Photo-Documentation of Okpe Traditional Marriage Performance Aesthetics

Descrizione

Abstract

This study examines and documents the performance rituals, aesthetics, and entertainment in Okpe Traditional marriage performance using still photographs. Traditional marriage performances in Nigeria serves as entertainment, cultural re-awakening, and as a means of connecting/ energising the relationship between the physical and the supernatural world. While some of these performances have attained visibility through literary documentations, others seek recognition. Okpe marriage performances are also looking for safe landing. This research investigates the requirement for the marriage rites and rituals, handing over ritual, welcoming and reciprocal formalities and procession in Okpe traditional marriage performance, and locate the aesthetics of Songs, language, dress and makeup, the performative roles of the traditional orators, other performers and the audiences were also examined. It interrogates these subject matters using ethnographic research and critical participant observation methods. Findings indicates that while the performance and ritual aesthetics in Okpe traditional marriage have continued to serve as source material for modern African drama, still photography is a ready tool for documentation of the myriad traditional performances across Africa.

Introduction

According to Susan Suntag (1977:19), today everything exists to end in a photograph. Photography can be source of visual inspiration and act as documentation for public space. Photos document a creative process. They are interpretation of a work and at the same time are work in their own rights. Photographs are like graffiti, murals, and installations that are displayed in public space, like streets, walls, and buildings which often carries social or political messages could be said to exist in photo state since they are pictorial. These forms of street arts are ephemeral, that is to say they are

finite or un-lasting. Street artists often pay special attention to the fact that important aspects of the work can be clearly seen in the photo afterwards (Ulrich blanche 2018:24)

Photo-documentation is not a creative theatrical photography, rather, it is a visual record of a live performance (Ronald Angelander 1974, 55). Photo documentation of a performance gives those who haven't witnessed the event the opportunity to experience, at least, the visual aspects of the performance. Any photograph taken during a performance is a visual documentation of that performance. Such documentation, whether done with motion or still photographs, involves capturing as much of the total visual experience of an actual performance as possible and getting it from the point of view of the audience (Ronald Angelander 1974). The photo documenter is sensitive to his own creative energies and those of the artist, and keep them separate, so that the concreate sensual(visual) nature of the performance is not misrepresented or distorted in anyway by his aesthetic orientation.

Many important historical productions can never be studied analytically, either because there is no photographic record, or because the photographs that do exist appear to be intentionally modelled in a specific posture for a photo or artistic representation which indicates a composed appearance for the camera and are therefore not valid indications of what the performance or acting style was like (Ronald Angelander 1974). One main advantage the cinema scholar has over performance researchers is that the previous have the original performances available to them for examination. Unless similar kind of visual materials are made available to theatre historians, the study of theatre as performance has no future. Ronald Angelander (1974) further explains that the most frustrating problem in studying theatre as performance (rather than as literature) is the lack of reliable or accurate visual material to work with.

Traditional African weddings are studied alongside other traditional African festival performances (Nketia 1965, Dzobo 1975). The strength of these performances are basically the same and they are in cultural re-awakening and their role in the re-uniting of community dwellers (Stephen, 2018, Mbachaga and, Ukuma, 2012, Shirley, Loretta, and Isaac 2019). While some festival celebrations in Nigeria have wider recognition through scholarship, others are yet to. Many scholars in Nigeria have paid little or no attention to the documentation of African marriage system as one among her many cultural celebrations. They have however focussed their scholarly energies on African festival performances, and have dwelt extensively on the arguments about

the schools of thought whether African festival performances can be called drama or not (Clark, 1981, Echeruo, 1971, Enekwe, 1981).

Performances are a happening usually a situation considered as art and are often improvisational in nature (Goldberg,2010). They are often a demonstration, or an execution of ideas rather than a product (Howell 1999). According to Goldberg performances are a way of bringing to life the many formal and conceptual ideas on which the making of art is based (2001:7). Edvin Sandström (2010) mentioned that Goldberg description of performance art summons up some important features that the art form rests upon. For Goldberg, “Performance has been a way of appealing directly to a large public, as well as shocking audiences into reassessing their own notions of art and its relation to culture. He stated that, unlike theatre, the performer is the artist, seldom a character like an actor, and the content rarely follows a traditional plot or narrative. The performance might be a series of intimate gestures or large-scale visual theatre, lasting from a few minutes to many hours; it might be performed only once or repeated several times, with or without a prepared script, spontaneously improvised, or rehearsed over many months”. (Goldberg 2001:8)

The need to visually document the visual aesthetic aspects of performances seems to receive poor attention. For example, in 2009, at the Delta State University Theatre, Abraka, Nigeria, Dr. Godfrey Enita, directed an improvised performance titled “*The Traditional Wedding*”. It was the story of Okafor, a young man from Asaba Delta State, and Okiemute, a beautiful Urhobo girl. They faced different obstacles from their parents who do not want them to get married because of tribal differences. They finally overcome all obstacles with the help of an old friend of Isodje the father of Okiemute. The performance ended with a big wedding, organised by both families. While the performance had a lot of criticism from scholars (lecturers who watched the production), it takes its audience through the process of marriage in Urhobo land, a traditional clan in Delta State, Nigeria. Some lecturers in the Department of Theatre Arts who witnessed the improvised performance said that although the performance was entertaining and educative, it does not fit into the praxis of a true drama. However, Anigala Autine, a professor of theatre arts at the same university argued with other scholars that if true drama as we have it today was invented out of the ritual performance of the Greeks in honour of their god Dionysus, then this performance (*The Traditional Wedding*) is drama. He cited the folk drama of Sam Uka like the *Akpakaland*, and *Slave Wife* which are modern dramas fortunately rooted in traditional African performances. Undergraduate students who participated in the performance listened, to the various arguments. In all the arguments raised, non-

made reference to documentation of the art. After many years of attending several other traditional weddings around Nigeria as a photographer and theatre practitioner, I realised that some of the recognised performances whose aesthetics have been widely published lag visual documentation (Blessing 2019, Stephen 2018). I contacted Dr Enita who organised the performance in 2009 at the Delta State University Theatre and Professor Eni who is versed in African Festival performance aesthetics not only to revisit the criticism that Dr. Enita's *The Traditional Wedding* had from his colleagues, but to collaborate and document the performance aesthetics using still pictures.

In pre-colonial Africa, societies celebrated birth, adulthood, life, success, marriages, and even death. These celebrations are embedded in the worldviews and religious beliefs of the African people. They serve as cultural entertainment through which a community showcases its diverse cultural endowment to visitors. They mark the time and season of mass return of sons, daughters, and visitors to celebrate and preserve the traditions of the land (Blessing 2019, p.145). Proverbs, idioms, masks, masquerades, drumming, choruses, songs, and different dances are relevant features of some of the performances.

Like formal theatre which originated from the Greeks between the 5^{th} and 6^{th} century BCE (Brocket, 2007), Patience Omolola (2006) explained that traditional African performances have survived despite the intrusion of globalisation. Despite colonial influences on the continent, several African communities and cities still hold on to their traditional treasure of generation-to-generation medium of entertainment. Patience also stated that the main factor(s) that has survived the African traditional performances is the special oral nature of the African people and their aesthetic elements embedded in orature. The uniqueness of these performances lies in mnemonic, body language, rituals, and audience participation. She cited examples from two major ethnic groups, the Wolof and the Mandinka from the Gambia and Senegal. Up till 2006, traditional artists in these communities do their performances in public. For some of these communities the performance is the main social activity that brings the community indigene home together. (Blessing, 2019, 155). However, their major setback is lack of visual documentation.

Marriage celebrations are an inseparable aspect of the cultures of the African people. It is a social-cultural activity every family participates in religiously. In most communities across Africa, marriage is regarded as a rite of passage. Moses Ugbogbo [1] (2015), mentioned that in pre-colonial Africa, many parents contracted marriages for their children. It was the duty of the father of a male child to negotiate for a wife

for his son from the parent of a well-behaved or recommended girl child. The couple that is getting married have little or no choice in the marriage rites. They are united by families and will live together as husband and wife. Today, however, Africa, like in the western world, marriage is contracted between a man and woman with mutual understanding. Thereafter, they seek and have the backing and support of their families. This type of union is mostly initiated by the man. Marriages, whether contracted by parents or by the persons getting married, is a means to bring families together and to continue the process of procreation and enlarging ethnic groups (Evans Asante, 2016). The marriage rite is a sacred act with rigorous processes. The fixed day of the marriage performance is revered by communities and families. With its levels of representation, its performance aesthetics are unmeasurable. Marriage ceremonies in African communities are a community business. It is an avenue for appeasement and a time to call on the ancestors for blessings. It is also a social, cultural, and religious activity.

Sample size of the Study

Okpe, is an ethnic group with two local government areas (Sapele and Okpe L.G.A). It has a population of over 200800 (2006 census). The major occupation of the people is farming, fishing, trading, and craftsmanship. Two communities from the kingdom were selected for the study. They are Ugbukurusu and Okegberode. These communities are both in the Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State. The reason for the selection was because they are among the oldest communities around the local government area and have many aged men and women who understand the culture and imitated their forefathers in the social and religious rituals the communities engaged in. Compared to other communities in the kingdom, Ugbukurusu is still very remote and is home to several traditional festivals. Okegberode on the other hand is home to some of the earliest educated families in the kingdom.

Method of Data Collection

This study is grounded in critical ethnography. Lofland (1971, p. 4) states that the collation and recording of ethnographic research “should contain a significant amount of pure description of action, people, activities and the like”. Such information leads to a greater understanding of cultural processes and forces at play within different

events. Participant observer approaches events with two purposes, to participate and to observe (Ervin, 2000). Consequently, participant observation requires the researcher to note the elements of each setting, as well as interacting within it. This entails watching and recording all the events, interactions and participants within the situation as well as the setting itself.

Photo-Documentation of Okpe Traditional Marriage Performances Aesthetics

The family compound is the performance arena for Okpe marriage ceremonies. It is a fluid performance space. Actions takes place at interval and in different part of the compound. Every activity on the day of payment of the bride's price takes place in the family compound of the bride's father. There is however an exception if the father of the bride has a personal compound, the rite may be performed there. All activities including cooking for the occasion are done in the compound. A few days before the marriage day, women who were previously married into the family (emeseogwa), friends of the bride's mother, and women married into the community (egwaemese), bring firewood and other necessary utensils for cooking to the venue.

The Room of Activity

Within the performance arena, there is a room set aside where the bride price is paid. The family of the groom and the bride seat there. If the room is large enough, family friend's seats with the family to witness the process. On arrival, the groom and groom's family are welcomed into this room. The room is arranged in such a way that the bride's family's seats directly facing each other with both spokesmen at the forefront of each side. Older men seat in the front role, followed by younger men, youths, and women. In some cases, after the older men were seated, women and others can find their place in the room of activities. In a few cases where the room is small, women find their place outside the room.

Photo-Doc 1. The Room of Activity



The room where all the marriage rite is performed. On the right is the groom putting on a round cap and wearing beads on his neck (Phot Credit: JahBoy Photography 09062112391)

Welcoming and Reciprocal Formalities

Welcoming and reciprocal formalities takes place in the room of activities**.** The groom and his family is formally welcome and entertained with drinks, kola-nuts, and sums of money; previously agreed upon by the parent of the bride and groom. All members of the bride's family who are present also give their monetary support for the entertainment. The groom's family retaliates with double of whatever they have received from the bride's family.

Photo-Doc 2. Welcoming and Reciprocal Formalities



In the centre, is a bottle of lord's dry gin; on the right, is the money presented to welcome the groom's family. The plate on the left has kola-nuts and #500 "wages." It is to prevent the kola-nut from rolling out from the plate. The #500 is shared among the elderly men who participated in splitting of the kola-nuts into pieces (Photo Credit: JahBoy Photography 09062112391)

The Family Orators

The Otemro (singular, Etemro, plural) are the spokesmen for the occasion. They determine the pace and tempo of the performance. After the groom's family have reciprocated the welcoming and entertainment offered to them, the spokesman representing the bride's family, stands to initiates a dialogue. The dialogue usually begins in form of question. 'You know we are busy people; we have farms to attend and streams for fishing. Others want to engage in their daily businesses,' have you come for visitation, so that we can prepare a place for you to sleep? Or, are you passing by, and then stopped to say hello to us? With a bottle of – gin and an amount of money, the groom's family through the spokesman presents the reason for their visit: that of taking a wife (he usually mention the name of the bride) for their son and not for visitation nor were they passing by. The bride's family accepts the drinks and money that are presented before them.

Photo-Doc 3. The Family Orators



Standing, are the two *Etemro* (spokes men) in fore front of the marriage performance. (Photo credit: JahBoy Photography 09062112391)

Requirement for Marriage Rites and Rituals

The requirements for the marriage rites are known by the elders of the family and those who are vast in Okpe marriage traditions. However, to reduce augments during negotiation, to maintain pace, and for decorum sake, a list is handed over to the family of the groom few month(s) or weeks before the day of ceremony. This list is given to the groom's father by members of the family of the bride. Some of the basic things contained in the list include: 1]. Clothing for the bride's father and mother, 2]. a walking stick and cap for the bride's father, 3] an amount of money demanded by the father of the bride, (this amount is negotiable), 4]. hair tie for the mother of the bride, 5] twenty (20) litters of *Ogoro* (sweet palm wine), 6] ten litters of *Ogogoro* (locally refined palm wine), 7] three (3) bags of salt along with Three Thousand Naira (#3000). A bag of salt is accompanied by a fee of One Thousand Naira. One of the bags with the attached fee go to the bride's mother's family, the second bag and its fee go to the bride's father's family, and the third bag with its fees is given to the women who are wives of the family of the father of the bride. It should be noted that in some rare cases, the last bag of salt and its fee is given to the community women (*egwa-emese*). 8] Three Thousand Naira (#3000) procession fee, 9] One Hundred and Twenty-Naira (#120) bride price fee along with, kola nuts and a bottle of Gin. In some communities in the kingdom, the one hundred and twenty naira is presented along with five thousand (#5000) naira additional fees. Presented also as part of the marriage rites are 9] seven (7) bottles of hots alcoholic drink preferably Gin.

After the presentation of the items needed for the marriage rite, the mother of the bride is called upon to the room of activities. She is asked if she has received her demands from the groom. If her answer is yes, she is asked to go and arrange with the other women to dress the bride and proceed on the procession to the room of activities. Before the bride arrives, the groom is called upon to tell the family of the bride what he does for a living.

Photo-Doc 5a. Some basic requirements for Marriage Rites and Rituals



The groom, and his *Otemro* with the pre-prepared bride price list. (photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391)

Photo-Doc 5b. Some basic requirements for Marriage Rites and Rituals



Three bags of salt and drinks as part of the compulsory requirement for the bride price (photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391)

Procession

The Bride is brought to the room of activities in a procession. On arrival, the groom shown to the bride for recognition and acceptance to marry him. When her answer is yes, she put her knees on the ground consecutively three times to affirm her yes. To express their joy, the groom and his people spray the bride some money (spraying of money at this point is not mandatory).

Photo-Doc 6. Procession





Procession to the room of activities. The procession is carried out by only women. In most cases it is difficult to see the bride in the crowd of women. The bride remains in between the crowd of women leading the procession. She is the one on heavy beads on her neck and right hand (photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391

Handing over ritual

Two mature women, one from the bride's mother's family, the other from the bride's father's family, who are legally married under Okpe customs and tradition and are in their marital home, are asked to hand over the bride to the groom. They hold her by the hand and seat her on his legs, nine times (see image F). On the ninth time, the groom grabs his wife with joy amidst a shout of *iii..., iyeee* (nine represents infinity)

Photo-Doc 7a. Handing over ritual



The *Ototа* (left) representing the family of the bride questioning the bride. In the middle is the groom holding a walking stick. (photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391

Photo-Doc 7b. Handing over ritual



On the right- and left-hand side of the bride are two women holding her hands. They are handing the bride over to the groom by siting her on his legs nine times. (photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391

Prayers

The bride and groom kneel before the father of the bride for prayers. Twice, the ancestors are called upon for blessing upon the marriage. The drink and kola-nuts for the ancestors are not to be taken by anybody it is purred on the ground. Another glass of drink and a piece of Kola-nut is blessed and given to the couple. The bride receives the drink and kola-nut and hand it over to the groom who first, takes a sip, gives some

to the bride, and finishes the remaining (the bride returns the glass to her father).

After this ritual, they are recognized under the customs and traditions of the Okpe people as husband and wife. They go out to greet visitors who have come to grease the occasion with them. Drinks and food are served. Visitors give gifts and money to the couple. Singing, dancing, and merry-making follow immediately.

Photo-Doc 8a. Prayers



The father of the bride is consulting the ancestors just before praying for the couple (photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391

Photo-Doc 8b. Prayers



The bride and groom on their knees receiving prayers from the father of the bride. As the bride kneels with her two knees, the groom put only his left knee down. (photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391

Photo-Doc 8c. Prayers



The bride receiving the glass of drink from her father. (photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391

Photo-Doc 8d. Prayers



The bride giving the glass of palm wine with prayers to the groom while on her knees.

(photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391*)*

Photo-Doc 8e. Prayers



Sitting on stools are the young men from the family of the bride. Their responsibility is to serve the wine to the father of the bride from the bowl. The young man assigned this role seat on a native stool while performing the rites. (photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391*)*

Aesthetics of Okpe Marriage Performances

This section of this paper discusses the performance aesthetics present in the Okpe marriage performances. Performance venue, costume and makeup, the audience, language, characters music, dance, procession are discussed.

The Audience: The audience members in Okpe marriages includes members of the families of the celebrants, invited, and uninvited guests, as well as a passer-by. They participate in the performance from the beginning to the end of the ceremony. The women sing traditional songs for the bride while she dresses. The same categories of the audience sing praise chants for the girl during the procession. During prayers, the audience participates and makes comments when the need arises. They also do the counting for the two women who have the honour of seating the bride on the leg of the groom. Counting usually is, *ohu*, (1*) eva*, (2) *esa*, (3) *ene*, (4) *esiori*, (5) *erha*, (6) *irhirhwe*, *(7) erere*, *(8) irhirin…* (9). The most important part of the counting is *the irhirin* which is a symbol of 'infinity. The audiences are not trained. They are fluid; moving from one place to the other; discussing with other members of the audience, and participating by singing, dancing, and performing when the need arises. They keep the atmosphere active and fascinating.

The Performers: Almost everyone present in the ceremony participates in the performance process. While the bride, the groom, the young boy who serve the drinks and kola-nuts and other observers play minor roles (since they do not have any speaking role).The *Otemro* and the old men who offer prayers play the major roles. The Etemro demonstrate their creative oratorical prowess concerning the occasion through poetry interpolated with the appropriate use of idioms and proverbs **(**Shava, 2015 p. 4), everyone is responsible for the development of the marriage rite.

The Orator(s): The orator plays key role in marriage process. The orator's responsibilities include announcing the arrival of guests, coordinating the compound activities, and ensuring everyone is comfortable and entertained while waiting for the bride, the groom, and their families to complete the marriage rite. The orator is usually one who is vast in Okpe language. He uses fitting proverbs for the occasion. The orator is traditional comedian, good at making jokes to hold the attention of the audience while the occasion lasts.

Language: Language is crucial and primary to traditional Okpe marriage rite. It increases appreciation. Elders find it unnecessary to sometimes speak English or other languages in the room of activity. Gestures, chants, signs, and other forms of physical communication are used to communicate ideas depending on the culture of bridegroom. Proverbs and idioms are an important features of the Okpe language and so, they are employed richly to add colour to the performance as well as showcase the linguistic aesthetics of the culture. The use of proverbs and idioms in the language exaggerates the improvisational dramatic dialogue and conveys deeper meanings and essence, most times, they convey deep philosophical meanings which highlight the Okpe people worldview. Poetry praise poetry, chants and ululation are employed as a common practice in Okpe traditional marriage rites. As noted earlier, praises accompany the bride to the room of activities . The chants following the procession are symbolic. They serve as a communicative medium to all audience members. It notifies all that a young girl is being taken to marriage. And that: 'whoever cares to know who she is should come out and see her. From this day, no one dares come close to her. She is fair, she is dark, she is tall she is never short, with the nicest of steps". Below is the chant.

Lead chant: Ughe na oooo e ……behold and look

Lead chant Ogbotor Orhorhomu na, oruotafene…. The beautiful bride has come out

Lead chant: Obarehin ……. She is light in complexion

Audience: E….. yes

Lead chant: Obihin, o**….** she is dark in complexion

Audience: E…. yes

Lead chant: Ohavwo piaranza…….. she is well structured

Audience: E … yes

Lead chant: Ukperi oha omaye e … she has no bodily defect

Audience: Ejo… she does not

Lead chant: Oburhobore**…** she does not have broken legs

Audience: Ejo…. She does not

Lead chant: iii iye eee …. adulatory praise chant

Audience. Iyee… reciprocal adulatory chant of acceptance

This action is carried out by the *emese-ogwa* and *egwa-emese*. Women take turns in the chanting and praise singing until the bride enters the room of activities. Praises and chants are, therefore, very significant aspects of traditional Okpe marriages rite. They are a reflection of the culture and traditions of the Okpe people. Importantly, they make ethical statements and express the norms and values of the society. They also embody the values that the young bride has been brought up with as well as portray intended values she is expected to take to her husband’s family.

Songs: The songs used during the marriage rites are mainly folk songs. These songs are essential feature of the performance of the marriage rites. The songs tell stories about strong family heritage.. Songs function primarily, to enliven the occasion, to entertain as well as to inform the family of the bridegroom as well as all present of family values of the groom and Okpe cultural values. In Okpe marriage rites, songs are used particularly by women to create a happy mood and a feeling of ecstasy during the occasion. Songs are sung early in the morning by the women who are preparing the food that is to be used to feed the guests at the occasion. The joyful songs awake

neighbours from their beds. The women take turns singing as they see how transformed the bride has become for the day, with makeup. If the in-laws (the family of the bride) are making things difficult for the groom in the process of paying the bride's price, the spokesman (Otemro) representing the groom's family, sings for liveliness, thereby resolving any conflict that may arise during the negotiation stages of the marriage rites.

Procession: The most exciting parts of the ceremony is the procession. The procession takes place when the bride is taken to the room for activities for questioning and final -rites of passage. Everyone is happy, especially the groom because he has been anticipating her arrival. All who are involved in the procession are women chanting praises to the bride. It takes several minutes for the procession to be completed. This is however dependent on the distance from the fattening room where she is dressed to the room of activities. The procession is symbolic. It is a rite of passage for the bride. It marks the end of her spinsterhood. She never returns to the fattening room. By the time the procession is completed, she has become a woman. The women's involvement in the procession symbolizes their support and witness to the change of status and acceptance of bride into womenfolk. Usually, only married women participate in the procession. However, an improvisational dramatic highpoint of the marriage rites which occur as part of the bridal procession is the bringing of family maidens to the bridegroom to identify is bride. Usually, this is done by covering the maidens with a hood, the bridegroom is expected to be able to identify his bride from the hooded maidens. This is done three times. If the groom fails to identify the bride and pick the wrong bride, fines, appeasements are made by the groom or he is made to first complete the formalities of marrying the maiden before marrying the bride in whose honour the family is gathered. Usually, a wrong unveiling spells the end of the marriage rites and spells doom for the families involve.

Dress and Makeup Aesthetics

Dressing is an important aspect of the Okpe culture. The Okpe people use the dressing to express their identity. Dresses worn in Okpe marriages, especially by the bride, groom, and their family members are always very colourful and attractive. While black dresses are generally and morally not allowed, white and other colours are welcome. The most common colours used include green which is primarily a symbol of productivity and procreation. White symbolizes chastity, purity or royalty. Yellow

exemplifies prominence and prosperity. Choosing colours to be worn to the marriage ceremony in Okpe land is choice-based. Individuals choose for themselves the material fitting for the occasion depending on their financial and social status.

The groom and older men tie six (6) or more yards of the wrapper, with a top. Men generally put on bowler hat- mostly black- and hold a walking stick. Around their neck and wrists are traditional beads. They also put on a pair of shoes or sandals. The bride and her mother tie their hair with beautiful and colourful headgears. The women use two wrappers of the same colour; one shorter than the other. The mother of the groom and bride carries a handbag, hold a hand use in greeting guests.

The dress sense and make-up are very purposeful in traditional Okpe marriages. They serve as a visual re-enactment of Okpe history and a reminder of the cosmic traditions. They also express the transformation of time and space and are constructed for contemporaneous meanings (Aduku, 2008 p 3). Appearance and general comportment communicate certain feelings or emotions and attitudes. Visual materials especially in dress convey depths of meaning, and they tell mythical and historical stories. Feathers, beads, chains, etc which may appear ordinary assume thematic and philosophical import if properly used and put in perspective (Aduku, 2008, p 3).

Photo-Doc 9. Costume and Makeup



Complete costume of the Bride and the Groom (photo credit JahBoy Photography 09062112391*)*

Conclusion

This study was able to document an African traditional marriage rites as performance through still pictures. In modern times when classroom education has inflicted foreign cultures and ideas on different forms of entertainment in Africa, some teachers like Dr.

Enita encourage their students to experiment with both traditional and modern forms of theatre. Thus, students in universities in Africa read and perform scripted drama, and at the same time, keep the tradition by engaging in traditional theatre during festivals and other special occasions (Patience Omolola, 2006). Scholars and theatre practitioners like Enita see traditional performances as a means to reshape students and communities and keep the tradition alive and also make them relevant in the African theatre and drama of the future. African weddings like other traditional performances are not an individual business. They are an institution and are cultural, religious, social, and communal affairs. The processes involve embody the performative, entertaining, and educative. They are source materials for modern African drama.

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