federal government under former President Olusegun Obasanjo and Cross River state government under the leadership of Mr. Donald Duke. This new brand has become the fad of the moment, as many states in Nigeria: Lagos, Rivers (CarniRiv), Benue, Ebonyi, Imo, Borno and Adamawa to mention but just a few, have keyed into carnival organization and celebration. This has paid off as these states have adopted this genre to keep alive their traditional performance forms which are almost going into extinction. The masquerade in its eclectic nature has realized that if it must continuously be relevant in its entertainment and aesthetic values, it must synergise with carnival in areas such as its form and content to enhance an aesthetically global appeal. This is thus, the reason behind the preponderance of its arts in Carnivals.

Carnival, which is a conscious attempt to celebrate life, is embedded in the African cultural lifestyle. Culture being the aggregate of a people's way of life, allows for public expressions of leisure and creativity seen in a carnival. Carnivals from the ancient period have served as a means of creative expression. It is described as an outdoor elaborate form of festivity that involves a show of different kinds of costumes and masks. Pearson and Shills perceive carnival, "as a space in which history as memory and national heritage are continually being made and remade" (2012: 34). The duo have gone further to suggest that culture distinguishes itself from other elements of action by the fact that it is intrinsically transmissible from one action system to the other by learning and by diffusion. Pearson and

Shills' assumptions underline the fact that most people who practice the carnival, for instance, borrowed the entire concept of the carnival or some aspects of it from other cultures of the world. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, "carnival is a world standing on its head" (1984:412). Since carnival and other festivities including masquerade are a product of culture, it is therefore assumed that each cannot do without the other hence their affinity. These ubiquitous similarities between the carnival and masquerade can be seen in such areas like; elaborate costuming, music, drumming, singing, design and processional style of performance. The carnivalisation of indigenous performance forms in most states of Nigeria has become the rave of the moment because its aim is to include more aspects of local heritage and traditions and at the same time strengthen the capacity of the natives to participate in a festival that celebrates their culture while enjoying its economic potentials. The carnival as a new festival is a global brand, where the indigenous masquerade art has found a platform where its waning relevance in the present performance equation can be revived through the deployment of its aesthetic and entertainment values. It is against this background that this research has set out to investigate the arts of the masquerade in these new festivals; Abuja Carnival and Carnival Calabar.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The masquerade phenomenon has witnessed more scholarly output than any other African indigenous performance form. Scholars such as Joel Adedeji (1971) and Yemi Ogunbiyi (1981) have studied these indigenous forms with special attention to their influence on the literary theatre in Africa. Conteh-Morgan and Olaniyan (2004) and Okagbue (2007) have studied the indigenous performances from the perspective of their contemporary variants. Ottenberg (1975) has studied the anthropology of Afikpo people through their Okumkpo masquerade performance; Bakary Traore (1972) has also studied the traditional African

theatre as a vehicle of thought that brings peoples together in celebration and mourning. Other scholars of masquerade art include Nnabuenyi Ugonna (1984), Meki Nzewi (1986), Ossie Enekwe (1987 and 2008), Victor Ukaegbu (1996 and 2007), Gowon-Ama (2006), Osita Okagbue (2007) and Chukwuma Okoye (1986, 2000, 2007, 2010a and 2010b). Even emergent contemporary theories have also been applied in the study of African theatre and performance forms especially using the postmodern indices (Losambe and Sarinjeive, 2001; and Nwosu (2014) suggesting that across Africa the socio-cultural and religious essence of masked performances are similar and they are tied to a people's culture and daily interactions. Alex Asigbo concludes that:

> These scholars have been concerned not only with masquerade costumes and speech but also its place in the peoples' socio-political and judicial life. Thus, from Ugonna Nnabuenyi, J.S. Illah, Robin Horton, Onuora Nzekwu, Jenkeri Okwori, and James Amankulor through to Romanus Egudu's seminal work on masquerade speeches…*Poetry of the Living Dead*, the ritual and sociology of the masquerade art has received and is still receiving robust attention as scholars continue to ponder this uniquely African heritage (2).

Similarly, with the translocation of the masquerade in carnivals, scholars have again engaged this new area of study from different academic angles. For instance, Esekong and Ekpeyong (2012), Esu Bassey and Arrey Mbaze-Ebock (2013) looked at the carnival against the parameter of tourists' satisfaction as cultural tourism and its potentials in the future, while Esekong, Agibe and Eneh (2014) studied Carnival Calabar with emphasis on float robotics design of Passion 4 Band. Margret Akpan (2014), studied the carnival within the premise of pattern composition on the Carnival King and Queen's costumes. In the same vein, Ajibade and Obongha (2012) investigated the carnival's colour and symbolism, while Jacob Udayi Agba (2013) studied the carnival within its implication for human rights protection in Nigeria. In all these abundant literatures in the carnival phenomenon, the only study that mentioned masquerade peripherally is Alex Asigbo's study of the transmutations in

Masquerades' Costumes and Performances in the 2010 Abuja Carnival and Okafor Ifeoma's comparative study of the 2011 and 2012 Abuja Carnival with emphasis on management successes of the two year-events. As bursting as literatures on indigenous masquerade art are, and from the trajectories of scholarly enquiries on these carnivals, this study identified a knowledge gap. Most of these scholarly enquiries were carried out before the advent of new Carnivals and so these previous studies examined the masquerade phenomenon based on its theatricality, ritualistic, literary, anthropological, dramatic, socio-cultural significance and thematic preoccupations. Their effort again centered on the wholesomeness of the masquerade performance without any significant attention channeled in studying the arts of the masquerade as components of the gestalt art of the masquerade. Furthermore, in recent studies in Carnivals, no scholarly effort has investigated the presence and attraction of the masquerade in these new street festivals. It is against this background that this study has set out to critically investigate the arts of the masquerade in new Nigerian Carnivals, especially in areas such as masquerade costume and mask designs; dance, music and drumming; mime and spectacle; acolytes and followership as well as audience-masquerade relationship based on their separate contributions to the overall performance analysis in the new Carnivals.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study undertakes a critical investigation of the arts of the masquerade in new Nigerian Carnivals. In pursuit of this aim the study has the following objectives.

- To offer fresh insights into the study of the masquerade in another platform other than the usual indigenous festivals and ceremonies.
- To establish carnival as a new form of festival and a popular genre of street theatre that provides a new platform for masquerade performances and serves as homing ground for the survival of indigenous masquerade arts.

- To establish that the arts of the masquerade, namely; dance, music, mime, acrobatics, costumes, masks, and spectacle can be studied separately as a part of the whole in the masquerade phenomenon.

- To underscore the continued relevance of the masquerade through the popularity identified in its eclectic and dynamic deployment of other art forms such as music, dance, drumming, song, spectacle, mask and costumes design in its performance.

- To establish the similarities between the masquerade and the carnival located in such areas as processions, use of masks, dances, songs, drumming, flamboyant and opulent costuming which are the major factors in their continued synergy on the contemporary performance space.

- To align with the submission that masquerades as representations of the ancestors must adapt to the ever increasing taste of contemporary audiences to be continuously relevant in the 21st century performance demands.

- To showcase the economic potential of the masquerade as a touristic fare and through its presence in new festivals expose its entertainment potentials.

1.4 Research Methodology

To effectively investigate the masquerade phenomenon in the new festival, few research methods are deployed due to the nature of the study which cuts across performance studies, cultural studies, carnival studies, masquerade art aesthetics and design. To this end, this research is guided by the visionthat “research is an interpretative enterprise whereby the investigator uses observations and… interviewing to grasp the meaning of communication by analyzing the perceptions, shared assumptions and activities of the social actors under

scrutiny" (Lull 1990: 183-184). This study adopted Participant observation, video monitoring and in-depth interview as its basic modes of data collection. Textual analysis was adopted in the reading of recorded versions of these performances which are commercially available on DVDs and VCDs in the market. Furthermore on reading of recorded performances, since the masquerades could not be reached, this study adopted an in-depth interview with the directors of the Carnival Directorate, some members of staff of the organizing body, some known participants, who were able to recollect and offer explanations on certain aspects/roles they played. This however, is with the intent to either validate or disprove the researcher's assumptions emanating from textual analysis and participant observation. However, the 'traditional research' method of consulting and interrogating literatures and the critical study of relevant works were explored in the areas of Performance, Theatre, Carnival and Festivalisation.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research embraces the arts of masquerade performances in carnivals described as new festivals in this study. Emphasis is on the Abuja and Calabar Carnivals. However, the preponderance of masquerades in these festivals limited the research to five masquerades within a seven-year period (2008-2014). These masquerades are:

a. Ijele, Agbogo mmuo, and Ugomma masquerades of Anambra and Enugu States.

b. Ekpo and Ekpe Masquerades from Akwa Ibom and Cross River States.

Seven-year period of the carnival in Abuja and Calabar 2008 to 2014 were selected to serve as the major focus of this research. The masquerades selected for study; Ijele, Agbogho Mmuo and Ugomma Masquerades from Anambra and Enugu States featured in Abuja

Carnival within the periods under investigation, Ekpo and Ekpe Masquerades from Cross River and Akwa Ibom states also featured in both Abuja and Carnival Calabar within the same periods under investigation.

Each of these periods demonstrated a gradual rise in state contingent's registration in masquerade events for such prizes like: Best costume in Masquerade Event, Best Masquerade Performance and Most Spectacular Masquerade. As interests to win prizes by States increased, there was gradual decline in States' participation especially from 2012 – 2014 due to security challenges orchestrated by Boko-Haram terrorism and insurgency in the Northern part of the country and kidnapping and armed banditry in the Southern part of the country. However, it was within these areas of adjudication that the arts of the masquerade; dance, music, mime, spectacle, masks and costume designs were investigated in the carnivals.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Although there exist rich literatures on masquerades in Africa and in Nigeria particularly, as evidenced in newspaper reviews, exhibition catalogues, pamphlets, journals and books, but to the best of this researcher's knowledge, there have been little or no attempts to investigate the arts of the masquerade in new Nigerian festivals, such as the Abuja and Calabar Carnivals. These two carnivals pride themselves as the largest street party in Africa, and have continuously grown in leaps and bounds in both monetary returns and entertainment values. Therefore, this study is significant in the following areas:

i. It is one of the pioneer research investigations undertaken at this level of academic pursuit since no known academic quest has been directed to investigate the arts of the masquerade in Abuja and Calabar Carnivals.

ii. It will contribute to the volume of existing literatures on the masquerade phenomenon in Africa and Nigeria as well as serve as an invaluable document to Nigeria's Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Carnival Directorates in the areas of research.

iii. In research, it would serve as a starting point for further research in related fields since very few literatures exist in the areas of masquerades in new festivals in Nigeria. iv.Specifically, the study will stimulate a deeper reawakening of consciousness for a continuous integration of indigenous performance forms in the new festivals to avoid their gradual extinction.

iv. It will contribute to knowledge in the areas of dance, music, song, mask and costume designs by serving as a resource material to be consulted when the need arises. vi.Hopefully also, this study shall be important to researchers in the areas of Cultural Studies, Performance Art, Visual Art, Dance Art, Mask and Costume Designs.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Literature on masquerade performances in indigenous festivals abounds in the African continent. In the very beginning, arguments about its validity as drama and or theatre in the corpus of African indigenous performance forms thrust up scholarly investigations amongst Nigerian scholars. This resulted in the emergence of three schools of thought: the evolutionist, the relativist and the referentialist who articulated different positions about the theatricality, dramatic, literary viability and credibility of African festivals within the benchmark of its foreign counterparts (Ogunbiyi, 1981). This argument about the interface between western theatre and the residual indigenous performance forms are yet to be resolved and have continuously generated staggering literature that reviewing such entire corpus will not only derail this exercise but also be a dauntingly task. The African continent is wide, with its varied masking traditions, forms, types, styles and contexts of performance. Undertaking a review of the entire oeuvre of Africa's masquerade culture will be a daunting task. It is therefore; against this background that reviewing of existing literatures on this research will dwell on studies carried out on masquerades in new festivals. However, there is dearth of literature in new festivals. This follows the fact that, new festival as the phrase alludes is 'new' in the lexicon of performances in Africa and more so, in Nigeria. Maybe, outside Africa what it suggests is a possible festivalisation of cultures by which theorists suggest a new way of proliferating and showcasing cultural products in city centres at every slightest opportunity. This spread of cultural festival in cities has led to a corresponding growth of tourism including that which is occasioned by carnival. Scholars like Owe Ronstrom (2011), Sauter Hauptfleisch (2014),

Graham St John (2015), Jennie Jordan (2012) and Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor and Ian Woodwad (2014) have all enquired on how festivals have become dominant and ascribed to the gathering of large people where cultural products including music and cuisine are traded. This position is contrary to what festivals mean in Africa, especially one which has appropriated masquerades. As far as this study is concerned, these scholars are not concerned with the African concept of festival. The only possible way of appropriating this scenario to Nigeria, should be to link it to the introduction of Carnivals in virtually all State Capitals in Nigeria, such as Calabar, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Benin, Adamawa, Bornu, Owerri, Abakaliki and Abuja. In all of these, the purpose is the same; to celebrate life in all its flamboyancy, characterized by elaborateness and resplendent costume and masks, spectacle and entertainment which are ensconced in the spirit of peoples' cultural past, enlivened and embodied in the presence of the masquerade.

2.2 Carnival and the Carnivalesque

In reviewing Mikhail Bakhtin's carnival and the carnivalesque theory as it borders on this study, the following views are sacrosanct. The theory accepts the democratization spirit of 'freedom of expression' made possible through elaborate costuming, masking, merrymaking, ribaldry, bawdiness, laughter, profanity, movement, transparency, abundance of mirthful humour, breaking of rules that occur through gender and status roles subversions. These and more can be said of the masquerades in new festivals. For instance, in the masquerade typologies in new festivals, there are animal masquerades (elemma, atumma, akum, ugomma,), masquerades of facial abstraction (ijele, onu ka mma, agaba), couple masquerades, (onuku, agbogho mma, ada mma, ńchatańcha, nchi-ekwa) and many different feminine masquerade genus. Each is allowed the creativity to mask and perform with ease and freedom. According to Bakhtin, carnival works like a dress rehearsal for better times. It

allows the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves. In this wise, carnival breaks down barriers and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid (Bakhtin, 1984:108-109). The Russian linguist and literary critic coined the catchword ‘carnivalesque’ many decades ago to refer to the nature of the carnival, a time in which normal social regulations and restraints are temporarily suspended. Bakhtin reveals that the occasion of carnival is valuable in its ability to produce a social condition, however fleeting, of equality and freedom, a reversal of all the cultural norms that carefully structure everyday lives. According to him, the carnivalesque is a primary outgrowth of ‘folk’ or popular culture that the common people take part in and help to form. In his words:

> Carnivals were related to one of the religious rituals, it was the last blowout before Lent. It was a time of excess, when the prohibitions on carnal satisfaction are abolished and popular creative energy is given full expression in the form of costumes, masks, songs, dances, puppet shows, poems, plays, etc (1984: 487). Society is in normal circumstances, ruled by the "head", hierarchy is not only suspended but inverted.... The village idiot becomes king; sinners in priestly vestments preach nonsensical or blasphemous sermons (1984:488).

The popular tradition of carnival was believed by Bakhtin to carry a particular wisdom which can be traced back to the ancient world. During carnivals, rank, a major deciphering factor and a pervasive tradition in medieval society, is abolished and everyone is equal. Carnival offered, ‘a temporary refusal of the official world’ (Bakhtin, 487). Bakhtin further submits that the carnival in the Middle Ages was more than a festive occasion; it was an opportunity for the population to express themselves loudly and clearly and to temporarily overthrow the established order and power, as well as the guiding principles of the social and material world. Revelers therefore, transformed their identity through costumes and masks, and indulged in sensual pleasures in the public sphere; food, drink, even sexual display or play. The vulgarity of the body took precedence over the disembodiment of the spirit, crude

expression interrupted refined conversation, delirium reigned, and reason was suspended. Excessive drinking and eating, together with dancing and games celebrated and were indicative of the irrepressible life force, ever changing in its vitality, as expressed in carnivalesque masquerade. These various phenomena, all tied to basic instincts, excess, and the materiality of the body and the things that surrounded it were carriers, for the duration of the festivities, of ripe fertility and abundance. According to Bakhtin, the medieval celebration of carnival went beyond its Christian function to post a secular-social front. It was a liberating time in the restrained culture of feudal Northern Europe.

It is against this background that the words of Esiaba Irobi reveal the doggedness and determined resistance of Africa, Africa diaspora and the rest of those who suffered the excruciating pains of slavery deep at the plantation of the brave New World. To him:

> They have been able to do this because carnival opens up spaces for communality and mass participation despite societal differences in terms of class, race, colour, income, intellectual pretensions, or the memories from the lacerations of history (Irobi, 2007:901).

May we assert in all fairness that this carnival tradition that has overtaken Europe and North America is a true reflection and reinvention of the indigenous African festival, which, according to Irobi, "is complete with masquerades, extraordinary costumes, intoxicating music, and suggestive, insinuating, liberating dancing. Its appeal lies in the great release it gives to the body politic through participation, dressing up, and dancing." (2007:903). Thefunctions of the body to the African, especially as regards its deployment to diverse artistic uses, support Irobi's assertion that:

> It is therefore because the body is the primary instrument for incubating, articulating, and expressing all ideas as well as transporting all art, be it music, drama, literature, electronic messages, theater, festival, or carnival, that I want to argue that it is through phenomenology and kinaesthetic literacy (i.e., the use of the medium of the body as a site of cultural signification) that crucial aspects of indigenous African festival theater were translocated to the New World (Irobi, 2007:900-901).

In recent years, Carnival has become an act of incorporation and atonement. It has become a ritual of purgation and regeneration, cleansing the blood and sores of slaves and serfs from sidewalks in Europe, the Caribbean, and the Americas. Politically, Carnival has come to represent a collective and dynamic process of subjectivity and creativity that enables Africans in the Diaspora to engage, rethink, redefine themselves, and act out the contradictions of their histories. Irobi concludes that:

> This is all so evident in different parts of the African Diaspora where Carnival, a hybridized derivative of African festival and ritual theater, has come to represent a performative retheorizing of individualism and alienation - the twin ethos and punishment of Western capitalist ontology (Irobi, 2007:899).

Irobi, like Bakhtin, also identifies the two sides of carnival, only that he introduces the African angle to his elocution. He declares:

> Carnival has a double-faced template. It reinforces the concealed spiritual, more esoteric, and religious concerns of the culture that produces it and strengthens its notions of identity, communality, liminality, and continuity. At the same time, as in the African context, it reveals and revels in the more playful dimensions of the society's psyche, invests richly in the spectacular, what Walter Benjamin calls the "exhibitionistic" side to art, which includes clowning, ribaldry, irreverent activities, raising the leg, playing the devil, stick fighting, and symbolic gender reversals that make psychic and sexual liberation and catharsis possible. In all its undertaking, the human body remains the ultimate arbiter of signs and information as well as the major phenomenological instrument for this process of historicizing the complexity of African diasporic subjectivity (Irobi, 903-904).

From the foregoing, one can conclude that the many carnival traditions spread across Europe, Britain, North America and Canada are true reflections of how far African culture and the rest of the enslaved nations of the third world were translocated. It will be worthwhile to elaborate further on Esiaba Irobi's position on the spread of carnival, an offshoot of the African festival tradition.

> By 1881, the Africans had so totally revolutionized carnival that the Whites, who used their own limited notion of the liberating potential of carnival to practice apartheid, had joined in the celebration and were now dancing African bamboula, gouiba, and calinda dances and even parodying or pretending to be Africans as part of their own performance. Today, Carnival has spread to other islands in the Caribbean and even migrated to North America and Europe (903).

Mikhail Bakhtin may have established how carnival can be read through his carnivalesque theorizing, however, domesticating it within African local content and context where masquerade, African dance, songs, poetry, and other forms of African indigenous art can be studied within the same critical postulations like the carnival was Esiaba Irobi's reply to the many negative readings of the African diaspora and their pasts. After all, many large festivals like the carnival are produced by locals for global markets. Carnival impacts on all people due to its dynamism. Thus, according to Bakhtin, "carnival is not a performance, and does not differentiate the spectator from the performer. All people who take part in the carnival "live it" but it is not an extension of the "real world" or "real life" but rather, as he puts it, "the world standing on its head", the world upside down. For Bakhtin, the "carnivalesque" is an aspect of the medieval celebration which he described as "carnival," the period of "licensed misrule" in which ordinary citizens could mock and defame the acknowledged authorities of church and state. A form of "theater without footlights" in which everyone participates through pageants, parades, and spectacles, the carnival undermines the concept of authoritative utterance and indulges in the rituals of crowning and de-crowning of fools,

mockery of all and sundry, foul language, the energetic utterance of nonsense, and the degrading of everything usually held as noble or sacred.

2.3 Masquerade Performance in Africa

Okeke Agulu Chika's introduction in *Maske* captures the wholesomeness of the masking tradition in Africa:

> Masking is one of the most complex and secretive, yet profoundly important phenomena in Africa. Western anthropologists were attracted to it during the early 20th century for what it revealed about the social structures, political practices and ritual systems of colonized peoples, while artists and art historians tended to focus on the aesthetics. Since that time, systematic study of masking from broad disciplinary perspectives has yielded much about its religious, political and social functions, but has also enabled us to examine the many dimensions of masking as artistic and theatrical impulses (Okeke-Agulu, 2010:3).

Africa is home to different masquerade traditions and festivals. Masking is a phenomenon that is inherent in the African child. From the very time a child is able to run, his first instinct is to cover his face with any leaf, a cane in right hand and a coned percussive instrument on the left and together with other children start the art of masking and performance. Ottenberg and Binkley have this to say:

> The acquisition of masquerade knowledge and performance skills in childhood helps prepare youths for their initiations, and for later adult masquerade activities and rituals. The child who has had some years of experience as a masquerader goes into initiation, not as a naïve individual, but as one with useful skills, making use of these during his own *rite de passage* and his adult masquerading life (2006:3).

The child runs around though naked yet with a covered face showing the attachment the male child has to his tradition of masking. His audience may not be anything aside the mother and his female siblings, while his stage will be no more than her mother's frontage, but surely there is a performance. Very often the mother or his sisters serve as the people who make him up as the masquerade. Ottenberg and Binkley reveal that in the children's

masking, “parents and older persons support their activities” (2006:4). Okoye also elaborates further on the general dispositions of the family towards masquerade outing of any member:

> …it is a tradition supported by the women who are involved in the knowledge and practice in ways that are not demonstrably evident. They support and encourage their sons and spouses and often contribute thematically and materially to the making of the performances (1986:61).

First of all, every male member of the community gets to ‘know’ the secret of the masquerade at a certain age (1986:61). So, from the very beginning of life, the male child exhibits the urge and traces of masking which, when he grows up, he will be initiated into the different stages that come with their own demands. Ottenberg and Binkley clarify on this assertion:

> Children’s pre-initiation masquerades assist the young in developing a sense of cooperation with children their own age. They come to realize, if they have not already done so through other experiences, that their African society is age-graded. The children’s age mates in masquerading often remain their age mates through their adolescent initiation and for a long time (2006:4).

The mask tradition in Africa as has been observed can safely be said to be a deep rooted tradition supported by all in varying degrees of attachments. Masking culture in Africa is also a multifaceted potpourri of strands, aspects and components coming together for a unified whole. Ododo (2019) captures the diversity of the African masquerade in details to include:

> The mask secret cult with its secret language codes and signs, tangible and intangible strands of juju, forces and magic, paraphernalia and accoutrements, rules, laws, and taboos, songs, dances, chants, actuators, and performers, mask regalia and costumes, etc. all these more or less, depending on region, culture, people and society, and peculiarities of historicity and contemporaneity, help the mask institution perform roles ranging from entertainment, through votary mediation, to enforcing law and order. Sometimes it could also manifest as a mix of all the above mentioned and more (IV).

Masquerade is a significant part of the cultural expressions identifiable with major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Among the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria, masquerade performance is unarguably the most popular form of communal cultural expression today. It features in practically every communal festival in both traditional Igbo and Christian calendars, such as the ubiquitous New Yam Festival and Christmas and Easter celebrations (Okoye, 1986:60). Obododimma Oha avers that extended studies on the Igbo masquerade by Nnabuenyi Ugonna (1984), has drawn attention to the different categories of the masquerade, and shows that the Igbo make a distinction between the type that represent the presence of dead ancestors, and which are revered and believed to emerge from ant holes, and the type that is secular and for which no pretense is made about their carriers being human. The latter type is always differently costumed and may not disguise its human features, whereas in the case of the former, there is an attempt at iconizing its non-human nature, particularly the use of features that instill awe and fear. Both traditions are, however, mimetic and semiotic: they are forms of representation. Nevertheless, the more secular and social masquerades are sometimes parodic and satirical: they may represent exaggerations of situations in humans.

The purpose of masquerade can be to entertain, sing praises of achievers, to chastise evil-doers, to bring messages of hope, peace or warn of impending disaster, to mourn the dead or to receive a special newborn, to grace a ceremonial occasions like a coronation, political rally and many social events in the community. Against this background, the masquerade's veneration and revered persona conjures memories and stimulates a wide range of emotions; of awe, reverence and deference culminating in a communal attachment to tradition. It is a truism that masquerades have the highest level of liberty to perform without restrictions in virtually all African indigenous communities where they perform. No one fights a masquerade, or unmasks it. And no one has the right to identify the person under the mask, even when one knows the identity of the masquerade. Once under the mask, he becomes

sacred, a person used to embody the spirit. Grace Okafor (1991:39) asserts that “as an instrument of disguise, the mask serves as the principal device for the invocation of the supernatural. As soon as an actor dons a mask, he is transformed on physical and spiritual levels. On the physical level, the mask conceals the identity of the wearer.” The audience may guess or know the actor but such knowledge is not discussed in public. Amankulor states that:

> It would be naive to suggest that the spectators do not know or cannot guess the identity of the masked performers. They do know and do guess at who are behind the masks, but that knowledge is not openly discussed. It is a convention not to discuss the identity of masked performers openly or else some evil could befall the culprit. But the major reason is to protect the dignity of the performance and for the spectator to enjoy it in a proper manner (1982:54).

A taboo protects the actor and aids the depiction of the supernatural quality with which the mask invests the character. In Mmonwu theatre among the Igbo, for example, the mask signals the "mystic emanation of the spirit" (Ugonna, 1984:34). Conceptually, Igbo masquerade characters are ancestors or spirit forces that have taken on material form and returned to the human plane at the invitation of the living. (Okagbue, 2007:19). Ordinarily they can be regarded as men dressed in weird and strange costumes. In our different traditional backgrounds the sight of masquerades reveal a visit from the spirit world to world of humans. Okoye underscores this importance when he asserts that:

> Generally, masquerades are figured as ancestral characters who presumably take on physical forms on the invitation of the community to participate in important communal ceremonies or perform specific social or religious roles. As supernatural beings they are received with awe and reverence, and credited with supernal knowledge and power (1986:60).

The masquerade though a major force in African customs and lore, is not seen every day. It appears occasionally and its periods of performance or presentation differs from one socio-

cultural milieu to another. They are seen mostly during festivals, either annual or seasonal, such as new-yam festivals, king's coronation, cult (initiation rites) or professional celebrations. Until recently, it assumed political and socio-religious connotations and underpinnings. Nwadigwe (1999:21) asserts that masquerades are manifestations of a culture's beliefs, a product of their mythopoeic tendencies and artistic impulse. Masked performances often involve dance and ritual and serve the usual functions (secular or sacred) associated with African traditional theatre. There is an avalanche of literature – Enekwe (1987), Nzewi (1986), Onuora (1981), Echeruo (1981), Ugonna (1984), David Kerr (1995), Okagbue (2007), Gowon (2006), Okoye (2007, 2010a and 2010b), suggesting that the masquerade is an African indigenous performance form. The ideological manifestations of this indigenous theatre are inextricably connected with the traditional conceptualizations of masquerade character, its social functions and dramatic skills, its relationship with the audience and many more. Ifeanyi Ugwu established these connections in the workings of the masquerade thus:

> The traditional ideating of the masquerades as spirits of ancestors, informs its connections with religious and spiritual ideologies. Their social functions and dramatizations point at its ethical, semiotic, and aesthetic ideologies, while its audience relationship portrays its patriarchal standards. The audience factor also portrays the masquerade's communalist ideology (2011:19).

All over Nigeria and indeed Africa, the socio-cultural and political essence of masked performances are similar and they are tied to a people's daily interactions, festivals and seasonal rites of passage. Okagbue maintains this position on the ubiquitous nature of the masquerade in Africa in these words:

> The masquerade theatre is the form most likely to be found all over the African continent. The major extant masking traditions in Africa today are: in Nigeria, the mmonwu of the Igbo; the Egungun and the Gelede masquerades of the Yoruba; the Ekine of the Kalabari; the Okumkpo of the Afikpo; the Okonko and the Ekpe of Ngwa, Ohafia, Arochukwu and Arondizuogu, and the Ekpo of the Ibibio; in Sierra Leone, the Ode-lay and Mammiwata in Freetown; the Dana of Dogon, the Do and Koteba of the Bamana and the Bozo, all found in Mali; further afield in Eastern and Southern Africa, the Gule Wa Mkulu of the Chewa of Malawi and Zambia; the Makisi of Angola and Zimbabwe; the Nkonde of Mozambique and Tanzania
> (2007:13).

Most African cultures south of the Sahara have a masking theatre tradition of one kind or another. Looking at African masking theatre across this vast geographical landscape and its contextual application, the practices show very close similarities in terms of their stories of origin, organizational structure and support, actual performance process, and social and aesthetic functions (Okagbue 2007: 13). In Igbo masking theatre, for instance, Okagbue maintains that "women are never initiated and so can never participate as performers, since only through initiation can individual acquire the basics and the authority to perform" (2007:18). And Okoye agrees to this when he asserts that, "the Masquerade is ostensibly a male secret society affair" (1986:61). The reason for this may not be far-fetched as women are generally regarded as the weaker sex, feeble minded and loquacious. Therefore, the fear that the workings of the masking art which is guarded jealously by men is likely to be made open by women's inability to keep secrets is a possible consideration why women are not let into the secret art of masking theatre. On the other hand, women are regarded as unclean, especially during their menstrual cycles. Men tend to keep away from them, and at extreme cases do not even eat from them until after such periods. Some masking performances abhor going close to women prior to its performance. Thus the masked performers are secluded from their wives before going into performances. Women can be spectators, but for them the mechanics of masking and control is shrouded in mystery and secrecy. The mystery of the

being of the masquerader and preservation of the secrecy and sacredness of cult knowledge in this respect enable the masquerade to function in political and social spheres as an agent of conflict resolution and peace building, to police the land and to create solidarity in the community through the many sanctions it wields. Ironically, Okagbue points out "that without the female spectators, Igbo masking theatre would lose a lot of its fun and impetus" (2007:25). Women and children of the age bracket of non-initiates serve the bulk of the audience in any African masquerade performance. The spectators' presence, interjections, shouts, choruses and mood heighten the importance of the performer and influence him in a way that is alien to the Western stage. (Grace Okafor, 1991:23). Whereas Euro-American actors might be disturbed by slight noises made by the audience, traditional performers welcome ululations, clapping, singing, and other signs of appreciation and encouragement or even disaffection.

Masquerade in Africa could be likened to what Patrick Idoye (1986) calls "Social Action Theatre", a functional theatre which is relevant to the people's life style and generally contributes to the overall development of the African society. As a result of the emphasis placed on the functional worth of a performance by Africans, the basic standard for judging an African performance is the social significance of the production, though such aspects like the religious, ritualistic, materialistic, entertainment are fully embedded in the performance. This means that any performance which does not take into account the social milieu that generated it would be irrelevant and would not excite audiences. Everywhere in Africa, there are theatrical performances which are expressions of the various ethnic groups in the bid to comprehend and interpret their social realities. Even when these cultures have come across the effect of modernization and change, they have adapted their performing idioms to accommodate these new encounters. Ossie Enekwe elucidates further:

> Every community has its own culture and obligation to maintain it. It is the surest way of ensuring stability and peace. I do not object to foreign influences; after all, no culture can grow without them. But I deplore a cultural contact that leads to the destruction of our culture, thereby inducing in our people a sense of rootlessness. We need a modern theatre that has its roots in the Nigerian soil and can therefore absorb foreign elements without losing its own character. We must insist that the Nigerian culture be the medium within which synthesis of values occurs so that the indigenous culture does not become a mere shadow of the European culture (2008:25).

Socio-politically, the masquerade theatre has been at the vanguard of conscientizing members of the society against social vices. The Akpoha-Afikpo Okumkpo performed after the dry season is rightly described as "Afikpo theatre par excellence" by Simon Ottenberg, who writes that "the essence of the play is the ridicule and satirizing of real persons and topical events, clothed in ritualized and superficially religious terms" (1975:129). Okumkpo presents an opportunity for the youths to confront their elders over issues bordering on their welfare which they cannot say openly for fear of victimization. As masked performance, the mask is a façade to perform with freedom against social injustices. The social dimension of Okumkpo masquerade performance is made clear by Simon Ottenberg:

> The criticisms in the play serve to control the elders' behavior, to cut down and level off the tendency of individuals to develop power and move toward a rank of individualism, which is considered destructive to the community's *utilitarian mode of communal living* (1975:135). Emphasis added.

Another example of the overt political function of masquerade performance is provided by the *Eegun alare,* masked players of the Yoruba, who are said to have grown out of political crises. According to Ogundeji, "the first performance was used for satirical and didactic purpose to reprimand and teach the erring members of the Oye-mesi ruling council a lesson. The people believe in the masquerade as a "citizen of heaven, a divinity…," and its reverence "is further enhanced rather than diminished by its theatrical and dramatic involvement" (2000:22). Ogundeji is of the view that "the involvement of the heavenly father in

entertainment and edification through the *Eegun alare* performances also helps in the balancing of the emotions of the individual and the society as a whole." Ogundeji's elocution is premised on the fact that:

> The Eegun alare are also regarded as custodians of the moral, history and their general culture of the society through their performances. They are said to be contributing both to social unity and peace, and to the unity of man and the spiritual world. It is on this basis that we submit that the masquerade as a performer does not diminish in reverence in a dramatic situation; rather, his presence compels some degree of apparent respectability to the dramatic situation (2000:22).

The Tiv Kwagh-Hir is another example of what Hagher (1990) calls "confluence of theatre and political action in society", because it was used to facilitate the Tiv revolt of 1960 and 1963. According to Hagher:

> The organization of the grass political party, the U.M.B.C, was similar to the cellular structure of the Kwagh-hir. The Tiv people turned on other members considered agents of governmental repression in Tiv-land. They burnt their houses, farms and food stores. As they did this, they were dressed in the costumes similar to those worn by the Kwagh-hir players (1990:86-7).

For well-established institutions or societies, indigenous drama and performance forms are indispensable instrument for social and political control. Thus, Gorelick in Enekwe adds that "partisan propaganda is the order of the day in modern theatre." The cleavage between nationalist states, the conflict in interests between capital and labour, the distress caused by economic failure, gave added occasion for the use of theatre as outright propaganda (2008:10). Art, according to Ossie Enekwe (2008:11), has been described "as a catalyst for change and transformation." We acknowledge the importance of entertainment, for as Eric Bentley (in Enekwe 2008:11) explains, "it is because art is fun that it can succeed in being didactic, for there is no true teaching except in eagerness, amusement, delight, inspiration" (2008:11) This is true of all art forms including the masquerade in traditional African societies.

2.4 Dynamism and Eclecticism in the Masquerade Aesthetics

The onslaught on masquerade by the Europeans through their tripartite approaches of education, commerce and religion interplayed to stifle growth, development and continuity of indigenous performance forms in Africa. This is because the masquerade is one indigenous art form that has survived and continuously become part of the historical past as well as the future of performance in Africa. The masquerade has survived in the face of challenging contemporary performance realities of the modern times. This review shall dwell on the following; performance nuances, costuming and mask design, performers, audience receptivity to changes in masquerade performance etc. and how these have positioned the masquerade on better a pedestal for what Nwosu (2014:2) terms African postmodernism. Scholars of African indigenous performance forms including the masquerade have shifted their attention from the over flogged issue of ritual as theatre to more contemporary and topical issues around the masquerade and its survival in the modern performance space.

In pre-historic times and deep into the lives of the Africans that survived the debilitating effect of colonial emasculation, masquerade performance was a seasonal affair; during festivals like the new yam, New Year, initiation into manhood, rites of passage for young people and even in honour of one god or another. Nwabueze elucidates further on this position:

> In the earliest period of its evolution, masquerade performances were presented as ritual and the enactment was faithfully carried out in order to ensure that the expected results are realized. For instance, in the funeral of a titled man, the masquerade performance has a bipartite role: to entertain the audience, and to perform the ritual that would enhance the dead man's journey to the land of the ancestors (2011:114).

To the casual observer, it is mere entertainment. But to an informed observer, it is an entertainment that uniquely captures a people's relationship with the gods of their existence. As ritual for the dead (gods) and entertainment for the people, masquerade has always been

subjected to a duality of purpose in African performance cycle. This is more pronounced in Yoruba mythology where the masquerade performer is seen as a mediator between temporal and spiritual domains of existence. Omojola captures the situation elaborately:

> Yoruba masquerade performances are particularly illustrative of such mediatory roles. The masker, usually a male, physically relates to the human audience who follows, tease, praise, observe, and perform with him. He must also relate to the divine presence of the ancestral forces that he embodies. The masker, just like the drummer, or the singer, performs within religious rituals, thereby navigating a balance between the two different modes of experience that he connects. For while, on the one hand, he must deal with esoteric narratives and age-long rituals that communicate directly with deities, he must, on the other hand, also respond and relate to the social situations within which religious rituals derive meaning in real life terms. As liminal agents inhabiting the threshold of these two spaces, the Yoruba performer connects the living with the spiritual; life with death; body with soul; as well as the aesthetic with the divine (Omojola, 2010:29).

This position on liminality differs considerably from what Okoye describes as 'the body of my friend' in his study of liminal presence in Igbo Masquerade theatre. He reveals within this premise that the Igbo masquerader knows that he is operating within two personalities (of himself and the character of the masquerade he represents) and knows when to control his excesses. This speculation is akin to a situation whereby a masked character over plays his role and steps out of bounds of a spirit and dares his capacity as a mere mortal behind the mask. To this end it becomes necessary that both audience and performers maintain consciousness of material reality despite being carried away by the spectacular display of the masquerade. Okoye reveals that:

> At the level of performance, the liminality of the performing subject is better understood. And the performer himself oscillates somewhere between these knowledges; between a consciousness of Self and of Other, between his subjectivity and his presentation of a fictional character (2013:9)

The inference from Okoye's position above is that masquerade's performance is subject to the ability of the mask carrier and not necessarily because it is assumed to be a spirit

incarnate with such powers as to do the extraordinary. In both Okoye and Omojola's submissions, one thing is deducible; the dynamic and eclectic nature of the masquerade in performance has been established.

Commenting on the interaction between the spiritual and the social in African masquerade rituals, Kasfir in Omojola, explains that "most African masquerades signify something beside the basic visual and the performative act of a person in a costume playing before an audience" (2010:18). In addition to the visual and sonic experience generated through the use of some combination of facial disguise, costume, body decoration, props, movement, vocalization and drumming, a masquerade outing is premised on a structure of belief system in African mythology which typically associates this illusion with the embodiment of a spirit or, in certain places, the appearances of reincarnated ancestor. Drewal, who had studied the *egungun* ritual performances of the Yoruba people in her expositions on the impersonatory concept of the egungun masquerade asserts that "(w)hen Yoruba people say that they perform ritual just like their ancestors did it in the past, improvisation is implicit in their recreation or restoration" (1992:23).

However, modernity, development and secularization in the staging of masquerade have led to the reformation and modification of ritualistic ties that bonded masquerade with the natives.

According Amankulor:

> Some traditional performances as we see them today have ceased to be actively associated with the traditional religion and ritual, but they still retain a great deal of their original ritual structures. Entertainment, more than anything else, is their principal objective. It would therefore, be necessary to bear this in mind, relative to the contemporary structure of the performances (1986:41).

Amankulor's position suggests a departure from the norm which, according to Nwosu, means that traditional festivals like masquerade performances shall be taken beyond their traditional indigenous contexts to the recent multicultural and postmodernist narratives. This quest for African postmodernism is in line with traditional African performances which de-emphasize text and project African performance as a total theatre.

Looking at masquerade performance in recent times, a lot has changed. The change is traceable to the need for the continued relevance of this age long indigenous performance. This change is also as a result of changes in cultural practices which the dynamic and eclectic nature of the masquerade appropriates. Okagbue enthuses further:

> The indigenous forms (masquerades) are constantly reviewing and revising themselves in response to their ever changing historical and cultural contexts. They withstood the concerted assaults of colonial politics and those of Christians and Islamic religions by engaging with, adapting and incorporating these intruding elements into their universe as a means of domesticating and coping with them (2007:10).

Despite the assault of the colonial state and the church, the phenomenon of the African masquerade performance has survived and continues to satisfy the new conditions imposed by the demise of colonialism. One that has taken on an outlook that is multicultural with aesthetic and global appeal. In these festivals, is the preponderance of masquerade whose dominant artistic dispositions align with the performing resources of the festivals.For example, some masquerade performances have been taken over by the state and professional bodies. This in a way has helped to achieve greater development in creativity and aesthetics.

Nwbueze reveals that:

> The take-over of the performances by the village professionals caused the Christian converts to take interest in the perormances, since the performances have been stripped of anything that would provoke religious opposition. In many parts of Igbo land, Christians now audition for selection as masqueraders. When selected, they see themselves as actors imitating and impersonating a character (2011:88-9).

Since it has become obvious that entertainment and edification are the main thrusts of the masquerade performances, efforts are geared towards making a good and an improved entry by the different village professional groups as this will ensure an increase in their take-home pay. These groups now partake in state organized occasions like state cultural arts festivals, national festivals and cultural competitions. The inclusion of masquerade performances in these festivals marks the recognition that masquerade performance is art, and can stand in competition with other arts of its kind. Okabgue captures the dynamic and eclectic world of Igbo masquerade as it borders on its postmodernist and multicultural performance disposition. Using the Ijele masquerade to underscore its importance to Igbo socio-cultural worldview, Okagbue observes:

> The Ijele masquerade of the Igbo exhibits an almost irreverent postmodernist appropriation of alien materials and threats in a process of discursive containment. Ijele successfully absorbed the colonial experience and presence of late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, and of late has taken on board the jet bombers, fighters and military personalities of Nigeria's three-year civil war of 19767-1970. At the time I saw it again in 1997, it was already beginning to acknowledge and assimilate the presence of computers, satellite dishes and communication masts of the eighties and nineties era. In this way the Ijele is able to perform its primary role of representing the entirety of the Igbo universe. In its climatic dance at the end of each performance is usually a gigantic and graceful swirling movement reflecting mirrors and images through which it is able to reveal to all spectators a concatenation of key moments, objects and personalities of accumulated Igbo communal experience and history. Thus, Ijele, like the Igbo universe, which it represents, and like itself, grows in size as it encounters and negotiates with history (2007:10).

The masquerade in recent times does not only encounter and negotiate with history but with itself, the followers/acolytes and the audience in a constant revelation of the elasticity of the performance space and of performance itself. For instance, African performative art involves performers or masquerades in traditional festivals that are itinerant artistes who perform from one village arena to another and where the audience is not only audience but plays key roles in the course of a performance. Edwin Wilson identifies the role of the audience in a theatre experience thus:

> Audience and performers are the two basic elements in the theatre equation, and both are essential. The presence of the audience is what sets theatre apart from other forms of entertainment such as film and television. Each audience is unique, especially in its reaction to what is happening on stage (1991:15).

The above submission by Wilson is a far cry from the experience of the audience in traditional African theatre space. Here, the audience is more committed, participatory and even transitory in a bid to enjoy more of the aesthetics of the masquerade performance. Unlike in the audience of Wilson's theatre, the audience in traditional African theatre, in the words of Soyinka, "is an integral part of that arena of conflict; it contributes spiritual strength to the protagonist through its choric reality which must first be conjured up and established, defining and investing the arena through offerings and incantations" (1976:39). Soyinka also reveals that Wilson's theatre is a fee-paying audience that is boxed up in one corner where they spy on the performance. African traditional theatre is therefore, 'a communal evolution of the dramatic mode of expression…where the moment for choric participation is well-defined' (1976:38-39).

Following the audience-performer relationship, Simon Ottenberg reveals that he had paid little or no attention to the audience in African theatre because according to him: "this is a view drawn from our own Western experience where the audience is generally quiet at

operas, dance performances and plays, except for almost regulated periods of clapping. It is almost passive at movies." (2006:81). The stark reality of the inebriated consciousness of the African audience dawned on him when he realized that:

> The audience at masquerades at Afikpo and in other parts of Africa is often quite active and expressive. True, there are periods of quiet, but there are others of demonstration: talking and shouting approval, running out to 'dash' favourite players and shouting down poor players. I have even seen performances temporarily stopped when men from the audience rushed out to end a poorly presented act at Afikpo. Sometimes Afikpo masquerade singers ask the audience whether they should go on, and await the expected shout of "Yes!" Players may also beg for "dashes" from members of the audience. One also sees a high level of audience-player interaction in festivals in southern Ghana where the local chief is carried on a palanquin, led and followed by his entourage; the audience flows around them as all move forward down the road or path (2006:81).

The audience, whether a woman or man, is an all-knowing part of the chain of the performance in African masquerade art. They contribute in the performance equation in their vocal encouragement, and even dashing out from their stand to throw currency notes on the masquerades.

Masking and costuming are other aspects of the masquerade that have evolved over the years due largely to the demands of contemporary needs that expect the masquerade to be creative in order to be relevant in the ever-changing performance realities of the present age. The masquerade which consists the most popular indigenous theatrical form in Africa is largely defined by its costume. Costume is unarguably the most essential element in the masquerade in Africa. Okoye believes there is no distinction between the mask and the costume in masquerade drama of the Igbo since, "the Igbo tradition has no name for masquerade costume other than the masquerade itself" (1986:3). In his submission:

> It is, therefore, obvious that the Igbo do not have any equivalent name for masquerade costume, actor, mask, 'props' and accessories. They conceive all as a total entity as there is never such absolute names as mask, costume, or a person who wears the mask and costume, for except where labored translation makes it apparent, they are always viewed in totality. In fact, even among the initiated, to put on the mmonwu costume (ikpu mmonwu) means "putting on the mmonwu" itself. Thus it can be correctly said that costume is the masquerade (1986:4).

To corroborate Okoye's assertion, Downs, Wright and Ramsey contend that "as long as there has been theatre, there have been costumes. In pre-colonial African theatre, masks and costumes were an integral part of the performance. Four hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Greeks used costumes *and masks* in their tragedies to reveal the character's mood and enhance their performance." (2014:214). In the same vein, Tracy Utoh-Ezeajugh enthuses that 'the art of costume and make up are primordial engagements which have over the years aided man to physically transform himself into any character his situation demands he becomes. She therefore defines costume as

> …the items of clothing, accessories and ornamentation worn by the actor or actress for the purpose of defining character and establishing the circumstances of the character's existence, by situating him/her in time and space (2010:130).

From the foregoing, it is clear that, for the masquerade art, costume is everything as there can be no masquerade without costume. This position does not negate Sunny Ododo's 'facekuerade' concept which describes masquerades without costumes and masks. However, such performance does not suggest no costume is deployed for the performance. It only contends that there are instances in traditional societies where people can perform as masquerades without adorning masks or face coverings. These masquerades are not material so they need no masks and costumes. For instance, *Ayaka* of Anambra State, *Akirikpokpo* of Akpoha-Afikpo, Ebonyi State and all night masquerades with voice disguises and other aural resources. Ododo used the Ekuechi Masquerade ensemble of the Ebira community to

advance his argument. Except for these, the physical features or powers of a particular masquerade are intrinsically embedded in its costume. Alex Asigbo contends that:

> Beyond its size, it is the colour and variety of the Ijele masquerade, for instance, that makes it the king of Igbo masquerade. In the same way, the aura and mystery of the Odumodu masquerade among the Edo people is embedded in its costume and mask head. As a 'True Listener', Odumodu can only read minds when it dons the mask head and stares into men's hearts. In spite of the above, the masquerade art is more than mere costuming; hence, its aura is what makes it more than man – the personification of the luminal essence of our ancestors (2010:7).

Generally speaking, mask, masking and masquerade concepts are age long phenomena in African socio-cultural worldview and are tailored towards the people's belief. Mask for instance, refers to all face coverings. Masking is the processes of putting on a mask. While masquerade means everything including visible, aural, embodied and psychological resources and concepts that define the phenomenon. Each mask differs in appearance and purpose for its crafting. There are quite a number of masks across the different ethnic entities that dot the African continent. Though basically exaggerative of its physical features, some of these masquerades underscore the dynamism of the masquerade performance. Ottenberg (1975) identifies twelve different types of masks in Afikpo alone, comprising the wooden, calabash and other types made of net materials. These, according to him, represent the basic corpus of Afikpo face coverings, except for the numerous masks of coconut shell and coconut bark fiber, calabash, net, leaf, paper, and cardboard – generally of lesser aesthetic quality – worn by young uninitiated boys in their own imitation secret society. Few masks in Akpoha, like in many African communities, are expressionless, but there are others, perhaps, like the ugly masquerade of *Agaba* (Anambra), *Odumodu* (Edo state), *Ekpo* Ibibio (Akwa Ibom and Abia states), *Tinkoriko* (Cross River), *Enentigha* (Ikwo), *Okumkpo* and *Lughulu* (Ebonyi state) have something of a look of disgust or even anger. The rest of the costumed characters in any masquerade performance are expressive of one thing or another, ranging from maidens

(*agboghommuo*), European couples, nursing mothers, and the masquerades of animal genus. Some masks depict serenity, poise and loving. Others are ugly, weird and grotesque. The masks, according to Ottenberg, are faces, not half or full heads, or helmets…some are stylized human faces with additional designs and projections added to them. In this group some are male, others female, and some represent either sex or no gender at all. A third group of masks consists of the ugly ones; they are distortions of human face – something like Iroquois False Society masks – with bulging cheeks, crooked noses and mouths, and ears that are shapeless; these ugly masks are often dark or black in contrast to the other masks, which have brighter colours making particularly use of white (2006:51). Although, the absence of expression is more noticeable in the case of the net masks, yet that does not in any way negate its functionalities in performance values and aesthetics. Speaking on the masks and costumes on parade, Ottenberg recounts that:

> At the front are the masqueraders, wearing traditional types of net masks, and the igri (violent masquerade) players. The agbogo mma probably represents a transition – they combine traditional costume elements with modern cloth, plastic beads, and mirrors. But after them come those dressed in modern clothing. This last part of the parade has a nice satirical quality to it; the masqueraders are poking fun at modern clothes and social roles by dressing up so finely in them. This is especially evident from the fact that they also wear masks, which represent a contradiction to the forces of modernity that generally abhor traditional masking (2006:76).

Talking about modernity and masking tradition, Okoye's views are more elaborate:

> African masquerade performance of even the most sacred and conservative kind functions within the tradition of modernity, appropriating and re-contextualizing cultural elements from within and without for the enrichment of its expressive register. In the less sacred forms the state of this tradition is more dynamic. Practically every useable artifact or expressive mode is consistent with the rate at which they are socially encountered. The masquerade's composite multivalency offers a rich unrestricted canvas for the hosting of influences from virtually every expressive form ranging from music, design or visual arts, dance, poetry, and drama, to even architecture and media technology. Pieces obtained from

> foreign cultural forms are recontextualized and inserted into entirely different symbolic systems, thereby deploying them in the making of meanings which are radically indifferent to the operational codes within which they operated in their natal environments in this case the pieces enrich the cultural integrity of the masquerade tradition without bearing with them significant traces of their original expressive systems (2010:25).

In Akpoha for instance, as it is believed to happen elsewhere in African masking tradition, the masks on display cut across all types of materials. The reason for this is the fact that each mask and performance has its expressive functionalities and socio-cultural connotations attached to it. Besides that, no mask can be used for another as each has its designated masquerades and performance styles mark them out accordingly. To elaborate further, each Okumkpo masquerade of Akpoha-Afikpo has a name, and its wearer is expected to dance or play, at least at times, in character with the quality of the mask. The dynamism and eclecticism also suggest that appropriating and expropriating are hallmarks of its performance dispositions. These divergent performance aesthetics and their concomitant appeals are also in tandem with the masquerade's adaptations to several performance mechanisms including shedding off its ritual accoutrements in order to be a continuous attraction to any festival or occasion.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The research adopted a few theories upon which the arguments of the study were articulated for clearer understanding.

2.5.1 Performance Analysis. In performance as it relates to masquerade and carnival, Performance Analysis theory was used.Carnival sits atop Performance Analysis theory within its context and form of performance. It privileges on a theatrical liveliness that dwells outside the domain of the proscenium walls. According to Pelias and VanOosting (2003:218), "performance studies envision theatrical events in more contexts than the traditional

proscenium or arena." Experiencing performance is in seeing its liveliness, being a spectator in the performance equation and knowing from where and how it all came out to be what it is; performance. This is further made clearer in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1999:13) position which sees performance as "to perform is to do…to behave…(and)…to show." She went on to assert that "for an action to "perform", it must possess a beingness which is expressed from doingness that is seen by its showingness. The knowledge of a performance's 'liveliness' and 'showiness' presupposes its acceptance as a phenomenon which directly borders on David Hume's theory of phenomenalism which is a theory of perception based on the knowledge of the external world that is limited to appearance only. Masquerade and Carnival are performances which are assessed with the sense of perception (sight) in the first instance before any further analysis. It is a street processional theatre that leverages on indigenous art forms. It shares a lot of similarities in performance with masquerade including the utilization of elaborate and opulent costumes, masks, processional display, dance and music. Carnivals cover activities of skills and dance routines which are choreographed and performed in procession across marked routes. Revelers enjoy both local and western music in the outdoor entertainment. They deploy creative bright costumes and stylized nakeup. Most of the costumes used are syncretic in the sense that most of the designs capture a fusion of western and African aesthetics in choice of fabrics, physical outlook, mode of adornment, colour choices and application styles. Sculptural masks, boas, head dresses, feathery costumes, beads and sequins are used in the building of carnival costumes.

2.5.2 Carnival and the Carnivalesque is another theory employed in the study. For Bakhtin (1984:314), the "carnivalesque" is an aspect of the medieval celebration known as "carnival," the period of "licensed misrule" in which ordinary citizens could mock and defame the acknowledged authorities of church and state. A form of "theater without footlights" in which everyone participates through pageants, parades, and spectacles, the carnival

undermines the concept of authoritative utterance and indulges in the rituals of crowning and de-crowning of fools, mockery of all and sundry, foul language, the energetic utterance of nonsense, and the degrading of everything usually held as noble or sacred. Considering its flirting and flitting nature, it is in carnival more than any other art form, that pastiche and mélange of tangible and intangible art objects find meaning and relevance. It may not be what the society desires, but the end product of carnival is the refraction and reflection of the society in motion. Talking about carnival and its expressive possibilities, the one indigenous art form that readily comes to mind with the same expressive freedom is the masquerade. The rate at which masquerade rips, tears, adopts, adapts and cannibalizes artifacts to enrich itself in performance negates the rules, just the same way carnival enjoins 'licensed misrule.' The freedom associated with both revelers and masquerade as seen in new festival platforms is heightened by creativity in designs of costumes, masks and improvisations in the performances on parade.

The carnival is based on spectating (actor-spectator dyad), in this instance, performer – audience. This is a double consciousness of the actor – spectator relationship where the spectator perceives not only the fictional character the actor is portraying but the artistic skill of the actor himself. To domesticate this within the subject of this study; the masquerade is a fictional character (spirit) that also plays a double consciousness of its acts, as a masked character as well as being conscious of its humanness. The major interest of the spectator is the skill deployed by the actor (the performer – the masquerade). This multilayered relationship of the actor to the spectator has been examined in cognitive approaches to spectating, phenomenology theories in theatre, the theatrical event approach, and the semiotic approach. For instance, Balch's (2012) study on "Actor – Spectator Relationship: Developing a Model…" reveals greatly what carnival audience and this includes the adjudicators expect

of the masquerades that perform for prizes. Using his model as an approach to further this research, he contends that:

> The appreciation of the acting (*masquerade's acts*) is also decisive for the spectator's (*adjudicator's*) interest in the fiction of the performance: if the actors' quality is considered poor, then spectators are not prepared to discuss the content of the play; only when they enjoy the acting will there also be an interest in what the performance was all about (Balch, 2012:29 italics mine).

This is not different from what happens in masquerades' performances in most African communities. Okoye (2013) had asserted that there is always a reference made and expectations for a better masquerade performance in Igbo communities after every interesting performance. This is what performance analysis theory presupposes; a situation where all the narratives of a performance are coalesced into a whole to be appreciated instead of creating separate experiences. When we apply this syllogism to carnival and the art of the Masquerade, there is a seamless interrelatedness between an art form (Masquerade) that is showing (performing) on the platform of the carnival (a street show) with many variants of accompaniments before a live audience (spectators) witnessing and acknowledging the showing and doing of the 'beings' which generates and accentuates entertainment value sequel to appreciations (clapping, applause and prize awards). The need to collate these experiences enhances appreciation of the performance in one piece. Commenting on audience perception and reaction to a good performance, Suzzane M. Jaeger, a contributor to *Staging Philosophy* describes the ontology of presence in performance and the relationship it forms between actor and spectator thus:

> Performers sometimes talk about "being in the moment" or having an "on performance," in the sense of being really on top of it, or in good form. Sometimes this sense involves both for the performer and for the audience and awareness of things uniquely coming together. One sees brilliance, a special communication between the artist(s) and the audience, a sensuously and perhaps emotionally heightened, lively awareness that unfolds within and is unique to a

> specific performance. The "on moment" occurs when the performer not only correctly repeats everything she rehearsed, but also has a keen awareness of herself, the other performers and the audience in the immediacy of live performance. It is reported by performers as a feeling of being fully alive to the audience, and other performers…(Balch, 2012:37).

Musical theatre and all other street theatre (performance) including carnival parades and its components term this a "show stopper," because the audience literally stops the show with their enthusiastic reaction. One of such highlights was the hugging of Agbogho Mmuo by a foreign tourist after its delectable performance in Abuja Carnival. Carnival sits atop Performance Analysis theory within its contextualisation of performance. The carnival as a street art is devoid of defined roles or texts, the same idea of rejection of script put forward by Jerzy Grotowski in his poor theatre theory. The eclectic appeal of carnival presupposes liberalization and the potentialities of variant meanings defining its performance idioms. The analysis of theatrical performances like the carnival has always provided a problem of particular difficulty to semiotic theory, for variety of reasons. According to Marvin Carlson, these include:

> The ephemerality of the event, the complexity of the interrelationship of so many communicative channels, the almost infinite variety of physical realisations that may be generated, the phenomenological concerns generated by the physical presence of the event, and the effects upon interpretation of changing historical and social reception strategies (Carlson, 1994: excerpt in lieu of the main text)

Carlson's position above is more significant to Carnival and the Carnivalesque, due to their tendency to acquire varied interpretations and meanings in performance. Carnival scenario from time past reveals society burdened by its past and which wants to exorcise it through any means including a 'licensed misrule' that indicts, mocks and defames the acknowledged authorities of church and state. The European diaspora Carnival undermines the concept of authoritative utterance and indulges in the rituals of crowning and de-crowning of fools, mockery of all and sundry, foul language, the energetic utterance of nonsense, and the

degrading of everything usually held as noble or sacred. However, the concept of carnival in Nigeria is quite different from what Bakhtin had envisaged. Here the state sponsors carnivals and is part of the float. No government gives opportunities to its opposition. On this ground, European carnival celebration which is fashioned out to speak back to the authority, is a celebration of freedom of expression, but the expressive freedom of Nigerian carnivals is to "showcase its carnival of music, dance and arts, to celebrate the individuality and unity of the State Governments and people of Nigeria, and to be the platform for the promotion and encouragement of domestic, interstate and international tourisms in Nigeria" (Yerima, in Yerima and Liz Ben-Iheanacho, 2009:6).

The festival of unity which the Abuja Carnival represents is an attempt by the Federal Government of Nigeria to recreate aplatform of equanimity and justice that would leverage on the aftermath of the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War. In fact, the Abuja Carnival was established in 2005 by the Obasanjo administration as a follow-up to the All-Nigeria Festival of Arts and Culture of 1970 and the 2nd World Black and Africa Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC'77). To really buttress this point and show how festivals can serve as a platform of unity, Adeoye (2017) chronicles the efforts of government to use festivals to bring States together for the purpose of recreating trust and unification among differing members of Nigeria's multiple ethnic tribes. In his words: "the issue of using festival as a form of unity and social engineering goes back to the post-war reconciliation efforts of the Gowon administration which hosted the All-Nigeria Festival of Arts in 1970, as a reunification/reintegration project on the platform of the people's cultural expression (268)." For the youths, there was the establishment of National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC), a one year compulsory service to fatherland where fresh graduates are posted outside their home states for sole reason of learning other people's culture for proper integration as one indissoluble entity. The notions of freedom and equality are being expressed and lived daily

through many platforms including festivals and art exhibitions which have come to dominate the cultural and performance sites in Nigeria's State capitals. Following from the above, the Federal Ministry of Culture in its Cultural policy document directs that drama, arts, theatre, music and film resources contiguous of Nigeria's diverse ethnic nationalities be documented as performing arts for posterity. Against this background, State and Local Government Areas used the opportunity to source for capable hands and talents that will represent their different cultures at the centre. This was the beginning of the establishment of State Art Councils, Cultural Centres, and Local Craft Centres. This paid off with the successful hosting of the Second ever Festivals of Arts and Culture in Black Africa (FESTAC, 1977) in Lagos and the yearly National Festival of Arts and Culture where hosting rights circulate amongst the thirty-six states of the federation including Abuja. The same platform has metamorphosed into other federal agencies and parastatals of the government, overseeing arts and its allied resources in Nigeria. These include Centre for Black and African Arts Civilization (CBAAC), National Institute for Cultural Orientation(NICO), National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), National Troupe and National Theatre. It is from these State Art Councils and other bodies that professional artistes have emerged to become cultural ambassadors of their different communities, states and the nation in general. Their representations across major festivals within and outside the shores of Nigeria, indicate a major breakthrough in the performing arts in Nigeria. The Abuja and Calabar Carnivals understudy have demonstrated that the preponderance of masquerades in these street festivals have occasioned a culture of festivalisation and carnivalisation of indigenous performance formswhich has thrust up an ambiance of unity amongst participating States at the nation's capital, Abuja, with the sobriquet: The Centre of Unity.

2.5.3 Festivalisation theory. This is another approach adopted for a clearer perspective on this study. Festivalisation is a site for new products. According to Jordan, "without it the art form doesn't move forward. It's the lifeblood."(2016:3) The Festivalization of Culture, according to Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor and Ian Woodward explore the links between various local and global cultures, communities, identities and lifestyle narratives as they are both constructed and experienced in the festival context. Crespi-Vallbona & Richards on the other hand contend that, "Cultural festivals and events are increasingly becoming arenas of discourse enabling people to express their views on wider cultural, social and political issues. Often the debates polarise into those advocating change and those wishing to preserve "traditional" or "local" culture in the face of modernisation and globalization"(Crespi-Vallbona & Richards, 2007: abstract in lieu of main text). Following the position of Crespi-Vallbona and Richards above, this study draws much strength against the background that modernity (carnival) and tradition (masquerade) are at a meeting point and synergizing to give relevance and value to each other in the performance space. And to further the position of this research, as long as the nostalgia for the past is there, one cannot deny the fact that change is immanent and that societies change and culture which is a product of the society will have to change to accommodate new possibilities. This is the situation the masquerade has found itself in new festivals. Taking a look at the components of new festivals, a whole lot of products are on parade; art symposia, cuisine, music, fashion show, carnival pageantry, costume and mask designs. The festival thus becomes a site for performing cultures modern and traditional. This position resounds in the words of Owe Ronström:

> Festivals have become diversified. Today all kinds of calendar events, markets, meetings, feasts, religious and secular rituals, are more often than not called festivals. There seem to be a certain attraction and cultural energy in the word, which turns festival into a black hole that sucks in and consumes all kinds of events and gatherings. Especially during the last decades festivals have turned into folk feasts for all kinds of people, with all kinds of music and

> a large variety of non-musical activities. Behind the spread of festivals is among other things a growing tourism. The festival industry provides the experience, and the tourist industry provides the audience, and the result is large festival geographies (Rostrom, 2011:52)

Festivals have changed in recent times, before festivals were associated with key calendar moments, linked specifically to particular seasons and cultural heritage sites. Over the last decade these have been changed and developed upon, there is now a broad and diverse range of festival events taking place all over the world. Getz (1997:1) introduces festival as: "events that constitute one of the most exciting and fastest growing forms of leisure, business, and tourism-related phenomena." The revolution in festivals has been stimulated through commercial aspect to meet the changing demand of the local community groups and increasing business opportunities for the events organizations and local businesses. Many large festivals today are produced by locals for global tourist markets. Tourism is one of the world's largest export industries. Esekong and Ekpeyong (2012) reecho this position against the background of Carnival Calabar:

> Another interesting area of manifestation of the global/local relationship is in the concept and eventual structure of Carnival Calabar. It has been widely remarked that Carnival Calabar is a foreign carnival tradition on which indigenous art forms and festivals have been sprinkled, so to say for acceptability. It is true that at the inception, Carnival Calabar was conceived to replicate the Trinidad and Tobago carnival (2012:291).

This position best suits Sule Bello's conclusion on how to tap into the diverse cultural products that abound in Nigeria as a multi-ethnic nation. Bello (2016) observes that:

> Nigeria's unique socio-cultural, historical, and geographical features also make it possible for it to promote its own distinctive brands of cultural tourism, eco-tourism, educational, economic and health tourisms in addition to the possibilities of constituting itself into an important African regional tourist attraction (2016:3).

From Abuja Carnival perspective, Yerima avers the major reason behind its establishment among other things to include, "a deepening of international participation and consumption

of Nigeria's *indigenous* arts and crafts through Abuja Carnival" (Yerima, in Yerima and Liz Ben-Iheanacho, 2009:6). Following the submissions above, the saliency of participation, spectatorship, cultural metisage (of spectacle, masquerades, masks and costumes) and the immersion of individuals in carnival spirit of celebration are amongst major factors of the carnival spirit. Talking about participation and immersion, Robinson (2015), O'Grady (2015) and Anderton (2015) quoted in Jordon (2016) considers the participative, experiential and immersive nature of festivals to be something that distinguishes them from arts events held in theatre and concert halls (2016:7). Festivals create unique opportunities for encounters between artists and audiences unencumbered by the usual rules that separate performers from audiences in theatres and concert halls. This experience, this feeling, this freedom for excessiveness, this atmosphere of celebration of culture, this oneness of purpose to laugh and perform self, is the life force and essence of carnival. Errol Hill's work on the two-day Trinidad Carnival highlights this multiplicity of the carnival:

> The eyes tire with gazing, the pulse weakens with exhaustion, you long for the pageant to end, yet fear you may have missed something important…the maskers, saving their costumes for the next day hurry home to charge and return to join the merry throngs singing, leaping, hugging each other on the streets to the hypnotic beat of the steel drums. It is a joyous thanksgiving. An exultant shout of victory. The first day ends; and tomorrow night, after another hectic day of incredible spectacle, music, dancing, singing, miming, will be the final bacchanal (Hill, 1997:98-99)
> .

The Calabar and Abuja carnivals have the same razzmatazz as explicated above by Errol Hill. The components of both carnivals from masquerade fiesta, dance extravaganza, street carnival of motorized floats, children fiesta, boat regatta, command performance, contemporary music fiesta to cultural night/traditional cuisine all add up to create and showcase the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Nigeria in one performance. In Carnival Calabar, the six bands with their Ekpe Masquerades and their processions that include revelers, carnival kings and queens create the spectacularity and aesthetics that reveal

creativity in managing the yearly carnival themes as well as showcase the rich cultures of the different ethnic sub-groups of the Cross River peoples. On a general note, Abuja and Calabar Carnivals have become a window through which Nigerian cultures, past, present and the future are processed, assessed, marketed and documented for posterity.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MASQUERADE PERFORMANCE IN AFRICA

3.1 Anthropology of Masquerade Performance

Anthropology as a catch-word here is an academic discipline which studies human kind in all its aspects, especially human cultural development, social customs and belief systems of a people. The masquerade is a culture bound phenomenon and traverses the jurisdiction of anthropology and ethnography. This is because its activities are communal and ethno-cultural in nature. Nigeria is a large research area within the culture of masquerade performance. This is because of the many performance cultures coming from masquerade alone. However, one thing is certain. These peculiarities in culture do not negate the oneness of masking tradition. The phenomenon of masquerade performance is such that across the length and breadth of Nigeria, masquerade performance is bonded by rules, styles, types, functions, rights of ownership, sharing and transfer. Thus masking culture is so socio-religiously developed that it enables the African to relate with his ancestors through a physical communion made possible through its performances. For example, Achebe had concluded that African communities share a lot in common including their masquerade traditions which through visits to festivals, people learn from one another the different masking origins, idioms, songs, dances and styles of performance. This is subsequently handed down from one generation to another through an embodied and oral means. Okagbue corroborated this position:

> Most African cultures south of the Sahara have a masking theatre tradition of one kind or another…looking at African masking across this vast geographical landscape, the practices show very close similarities in terms of their stories of origin, organizational structure and support, actual performance processes, and social and aesthetic functions (2007:14).

Masquerade tradition across Nigeria shows obvious similarities in its performance idioms. However, it is a culture dominated by men, women only watch masquerade from a distance.

This is because it is only through initiation that knowledge into its workings is revealed to initiates. Okagbue emphasizes that initiation of boys in African socio-cultural milieu "functions as contexts for teaching male children codes of conduct and roles required of them in the society" (2007:56). The site of initiation is symbolically a place and a means of transforming boys into men. The structure of the initiation as a series of trials or contests is designed to celebrate and encourage manly courage, endurance, initiative, leadership, honesty, comradeship, and trustworthiness in the young boys, which should become their attributes and mode of behaviour in future life. Okagbue avers that initiation, "places a degree of responsibility on them to behave in accepted ways expected of men in Igbo society" (2007:56). Initiation also reveals to young Igbo boys like in many other Nigerian societies, the higher secrets of the land, thereby placing them in a privileged position as repositories of communal history, knowledge and wisdom. It also prepares and authorizes them to use this platform to achieve other functions through their participation in and maintenance of the masking tradition of their communities and the society at large. Women may support it materially and thematically, but the knowledge of its production processes is shrouded in utmost secret which only men have the exclusive privilege to. Men get to know about the workings of the masquerade at a certain age in their life. This period is significant in the life of every male child as parents support this rite of passage of their child. Therefore, some gradational masquerades require initiates to undergo a period of seclusion between three days to months in some communities and depending on the type of masquerade. For instance, initiates of the ogo (evo) cult of Akpoha-Afikpo generally stay within five days or less, while the ipu ogo initiation involving Isi-iji masquerade of Edda, Akpoha, Amasiri, all in Afikpo South and North LGA of Ebonyi State require the initiates to go into full three (3) months seclusion and interned in the forest away from female contact for the purpose of turning them into men. Here, they are exposed to all manner of masculine attributes of dexterity, hard work, perseverance, vigour, determination, focus, resilience, bold and daring.

They are also involved in other rituals that come with the seclusion. Every masking tradition at least in Africa, has one form of initiation rite or another that reveals its workings to the initiates at one point or another. From Idoma in Benue; Igala in Kogi; Nsukka, Awgu, Udi in Enugu; Oraifite, Neni, Amansea in Anambra; Ohafia, Arochukwu, Abiriba in Abia; Akpoha, Edda, Ehugbo, Amasiri, Ikwo in Ebonyi; Kalabari, Nembe in Rivers, Anang, Eket, Ibibio, Uruang in Akwa Ibom state; Yakurr, Efik, Ikom and Ogoja in Cross River state. From one geographical location to another, the need for initiation into the different masking cultures is a prerequisite for being inducted as a member. It is a ritual process that has come to stay within its peoples.

Ritual of appeasement is an aspect of the masquerade performance in Africa which is an offshoot of the initiation processes into the masking art. Before one adorns the mask, certain sacrifices and ablutions are carried out. It is an obvious belief that spirit ownership of trees cut for mask carving should be appeased before such mask is worn. In Ekpo masquerade of Ibibio, Efik, Arochukwu each mask has taboo attached to it. The masker may be secluded from the public especially from the wife before masking. Certain food is abhorred to be eaten by the masker preparing to adorn the mask carved from certain trees. As part of the general ritual requirements, village groups preparing for a masquerade performance usually carry out extra in-house ritual (juju or talisman) for each of the maskers to prepare them against those that will secretly attempt to frustrate the efforts geared towards a successful outing. This is obvious in situations where such an individual(s) are to be publicly disgraced through songs or commentaries (criticism) from the masquerade. A ready example is the Afikpo Okumkpo described by Ottenberg as 'theatre par excellence.' He submits that "the essence of the play is the ridicule and satirizing of real persons and topical events, clothed in ritualized and superficially religious terms…Okumkpo is a medium through which the young and the middle aged adults can air feelings about their elders that they could not otherwise explore

directly in public" (1975:135). From Ottenberg's submission, it is obvious that plans to scuttle the masquerade performance will be rife amongst those who feel bad about the masquerade's critical postures. J. P. Clark also reveals some rules and rituals guiding the performance of certain masquerade drama in Nigeria. In his words:

> Quite tied up with this phenomenon is the observance of certain taboos in a number of plays within the Nigerian repertory. Thus priests and worshippers of Obatala must not eat certain meals, nor wear any dress other than white. Performance of sacred dramas like that of oshagiyan at Ejigbo cannot just be fixed for any day of the week. It must fall within only those days that are holy to the deity. In Ozidi, the story-teller/protagonist may not have anything to do with women in the course of the seven-day production…the virgin palm fronds girding the headpiece of the chief masquerade, the fences of similar fronds this masquerade cuts through in his initial passage, and the actual sacrifice of gin and cockerel his priest makes to it on the field of play, these certainly are conscious acts of worship without which there can be neither performance for pleasure nor peace for the age-group (1981:68-69).

In the ritual of appeasement before adornment of masks, the Ogoni people have a fair share of this as observed by Robin Horton. One instance he witnessed and captured was the Ekine masquerade. According to him, before a masker adorned his mask, one elderly man from the family of the masker had this prayer to make: "this your child is going out to the field in your name; give him a quick ear, a smart leg, and let no ill thing harm him in the dance" (1981:98). In continuation of the libation and appeasement, the Ekine masker will then approach the tree from which his mask was carved from for more ritual of cleansing. Horton believes as many Africans do, that such could be to wade off any harm that may come as a result of contact with women before the performance or even any other form of defilement of oneself. While before the tree, the priest collects the ritual item of sacrifice; palm gin and present before the goddess of the tree, and declares:

> Ekine Ba, Ekine Ba, Ekine Ba! This is what you have said; that any time the dancing people are going to bring out Owu, every one of them who is going to play the Owu should come before you to

> give you drink in case he has been polluted by women or some other things. This is Karibo: please open his ears to understand the meaning of drums; open his eyes to see everything that may come before him; give him strength to dance the Owu; let his legs and hands be nimble. (1981:98).

Researchers on anthropology of masquerade performance; Simon Ottenberg (1975), John Miachi (2012), and Ugonna Nnabuenyi (1984), allude that a pre-performance ritual is necessary if maskers must be successful and fully protected by the ancestors whom they represent in their outings. The ancestors, despite being near to the gods, are not very far away from the living; hence Africans bury the dead in their living rooms, around the homesteads and compounds. In fact, it is ever so easy to summon them as masquerades at festivals and other special occasions when the human world has need for their help. Miachi's encounter during the pre-performance of 'incarnate being' as he prefers to call the masquerade is revealing.

> I was let in. Inside there, in a back courtyard room, I was put in the position to have a feel as to how owners of the incarnate beings regard their incarnate beings. Before touching the costume of egwu affia, the symbol of their ancestors, the four elderly men, visibly laden with awe and much reverence, prayerfully sought for permission of the ancestors. Even with that solemn prayer, the old man was still panicky and shivering, behaving like a child does to a father whom he fears and reveres. To these elders then, even the costume is very much alive and is imbued with the holiness and efficacy of the incarnate being himself (2012:50-51).

The idea of praying and propitiating the ancestors represented in the mask is a general phenomenon to the masking culture of the African and not only in Ogoniland and Igala land as shown by Robin Horton and Miachi respectively. In Igbo land for instance, before a masker adorns the mask, a lot of libations and spiritual cleansings are carried out to secure the life of the maskers and the success of the performance. Okagbue maintains that: "although the Igbo universe has the living at the centre, yet is spirit-centered. Transference from one plane to another can easily be achieved through specific rites of transition. Igbo masking is one such socio-religious rite of transference, and the mask is the most tangible

manifestation of the link between the living and the dead." (2007:18). To really buttress the significance of ritual and its place in masquerade performance from time past, certain ritual objects have been deployed in the course of masquerade performance to enhance its efficacy. Ritual objects are sacred materials used by man to communicate with the unseen forces. In masquerade performances, such sacred objects used include, tender palm fronds, eggs of certain birds like the owl, vulture, eagle and native hen. Other ritual demands are cockerel, ram, billy-goat (he-goat), white and red cloth, red, yellow and white chalk or (nzu) in Igbo. According to Henry Bell-Gam (1986), traditional spiritual leaders find sacred objects suitable for summoning the spirits during consultative rituals. For instance, the tender yellow palm fronds are believed to be clean, pure and unadulterated, hence they are regarded as symbolic objects of purity, defence, justice and divinity. As symbols of purity, tender palm fronds are tied on vehicles carrying a corpse to make the journey of the spirit of the dead travel to the ancestral world without any form of hindrances. It is against this background that masquerades (ancestral spirits) use tender palm fronds against wicked spirits that may attack the maskers and the mask they inhabit. It is a belief that is as old as masking itself and which formed the nexus of the art of masquerade performance in Africa. After these rituals of propitiation, supplication, and appeasement, the masks allow individuals to behave in unusual ways towards the viewers (audience/townspeople). In a willful, designed approach, men inhabiting the masks move in exaggerated ways, say unconventional things, act differently than they would in ordinary times. Putting on a mask turns a person into a spirit. In fact, masquerades are intended by their performances, to convey certain attributes and qualities of ancestral spirits – power, strength, speed and knowledge. According to Onuora Nzekwu (1981), some masquerades that wear two-faced masks, carry swarm bees or even smokebelching fire on their head-pieces and perform other impossible feats all tell their own tales in splendor, energy, aesthetics and creativity, and according to the spirit they represent in such masks.

To elaborate further, Nzekwu reveals that:

> Among the Niger Delta and coastal tribes made up of the Ijaw and the Kalabari, masqueraders represent gods, water spirits, village heroes and the dead. In many cases they symbolize the ancestors who introduced them. The bulk of the masquerades however, represent manifestations of water spirit. They believe that in some of their masquerade displays, the masqueraders, whose identity may be known, are possessed by the spirits they are representing (1981:133).

To support this position, J. P. Clark asserts that "dramas, like the Ijaw masquerade and Ullu ritual, represent spirits and gods which worshippers *as well as maskers adorning such masks* seek to propitiate (emphasis added)" (1981:70). In the South-South/South-East states of Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Abia, the Ekpo masquerade culture is a dominant phenomenon and the peoples of this culture are aware of its socio-political and cultural functions and roles. However, the history of the Ekpo is buried in the principal secret society of Ekpo Nyoho which had served both as traditional patriarchal authority and an enforcement arm of village government before the advent of colonialism. The Ekpo masquerade is the enforcer and exerts an enormous fearsome influence on the people using its ferocious and awe struck masks designed and carved to reflect the spirit character that it possesses. According to Joseph Akpan "the authority and legitimacy of these characters are due partly to their established history and partly to imagery and symbols carefully manipulated to arouse fear and to create an impression of the masks invincibility" (1994:50). If the masks and costumes are devoid of the mystiques surrounding their opulence and weirdness, they become merely an art objects. The physical characteristics of a masquerade depicted in the carving breathe artistic life into the mystique. Some of these spirits are those of young men who were killed in mysterious circumstances like chickenpox, ọgbanje, talisman (juju), war and of older people who died a natural death. The actions of the masquerade therefore, is a true reflection of the masks it adorns and may range from benevolence, cordiality, violence, restless spirit to outright uncontrollability in its actions. Masquerade props include guns, machetes, bows and arrows which it wields and uses with reckless abandon. This is at the verge of hostility when

encounters occur especially at village boundaries, where one Ekpo masquerader might challenge another to cross a line drawn during the bait, bawl and brawl sessions. Against the background nomenclature ascribed to the Ekpo as a "secret society," its activities and functions are usually not shrouded in mystery. Nonmembers, including women, are fully aware of its roles and functions, because every villager is subject to its adjudications and code of conduct during the Ekpo season. However, only members participate in the rituals and practices which prepare them for their role. The main secrets are the series of code words and dance steps that a member learns when he goes through initiation. These give him the right to travel within and outside his village during the season. When a traveler encounters an Ekpo masquerade, he is challenged to utter these words and to perform the dance steps. Failure to do so betrays one as a non-initiate and attracts an arrest and prosecution which may come in form of whips and wrestling bouts with the masquerade.

Periods of masquerade performances may vary from community to community and from one geographical location to another. However, a general clement weather is a requirement for a successful masquerade performance as rain is a bad omen during masquerade performances. This is one reason why masquerade outings are usually in the dry season regarded as period of rest when farm produce is being harvested to usher in period of plenty culminating in social activities.

Nzekwu elaborates on this position:

> The masquerade displays in Eastern Nigeria take place mainly in the dry season, that holiday period following the rain and farm-work season, when food is plentiful – when men and women assess the result of their labour under the hot exhausting tropical sun over the past months, when all can afford to relax and divert their energies and resources towards the celebration of thanksgiving festival and the advancement of their social status within the society by traditional initiation and other rites (1981:135).

Aside the obvious points noted above about staging masquerade performances in dry season, this researcher feels obligated as an initiate to reveal further that wet season is not friendly to maskers due largely in part because of their costumes which are usually drawn from heavy materials such as raffia, jute bags, dry banana and palm frond leaves, clothing materials like blanket, coat, Ankara and asoke. If soaked under a heavy down pour, it will surely add to the burden of the maskers. Imagine such masqueraders like Okumkpo of Afikpo costumed with padded blanket, old-coat, rags of all sorts, and dry animals of all types, being soaked under the rain, or the Atumma, Enemma, or other masquerades mimicking different animals scampering for safety in the rain. Aside that, during rainfall, the visibility of the maskers is blurred since the space in the mask that allows for sight is so little that it will further impede movement of the maskers if masking were to be held during the rainy season. Rainy season therefore, is antithetical to celebration and gathering of any sort, hence the choice of dry season for masquerade presentation and spectatorship.

Generally speaking, masquerade's presentation could come as an offshoot for initiates to have a firsthand experience of staging a performance after initiation. This is the period of knowing the workings of the masquerade and experiencing face covering (wearing of masks) by new initiates. As a gradational phenomenon, young boys are formally introduced into the secret and sacred art of masking. Nevertheless, a community may also decide to organize a masquerade performance where every member of the community within a certain age bracket offers himself to be part of the performance and in the spirit of communalism. In another instance, seasons of masquerade performance like the Christmas period, New Yam festival, Easter and New Year celebrations add up to seasons of masking across the length and breadth of Nigeria and beyond, when young boys and middle-aged adults entertain people and earn cash rewards as well as food items in the course of wandering and performing at every stopover. This reminds one of minstrelsy and commedia dell'arte (travelling performers) of

the 15th century Europe. The components of such masquerade outing include dancing, singing, drumming, and several comic stunts and acrobatic displays that will endear the hearts of the audience to attract their patronage.

3.2 Dance and Music in Indigenous Masquerade Performance

This subhead will continue on the exposition of the anthropology of masquerade performance in Africa, with focus on the major components of the indigenous masquerade art; dance and music. Before the advent of colonialism which suppressed most indigenous performances, masquerade performance was majorly enlivened through dance and music, and was the cynosure of spectators at the different venues; village square, market square, king's palace and many other spaces of performance. To the average African, coming to watch masquerade meant coming to watch the improved dances from the previous year's masquerade outing. It was therefore, the dances and music of the masquerade that attracted them to the performance. African indigenous performance forms may have been seriously affected by its encounter with western civilization and European thought, however, masquerade performance is among the traditional institutions that have survived such happenstance, though with varying degrees of distortions. The reason behind this exception is its undying popularity based on its socio-entertainment and unifying functions. Going back in time, masquerade performance was heavily associated with dance, music, drumming, singing, acrobatic display and minstrelsy. It was organized based on the festival needs of the communities; new yam, New Year, initiation rites of passages, burial and funerary rites, age grade masquerade outings and other cultural groups. Because of the orderly nature of the African socio-cultural thought and lifestyle, learning of these dances and songs/music was gradually transmitted through oral means and basically gradational in approach. From the period a male child is born, he grows to know his playmates and later age mates. This knowledge is exposed through interactions involving social and masking activities. Children

do not need direction to align with mates. It is a natural instinct. Ottenberg and Binkley in the blurb of their work, *Playful Performers…*reveals further that "African children develop aesthetic sensibilities at an early age, roughly from four to fourteen years. By the time they become full-fledged adolescents they may have had up to ten years' experience with various art forms – masking, music, costuming, dancing, and performance." This period and stage in the socio-cultural development of the male-child is significant as he will be introduced into the main masking art and its paraphernalia during the period of initiation rites forms the background of his African life. Iniegbe and Markson corroborate the above thought in their assertion: "the African theatre operates within the continuum of the African worldview, its artistic presentations are subjected to frameworks, forms, contents, styles and contexts of African traditions and cultures" (2013:79). These outlined indices are ensconced in the masquerade's dances and music which form the nucleus of its performance. The child is therefore, trained on these as prerequisite for attaining certain age and its attendant status accompaniments. Henry and Margret Drewal tell us how skillful boys' masquerades can be, through having learnt from older masquerades of either father or brother: "a son whose father was a dancer could begin to perform at the age of four or five. By the age of 12 – 14 his instruction would be strictly disciplined as he masters the complex rhythm" (1978:57). Emulative boys' masking is a way that boys learn their masking culture and its traditions across the continent of Africa.

This part of the research is basically on what dance and music are to masquerade performance. How did masquerade use dance and music to relate to its audience in its performance venues in indigenous African societies? What are the major forms of dance and music, processes of production and delivery systems? Against the backdrop of these questions, dance and music in this study shall be looped together due largely because of their interrelatedness in masquerade performance. Dance is an organized and patterned movement

that uses the human body in time and place. It is visual and spatial, while music is rhythmically harmonious sound accompanied with aurality. Music is non-spatial and exists within the confinement of its performance. Hence, dance complements the non-space phenomenon of music. These are two inseparably and interwoven artistic mediums that have coexisted and symbiotically enriched each other from time immemorial. To buttress further Marriem Hassan alludes dance as "an integral part of music, that generates physical response or behaviour which are represented by bodily attitudes and postures" (2012:14). In the same vein, Nketia, a renowned music scholar corroborates Merriam on the inseparability of dance and music when he revealed that:

> Music is frequently integrated with dance which is bound to emphasize and develop those features that can be articulated in bodily movement or to relate its form and content to the structural and dramatic requirement (2005:207).

Williams Onogu and Damian Amana elucidate further on this argument: "in a truly successful dance performance, there is little or nothing to separate the two arts because the movement and the music express together, the same artistic vision" (2015:2). However, it is the position expressed by W. Kariam that wholly captures the essence and significance of dance and music as they relate to indigenous masquerade art. In his submission: "another outstanding characteristic outlook is our love for music, dance and rhythm. Our throats are deep with music, our legs full of dance while our bodies tremor with rhythm…, these three phenomena are indeed, the spice of our life *as Africans*" (9). As art forms that are natural to the African, no African can be 'taught' how to dance. At least not the indigenous dance steps that abound and have been perfected at the initiate level and one in which the masquerade and other indigenous performance forms showcase in nearly all ceremonial outings. Poetry may be the desirable and perfect art form for the Greeks, among Africans and Asians on the

other hand, dance, mime and music are of essence in the theatre because of the ritualistic nature of African/Asian theatres (Enekwe, 1981).

Dance is a major phenomenon in nearly all African cultures. From studies, it has been revealed that dance is a concept which is multifocal and has multifunctional value to the African. All over Africa where masquerade features in their ceremonies, it is accompanied with one dance/music or another. In performances involving masquerades of physical violence, the acolytes tie ropes around the waist of the masquerade to checkmate its demeanour. These masquerades of physical force and ferocity are made up strong and agile men armed with spears, bowls and arrow, and medicine (juju); they come out at the dead of the night of about 12 midnight and disappear again before dawn. They summersault in the air, climb trees, beat drums and sing in disguised voices from heights in order to create the impression of awe and wonder of being airborne ghosts (or spirits incarnates). During performances, for instance, masquerades appear with its attendants all holding one percussive instrument or the other ranging from *ogene* (gong), *ekwe* (slit stick), *nkwa* (drum), udu (earthenware), *ohia* (coned percussive object filled pebbles), *ikoro* (slit log), *opi* (flute). At the arena or performance venues, masquerades perform with freedom. Each performance is a combination of dance and music involving leaps, turns, swirls, darts and brisk movements enhanced by the rhythmically harmonious music. For instance, Etembelembe, Akwujena and the Wonder Masquerades of Cross River, Kogi and Oyo States respectively can rise to a spectacular height of twenty feet or more. This is apparently to reveal its magical importance to the community. It can also shrink to five feet or less, roll on the ground and wriggle like a snake. It can charge at the audience to scare them off its path when unduly encroached at the performance space. Dance whether organized or not is to a large extenta component in the cultural nexus of the Africanperformance chain. Its inclusions in festivals, ceremonies and as part of masquerade performance, heightens its socio-entertainment relevance for both the

performer and the spectator. Each masquerade is costumed differently, and it is believed that costume is a carrier of the acts of the masquerade and a representative of different spirits or beings. It is the belief of the African that spirit possession in masquerade costume dominates its performance. African maskers not only represent a spirit, but embody that spirit during the dance. Maskers use a range of masks and costumes to represent spirits, gods, and sacred animals; birds (ugomma), antelopes (enemma), elephant (atumma), other masquerades representatives include maiden spirits (agbogomma), foreigner (oyibo), police warders and traffic officers etc. and their dances are imitations of these representations. In New World Encyclopedia, it is captured in these words:

> Imitation and harmony as reflected and echoed in nature are symptomatic; not a materialistic imitation of the natural elements, but a sensual one. The imitation of the rhythm of the waves, the sound of the tree growing, the colors in the sky, the whisper and thunder of elephant's walk, the shape of the river, the movement of a spider, the quiver of breath**,** *the nimble walk of an antelope, the charging and violent movement of the bull*, the cringing of concrete become source of inspiration (emphasis added, online).

Etymologically, it is not easy to state with utmost certainty how these dances evolved and who created them. However, because of the communal nature of the African societies, it can safely be said that it is communally owned and subsequently transferred from generation to generation through oral means.The myth surrounding the evolution of masquerade performance in African cultures is deeply rooted in ritual and folklore. The implication of the above assertion is that each narration of distant past develops its trajectory of performativity as witnessed in masquerade performances across African cultures.Age gradesor members of adult male groupsthrough initiations acquire them and serve as depositories of community's mores, ethos, traditions and culture. According to New World Encyclopedia:

> Traditionally, dance in Africa occurs collectively in a community setting. It expresses the life of the community more than the mood of an individual or a couple. In villages throughout the continent, the sound and the rhythm of the drum express the mood of the

> people. The drum is the sign of life; its beat is the heartbeat of the community. Such is the power of the drum to evoke emotions, to touch the souls of those who hear its rhythms. In an African community, coming together in response to the beating of the drum is an opportunity to give one another a sense of belonging and of solidarity. It is a time to connect with each other, to be part of that collective rhythm of the life in which young and old, rich and poor, men and women are all invited to contribute to the society (online).

In indigenous masquerade outings, dance and music are a major signifier of its performances. From inception, masquerade has been known and identified with its daring dance stunts. And because it is believed to be spirits incarnate, most of these displays by masquerade are regarded as being possible due largely because of the belief in 'spirit possession.' Yet no matter the extent of such supposed spirit possession, care is taken not to allow oneself be consumed by over performing. This is because, the performer is still human and must be conscious of the limits of human acts within mask impersonation. Okoye advises thus: "So in as much as the masquerade performer executes signifying and often aggressive actions he must guard against an uncontrollable arousal of attendant feelings/emotions within him" (2013:4). The major attraction of the African audience to masquerade performance venues is its dances and opulent costumes couched in energetic displays before a participatory audience. Beyond these displays, masquerade art also exhibits a total theatre approach to performance as it is coalesced in many other art forms aside dance and music to include; poetic narration, acting, miming, singing, dialogue, costume and mask design aesthetics. During performance, the formation of the masquerade in dance and music is both processional and circular. Immediately the masquerade is led out from its 'obu', 'ulo ogo', common room or house of initiates, performance begins. If they are more than one, they take turns to perform depending on their nature or the spirit character they represent. Their first contact with the audience is the village square which is within the masquerade's house. The next can be a movement down to the market square, king's palace or designated venues which traditionally has already been marked as venues for such performance. At each

stopover, the masquerades perform in circles or along the road. Hence it is either processional or circular. Thus, it can safely be said that in African indigenous performance, space is varied, it is usually elastic and immediate; king's palace, village square, market square, bush paths and many other found spaces. It is within these spaces that masquerade performs for its audience.

3.3 Space and Audience in Indigenous Masquerade Performance

Performance is as natural to the African as is breathing. It can be anywhere, just as the air we breathe abound. However, as open as performance space may seem to the African, there are restrictions. In traditional African masquerade performance, space is confronted and negotiated during performance. The position of the researcher on this assertion is based on his experience in a performance in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State on 29th March, 2016 which also corroborated his personal experiences as an initiate member of Ogo cult in Akpoha, Afikpo North Local Government of Ebonyi State. The *etenghara* masquerade from Ikwo is deadlier than even Ekpo Ibibio of Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom State. During the performance of the masquerade in March, 2016, the elders of the community, where Alex Ekwueme Federal University, NdufuAlike, Ikwo is hosted came on a special message to the Vice Chancellor of the university, the message was crystal clear; students and staff (male and female of non-indigenes) were to be warned to stay off the major roads leading to *etenghara* shrine between the early hours of that day till 12 noon. The major road was deserted because of *etenghara* until after its procession to its shrine led by its acolytes, brandishing cutlass, cudgels, clubs, and all sorts of dangerous prop that will be used on a defaulter. In Ekpo Ibibio masquerade of Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom state, the same scenario plays out during its performance. They can waylay vehicles on motion, confront and dare visitors to cross its path where its cutlass lays, use cutlasses on each other during the skit of 'challenge-win-and-pass.'

Following this scenario described above, space confrontation and negotiation is certain in some indigenous masquerade performances. Audience members are confined to a section of the venue during the performance of violent masquerades. In extreme cases, the venues like track roads and bush paths are deserted to avoid unnecessary confrontation with the masquerades that may lead to unwarranted embarrassment. Because the rules are part of the mores of the community, it is observed without questions. Such spaces are designated using *omu* (fresh yellow palm fronds) and marked as prohibited areas to ward off women, children and non-initiates. During performance, some masquerades also demonstrate ownership of their performing areas through the use of wide gestures, a high pitch guttural voice, whipping and charging at the audience to move back and avoid unnecessary encroachment. It is usually a 'celebrated site' to see spatial prohibition during meetings, performances, initiations and rituals involving masquerades. Initiate members feel fulfilled and will show off entrances and exits to the admiration of family members and envy of non-initiates. During important periods such as masking season, non-initiates including women are prohibited from entering spaces that have been declared open only to members of certain levels. Only through initiation can non-members be part of such spatial exclusion. However, the urban nature of Calabar and Abuja, the subjects of this study negates this model. The masquerade 'shrine' (*ulommuo*) and the 'arena of exclusion' in these cities dissolve into one physical performance space as this study shall reveal. In any case, whether the space is demarcated or not, it is a psychological phenomenon among the village people, who are vested with the knowledge of the rules of the performance. Physically and spiritually, spaces are negotiated in their sub-consciousness. Territorial invasion is met with resistance, hence, a big gong, slit drum (*ikoro)* or wooden gong (*ekwe)* is used to announce and herald the appearance of the masquerade to the performance arena. Before now, all non-initiates and women are not allowed closeness to the village square or *ulommuo* where the masquerade is being costumed. Immediately the cannon (local gun shots), *ikoro* or gong is heard, the enthusiasm and ululation that greet this

aural signage from both young and old who rush to the arena is usually unprecedented. As a communal rite, the rules are well engraved in their hearts as members of one entity. This is the hall mark of indigenous masquerade use of space and its interaction with the audience. Ukaegbu captures the essence of space and the audience in Igbo masking culture thus:

> The arena reflects the inclusiveness of communal performances and re-affirms the wider implications and functions of such presentations to a community. Open spaces may be seen as symbolising communal unity while the frequent ruptures of space and time depict the continuous interaction between different cosmic zones. Space in Igbo theatre is therefore, a symbolic recreation of Igbo cosmogony and each performing area is a microcosm of the world. Entry and exit points for itinerant groups are the same as space has an almost limitless quality. The staging of a majority of performances in the arena and the frequent adoption of circular seating arrangements are suggestive of their communal and celebratory overtones (1996:129).

In all traditional African masking culture across the continent, men, women, and children form the audience. The female groups (adult female/girls) sit in a special area far away from the performance and usually according to Ottenberg, in "the less comfortable and less shaded areas" (1975:135). This is not unconnected with the spirit possessing the masks which abhor women from close contact to avoid some repercussions that may involve loss of fertility until such spirit is appeased. It should also be noted that unlike western theatre, audience in traditional African masquerade performance and even other unmasked festivals like funerary rites, new yam and New Year celebrations are patient. This is because long time of waiting occurs before the actual performance. In the course of waiting, one sees the essence of communality as pleasantries are bantered away happily. While waiting, mothers separate fights among the children, elderly men come around to make the women keep quite because they are not supposed to be vocal and warned from being unnecessarily demonstrative or pointing to the masquerades in performance. They are also forbidden from coming out to appreciate the masquerade like some men and other initiates do at the heat/climax of the performance. The thoughts, feelings and reactions of the audience in all traditional African

performances are a part in the celebration process as are the performers. Both are bound in intimate interrelationships and each needs the other to give meaning to the performance. Margret Drewal notes that "the relationship between the maskers, the musicians, the spectators, and other participants (are) multiple, reciprocal, and continually shifting" (1992:101). This is obviously true in performances like the violent whip wielding children masquerades that waylay the opposite sex on the way to the streams along the bush tracks. To this set of masquerade, anywhere is performance space. This is also captured in Drewal's submission thus; "the participatory nature of African performance means that performer and the audience are continually in a state of flux during performance. This mode of spectatorship as decentered and constantly in flux differs remarkably from western notions of the fixed gaze of the audience and the objective of the performance onstage. Spectators in traditional African performance are free to intervene and be involved directly or indirectly in the performance since each audience member it is believed has the epistemic background of the event at heart as part of his/her mores. In many ways, the gathered spectators are both audience and performers, "standing within and without" (Drewal, M. 1992:16). Generally speaking, indigenous performances are held in the open. As a communal event, it is staged in a village square or round, market square or the king or chief's compound to accommodate mass audience. The arena stage accommodates different degrees of audienceparticipation, depending on the type of festival. Masquerade performance like *ijele* of Anambra, *Okumkpo* of Akpoha-Afikpo, *Ekpo* Ibibio, *Ekpo* Ngwa and Abiriba, *Ekpe* Efik and other such masquerade ensemble and their acolytes may use the arena. At other times in the same performance, the masquerade may deploy other ways of entertaining the audience that may negate the use of the arena space. However, it is not all masquerade performances that utilize theatre-in-the-round space. Some masquerades of physical force, children and night masquerades go about the nooks and crannies of the village in search of girls and young non-initiates to waylay as part of their performance style. Here, space of performance is founded

and demarcated to serve the purpose. Some other masquerades like *njenje* (a parading masquerade) of Afikpo, *akwujene* of Igala and *tinkoriko* of the Efik; *Ijele*, *agboghommuo*, *adamma*, *atumma*, *elemma* and *ugomma* are processional. They walk along and through a marked route to the market or a designated venue where they perform for the gathered audience. In other cases, there are quite a number too, that perform along the bush paths in the early hours of the day to scare young girls who go about their morning chores of fetching water or firewood. The bush tracks or the road to the stream serve as their performance space and the young agitating girls serve as the audience. The open nature of these venues does not require formal setting like in the case of western styled theatre. The naturalness of the environment is enough scenic units. In extreme cases, there is the omu (fresh yellow palm fronds) to demarcate the playing area from the audience area (this will be discussed in full under a separate subhead). Ugonna reveals that, "the mmonwu theatre appears to be a fusion of the stage as platform and as environment" (1984:194). He elucidates further:

> Geographically everybody in the obom is in the same environment, but psychologically they are all enclosed in the mmonwu world in which everyone present assumes a kind of dramatic role and apparently becomes a character in an environment quite removed from the everyday rationalistic world (1984:194-5).

The environment is also made possible by its central staging technique, which according to Ugonna, "instead of separating the spectators from the actors, treats them as part of the whole environment and in many cases as part of the cast who by their active involvement especially their intermittent applause and emotional responses help to achieve the *mmonwu* catharsis (1984:195). In traditional African masquerade, the spectators are, indeed, part of the total *mmonwu* environment, for although they are spectators, they are also part of the spectacle because each *mmonwu* spectator witnesses not only the performing masks, the dancing *okuigba* and the chanting *mmarigo* but also the movements, and reactions of the other spectators. After all, performers and spectators, in the broad day light and in the full view of

another, sit, stand and move around in the *mmonwu* arena contributing individually and collectively to the final realization of the *mmonwu* dramatic effect (1984:196).

This researcher supports the position of Ugonna on the change that has overtaken the *mmonwu* dramatic tradition in recent times. However, he finds it startling and incomprehensible to align with him on the masquerade theatre being confined in an auditorium for a fee paying (box office) audience. There are masquerades that cannot survive in an enclosure; masquerades on stilts, the wonder masquerades that grow and shrink, violent and masquerades of physical force and even night masquerades cannot qualify for an enclosed performance, or are they no longer traditional *mmonwu* dramatic experiences? This is not the change this researcher desires for a traditional African theatre like the masquerade whose aesthetic value is derivable through its open air performance. Ottenberg who had studied Afikpo masquerade culture saw in one of the masquerades, *njenje*, what can be termed carnival masquerades as far back as 1953. According to him:

> The njenje of Afikpo is unusual for Africa in that it is a masquerade with very little musical accompaniments and dancing. It is, in fact, a parade; the majority of the players form a line, which shows off their skillful manner of dressing and masking, their styles of movement, and the contrasting arrangement of the various types of masqueraders. The term njenje means "walk-walk" (2006: 69).

To actually establish the semblance of today's carnival art to the njenje masquerade, Ottenberg reveals further that "the procession is most impressive as it moves through a village (like in carnival routes). As the players approach a settlement, people hear them coming and come out to the common to view them. There is delightful variation in dress and a sense of style…and creativity they used in designing their costumes. The parade is pleasant to watch" (2006: 74 & 75). The significance of this parade is a revelation of the skills and

attributes of carnival which started even before we made attempts at importing the caravan like street party that now includes masquerades.

It also reechoes what Irobi had argued in "What They Came With: Carnival and the Persistence of African Performance Aesthetics in the Diaspora."

> By 1881, the Africans had so totally revolutionized carnival that the Whites, who used their own limited notion of the liberating potential of carnival to practice apartheid, had joined in the celebration and were now dancing African bamboula, gouiba, and calinda dances and even parodying or pretending to be Africans as part of their own performance. Today, Carnival has spread to other islands in the Caribbean and even migrated to North America and Europe. In Britain, for example, Carnival has spread from Nottinghill Gate, where it still remains the longest street festival in Europe, to other cities in England including Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Leeds, Leicester, Luton, and Manchester, where it continually draws participating multicultural audiences that range from 20,000 to 2 million in each city (2006:903).

The change Ugonna anticipates is worrisome. He may have envisioned these concluding remarks owing to activities between tradition and modernity in his part of Igbo community and within the period in which he wrote. There has been change no doubt and we are bound to witness more as far as human society exists. Change from masquerade performance is immanent. In fact, this research is majorly anchored on changes on masquerade performances which has attracted its arts in other performance platforms. With this change, the masquerade has left its shrine/groove arena and into the streets/roads, and from ritual to entertainment but not into "modern auditorium where spectators would be admitted after they might have purchased entry tickets…" (1984:197). This may not be achievable now because "long before cultural contact with Europe, Black Africa had its very own personal forms of dramatic expression. But, in order to understand them, one must banish all notions of theatre as it is thought of in the Euro-American context—something dependent on text, on halls, on technology and on box-office returns" (Diakhate and Eyoh, 2017:1). Masquerades are already on the streets of cities dressed and performing differently to what we knew it with

and for. It has also found relevance, attraction and has been appropriated by the Carnivals being celebrated annually in major cities including Abuja and Calabar. This is due to its aesthetic and entertainment regeneration in the face of change in its societies. Depending on the type of masquerade, space use in the anthropology of masquerade performance in Africa is flexible, elastic, encompassing and negotiable. Masking traditions have also evolved in contemporary times to inculcate modern social attributes seen in the society. It is against this backdrop that the next section of this enquiry, will examine the old ways indigenous masks and costumes were created.

3.4 Design Elements in Indigenous Masquerade Performance

Indigenous African performances reveal in their design motifs a realistic approach to all cultural celebrations. The 19th and 20th centuries' realist movement developed a set of dramatic and theatrical conventions with the aim of bringing a greater fidelity of real life to texts and performances. Traditional African performances have been true to this theory, even when they do not know what this theory means, neither is it used to judge their performances. Rather, they unwittingly deploy naturalness to their setting, décor, and makeup, costume and mask designs as prerequisites to performance verisimilitude. This approach resonates again with the poor theatre theory of Jerzy Grotowski, which believes in mastering of one's acting (realistic acting) instead of paying attention to flamboyant formalized setting that negates the power of conviction in acting. He proposed that "the actor makes a total gift of himself. This is a technique of the "trance" and of the integration of all the actor's psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and his instinct, springing forth in a sort of "trans-lumination" (Grotowski, 1968). Design motifs in traditional African masking culture can be examined within a tripartite approach: mask design and construction, costume and makeup design, and set design (even when this is minimalist). Against this background, African performances deploy and maintain realistic approach in all facets of the

production design process; In acting (acting in indigenous masquerade performance is true to life and presentational, a style of acting in which the audience are involved in the performance through responses and interactions), In costume (costume in indigenous masquerade performance is realistic; even masquerades representing animals are costumed to look exactly like the animals they represent, antelope (*elemma* masquerade); eagle (*ugomma* masquerade); hippopotamus (*akum* masquerade); maiden masquerades of *agbogho mmuo* and *adamma*. Other realistic representations include *onukwu* (imbecile) masquerades, *awusa* (Hausa) masquerades, couple masquerades and police masquerades. In makeup (makeup in indigenous masquerade performance is also realistic, be it patterns on the body or the application of ornaments). In mask (masks are designed to reflect their needs; for *oyibo* (foreigners), maidens, scary ugly masquerades). But Okagbue believes that "a major feature of Igbo masking theatre is the high degree of abstraction in the conception and design of masks. He concludes that, "Igbo mask theatre is a symbolic art form, and thus hardly any attempt is made to create realistic portrayals of characters…" (2007: 47). However, this researcher does not align the position of this study with this submission. If there is no difference between the mask, masquerade and its costume as opined by Okoye (1986), is it not also logical that seeing and identifying masquerades such as *Adanmma, Ugomma, Agbogo mmuo, Atumma, Akum, Onukwu, Mmanwu Hausa, Enemma, Nchiekwa* (Wrapper hangers) and many other typologies in a masquerade ensemble reveal a realistic masking tradition? Masks therefore, are designed bearing in mind their needs before a performance and must be true to such needs. In fact, the mask is considered the material representation of a spiritual presence assuring the presence of the ancestors among the living. It can symbolize animals as well as humans. The mask, therefore, is an emblem, a signage which is not only used to erase the personality of the wearer, but which also identifies the wearer with an ancestor or a supernatural being. It can also enable the wearer to take in the appearance of a creature belonging to another species while still retaining ancestral connections. Masquerades

utilize several design elements that may not actually be termed design as deployed in western theatre practice. However, when it is said that indigenous traditional masquerade performances do not make use of design, what readily comes to mind is the declaration by Peter Brook, that, the bareness of the stage is its design. African ceremonies for instance, are performed in public squares (market square, village square), courtyards (king's courtyard) etc., the performance is done with the audience (townspeople) standing or sitting in a circle around the 'actors.' The background to the arena or square of performance can be trees and shrubs along the path to the stream, the blue sky, the flowing river, the thatch roofs and mud walls and the logs serving as seats for the elderly people. All these come together to serve as scenery and background to the performance at the arena or square. The circular space expresses the desire to bring the participants together and to create between them a fusion, a true physical and physiological interpenetration. It is an attempt at recreating a spatial form in which beliefs and collective conceptions can best be realized (Diakhate and Eyoh, 2007:3). From the standpoint of space, it is also clear that in ancient Africa, no ritual act had meaning separate from the place where it was performed, or apart from the participants involved in it.

To further the argument of this study in relation to the design elements in indigenous African masquerade performance, this researcher aligns with culture specificity in masquerade designs. Across Nigeria and beyond, every culture produces masquerades depending on the availability of raw materials in their domain and at their disposal. Borrowing however, is not ruled out entirely in mask production. Even that, is also subject to proximity of cultures and their affiliations. Masks and Masquerades portray the ecology of the environment within which they are produced and performed. Most masks in traditional African societies derive materials for their production from the plants or animals in that vicinity. This is what Economists call comparative advantage in economic goods' production. In Cross River state for instance, *Atam* masquerade of the Bakor is produced exclusively from Palm leaves and other reeds found in the community. *Tinkorikor* or King Masquerade popular among the

Efiks and the Ibibios, is produced from plantain leaves which abound in the environment, while among the Arochukwu, Ohafia, Abiriba and Ibibio of Abia state and Akwa Ibom State respectively, Ekpo and several other masks are made from wood and raffia which are also found in abundance in these communities. The principal materials for mask making are logs from trees which are durable from where masks of different shapes are carved. Skill in the carving of masks is also highly prized in traditional African society even though the artist does not primarily survive by his artistic productions. The above submission was captured succinctly by Ottenberg, "the Afikpo mask tradition appears to be a blend of Jones's Igbo-Ibibio and his Cross River styles. This mixture reflects the village-group's geographic position and history. The Cross River influence is probably best represented at Afikpo in performances where raffia and net costumes, along with masks of wood or netting are worn." (1975:14). The Okumkpo and Okonko (Akpoha-Ngodo/Akpoha Igurube) masquerades best represent the Igbo-Ibibio tradition, for this performance has large number of wood-masked dancers and players and a substantial audience, and are staged as theatre (1975:15). It should also be noted that some of the white and light-coloured beautiful masks, often used to portray females, are probably the result of Igbo influence, while the darker, ugly ones, employed to scare people or to represent ugly persons, are an ancient Afikpo tradition, perhaps linked to the Ibibio-Anang-Efik cultures to the south. Why this is so could be gleaned from the fact that Ottenberg sees Afikpo as having a strong and rich masquerade tradition emanating from the cultures of Southern Nigeria and Cameroun. Furthermore, the Ekpo masks of Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom and their neighbours, Arochukwu, Ohafia and Abiriba in Abia state, in designs, are strung with raffia that hangs to the waist. It is worn with a knee-length raffia skirt. The only parts of the body covered are the lower legs, which are painted with charcoal (Akpan, 1994:48). Ekpo masquerades in these parts of Nigeria are fearsome and wield bows and arrows, swords, machetes, and hunting guns. They represent the spirit of great warriors, strong and heroic who were killed at the prime of their lives. All over their body are

protective charms and talisman. Young men between the ages of 20 – 35 struggle to be masked with the Ekpo masquerade to exhibit that innate youthful exuberance of their age.

In setting, African indigenous performance is natural. Its venue uses no scenery and depends upon sunlight for natural lighting and visibility apart from the night masquerades which are not masked in the real sense. It employs a minimal number of props, which are majorly costume props for the masquerades (whips, machetes, bows and arrows, guns, hand fans, horse tails, and some percussive instruments of aural accompaniment). The scenes in the performance are set in ordinary places known to the audience already; in front of homes, in a village square, along the village bush tracks and prominently in the market square. Rules guiding sitting arrangements are observed. For instance, Ottenberg (1975) revealed that women in Afikpo socio-cultural milieu are usually confined to the worst places during masquerade performance. But Ottenberg should know that they are rules guiding masquerade traditions in different socio-cultural milieus and leaving women in a secluded position may not be unconnected to the rules guiding masking tradition in this part of the society. Grace Okafor (1991) had also averred that women watch masquerade performances from a distance. Masking traditions are culture specific, but generally speaking, women are not known to be identified with masquerade performances in many parts of Igbo land including Enugu, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Imo and South-South states and some North Central states like Kogi and Nassarawa. The omu (fresh yellow palm frond) is usually conspicuous during performances and bars non-initiates and women from coming close to masquerades around the venues of performance. However, in setting as part of design elements in indigenous masquerade performance, the visual symbols and their effects on the audience depend upon mask and costume and the movement of persons, not upon scenery anyway but upon the backdrop formed by the audience and the general scenery created by the village setting. This is made clearer by Okagbue:

> The space can be anywhere, usually a village or town common, or any other open space, including public roads and family compounds. A performance happens wherever the spectator encounters and engages with the performer, and the two automatically define, continuously, the enveloping space of their meeting throughout the duration of the performance. Equally, their roles, as performer or spectator, go through a similar process of renegotiations as the performance progresses. The fluidity of the space is responsible for the constantly shifting positions of and alternating roles between spectator and performer in most African performance contexts (2007: 2).

Costuming in masking cultures all over Africa is a signifier and serves more than the mere function of body concealment. The costumes also establish that awe and inscrutable attributes of the masquerade persona. Across the entire world, costume has variously represented so many things at one time or the other to different cultures. Its presence in any event has a subtle metaphor attached to its meaning and presupposes that it can be read outside the present reality of its presentation. However, costume is a veritable force in Igbo masquerade theatre. Rather than 'concealing the actor', the costume reveals a new supernatural personality. It is regarded with awe and is not considered in any way 'dress' or 'clothing.' In fact, the Igbo tradition has no name for masquerade costume other than the masquerade itself. Whatever the actor puts on by way of costume is a spirit force in its own right. It transports the actor into total identification with it, so that he ceases to exist. He becomes the spirit that is graphically represented in the costume. It is therefore, obvious that the Igbo do not have any equivalent names for masquerade costume, actor, mask, props and accessories. They conceive all as a totality which carries both act and art. Okoye puts it more succinctly: "there is never such absolute names as mask, costume, or a person who wears the mask and costume, for except where labored translation makes it apparent, they are always viewed in totality" (1986: 40). In fact, even among the initiates, to put on the *mmonwu* costume (*ikpu mmonwu*) means "putting on the *mmonwu*" itself (1986: 40). Thus it can be correctly said that costume is the masquerade. Masquerades in African societies are identified by their costumes and form the basis for the understanding of its art, the acts associated with the

masquerade performance is almost synonymous with the kind of costume it puts on and which invariably reveals its significance in the gestalt act of the performance. For instance, *Ekpo* masquerade of the Efik and Ibibio includes *Nkubia, Adiaha unak* (dangerous daughter), *Akpan Ekpo* (first son) and *udo Ekpo* (second son). *AdiahaEkpo* is dangerous and costumed with terribly looking mask and charcoal painted raffia. But unlike *Adiaha Unak, Nkubia*, *Akpan Ekpo* and *udo Ekpo* are friendly and benign. Their masks and costume are more naturalistic and child-like. Their smooth faces and open eyes create an impression of innocence. Hairstyles are paramount features in the costumes of these masquerades. Some of the colours (paints) used on the mask which doubles as makeup include charcoal river sediment (black), ochre or camwood (red) or yellow ochre or kaolin (white). However, the raffia attachment is a major form through which the mask is created for adornment. In the South East states of Anambra and Enugu, masquerades are costumed to represent an idea, experiences, a particular being or animal. Okagbue asserts that:

> There are as many mask types as there are Igbo ideas and experiences. The masks can be anthropomorphous, theriomorphic, or therianthropic…but in general, ideas, concepts and notions, such as beauty, ugliness, power, force, strength, terror, wonder, elegance, chastity, strangeness, inscrutability, wisdom, nobility, agility, mystery, and wealth are predominant design motifs in Igbo masks (2007: 48).

The masking culture of the Igbo and the entire research areas reveal representations of human characters and animals in their costuming: *adanmma*, *agbogho mma*, police sergeant, *mmaṅwụ* Hausa, couple masquerades, white (*Oyibo*) masquerades, rascal son and (*Onukwu*) masquerades and in animal costuming; antelope (*Enemma*), eagle (*Ugomma*), elephant (*Atumma)* yet there are many others with varying abstraction of costumes; fresh yellow palm fronds, dry banana leaves, raffia reeds, multi-coloured clothing and ribbons. In Igbo masking cultures, the certainty of realistic representation is assured as each masquerade is costumed bearing in mind its role in the performance equation.

3.5 Indigenous Masquerade Performances as Total Theatre

The concept of total theatre in African performance forms is a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in the indigenous celebrations of the African peoples. It is a major attribute and spectacle of masquerade performance and bears the imprimatur of its Africanity. In line with this assertion, the aesthetic paradigm of total theatre concept integrates impersonation, pantomime, skits, drumming, drama, music, dance, songs, poetry, incantations, costuming and other creative artistic modes which are rolled into its practices as unique African performance techniques. Indigenous African theatre comprises distinct and varied socio-cultural practices, conventions, rules, mores, and aesthetic trends, all of which are as dynamic, diverse, multifocal, multifunctional, and unique as the people who produce and consume them. Nwosu (2014) reveals that what distinguishes indigenous African total theatre from similar practices is the unique historical experiences of the people of Africa, which potentiates the origins and perpetuation of an integrative aesthetic paradigm. Against this backdrop, corpus of literature supporting the idea of African theatre and indeed masquerade performance as total theatre is staggering: Duruaku (1997), Chike Aniakor (2001), Kennedy Scott (1973), Ossie Enekwe (1981), J. N. Amankulor (1981), Osita Okagbue (2007), Victor Ukaegbu (1996), Emeka Nwabueze (1984, 1987) and recently Canice Nwosu (2014). Duruaku submits that:

> Traditional African drama refers to indigenous African performing art forms that have not been corrupted by modernization over the years. They include those found in festivals which combine dances, songs, music, chants, speech/dialogue, spectacle etc. The other instances are those that spring from religion, rituals, comedies and storytelling (1997: 16).

From the above declaration, masquerade and its performance idioms capture in totality these descriptions. It is the rallying point and the centre piece of African indigenous performance aesthetics. Masquerade in indigenous African setting goes beyond mere spectacle. It is a communal theatre and strives to identify with the aspirations of its producing community

through serving as a gadfly, critic, arbiter, adjudicator, entertainer, as well raconteur and the depository of the mores of the community. Amankulor believes that indigenous African theatre:

> Is practised as total theatre, which means that the other traditional arts are fused within its practical form. A catalogue of these arts includes masks, body costumes, and decorations, the verbal arts, music, song, dance, acting and warfare. They blend these arts into the single art of drama produces pattern of performances as well as conventions which set traditional African drama apart from dramatic practice of their world cultures (1981:37).

Enekwe elucidates further on the components of traditional African theatre by stating that, "traditional African and Asian dramas are participatory and celebrative. It is total, because it combines many art forms, music, poetry, dance, acting, miming, masking, painting, singing, dialogue, etc., hence, speech is not dominant as in the mainstream European theatre (1981:154). Like drama and theatre, traditional African theatre according to Anthony Graham-White is, "primarily the drama of the community: prepared by members of the community according to well-established modes and performed for or on behalf of the whole community" (1975:13).

Traditional theatre is not only community-oriented but has been described by Yomi Onope, "as live performances, typical of festival celebration, music, dance, and other supportive arts that made the traditional African theatre multifunctional (171). Traditional drama can be regarded as a prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers (Turner, 1987:26) or to what Duruaku refers to as, "indigenous performing art forms that have not been corrupted or polluted by modernization over the years" (1997:11). The nature and functionality of Traditional African theatre pre-dated the civilization that came with the imperial forces. This is because indigenous African theatre was and still deeply rooted in the day-to-day activities

of the people. It is part and parcel of the whole conception of existence and it is a communal activity.

The African theatre, therefore, relies heavily on total theatre aesthetics of dance, music and song, puppetry, poetry, acrobatic display, incantation and invocation, evocation and chanting, mime and pantomimic dramatization. All these elements, as Adeoye submits, have become a recurring decimal of artistry in the poetic justification of African theatrical aesthetics. This aesthetic pervasiveness of masquerade in indigenous African performance space reveals that its entertainment values are anchored on creativity. This creativity is deployed in its arts of performance through: spectacular and opulent costuming, elaborate and creative masks designs, highly choreographed dance steps, formation of masking groups for proper coordination and organization of group outings. This reformation has attracted the masquerade to new and emerging performance sites such as seen in the new festival of carnival where the masquerade has found relevance and significance in recent years, as this study shall establish. What the indigenous theatre like the masquerade do, according to Okagbue "is to appropriate new experiences, represent them, and thereby in the process acting simultaneously as social memories and refractive indexes of their respective communities. Each performance is in dialogue with history, affecting and changing history as much as it is affected and changed by history" (2007:13). To further his argument, Okagbue used Ijele masquerade of Anambra for emphasis.

> The ijele masquerade of the Igbo, for example, exhibits an almost irreverent postmodernist appropriation of alien materials and threats in a process of discursive containment. In this way the ijele is able to perform its primary role of representing the entirety of the Igbo universe. Its climactic dance at the end of each performance is usually a gigantic and graceful swirling movement of reflecting mirrors and images through which it is able to reveal to all spectators a concatenation of key moments, objects and

> personalities of accumulated Igbo communal experience and history (2007: 10).

This quote captures the essence of this study as the next chapter will dwell on the arts of the following identified masquerades in the Calabar and Abuja Carnivals: *Ekpo* and *Ekpe* in Akwa Ibom and Cross River states, *Ijele*, *Agbogommuo*, *Ugomma* and *Adamma* in Anambra and Enugu states. This investigation will be within the arts of the masquerade which include: Costumes, Masks, Makeup, Dance, Music, Acolytes and Drumming, Mime, Audience participation and Space utilization, co-ordination and organization by the acolytes in the processional performance.

CHAPTER FOUR

MASQUERADE PERFORMANCES IN NEW NIGERIAN FESTIVALS

4.1 History of Carnival

The history of carnival is a history of performance and cultural expression which is traceable to all ages. As far back as human civilization, there has been one form of social gathering or another. Each of this has been aimed to relive memories and sustain communality in warm celebration. From Carnival'spre-Lenten ritual ceremony in Roman Catholic Church to itsform of emancipatory celebrations across all Labour Camps by those Africans forced into slavery across Europe, this street processional art has served as a medium of festivities, revelry and funfair through which individuals have come togetherto attain and express, a nostalgic catharsis of a distant time in life and culture.From such unsavoury celebratory attachment, carnival blossomed and has since been transposed in other cultures of the world. To attempt a definition of carnival as it suits this study and beyond what scholars have done; it can be described as a live and loud street party made up of a procession of highly spirited fun-lovers whose expressive freedom is not hindered, but rather heightened by their wearing of the Venice-styled half-masks that disguise their true identity and afford them the opportunity to perform with utmost freedom (the spirit of carnival). Like the masked character or masquerade, the mask which acts as a veil emboldens one to perform in ways different from the real self. At present, carnival, can variously be described as a revelry, a costume parade of band members, a cultural procession of masked entertainers, a float of themed high-spirit and animated fun-lovers, is celebrated and identified with different cultures across the world. In Nigeria, carnival which started as a Christmas festival to usher in the New Year in Calabar, Cross River State. It has become a major cultural attraction and funfair in virtually all the state capitals in Nigeria, and includes; an annual cultural festival which began in Akwa Ibom State in 2008, Rivers State cultural carnival nicknamed CarniRiv

which started in 2008, Benue State youth cultural festival in 2008, Bornu's Marama cultural festival in 2010, the now remodeled (pre-colonial) Benin Ugie Festival, and recently, Ebonyi State's maiden carnival christened 'In God we trust' in 2015 and many 'street' carnivals amongst youths in Lagos state and major cities in Nigeria. Guinard had described this festival epidemic as festivalisation of cities, by which he means "an increase of cultural performances and events such as festivals, temporary and intangible art forms in order to market and/or reinvent a place" (2009:18). In continuation, he asserts that "festivals are not something new. They have always been a means to celebrate the identity of a group in a place. This festivalisation is problematic in that the current festivals tend to be mainly economically oriented, losing sight of the social and local dimensions that formed them in the very beginning (Guinard, 2009:9). It was the same position which Ahmed Yerima accentuated during an interview with this researcher. He retorted that:

> Carnival is a celebration of the past. You cannot discard the past and celebrate it. The past is determined by the present. Carnivals grow from the immediate culture. When you are packaging culture, you must look inside for significations. I was appointed a Director of Cultural Carnival and not carnival of expression. There are two types of carnival; carnival that celebrates culture and the other that brings new images and imageries of contemporary issues. Calabar Carnival is highly hybridized thereby neglecting the local import and significance of cultural artifacts (Yerima, interview, 4th October, 2017).

However, whether a carnival is hybridized or the local artifacts are prominently on display, the focus of this research is the commonest determining factor, a recurrent decimal in all carnivals; the mas' (masquerade), the costumes, the dances, the drumming and live music blaring on a high pitch from a wagon or truck, the highly animated procession of youths that dance to these tunes.

These are the major aesthetics of carnival display. Adeola Dewis' description of carnival aligns within the premise of this thesis. Quoting Best, she projects carnival as "total theatre",

one which mas' performance is incorporated. Dewis had identified mas' as mask, or masquerade or carnival, but further says, 'it is potentially that and more" (Dewis, 2014: 4). The loud music, colourful costumes, masquerades and revelry of today's carnival is traceable to the Island city of Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad, also known as Trinidad Carnival. The history of the carnival is replete with varied trajectories of development; from a pre-Lenten Roman Catholic feast, to a celebration of emancipated African slaves and on to a cultural festival of expression of unity in diversity as there is in Nigeria. A more dateline account of the history of the carnival is supplied by Asha St. Bernard. According to her, "Carnival in Trinidad, most popularly known as Trinidad Carnival, has its roots in pre-Lenten celebrations held by European settlers to the Island in the late 1700s. In 1873, the "Spanish Crown" allowed Roman Catholics in nearby Islands to settle in Trinidad" (Asha, 2016: 12). However, to corroborate what many others have said, she reveals that 'carnival's final shape and content belong to African slaves who took over carnival with emancipation in 1834." Throughout its history, carnival has undergone many significant changes. It has moved from an 'imported, sophisticated festival initially celebrated predominantly by French Creole planters and other elites on the Island, to a raucous celebration of freedom by the African Creoles, and then to a widely participatory, eminent and commercialized festival seen today.' (Asha, 2016:14). Trinidad has since influenced the carnivals in other Caribbean islands, and has been exported to the United States of America, England and Nigeria by Caribbean immigrants. Carnival attire has continued to evolve from more traditional costuming to more contemporary pretty and opulent dresses including new designs for masquerades and revelers. The change in aesthetic can be attributed to the commercialization of the carnival. In furtherance to this and in order to blur limits and boundaries, Denis-Constant reveals two major devices used in carnival: 'masks and laughter.' A mask according to him "is to be understood as any decorative device which allows the individual to change his/her appearance. Possibilities abound where it covers the head, the naked body, it can transform

one into an animal, into a new being part human, part animal, with few decorative items, it can transform and transfigure an individual" (Denis-Constant, 1994: 24). In all these, the mask always gives the reveler the chance to look like someone, sometimes even like something. For according to Mikhail, "the mask is one of the most complex elements of popular festivals, it negates unitary conceptions of the self, it playfully permits changes and reincarnations. Masking stimulates expression of the self's multiplicity. Behind the mask, a reveler can be at the same time him/herself and another with whom he identifies, even partially or ephemerally" (Mikhail,1984:7). From this exposition, one thing has been established, that masquerade or masking or covering of the face with an object, an item of disguise runs through as a major significance, or the core, or kernel of carnival. As a metaphor of hidden identity, enlivened and embodied, the façade of the mask potentiates an individual's performance with utmost freedom of expression, which the carnival permits. It is this same freedom that masquerade enjoys in African lore that this researcher believes, attracted the masquerade to be a major force used by the African slaves during the initial stages of the development of carnival as an African identity. To connect these thoughts together, it will be necessary to reecho the words of Esiaba Irobi:

> Because the body is the primary instrument for incubating, articulating, and expressing all ideas as well as transporting all art, be it music, drama, literature, theatre, festival or carnival, I want to argue that it is through phenomenology and kinesthetic literacy (i.e., the use of the medium of the body as site of cultural signification) that crucial aspects of indigenous African festival theatre were translocated to the New World. These fragments of performative texts were then deployed by diasporized Africans to negotiate the creation of hybrid and syncretic forms that are now called African American or Caribbean or South American carnival texts… (Irobi, 2007: 900901).

The carnival festival may have been transplanted to Trinidad and Tobago Island by the European settlers; but, once adopted by the Afro-Caribbeans, it was transformed into a cultural expression of surviving African traditions, coloured by local experience which

includes dancing, music, masking, costuming, drumming and poetic renditions usually identified with Africans anywhere. Drawing necessarily from the above, the emphasis is to establish that masquerade and its total theatre components are major features of the carnival everywhere in the world and are traceable to Africa, including Nigeria. However, following this argument will negate the title of this research, which identifies carnival as a new form of festival in Nigeria. How can one convincingly establish the fact that a festival which bore the imprint of African slaves in diaspora is now 'new' to Nigeria? This is the major thrust of this research and will be tackled in the sections to follow. But it must be noted that carnival or festival is not new to Africans. It has variously been represented in many forms like the new yam festival involving ritual procession, masquerade performances that are elaborately and spectacularly displayed along identified village paths through the market square; dance and music performances that involve the generality of the townspeople.

Nevertheless, the researcher's interest in masquerade performance developed into a deeper desire to engage critically with the performance aesthetics in Abuja and Calabar carnivals, where there are no textual materials to provide critical interpretations but historical narrations on the festivals. In this study therefore, the researcher has paid particular attention to masking and performance practices/aesthetics within the masquerade parades of Anambra, Enugu, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States in Abuja Carnival and Akwa Ibom and Cross River States in Carnival Calabar. This focus has made the researcher not delve into the rest of the States and their masquerade performances in these select carnival festivals, although, he acknowledges that these are intrinsically connected to the overall performance razzmatazz and contribute to the ways in which these festivals are celebrated.

4.2 Introducing Carnival as a New Nigerian Festival

Nigeria has always been identified as host to many cultural festivals. In fact, her unity in diversity as a nation state resonates in her performance similarities despite her ethnic affiliations. This is mostly conspicuous in her masking art. From recorded history, Nigeria has been a major producer of indigenous art forms; crafts like ancient sculptors in the mold of terra-cotta from Nok kingdom, bronze castings which dominate Igbo-Ukwu in south-east, Ife bronze heads and terra-cotta in state of Osun, ancient Benin kingdom known for their ivories, bronze and wood works, Ikot-Ekpene in Akwa-Ibom state with their raffia, cane chair and mask carving artistry, hide and skin work in Sokoto, and Abeokuta in Ogun state known for its *adire* and tie-dye fabrics, and so many others. These are testaments to the conspicuity of crafts in virtually every community in Nigeria. In performance arts; Nigeria is a breeding ground for such indigenous performances like dancing, singing, drumming, masking, wrestling, fishing contests, and many ceremonies involving rites of passage for young male and female adults. Nigeria has always been a hotbed of indigenous cultural festivals. As supplement and complementary to this, states have recently developed new art and cultural products that partner global interests with the local energies which abound. Against this background, the frequency of this display of Nigerian arts and performances have increased with many states of the federation adding "new festivals" (Esekong, 2010) to their cultural calendar to supposedly boost revenue generation and also celebrate their cultures. This was necessitated by the importation of a new brand of festival called carnival from the Caribbean and South America by Cross River state in 2005 as part of its annual Christmas festival celebration. Liwhu Betiang's "Global Drums and Local Masquerades: Fifty Years of Television Broadcasting in Nigeria (19592009)" corroborates this assertion, "This new-look form of carnival culture is however not indigenous to Nigeria. The Carnival Calabar for instance has a technical relationship with Trinidad and Tobago" (Betiang, 2013:8). The Cross River State had therefore, started what it called Christmas festival in

1999 to usher in the new millennium in the year 2000 by the former governor, Mr. Donald Duke. As a student of Theatre Arts, at the University of Calabar, this researcher was among the technical hands to Dr Molinta Enendu (now professor) who had won the contract to light up the Christmas village at the popular Bus-Stop 11-11, which has become the carnival village. Other streets that enjoyed this light-up were Mary Slessor Avenue, Calabar Road, Barracks Road, stadium and streets leading to the Government House. The most conspicuous spectacle was the array of light and movement of people at night and the display of masquerades of all sizes and mask designs in the day, all within the precinct of the Christmas village. By 2005, it had metamorphosed to a carnival brand modeled after the Trinidad and Tobago example; in themed formation of band floats, live music and procession along designated carnival routes. From this humble beginning, and in a bid to be part of history, every state in Nigeria including the federal capital, Abuja, started carnival festival and successive governments have maintained the status quo.

As pointed above, the newness attributed to this Carnival was not because of the 'strangeness' of its components, for according to Bakhtin, carnival "was a time of excess, when the prohibitions on carnal satisfaction are abolished and popular creative energy is given full expression in the form of costumes, masks, songs, dances, puppet shows, poems, plays, etc. (Bakhtin, 1984: 487). These aforementioned are well known to an average Nigerian nay African, and so, they are not the reason for the overwhelming acceptance and introduction of carnival as a new form of festival in Nigerian cultural calendar. The major reasons why it is termed 'new Carnival' is because it is a new addition to the festival culture of Nigeria having been imported from the Caribbean Island first, in 2005. It is also new within the general performance idioms usually identified with indigenous performances. For instance, costumes used in these new festivals are syncretic as most of the designs introduce foreign elements with its African counterparts, the creativity deployed in mixture of fabrics,

masks and costume designs, colour amplification, style of adornment, and the general aesthetics reveal an innovation which can only be introduced by 'a new festival' whose organizing body is focused for the future in order to satisfy a yearning audience whose thirst and taste for contemporary performance it should satisfy. This is what the 'old' indigenous festivals lacked. It is also why masquerade, an indigenous performance form became an instant attraction in the new festival, for according to Ahmed Yerima in an interview with this researcher, "our indigenous culture is the resource material for the carnivals, although spirituality is played down in carnival because its purpose and intention are purely entertainment" (Yerima, interview, 4th October, 2017).Talking about spirituality and entertainment, context can demystify ritual (Schechner, 2004). The translocation of masquerades in carnivals taking place in major cities in Nigeria has therefore granted it an entertainment status different from what masquerade with its ritual undertones has been known within its natal culture.Accordingly, Enekwe avers thus: "ritual can easily be transformed into theatre and vice-versa in a number of ways. A ritual becomes entertainment once it is outside its original context or when the belief that sustains it has lost its potency (in Ogunbiyi, 155).This attraction to the new festival by masquerade is obviously seen in their similarities in such aspects like the costumes, dance movements, processional display and the masks worn by revelers in these new festivals which are seemingly similar with the masquerades in our indigenous performances. Still on its 'newness', in African indigenous performances, as a communal event, it is free for all. There are no prizes and no adjudicators in the real sense of that word. This researcher cannot describe what happens at the communal level of performance appreciation as a formal right of assessment and appraisal, as deployed by adjudicators in these new festivals. At the village venues of performance for instance, the audience side calls, jeers, boos and voice out condemnation of certain displays by a performer. At other times appraisal through commendationsare passed in form of clapping of

hands, uproarious excitement of acceptance and dashing to the arena of performance to paste money on a good performer as forms of appreciation.

In the newfestival, there is an established protocol and order of adjudicating and subjecting performers (revelers and masquerades alike) to competition to win prizes in certain areas and categories like 'Best Costumed Masquerade', 'Most Spectacular Performance' and 'Best Masquerade Performance'. This is part of the performance idioms of the new festival. According to Esekong, "in Calabar Carnival, bleachers, each with the capacity to carry about 2000 spectators, are temporarily constructed at three adjudicator points" (Esekong, 2010:67). In yet another introduction of newness to the carnival, Esekong talks about appointment of artistic and technical directors to coordinate and oversee each band's pre-performance exhibitions before the finale. This is certainly new to the old festival. In his words:

> Performances at carnivals are usually conceptualized by an artistic director, who appoints a technical director to coordinate the technical details, including the recruitment of support personnel from the private sector or from relevant institutions. In Calabar Carnival, every band has an artistic director who decides how the central theme of the Carnival will be interpreted and who coordinates every component of the ensemble as they develop a unified performance. At the Abuja Carnival, the artistic directors of the various contingents are always challenged to assemble cultural presentations that break the monotony arising from the repetition of the previous performances (Esekong, 2010:67).

In the same vein, Professor Ahmed Yerima who had been a Technical Director in Abuja Carnival Directorate and later Chairman/CEO Abuja Carnival Commission had revealed to this researcher in an interview that as a Director of Abuja Carnival, "I always advised Directors of State Art Councils, to come with the strength (their best entry) of their states, to ensure healthy competition amongst contingents. This is because what brings carnival into a tense mood is the sense or idea of competition between the performers and the performance. Each State wants to be given attention. The prize is therefore contested for and won" (Yerima, interview, 4th October, 2017).

It may not be out of place to point out the fact that indigenous performances may not be in any form of prize contention, but there is always an assessment mechanism or benchmark or minimum standard expected of a community's outing in each year. This way, individuals who performed below par will not be included the following year because of their abysmal performance the previous year. This helps to checkmate the incidence of bringing a whole community's performance oeuvre to ignominy. In the same way, elders of each community offer helps in forms of advice on how best to deliver a perfect performance. This helps in fine-tuning any area observed as not good enough the previous performance year. This should be considered within the premise of 'artistic directing.' It does not however, intend to counter the points already established about carnival as 'new festivals' but the onus lies on this research endeavour to weigh in and comment on areas where tradition is at par with modernity. It is also worthy of mention that in carnivals like in indigenous performances, the audience is an active member either as an onlooker or as participant. Esekong reveals inter alia, "the audiences in both Abuja and Calabar Carnivals, consisting of both "art-core" (dedicated) and "art-peripheral" (passive) spectators, flank the sides of the carnival route and watch from balconies of buildings to experience the carnival firsthand" (Esekeong, 2010:67). Another obvious fact about the newness of the festival lies on the band formation and contingents. In Carnival Calabar for instance, they started with five (5) bands, a sixth (6) band christened 'All Stars Band' was introduced in the 2015 edition. Its financier and leader is Prof (Senator) Ben Ayade, the governor of Cross River state. Details about the bands will come up later in subsequent sections of this study. In the same vein, Abuja Carnival is made up of all contingents from the thirty-six states of the federation including the FCT. All State's ministry of Arts and Culture and its Directorates are usually part of the Carnival. Each State or contingent is represented and identified with a signifier or State's motif. It could be their masquerades, native costumes, standards props, or through the choreographed dances of the region. Professional choreographers are usually engaged for several weeks, training dancers

for competitive performance in both Carnivals. This professional touch of coordination, organization and management of human, cultural and entertainment resources are lacking in the old indigenous festivals. In the narratives around Abuja and Calabar Carnivals as new festivals, it is also expedient to establish yet another 'newness' found around them. Both Carnivals are government establishments and therefore enjoy financial supports. Individual philanthropy and corporate institutions also patronize State's contingents during the festival. There are quite a number of significances of Carnival as new festival addition in the Nigerian cultural and entertainment space. Aside its function as a tourism platform, it is also a means of exporting the Nigerian cultural artifacts, as well as a form of income for the host States in their drive for internally generated revenue in the wake of a dwindling oil economy.In a globalized world where capitalist-consumerism is challenged and sustained by best practices in delivery of commodities, the global appeal Abuja and Calabar carnivals enjoy can only be guaranteed through dedicated effort by carnival directorates at meeting a minimum standard of international best practices in tourism packaging, advertisement and an assured security for carnival patrons. People or the art audiences want to spend their money and drive satisfaction in the art products. Audience engineering according to Nwamuo, is the scientific and skillful designing, organizing and implementing of a programme of action aimed at winning large audiences to a named event, ensuring their comfort and pleasure during the event' (34). Efforts on attracting large scale audience in carnival events can be achieved through security at events venues, cooperate imaging and sponsorship in the areas of advertisements, branding, and leasing of events management in the hands of professionals. If this must be achieved, then attendance and participation in the carnival can only but accentuate Nwamuo's position 'the theatre audience is a group of people drawn to a theatrical (*carnival*) event by the appetite for art at a certain time and place and that is aware of itself as a homogeneous group of art lovers' (29).The Abuja and Calabar Carnivals share a lot in common; year of establishment, organization, bands/contingents formation, themed

programmes, designated processional carnival routes, and a fusion of contemporary and traditional performance aesthetics. This will be revealed shortly in the next section.

4.2.1 Abuja Carnival

I. The Act of Establishment

The establishment of what is now known and referred to as Nigeria National Carnival (NNC) which was formerly Abuja Carnival, started with a presidential Executive Order signed by the former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. According to Ahmed Yerima:

> The strategic orientation of Abuja Carnival started at the Presidential Committee on Tourism (PCT) held in Calabar in 2005 and chaired by the then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. It was at this session, that Nigeria initiated an international Carnival to be known as Abuja Carnival to be held in Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria and to be hosted by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism on behalf of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Yerima, 2009:2).

The Abuja Carnival took off in 2005 with a mandate and objectives to not only serve as historical source material, but also an inspiration for the unity of Africa and a reconnection with the past. It was also commenced to showcase traditional Nigerian Carnival of music, dance and arts; to celebrate the individuality and unity of the State Governments and people of Nigeria; to educate and inform the world of the rich culture and history of Nigeria; to serve as a vehicle to promote and market the rich cultural heritage and arts forms of Nigeria with the view of attracting international tourists to Nigeria. The choice of Abuja as the venue was to among other reasons:

> a. Promote and celebrate Nigeria's cultural heritage
> b. Establish Abuja Carnival as a national event, especially as it was entered into the Tourism Master plan.
> c. Highlight Abuja as the heart of national unity
> d. Introduce Abuja to the world, not only as a seat of governance but a place for selling and showcasing Nigeria's cultural heritage (Yerima, 2009:3)

To actualize these objectives, the Presidential Committee appointed Ambassador Frank Nchita Ogbuewu, the Honourable Minister of Culture and Tourism and former Ambassador to Greece; where tourism and culture had been highlighted to a point of not only that of celebration, but as a revenue earner, to be Chairman of the maiden Carnival and Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, the Minister of FCT as Vice Chairman. In the same vein, an inter-ministerial committee on Abuja Carnival made up of thirteen (13) Ministries was constituted, to show the inter-relatedness of marketing Nigeria as a Tourism Destination and the concomitant action by the various ministries as impacting on attracting tourists to the country. Carnival Consultants were also appointed. The Road Show Company of London made up of a group of experienced individuals from the West Indies and England was duly appointed as consultants on the Carnival. The team of the consultants comprised:

> Claire Holder – Managing Director
> Chris Nortey – Finance and Development Specialist
> Danny Holder – Route Design and Management Specialist
> Martha Fevrier – Float and Costume Specialist
> Avion Mookram – Float and Costume Specialst
> The Consultants were to proffer technical assistance to the Carnival Management Committee in packaging and presenting Nigeria's rich and diverse cultural manifestations into a single product of international standard patronage (Yerima, 2009:5)

To reinforce his commitment to the pursuit of alternative income through the culture tourism sector, Mr. President inaugurated the Carnival Management Committee (CMC) in July, 2005. Because of the organic nature of the Abuja Carnival, the objectives have continued to increase over the years. Against this background, the Abuja Carnival is distinguished from the known world renowned carnivals and designed to be a creative occasion showcasing Nigeria's unique heritage of art forms and culture. The best of Nigeria is presented to the world through the eyes of the City of Abuja – history, people, cuisine, fashion, art and culture. Hence the definitive and perennial byline of the first edition: *ExperienceCulture, CelebrateLife*. As it is with the Carnival Management Committee (CMC), to oversee all the

ground plans of the carnival, the Carnival Development and Operations Plans provide details of Management and Operations Strategy for the carnival to be held in November of every year beginning from 2005. The strategies have been developed within the framework of the main carnival objectives, and a carnival that will attract over 500, 000 spectators to the streets of the City of Abuja

II. The Abuja Carnival Performance

The maiden edition of the Abuja Carnival kicked off on Thursday, November 24th – Sunday, November 27th, 2005, to a rousing and thunderous ululation of a birth of a new festival. It was a huge success by all standards, admitting as much as 34 state contingents and two foreign nations.

Subsequent editions of the Abuja Carnival include:

S/n	Date of Carnival	Carnival Theme and Byline
1	Nov 23 – Nov 26, 2006	Using Culture to Promote Tourism Strategy
2	Nov 22 – Nov 25, 2007	Abuja Carnival: A Celebration of Nigeria Culture
3	Nov 20 – Nov 23, 2008	Packaging Carnival for Tourism
4	Nov 21 – Nov 24, 2009	Celebrate Nigeria-Abuja Carnival 2009: The People's Carnival
5	Nov 27 – Nov 30, 2010	Celebrate Nigeria: The Jubilee Carnival
6	Nov 26 – Nov 29, 2011	The Carnival of Reconciliation
7	Nov 24 – Nov 27, 2012	Carnival of Peace and Harmony
8	Nov 23 – Nov 26, 2013	A People for a Century, a People forever
9	Nov 24 – Nov 27, 2014	Building an Enduring Creative Nation
10	No 2015 Edition	Cancelled because of late appointment of ministers
11	Dec 3 – Dec 6, 2016	The Creative Industry: Pivot to Economic Growth

The 2016 edition of Abuja Carnival was remarkable in a way, following its change of nomenclature from Abuja Carnival to Nigeria National Carnival (NNC), and change of date from its traditional November dates to December. The idea about its change of name had been mooted since 2015. Over the years, the ministry, technical committee members, financiers in the private and cooperate sectors had been having challenges with the name 'Abuja Carnival,' which informed the decision for a name change, with the aim of making the project more acceptable to all stakeholders. According Mrs. Grace Gekpe (a Director Entertainment and Creative Services Department in the Ministry of Culture and National Orientation), "the challenge is that when you are talking to people about Abuja Carnival, It is alleged that other states have their carnivals like Calabar Carnival, Lagos Carnival, 'why should we come and support a State Carnival? If you say it's a National Carnival, then it should not be Abuja.' So, this is what informed the change or rebranding of the name to Nigeria National Carnival," She said in an interview with the researcher, ahead of the 2015 edition that was eventually canceled. However, from its inception in 2005, Abuja Carnival has been consistent with the components of its performance and entries from State contingents.

The components of Abuja Carnival from inception have been:

1. **STREET CARNIVAL OR STREET PROCESSION OF MOTORIZED FLOATS**.

   The Street Carnival which is a street party portrays extreme creativity in costumes, floats and dance steps complemented by contemporary music. It is a great party that has over forty (40) bands representing the thirty-six (36) States of the Federation including the FCT, foreign troupes and corporate organizations. The Street Carnival takes place on the Carnival routes of eighteen (18) kilometres: from Transcorp to Maitama to Shehu Shagari way to Eagle Square. The most amazing spectacle that crowns the Street procession comes from the motorized floats, each representing a

particular State of the federation and distinguished by unique cultural motifs. For instance, River State in their entry in 2006, venerated the shark, as the king of the waterways. Abia State contingents used their war dance known as '*Ikpirikpe Ogu*' as their constant motif and intro, Gombe State in their motif entry, designed the head of a cattle on their motorized float and titled it, 'Cattle Pride', Ebonyi State in 2007, reenacted the slavery experience in their entry, their float was a colonial wagon-driven motif; Benue State designed their float with the Kwaghir Puppet in 2007; Cross River State used their *Ekpe* Masquerade as their introductory float, while Akwa Ibom designed the *Ekpo* Mask on their motorized float in 2005, *Okennma* Masquerade represented Ebonyi as their 2006 entry; Katsina State's float in 2005 was the *Gobarau*Minaret, the Minaret (mosque tower) is over 300 years old; Oyo State used the Tortoise as their entry for 2007 Abuja Carnival; Taraba State used Plastic Arts representing masquerade as their entry float; Anambra State in 2007, used a stylized *Ijele* Masquerade as their motorized entry float; Kaduna State in 2007 designed and patterned their float after the Nok Head; Benin (Edo State) entry in 2006 was the Oba's Palace motorized float; Ekiti State entry in 2007, was an 'Academician' motorized motif; Yobe State entry in 2007, was a motif of a 'Horse and its Rider'; In 2006, Adamawa State designed and floated the *Sukur* Walls, *Sukur* is a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage; In 2007, Cross River State designed their motorized float and titled it 'A Salute to Womanhood'; *Eyo* Masquerade (aka) *AdamuOrisha* play, represented Lagos State in 2006 and 2007 in their entry floats. The significance of this part of the carnival is in Abuja's continued demonstration of Nigeria's unity in diversity as States of the federation display their unique heritage in the metaphor of a Carnival train/float thus building bridges across States and consolidating on friendship (www.abujacarnivaloffice.com).

2. CARNIVAL DURBAR

Durbar is another component of Abuja Carnival. It is a royal event which is synonymous with the people of Northern Nigeria, after its introduction by the colonialists as formerly, an official reception or audience held by a local prince or British governor in colonial India, or by a local chief or British official in colonial Africa.Enuma Okoro a CNN Reporter describes Durbar festival as'an annual festival celebrated in several cities of Nigeria at the culmination of Muslim festivals Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha' (CNN Africa, July 2017).It is an assemblage of beautifully decorated horses and horsemen in artistic parade, which includes riding competitions that was introduced into the Abuja Carnival from inception. It is one of the most respected gatherings among these people, performed with well decorated and mounted horses, each representing a royal palace or kingdom in the Northern Emirates. To them, the event is a symbol of authority and material prowess. Today, Durbar remains a social manifestation of certain aspects of Nigeria's cultural heritage especially the way it signifies the development of political institutions, capacity for handicraft production and the skills of breeding, riding and maintaining healthy horses. Durbar has become a major attraction and an integral component of the Abuja Carnival. Horses and Camels on display are costumed in expensive jewelries. Expensive and elaborately designed velvet and lace materials are used for saddles and draperies, the riders are royally garbed either as Emirs or as palace guards, armed with swords – the history of past northern leaders is prevalent with exploits at war achieved through the art of horsemanship and sword (www.nacd.gov.ng). States in the Northern Nigeria that are identified with Durbar during Abuja Carnival include: Bauchi State, Kano State with their Emir's Body Guard Calvary, Emir of Zazzau kingdom, Yobe, Bornu and Zamfara States. Horse and Camels are used by

contingents from North-East and North-West Nigeria as animals of great importance during royal festivals and have since taken a prominent place in the Abuja Carnival. For example, the Traditional 'Jahu' Horse Rider's Royal Salute, Royal Calvary and Infantry formation in North-West, North-East and parts of North Central Nigeria, featured these animals since the beginning of carnival in 2005. Participants are from royal emirates of Northern Nigeria. The overall effect was that of power, wealth and beauty, an enchanting spectacle to watch (www.nacd.gov.ng).

3. MASQUERADE PERFORMANCE IN ABUJA CARNIVAL

The Abuja Carnival masquerade performance is likened to an amalgam of indigenous spirits gathered in the streets of the Federal Capital at the height of their de-ritualised and aesthetic razzmatazz.However sacred the masquerade and its costume may seem before the audience at the Abuja and Calabar Carnivals, the element of rituality is barely noticed as profanity is elevated. This is obvious in the type of creativity deployed in designing the costumes and masks. Yerima in an interview with the researcher had explained that the aesthetic appeal enjoyed by the Abuja carnival is not anchored on the ragtag display of masquerade cultures of the participating states, but on the opulence, elaborate, and well-patterned and stylized masquerade costumes on displays. The central idea behind Abuja carnival which is to attract and display to a wider and heterogeneous audience, the cultures of the people of Nigeria is deeply rooted on colour, and the resplendent colours of masquerade's costumes align favourably with this objective behind the carnival establishment. Nigeria has a vibrant masquerade performance culture which cuts across all ethnic nationalities. Masquerades are found in virtually all communities in Nigeria no matter how small such a community is, and are seen as spirits which represent communication links between their ancestors and the living. From the *Egungun* of the Yoruba, the *Dodos*

of some NorthCentral ethnic groups, the *Ekpe*/*Ekpo* of the Efik/Ibibio/Abia, the *Mmanwu*, *Mmuo*, *Monwu* and *Maa* of the Igbo, the *Egwura* and *Akwujena* of Kogi, the *Alagba* and *Igbelegbe* of the Niger Delta stock, just to mention but a few, these masquerades which in themselves are repositories of all that is held secret, mysterious, magical, supernal and inscrutably wonderful are used by their community members for ancestors' veneration, agricultural rites and majorly for socio-cultural entertainment. A Newsletter had reported that the masquerade event of the 2007 Abuja Carnival witnessed an array of major and minor masquerades from across the length and breadth of Nigeria, that at one point, "the Eagle Square, venue of the event was taken over by such a large number of these masquerades that everything seemed to pass in a blur, with one noticing the difference in sizes, colours and costumes, rather than their states of origin" (www.nacd.gov.ng). The performance of each masquerade differs from one culture to the other depending on the concept and idea behind its institution. Some are war cults while others are for peace and security, some are meant for entertainment through dancing and yet others are symbols of beauty, creativity and dignity. This last variety is among the colourfully costumed, decorated and entertaining masquerades in Nigeria. The entertainment connotation of the masquerade in these new festivals is the interest of this research considering its place in history among Africans and their belief systems. Joel Adedeji had explained the process by which ritual theatre becomes festival theatre, and festival theatre fragments into professional and amateur productions of secular theatre. Over time the religious purpose may diminish but the seasonal enactment would continue because people have become accustomed to it as a traditional event (Hill, 1994). This elocution resonates in Abuja Carnival when one sees masquerade which hitherto was an indigenous performance form and rooted deeply in ritual festival and now being transposed on contemporary stage of Abuja Eagle Square, venue of Abuja Carnival.

This position was also corroborated by Ahmed Yerima, when he asserted that in Abuja Carnival "spirituality is played down because of the people that are involved, and the purpose and intention which motivates it, is entertainment" (interview, 2017). This assertion best captures the focus of this research.

4.2.2 Carnival Calabar

The 'Carnival Calabar' and not 'Calabar Carnival' is a brand name that has come to be identified with the yearly street processional party in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. Scholars like Carlson Amanda (2010), (Esekong and Ekpeyong, 2012), Liwhu Betiang (2013), Ajibade Babson and Sarah Eno Obongha (2014) agree to this appellation. The Carnival officially started in 2005 and not 2004 is supported by such scholars like Carlson (2010), Esu Bassey Benjamin et al, Esekong and Ekpeyong (2012), Esekong H. Andrew, Chris Agibe and Emmanuel Eneh (2014). However, as a pupil in 1990, this researcher was 'bribed' with a promise of a visit to Calabar if he passed an entrance examination into one of the prestigious Catholic owned Secondary Schools in Okigwe; the Marist Comprehensive Academy, Uturu. He passed, and at the end of the first term, he was taken to Calabar for the Christmas holidays. One striking experience about the holiday in Calabar during this season of Christmas was the *Ekpe* masquerade display which as a newcomer to a city was captivating, alluring and luring, as he practically spent each of his whole day at 'round-about (Eleven-Eleven) and cultural Centre Calabar', where these masquerades and other dances were displayed for people; indigenes and non-indigenes alike to watch. These same locations have come to be identified as the hotbeds of cultural activities till date including the Carnival Calabar. It is also against this background that the researcher aligns this historical exposition to the narration of Udayi Jacob:

> According to Atuake, the deputy director of administration of Carnival Commission in Cross River State, Nigeria (in a personal communication in 2009), Carnival can be traced back to the 1980s where (sic) visitors and indigenes alike rushed to the roundabout to watch cultural displays performed by the Ekpe masquerades which was tagged "Ekpe festival". He said that the event which came up every December each year was an event that every true sons and daughters of the Efik kingdom in Nigeria looked forward to. Carnival Calabar therefore, according to him, is a gradual progression of the Ekpe dance to a bigger event that is being put together by the state government for the celebration of both Christmas and end of year (Agba Udayi, 2013:7).

Historically, the Calabar carnival with the brand name Carnival Calabar, dubbed 'Africa's Biggest Street Party' by fun-seekers, revelers, tourists and its organizers, has been a yearly funfair since 2004. It is significant at this juncture to mention the role of the Presidential Committee on Tourism (PCT), whose retreat and orientation held in Calabar and chaired by the then President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo kick-started what has come to be a major contemporary cultural event in Nigeria. Calabar had served as the host and venue for this orientation and Mr. Donald Duke as the governor of Cross River State, was ably present and the deliberations in the different sessions sparked off the idea of replicating the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival style in his state. Hence, after the event, he constituted a 31-man committee and served as the chairman, to go to Port of Spain, the Capital City of Trinidad and Tobago and study their Carnival and its successes over the years. On their return, the first Carnival Calabar was celebrated and also at the national level, the first Abuja Carnival came on board. The idea of the Carnival had been on the drawing board since 2000 when the Cross River State government started celebrating the annual Christmas festival now renamed Calabar Festival. The festival started with a parade showcasing major Landmarks of the state such as the famous export commodity – cocoa pod, the low land Gorilla of the last rain forest in West Africa, the leopard of the *Ekpe* Cultural group, the old Residency building which once served as the seat of Government of the entire Colonial Nigeria, the Mary Slessor Caravan, Monoliths and more (Carnival and Events Brochure, 2011). In 2004, costumes were

introduced to elaborate the Street Parade, and the five official Bands were created and fully launched as Carnival Calabar Bands the following year, 2005. His Excellency the former governor, Senator Liyel Imoke introduced the Cultural Parade and Children's Carnival in 2007, thus making the Carnival Calabar a two-day event (26 and 27 December). The Carnival Calabar fashioned after the oldest Caribbean Carnival, the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival but with African flavor, has five registered bands namely, Bayside, Freedom, Master Blaster (Masta Blasta), Passion 4 and Seagull. However, in the 2015 Carnival Calabar sponsored by Governor Ben Ayade, he created 'All Star Band.' This band is composed of businessmen and women, industry leaders and chief executives, Stars, Nigerian celebrities, past beautiful queens, past presidents and governors, diplomats and their wives. Professor Ben Ayade is the band financier. Each of the bands is headed by a leader who in consultation with prominent band leaders develops a guiding philosophy for the operations of the groups. Esekong and Ekpeyong, assert that membership for each band is drawn from the public and can be extended to any size. Funding is derived from corporate sponsorship, adverts at carnival venues, membership contributions, annual registration fees and proceeds from year-round entertainment activities (2012: 290).

The festival starts with the Tree-Lighting ceremony on the 30th of November at the millennium Park (Carnival Calabar Village) and culminates in the Thanksgiving Ceremony on 1st January of the succeeding year. According to Carnival and Events Brochure, in between these 32-Day events, there are musical concerts which have featured renowned national and international artistes like late Lucky Dube, Joe, Alpha Blondy, Huge Masekela, Oliver Mtukudzi, Akon, Kirk Franklin, Donnie McClurkin, Chevelle Franklyn, Fat Joe, Neto, Asa, D'banj, P-Square, 2Face, and Flavour. All these world celebrated acts have at one time or the other graced the festival with their rhythms and lyrics. There are also awareness campaigns and seminars on contemporary issues of global concerns some of which are part

of the year's Carnival themes like Deforestation and Sustaining Earth's Treasures through our Culture as theme of Carnival Calabar, 2008. Others include the children's Christmas Camp, Theatre Performances, vocational trainings for youth, Fashion and food fairs and finally the two-day Carnival Calabar to spice up the season-long events.

THE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF CARNIVAL CALABAR

The major components of Carnival Calabar like its imitation, the T&T Carnival (Trinidad and Tobago Carnival), include Dance and Music, Masking (Masquerade) and Costuming, Carnival Floats and Bands, and Carnival Street Procession. These will be discussed briefly in this section. However, the nature of the Carnival Calabar is such that it captures the position expressed by Yerima that, "Carnival Calabar is highly hybridized thereby neglecting the local import and significance of indigenous cultural artifacts" (Yerima, interview, 4th October, 2017). This has led to different innovations which are springing up such as Super-Bike, Superman, Roman General, Carnival Kings and Queens. All these are in a bid to globalize the concept and attract more interests from foreign tourists. Yerima insists that, instead of globalizing our cultures, we should glocalise it, because Carnival should grow from the immediate culture. "When you are packaging Carnival, you must look inside for the cultural significations of the producing cultures" (Yerima, interview, 4th October, 2017). However, Esekong and Ekpeyong who had been part of the Carnival Calabar from inception as designers of floats and Research and Technical Assistants contend that:

> Carnival Calabar and Calabar Festival are tourism products that draw from traditional indigenous practices and the ever unfolding forms of modernity in various contexts. This is why the concept of trado-modernity, formulated to describe and address the fusion of the traditional and the modern is apt in describing them. While the contents of Carnival Calabar and Calabar Festival are largely indigenous and traditional, parts of the execution and consumption of the concepts reflect aspects of modernity. The core artistic mix of Calabar Festival – the masquerades, songs, dances and costumes are indigenous art form which have been in traditional usage early in time. Masquerades, for instance have been performing in

> Calabar, like many parts of Africa, acting as intermediaries between the spirits of the ancestors and the real world in roles that vary with societies. But in contemporary usage in the festival, masquerades simply entertain and the costumes draw from a wide variety of locally produced and foreign materials, the essence of which is to achieve the requisite aesthetic blend (2012:291).

Yerima might have expressed his fears for an African culture that is in dire need of rejuvenation and calls for a transposition of the cultural artifacts of the Carnival's producing communities instead of outright copying of its foreign alternatives. Yet, the intellection of the duo of Esekong and Ekpeyong who are core members of the Carnival Calabar floats and motifs' productions has laid to rest these fears expressed by Yerima. From all indications, culture's mutability is a dead giveaway for its expropriatory potentials in performance sites. Carnivals have become the attraction of the moment and present avenues for the coalescence of different dance and music cultures seen in contemporary performances including the Calabar examples. Music in Carnival Calabar is supplied by the band's orchestra (a group designated and assigned with the supportive role to the live DJs in a truck).

Carnival Calabar Bands' Competition Tableau

Carnival Year	Carnival Bands	Carnival Theme of the Year	Winning Band	Runners Up
2005	**Passion 4 Band**	Cross River State: The People's Paradise	**Passion 4 Band**	**Masta Blasta**
2006		Canaan Land of Milk and Honey	**Passion 4 Band**	**Freedom**
2007	**Seagulls Band**	Come And Live And Be At Rest: CALABAR	**Bayside Band**	**Passion 4**
2008		Sustaining Earth's Treasures through our Culture	**Passion 4 Band**	**Seagulls Band**
2009	**Masta Blasta**	Land of Our Birth: Our People, Our Heritage	**Passion 4/Seagull Bands**	**Masta Blasta**
2010		Our Strength, Our Resilience, The Bedrock of Our Future	**Passion 4 Band**	**Seagulls Band**
2011	**Freedom Band**	Endless Possibilities	**Passion 4 Band**	**Seagulls Band**
2012		Celebrating a New Dawn	**Masta Blasta**	**Passion 4**
2013	**Bayside Band**	Aint No Stopping Us	**Masta Blasta**	**Passion 4**
2014		Celebration Time	**Masta Blasta**	**Passion 4**
2015	**All Stars Band**	Climate Change	**Passion 4 Band**	**Seagulls Band**
2016		Climate Change	**Seagulls Band**	**Passion 4**

4.3 Masquerades in New Nigeria Festivals

The Abuja Carnival

Masquerade performances in traditional society are seen as a means of social interaction and an agent of social change. In recognition of the significance of this cultural heritage especially among communities of Southern Nigeria, it was included as a major plank for the realization of the mandate of Abuja Carnival as a mega cultural extravaganza featuring the diversity of Nigeria's national heritage. Long thought the exclusive practice of the South, Abuja Carnival Masquerade Fiesta revealed that the art of the Mask is very much thriving in States of the North with Nassarawa State winning the award of the overall best masquerade entry in 2007 to the chagrin of the States from the South-East in particular. The various

masquerades on parade are part of the splendour and razzmatazz of the Carnival Opening Ceremony while a dedicated day and venue is set aside for the Carnival Masquerade Performances. This will be discussed further in the later part of this section. It is also instructive to note that only friendly, social, non-spiritual/ritual and parade-like entertaining masquerades perform at Abuja Carnival in deference to the phenomenological sensibilities of the viewing public made up of foreign and Nigerian nationals. To the best of this researcher's knowledge, coming from the number of years put into this research work, there are no restrictions to the type of masquerades on parade in Abuja and Calabar Carnivals. Against the background of Christianity maintaining that masquerade performances are pagan and fetish practices, several reasons have been deduced for persistent participation in masquerade activities by the natives. These include; one's attachment to his/her natal culture, the urge to identify with one's heritage in the community and the attached communal consciousness, the conviviality that comes with the masquerade celebration, cultural revivalism and mercantilism of masquerade performances in recent times. Uwagbute (2021) explains that, contrary to early (Western) missionaries' prediction that Christianity would erode Africa's 'fetish' practices, masquerades are thriving. This has been witnessed in its translocation in carnivals, in a bid to sustain its relevance and keep alive this all important cultural phenomenon. This also indicates that carnival platform has helped in keeping the future of masquerades despite Christianity's long standing presence and stifling plans on indigenous cultures.

In Abuja Carnival masquerade performances therefore, emphasis has shifted from ritual and cleansing to entertainment and pleasure.Here, Enekwe (1981) asserts that 'a ritual becomes entertainment once it is outside its original context or when the belief that sustains it has lost its potency' (155). The implication of the above statement is that immediately masquerades leave their natal cultures, everything that held them together as ritual automatically fades

away and in its place, comes pure entertainment.The masquerade's performances have moved from the groove and arena to the streets and the tarred roads. Talent and creativity have replaced traditional expertise. The communal responsibility always known with masquerade in traditional settings was jettisoned and in its place, individual creativity is highly regarded and appreciated.Thisis seen in State contingents (Art Councils) contracting specialists and experts in their various fields of performance to be part of their entry to avail them the opportunity of winning prizes. It has also become a government affair with troupes sponsored with government's subventionsand financial allocations. The ubiquity of masquerades in Abuja Carnival is an exemplification of how highly this indigenous art is reveled and revered in every community in Nigeria. From the beginning of Abuja Carnival in 2005, all the 774 Local Government Areas that make up Nigeria were expected to present one form of masquerade or another from their locality. Every community in Nigeria therefore, has a masking culture to fall back to during festivals. The array of masquerades on parade during Abuja Carnivals testify to this assertion. From the North-East, North-Central, South-South, South-East to South-West, masquerade is a major spectacle in Abuja Carnivals and include: the *Eyo* (*adamu orisha*) masquerade of Lagos state, the *Igede* masquerade of Benue, the *Ekpo* masquerade of Akwa Ibom State, the *Ekpe* masquerade of Cross River State, the *Enentigha* and *Okenma* masquerades of Ebonyi State, the *Ijele, Agbogo Mmuo, Adamma*, masquerades of Anambra and Enugu States, Leaf Masquerade of Plateau State, the Angel and the Devil masquerades of Abia State, the *Ugbekpe* wonderful masquerade of Edo State, the *Akwujena* wonderful masquerade of Kogi State, the Rolling masquerade of Nassarawa and Kaduna States, the masquerades of animal genus also abound in Abuja Carnival and include *Enemma* (antelope), *Enyi* (elephant), *Odum* (lion) *Ugomma*(eagle) and *Akum* (hippopotamus) mostly of Igbo pedigree, the *Ashama* masquerade of Nassarawa State, the *danafojura* (fire defying) masquerade of Oyo State, the hydra dancing and tumbling masquerade of Edo State and many others. All these are usually unleashed on the streets of Abuja as part of the

Carnival. However, the performance of each masquerade differs from one culture to the other depending on the concept and idea behind its institution. This research has therefore set out to discuss few of these masquerades as they perform at Abuja Carnival. Masquerades selected for study include *Ijele*, *Agbogo mmuo* and *Ugomma* from Anambra and Enugu States. Others are *Ekpe* and *Ekpo* representing Efik and Ibibio tribes of Cross River and Akwa Ibom States respectively.

Table showing the differences between indigenous masquerade and masquerade in Carnivals

s/n	Highlights	Indigenous Masquerade	Masquerade in Carnivals
1	Nature of the masquerade	Both ritual and social inclined. Regarded as ancestors on a visit to mankind with a message.	Social and as a means of pure entertainment.
2	Ownership	Communal but anonymous, since no individual lays claim to ownership.	State's contingent and sponsored by government or its agencies.
3	Membership	Gradational through initiation into manhood.	Free entry through selection/audition overseen by artistic director
4	Preparation	Whole community comes out to prepare maskers for the performance	Officials of art councils help to mask recruited people.
5	Costume	Mostly local raw materials: jute bags, plantain leafs, raffia leafs, palm fronds, wrappers, feminine wears. Appeals to the natives who are owners of the performance.	Highly stylized. Designed with resplendent colours. Aesthetically appeals to wider people including foreigners and mixed audience.
6	Venue	Site specific. Village and market squares. Kings' courtyards, paths leading to the stream/river, compounds, shrines or found sites	Designated spaces; streets of cities, zoological gardens, stadium, amusement parks, including the carnival routes
7	Audience	Villagers and visitors to the performance.	Mixed audience. It attracts large audience due to its visual and global appeal.
8	Performance	Dancing, pantomiming, singing	Dancing, processional acts.

The Ijele Masquerade in Abuja Carnival

Ijele masquerade is the most well-known masquerade among the South-East states of Anambra and Enugu. It has been variously described as the king of masquerades. *Ijele* masquerade is the most spectacular mask in the festival as attested to by the organizers and the audience alike (Yerima, interview, 2017). Okoye calls it "the most expensive and fabulously monumental of all the Igbo masquerades" (1999:111). According to him, *Ijele* is a symbolic representation of the community in the shape of an enormous superstructure supported by a cylindrical base. Reeds who had witnessed the *Mmanwu* festival of Enugu where *Ijele* was presented captures the description of Ijele masquerade:

> The Ijele was framed by figures of policemen around the lower levels of the mask and figures of chiefs appeared throughout. A man on horseback, with an Ozo title, stood near the top, while an airplane surmounted the entire assemblage. Around the base of the mask a cloth python curled around itself. Ijele masquerades are made from cloth-covered armatures, and the cloth is shaped into an elaborate mound over an arc colorful canes. On this super-structure as many as forty stuffed cloth figures and animals are arranged. These figures-from pythons and policemen to women with children-reflect the vibrant life of a community (Reeds 1996:8).

Following this description, *Ijele* does not reduce in flamboyancy and opulence as Okagbue asserts that "Ijele exhibits an almost irreverent postmodernist appropriation of alien materials and threats in a process of discursive containment. *Ijele* successfully absorbs the colonial experience and presence of late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, and of late has taken on board the jet bombers, fighters and military personalities of Nigeria's three-year civil war of 1967-1970 (2007:10). Okoye describes *Ijele* as featuring very expensive and decorative vertical sections of cloths of various bright colours with abstract geometric applique designs, the headdress is a network of interlocking canes wrapped in brightly coloured wool which meet at the apex in a dome shaped around and within which are various roundly sculptured images drawn from the human, animal, ancestral and vegetative worlds (Okoye, 1999:112).

Ijele's performance in Abuja Carnival attracts large spectatorship as everybody wants to have a look at its awesome presence. Even other masquerades stopped their performances and were puzzled as such gigantic figure approached the Eagle Square. As the *Ijele* approached the Square, it twisted gracefully from side to side, causing its panels to gently rise. Once it reached the reviewing area where Carnival adjudicators were seated, it began to perform more elaborately. Surrounded by its acolytes and musicians who directed its movement, the *Ijele* begin to spin, slowly at first, then gaining speed. The centrifugal force generated by the spinning mask was carefully controlled, and the *Ijele* slowed and stopped without wobbling or stumbling. Its dance steps were delectably royal. Okoye captures *Ijele* dance more elaborately:

> From the moment the *Ijele* emerges into the performance area to the time it goes back into its enclosure there is an alternating air of fast and slow motion, suspense, tension and release. As the Ijele increases its pace, it is attended to by a throng of efficient escorts, the orchestra, and the aesthetic exclamations of the audience. Occasionally this enormous structure rhythmically spins round and round causing the various tassels and panels of cloth to fly and sway round in a very visually overwhelming rhythm. The regal gait of *Ijele*, its incredible agility, the artistic excellence of its beautiful openwork cloth and woolen superstructure delicately balanced on two barely visible legs, and the sheer economic expense of the *Ijele* costume make it indeed a wonder to behold (Okoye, 1999:114).

One thing this researcher observed in the Abuja Carnival Masquerade performance vis-à-vis the assessment process by adjudicators was the issue of regulation of the performance. Each masking group performed short versions of their displays before the audience and the judges who sat at a demarcated enclosed state box which served as the main assessment point for the parade. Each group paused as they reached this area in order to exhaust their performance for full adjudication. This area was the "stage" where masqueraders performed according to the particular genre of the group. The processional quality and nature of carnival demand that *Ijele* masquerade performs differently from the way it does in its customary village settings.

While each of the masking groups had its own particular style, the forward motion of the procession was externally regulated by officials, who limited the performative action that any masquerade would undertake. The context of the procession created new and uniform time under which each masquerade had to perform. Carnival organizers aimed for a harmonious parade of different masquerades.The order of presentation was controlled by officials urging groups forward and holding them back at the same time in a regulated manner of appearance. The usual Nigerian factor of selective justice played out as more time was given to some masquerade processions especially, if the group happens to know any member of the officials. Masquerades like *Ijele* that requires more space and time to really display was shortchanged in this arrangement. The burdensome heaviness of the mask and costume of *Ijele* on its masker which requires slow paced dance steps was abrogated with the call by officials of the Carnival to move on in order to allow others time to perform. No audience can enjoy *Ijele*'s dance in just one twist and sway. Its mammoth size needs space to perform and to understand the dance steps, an audience needs a closer following like the Igbo adage admonitions 'to really understand and enjoy the dances of a masquerade one needs not be static in the performance arena.' According to Ukaegbu (1996), the *Ijele* mask performs in slow, graceful steps but its performers and participants adopt free-flowing formations. The combination of measured movement by masks, and the expressive free-flowing dance by performers and participants can only be sustained in a fluid space so that, *Ijele* and similar masks adopt semi-restricted use of space in a free form (PhD Thesis, www.collections.plymouth.ac.uk). The practice of combining restricted and free space enables many performances to incorporate both itinerant and localized components as adopted by *Ijele* in all Abuja Carnival performances. The *Ijele* is a visual wonderment. The head, the body and the base are massive and virtually rotund. It is indeed a giant masquerade, an embodiment of nobility and a pride to the home culture of Anambra State. The cylindrical base is bedecked with richly embroidered hanging tassels of varied colours.

Plate 1:
This is Ijele Masquerade in its magnificent and resplendent splendour. The performance is a processional display along the major carnival route during Abuja Carnival, 2008.

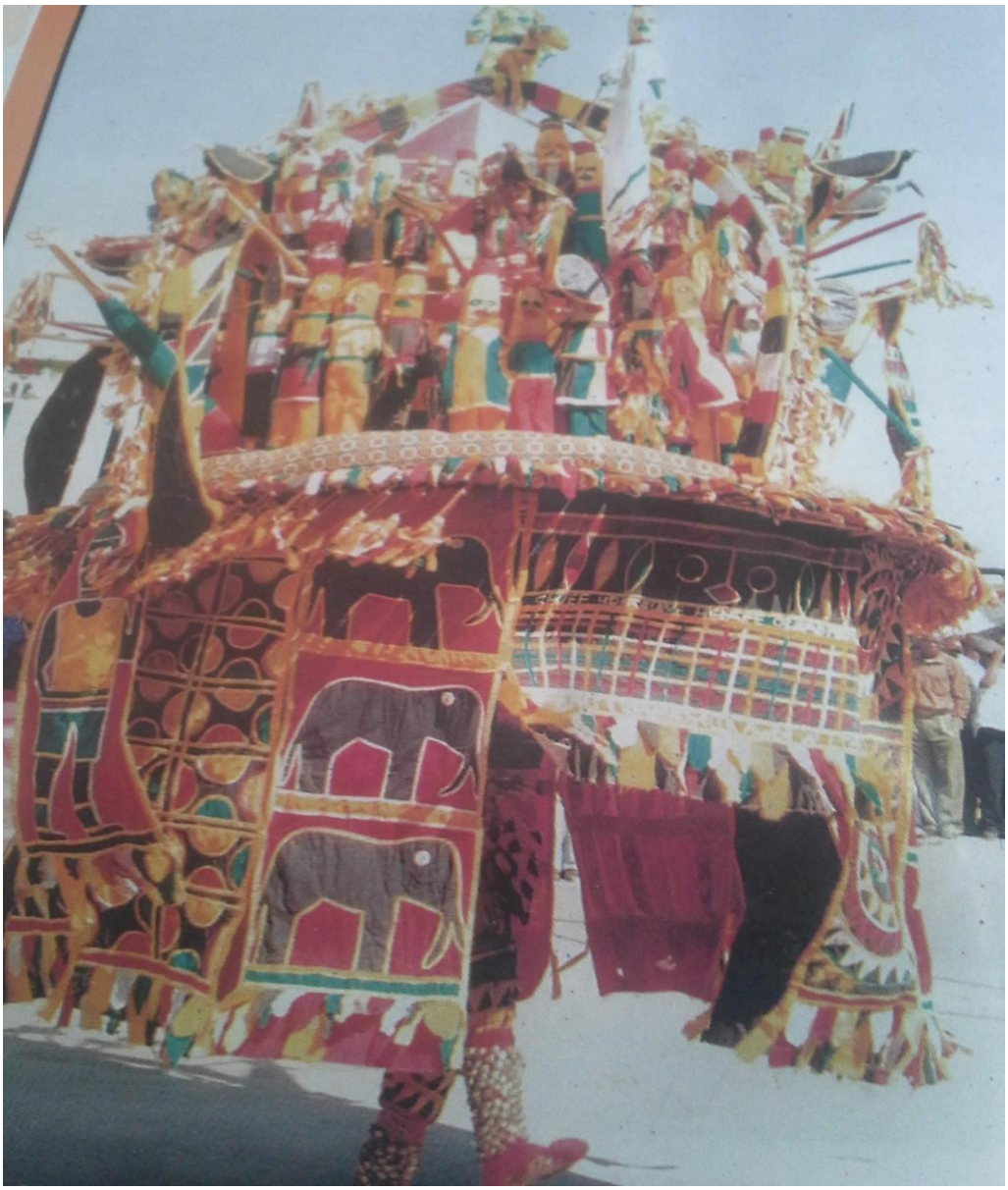

Plate 2.

This is a stylized and motorized carnival float designed as Ijele masquerade by Anambra Contingents in 2008 Abuja Carnival. This singular creative design shows the extent to which masquerades can represent anything imaginable in Carnivals. Designs of this nature has become major visual and aesthetic attractions in Abuja and Calabar Carnivals.

***Agbogo Mmuo*Masquerade in Abuja Carnival**

Agbogo Mmuo, Adanmma, Agbogo lugulu, Nganga-Ije or *akparakpa* as Ottenberg (1975) would call the maiden spirit masquerade or what Okoye (1999) termed the *Agboghomuo* genus of masks, is well known all over Nigeria with its girlish disposition and characteristic brightly coloured and beautiful feminine masks. The agbogho mmuoare maiden spirits who are believed to represent images of ideal female gorgeousness and comportment. They are the daughters of the household (Okagbue, 2007) and comprise generally a family ensemble in which there is a mother (*nne mmuo*), one or two grown up daughters, sometimes a little daughter…(Okoye, 2000:107). They are very beautiful in mask and costume, and they dance

in pretty feminine styles. Its costume is a variant of shiny golden yellow blouse or mini-skirt over a marching top. The blouse can be embroidered with mazes of designs up to her breasts that are exaggerated unduly in size. Her mask design represents a young woman full of life, with a wig of full and well combed black hair (some hairs are golden). In Abuja Carnival, *Agbogho mmuo* enjoyed her flrity disposition amongst tourists and audience alike. In the course of her procession along the adjudicating stand, her nimble and animated dance steps concentrated on the use of bent knees, hands followed by bowed face to the ground while the shoulder moved more dynamically to the rhythm of the music. The dance steps were in different directions as she maintained her processional movement. *Agbogho Mmuo* like others on procession was limited by time factor. However, limiting the performances between five to ten minutes in the central space, the organizers of Abuja Carnival ensured that the maskers had to decide what brief performative elements best represented their masquerade and one that will win a prize by the assessment of the adjudicators. *Agbogho Mmuo* in Abuja Carnival is a flirt and does not hide it. In one of the pictures shown below she is in a deep hug with a foreign tourist. This act accentuates the entertainment underpinnings of the masquerade in recent times. Before now, it would have been a sacrilege for a masquerade to be in the arms of an uninitiated member of its cult group. But times have changed and are obviously reflective of the performance nuances of the masquerade as seen in masquerades performances in Abuja carnival.

Plate 3

Here in Abuja Carnival of 2010, the *Agbogho Mmuo*is seen in a warm flirting embrace with a tourist, as her acolyte watches on. In indigenous masquerade performances, this would have been a sacrilege. But in Carnivals, it is a normal sight to witness.

Plate 4.

This is another version of the agbogho mmuo genus in 2010 Abuja Carnival. The brightly designed mask and braided hair show feminine gait and outlook. The makeup and lipstick shows that any design imagined can be created with masks and costumes in Carnivals.

Plate 5.

Another *agbogho mmuo* masquerade genus in Abuja Carnival, 2008. The costume and mask design represent another quest to represent reality in designs of Carnival Masks.

Plate 6.

Overleaf is *Ugomma* masquerade in Abuja Carnival, 2010. This is representing bird genus in the realistic representation of masquerade designs in carnivals. Like its animal genus representation, masquerades in Carnivals show efforts in deploying local materials creatively, for designs that meet global taste.

***Ugomma* Masquerade in Abuja Carnival**

Ugo the Eagle is king of birds (*Ugo bu eze nnunu*). As one of the bird masquerade typologies, it is one of the wonders of masking art of the Igbo. In Abuja Carnival, *Ugomma* masquerade entertains with its delicate royal steps and ease of performance. It's akin to processional demands of the Carnival. *Ugomma* masquerade is the epitome of artistry and splendour. The Anambra contingent in Abuja Carnival had *Ugomma* masquerade amongst other masquerades of animal genus which included the antelope (*Enemma*), elephant (*akum*), lion (*odum*) etc. However, *Ugomma* masquerade was the cynosure of all eyes and the most anticipated. It was heralded into the Eagle Square by musicians and dancers to the accompanying flutes and drums all directed at its praises.

Ugo masquerade dance steps have a story which climaxes in the laying of the golden egg.The laying of the egg at the peak of its performance is significant as it is suggestive of rebirth, rejuvenation, continuity, survival, untiy and the belief in one ancestry, desired by the congregation of different States in one festival, the Carnival.According to Okoye (1999), one can easily understand the enthusiasm, admiration and bewilderment with which the Igbo audience perceives the *Ugo* masquerade performance if one comprehends the Igbo cultural conception of the *Ugo* (eagle) bird itself. However, the Abuja Carnival audience is a group of different people from diverse cultural backgrounds and understanding *Ugomma* masquerade performance was like every other act that required no special inkling. This will be discussed further under audience in Abuja Carnival. Below is the Ugomma masquerade in Abuja Carnival in its immaculate white costume that signifies royalty, valour, beauty and dignifying presence amidst regality in performance.

Plate 7. This is *Ekpo* masquerade in Abuja Carnival, 2011. Its performance mechnanics is as engaging as it is processional, while it charges with its scary masks at the audience along the carnival routes.

Ekpo Masquerade in Abuja Carnival

Ekpo masquerade from its background history is the most important and widely distributed of three secret societies still active in various Ibibio, Efik and Ngwa towns in South-South and SouthEastern States of Nigeria. As a secret society, membership is tied to initiation and the masquerade as its performance platform is revered and can only be performed during members' initiation. However, in Abuja Carnival, Ekpo masquerade is a major spectacle and an entertainer. With its acolytes made up of singers, drummers and followers that reduce its violent excesses, the carnival is a readymade platform for *Ekpo* masquerade to deploy its darting and riotous moves and chases. Its performance is hampered by its violence but the processional and entertainment appeal are its major attraction in the carnival.Looking at their line formation, one would notice good picturization on display.

Plate 8.

The *Ekpe* masquerade during its processional performance in Abuja Carnial, 2011. The ekpe mgbe leaf, walking stick and bell are major props which announce its presence while it performs.

Ekpe Masquerade in Abuja Carnival

Ekpe is the name of a masquerade among the Efik people of Calabar, Cross River State. The term is also the name of the leopard and of the traditional sacred institution that owns the masque. The *Ekpe* (sometimes called *Mgbe*) society is also called the 'leopard' society because the *Ekpe* masquerade is a visual cultural reference to a leopard – its costume, makeup and props define it as such(Carnival Calabar Brochure, 2011). The *Ekpe* Masquerade is one of the most iconic spectacle in Efik society, the subject of numerous Tourist Board photo campaigns and post-cards. The splash of red, black and yellow raffia and fabric of the *Ekpe* in full cry has come to represent in the minds of many non-indigenes, the characteristic face of Efik culture. In reality the Ekpe Msquerade represents significantly more than a mere Tourist spectacle, but in fact embodies the very socio- cultural and indigenous spiritual soul of the Efik people. The *Ekpe* Masquerade is one of the symbols of the ancient *Ekpe* Society of the Cross River Basin. However, in Abuja Carnival, all the ritual and spiritual accoutrements are shed off and in its place, entertainment. The Ekpe Masquerade in Abuja Carnival represents Cross River State contingent and performs with the mind set of winning prizes for its State. It glided with its free-flowing dance movements depicting the typical riverine culture of the people of Cross River State. The Ekpe masquerade in Abuja Carnival followed the carnival routes as already designated while the audience watched and paraded along. Some of its costumes matched the colour of its State of origin while others reflected the national colour. This is in keepting with the spirit of the carnival and in recognition of the central message of celebrating Nigeria's unity in diversity. Ekpe's lavish use of raffia reeds to design its costume also showed a fervent belief in their local raw materials and the need to design not only for local consumption but for global appeal and export.

4.4 Masquerades in New Nigerian Festivals

The Carnival Calabar

The Carnival Calabar is a State event, organized at the directives of the State's Chief Executive. It hasfive registered bands with an additional band to make it six in the 2015 edition. A carnival that is widely acclaimed as the largest street party in Africa should have been an avenue to showcase the numerous masquerade performances of a state with as many as 3 major ethnic groups; the Efik, Ejagham and Bekwarra, and 29 sub local groups. However, Ekpo and Ekpe masquerades that perform during the carnival are almost relegated to the background because of the hybrid nature of the Carnival which is heavily westernized thereby neglecting the local cultures. But if carnival is food for the eyes and is measured by the spectacle on parade, Carnival Calabar is living up to its name as the largest street party in sub-Saharan Africa. With the introduction of carnival pageantry, super-biking, Roman generals, superman, the place of the local masquerades is almost non-existent. It is in the midst of all these contemporary spectacle and visual eclecticism that *Ekpo* and *Ekpe* Masquerades find reason to perform due largely because of their adaptations to the taste demands of the Carnival audience and tourists alike. The *Ekpo* genus of masquerade alone has more than ten typologies; *Ekpo Nyoho, Ekpo Ekong, Akpan Ekpo, Adiaha Ekpo, Udo Ekpo, Ukpaka Ekpo, Tinkoriko, Nkubia and Unak*. Its performance is set out for a special time following the rear of all registered and non-registered bands. As masquerades with much awareness about its performance, no serious attention is given to its display unless by foreigners. Attention is rather given to the more spectacular components of the carnival like the half-naked revelers posing for the camera with their bosoms. However, with Ekpo's fearsome outlook and riotous displays and the *Ekpe*'s string of bells announcing its gliding presence, the audience and tourists alike do not miss the scare and invariably the short displays along the Carnival routes. Despite the openness and touristic appeal of the *Ekpe*Masquerade, it remains a deeply significant and revered symbol of one of the most

important and respected institutions of the Efik and some part of Igbo people. Its dance movements in Carnival Calabar is more detailed. The swaying, the turns, the sustained foot works and brief run around the square of performance, is a conscious attempt to display mastery of the dances. Here in Carnival Calabar, everyone aside tourists and visitors know how the *Ekpe* dances.Its performance comes separately on a special day and at a designated venue (the Calabar Zoological Garden, along Mary Slessor Avenue). This comes after the opening ceremony, where all registered bands, local dancers stunt displays, acrobatic performances, super-bikers and masquerades would have been part of the procession-parade. A day for the competitive prizes is set out for adjudicators to assess different bands and masquerades.

Plate 9: The picture below is *Ekpe* Masquerade performing at the Zoological Garden along Mary Slessor Avenue, during Carnival Calabar, 2012. The exquisite designs shows resplendent colours on display. Ekpe masquerade and its secret society is the pride of the Efik nation.

Plate 10: Ekpe Masquerade in a processional display along the Carnival route in Calabar.

This is Ekpe masquerade in Calabar Carnival, 2012. It has the most creative and aesthetic design which appeals to wide range of audience. Notice the outpour of colour in the design. The masquerade's alluring visuality in Carnival Calabar is among the attractions for foreign tourists and audiences. The masquerade also serves as postcard on major Cross River State functions and official documents. Ekpe's performances are graceful, with lots of arm swinging depicting the slow movement of its riverine area. There is also measured leg raisings and droppings alternating the arm swinging simultaneously. At the peak of its display, it can dart about the venue throwing its legs about while its acolyte runs after to checkmate any excesses.

Plate 11: Ekpo Masquerade in a processional display along the carnival routes in Calabar.

This is the Ekpo masquerade genus in Carnival Calabar, 2012. Its performance is very riotous, sepertine, with aggressive and daring movements. It has grotesque and oversized masks which creates excitement as it charges at the spectating audience along the carnival routes. The design shows antiquity of an age long masquerade phenomenon in traditional African societies and the translocation of masquerade in Carnivals. Its performance comes with fast tempo and dexterious instrumentation. It therefore suits the processional parade-like performance of the Carnivals.

Plate 12: Ekpe Masquerade on its street procession in Carnival Calabar.

The *Ekpe* masquerade in Carnival Calabar, 2013. Its costume is the trademark raffia reeds of the riverine and coastal people of the Cross River State. It is an initiate and secret society masquerade. Membership is by initiation. However, with the introduction of Carnivals, *Ekpe* can be produced and reproduced by any group and taken to the Carnival events in both Abuja and Calabar. Its colour is majorly large strokes of red, black and yellow raffia reeds. It has graceful and free-flowing dance movements peculiar to the riverine performance culture of the Cross River people. The designs in costume and masks are an accentuation of creativity amplified by colour and spectacle. The *Ekpe* masquerade has large followership (spectator) base in any of the Carnival events. Because of the masquerade's visual appeal, it has become a major cultural export of the State and Nigeria in general.

4.4.1 THE AUDIENCE

Audience is structural to the success of both masquerade and carnival performance presentation. Like the consumers in a production chain, the audience is the raison d'etre in any performance chain. According to Nzewi, 'its cheers spur artistically-aesthetically proficient acts' (44). The audience in the Carnivals were both passive and active participants. They were quite responsive in the carnival procession. The elastic interest and attention given to the parade performance showed the audience as the pivot of every performance. As part of the aesthetics of the performance structure, the audience has a function as a critic, as a moderator and even as an adjudicator of the performance. Nzewi reveals that, 'the ideal Nigerian audience has the tendency to function as a structural and integrated feature of a presentation' (442). The audience in Abuja and Calabar Carivals, though a heterogeneous group of persons, functioned within the indigenous temperament which favours transitory spectatorship. The audience in the new festivals aligns with the processional parade requirement of the carnival spirit. There is no stopping the groove as everyone; maskers, revellers and the audience dance along the designated carnival routes. This exposition above connects to what Nzewi opined: "our ideal model should be an audience that is emphatically and spontaneously involved to the extent of contributing effectively and structurally to a presentation *as observed in the two Carnivals understudy*" (442, italics added). The audience of the two carnivals understudy is a peculiar set of people. Ahmed Yerima had told this researcher that in one of the Abuja Carnivals, he had hosted over twenty-five (25) heads of States and Governments of different nations and he "did not want to disappoint the Queen and her representative by allowing a masquerade dress in tattered costumes because it cannot change into a new one for fear the spirit of the masquerade will not possess the new costume" (Interview, 4th October, 2017). As tourists and audience from far and near, indigenes and non-indigenes alike, one thing dominates their attention; entertainment through visual appeal. This visual appeal can only be actualized through variety. Variety and showiness are the

bedrock upon which carnival event is planned and executed, and variety they say is the spice of life. The eyes, like most of the sensory organs, rely mostly on variety for continuous and exciting moments in its existence and carnival is the destination for such visual variety and appeal. Variety in colour, in costumes, in movements, in dances, in peoples, in mask sizes and shapes, variety is carnival and carnival revels in variety. The carnival more than any other human endeavour is built on variety and this is what delights the eyes through which the audience perceive variants of carnival spectacle on parade. However, with the declaration by Edwin Wilson that, "audience forms an indispensable element in the theatre equation…they bring more than their mere presence; they bring a background of personal knowledge and a set of expectations that shape the experience" (1991:44). The case in both carnivals was quite different, as they were no real audience in the sense of that concept and as submitted above. Apart from the State Officials and Adjudicators, everybody was part and parcel of the processional parades, the distinguishing factor being the registered bands in Carnival Calabar, but for Abuja Carnival each State Contingent, had its citizen who could easily identify with his/her State motif and naturally follow. However, the indigenous people of Calabar knew what Ekpo and Ekpe represent in their lore, but that was not their attraction today for they have been seeing Ekpo and Ekpe since their lifetimes. What brought them out under the heat of the harmattan haze and gliding along as others either in the main line (bands) or along the walkway; was the skimpy dressed girls rolling their backsides, the Bikers doing wonders with the two wheels, and many other contingents from Brazil, Egyptians, India and the ladies from the Caribbean Island of Trinidad and Tobago and many other side attractions but not the masquerades. This observation is due to what usually characterize a festival of such magnitude. According to Ronstrom, "festival audiences normally engage not only in what is presented, but also in many other forms of social interaction simultaneously, such as chatting, eating, smoking etc. for that reason, festivals, as television, have difficulties in catching and maintaining the audience's attention for a longer

period while the event lasts" (2011:6). This position captures the situation in both carnivals against the temperament of the Carnival audience. In Abuja Carnival, the Art and Craft Village located around the carnival routes is usually another 'distraction' as people are deep into buying and selling of souvenirs and branded gift items. The aftermath reveals that most audiences are not revelers for the Carnival but for the general festive atmosphere which the Carnival presents to them to engage in other things that interest them. During the few days that the carnival lasts, the streets along the Carnival routes are jammed with people, restaurants are overcrowded, while hotel accommodations are sold out, yet the reason observed is just because these are days marked out for fun, to be happy, to entertain the eyes with what ordinarily we see every day but packaged in a razzmatazz presentation; the Carnival experience. Every audience is part of the Carnival because he/she is dressed up for the event, like in traditional festivals, there is no distinction. This leveling off is privileged more in Carnival as the audience and revelers are one and the attraction can be any of them. Furthermore, the free flowing movement in Carnival also means that most paradelike masquerades find the Carnival a better platform than the village arena. Ukaegbu articulates this position thus "Igbo theatre combines 'moving audience - moving performance' in its integration of composite stationary and itinerant performances, and in fashioning its distinctive three-way performer-participant relationship" (PhD Thesis, www.collections.plymouth.ac.uk1996:100). This relationship which Nzewi (1981) has described as 'the traditional tendency of the Nigerian audience to function as a structural and integrated feature of a presentation' (1981:442) is much more than a tendency. It is an integral element and the main reason for the existence of Igbo masking as a public performance. Igbo theatre obviates the concept of separate identities as performers and participants are complementary parts of a performance. Communal participation is sine qua non and as Nzewi observes, 'involvement as audience and participation is mandatory by virtue of belonging to the community' (1986:23). In fact, as Rothenberg points out about

performances such as Igbo masking, “along with the artist, the audience enters the performance arena as participant or ideally, the audience disappears as the distinction between doer and viewer begins to blur” (Rothenberg, 1977:14). The Abuja and Carnival Calabar audiences do not define space or the performer during movement. Immediately the masquerades are sighted, everybody becomes enmeshed in the performance. In one of such instances, there were so many masquerades at the Eagle Square, venue of the performance that nobody could identify which state owned which masquerade. The only defining moment was when the masquerades performed before the judges for assessment in anticipation for prizes. The audience in Abuja Carnival and Carnival Calabar are presented with viewing options; sitting or standing at a place, walking along the streets and still be engaged in the visual spectacle which the masquerade represents. Ukaegbu enthuses that, “in performing in any place, masquerades harmonise any contradictions posed by the new place in relation to the tripartite relationship between performers, space and audience” (PhD Thesis, www.collections.plymouth.ac.uk). Carnival audiences sit or stand anywhere and may constitute a circle, square or rectangle around the masquerades. They may be positioned on one or more sides, or simply positioned before the masked performers. With the community serving as the audience, the space becomes elastic and devoid of restrictions, apart from such as created by the tradition. Masquerades of chase-and-run, especially of violent typologies, which are not allowed in Abuja Carnival, but allowed to wander in different venues in Carnival Calabar, define the indigenous interface between masquerades and their proximate cultures and peoples.

Plate 13: A typical example of the mix of audience and masquerade procession along Shehu Shagari way in Abuja Carnival, 2012.

This audience is a representation of the spectactor-visuality which both foreign and local audience crave for. The Abuja and Calabar audiences identify with this spectacle largely because there are no restrictions in its entertainment delivery unlike in the indigenous performance presentation where the masquerade is seen as ritual, sacred and an ancestral spirit on a visit to mankind with a message. The masquerade's enlistment in Abuja and Calabar carnivals is, therefore, occasioned by its visual, kinetic and aural dynamism which fitted easily into the carnivals' de-ritualised design and performance aesthetics**.**

Plate 14: Audience gather to watch *Ekpe* and *Ekpo* Masquerades as they perform at the Zoological Garden, along Mary Slessor Avenue during Carnival Calabar, 2013. Like every audience, the desire to get proper visual satisfaction drives them to go follow the masquerade through its venues of presentation. Typical of the Abuja and Calabar Carnival audiences, the central objective is to enjoy the spectacle cum aesthetic display of the masquerades. The transiency of masquerade presentation presupposes that the audience satisfaction is hardly assuaged as far as the performance continues. Following the masquerade from one point to the other also contextualizes the meaning of the Igbo adage: adighi ano ofu ebe ekiri mmanwu (no one stays at a place to see all about a masquerade performance. The procession therefore gives the audience, the opportunity of elastic and dynamic visuality in the masquerade's presentation.

4.4.2 MASQUERADE SPACES OF PERFORMANCE IN NEW NIGERIAN FESTIVALS

Performance space in the theatre consists of both the material place and abstract space. A performance space as exemplified in indigenous, contemporary and carnival events is an aggregation of physical environment and invisible or conceptual space visually and mentally evoked by the audience through the embodied behaviour of the performers. Dean Wilcox observes:

> The concept of space as an element of theatrical presentation is as old as the medium itself. Space has been consistently engaged and manipulated: from the natural space that surrounded the earliest Greek theatre; to the dispersed space that typifies medieval performance; to the containment and control of illusionary space in the Renaissance cumulating in the fourth-wall realism of modern era (2003:542)

Through the period of theatre and performance history, space has been seen as capable of giving the performance within it an identity that is borne out of its make-up. For Dean Wilcox, 'the simple distinction between "performer" and "spectator" not only indicates the complex negotiation of role playing, but also distinctions of space defined simply as "performance space" and "audience space" (2003:544). Spaces of performance in history have been identified as proscenium, thrust and the arena. Each of this has had its own shortcomings and limitations in the course of presenatation of performances. However, the nature of masquerade performance requires an open-ended spaces of presentation. Like all flexible, found, designated and makeshift spaces of performance, the venues for the Abuja Carnival and Carnival Calabar are dynamic, elastic and always evolving as masquerades meet and interact with the audience. However, the Eagle Square remains the most important venue of the Carnival Masquerade Performance for Abuja Carnival while the Zoological Garden along Mary Slessor Avenue Calabar, is the venue for the *Ekpe* Masquerade performances in Carnival Calabar. The nature of the carnivals which require assessment for prizes means that a point designated for the adjudicators are marked and mapped out for masquerades to really showcase their arts before a group of people and within the time allotted for the performance. This way, the masquerades are judged based on what has been set out as criteria by the adjudicators. In Abuja Carnival, the routes taken by masquerades include; an 18-kilometre of the sprawling Abuja highways, from Transcorp Hotel axis at Area 10, through Maitama highbrow area, through Shehu Shagari way and on to the Eagle Square. However, in the itinerant nature of African masquerades, wondering is part of the performance styles and tourists and audience encounter the masquerades in other spaces different from its performance area, where they negotiate performances to support the view by Carlson that "places of performance generate social and cultural meanings of their own which in turn help to structure the meaning of the entire theatre" (Carlson, 1994:2). Some of the masquerades are seen at the Area 11 Under-Bridge, Abuja, along the Three-Arm Zone

(the Nation's seat of Power), behind the Eagle Square (the epicenter of all official programmes) including ceremonies marking Nigeria's Independence, Labour Day, Children's Day. One can also see the masquerades right inside the Secretariat performing and begging for arms from workers who are also spectating. There is no limit to where the masquerade can perform. Spaces of performance are negotiated and defined. Masquerade performance it should be noted is part of the reason environmental theatre theorists defined performance space, as found space in which the architecture of the space is intrinsic to the performance or a theatre space that is transformed into a complete environment for the performance. In Abuja and Calabar Carnivals, the audience space and performance space dissolve into each other completely, thereby creating a single focus interaction or presentation. Pictures below show different venues in use by the masquerades during the Abuja Carnival.

Plate 15 *Ashama* Masquerade of Nassarawa State in Abuja Carnival, 2007. This masquerade from Nassarawa State won the 2007 edition of the most spectacular Masquerade. This venue is the Shehu Shagari Express Way during Abuja Carnival. Venue is boundless in its parade.

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Plate 16 Devil Masquerade (*mmanwu isi-ajakaja*) of Abia State performing at the Area 3 Under-Bridge, Abuja. This masquerade also shows the dynamism of elasticity of space use.

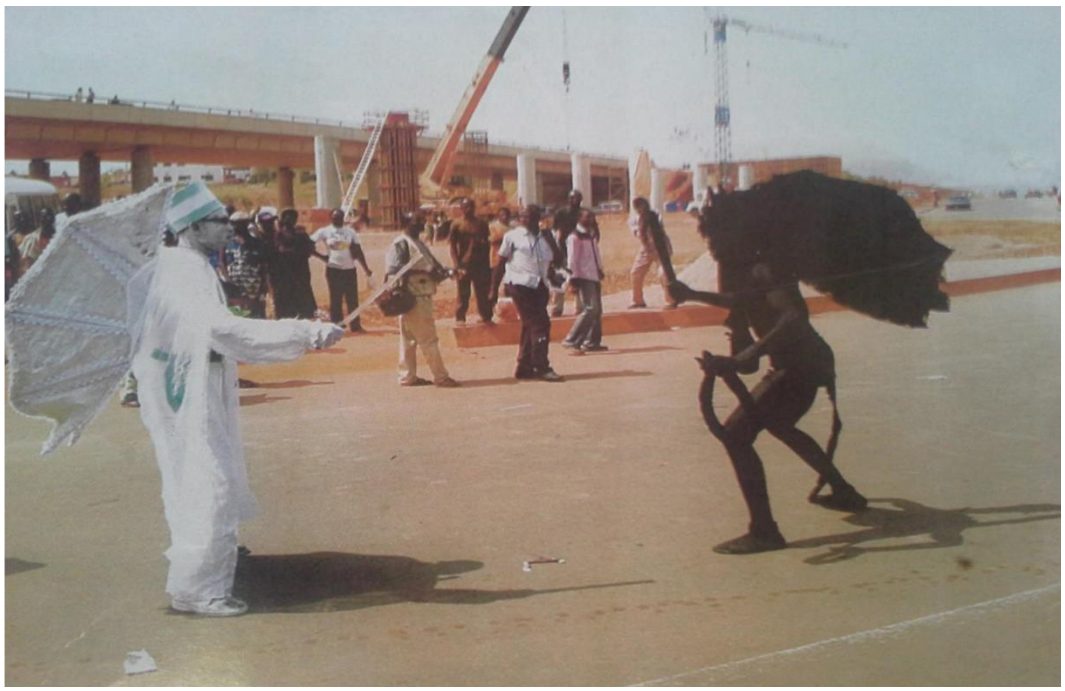

Plate 17: The Angel and Devil Masquerade in a duel at a construction site in Abuja during the Abuja Carnival, 2008. At anywhere the masquerade performs, there is an audience to watch as can be seen in the display above.

Plate 18: A Host of spirits of ancestors (Masquerades) gather to perform close to the seat of power, The Three Arm Zone, Abuja during the Abuja Carnival 2008. The gap between the audience and the masquerade dissolves in this performance presentation below.

The dynamism of space use in carnivals is also visible in Carnival Calabar. Here, the processional route for the *Ekpe* and *Ekpo* Masquerade Performances include a 12-Kilometre parade and walkabout around the city centre. However, masquerades, like the *Ekpe* in Carnival Calabar perform exclusively at the Zoo Garden or Calabar Botanical Garden along the Mary Slessor Avenue, formerly Calabar Zoo. Contrariwise, the Ekpo, Tinkoriko and many other violent and unfriendly masquerades adopt the traditional chase and run performance style around the entire Calabar Municipality, Barracks Road, IBB Road, Ette-Agbo Road, Old-Marian Road, Old Ikang Street, Akim Road, Eagerton Road, Bedwell Road, Heckett Street, Unical Roundabout, White House, Nsirum (Calabar) Beach and Calabar South. The Eleven-Eleven Bus stop is masquerades' abode. This is located adjacent the Millennium Park (Carnival Village) near the State's Library along Calabar Road. Every physically strong masquerade is expected to come to this bus stop for challenges, contest and combat to win superiority over another. For the Ekpe Masquerade whose demeanor and

subtlety is characteristic of Efik culture, it does not engage in violent performance. In fact it is a major cultural signifier and emblem of the Efik people of Cross River State.

4.4.3 THE MASK, COSTUME AND MAKEUP DESIGNS

The mask, costume and makeup are the attention pull, attraction as well as the focal points in Carnival events. These three components aside the performance of the masquerade make or mar its 'showiness' upon which the adjudicators base their assessment of each masquerade presented for competition. Against this background, appropriate and quality materials, colours of choice, expert and professional advice are sought before designing masks, costumes and the deployment of makeup.sourced and produced. Some of these materials used by both the maskers and carnival revelers are locally sourced and produced in Nigeria's cottage industries. The materials are designed and worn at the carnival parade which presents an international exbhition platform. The essence is to promote entrepreneurial skills through the deployment of local raw materials for global audience appeal and commercialization. The raw and waste materials such as polythene bags, straws, water sachets, noodle packets, are recycling innovations for tackling of climate change. It is therefore, a creative invention for sustaining a friendly climate environment. The exhibition of local fabrics designed with global appeal in the carnivals is to boost international patronage and orchestrate export revenues for the Nigeria Fashion and Garment Industries. It is also important to note that each State contingent in the Abuja Carnival has the financial backing of its Chief Executive, while on the other hand, the Carnival Calabar is bankrolled entirely by the State. Therefore, compromising quality is usually not tolerated. In Abuja Carnival for instance, as each State's motif meanders through the streets of Abuja in the metaphor of a moving and stylized train, embellished by sights, sounds, costumes and dances peculiar to her, the Masquerades are also a reflection of each State's trademark and cultural significations. Efforts are channeled to design the mask, costume and makeup within the comparative advantage of each community.

The comparative advantage in masks production is evident in the materials used amongst masquerades on parade and presupposes that Communities or States should produce masquerades' masks and costumes based on the availability of raw materials within their localities.

Esekong Andrew and Elizabeth Essien-Andrew have this to say in the deployment of cultural materials in designing for Carnivals:

> The tendency in craft production is for artists to explore their immediate environment and to use materials that are readily available. Any material can become valuable for craft production, depending on the dexterity and resourcefulness of the craftsman. Following the assumption that availability of materials within an environment encourages the production of arts and craft, one can easily relate certain crafts to specific locales in Nigeria. Wood carving, for instance, is predominant in the forest belt where the raw materials are available; cane work is common in the riverine areas; raffia and mat weaving are practiced in the palm belt. Calabash decoration, pottery, stone carving, dyeing and many other crafts are practiced in environments where the raw materials are available (2013:277).

From the above submission, it does not mean that raw materials cannot be transported to locations where they are not commonly available. Drawing necessarily from the above statement, the masquerades of the two Carnival events understudy exhibit an influentially conspicuous cultural artifacts that reflect their States of origin. The costumes are usually drawn from a wide variety of locally produced and foreign materials, the essence of which is to achieve the requisite aesthetic and spectacular blend in mask and costume designs. However, it is the creativity with which these materials are fashioned for these masquerades that sparks off the interest and entertainment values derivable from their performance. It is the same aesthetics if supported by good performance that may invariably win the heart of the adjudicators during the assessment periods. The category of prize awards for the Masquerade Event in Abuja Carnival include: 'Most Spectacular Masquerade', 'Best Masquerade Costume', and 'Best Masquerade Performance.' These are all tied to the

expressionist trends of the 21st century and its demands for creativity. Some masking cultures in their design may revel in abstraction while others are suggestive of different physiognomies like feminine characters, western styled masks of European pointed nose, and at times suggestive of animal characters. However, because of the prize tag on best costumes and most spectacular masquerade sub-divisions in Carnival, so much effort are expended to produce an award winning masquerades. Okagbue's elocution captures the thought of this researcher in full:

> Most groups go to great lengths and efforts to make their masks colourful and beautiful so that their performance *can win the prize* and be long remembered for its artistic flamboyance and impact. This is where costuming can become very significant in what it can contribute to the overall visual affect of a performance. And the bigger the mask, the more the care that goes into the choice of costume and colours, not only in terms of the masks, but also in terms of the often large number of performers involved, from musicians, singers, attendants to the supporting dancers. The costume design for such an array of performers has to take into account colour and material coordination needed to achieve harmony, or contrast, and sometimes to establish levels of thematic significance and importance of roles (Okagbue, 2007:50).

Winning prizes and categories of such awards set Carnival Calabar against Abuja Carnival because masquerade performance events in Carnival Calabar have not adopted such performance reward mechanisms. Reason could be deduced from the fact that it is a State affair and the only entry is the *Ekpe* Masquerade and its various 'secret societal' groups which is well known within and outside the State as her cultural signifier. The more violent *Ekpo* and *Tinkoriko* masquerades are left out of the Carnival Venues. The *Ekpe* Masquerade performance styles are quite well known, its costumes do not change even when new ones are designed. Furthermore, if *Ekpe* Masquerade performance in Carnival Calabar is approached within its economic viability by the organizers of the event, it will compete favourably with masquerades in Abuja Carnival considering the potential and enormous cultural art products in virtually all parts of the Cross River State. The State has three (3)

major tribes; Efik, Bekwarra and Yakurr and as many as twenty-nine (29) ethnic units. These diverse sub-groups can pull their masquerade cultures together for a harvest of masquerade performance whose total impression will showcase the State's diversity and plurality. Such constellation of masquerade cultures will establish and launch the State on the path of a distinct but united in the oneness of secular masquerade performance. Having made a modest analysis of masquerades' costumes and masks designs, the next section will analyze in details the masks and costumes of the chosen masquerades in Abuja Carnival and Carnival Calabar. Below are some masquerade designs in Abuja Carnival. Each masquerade is carefully designed in conformity with its realistic demands. These masquerade cut across selected States of the Federation as seen in the Abuja Carnival.

Plate 19: *Eyo* Masquerade of Lagos State in their immaculate white costumes.Most carnival masquerades are designed with colour representation. Each design appeals to visual aestheticsand significance of culture. Eyo is a cultural signifier to the Aworis of Lagos State.

Plate 20: The animal masquerade typology. The Elephnat as represented by Anambra State in Abuja Carnival, 2013. The costume shows its colour in its habitat and reveals creativity.

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Plate 21: The scary *Ekpo* Masquerade of the violent genus. In some designs of the mask, the fingersize teeth are painted white. On first appearance, the costume (yellow palm fronds) is fresh and beautiful to behold. Designs of masks and costumes can be from any raw material. However, more stylized and fabricated approaches are being adopted by designers of carnival masks and costumes. This approach is to ensure that tourists and foreign audience at the Carnivals are able to identify with developments in fashion design, delivered with creative deployment of local raw materials for global appeal and acceptance.

Ekpo Ibibio of Akwa Ibom State at the Abuja Carnival 2013. This masquerade is an ensemble;Thefather, mother, two sons and a restless daughter. Their masks are designed to represent age and temperament of each of the characters as identified. In performance, each displays its art according to its temperament and status.

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Plate 22 *Okemma* Masquerade of Ebonyi State. The mask is designed out of feathers with a colour matching the costume. The quill mask is almost synonymous with the Ijele headgear design.

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Plate 23: There is an interface between creativity and costume design in Abuja Carnival as seen in most of the masquerades on parade. These are *Suga* Masquerades of Birom ethnic group from Plateau State in Abuja Carnival 2012. These masked characters represent warriors with leaves camouflage for action. There is actually nothing that is imagined, that cannot be creatively designed as part of masquerade costumes as witnessed in Abuja and Calabar Carnivals

Plate 24: Hippopotamus (Akum) Masquerade just after displaying to the adjudicators at the 'stage' of masquerade performance. Notice the realistic creation of the headgear (supposed mask).

Plate 25: The Lion (*Odum*) Masquerade in its majestic and fearsome splendour. Everything about the costume and 'mask' is realistic and depicting a masquerade of the animal genus and a reflection of creative artistry. The Lion Masquerade was paraded by the people of Ukie in Anambra State in Abuja Carnival, 2010. The *Odum* masquerade was added to create the visual appeal this study highlights in its focus on aesthetics and expressive performativity.

Plate 26: The mask can be as abstract as the example below. With the contrast coming from its yellow palm fronds costume. The makeup is the colour combination of red, black and a touch of white. This shows the level of creativity that goes into the design of masquerades on display.

Plate 27: With the rolling and bulging eyes, everything about its abstraction is suggestive of creativity of African art. Mask and Costume design in Abuja Carnival is a reflection of masquerade art dynamism and artistry.This masquerade was not included in the study, however, its inclusion is to show other masquerades in the Abuja Carnival as a convergence of Nigeria's unity in diversity

Plate 28: These two masquerades are costumed in a fibriform (fiber material). The masks are of wood and the colours are dominant white, yellow, black and blue coming together for a perfect visual appeal. The Fibreform masquerade appeared as the representation of Ekiti Contingent in Abuja Carnival, 2013. The addition of these masquerades in the study is to reveal the vagaries of masquerade entries by different State Contingents in Abuja Carnival.

4.4.4 The Designs in Mask, Costume and Makeup in Performance

Amongst the masquerades selected for study in these carnivals, spectacle is their most significant attribute in relation to their designs. Their costumes, masks and makeup beguilethe visual sensibilities of the audience and accentuate the creative ingenuity of the designers. This heightensthe acceptance and ululation with which the audience welcome aesthetically elaborate and beautifully made costumes and masks. Spectacularity is among the criteria for assessment of the masquerades in these new carnivals. There are three categories where competitions are channeled in the carnival events especially in Abuja carnival. These are: **Most Spectacular Masquerade**, **Best Masquerade Performance** and **Best Costume in Masquerade Event**. In designing costumes for masquerades in Carnivals,

emphases are on creativity, amplification of colour, conformity with Carnival theme, and functionalities. Other considerations include weight, ease of mass production, cost and ease of transportation to Carnival venues. Colour and fabric are carefully selected to amplify design and spectacularity. Masking art is essentially visual oriented, this is the reason why contingents to Carnivals create masks and translate their aesthetic ideas into visual forms. Whether the masks, costumes and props are bought, the ability of each contingent to localise them, indicate that designs and styles of packaging are guided by aesthetic considerations which are deciding factors in Carnivals. Masks and costumes suggest a certain consciousness which is attached to the social awareness created and revealed by a particular mask. The implication of this statement is that, designers attempt to deconstruct and simplify their creations within the acceptable norms and lore of their social backgrounds. Igbo Masks according to Ukaegbu, "reflect mystical power, terror, aggressiveness, beauty and ugliness, masculinity and spirituality" (1996:135). Designers of Igbo masks and many others across Africa, imbue them with great symbolism, potential powers and personalities fully realized in performances. Ukaegbu again reveals that "Igbo masks are therefore, expressive, reflective and responsive…and invested with both the characteristics of their types and individual features." His elaboration is presented in full to support masquerade typologies which abound in carnivals:

> Since most masks bear descriptive names and qualities besides those of their type, their creation demands that their physical appearance reflect their distinguishing attributes and claims to power and sacrality (sic). Physical features enhance characterisation to such an extent that the actions and movements of Igbo masked figures must be in concert with their characters (Ukaegbu, PhD Thesis, www.collections.plymouth.ac.uk 1996:137)

Against this background, masquerades of animal genus like Lion (*Odum*), Buffalo (*Atumma*), Antelope (*Enemma*), Eagle (*Ugomma*), Western Couples (identified with their pointed nose-like masks), *Mmanwu* Hausa (Hausa Masquerade), Police Sergeants, *Agbogho Mmuo*,

Adamma, *Mmanwu Okorobia* and his parents, are characteristically designed to reflect the social awareness attached to their delineation and their performances suggest these attributes. The spirit possession of masks and costumes though reduced to its barest significance in Carnival is suggestive of African creativity and its concomitant aesthetic appeal.

The major raw materials for the design of masks and costumes of the selected masquerade understudy include wood, cloth, feather, raffia, palm-frond reeds, their general blending, and especially in *Ijele* and *Ugomma* Masquerades, the use of metal and wire gauze (wire mesh). At the point of execution, the finished products of these materials are usually in bright primary colours demonstrated in broader and louder strokes of amplification. Contrasting colours are deployed to achieve the desired degree of abstraction and distortion of features to enhance the mystification attributes of the masquerade resulting in an eclectic visual panorama and razzmatazz. Major colours that dominate costumes and masks designs include red, white, green, blue, yellow, orange and black. As symbolic, psychological and emotional as colours may be (Babson, 2012), their application in masks and costumes designs in Carnivals is significantly measured bearing in mind its aesthetic and entertainment qualities. Therefore, Carnival masquerades select and use colours that will match the State's logo and theme of the event. In full costume, masquerades are lavishly colourful, opulent, resplendent, weird, austere, abstract or strictly functional. In all its descriptive allurement and visual candour, if the masquerades in Carnivals fail to impress its audience and adjudicators, its reception is lost, for it is in performance that the beauty of costume and mask designs are accentuated.

Design is a major area of interest in Carnival masquerades. Efforts are geared towards deploying design variables that will heighten success potentials. Designers are employed from different backgrounds; carvers, fine artists, carpenters, painters, electricians and artisans. Each mask character is therefore designed to suit the fact that costume is a carrier of

act in the art of masquerade performances. For instance, Agbogho Mmuo and Adamma all belong to the same feminine genus and has the physiognomy and visage that exudes feminist sophistication in carriage and deportment. Okoye reveals that detailed attention is given to the design of costumes of masquerades representing female gender. "the*Agbogho mmuo* for instance, wears a cat suit made from strong locally woven fabric. Detailed applique patterns of predominantly bright colours cover the entire surface of the material. The most common colours are red and yellow. Sometimes bright green is also used (1999:257). In a similar way, Adamma, the modern opposite of Agbogho mmuo is represented with feminine accessories such as waist beads, anklets, wristlets, necklaces and fine decorated hand fans which she uses often as she makes her way to the stage. Each of them is costumed to reflect their levels of sophistication with contemporary fabrics which are mostly industrially made and sometimes with local fabrics. Their masks and headdresses suggest feminine comeliness and innocence. However, the more aggressive and heavy masked figures like *Ekpo*, are agile, ferocious and practically restless when in procession, depicting masculinity and youthful exuberance. Their masks are ugly and scary. They are mostly painted black with bold strikes of white. They may have offensively large heads, grotesquely large, spaced, protruding teeth, large rolling tongue, bulbous eye-balls, gaping nostrils through which the masker's face could be seen, rugged cheeks, and unseemly ears. Some have large mouths that open and close and through which the masker breathes and sees. The teeth are usually finger sizes and protruding from its mouth. The hollow eyes are penetratingly discomforting when stared at the audience, hence the audience are usually quick to recoil backwards even while watching from the stands when the *Ekpo* Masquerade approaches. Ukaegbu believes "the creative motif is to capture these forces in a background of the fear and awe they arouse in participants, and the idea sometimes yields masks with abstracted and ludicrously exaggerated anthropomorphic and theriomorphic features" (Ukaegbu, 1996:144). *Ekpe* Masquerades on the other hand is a

signifier of the peoples of Cross River, and its wave-like dance movements are suggestive of the riverine location of its origin.

Jordan Fenton (2009), describes *Ekpe* Masquerade as: "one of the most iconic spectacles in Efik society, the subject of numerous Tourist Board photo campaigns and post-cards. The splash of red, black and yellow raffia and fabric of the *Ekpe* in full cry has come to represent in the minds of many non-indigenes, the characteristic face of Efik culture" (Fenton, 2009:28). The Ekpe Masquerade physically consists of an underlying all-fitting net material, tight-fitting body-net costume, made from fibrous material sourced from a tree bark, though Nylon is more commonly used today. On top of this is a raffia mane worn around the chest, also raffia attachments are worn around the wrist and ankles, whilst Nsibidi patterns are worked and expressed in the mane and wrist and ankle attachments. On the head of the Masquerade is a raffia attachment. All these completed by a wing- like hat attached to the back of the neck. The Masquerade would also hold in its hands, the sacred "*Oboti*" leaves which are said to have the spiritual power to cleanse ills and are also used as a means of paying homage to the Chiefs of the *Ekpe* Society. The deep ritual symbolism of the *Ekpe* Masquerade is further signified by homage which is paid during appearances of the *Ekpe* to the father of the *Ekpe* Masquerade "*Nkom Ekom Nkom*". The bundles of raffia reeds knitted beautifully serves both as costume and mask. The colours are bold black, white, red, green and a touch of blue for some. On its headgear are two eagle feathers or more signifying royalty. The creativity in costume design of *Ekpe* masquerade is deployed in ensuring that from the burst-line down the navel point, the masquerade is bigger and thins out from the abdomen down the leggings. As a masquerade of Secret Society groups, colours are significant as it suggests hierarchy and gradational rankings. Whatever feelings a mask evokes from its designs, and whatever appeals toits performing style, both issues are difficult to express without due consideration for form and contentseen in its performance. Mask

movements range from the demure and impressive, through the gentle, the aggressive and acrobatic, to the grotesquely obscene and incongruous. Different masks reflect different performing conditions, and the facts that all do not sing, dance, or engage in verbal dialogue help determine their designs and sizes. In all intent and purpose, masks, costumes and makeup designs in Carnival are made manifest in performance. However elaborate, spectacular, exotic, opulent, richly costumed a masquerade appears, and lacks dexterity in performance, it is likened to a beautiful girl with bad breathes (mouth-odour).

4.4.5 The Performance: Processions, Acolytes and Drumming

By performance, this section means all the activities taken up by masquerades in both Carnivals. This subhead also suggests that the arts of the masquerade in this study is divided into two parts: the arts in designs (masks, costumes and makeup) and the art in performance (procession, drumming, dancing, singing, mime, and masquerade followership or acolytes. Spectacle would have been discussed here. But the end products of the arts of the masquerade in both design and performance in these Carnivals geometrically progress to actualize spectacle which serves to heighten the senses of perception. The context of this achievement is the Carnival platform and the form is the style of presentation which borders on masquerade's eclectic appeal in the deployment of these arts aforementioned. These are the arts of the masquerades in performance which this study shall go on to analyse.

The masquerade events as originally conceived was designed exclusively for the Igbo States and a few South-South States like Cross River and Akwa Ibom States. This is because of the strong masquerade tradition of these States. To support this assertion, Ayokoroma reveals that, "this had necessitated the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) setting up a Research Centre on Masquerade Traditions in Enugu, just as the Durbar event was designed for the core Northern States, and Boat Regatta for the riverine States" (Ayakoroma, in Yerima and Liz Ben-Iheanacho, 2009:93). Nevertheless, participation in the masquerade

event has spread even to some Northern States like Nassarawa which won the Best Masquerade Display Award in the 2008 edition. Generally speaking, performances of masquerades in Abuja Carnival and Carnival Calabar are processional and parade-like. Masquerades for this study were selected bearing in mind this performance disposition of the Carnival. Masquerades of dramatic skits and impersonators such as Onu Kamma, Okumkpo, and Ogbllo of Anambra, Akpoha-Afikpo in Ebonyi State and Igala of Kogi State respectively whose acts require more time to realise are not regulars here because the Carnival officials allot time to each performance and stick by it. Assessment and grading of performances are also tied to spectacle and dexterity of performance. Spectacle is the deciding factor for masquerades in these carnivals and is seen in dance movements, exotic designs in costumes and masks, loud statements made in the generous use of colours across all designs.

Carnival Masquerade Procession:

The procession is for every state's contingent; their motifs, masquerades, and any other inclusion that is identified with the state. On the day set aside for Masquerade Event, it is usually spectacle for the eyes. Carnival Officials, usually announce the names of the different states in alphabetical order of entry for this category of presentation. The procession of the masquerades follows the same Carnival routes as earlier described and ends at the Eagle Square venue of the performance.

At the Eagle Square, the adjudicators await each contingent's presentation in order to assess their display. Marks are collated based on the three assessment criteria: Best Costume in Masquerade Event, Best Masquerade Performance and Most Spectacular Masquerade. Taking a roll call of masquerades chosen for this study in Abuja Carnival, the prodigious, opulent and colourful Ijele's performance is usually a beauty to behold.

On approaching the Square, the drummers and *Ijele*'s acolytes frenetically busied themselves with songs accompanied with drumming, eulogising *Ijele* with reverence. The *Ijele* danced with slow steps characteristic of dexterous royalty. At the point marked out as stage and where the adjudicators sit, *Ijele* displayed its well-known dance artistry, entertaining the audience with its spectacular and majestic dance steps, as it twisted, looped around, stepped forward, backwards, coiling and at other times striding out. And just when *Ijele* was about to undertake the next lineup of his dance movements, the officials called in another group and ushered Ijele and its retinue out. The spectators and adjudicators alike roared excitedly with uproarious excitement mixed with slight echoes of disapproval for calling off the dazzling display from the Ijele masquerade. The *Ekpo* Masquerade from Akwa Ibom State whose mask is as scary as its performance charges at the audience as it makes its way into the Square of Performance with its ensemble. The *Ekpo* is a family of masquerades made up of the father, first son (*Akpan Ekpo*), second son (*Udo Ekpo*), and a dangerous daughter (*Adiaha Unak*). Descriptively, their masks are suggestive of their temperaments; *Akpan* and *Udo Ekpo*'s demeanors are friendly and benign, and their masks are more naturalistic and even child-like than that of the dangerous daughter (*Adiaha Unak*). As they scare spectators along and perform, the lyrics coming off drummers and acolytes are such as narrate the *Ekpo*'s heroic deeds. Its major dance routines include short brisk dance steps by the father and two sons followed by darting movements towards the dangerous daughter (*Adiaha Unak*) who might have charged at the audience with her bows and arrows or spear and machete.

Ekpo's dance steps are riotous and impactful with a lot of space use as it charges at the audience. *Ugomma* (Eagle) Masquerade from Anambra State is royalty personified. Its dance steps are a combination of hops, slow moves, and a raise of its white plumage wings followed by head nods to the right, to the left and movements of sheer pride deportment. *Ugomma* struts and hops while maintaining a sustained well-choreographed dance steps.

Usually the height of these displays is the laying of the egg which attracts thunderous cheers and excitement from the spectators. However, the Abuja Carnival does not guarantee detailed performances since the processional nature of the event means that other masquerades are waiting for their brief turns before the adjudicators. Hence, *Ugomma* masquerade was not allowed to lay its egg at the Carnival.

Agbogho Mmuo or *Adamma* is a masquerade of feminine elegance. As she approached the Eagle Square, she was followed by other maskers, the father, the mother, Police Sergeant serving as her guard and Onukwu who was busy trying to engage her attention romantically. At the stage of performance, she danced shyly with pauses to admire and fan herself with a hand fan. When the Onukwu masquerade braced up as a man to talk to her, she used the fan on him and the exaggerated fall from Onukwu masquerade sent the spectators hysterical with laughter. Agbogho Mmuo is light-footed and danced in angular brisk steps and made curves of various shapes while hobnobbing in different directions. Gaiety, nimbleness, and briskness characterized the dance movements of Agbogho Mmuo masquerade in Abuja Carnival.

Ekpe Masquerade of Cross River State is full of signs and symbols in its dance movements. Each movement is either delivered to a senior member of the secret society or used as obeisance to the Obong (the paramount ruler of Calabar) during performance. In Abuja Carnival, *Ekpe* masquerades and their acolytes appeared with all their visual accouterments and delivered a scintillating performance. Its elaborate and opulent costumes added to the movement dynamics on display. Why displaying its synchronized dance steps, the acolyte with a percussive instrument busied himself chanting *Ekpe*'s heroics, while going round *Ekpe* masquerade all the time. *Ekpe*'s most visible dance steps include, long strides, swirling and turning while looking around where to dart out to. As the acolyte's voice pitches, the *Ekpe* Masquerade increases its gliding movements. The acolyte directs the dance with his voice

and his cone-like percussive instrument which delivers the rhythms against which the *Ekpe* masquerade performs.

The processional performance dynamics of masquerades in Abuja Carnival reveal their preference for spectacle which makes verbal language and dialogue unnecessary. There is instead, the presence of exaggerated gestures, pantomimic display and acrobatic stunts. Theatrical idiom exists in the forms of laudatory chants, songs, rhetoric and praise poetry. Even then, this is not fully developed due to time factor following time allocation to the masquerade groups. In fact, language in the form of theatrical dialogue is secondary to action which is more in dance. Monologue is more common since it can be deployed in procession and combines with physical gestures and movements to intensify symbolic theatrical communication in the Carnival events. Carnival in Nigeria, like Olympics is all about participation with less attachment to winnings.

The Performance – Acolyte, Drumming, Dance and Music in Carnivals

In Abuja and Calabar Carnivals examined in this study, performance presupposes the acts of the masquerade which are its arts. This is what it sets out to do. The masquerade deploys dance, music and drumming to entertain the spectators. In one performance, all components of the performing arts are brought together in one gestalt art. While in some other, a different action can suffice; masquerade dramatizing, singing or dancing and or both, as the case may require.

ACOLYTE:

Generally speaking, every masquerade has an accompanier, a follower, a leader, a mediator, or group of retinue or performers who usually costume not really as a masquerade, but wear significant costumes that set them on the same recognition as aiders to the masquerade.The retinue with their percussive instrument serenade the entire procession as they accompany the

parading masked characters and revelers. In 2014 Abuja Carnival, the retinue of Akwa Ibom could not locate the procession of their masquerade on the parade due to the large crowd. The acolytesassist the masquerade through all its performances and acts.In Ottenberg and Binkley's *African Children's Masquerades: Playful Performers* (2006), child maskers during festive seasons go about their neighbourhood obtaining gifts. 'Through their performances, members of children's pre-initiation masquerade troupes acquire skills in obtaining gifts of money and food items from adult viewers' (4). Instances abound in traditional masquerade settings where children hardly cover their faces. Their major interest is the gift items and arms-giving they expect during the festive seasons. Both followers and masked members are acolytes or retinue and role reversal is a motivation that guarantees subsequent outing in other days. Thus, masquerade acolytes is a phenomenon which starts from very young age and develops into a strong component of the masquerade structure and feature as can be seen in recent times with carnival events. The acolytes sing masquerades' praises, serve as the orchestra, serve as a second eye to the masquerade whose mask is visually impaired, pass on instructions, dance to support the masquerade aesthetically and at other times subdue its daring and riotous excesses by restraining it from causing havoc to the spectators. They also serve as patron acknowledgers. In cases where the masquerade is appreciated or offered tips in form of cash rewards for a good performance, the acolytes accept these on behalf of the masquerade. Their roles are manifold hence no masquerade appears without the acolytes. In the new festivals understudy, acolytes serve variously as part of the State Contingents in (Abuja Carnival) and Ekpe initiates in (Carnival Calabar). Their roles outlined above do not change. However, in the study, the acolytes were quite significant in their number. The crowd that served as acolytes to the Ijele Masquerade, Ugomma, Agbogho Mmuo, Ekpe and Ekpo was a different spectacle to behold. The caravan spectacle at the carnival routes left no one in doubt about the similarity of this indigenous performance form across cultures in Nigeria. No one could identify which masquerade belonged to which tribe or State as dead

spirits and the living commingled in a celebration of culture. It was a mix of tradition and modernity in pursuant of entertainment.

DRUMMING:

Drumming is a sin qua non in masquerade performances.The drumming supplies the musical rhythm and tone and regulates the dances of the masquerade. Those who serve as drummers in any masquerade outing is also known as the orchestra. They are also the acolytes who lead the masquerades out to their venues of presentation. The instruments of the orchestra can be made up of drums of varied sizes and shapes, iron gongs (*ogene* or *agogo*), the *ogene* or *agogo* is a bi-tonal instrument consisting of single or double hollow iron cones which are joined together and beaten with iron rod or hard stick, rattles (*shekere* or *ohia*), slit drums (*ikoro*), earthenware pots (*udu*) and many others. Bode Osanyin in his paper titled "From Classical Bata to Break-Dancing" presented at the National Symposium on Dance held at the University of Ibadan in 1986, asserts that "bata drumming and dancing try to stimulate the electrical dash which *accompanies the actions of performers including masquerades in the peak of their performances* (italics added, 4). He went further to reveal that "the bata ensemble consists of four drums: Iyaalu, omele abo kudi, gudugudu and omele ako. The last two instruments are usually tied together and played by the person in a feat of virtuoso drumming" (4). The fervency and dexterity of tonalbeats and rhythms of the drum come from the acolytes who follow their different representing masquerades through the Carnival routes and back to the Eagle Square, venue of the performance competition. In the Carnival Calabar, the *EkpeMgbe* masquerade cult have different subgroups according to their levels of hierarchy or seniority. Their performance is ordered accordingly. Each hierarchy comes out with its Ekpe masquerade led by the Clan head or the most senior member of the Ekpe Cult. The tune and melodious decibels of the drums accentuates to embolden the Ekpe masquerade to sway around with its characteristic wavelike dance steps. Ekpe masquerade during

Carnival Calabar performs at the Zoological Garden along Mary Slessor Avenue. In Abuja Carnival all masquerades understudy freely interacted with both acolytes and spectators alike. In both Carnivals, the drumming comes from a stationed orchestra in a corner of the State box closer to the Adjudicators. This closeness is also part of the assessment requirements. Any drumming from the acolytes when a group has been asked to stop invalidates their performance. As frenzied as you can be as a drummer, it also means listening to instructions and not being carried away. This is quite different from the accompanying drumming that comes in the course of the general procession. However, after an entry performance, the acolytes stand to lead their masquerades out. This signals the end of the group's performance and the beginning of another group's entrance. The drumming can resume to entertain the spectators along the Square. Every drummer would want to showcase his mastery of his instrument during the Carnival, but the adjudication process barely allows that.

DANCE AND MUSIC:

These are two inseparably artistic phenomena that have co-existed and symbiotically enriched each other from time immemorial. Dance and music feature prominently amongst the performing arts deployed by the masquerade as its arts in performance. In masquerade cultures all over Nigeria and beyond, dance and music are inextricably looped together as coexisting elements. Music acts as accompaniment to dance. Dances of masquerades are therefore guided by the nature of the music. Vigorous dance movements require vibrant and very animated music tunes and rhythms. Dances that are slow paced require slow music tunes. As noted earlier, some masquerades only dance with the tunes coming off the music from the orchestra or its acolytes. The music instruments of the orchestra can be anything from bare hands producing clapping sounds, wooden drums of different shapes and sizes, metal pronged gongs or single gongs producing varied tones, rattle gourds, or coned shaped

percussive instruments. The dances ranges from a stump, a leap into the air, a swirl, a twist, a vigorous and riotous movement and dashing in and out of the audience area, to a more concentrated choreographic dance steps which deploy the use of the flat feet, the heels and the toes at other times. The nimble dances of the *AgboghoMmuo*, the swaying sideways of *Ekpe*, the gliding runs of Ijele and *Ugomma* as well as the stomping about of the *Ekpo* Masquerade are characteristic dance forms of the masquerades in new festivals. However, creativity and improvisations set them apart from what obtains in indigenous arenas. There are yet another group of masquerades not studied that embark on impossible acts like climbing of electric poles, GSM masts and walls of residences, all to attract and signpost spectacularization as demands of the Carnival. Over the years, the masquerades studied have had a routine dance steps peculiar with their performances. But in the Carnivals, these masquerades deploy creativity, improvisation and individual ingenuity to prove points as masters of their arts. During the frenzy for spectacular displays, the orchestra are left with choices of beats to make as masquerades engage them with unimaginable dance steps. The tempo, rhythm and tunes are at the highest levels of rendition and spectacularity for that onerous task of appeasing the audience and adjudicators who are stationed along the Carnival routes and the State Boxes. To bring this section to an end, Chike Okoye's view about dance and music may suffice: the kinetics that accompany the masquerades; the emphatic movements to and fro, the forward dashes and abrupt stops, the affirmative nods and disagreeing shakes of the head, the dignified slow-spins, the dance steps and the main stream chants, narratives and songs are symbiotically aligned to the third accompaniment: Music or its appropriate (Okoye, 2014:32).

4.5 Appraisal of the Arts of the Masquerade in New Nigeria Festivals

The appraisal of the arts of the masquerades in new Nigeria Festivals is based on some variables identified in the course of the research. The festivals are both government sponsored events. They are in search of cultural revitalization, heritage building and touristic consciousness through carnivalization of indigenous performance forms. The Carnival Calabar is more hybridized than the Abuja Carnival with more foreign components added. The indigenous art forms in the new festivals like the masquerade have increased with more abstract creations as masquerades that are not locality based. With prizes donated in favour of their performances, the Carnival has witnessed more subscription with the registration of more State contingents. The idea of hiring artistes to perform for other State contingents has become the norm because of the monetary rewards. The Carnival bands (Calabar example) and State contingents (Abuja example), now employ the services of master artistes who are trained in both designs and dance choreography as members of their groups. This is in a bid to help the group win the prize monies in contention. It is also against this background that these groups revel in creativity by adapting and deploying any art material to suit the Carnival themes in their design motifs. Challenges observed in designs are resolved through a workshop approach

Designs in costumes, masks and props as used in Carnival masquerades are a constellation of postcolonial modes of phenomenological perception of artistic and cultural artworks dominant in Nigeria's socio-cultural milieu. They are hybridized, intercultural and variously multifunctional.

Against this background, Ajibade, Emekpe and Oloidi contend that:

> The modes of making, seeing and using artworks like sculptures in Africa today neither fit-neatly into what one may call traditional nor western. At best they are a syncretized and eclectic hybrid taking on new local and global materials, methods and meanings as social changes occur. (Ajibade, Emekpe and Oloidi, 2011:179).

Both masquerades and revelers design masks and costumes to fit into the spectacularity of the Carnival theme (s). These designs are motivated and emboldened through the use of colour amplification and aestheticism. The researcher observed in both carnivals and videos monitored, that masks and costumes used in creating the carnival spectacle are not those that could be found in any traditional setting or what Ajibade et al (2011:180) termed 'ethnographic anthologies' but were made for the needs of the Carnival. Most of the raw materials used in designs are fabricated. The Carnivals have also adopted other forms of spectacle and is gradually relegating to the background the cultural artifacts of its natal cultures. This is in a bid to meet the demands and tastes of tourists in its wake and quest for patronage as sources of revenue generation to the host states. For instance, the Carnival Calabar is no longer a popular art form of its people because of its components which include Super Biking, Roman Generals, Spiderman characters and Carnival Kings and Queens and many others that have elevated the carnival to the status of a high art form. The varied nature of the components of Abuja and Calabar Carnivals suggest the organisers' quest to attend to every consumer of this emergent street art. What this means is that whether a foreign tourist or a local audience, there is one art form in the performance mix that will capture one's visuality because of its numerous aesthetic appeal. As an art patron and consumer of art products, there is always the utility usefulness derivable when art and its consumer engages in an exchange – performer-audience in spaces like the carnival performance space.A look at the constituents of the masked characters and their acolytes, one sees an age bracket of young people desirous and eager to contribute in the making of an art work that could create jobs. The fame and the cash prizes offer the masqueraders (mostly youths) an economic opportunity in an otherwise next to non-existent Nigeria economy for young people. Based on the foregoing, the youths deploy their creative energy to design costumes and masks, choreograph dances and perform spectacularly to win the prizes marked out for each of these categories. Aside the above analysis and appraisals of the masquerade in new Nigerian

Festivals, their arts in these new festivals are assessed based on the following adjudication criteria established by the sponsors:

a. Best Costume in Masquerade Event
b. Best Masquerade Performance
c. Most Spectacular Masquerade

Best Costume in Masquerade Event

In designing costume for masquerade in Carnivals, emphasis is placed on creativity, conformity with carnival themes, utilitarian considerations like weight, functionality, cost of mass production and ease of transportation to carnival venues. Colour and fabric are carefully selected to amplify design spectacularity and comfort of wearing of the costume in performance. Some materials used are fabricated for ease manipulation and amenability. Some others are locally sourced, aesthetically designed and given a modern outlook and deployed in the Carnivals.

Best Masquerade Performance

Masquerades in the Carnivals deploy all the performing arts of dance, music, drumming, followership/acolyte coordination and processional displays. Contingents and Band groups in order to win prizes hire extras who are masters of the arts. These expert dancers, choreographers and acrobats serve as masqueraders. Masquerades in these Carnivals have also changed in costumes and dance routines. Before now, masquerades were identified by their acts. This has changed as performances now bother on what daring stunts, acrobatic displays and spectacular dance steps a masquerade can deliver to win the assessments from the adjudicators. Unlike the Carnival Calabar where Band Groups have dedicated members, the States in Abuja Carnival can hire members of previous winners to enable them aim for the prize money in a particular Carnival year. Masquerade entries in Abuja Carnival have become cash and carry.

Most Spectacular Masquerade

The only meaningful explanation on this assessment module is the merging of Best Masquerade Costume and Best Masquerade Performance. This will launch the masquerade into a spectacular performance. There are many considerations to realize this criteria: the stunning moves, the fabulous and magnificent costume and masks designs, the brilliant, dazzling, breathtaking stunts from the masquerades create a visual panoramic razzmatazz. Such mind-blowing scenario is the appearance of hundreds of masquerades, in fluid formations on the long stretch of Nnamdi Azikiwe Way en-route the Eagle Square (Abuja Carnival) and from Carnival Calabar Village route through Mary Slessor Avenue via Ete Agbo Road, Marian Road, Ndidem Usang Iso Road, MCC Road, Calabar Road en-route the stadium amid gunshots, songs, dances, music from live bands, chants, and ululations from the spectating crowd. The visual beauty of this spectacle has been described by Ossie Enekwe (1987) as "poetry in motion." The table below shows the different winners of the Masquerade Event in Abuja Carnival. The Carnival Calabar does not include masquerade amongst the competing bands. Ekpe and Ekpo Masquerades in Carnival Calabar are not adjudicated for prizes.

Abuja Carnival Masquerade Event Winners' Table

S/N	Carnival Year	Masquerade Event	Winning State(s)
1	Abuja Carnival 2007	Best Masquerade Costume	Nasarawa State (1st) Anambra State (2nd)
		Best Masquerade Performance	River State (1st) Nasarawa (2nd)
		Most Spectacular Performance	Akwa Ibom State (1st) Ogun State (2nd)
2	Abuja Carnival 2008	Best Masquerade Costume	River State (1st) Nasarawa (2nd)

		Best Masquerade Performance	Akwa Ibom State (1st) Bayelsa (2nd)
		Most Spectacular Performance	Anambra State (1st) (Niger State (2nd)
3	Abuja Carnival 2009	Best Masquerade Costume	Rivers State (1st) Oyo State (2nd)
		Best Masquerade Performance	Rivers State (1st) Anambra State (2nd)
		Most Spectacular Performance	Rivers State (1st) Bayelsa State (2nd)
4	Abuja Carnival 2010	Best Masquerade Costume	Nasarawa State (1st) Rivers State (2nd)
		Best Masquerade Performance	Akwa Ibom (1st) Ogun State (2nd)
		Most Spectacular Performance	Nasarawa (1st) Rivers State (2nd)
5	Abuja Carnival 2011	Best Masquerade Costume	Rivers State State (1st) Ogun State (2nd)
		Best Masquerade Performance	Akwa Ibom State (1st) Niger State (2nd)
		Most Spectacular Performance	Akwa Ibom State (1st) Niger State (2nd)
6	Abuja Carnival 2012	Best Masquerade Costume	Rivers State (1st), Akwa Ibom State (2nd)
		Best masquerade Performance	Rivers State (1st) Akwa Ibom State (2nd)
		Most spectacular Masquerade	Akwa Ibom State (1st) River State (2nd)
7	Abuja Carnival 2013	Best Masquerade Costume	Akwa Ibom State 1st Oyo State (2nd)
		Best masquerade Performance	Akwa Ibom State 1st River State (2nd)
		Most spectacular Masquerade	Akwa Ibom State 1st Cross River State (2nd)
8	Abuja Carnival 2014	Best Masquerade Costume	The 2014 Abuja Carnival was marred by low turnout. Only six States registered; Kogi, Zamfara, Ebonyi, Niger, Akwa Ibom, Kano and the FCT.
		Best masquerade Performance	Akwa Ibom was declared the overall winner of the event

		Most spectacular Masquerade	Akwa Ibom was declared the overall winner of the event.

Table showing past Abuja Carnival Directors and Chief Executives

s/n	Name of Director/CEO	Year of Service
1	**Prof Ahmed P. Yerima**	**Pioneer Director/CEO, 2005**
2	**Otnnba Segun Runswe**	**Director/CEO, 2006**
3	**Prof Ahmed P. Yerima**	**Director/CEO, 2007**
4	**Prof Ahmed P. Yerima**	**Director/CEO, 2008**
5	**Prof Rasaki Ojo Bakare**	**Director/CEO, 2009**
6	**Prof Rasaki Ojo Bakare**	**Director/CEO, 2010**
7	**Prof Rasaki Ojo Bakare**	**Director/CEO, 2011**
8	**Prof Rasaki Ojo Bakare**	**Director/CEO, 2012**
9	**Prof Rasaki Ojo Bakare**	**Director/CEO, 2013**
10	**Mr Abiodun Abe**	**Director/CEO, 2014 to present.**

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 The Future of Masquerade Art

The future of the masquerade art will dwell basically on its diversity, dynamism, creativity and adaptation to new forms and approaches in designs in content and context of performance. These will ensure its unwavering popularity. In the future, communities will take up the production of masquerades they have the comparative advantage to produce. It is envisaged that people will not tie down their masquerade production to their community's masquerades alone. Here, creativity, adaptation and cannibalization will play a prominent role in designing a masquerade. A lot of postmodernist theories will be applied in the designing and study of masquerades of the future. Theories like Growtoskian, Brechtian, Realism, Symbolism, Theatricalism, Representationalism and presentationalism will easily come up as theories of criticism in the study of masquerades. A masked character on a corporate attire like a banker can easily pass for a masquerade and can be read as a realistic or poor theatre approach to costuming. Following the introduction of the masquerade in in new Nigerian Carnivals, its design elements has remarkably changed in tandem with the economic realities that come with Carnival as tourism and a major source of revenue for its host cities. This will continue in the future. It is expected that most heavy masks like those worn by *Ekpo* Ibibio (Akwa Ibom) and Cross River, will give way for more stylized and fabricated masks, designed by professional artists. Costumes of masquerades in the distant past for instance, were plantain stem and leaves, coconut fiber, yellow palm fronds and tree leaves. These costumes have since changed to reflect modernity. There is constant review and adaptation of designs in both costumes and masks in these new Nigerian carnivals. Designers of Masquerade costumes and masks have deployed quality and bright coloured fabrics like weaved akwete material, multicoloured linens, George materials, hollandaise materials to costume masquerades. This approach to designing costumes of masquerades in new festivals will continue in the future. But more importantly is the possibility of adopting

and deploying more eclectic designs to represent costume and masks. The mask was got from animal skull, weaved nets, feather and raffia materials and logs of wood. These materials no doubt are still in vogue but with more refinement and aesthetic blend of multiple colours. Contemporary masks are more fitting to the face, multicoloured designs and woods used for their carving have become treated/seasoned and lighter to adorn. Masquerade followership or acolytes is another major improvement in new festivals. During an interview with Ahmed Yerima, he countered that it is an assault on the sensibilities of international tourists to see acolytes with bare feet or dressed with rags as costumes and therefore, an indictment on State Governments who send their contingents without preparing adequately for them. He revealed that weeks before the opening ceremony of the Carnival event, he usually visits camps of States' contingents to ascertain their level of readiness in all areas including costumes for the acolytes. It was on one such routine checks that a masquerade costume was redesigned even when the owners felt bewildered about its possibilities. At this point, the masquerade troupe realized that masquerade performance has gone beyond ritual to mere entertainment. Since 'original' masquerade costume can be discarded and a new one made. The question of whether the spirit of the masquerade took possession of the new costume was resolved when another artiste in-training took over the performance of the masquerade and delivered a scintillating performance to the consternation of everyone including the 'owners' of the masquerade. Masquerade art in new festivals is victory of modernity over tradition. Its performances in new festivals are feasts for the eyes made possible through creative deployment of tangible and intangible art forms. The motivation behind these quest for creativity lies in the monetary inducement in the competitions which is part of the new festivals. Prize monies are given out based on certain criteria set out by organisers and the adjudicators. Bands and State contingents design and create motifs to suit the themes already announced by Festival Directorate. Masquerade art has continued to develop with its society and its people at the wake of modern tastes in performance needs. It

keeps borrowing, adapting and appropriating virtually every aspect of their lives and subjecting same to serve its performance dispositions.

Change has rendered the masking culture inactive as far as local communities that produced masquerades are concerned. The youths that served as human resources for the masking art have either imbibed the white man's religion or due to the search for a living outside their communities have travelled out to the cities in search of a better employment. The elders who carved the masks and trained the youths in the art are aged and retired or have even died. Generally, the masks that are displayed during the new festivals are carved by graduate artists to make a living. It is among these designs that Carnival revelers and State contingents acquire to prepare their masquerades. The creativity that goes into these masks and costume designs attest to the fact that, they are from master artists of professional training.

5.2 Conclusion

The masquerade's popularity as seen in the new festivals understudy is due to their constant adaptation to the changing needs and realities of its societies. It is also based on the review processes that its costumes have been subjected to over the years. The meanings of their performances have also been altered to suit the socio-cultural, economic and political narratives of the producing communities including those masquerades on parade in the new festivals. Against this background, history has never relented in retelling what culture is. Achebe articulated this position fully in his *Things Fall Apart* (1958), when the ominous signs of change overtook Umuofia community.

> That night the mother of spirits walked the length and breadth of the clan, weeping for her murdered son. It was a terrible night. Not even the oldest man in Umuofia had ever heard such a strange and fearful sound, and it was never to be heard again. It seemed as if the

> very soul of the tribe wept for a great evil that was coming – its own death. (1958:132).

It was the end of an era and yet the beginning of another. Things indeed fell apart and the centre that held cultures of the people, including the culture of masquerade art snapped into pieces, and never again to be bound together. Societies all over the world are in constant culture flux. Nigerian society is not an exception. These much have been witnessed in their performances. The performance art of the masquerade is undoubtedly the most popular indigenous art form. Its socio-cultural, aesthetic and entertainment functions and receptivity to change has continued to grant and assure of its relevance in the performance dynamics of the Nigerian society. The masquerade amongst other things enjoys flexibility in its performance. It deploys dance, music, songs, mime, spectacle, processional display, acolytes and drumming. This is where the masquerade art has much similitude with the Carnival art; a new festival that was imported from the Caribbean Island of Trinidad and Tobago in 2005 by both the federal government of Nigeria and the Cross River state government. Since then, the masquerade art has been attracted to it because of the exact performance approaches and similarities they possess and share. These similitudes with carnival arts are in the areas of masking, costuming, dancing, drumming, processional display, music, song, and spectacularity have guaranteed its continuous relevance as popular art form. This attraction to the new festivals and the relevance it continuously enjoys did not come with ease. It was achieved by losing its deep attachment to ritual and religious undertones of its earliest beginnings. From a gradual movement from its groove-arena performance space to a more flexible and found spaces like the roads, squares, political campaigns and a mix in major social gatherings including weddings, coronations, picnics and children's parties. Its major function at the wake of this change is pure entertainment and to a large extent economic.

5.3 Observations and Recommendations

In the course of this research on the arts of the masquerades in new Nigerian festivals, some interesting things about the masquerade were observed. Masquerade art will continue to find avenues and platforms to be relevant as an indigenous popular art form. From its ritual and religious past to entertainment of the present, from its groove habitation, to tarmac of the cities and cultural centres. Masquerades have become a regular feature in music videos of Nigerian popular music artistes including Flavour's 'Ogene', Asa's 'Eyo', Phino's 'Godfather'and Marvin Record's 'Dorobuchi' remix to mention but a few. It has also become a part of church ordinations, wedding ceremonies, children's birthday parties and picnics, titular and chieftaincy coronations, where its performances are purely entertainment. Masquerades have also become an attraction to products brands. Most companies in Lagos, Portharcourt, Abuja, Uyo, Calabar and Enugu use masquerades as brand ambassadors and advert agents to showcase their products for patronage. It has become a normal sight to see masked characters on wagons dancing to a live music while pretty girls scamper in and out of streets with products in their hands making brisk sales. Such companies include detergent companies, communication network providers, and few Nollywood marketers that are yet to make a name.

Everything about the secrecy associated with the masquerade has since been abrogated. This should not be seen as a sacrilege following what had been known of the masquerade, but as change that has caught up with masking culture like every other aspect of the society. Masked characters have since shed off the inscrutability that endeared it to the villagers in time past. In very remote villages, they may be some consideration to give the masquerade the desired ritual underpinnings. This may not last much longer before the same change catches up with them. In some Christmas masquerade outings in major cities including Enugu, this researcher stumbled on a masquerade that removed his mask in the glare of

women, to eat, drink beer and a nap after much exhaustion occasioned by his wanderings. He paid his bill from the monetary reward from spectators and patrons of his arts. In a major restaurant (Buka) along the busy Aggrey Road in Portharcourt, Rivers State, this researcher again, witnessed a masquerade requesting for food from a girl with his mask in his hand. When he was served, he kept his mask close by and ate his food. After the refreshment, he adorned his mask and went on performing along the street. This is how far the masquerade has changed in the society. It is a known fact that some masquerades do not perform outside its abode. The new festival has long changed such beliefs. The Oyo State contingent in Abuja Carnival 2007, paraded the most mysterious masquerades. According to the acolytes, the costume of the masquerade do not travel out of Oyo unless guarded. Ahmed Yerima, the Carnival Director then, wanted the masquerade to be part of an opening event because of the beauty of the costumes and its spectacular display. But the natives declined the invitation due to lack of support from their state government. In an interview with this researcher Yerima revealed that he employed the services of expert dancers and choreographers to replicate those dance steps and designed the costumes with the help of experts. The masquerade that performed at the opening ceremony of the 2007 Masquerade Event of Abuja Carnival was from Oyo State on record, but the missense had taken place before the public show. Cannibalization as a popular tradition in the masquerade art (Okoye, 2010), has become a lost and won battle between tradition and modernity represented by socio-cultural needs of the society. What has happened to the masquerade tradition is not unexpected. As societies develop, they accommodate cultures that are amenable. Static cultures give way or naturally die off if not abrogated including masking cultures. The introduction of children events in most of these new festivals have taken the shine off children Christmas masquerade production and performances which lasted till January and beyond. This aspect of the Christmas razzmatazz used to be fun and the reason why most children looked forward to the season. It horned their creativity and served as a preparatory stage for boyhood initiation in

most African societies. The gradational initiation rites of boys and women alike start from these events. However, what may have been lost in denying children in the villages of such historical and cultural past should be compensated by introducing masking culture as part of the primary and post-primary curriculum in the school system. Aside masquerade which has continued to find platforms for its relevance, most indigenous art forms have gone into extinction or are gradually been phased out. The new festival should be hosted in each state and therefore, be encouraged to take up the challenge of integrating all other indigenous performing art forms like new yam festival, wrestling festival, hunting festival, local dances and songs as part of a weeklong Carnival art. The Arugungu Fish Festival and Yakurr New Yam Festival of Adamawa and Cross River States respectively, which have exposed the local cultures of these natives to international tourists are good examples of the future of other indigenous art forms in Nigeria if harnessed and fully supported by their State Governments. Even if the masquerade and other performing arts do not wish to be used as tourism, communities in Local Governments across Nigeria can produce their masquerades through a government's subvention as projects of the future. These performances can be recorded in a video format, mass produced and sold in the open market like the Nollywood films and music videos. This will encourage parents to buy them and introduce their cultures to their children in cities in order to relate with their socio-cultural heritages as a people. Most city dwellers do not know their historical or cultural backgrounds, including masquerades of their people. This may be an opportunity to address such ugly situation. The performances can also be documented in a catalog and brief reports summarizing each masked character revealed. The State Libraries will take possession and storage of these documents for further researches on these indigenous art forms. State Museums can also be erected to house some of these antiquated masks and later displayed to the public at intervals.

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