

Towards Understanding Drama, Culture and the African Man: A Dramatic Exploration of the Urhobos' Burial-Rites

Joseph Agofure IDOGHO

Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Federal University Oye Ekiti, Ekiti State Nigeria

Abstract

The paper attempts a holistic analysis of the burial-rites of the Urhobo people, of Delta State, Nigeria vis-à-vis its dramatic content. Drama over the ages has been acclaimed as an essential part of culture, however not every cultural practices could be regarded as theatrical. It is therefore in the light of this position that the paper examines the burial-rites of the Urhobo people with regard to its dramatic correlation; to ascertain the relationship between ritual, drama and culture on one hand: and on the other hand to explicitly expose the urhobos worldview on the concept of man, as a trinity being- that maintains a relationship between the world of the unborn and the ancestral world. The researcher employs historical, sociological and literary methodology in this study: accordingly, the paper adopts qualitative research methodology in data gathering and analysis to reach its logical positions. The paper thus revealed that the Urhobos' burial-rites possess measurable dramatic elements, which African drama could draw inspirations. Subsequently, that death, to the Urhobo people as to Africans is not an end to human existence, rather a passage from one realm of existence to the other: that deserves appropriate rituals to ensure order in the cosmos. Although modernization and civilization is gradually affecting this indigenous practices, but its importance to the Urhobos cannot be overemphasized. Thus its documentation and dramatic affinity underscores the clarion call for cultural preservation and propagation and the fact that most African rites could provide insights for modern African drama.

Introduction

The age-long argument that establishes the relationship between ritual, drama and cultural practices within African communities has given drama theorists, scholars among others which and what activities within the African context possess elements of drama. Suffice to mention that these paper is not in any way elongating the corpus of arguments or positions on this issue: rather it only set out to examine the dramatic content of the Urhobos Burial-rite and the need to document such as a cultural and archival material, since the effect of civilization and modernization has become inevitable to our indigenous tradition. This paper thus shed more light on the Urhobos Burial-rites with the aim of establishing the age-long similarities between ritual, drama and culture.

Theatre scholars all over the world cannot shy away from the fact that theatre fundamentally originated from the primitive tradition of societies. Thus it has become a popular practice among playwrights to resort to their indigenous tradition for dramaturgy. Examples of playwrights who have resorted to primitive traditional cultural practice abound in our society. Efuwa T. Sutherland's, *The Marriage of Anansewa*, is a clear exposition on the Ghanaians marriage rite, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, derives its subject-matter from the Yoruba's burial-rite of a prominent personalities, Kings. While J. Pepper Clark-Bekederemo's plays all gears towards the cultural practices of the Ijo people of the Niger Delta.

Perhaps the little we know of Egyptian theatre today centred on the death and resurrection of Osiris and the coronation of Horis: the burial-rites and coronation-rites of the Egyptians. For the Greeks, where drama (claims its origin formally), drama developed partly in reacting to the period of barbarism from which the society emerged and it further reinforced and affirmed the moral values of civilization. The Greeks experience of drama was centred in their religious festivals which coincided with their Agricultural cycle of the year. As the Greeks established themselves as communities, their drama became an important focus for their communal lives. To this end we can say that J. P. Clark-Bekederemo's statements become relevant to this discussion:

if drama means the "elegant imitation" of an action significant to a people, if this means the physical representation or the evocation of one poetic image or a complex of such images, if the vital elements to such representation or evocation are speech, music, ritual, song as well as dance and mime, and if as the Japanese say their Noh theatre, the aim is to "open the ear" of the mind of a spectator in a corporate audience and "open his eyes" to the beauty of form, then there is drama in plenty in Nigeria... (57). (The underlined words are mine emphasis.)

The above statements are apposite to this subject-matter in that virtually all the rites of passages prevalence in Africa, Nigeria specifically are bequeathed with the aforementioned, underlined concept: which incidentally are the predominant elements of formal drama.

Statement of the Problem

It will be merely stating the obvious, if we say that Nigeria arts and culture faces a great danger, because of the

nonchalant attitudes of government, co-operate bodies and individuals to their own arts and culture. Rather we ape the Euro-American culture; which we tag as modernization and civilization. It is very painful to mention that Nigerian arts and culture has not being given the attentions it deserves, in spite the clamour by scholars and laymen alike for cultural preservation and promotion. Imagine some Nigerians, born in Nigerians cannot speak their language much less understand their traditional rite of passages. Others have out-rightly forgotten the way of life of their people: foods dresses, arts and crafts and technologies. These signals imply that Nigeria as a nation is heading towards doom: because a nation without a future is disastrous. Sarunmi statements, in Remi A.A. (ed) expresses this Nigerian predicament thus: “One effective link between the past and the present of a people is their culture. A nation that has lost touch with her past definitely will make her future irrelevant (v).” Due to western influence, Christianity, technology advancement and education, many aspects of authentic African culture are fast fading away. Some of the practices have changed over time and gradually losing many of their initial elements. Similarly, the tradition had been transmitted over time through oral tradition, but in modern times, oral tradition cannot be relied upon for a culture to be preserved for future generations: thus the need for this research to document this sensitive component of the Urhobos’ culture and as well as establishing its dramatic content for dramaturgy by scholars of drama.

Ritual, Drama and Culture

There is the need to clarify the above concepts, for a clear understanding of this paper. These clarifications would also help us understand the relationship between the trios.

Ritual according to the On-line Encarta Dictionary (2009) is view from divert perspectives as it is relevant to this discourse. First, as an established formal behavior; that prescribed pattern of observance, especially in a religion setting. Secondly, as a performance of formal acts; the observance of actions or procedures in a set ordered, and ceremonial way. Thirdly, as a system of rites: the system of set procedures and actions of a group, a people. Finally as an unchanging pattern: a pattern of actions or words followed regularly and precisely. From the above explication term ritual seems to pervade our day to day living. Consequently, most of our traditional ceremonies appear to be ritualistic in nature. Be that as it may, we can riskily posit that ritual and culture shares some similarity to some extent; this we shall see as we proceed in this paper.

Drama, on the other hand is an ancient Greek word meaning “act” or “deed”, coined by the Ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle in his *poetics*: where the term drama culled from. Aristotle’s pioneering theory on drama, the *Poetics*, has and thus provided one of the explaining and most influential explanations of drama. This he did by elucidating it as the “imitation” of an “action”. Perhaps, today drama has been used to describe many activities that possess dramatic elements, primitive rituals, and traditional ceremonies inclusive: especially using Aristotle’s postulation as criteria. On-line Encarta Dictionary (2009) also define drama as: *A literary composition that tells a story, usually of human conflict by means of dialogue and action to be principal forms of the drama are tragedy and comedy from modifications or combination of these results the lyric drama or grand opera, melodrama, tragicomedy, opera bouffe or comic opera force and burlesque.*

From the above definition, though defined from a literary play-text viewpoint: drama in terms of a literary creation possess (i) a story element (ii) dialogue (iii) action (iv) Actors on stage and (v) audience, which are meant to communicate/experienced an experience real or imaginary. These elements in no measure corroborate Aristotle’s postulations of elements of drama: plot, character, theme/thought, language, music and spectacle. These elements were and still the acclaimed elements of drama the world all over; traditional African/Nigeria theatre inclusive. Consequently, these elements will later form our judgments of the Urhobos Burial-rites being dramatic or not.

Culture on the other hand is often described by scholars as a rich heritage of a society. In the western world especially, culture is often associated with such things as good breeding and finesse in human relations; an educated condition; a well-developed taste and capacity for the arts such as music, sculpture, literature etcetera. However the African concept of culture transcends the aforementioned description. In many parts of Africa, culture is often refers the way of life of our forefathers. In other words, culture can be best interprets as the established tradition of our predecessors: such as ritual-ceremonies (rite of passages) traditional religious and belief, customs, norms, traditional dances and values. The *Culture Policy for Nigeria* defines culture as:

The totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetics, and religious norms and modes of organization; thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours (5). (The underlined words are mine emphasis.)

The need to ensure order and harmony in Urhobo society has engenders the perpetration of their culture from generation to generation. Thus the documentation of the burial-rite of the urhobos becomes necessary in this globalization age to avoid extinction of the practice. Subsequently, the policy further protects and encourages the preservation of culture in its preamble. Part 1 Article 4:2.1 states that: “Culture preservation in this context shall relate to the promotion of cultural property, whether of concrete or non-concrete nature, past

or present, written or oral or relating to values, or facts of history (11).”

The way of life, in the above statement implies ritual: when viewed against our earlier definitions of ritual as an established formal behaviour, as a performance of formal acts and as a system of rites. In other words, the relationship between culture and ritual is somehow symbiotic and inevitable. Consequently the relationship between drama and ritual are symbiotic. Although scholars have often time agreed that drama evolved from rituals. For instance Ola Rotimi that:

Some African ritual ceremonies reveal instances of “imitation” either of an experience in life, or of the behaviour-patterns of some power. Others merely re-present certain powers without mimetic impulse to recreate the ways and details of those powers...Ritual displays that reveal in their style of presentation, in their purpose, and value, evidences of imitation, enlightenment and or entertainment, can be said to be drama (77).

Our concern in the above statement is to establish the inter-woven relationship between ritual and drama. Scholars have also argued at other level that ritual activities, performance, “process” is not drama in itself though dramatic: but when removed from its ritual context, rehearsed and presented before a group of audience, it becomes a drama. This position seems to buttress our argument again of linking ritual, drama and culture or presenting the trios as a related concept. However, whichever position we may view these positions; our concern is to establish the Urhobo Burial-rite as a distinct tradition, cultural practice of the people that deserve our attention and to study it alongside its dramatic essence.

The Urhobo’s Concept of Man and Burial-Rites

A philosophical appraisal of the concept of man; Being and death revealed that, though for the Urhobo, death brings sadness because of the vacuum it creates, it is the only means by which we can associate with our ancestors in the world beyond. The Urhobo people hold the view that death is a necessity for all mortals; also, the Urhobo strongly believes that Oghene (God) did not create man to die originally. This belief reechoes in their acceptability of reincarnation.

The Urhobo people like their counterpart in other parts of Africa thus believes in different types of death such as mature, premature and abominable death. For them death does not occur without a particular cause, some of the causes of death according to the Urhobo are old age, witchcraft, accident or sickness and abomination. It is discovered that for the Urhobo death is not the end of man, and does not also sever his connection with his family, death extends the family relationship into infinity, the ceremonies and ritual performed by the living for the dead emphasis the unbroken family relationship between the living and the dead.

Thus the Urhobo do not bury the dead without consulting the spirit of the dead and the divinities of the land, this is because they want to know the causes of death and the kind of burial to be given to the dead. Though with the advent of Christianity a lot has changed, the practice of necromancy is now restricted to the traditionalists alone who are buried according to traditional rites. The Christians and other religions outside the indigenous Urhobo practice are exempted from the traditional practice, however, if the family of the deceased wish to bury the deceased in the traditional way, the deceased has to be judged before burial. There are variations in burial rite in Urhobo culture, these Rites are performed based on the circumstance of death, a person that died a good death is accorded a befitting burial, while a person that died a bad death is thrown in to the evil forest, and such persons are not buried.

The Urhobo recognizes only two kind of death, the good death and the bad death. A good death is one that is associated with somebody who has attained the ripe age of sixty years and above, married with children and lived a morally just live and is not a member of secret cult. However, as for the bad death, are those that died a premature death, members of witchcraft, evil people, those that died an abominable death, as such are not given proper funeral-rites. A new category that is being considered for a good burial are those who are matured but died without marriage or children, other factors considered for giving either good or bad burial are age and social status of the deceased.

The Urhobo strongly belief that unless the proper burial rites and ceremonies are performed the spirit of the deceased may not be able to join the ancestral spirit, thus, great satisfaction is derived from the performance of these funeral rites. The practice of necromancy in Urhobo is to determine the type of burial to be accorded the deceased, though it has both negative and positive effects. The burial of good people is done in a much elaborated ways, there are funfair, traditional ritual to the ancestors and gods of the land and prayers for the dead to protect and bless the living. A young person who died prematurely, but lived a morally just life is buried, but without funfair and passage rituals, the deceased is given dangerous weapons, such as cutlass, knife, broken bottle etc in his casket to fight and avenge his death.

It is a common belief among the Urhobo that a young person cannot die, so if such death occurs it is considered that someone kills the person. Those who are members of secret cult, evil persons, witches and wizards are considered as bad people as such their death is regarded as bad death, such people are not buried, but are thrown into the evil forest to be eaten by wild animals, this is to discourage their spirit from reincarnating.

Those that died without children are buried, but without funfair and other rituals, this is because they have nobody to carry on with their name and nobody would conduct the ancestral worship. The women are buried according to circumstance of death, but do not have ancestral shrine like their male counterpart, this is because women do not go to the ancestral world.

Stages in Urhobo Funeral Rites

Among the Urhobos, there are basically two stages in the burial rites of the deceased. The first consists of merely lying-in-state and interring the remains, while the second, which is usually known as *erhuere*; the preparation of the deceased for acceptance by the ancestors. Significantly rites prepare the *erhi*; soul of the deceased for presentation to his kin and fellow companions or family in the world beyond *erivwin*. The traditional burial rites in most Urhobo areas are virtually the same with slight variations in different kingdoms making up the Urhobo nation. However worthy of note is that the Urhobos bury their dead in their homes, to promote the cordial relationship between the dead and the living. Okumagba M.P. observes that: “traditionally a man is buried in his own house if he has built one, but if he was a young person he was buried in any place chosen by his family (135),” within the family compound. This practice simply reechoes the Urhobos view on death not as the end of man, and not also severing the deceased connection with his family, that death extends the family relationship into infinity

The first burial: This burial rite is not unlike Western/European burials: the deceased is placed in a coffin and buried in a grave dug by the family, often near the family home. This usually happens within a day after death but cannot be carried out at night. Like Western funerals and burials, the first burial is sombre and reflective. Okumagba M.P. avers that in the course of the first burial:

The immediate elders of his or her family (who are younger to the deceased) bath the corpse dress it up and lay it in state. Elders of the town were now informed. Preparedness for the burial ceremonies was then set in motion. It is customary to lay the corpse in state with the legs towards the door. When all is set then canon shots were fired to announce the death and herald the beginning of the wake-keeping. By this time weeping members of the family would have wiped off their tears to prepare for the wake-keeping which begins with traditional dances. **IVWRI** is usually the principal dance of that night which continues till the next morning (134).

The underlined phrase and words are my own to emphasize the dramatic elements inherent in the burial ritual at the first stage. Aside the traditional dances; there are special songs and musical accompaniment equally designed for this purpose. The predominant musical instrument for burial ceremonies is the *ekpagha*; a pair of flat-wooden pieces often clasp together to produce musical sound. The *ekpagha* is used by married women, (not wives) of the family who are certainly younger than the deceased; in other words the deceased younger female siblings (married). During the lying-in-state, this women in question lined up and dance-round the corpse cyclically, singing praises of the deceased using the *ekpagha* musical instruments; while the first daughters often refers to as *odede* of the deceased seats beside the corpse fanning it with traditional hand-fan called *adjuju* and as well showering praises on the deceased. While doing this every other members of the family and guest spray them money which is basically refers to as *oghwa*.

Goats Slaughtering Rituals: During the evening of the lying-in-state, a goat must be slaughtered; connotatively called *Evwe- Inuvwu* goat to wash, bath and rinse of dirt: meaning meant to wash, bath and rinse the deceased of dirt, before commencing the journey. This goat is usually meant specifically for those members of the family who bath the deceased and prepared him in the coffin and every other members of the family. Another important Goat to be slaughtered is the *Evwe-Ehun*, goat for waist, this goat is connotatively meant to honour the deceased for utilizing his waist in his life time. This goat again is meant to be consumed by every members of the family.

Traditionally some Urhobo kingdoms hold the views that the in-laws of the deceased are responsible for the grave-digging. However Okumagba posits that: “it is traditionally the responsibility of all males who are married from the family of the deceased to dig the grave (135).” While the grave is being dug traditional songs were sung and when the grave is ready; the children of the deceased were then asked by the family to prepare the last supper for the deceased. At this point the traditional *owho-ephri* the urhobos oil-soup is preferred here. “This was later placed as an offering in the deceased grave. In doing so the pot with which the food was cooked was left on the grave, (Okumagba 135)” .While part of the meal had been consumed by members of the family. Then the sticks-breaking ceremony follows; when mourners come up to the corpse to speak their last words to him before it was covered up with earth. Okumagba further notes that: “if the deceased is a title person, *Ehonvbore*, chiefs sang seven traditional (*Ema*) songs before he was covered up (135).”

Thereafter, the owaran (eldest son of a deceased) prays and pleads on behalf of all other children. Special requests are made to the deceased especially those, who are believed to ensure peace and prosperity for all those left behind. Sometimes we have a tone of complaint and the ancestor is approached directly but the poetic effectiveness is created through the use of concrete and visual images from the everyday world. The

speaker addresses the ancestor in whose honour the incantation is made. By the time the grave is ready all other side rituals performed during the wake must have been completed.

The in-laws at this juncture come out for a ritual known as *oghwa- eghorie* that is rolling the load or coffin. The belief is that the deceased would be carrying a lot of things home, therefore the in-laws must come forward to assist him in his job by helping to roll it from the spot and thus symbolically make it lighter. The in-laws fire guns while dancing. The coffin is lowered into the grave where it is received by two gravediggers. The gravediggers open it up and a complete maize cob is placed in the right hand of the deceased before it is finally sealed. The maize symbolizes fullness of life. The deceased is urged that in his next incarnation he should be predestined in such a manner that his life should be accomplished or as full as the full cob of the maize he carried away. A bottle of gin is given to the two gravediggers for cleansing themselves before coming out of the grave.

On the third day, the whole family went to a nearby river or a stream to bath and washes their clothes. After all that, all members of the deceased family who were younger to the deceased in age had their hair shaved for the deceased. "The hair was then buried in the ground around the family home: as this was meant to be money for him to spend in the world beyond. Though the first son *owaran*, of the deceased is exempted from shaving his hair till after three months (Okumagba 135)."

The Second Burial-Rites: The second burial known as *erhurhe*, which aim at preparing the deceased soul, *erhi* to be received by their ancestors in *erhivwin*, the ancestral-world. There are usually no stipulated or recommended time lapses between the first and the second burial. The financial status of the deceased children determines when and the elaborateness of the occasion. However the rituals for the second burials are usually permanent. In the same vein there is hard and fast rules as to whether the second bury be observes as separate from the first burial. In other words the financial capability of the deceased children determines to a great extent here. In other words the first and the second burial could be held simultaneously: however care must be taken to perform the rituals in order of importance

The second burial-rite is usually performed with the erection of two booths, built with mats; one big and the other small. The smaller booth housing the *agbrerhen* or *omah*; effigy of the deceased, while the bigger booth for the dances and performances of other related ceremonies. Okumagba posits that:

A day or two before this ceremony begins two booths, one big and the other small are erected with mats. The one housing a weave or carved chest representing the dead person and the other is for dances which take place later throughout the ceremonies. The small shelter where the chest placed was usually decorated with expensive clothes materials such as damask and velvetine. In the chest or *omah* were contained nails of the deceased man's fingers and toes, a quantity of his hair and a piece of the white shroud used in wrapping him before the first burial.

On the day when the ceremony begins canon shots were fired three or several times, at regular intervals to coincide with the numbers days that the ceremony would last. Dances from far and near were invited. The first night was devoted to dances by the deceased relations and his village community. Some part of the dances relates to funeral rites. **IVWRI** is the traditional dance of the first night.

OMAH PROCESSION: The last day was the most important day of the whole ceremonies. On that day the *owaran*; eldest son of the deceased, dressed in tradition apparel and with a sword in his right hand and a horsetail on the left hand lead the procession of mourners carrying the *omah* or chest representing the dead on a visit to all the important places in the town. As he leads the way he symbolically clears the way for the *omah* to move freely. The eldest daughter of the deceased was also at the head of the procession holding a plate full of *Emarin* (a meal of mashed yam mixed with oil) which she scatters as the procession moved along. Also playing an important part in these ceremonies was the last child of the deceased who was carried along on the shoulders. The *Omah* was carried by four persons: two of them at the head represent the man's father's family while two others at the feet represent the man's mother's family. This *omah* was carried to visit traditional places and at each place *Amare*, coin cowries were showered on the places. At the end of this visit which was accompanied by a lot of dancing, the *omah* was carried to a place where certain ceremonies were performed exclusively by the elders before it is interred (135-38).

The second burial is indeed a rigorous ritual which must be observed, especially in the traditional Urhobo society. The last part of the ritual not captured in the above excerpt is that the elders perform notable libations to the ancestors with *ogogoro*, the Urhobos traditional gin, kola-nuts, and the *Emarin* (a meal of mashed yam mixed with oil). Goats or other animals could be slaughtered for this funeral service but is of no ritual significance: they are merely for social consumption for both for the family members and guest present. Significantly in the second burial is that the family perform burial rites in three categories in the community: the village/community level; the larger family; which is the street level that are of blood relations with the deceased and the immediate family of the deceased(nuclear and extended family of the deceased). Some family could use cows, others could use goats for these ceremonies depending on the financial status of the deceased children but

they have no ritual connection: there are just for mere celebration.

The second burial is more of a ceremony than an actual burial – as the body has already been buried – and often takes place many months after death, as it is practiced in some communities. These are times for the family to celebrate the life of their deceased loved one and to prepare her/him to be accepted by those ancestors who have already passed on.

Although these customs are generally still followed today, in some areas they have given way to less strict practices. For instance, first and second burials are being compressed into one. With the arrival of refrigeration and other modern mortuary services, bodies of the dead can now be preserved for months, allowing first burials to be delayed and then merged with the second burial. Second burial ceremonies are frequently huge, ostentatious affairs. Rich families may use them as an opportunity to flaunt their wealth, while families who are less well-off can fall into debt or other financial difficulties in the struggle to keep up appearances. Worthy of note is the fact that there are no significance differences between the burial-rites of male and female among the Urhobos except that the male ancestors are more venerated among the Urhobos, which is typical of every other African society.

Though, this practice is gradually going into extinction following the advent of Christianity, Westernization/Modernization and government proscription of night-burial in Delta State. Some families who wish to bury their deceased in the Christian burial rites now approach the family and make their intention known: the family in turn list out all the important rituals to the deceased children and they will pay cash: thereafter continue with their Christian burial.

The Dramatic Evaluation of the Urhobos Burial-Rites

Arising from the above burial-rites analysis, obviously the ingredients of drama as propounded by Aristotle, which is the acclaimed stricture for judging what qualifies to or not be drama abound in Africa Festival / Ritual drama and burial rites; the Urhobos burial-rites specifically. Aristotle lays out six elements of tragedy (drama): plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and song; these elements will thus form the basis of our evaluation

Plot: Plot is the most essential components of drama as propounded by Aristotle in his poetics: by plot, Aristotle implies the sequential arrangement of events to achieve harmony in presentation. According to Aristotle: “Plot is 'the soul' of tragedy (drama), because action is paramount to the significance of a drama, A plot must have a beginning, middle, and end; it must also be universal in significance, have a determinate structure, and maintain a unity of theme and purpose (Dukore 192).” Critically assessing the Urhobos burial-rites as captured in our analysis; the Urhobos funeral-rites indeed is bequeathed with series of actions that if well organized could qualify for a drama presentation. For instance the series of rites in the first burial from the lying-in-state, the goat slaughtering rites, the sticks-breaking ceremony, the interment rite, to the various rites that abound in the second burials as examined above are enough actions to constitute an acceptable plot for drama.

Aristotle’s Second Dramatic Element, Character: Characters in dramatic exposition are the dramatic personae that unveil the actions in a drama presentation. The Urhobos burial-rite as analyzed above feature different personalities that could make for dramatic personae. The elders in the burial rites for instance play prominent role of ushering the deceased to the ancestral world. The role of the deceased are also of importance: especially in the characters of the *owaran*, the deceased eldest son; the *odede*, the deceased eldest daughter and the *ubrovwie*, the last child are so paramount to make a drama presentation.

Aristotle’s Third Dramatic Element, Theme: A theme is two or more abstract concepts that are opposed to each other throughout the course of a production through the use of different characters and symbols, each representing one of the concepts. Theme can also be defined as thought or the central message in a dramatic presentation. Arising from our exposition of the Urhobos burial-rite above; different rite can serve as a concept for drama independently. More so, two or more rites could even serve as a thought; the entire funeral-rite could even constitute the theme of a dramatic presentation.

Aristotle’s Fourth Dramatic Element, Dialogue (Diction): Perhaps there is no funeral-rite without the use of rendition; language or communication. Dialogue manifest at different level in the Urhobos burial-rite as captured above. For instance at the first burial where the *owaran*, the deceased eldest son; makes supplication to the deceased on behalf of the other children. Then during the lying-in-state when the women and the *odede*, the deceased eldest daughter sing the praises and address the deceased as if still living. These dialogues are often time rendered in different tone: poetic, emotional, and exciting mood. These varied tone and mood of rendition makes a perfect dramatic presentation.

Aristotle’s Fifth Dramatic Element, Rhythm: Song, Music: Aristotle felt that the choir (virtually the only musical medium at the time) should be like an additional actor, blending in with the play to create mood. The Urhobos burial-rites doubtlessly possesses different songs and music and songs: the *ekpagha*, musical instrument performances as captured in the above analysis, then the various eulogy and mourning songs used in Urhobos burial-rite: specifically music and songs performed for the *ema* and *ivwri* dances are rhythmical flavour that could make up for a dramatic presentation.

Aristotle's Sixth Dramatic Element, Spectacle: Spectacle refers to the visual aspects of a drama production such as costume, set, backdrop, props, makeup, and special effects. Aristotle referred to this as the "least artistic" of the six elements. He felt that spectacle alone could not make a great play. Without a doubt, spectacle is the most visible aspect of the Urhobos' burial-rite. The different dances: the *ema* and *ivwri*, specifically performed in the funeral are certainly featured in different costumes, make up and special effects. The firing of canons into the air could imply special effects. The varied paraphernalia used to accompany the deceased during the interment and the various apparels and make-up by the deceased children and guest, and even the gorgeous costume and make-up of the *Omah* or *Agbrerhen*; the effigy is so spectacular, specifically during the procession rite: all this could make for dramatic spectacle.

Conclusively, therefore, the Urhobos' burial-rites which are essential components of their tradition deserve importance given it in this study for the purpose of cultural preservation and promotion. On the other hand, while it is reasonable to say that the Urhobos' burial-rites, which could serve as a resource material for traditional African drama may differs markedly from the European or Western type in terms of cultural and historical experience and intellectual sensibility, thus, it is wrong to absolutely hold the view that African had no fully developed drama; which is Eurocentric view on existence of African drama. However our comparison of both traditional African ritual/festival dramas at this juncture depends largely on value judgment. Even though African drama and European drama share features in certain aspects (origin and nature), it is safe to say or agree with Enekwe (1981) that function had determined, to a large extent, the formal nature of African traditional festival and ritual drama. Notably the origin of drama across the continents at different era cannot be divorced from traditional religious ceremonies of the people, irrespective of their civilization.

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