

POSTULATIONS AND THEORIES OF NIGERIAN MAKEUP DESIGNS

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Introduction

Makeup design particularly up till 2005, has not enjoyed the attention of writers in Nigeria, as is the case with scenography and lighting design. Costume, which is still relatively unattended to in terms of literary appreciation and research, is richer in available literature than its twin sister, makeup. Our search for literature on makeup in the Nigerian theatre reveals that makeup has often been treated as a component of costume. Where found expedient in this study, references have been made to related costume and mask design.

Scholarly Opinions

Shuaib's "Costume and Makeup in contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Problems and Prospects," looks at the academic perspective of makeup and costume and attempts a documentation of historical and academic developments of makeup and costume practice in Nigeria. Thus Shuaib traces the history of theatre practice in Nigeria from the traditional perspective to the contemporary, giving us an insight to historical background that has evolved to the present makeup practices on stage and screen. According to her;

... Apart from the mentioned raw indigenous theatre modes (ritual, folktales, festivals, masquerades), there are some organized indigenous entertainment forms, that are refined out of the aforementioned indigenous theatre forms in both

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traditional and contemporary Nigerian societies. Among these are the Yoruba Alarinjo theatres, Annang drama of Ibibio,, Bornu Puppet shows as well as the Hausa comical art of Yakamanci and the Tiv Kwagh-hir among others. (Shuaib, 59)

It is from these theatrical roots; traditional festival theatres and later the traditional professional theatres that the contemporary theatre emerged in the hands of Chief Hubert Ogunde. As Ododo reiterates:

Hubert Ogunde's appearance on the Nigerian theatre scene opened up a new vista for theatre practice in Nigeria because of the formal dimension he brought into theatre presentation, using western models to harness indigenous materials while being mindful of his audience and environment. (93)

Another scholar Utoh-Ezeajugh in a paper titled "Sustaining the Development of Theatre Practice through the Resuscitation of Traditional Design Techniques: Uli Makeup Design among the Igbo" explores the uses and development of the Uli makeup design Art of the Igbos.

According to Utoh-Ezeajugh (158):

This design technique is called Uli or Uri, depending on the dialect of the particular Igbo town. However the name Uli is more widely known and accepted and has been adopted for this study.

She identifies four types of Uli namely, Uli Oba or Uli Nkpo or Uli Obodobo (with the botanical name; Rothmania Whitfieldi), Uli Nkirisi or Uli Mkpuru-Shioke (with the botanical name; Cremaspora Triflora), Uli Okorobiam or Uli Mmiri (with the botanical name; Rothmania Hispida), and Uli Ede Eji or Uli Ataesi (with botanical

name *Gardenia Imperialis*). Utoh-Ezeajugh attempts to trace the origins of Uli design. In her view

Though the exact historical origin of Uli makeup cannot be determined, one could rightly assert that Uli design tradition is as old as Igbo traditional society. (159)

She goes on to reveal the techniques of this Uli design Art, presenting it as a well developed professional art.

In his "Facekuerade' ¹ Theatre...", Ododo undertakes the study of unmasked dramaturgies in the context of the African understanding application and value system of the traditional African festival theatre style, with the Ebira-Ekuechi Festival as a case study. According to Ododo (254), "The base of 'facekuerade' theory is formidably rooted in the duality and double essence of Ebira masking practice". In his study of the "Eku 'rahu's performance in the absence of a major icon of the mask"... Ododo (294) does not only capture the spiritual and dramatic essence of 'Facekuerade' theatre in Ebira Ekuechi, but also reveals the techniques and styles of presentation. He shows that in the absence of mask, there is the presence of makeup.

Utoh-Ezeajugh's research is aimed at resuscitating Uli traditional design techniques for use on contemporary stage and screen. It is this tilt to her research that mostly elicits our interest. According to her;

... Uli design effects using eye pencil, which can never be as dark as Uli, or even the darker Kajal eyeliner, which still does not give that distinct "Uli look". But however one tries, no liquid can achieve the unique appearance of Uli. (166)

Indeed this observation is quite correct, but the makeup designers of Nigerian screen and stage are not un-aware of the

existence, use and technique of Uli design, but do not use it for reason of a fundamental problem, which Utoh-Ezeajugh presents as an asset. She proposes:

The Nigerian home video industry would benefit immensely from Uli makeup because Uli remains on the skin for five days before it begins to gradually fade off. (167)

Our experience with Uri in the Mbom festival of the Item² people of Abia State shows that, it actually takes upwards of four weeks for most Uri makeup to completely fade from the body. Here-in stands the problem, for the following reasons;

1. Nigerian movies are made within minimum of 3 days and maximum of six weeks, with an average of 12 days for epic movies. Uri lasts too long on the body.
2. Most Nigerian Artistes are on two or more sets rolling simultaneously and cannot afford to carry a long staying makeup from one set to the other.
3. Even when Artistes do one job at a time, the jobs are often back to back and leave no time for Uri to fade out.
4. Modern contemporary makeup regulations for screen and stage insist that a makeup designer is yet to finish his/her work until he/she has cleaned off all applications used.
5. The individual artiste hates to wear his character off stage or off set and insists on its removal after each performance or shooting. Use of Uri may attract unpleasant reactions from artistes and maybe even legal actions against the makeup designer.

The above five points, amongst many others, negates the promotion of Uri use on stage and screen, but should turn our focus to getting our local industry to refine and bottle Uri for portability, as well as either reducing the long staying factor of Uri

or developing a safe removal for Uri makeup. Indeed Utoh-Ezeajugh has brought into focus a range of traditional raw materials for the industrial developments of makeup materials from indigenous sources. Some of these raw materials include; Camwood dye (Ufie), yellow Ochre (Edo) , white clay (Nzu), Kajal, kaolin and Uri. We shall in the course of this study look at the potentials of some of these raw materials for investment and indigenisation possibilities for the makeup design industry.

To revisit the research by Shuaib, we take a look at her identification of some problems in makeup and costume practice in contemporary Nigerian theatre and pathways for the development of makeup and costume industry in the Nigerian theatre. We shall be calling on the wealth of findings and expositions later in this study with a view to verifying her findings and creating further in-roads to understanding and proposing the path for professional, academic and industrial development of the makeup industry.

Contributions of the Educational Theatre to Makeup Design Development in Nigeria.

Ododo (93) observes that:

One inherent problem in the Nigerian theatre is inadequate documentation. It is true that some significant efforts have been made at documenting aspects of Nigerian theatre, but Nigerian stage designers have not been so lucky. They do so much for theatre performances but get little attention.

The documentation of design practice is a task best executed by design practitioners and this is expected to originate from the institutions of higher learning where Theatre Arts is studied. It is heart warming to find the many contributions of design lecturers especially since 1998 when they appear to have flourished. Scholars

such as Ododo (1998, 2000 and 2001), Akinwale (2000), Layiwola (2005), Oni (2005) and others have dominated the scene since this explosion. Nigerian academics have led the way for the growth of literary theatre in Nigeria since 1960, with the establishment of the then University College Ibadan. Theatre then existed under the English studies department for a decade. This was soon followed by Dramatic Arts Department of Ife, Drama unit of the Department of English studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Performing Arts Department at the University of Ilorin, the Universities of Jos and Port Harcourt's Theatre and Communication Arts and the Creative Arts Department as well as many others between the 70s and the 80s. It was these universities that introduced such prominent designers as Demas Nwoko, Esoshe Sunner, Daniella Lyndersey, Amatu Braide, Gloria Hart and others. As Shuaib (74) submits:

In fact most of the plays produced by Soyinka; *Trials of Brother Jero* (1960), *Lion and the Jewel* (1963), *Kongi's Harvest* (1965), at the Arts Theatre, Ibadan benefited tremendously from the expertise of these costume and makeup production staff. As a matter of fact, Nwoko, Lyndersey and Folarin among others are early costume and makeup designers in the 60s, 70s, and 80s who made their marks in these areas of theatre specialization at the Arts Theatre Ibadan.

In view of all these, one is at a loss to fantom why the standards they achieved seems to be dropping instead of increasing. In his observation, Okoye (1) opines that:

Generally education itself has been going in that downward direction and most of the things we used to have are no longer available. ...Even in the class what we teach is the definition of design and the general elements of design.

The cause of this abnormally appears to be the university curriculum, which gave low emphasis to practical study in makeup and theatre design and in fact until the early 1990's did not encourage specialization in these areas beyond the diploma level. To buttress this point, Adeyemi (4) recalls:

When I was in school, 1974 to about 1979 with 2 years of diploma training and 3 years of undergraduate studies, things were really different. We had specialist teachers like Daniella Lyndersay... the curriculum was designed to have much practicals at all levels. Though we had to go through theory and history, the emphasis was on practicals....

The early holders of Masters Degrees in Theatre Arts with emphasis on scenography and lighting only began to emerge in the 1980s. Makeup and costume still remained sparsely emphasised only at the Bachelor of Arts degree level till the late 1990's when Masters Degree scholars began to emerge in the area.

It is on the premise of the above that universities used the most knowledgeable persons available on the teaching staff to teach makeup and costume design in which they often are theoretically sound, but practically deficient. Resultantly emphasis in these courses shifted fully into theoretical studies as the few practical aspects provided for, in the already inadequate curriculum became forgotten and the few equipment available became non-functional. As Nwadike (193) rightly observes.

..., the poor state of academic theatre in Nigeria is characterized by dilapidated structures, lack of equipment, inadequate personnel, and deficiencies in the curriculum content which are militating against qualitative training for professional designers and technologists.

While Adeyemi (4) notes that:

The same lecturer is teaching scenography and lighting, same lecturer is teaching media and costume design.... You can not expect the lecturer to input maximum result in the teaching, unlike what we had in university of Ibadan. We had the materials and we had at least two lecturers on just costume design.

Further observation reveals that some of the universities do have very comprehensive curriculum, therefore the inadequacy may be traceable to the lecturer who is interpreting the curriculum and projecting the course layout. The absence of inadequate equipment further complicates matters. Nwadike (197) observes further that:

...there are observable gaps among the intended curriculum (as approved by Senate), the implemented curriculum (as delivered by lecturer based on their individual capabilities and available resources) and the achieved curriculum (what students actually learnt from the course).

Shuaib (122) summarily reiterates:

...the role of educational curriculum in building and sustaining a career in any field of human endeavour cannot be over-emphasized, but when the curriculum that is institutionalized for educational training programme is not properly conceived, designed, implemented and reviewed, substandard output, is to be expected.

The fundamental projection in the light of these identified problems shall be to find solutions to improving the situation of theatrical makeup design education in the institutions of higher learning.

Makeup Practices in Traditional Nigerian Theatre

The first recorded performance in Africa was in 2,600 BC. Egypt, (twenty thousand years older than the European Greek theatre) known as the “Abidos Passion plays” as found in the tomb of Pharaoh Amenhotep II which was written for him by his chief priest Ikhneferti. This is the story of the Egyptian creation myth involving the gods of Egypt; Osiris, Horus, Anubis and others and tells of the origins of Evil on earth. Elaborate makeup was used as recorded. Similarly in Nigeria, theatre originated from rituals. From the traditional Nigerian theatre and ritual festivals, evolved several organized entertainment forms. Among these are the Bornu puppet show, Hausa Yankamanci comedy, Tiv kwagh-hir, Annang drama of Ibibio, Alarinjo of the Yoruba ethnic group and several others. The most celebrated theatre cultures however are; the yankamanchi, the kwagh-hir and the Alarinjo theatres. The first recorded is the Alarinjo. In reference to the Alarinjo composite masque dramaturge, Akinwale (119) observes that

Makeup was not necessary, since the costumes had a mask or net and hence faces were covered. However, the Alarinjo movement dwindled into oblivion with the incursion of Christianity...

It would appear however that Akinwale has conceived makeup as being limited to the face region only, but the Alarinjo did use body makeup. The first “ghost murmers” were painted in white chalk / clay and dust to give them ghostly appearances. Makeup and mask are present in all of the traditional Nigerian theatres, even the Epira - Ekuechi “face-kuerade”. We must understand that the mere use of powder on the face is an act of makeup, because this reduces the shine and oily nature of the face and so alters it in appearance. Most common to all Nigerian cultures is the use of white chalk / clay, chacoal and dust. Other materials that may be found in traditional Nigerian makeup are; uri (indigo),

cam wood dye, kaolin, yellow ochre to mention the popular types. They are all products or extracts of trees, animals or mineral deposits. We shall proceed with brief historical and cultural information to aid understanding of our three selected traditional theatres, Mbom, Gelede and Ofrima.

Mbom Festival

Amaokwe-Itèm² is one of the nine villages of “Itèm isi ogo Tolu.”^{2B} Itèm is found in the Bende Local Government area of present day Abia State. There is a yearly festival in Amaokwe-Itèm known as “Mbom”. Mbom is a seven day long festival of ritual and drama, embedded in the New Yam festival. Mbom originated from the first settlers who were said to have come from a place called Potopo, (between what is now known as Ibiakpan and Ohafia). These first settlers followed the rows of palm trees till they arrived at the outskirts of Akanu where they saw a puzzling sight. At the end of a row of palm trees, in the middle of the road was a palm tree (now extant) with five types of palm nuts that never grow together namely; Ekwu, Abuba, Okpurukpu, Osukwu and Ojukwu.³ As was typical of the ancestral fathers who deify anything they cannot explain, these settlers built a shrine around the tree and called it ‘Mbom’ (The god of the farm land) and worshipped it every year at the new yam harvest season, till the present day.

Gelede Festival

The Gelede masquerade festival is found in Ikpokia local government, a south region of Ogun State. The festival takes place in the first quarter of every three years. It is enacted to celebrate womanhood in the society. According to Enekwe (12):

...Gelede ceremony, which is designed to sublimate the dangerous power of Aje, women on whom Onile, the Earth mother, has bestowed mystic powers that can be used destructively, such as in

undermining the fertility of people and crops, or in withholding rainfall or inflicting disease on people. At an annual Gelede festival, the Aje are publicly honoured and entertained by masks in order to attract their goodwill....

We must therefore adduce that; Gelede is a festival for the appeasement of witches in the society and the honouring of women even though only men embody the masquerades.

Ofrima festival

This is a masquerade festival of the Okrika people of the Ijaw settlement. According to Alagoa and Derefaka (15): The traditions of the four Delta states of Nembe, Eleme Kalabari (new Calabar), Bonny and Okrika suggest that their founders came from homelands in the central Delta to settle in the Eastern Delta. It may be inferred from these traditions that the migrants came with institutions and ways of life similar to those of Ijaw groups of the central and western Delta. The Ofrima masquerade is one of the biggest masquerades in Kalabari land. It is exhibited in Okrika, Nembe, Brass and Tombia. The Ofrima masquerade is a masked representation of the white shark which is a menace to these people who depend on the water for their survival. It is also performed in some western Ijaw villages outside of Rivers state and Bayelsa, such as Edo and Delta states of Nigeria. This masquerade is performed during the burial ceremony of a chief of the particular lineage that holds the rights to the Ofrima dance. It is also performed every seven years, ten years or twenty years depending on the tradition from island to island and as set by such families as the spiff family of Tuo – Brass. Everybody in the community can watch Ofrima performed, but only the kindred associated with it can witness the ritual aspects of the performance or participate in the dance.

Makeup used in Mbom, Gelede and Ofrima festivals

The use of chalk in Ofrima by unmasked dancers and women symbolises peace. Two attendants, decoratively dabbed in white chalk and kaolin to dispel negative forces hold the restraining rope of the Ofrima masquerade alternately as they are attacked. Other materials found in the makeup of the performers include; Uri (indigo) used elaborately with cam-wood to make the women water fetching parade colourful in Mbom. The women in the Okrika community also use cam-wood and palm oil to make their bodies beautiful during the Ofrima festival, Iria (fattening room ceremony) and all other festivals performed in the community. The Uri used in the Niger Delta region is in two types known as “Gburumo” and “Idela”. While the Idela (*Cremaspora Triflora*) stays on the body for over a month the (inky) Gburumo (*Rothmania Hispida*) comes off the body in three days or less and is even affected by sweat. Kajal is used in the Gelede by men and women to line the eyes, this is believed to help see the Aje (witches) better, and camwood is also used. No factory made products and contemporary makeup materials are utilised. The Most outstanding use of makeup in all three festivals involves the use of white chalk. In the Mbom festival, white chalk (Nzu) and charcoal are used to make the war dancers (Ikperipe ogu) look fierce. Women, children and elders also adorn their necks with it as a symbol of peace. Native chalk is similarly used by women in the Gelede.

The major finding here is that; with the exception of native chalk, charcoal and dust, other makeup materials require makeup experts for their application. This means that professional makeup artistes are present in traditional Nigerian theatre. However, the makeup artistes here must not be seen in the context of the definition of a makeup artiste in contemporary theatre. They are limited in knowledge to the items to which they are exposed, and cannot practice, research or create makeup designs in a standard production requirement, stage or screen.

NOTES

- ¹ "Facekurade"; Masking without use of a mask. Use of makeup and characterisation to create a personality change. As postulated by Ododo, Enessi 2004.
- ² "Itèm"; an Igbo village in Abia State made up of nine clans; "Isi ogo tolu"; meaning nine village squares.
- ³ "Ekwu"; Regular palm fruit with no outstanding quality except a dark colour ; "Abuba"; very robust species of palm fruit which has fragile skin and produces a lot of oil ; "Okpurukpu"; This specie has the largest palm kernel with very little covering and is poor in oil production ; "Osukwu"; The palm that grows this fruit is a dwarf. The kernel is so brittle and the seed so small that they can be chewed or pounded together to produce a light sweet oil ; "Ojukwu"; The Ojukwu tree that bears this palm fruit is the giant amongst palms. The seeds are protected by the worst case of thorns, only the okpurukpu species has bigger seeds. It is considered medicinal, especially, the kernel.

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