

**THE MASK, MASKING AND CURTAILMENT OF DOMESTIC
TERRORISM IN IKA THROUGH AKAKUM PERFORMANCE
OF NTO USOH PEOPLE IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

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Abstract

In today`s Nigeria, unchecked spate of violence has gradually surfaced through slippages in human character and garner to domestic terrorism in many communities. Consequences reflect in development plans schemed for these communities. Ika community has experienced this setback significantly among others in terms of development. The dimensions the institutions responsible for countering this enigma take seem to aggravate more terrifying scenarios which end in injuries, tears and even loss of lives. This paper examines how the costumes of *Akakum* performance tone down domestic terrorism in Ika community. It uses qualitative methodology and interview as its methodology and bases the framework on functionalism. Findings show that chaos are developing in communities as sub-cultures like traditional performances which were viable tools for curtailing antisocial manners have been relegated to the background because of the constant absorption of foreign cultures that do not fit into the context of Nigeria`s perception of social manners. Traditional performances maintain in-built principles that prevent members from transgressing. The body accessories of *Akakum* are believed to embody supra-mundane powers which deter initiates from indulging in domestic terrorism that pervaded Ika community for many years. The paper concludes that traditional performances should be revitalized, secularized and given a global appeal. If traditional performances are secularized, they may attract tourists` interest; become a foreign income earner and also serve as tools of social control and development in the community.

Keywords: Mask, Domestic Terrorism, *Akakum* and Performance.

Introduction

One of the causes of underdevelopment in a community is chaos especially when it aggravates from disunity that a tenable way to curtail seems elusive. The unity of a people in a community can be maintained through many ways. One of such ways is in the revival of communal enactment that has both spiritual and material command in the philosophy of the people. Among the villages with a distinguished communal enactment, Nto Usoh in Ika of Akwa Ibom State is remarkable. The outstanding remark is not based on political relevance or number in population; it is based on the ability to sustain the purity of their unity through

traditional theatre even in the face of turbulence and flashpoints that pervaded Ika community for years.

There are many traditional performances in Nto Usuh such as *Eka-Akpukpa*, *Ekpe-Ikang*, *Udide*, *Nsikute*, and *Nkoro*, but the one that has a very deep and convincing history is the *Akakum* performance. *Akakum* performance embodies what Umukoro (2015, p. 46) describes as cultural signpost... denoting invisible animating or energizing force..." This force persuades the initiates of *Akakum* to abstain from contaminations such as adultery, deft, witchcraft, falsehood and other transgressions that beset domestic terrorism in the human society. *Akakum* society "has a set of ideas about what is good or bad, right or wrong and what is deemed to be good behavior and what is regarded as responsible behavior" (Ekanem, 1984, p. 11). One remarkable thing about this performance is the control over its membership for which in the gruesome massacre that pervaded Ika community for some years, indigenes of Nto Usuh who are *Akakum* initiates never get indicted in any aspect of domestic terrorism.

Domestic terrorism is an extreme act of violence meted out to set of folks in a community. Such act of violence include threat of extinction, genocide, sporadic gun firing, bullet-exchange broil in people's locality, knifing of parents before the children, gunning down of children before the parents, rapping of people's wives before their husbands, snatching of people's personal property at gun-point and many other threats with accompanying brutality and trembling in a community. Some of these acts once pervaded Ika Community. In all the turbulence of threats and deaths, Nto Usuh remained as an island with immutable flow of serenity in the midst of a turbulent sea infested with ferocious beasts. Situations reveal that initiates of *Akakum* do not indulge in anti-social practices mentioned above. Crimes like murder, deft, and rape are taboos to them built into the cult, and there is no atonement except abstinence. However, the most solemn in *Akakum* society is its costume which the mask is the centre of attraction.

The mask of *Akakum* has an inconclusive mystery. One faction believes it to embody the *Ndem* force. *Ndem* force is a mysterious element that can exert control over someone under its terrain. According to Asigbo (2013, p. 7), "this element is called *Ibobo* or aura in Igbo culture and it is what transforms masquerade from mere cloth combination to spirits". In many African traditional masks, it is this force that evokes the eerie spasm which covers spectators to awe. In *Akakum*, it is built into a special element the performer wields. However, in the nature of youth, tantrums are quite inevitable, to ascertain the fairness of the custodian deity of *Akakum* Nto Usuh, the head reacts very fast and calls for appeasement which a delay may result in a terrible disaster. Within the control of the performance injunctions and secrecy of *Akakum*, members observe self-control and orderliness even when many youths chose to kill or be killed. However, it is purported that *Akakum* is aligned to a potent deity who makes its membership and dramaturgy appear polluting to immersed Christians who may want to join. This has made the performance to be limited and not secularized of which tourist interest would have been drawn beyond its powers to dissuade evil activities alone in Nto Usuh.

Theoretical Framework

Ika community is peopled by families that maintain distinct but related annals of history. "In Ika, close family members live in compounds, *ilung*... related compounds make

up a family, *ekpuk*. A collection of villages makes up the village. Every village has age-groupings, *ulimakpo...*” (Ebewo, 2005, p. 10). The natural divide in Ika makes for proper dependence and support of the other. Within these units, other sub-cultures are created which further pulled Ika to a whole. In observing how units, divisions or fragments of a system can be a basic energy for the structure, this paper uses a social theory called Functionalism to discuss the interaction of culture-behind-the-culture and the political system of a people as found in *Akakum* and Nto Usuh Ika polity. According to Mullin (2010, p. 745) a “culture-behind-the-culture carries the real beliefs, values and norms that drive patterns of behaviour...” In the same vein, functionalism explains that communal administration found in marriages, beliefs, politics, cultural performances, farming, education and other activities of a society contribute distinctly to the overall workability of the system.

Functionalism emerged as a theory of society in nineteenth-century in Europe. Haralambos, Holborn and Heald (2008, pp. 7-8) explain that Emile Durkheim is a major proponent of functionalism. The theory was further broadened to absorb sociological context by Talcott Parsons, an American sociologist, in the twentieth century. Functionalism featured as one of the theoretical frontiers in the 1940s and 1950s in explaining how a unit of a system is *sine qua non* to the wholeness of the system. The theory defines the society as an amalgam of people and cultures who survive through the support of the other. Every sector of the society exists to support the other sectors to survive. For instance, the legs exist to support the waist; the waist supports the chest which carries the head; and without the ear the toes might not survive. A performance in a community is measured on the same scale to ascertain the workability of a sub-culture like *Akakum* in the curtailment of unwanted behaviours in the society. But, Igbo (2013, pp. 333-334) differs on the proponent of the theory and rather views that it dates back to August Comte (1788-1857) and Herbert Spencer; that it was developed by Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parson. Observing these two positions, the gap of sameness is not much except the inclusion of Comte and Spencer.

Functionalism encourages collective and mutual interchange of functions in the society. It is the study of social pressure and the contribution of each part of the society like “persons in their inter-actions with one another and with reference to the effects of this interplay upon the individual’s thoughts, feelings, emotions and habits” (Kimbali (1999) cited in Ugal, 2003, p. 1). This explains how a traditional performance of a village contributes in the purging of evil intentions and activities that engender lawlessness in a community. Functionalism, according to Igbo (2003, pp. 333-334),

holds a view of society as a social system that is made up of different parts which are interdependent and interrelated. These different parts of the society, namely, the family, school, church, government, economy etc perform various functions... toward maintenance, stability and survival of the social system... Functionalist theory views society as an organized, stable and well-integrated system held together by value consensus, that is common value and norms collectively shared...

Igbo’s position reflects that every part of the society exists to contribute to the overall good of the society. If one part of the society is relegated to the background, its function may

equally diminish. That seems to be the case with traditional performances in Nigerian societies which maintain internal culture of control of their members. In the view of Udo (1983, pp. 148-152), the essence of maintaining, regenerating and encouraging sub-cultures like traditional performances in the past was to entertain, inform, educate and control the pressure in the society.

***Akakum* Nto Usuh Performance**

Nto Usuh is the village in Ika of Akwa Ibom State that performs *Akakum*. Other villages have also emulated *Akakum* because of the splendour of its performances. Among those who emulate this performance, Nto Udo Enwan seems to be the most de-ritualized, in that, the performance is costumed with various colours and a performer may even pick a phone call of a girl-friend and say, “*Mben afum o!*” Meaning, I carry wind o! The word, *afum*, gives another name to *Akakam*.

Akakam is also called *Asakum* but following the nature of its performance, it is traditionally addressed as *afum* (wind). *Akakum* and *Asakum* are onomatopoeic, conveying two sounds: *aka* which suggests the breaking off of a tree branch while *kum* suggests a hit. Both *asa* and *aka* before *kum* are descriptive sound conveying the process and the result. *Akakum* and *Asakum* mean the same thing. The performance gains the nomenclature from its performances activities not by myth, deity, or spiritual label.

Image 1 *Akakum* Nto Usuh



Ritualized *Akakum* (Udofia.A/Akpan,M- Collection)

The origin of this performance in Nto Usuh is conflicting. In an interview with Essien (2010), *Akakum* was formed in 1472. It was introduced as an entertainment to mark the fullness of harvest time. During this period, Nto Usuh sons and daughters wherever they stay would come home and celebrate *Uchoro Ilok* (harvest celebration). The most significant of the season was in addressing all offences, granting offenders pardon, and making general reconciliation. The emergence of *Akakum* will mark a total sanctification of the land. *Akakum* used to be played once in seven years and it was highly ritualized. This version of *Akakum* is somewhat vague. The fact is that Nto Usuh did not exist as a political society called Nto Usuh

village in 1474 but the linkage of *Akakum* performance with communal purge of guilt and transgression is in tandem with other histories of this great performance.

Another version is rendered by Ekwa (2018) who holds that it is *nnem ilung* (communal deity). It is performed once in a year: from 28 through 30/31 December. Sometimes it may extend to the New Year. It is performed in worship of the *nnem ilung* for guidance over a peaceful planting and bountiful harvesting period in the land. It is only an indigene of Nto Usoh that carries *Akakum*; a stranger does not; and someone that is not from a royal family in the village cannot interweave the accoutrement of *Akakum*. People do not willfully tie the mask; any would-be performer will be confined in the shrine (the custodian's house) to confirm his sanctity before he carries the head. If the person has polluted himself, the mask will bend his neck of which he will propitiate for a release. *Akakum* initiates do not belong to a secret cult other than the secrecy of the *Akakum*. They do not partake in evil conspiracy defined in the cult to be a plan to cause destruction to others. They do not lay a woman under menstruation. They do not see each other's blood; that is, they do not engage in vicious fight that can draw blood. The head which is the mask is protected by the chief priest. Those who perform it are selected from a certain age grade and it is only those accepted by the deity that can "carry" (be able to move when the mask is put on them).

Akakum is performed in two ways: the first one is as a command by the deity which demands blood sacrifice and it comes up once in a year. The second one is ceremonial to entertain the audience which may surface in occasions like the death of an initiate, the funeral of a prominent personality or a command performance endorsed by both the village head and other elders. The reason being that any time it hits, the consequence is the same. These two ways have identifiable characteristic in the control of atmosphere, spectacles and songs.

When it is a command-ritual the costume will be red. It will wield *afuud* and *ajei* in both hands. The head has both a man and a woman's visage: one at either sides of the wooden pole. On a day like this, the male face will turn to the front. *Ajei* will be tied on the head. A special rattle will be tied on the hands and feet, and on the completion of the construct, the *Akakum* runs to *Iso-ikpa isong* (the village shrine) and thuds the head. Sometimes it prostrates completely. When it lifts the head, it hurries to *Akpo ikut*, a tree in the village heath that century of sacrifice at the base has made to appear sacrosanct with its eclipsing boughs constantly enveloped by a flock of vultures, and embrace for invocation. The chief priest will emerge with *akai-kai* (a native gin); swig a little to wash his mouth, and then guzzles a generous quantity and spews on the head before he begins incantation. He will invoke the spirits of dead people who were custodian and initiates of the deity to fortify the actor before he runs to the orchestra who shall have raised their composition to a crescendo tensing up the ambience to fraught with tension and fear. At this level, it is engulfed with the desire to shed blood. This desire is further reinforced by special songs. It will now begin to perform the drive to satisfy *nnem ilung*.

In the ceremonial *Akakum* performance, it will put on a white tunic. The face of the mask will be that of a woman's face. It may not tie *ajei* on the head. *Afuud* is optional but rattles and other paraphernalia are properly costumed. It bows to *Ikpa isong* but never embraces the *Akpo ikut* for powers. The songs are different and it never poise for blood. A hit on a day like this is equally propitiated. The consequences are same. On a day of peace like this, *Akakum* does not actually pursue people to hit to appease its deity. Such day is a day of fun. However, situations that may engender domestic terrorism in the community are not compromised for such fanfare. *Akakum* members are purged, sanctified and re-checked to

ascertain worthiness. Worthiness in this group is the ability to abide by the rules of the *Akakum*, which involves maintaining peace with oneself and other members of the society.

Domestic Terrorism

Terrorism has been explained by many scholars to reflect that it is an aggressiveness which seeks a particular aim. It undermines conventions destroys both the combatants and civilians alike without recourse to the circumstances of law. According to Jones (1988, p. 44), “terrorism does not have a precise definition but it is... the planning, preparation, initiation or waging of aggressive war... crimes against humanity including murder... and other inhuman acts committed against any civilian population”. However, Sigmund Freud reflected in Shainess (1977, pp. 113-116) implies that domestic terrorism devolves from the psyche. When the child is exposed to unnecessary beating, threats and violence from childhood, the child may begin to draw pleasure from violence which he would fuse with erotic feelings. In a society where discordance pervades through violent activities, the child would gradually build his world in violence and relish in sexuality. What he understands is assault, which to him is a fair way to relieve a pent-up energy suppressed for a long time. Such children, “bombing, armed robberies, murders, and arsons are some of the criminal acts that have been attributed to them” (Territo, Halsted, and Bromley, 1989, p. 197). And according to Riordan (2008, p. 165), “domestic terrorism today is associated, not with the state’s action in its own defence, but with the actions of these individuals or groups who threaten the peace and harmony of the society and state by violent action, directed against targets which more than not include civilians”

Domestic terrorism covers many acts of violence like murder, rape, threat, arson, bombing, sporadic shootouts, and other aggressiveness carried out in a military might in a community. Omotosho (2002, pp. 23-25) sees it as an intermittent spate of violence carried out by those who are irked, abused or not properly treated to get a goal that is not justifiable. Walters (1975, p. 38-39) corroborates that those who are frustrated easily get irked and become emotionally crippled; such people indulge in domestic terrorism to gush out their spite. This means, “domestic violence is an emotive word, designed to emphasize the extreme fear caused by apparent indiscriminate violence action of individuals and groups claiming to be operating on behalf of some particular cause” (Jones, 1988, p. 44). This reflects the tide of destruction that pervaded Ika in 2002 of which the reverberation still eddies to this day.

There were cases where young men trooped into a village and killed a father and a son; another, where a splinter group went to a village head’s compound and demanded money but ended up gunning down those at sight. Such acts permeated other communities like Ukanafun and Etim Ekpo. In these latter communities, anyone at sight was killed and hacked to bits without recognition. Houses were razes with people inside. “Domestic terrorism engenders sexual abuse (forcible rape) verbal abuse... and physical abuse with a weapon...” (Shainess, 1977, p. 28). In the case of Ika, Etim Ekpo and Ukanafun Communities, it used to be a face-to face confrontation with fully armed young men at one end and fully kitted Nigerian armed force members at the other end exchanging gun shots while feeble and unprotected civilians perish in-between.

Terrorism occurs and escalates in societies where there is a constant thrust of controversy. In Ika community, the division of the local government to three clans did not incite discord as the sharing of villages into wards. Even with this, the full return to civilian

rule where citizens fully participate in politicking seems to spawn much seeds of discord which hinge much on factions created by young men and women who have lost focus in life purported to be school dropouts, loafers, jobless people, those whom fortune of job and means of sustenance never favour, those who have been deceived into cultism, some forced into it, while some voluntarily need physical and spiritual powers to gain social approval and join it – all these set of young men are people who have lost self-esteem, popular acceptability and respect. They indulge in violence to cover up their weaknesses. And in the tradition of Ika people in the past, the legitimate child with a good record in life who may not accumulate much wealth was always respected and revered; in the current Ika tradition, the wealthy son or daughter is the child.

Today, the source of wealth is not verified any more; it is the wealth that matters. Chaos is purported to have evolved from these categories in of people in Ika: wealthy young men who never have jobs but seek to live in affluence, young ladies who denigrate marriage but practically enticing men through actions, newer churches that mechanics of wealth are practiced and activated in businesses for fast riches, and other introduced practices that never really look appalling for open criticism rend the air in Ika. Tension rises over wealth acquisition, personality thrusts and regeneration of lost-self in a less cumbersome means. The interplay of desire and means of achieving it clash. Violence activates a struggle to eliminate or be eliminated through death and pave a way for full military onslaught in the locality. “Terrorism occurs in an environment of conflict and discord, and hence it’s a product of conflict escalation” (Ukpong 2013, p. 154). Domestic terrorism claimed many lives in Ika. Today, even in acute control, moments of extreme verbal feuds always end in arms threat parried only by fear of retaliation for those who have found a fortune. Many of those who are yet to glower in affluence live in suppressed aggression waiting for an outlet to gush out their hurt.

The Mask

A mask is a costume. According to Clive (2006, p. 27), “masks are carvings from wood, metal and clay use for social as well as religious ceremonies. Masks are treated as part of the traditional costume” it is one of the costumes that define the *Akakum*. As in any other performance, it helps in impersonation. In the ancient Greece, Cohen (2006, pp. 18-21) maintains that Greeks intention in their performance was to arrest the souls of spectators through creativity and throw open the gaps in reasoning to be filled after seeing a performance. Mask enabled performers to simulate their roles, and enter the persona envisaged.

A mask is always designed with emphasis. One of such emphasis is on the emotional depth of the performer. According to Barranger (2002, pp. 358-359).

In the early theatre, masks had many uses. They enlarge the actor’s facial features so... expressed basic emotions: grief, anger, horror, sadness, pity. But most important for us today, the mask actor creates an altogether different presence on stage than the actor without a mask ... the presence of the actor-with-mask can be stately, heroic, awesome, or mysterious.

The way a mask is designed with inbuilt facial contortion evinces human feelings convincingly. A mask can induce romantic appeal; a mask can stir disgust. This may be the reason Asigbo (2013, p. 7) expatiates *Odumudu* and *Ijele* mask to have embodied a force that can jar off the courage to behold by spectators, meaning, a mask can be a total shrine. A mask that is a shrine is said to embody *Mbiam* element in both Annang and Ibibio communities.

A mask is an interface of cosmic connects between the living and the dead in African society. Many masks used in performances in the traditional African setting are fortified through blood sacrifice. In many religions blood is revered as a solemn factor that expedite the potency of a ritual to a deity Blood bleeds; blood roams, and deities hear the cry of blood. In Esema (2002, p. 47), it is through blood oath of secrecy that one joins a secret society. In the Bible, (Genesis 4:10) the blood of Abel cried out of the ground to God.

A mask in Ika dialect is *iso* (face); a shrine, *Iso-mkpo* (face of something): both allude, an altar of transmogrification intensified by rites, worship and solemn rituals for a regeneration of cosmic force through the circumstances of blood.

There is only one thing that is believed to be inside the mask that one thing is force, a vital force, a force external to man and foreign to his ego- a spirit. There is the spirit of the dead generally and the ancestors in particular. There are also the other spirits, e.g. The directing spirit of individual life, *Obot*, the energizing spirit of individual soul in daily activities, *ukpong*, the spirit of the village – *Ikpa Isong* and *Ibok*, and so on... the Ibibio make no difference between masks and shrines for behind each is believed to be this spirit force (Akpaide, 1982, p. 28).

To expatiate Ukpai's view, when a mask is conceived to be *iso-mkpo*, it encases a supernatural force. Such mask is worshiped, appeased, and projected to act spiritually to the betterment or detriment of man. According to Barranger (2002, pp. 258-259) "mask-making is an ancient art. From early cultures masks were object of fear; they were thought to have supernatural powers". However, a mask that is an *iso-mkpo* in totality, when it is used for performance within which a limited set of people form membership; it is set upon rules adhered strictly to by its members. The mask automatically becomes an object of order exerting control over initiates at all times.

Akakum Mask/ Accessories

Iwuo Akakum: *Akakum* Nto Usoh mask belongs to the *iso-mkpo* category. It is appeased by the custodian. Those it hits placates it with a live-goat (before, it used to be two cocks). The mask is a wooden pole shaped in a man and a woman's face at either side. It is constructed into a tunic and made to drape to the heel. A network of rope tangles underneath to solidify the wooden pole, which the performer jerks, swirls or hits occasionally on the earth as a mark of genuflection to a deity.

Afong: The tunic of Nto Usoh has two colours: a white one with a red cross that runs above the performer's head down to the end of the cloth at both ends which symbolizes peace and a red one that has a white cross of the same designed symbolizing dangers. These costumes are made to look like the tunics of the medieval crusaders with a wide openings at the armpit to allow it move the hands and simulate dance easily. Whenever it pursues spectators, it drags the tunic above the knee to allow it run. There is a net neatly designed at the face to allow the performer breath and see.

Ajei and ajioro: Occasionally, the designer often fasten *ajei* (budding palm frond) at the base of the trunk. The *ajei* in Ika community is a sign of law. It always denotes a boundary or limit of encroachment in action and in space. There is a bunch of *ajioro* (native rattle) fastened on both heels.

Afuud: among the whole accessories of the *Akakum* Nto Usoh, *Afuud* is the most important. According to Essien (2010):

What is *Akakum* is a different thing from all those things you people open teeth and run about like what I don't know.... Have you ever seen *Akakum* open the right hand?.... In that hand, there is something called *afuud*. *Afuud* decides where *Akakum* goes. It determines where it thuds the head. It regulates the performer's movement: that is, if it wants him to run o; if it wants him to crawl o; it is that small thing in his hand. If *Akakum* wants to hit anybody, he can easily do that by pursuing the person to where he likes. It will point the *afuud* at the person to tangle the feet, and that is all. The *afuud* cuts both ways. *Akakum* performer must not do evil if not *afuud* will twist him. For example, an *Akakum* member cannot take someone's life. He cannot poison another person. He cannot rob the innocent or cause someone to lament. Those who carry the mask are people with good hearts. There is no time you will hear that *Akakum* initiate has caused another to lament let alone joining these heartless destruction of life and property.

In reassessing Essien's position, *afuud*, one of the body accessories of *Akakum*, is a tool of control the *Akakum* performance.

Masking

Masking is the procedure undergone to put on the mask. The idea of masking in the traditional African performance may not necessarily fit in to certain categories of mask. The term covers such concept like masquerading. In the case of *Akakum*, it is what Nzekwu (1981, pp. 131-134) implies as the awe and tension a masked personage evince in the course of performance. Traore (1972, pp. 56-57) corroborates that masking is the absorbing of a performer (mortal) into the medium of harmony with the persona (immortal or what the

performer performs by putting on the mask). Nevertheless, since “masks in most traditional societies are used to represent the spirit... the carrier of a mask is believed to have transformed to a supernatural being” (Clive, 2006, p. 27). In this context, a more suitable explanation of masking is capture in Akpaide (2005, p. 28) to be the preparation to wield a mask and the process of performance. In *Akakum*, it would be said *mbiom afum* (to carry the wind) or *mbubo akakum* (to tie *akakum* – as in clothe oneself with its paraphernalia).

Masking in *Akakum* performance is a rigorous process in Nto usoh. It does not only convey interweaving costume and accessories on a performer’s body. Masking is a ratification of purity. The process begins with the choice of the carrier and ends with his ability to move from the shrine. The performer will be equipped with all bodily gears; finally, the head will be put on his head while the orchestra is already tensed with songs invoking it to its supra-mundane essence. In a situation the performer may have indulged in evil act, *Akakum Akoko Itong* (dislocate the neck). When it is mere impurity, *Iwo Adokpo* (the head becomes too heavy to carry). In any of these occurrences, the actor will confess and appease the mask. This process of masking exposes transgressors and delinquent initiates, and they pay with painful penalties. From the choice of the carrier to the orchestra, there are series of rites to ascertain purity. If someone who has shed blood, may be out of shame or exuberance, bypasses the various circles of rites and carry the mask, he may not return alive. The intricacies of masking rites prevent the members from participating in destruction.

When *Akakum* is on performance on a day the tunic is red, both initiates and audience are on spurs. To energize it capture a victim, songs like *Ngwot Mkpa Aka Ibe* (show me the ransom price), or *Afum O* (wind o) would be sung.

Song 1: Ngwot Mkpa Aka Ibe

Ama ngwot; nna ugwot- (if you kill me; I will kill you)
Nwot mkpa aka Ibe - (show me a ransom) (2 times)
Echen agwo asanga enen – (the visitor enters via the main entrances)
Ama asanga esa ade ino – (if he passes the backyard, he is a thief)

Song II: Afum O ...

Afumo – O (wind)- *Elonko*
Ana ada?- (Would you stand?) - *elonko*
Ajem ile akut itok -(He who wants aggressiveness risks race)- *elonko*
Ama ali ana adaa? -(When it comes will you stand?) - *elonko*
Dede Ekanem –e! -(name of an ancestor of the mask)- *elonko*
Ana ada? (2times)- (would you stand?)- *elonko*.

When *Akakum* is invoked to this height, the *afuud* will be directed to a particular person and however perfect the person can race, *Akakum* can manipulate him or her through the *afuud* in the hand to trip; *Akakum* hits. When *Akakum* hits someone, it is said *Akakum ateed agwo*. Another expression is *afum adia agwo*, which literally means, wind has supped on someone. A hit from it will make the victim to experience heaviness. In such situation, it is said, *Akakum a’nyin agwo* (*Akakum* has submerged someone). The person will buy stipulated items which would be used to vindicate him or her (*ekama eduep*). When someone

refuses to cleanse the hit and dies of it, *Akakum aben iwuo* (*Akakum* carries the head). The corpse would be interred at the shrine. These situations cove the members from indulging in evil deeds like domestic terrorism to avoid backfiring

Rare cases are that when *Akakum* initiates chant the sacred songs, even when it is not time for it, they risk invoking the powers to roam looking for a carrier. This situation always result in members running from wherever they had sojourned down to Nto *Usoh*, swiping their heads uncontrollably and hitting any thing at sight. No matter what such member hits when he is possessed, there will be neither wound nor blood on the person's head. The fellow will roam down until *egwa iwo* (appease the head) before he rests. According to Essien (2010), when *Akakum* is excited, it might turn the head and target a cocoa nut tree with a monstrous top and hit. Everything the tree had on the top will scatter on the floor. The audience members will then rush for the fruits. This moment is about the most dramatic with its accompanying horror; for *Akakum* must also hit.

Akakum member or initiate cannot participate in violence or destruction. In a situation where someone erroneously transgresses, *Akakum* mask rejects the person; if the person tricks the mask (*akang ibet*), the masking wrecks him. This makes the *Akakum* an elevated performance. Many villages have imitated the ceremonial kind but choose to make the costume predominantly red except that of Nto Udo Enwan that can even put on green or blue tunic to convey a different aesthetic through their near-secular splendour.

In *Akakum*, both the mask and masking process are performed based on the purity level of the actor. As observed by Walters (1975), what really engenders domestic violence is impure thought aggravated by chaotic scenario in a community. When the social institutions of a community are orderly, the citizenry will also be orderly; when it is chaotic, the citizens can indulge in chaotic activities without any itch of remorse. In Nto *Usoh* village, *Akakum* performance does not encourage transgression; the question of killing, raping, shading people's blood and massacring of the entire community for any reason is a taboo.

Conclusion

The traditional African society is appreciated for its plethora of traditional conventions enshrined in the various sub-cultures her people practice to maintain orderliness in their communities. It may appear surprising that a violent performance like *Akakum* has an in-depth tranquility through the rules that set the group up. If a sub-culture like this can deter initiates from rapping woman, killing people, robbing people and exchanging bullets with government forces in the various moments of flashpoints in Ika, such traditional performance should be encouraged and made to have a global outlook so that its innate force of human control can permeate our people's psyche and help curtail besetting factors that cause domestic terrorism in our society.

Recommendations

The way some traditional performances in Nigeria were designed, most of them are immersed with supra-mundane forces which make the good side of the performance to be overlooked. A performance like *Akakum* Nto *Usoh* would have been a model for social control but its supernatural ambiguity makes it detestable to others especially Christians. This paper recommends that *Akakum* should be secularized to allow other people to participate in

the performance. If the spiritual aspects of some remarkable traditional performances are stripped they may attract global interest.

Akakum Nto Usoh has existed for years and has been performed as mere traditional ritual to appease *Nnem ilung*. The performance has a dual capacity to entertain and maintain its pedigree as an ancient mask in Ika. If the ceremonial part is explored as a social activity while the spiritual aspect is maintained to instill decorum, it may become a tourist object to promote Ika among Akwa Ibom communities with a profound performance that can be used to enhance unity and order in the society.

The most significant thing in *Akakum* is the body accessories. The promotion of this level of creativity that which can invoke awe and fear may encourage creativity at the local level and preserve the culture of Ika people of Nigeria. This paper further recommends that Nigeria government should acknowledge and encourage local crafts and their designers within her communities. The regeneration of the creative faculties of the rural people may boost her ameliorating record in the entertainment and fashion area of its economy. When a performance is highly ritualized, it might repel other people who may even have interest in the convention setting up the performance; and creativity might be limited. When it is de-ritualized, it will encourage dynamism and newness in terms of aesthetics. In a de-ritualized *Akakum*, such as found in Nto udo Enwan village there is ample opportunity for creativity.

Image 2. *Akakum*, Nto Udo Enwan



De-ritualized *Akakum*

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