



Drumlöre of Opobo Kingdom: A Historical Interpretation

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 7 March 2015;

Received in revised form:

1 August 2015;

Accepted: 10 August 2015;

ABSTRACT

The problem of historical documentation has been with society since the ages. The response of African societies like Opobo to this trend has been to utilize various artistic mediums like drum language as repository of history. Through this approach the various traditions are passed on through time. This research x-rays the contributions of Drumlöre to the rich history of Opobo Kingdom.

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Keywords

Kingdom,
Drumlöre,
History.

Introduction

Drumlöre is peculiar to the Niger Delta societies. It is part of their culture and a mirror through which the culture of the people are understood. Culture is the characteristic way of a people's life. Drumlöre is the unique African way of communication using drums. It has nothing to do with noise pollution although sometimes it is accompanied with music. It is a process of sending long-distance messages to one another on drums in pre-colonial times. In pre-colonial times these messages were most times warning calls to alert the people on an impending disaster, calls to revolt or a call to assemble.

African drum music was an effective means of long distance communication. It is far more complex in its rhythm and structure than western music and therefore difficult for non-initiates to fully comprehend. This explains why for whites, it is difficult to "over stand". This form of communication could approximate the tones and pitches of human speech consequently, they convey intricate messages not just code-like signals making it possible for African societies using these medium to "talk" to each other.

It is important to note that African societies can also communicate with one another by clapping or stamping their feet if drums are not used. When synchronized it gives well thought out rhythm produced for the pleasure of the people.

Drumlöre and Music

Drumlöre was an important form of communication in pre-colonial African societies. This art was passed on from generation to generation. In African societies every action is laced with music. Music is part of people's culture. It is a medium through which the culture of a people is understood. Music is one principal aspect of human culture and remains a veritable way of life and no occasion, whether joyful or sad is without musical performance. Drumlöre can be described as folk music because it evolved from the history and tradition of a people. It is a handed down tradition (Okafor and Emeka, 2009). In African context, folk music is supreme because in war, dirges, communal development projects, or just summoning people to an emergency meeting there exist a combination of voice (vocal) or Ogele, Ekwe or Nkwa (instrument) to appropriately convey the situation/information. Music is the expression or art that is most accessible to human beings in any situation of their lives –

crisis or calm, work or worship, play or war, recreation or reflection. Music is implicated in life and people go all out to use music to communicate, to move, to express emotions and ideas, and to mobilize people or rally them to solidarity. Music of Opobo Kingdom is a rallying point, a marshalling point for expression of solidarity. So it is for other culture groups, as music express their personality and identity. Whenever, music of that culture group or society sounds, people rally round it because it expresses their solidarity. Conversely, when a community abandons its own music in favour of another's, it is in danger of thinking, behaving, feeling and eventually being like the community that is parent to its adopted music.

Drumlöre and Transmission of Culture

Drumlöre is a very important element in the transmission of culture. For example, in performing the drumlöre of the Opobo (Ibani) one begins to develop the traditional instrument technology of the Ibani people, learn how to make the instrument, what to use and how to source them. It generates the industry of entertainment and occupation. Drumlöre is a kind of folklore, it is African traditional music that is supreme. Akpabot (1986) states.

One of the chief characteristics of African traditional music is its association with social and ritual ceremonies, but whilst this is generally true, it would be incorrect to say that all African music follows this pattern as there are many aspects of it totally unrelated to any traditional ceremony. It is not unusual to find musicians in an African village gathering together after supper to make music in the moonlight just for the fun of it. The music for such occasion maybe background for a wrestling contest, a general sing-song in which everyone present takes part... In all these instances, the mood of the moment dictates the type of music and instrumentation.

Music feature in festivals and ceremonies which are ancient in origin. For instance the *amaiwo* (yam festival and *Owuogbo*/masquerade) ceremonies. As long as music is part of those ceremonies, the whole old ceremonies are passed down from one generation to another. Consequently, music becomes a vital instrument for the transmission and continuity of culture. As Opobo celebrate the *amaiwo* even though the people are not an agricultural community, the *Owuogbo* ceremonies assist in perpetuating the culture and tradition of a predominately

agrarian society. Without music these ceremonies, rituals and festivals will not be complete. And without music it would have been difficult to pass on the dances and all the attendant values of the dances.

Drumlore and Transmission of Values

In Opobo kingdom, drumlore is associated with the masquerade club (Owuogbo). A club noted for the enactment of masquerades. These masquerades are representations of things on land and in the sea that are of emotional and spiritual importance to the people. It is a semi-secret society whose values are closely guarded by a select group of initiates versed in the drum language and dance steps of the riverine. Owuogbo is an institution meant for acculturation of new slaves into Ibani citizens in language, habit and norms. Songs are important medium because of the messages embedded in them. One of the most important uses of music is to transfer social values or values of morals. Blacking (1971:8) states that:

Music making is simply an organization of sound. It is a symbolic expression of social and cultural ideas which reflect the values and past and present ways of life of human beings who create it.

In effect drumlore depict the culture of the Niger Delta people who use them. Apart from the Opobo people, the Eastern Niger Delta people of Nembe (Brass) Kalabari, Okrika, and Bonny are known to document history in the drum language. Consequently, the drum music is not just for entertainment but also to recount the history of societies. It is no wonder that Agu (1996:226) argue that:

Nigerians are great makers of music; they make great use of music in all activities ranging from birth to death, religion to politics and from social to warfare.

This informs the creation and revision of many traditional music by various communities to serve various purposes as the need arise. Traditional music become medium through which society deals with not just history but also vices that plague the society. Jaja (1995:27) has shown that songs typify the life of a people and expresses all aspects of their existence through the medium of sound. It provide ways of reconstructing inter-group relations between peoples as well as movements of cultures through time, especially in pre-colonial period.

Opobo Drumlore and Historical Interpretation

Drumlore is a unique music performed by a semi-secret society after colonialism was established in 1900. In pre-colonial times it was used in communicating within the kingdom and with neighbouring communities that understand the drum language. In pre-colonial Opobo kingdom, the Owuogbo society was the militia, the police of the kingdom. It has powers to arrest and prosecute offenders. It was also an important institution for acculturation when new entrants from the Igbo hinterland came into the city state. However, after colonial rule was established, it became illegal for the Owuogbo to continue to perform the function of policing the kingdom or exercise the power of arrest. A responsibility clearly in the purview of the Nigeria police. This limited the function of the Owuogbo to matters that are of traditional interest and concern. It was under this circumstances that the socio-cultural aspect of Owuogbo came into the fore. Members of Owuogbo through initiation have mastery of the drum language and the art of dancing/masquerade performance. The Ibani (Opobo) believe in two worlds – the land and water which influence their every activities. It also believe in two types of spirits – those in water which are considered gentler and more benevolent of the two. Bush spirits are much more notorious, dangerous and irritable. Among the Ibani (Opobo and Bonny), it is believed that spirit characters encountered in the forest path

could prove much more fatal. This spirit world view inform the various recognition given to these spirits and rituals associated with them (Anderson, 1998:260). Owuogbo as an institution has the responsibility to ritually enact plays in honour of these spirit being, for the protection and welfare of the collective appeal from the kingdom to bush spirits for help in hunting, war and wrestling. A similar appeal is to made spirits for prosperity, children and safety as Ibani people.

Understanding Ibani (Opobo) drumlore, the masquerade they depict and how these masquerades came to acquire the historical context in which they are known is more problematic, though it fits the general pattern of beliefs that masquerades in the Niger Delta are known in historical context. Besides, masquerades have different mein, showing the way people conceive water spirits – beautiful, fair, long haired with the ability to bestow riches (Talbot, 1926:11) on those they love. Masquerades performed by the Owuogbo have names on the drum language and are beautifully adorned with damask, George wrapper, head ties, coral, cowries and mirrows (Drewal, 1988b:160). The Ibibio conceive of water spirits as wearing beautiful jewels and gold medallions which they also dress their masquerades with (Salmons, 1977:8). In Opobo kingdom, it is in the masks that the water spirits manifest. Although most masks have lost their potency due to neglect and do not actually manifest spirits in the carvings, yet its historical name in the drum language persist.

It is the historical content of these drumlore that interest the historian of the Niger Delta. This is explored below. Owuogbo as a Source of Amusement and Instruction

The Owuogbo is not just a creative art it is also a visual art and a functional art. Indeed it is didactic. Didactic here may mean “conveying information” or “giving moral instruction” or “something which comprehends both”. Dramatic art has a social function peculiar to it which is making an immediate, collective impression on a large number of people gathered together. Eliots famous words of what poetry gives can really be applied to the Owuogbo in Opobo kingdom. According to him;

Poetry (Owuogbo) is to give pleasure,... and... there is always the communication of some “new” experience, or some fresh understanding of the familiar, or the expression of something we have experienced but have no words for, which enlarges or refines our sensibility (Eliot, 1957:17).

It will be misleading to think of Owuogbo as just an institution or an art. What is interesting and significant is not, most often something called “art” but rather what people do, the way they act within an artistic context, the social conventions connected within artistic activity which they observed and manipulate, the different uses to which they put artistic formulations – Owuogbo, is in fact, conceived as a social action by people rather than as a static entity.

The Owuogbo’s performance is like a dance drama. A dance drama that has all in one – spiritual, historical, moral instruction, pleasure and entertainment. Owuogbo therefore was conceived as a social action. A dramatic entertainment that not only bring the citizens of Opobo together but also as an instrument of social transformation through moral instruction people gain from its display. Consequently, Owuogbo like any other institution is of service to the Opobo society and therefore of service to mind kind. The dramatic art of Owuogbo is of great purpose to the Opobo kingdom. In the words of Plekhanov (1957:5) quoting Chernyshevsky (1906:33).

“The idea of “art” for art’s sake’ is as strange in our times as “wealth for wealth’s sake”, ‘science for science’s sake’ and so forth.

Opobo Kingdom

			Alabo or Wari (House)	Ibani	English Interpretation	Historical Interpretation
1	Opobo	King Jaja	Oboro mangi mangi Osibila Obiri mangi mangi Osibila Osibila, Osibila, buru buru bo.		Goat may run anyhow but it cant traverse the Opobo Kingdom. Dog would run round the Kingdom but it cant completely circle Opobo.	A reference to the vastness of the Opobo Kingdom
2	King Jaja	Juo juo	Amabara bo. Egwenga Ere barabo Egwenga, Egwenga buru buru bo.		Anyhow you move you must end at the Jaja's compound. King Jaja's compounds surround Opobo. The Jaja family is virtually everywhere.	Probably as check on other compounds, that may be recalcitrant at the time.
3	Cookey		Obo Kalama, kala kala bori doi, pre so pre kala kala.		When drum sound there is something to eat. Even while eating they are ready for war.	
4	Peterside		Amabarabo furo Ere bara bo furo furo furo, buru buru bo.		The womb that gives birth. Weather from the left or right we are well bred.	A reference to the privileged birth of Alabo Peterside.
5	Ogolo		Amabarabo Egwenga furo Ere barabo Egwenga furo.		Those that support when giving birth – the support new creation – new ideas.	
			Amabara bo Aki Abali, Ere bara bo Aki abali Aki abali buru buru bo		King Jaja's informant. He hold the key to the armory.	
6	Jungo Manilla		Amabarabo Amikiri Ere barabo Amakiri Amakiri buru buru bo		The custodian of the town gods. They are in charge of rituals and the Owuogbo.	
7	Fubara		Otubo Ebezi wolo wolo Ebezi fifi na		The sound of the sea you hear. We own/control the sea (that explains why they don't eat shark).	
8	Toby		Koko, kobo Egwenga bibi so, Kobo kobo Egwenga bibi so buru buru bo.		They produce some material for the king. They produce materials for the kings use.	
9	Thomas Jaja		Amabara bo Elesia pembe Ere barabo Elesia pembe		Small, beautiful and proud. The beautiful bird.	
10	Minimah		Amabarabo bara bara na ma ku, Ere bara bo barabara na maku, buru buru bo.		When you attack/invade the forest we are lions waiting to see what you can do.	
11	Opukalama		Opu ama teri kiri Kalama presia bere Egwenga bara fori/buru buru bo.		The strong town that King Jaja stores his war implements. A town difficult to defeat.	
12	Ikuru Town		Amabara bo Abara ma boro./Ere barabo abara ma boro/amara ma boro buru buru bo.		No matter how you traverse to Ikuru town your boat must reach the sand. It's a town surrounded by sandy beach.	
13	Kala Sunju		Amabara bo obujie ge,/Ere bara bo obujie ge/obujie ge buru buru bo.		Their eyes are always open, no matter what time you go. They are always alert to warn others.	
14	Dappa		Amabara bo obie giri/Ere bara bo obie giri./obie giri, obie ya woo.		They are peace makers. They calm every situations.	
15	Brown		Amabarabo Asinta kala tubo. Ere bara bo Asinta Kala turbo. Asainta kala tubo buru buru bo.		The are funny/jesters and beautiful.	
16	Anie Pepple		Amabarabo/Karaga bara bara na maku,/Ere bara bo ikanga bara bara na maku, /Ikanga bara na maku buru buro bo.		Makers of Ikaranga (they play the Ibotolo masquerade)	
17	John Africa		Amabarabo upoli upoli pe. Ere bara bo upoli upoli pe, /upoli upoli pe buru buru bo.		The knowledge of crayfish is ours.	
18	Epellema		Amabara bo okuru pisi, pisi obi paa, Ere bara bo okuru pisi pisi ebi paa okuru pisi pisi ebi paa, buru buru bo.		No matter how wet or soaked a cloth, it is never spoils.	
19	Oko Jaja		Ama bara bo kpoi,		King Jaja's close confident. To get to King Jaja, you ought	

		Ere bara bo kpoi	to be close or see his inseparable loyal confident.
20	Strong Face	Oponi furu nkata furo Afuro afuro ogbo	If the oponi (fish rack) is empty then the fish trap is lost.

Other Nations

1	Nembe	Kala Ikulama Nembe Kala Ikulama Nembe Nembe doko doku bie kpo,/Ngala dubo, dubo aru kara.	No matter how large the mangrove tree, it cannot be used to make boat.
2	Andoni	Amabarabo ofiokpo Erebara bo ofiokpo Ofiokpo buru buru bo Amabara bo obi longo Ere bara bo obi longo	The custodian of ofiokpo (masquerade). Great divers of the sea.
3	Ogoni	Amabara bo oporopo Juju Erabara bo oporopo Juju Oporopo juju buru buru bo.	The sacrificial animal of King Jaja – the pig -
4	Akwa Ibom	Amabara bo, Agidi bara bo mama mbe Ere bara bo Agidi bara bo mama mbe Agidi bara bo, buru buru bo.	They were slaves of the Opobo Kingdom.
5	Ohambele (Ndoki)	Ama bara bo mbele Ere bara bo mbele Mbele ju mbele buru	No matter how filled a calabash, they can lift. No matter the situation they are up to the challenge.
		Amabara bo okpotu Erebara bo okpotu Okpotu ama ekwe buru buru bo.	In a contest, any challenge is confronted with darkness.
6	Obohia – Ndoki	Ama bara bo obohia okwere azu Ere bara bo obohia okwere azu Odi ne titi mba, mba nati iju Oburu bia nara aka buru buru bo.	A town in the centre of a fearful town. Any killer should be congratulated.
7	Kalabari	Ama bara bo kali kulu kulu kali ka Ere bara bo, kali Kulu kulu kali ka Omo fie, fie sere ya Sere fie fie, buru buru bo.	A small town that is large. Both small and great river flow in. A reference to their greatness in terms of resources and personalities.

Bonny Kingdom

			New Drum Name	Old Drum Name	Old Drum Name
1	HART	CAPTAIN HART	Ngu fe iru fe 2 Opu ijikila toru koro Igwenga bipi su Gboro gboro	Oyamini oyakarama x2 Obiri mangi mangi sibi lagha Obori mangi mangi sibi lagha Oporopo bupa nsi Igwenga bipi su Gboro aboro	
	HART	EZEKIEL-HART			
2	IBIAMA	IBIAAMA	Teme kobo igwenga temegha 2x Apila ama kobo tonogha; Bie guru bie bere; Gboro gboro.		

3	JACKMAY	JACKMAY	Ibani pa abo tuo 2x Ijikila toru kor, Ogbolo fubara Ibiere tuo. Gboro gboro		
4	JUMBO	DAN-JUMBO (JENE)	Obie guru guru bie bere; Obie guru guru bie bere, /dabo finisa bipi kpo Gboro gboro.		
5	JUMBO	JUMBO	Omoni fe okuma bere fe; /Awo yi okume bere yi; Ene basaa obie guru guru bie bere Ere bara bo igwenga kobo kobo amina	bara bara; Ama bara bo igwenga kobo kobo amina bara bara; Toru doughubo konibo; Gboro Gboro.	
6	LONGJOHN	LONGJOHN	Obibo sighi okuma biribo tuwo nyingi 2x Obu kubo nama obu nama Mangi mangi otume seghi, Obie guru, obie bere, Gboro gboro.		
7	PEPPLE	FUBARA MANILLA PEPPLE	Ere bara bo igwenga, Ama bara bo igwenga Oki ebulu, kabo tomagha Gboro gboro.	Apila ama kobo tonogha 2x Okebule kobo tonogha, Obie guru guru bie bere Ofiri mingi bie barasua ibigha Gboro gboro.	
8		BONNY	Okolo ama ogbonji bara turo awo; Ama duba duba onu shugha; Obori mangi mangi sibi lagha; Obiri mangi mangi sibi lagha; Ama duba duba Pokusi; Buo gbisiri agba; Kpoli kukubie bere bere; Tkuba nvana ama/bele sema.	Okoloma Opu Apu Bara Kuro Awo Amaduba Duba Onu Shuagha; Obiri Mangi Mangi Sibilagha; Obori Managi Mangi Sibilagha; Ama Nyanagha Bele Sema; Ngu Bile Bile Mbapa Bileagha; Mbapa Bileagha Kura Si.	Ibani Paghabo Taria; Ibani Paghabo Taria; Okoloma Tuwo, Nji Bara Kuro
9	THE HOUSES	ALAPUTA	ALAPUO TARIABO OFORI	Bekini igoni 2x Bara bara pa amina buko; Fekiri kpeki, ngere kpokpo bila akpokpo Gboro gboro	
10	ALLISON	ADDA-ALLISON	Olom senibo alabo 2x Perebo tuo na nwangi alabo Tamonu ibi firi nwangi alabo Gboro gboro		
11	ALLISON	JAMAICA-ALLISON	Igwenga bara oforiabo sibo sibo Bara pabo senibo tuwo Gboro gboro		
12	ALLISON	NWAOJU ALLISON	Okuru kara kunju karagha 2x Pulo Putri gberebuo i pa kalatuwo si A tamuno sigha okuma i ipem Ere bara boro tamuno bere Ama bara boro tamuno bere Tamuno bere Gboro gboro.	Kalabo senibo tuwo Okiemini abalama Pere figba bipisu Inebo inebo toru kiki Toru bere na nwangim. Gboro gboro	

13	ATTONI	ATTONI	Oyamini oyakara 2x Opu ijikila toru koro okuma Tamuno Ebiribo kelebo Gboro gboro.		
14	BANIGO	BANIGO	Ere bara bo, igwenga gboro, Ama bara bo; Igwenga gboro gboro; Ogbolo fubara ibiere, dabo finituwo bipi kpo Gboro gboro		
15	BENSTOWE	BENSTOWE	Igwenga bipi 2x Ogbolo fubara ibiere, dabo finituwo bipi kpo Kobo kobo ko telema. Gboro gboro		
16	BERESIRI	DICK-BERESIRI	Beresiri bere mubo 2x; Igwenga kini selegha; wari kini selem gboro gboro.		
17	BRISTOL	BRISTOL	Pele pele ijikila bugha 2x Ijikila fa okuma bere ton; Igwenga bara bara fini gbi Gboro gboro.		

New Drum Name**Old Drum Name**

1	BROWN	BROWN	Ogbolo fubara ibiere buru akpakpa Gboro gboro (Omoni)	Alabo fiari akparano Siminibo fiari akparangha Tamunobere Gboro gboro (Abubo)	
2	GREEN	DUBLIN GREEN	Opu okrika mingi aso, Opu ogoloma mingi aso, ere bara bo piri, ama bara bo piri, piri gbarigha gbarigha, piri nimibo nimibo mina nimi minamie. Upoli fulobie fafagha.	Nkata kiri kiri 2x Nme bara nye olobo, Gberenye fa, gberenye aki; Upolifulo sobo mgbeh si sigha. Gboro gboro.	
3	GREEN	JECKY-GREEN			
4	HALLIDAY	CHARLES HALLIDAY	Opu aru kuku mgba, Okoloma opu siri kiebo kie karagha; Abaji kana alabo Gboro gboro. OLD	Kulo dabo bere da; Omoni febo bere feh; awo yibo bere yi /abia gidi Gboro gboro bo, okoloma opu siri, /kiebo kiekaragha; apilama kuro kaka; Ere bara bo kuro kaka /ama bara bo kuro kaka obie grugru Gboro gboro.	
5	HALLIDAY	JIM HALLIDAY	Kulo dabo bere da, Omoni febo bere fe, Awo yi bo/b ere yi, Ere bara bo kuro kaka, Ama bara bo kuro kaka, Igwenga kubo kubo Gboro gboro.		
6	HART	ABBAY-HART	Kala-abaji wulu wulu 2x Abaji fienye; Je ama nagha.	Kala abaji wulu wulu 2x nungu fisa na	

All human activities must serve mankind if they are not to remain useless and idle occupations. Wealth exists in order that man may benefit by it, science exists in order to be man's guide; art, too must serve some useful purpose and not fruitless pleasure". In Chernyshevsky's opinion, the value of the arts, and especially, of "the most serious of them"... is determined by the sum of knowledge they disseminate in society...

Plekhanou goes on to say that, "in the opinion of Chernyshevsky and his disciple, Dahrolynbov, the function of Art was indeed, to reproduce life and to pass judgment on its phenomena (Plekhanov, 1957:6) Plekhanov explains further that this opinion is closely related to that of Belinsky who wrote:

The highest and most sacred interest of society is its own welfare, equally extended to each of its members. The road to this welfare is consciousness, and art can promote consciousness no less than science. Here science and art are equally indispensable, and neither science can replace art nor art replace science. But art can develop man's knowledge only by passing judgment on the phenomena of life (Alaba, 2002:73).

The argument that art, like any other activity, is purposeful cannot be valid – moreso as it does not deny the aesthetic values of art. And Belinsky's observation that "art can promote consciousness no less than science" is reassuring to all those who are involved in the production and consumption of Art (Alaba, 2002:73).

Character Sketches of Owuogbo Masks

Earlier on, I noted that amusement and educational instruction is an integral part of Owuogbo dramatic art. In a sense, Ibani masquerade (Bonny and Opobo Owuogbo artist) act as the conscience of traditional society in the practice of their art. Appropriate marks representing environmental spirit being recognized as worthy of note by the larger Opobo community appear handy for these initiates to do the specific job of amusement and education. Two examples will help illustrate our argument. The mask Mbe (tortoise) masquerade is performed during the annual performance of the Owuogbo. In folktales the character of tortoise in every culture is associated with tricks, crafty and surreptitious behaviour.

Its entry into the arena is spectacular in the sense that it attracts attention negatively by pouring sand and scattering an already formed human arena. An action that is not only amusing but annoying. Once in the arena, it challenges anyone to a game of "Osa". Osa is a childhood game played in the evening on sand. It is a ring or circle made from broom. The circle is hid in a ridge of sand. To win one must pick out this hidden ring by inserting a finger or stick inside the circle to fish out or bring out the ring from the ridge of sand. The looser gets a hard knock on the head. The tortoise has never been bitten in its own game. The dexterity of the masquerade is not only amusing, it is instructive. Moral: Never be all of when dealing with the tortoise. The tortoise is sly/shrewd with a "bag of tricks".

The other masked play that attracts our attention is Onyeibi. The hynia masquerade, rarely do masked plays portray disease or illment. Owuogbo uses parody to exhibit humour in other to underline the fact that whatever one can think of has its own significance and some relationship with other things in the universe.

It portrays the imperfection in society. The masquerade carries a "ball-like" costume in front of his pelvic area and a broom in his hand with which he chased away flies that perch on its big hynia. Women run out of embarrassment when the masquerade comes near them. Although this satisfies the amusement aim, it also reiterates the fact that diseases are as old as society. They constitute necessity which cannot be avoided.

Humour, is one of the delight in watching display of Owuogbo. Owuogbo aims at amusing spectators as well as instruct on how best to live in society. Owuogbo creates comic situations and so suggests that spectators should normally laugh. The fact that laughter is a universal response to humour cannot be over-emphasized (Gossen, 1971:157). The messages of Owuogbo presented in their masked displays are realistic enough for us to maintain that cheerfulness and laughter are part of the philosophy of life of the Opobo. It is their believe that he who can take all things cheerfully with laughter has happiness.

Owuogbo Masks and History

Masks displayed by the Owuogbo relate to the environment, especially water spirits. These carved figures were brought by the group led by King Jaja to their new settlement Opobo. Consequently, the actual date these mask heads were made is lost in history, some were said to have been picked by the sea shores while others are so lost in history that it is not only difficult to reproduce them but their dance steps and drum language are lost. The divergent images of spirit head presented involve a complex costumes, ideals and experiences. Masquerade costumes present antiquity, vestiges of the remote past and the present. Owuogbo hall become a unique shrine that retain elements which have all but disappeared from the context of everyday life. Though they tend to be even more tied to tradition than their human counterparts. Masquerades can also be progressive, keeping up-to-date with fashion trends. This contradictory way a masquerade is dressed mixes together bits and pieces of the Niger Delta past, present and even future. In effect, they serve as cultural documents which reflect the dominant themes of Opobo history and a desire for progress.

Conclusion

There is a limit to what one can say in a paper although there is so much one can say here from the foregoing discussion of a particular Opobo experience. We have tried to show that culture history is indeed not only "sweet and useful". It is also, in a sense a way of life. One potentiality which this latter aspect of Opobo (Owuogbo) experience has is that the traditional leaders (i.e. the ruling elites) may make a profitable use of this knowledge of the innate potential in the institution of Owuogbo. This is in addition to its value as a repository of history and in helping to maintain stability by diverting the attention of the poor citizens from the immediate problems of food, clothing and shelter to the appreciation of leisure, entertainment and spirituality of the so-called "timeless truths" expressed in the dramatic art of Owuogbo.

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