

RITUAL AS SOCIAL DRAMA: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN UMULUMGBE

FUNERAL RITUAL

OZOR, GLORIA NWANDU

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DECLARATION

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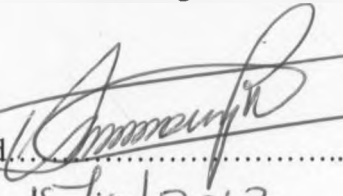
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Signed.....
Date: 15/10/2012.....

Mr. Kimmingichi Wabende

Signed.....
Date: 15/10/2012.....

Dr. Simon Peter Otieno

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beauty Dr. Nicholas Ozor and our little angels: Precious,
Emmanuela, Oluebube and Ethan Chimdalụ Pendo Ozor.

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ABSTRACT

In this study I present the extent to which the performance of the funeral ritual of the Umulumgbe community, the South Eastern sub-tribe of the Igbo of Nigeria, can be viewed as a social drama, and the meaning of the special participation of women in the performance of the ritual. Specifically, the study set out to investigate the nature of the ritual as a classic example of the category of African social drama as run by women. From the social dramaturgical elements identified in the performance of the ritual, the study has subsequently sought to examine the significance of the elevated role of women within the Umulumgbe context. I have explored the performative aspects of the ritual: the design, the process, the setting, participation and effects. From the findings, it emerges that the funeral ritual of the Umulumgbe is a classic example of African social drama. More so, the elevated role of women in the performance of this ritual signifies a more powerful position in the Umulumgbe society.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background Study

Until Wole Soyinka, in Myth, Literature and the African World and Ruth Finnegan in Oral literature in Africa, made incisive literary inquiry into African rituals, the colonial critics took for granted that there was drama in Africa. Soyinka and Finnegan illustrated the complex existence of African drama within an overlap of fiction and fact, and more so the overlap of the fictional and the functionally quotidian. This overlapping play could only be suitably found in ritual. From Soyinka's findings, the ritual, which colonial literary critics dismissed as purely anthropological, is the embodiment of the traditional African drama. In the African world, although function is the most significant features in ritual, it is perpetually an experience of contrivance (play, imagination and creativity) which shape it. Ours has been social drama. It has, thus, become imperative for literary scholars to engage in further exploration and examination of various African rituals, not only as functional customary activities, but more so as literary texts with which the people's world views and discourses can be understood.

Human life is full of rituals which set patterns of behaviour, formalize relationships, locality and help to give meaning to social and cultural life. Rites of passage are for example specially assist members of a society at key times of human growth and change. They mark the transition from one stage to another, for example, marriage can be seen as a transition from being single to being with a life partner or being married; death can be seen as a transition from life to the after-life; while puberty can be seen as the transition from childhood to adulthood. These transitions follow a

recognizable but different pattern of behaviour in many cultures, for example, babies are given names, and during this time a ceremony is performed to celebrate the naming, youths enter adulthood; in some cultures circumcision marks this transition. People also pass from the world of the living to the world of the dead, and the ceremony that marks a burial rite.

Rituals are social activities which occupy the space between reality and the imaginary in the sense that, while participants of the rituals are convinced that they are carrying out an ordinary quotidian activity, they employ aspects of play in the performance of the activity. Rituals are thus complex human activities whose understanding can be approached from many dimensions. For a long time rituals have been approached from anthropological and sociological scopes with more concern on their functionality and little examination on their fictional nature. Literary studies offer a more suitable understanding of this missing dimension. From this dimension, an infinite array of insights into how people think about themselves and about others, and how they constitute individual and group values, can be attained.

What strikes as an aspect of play in a ritual is its process, and although the conductor of the ritual is only aware that the performance is quotidian, the process is simulated. It is within what Victor Turner observed and called "subjunctive mood" (28) and Richard Schechner's idea of "as if" (xiii) where rituals provide moments of realizing the imaginary to reality. These performative elements in a ritual, such as action, setting, plot, effects and diction provide windows with which we can examine values, knowledge and ideologies of a people on such salient socio-cultural issues as gender, class or race,

because creativity has the rare capability of fixing ideas in subtle ways, as Peter Lam argues and Stein Haugom Olsen opine, literature has “truth telling capacities” (3). It is within this context that this study engaged in exploration of the role of women in the ritual through the lens of performativity.

Gender has been one of the most explicated social issues in literature because, as Judith Butler observes, literature is a “stylized repetition of act” which is capable of fixing every kind of ideology (141). Butler insists that gendered identity is a socially conceived and fixed. Subsequently, what has then appeared to critics as very ripe grounds for examination of gender conception and fixing is the analysis of performative activities and their discourses. It appears that such performative activities which are more situated within the functional and “factual” category can yield more ideas of a people’s gender conceptions and fixing subtleties. The subtlety of such performative genres is added when the supernatural is involved. A rite of passage like a funeral ritual, for example, marks the movement of one from the living to the spiritual or ancestral. Performance of such rite requires deep supplication, thoroughness in procedure and adherence to the goal of the rite. This implies that, at such moments, people’s profound values, knowledge and ideologies are put to a very practice in a way that is most illuminating to an observer.

A ritual is further understood as a performative process designed to accomplish major functions in the society. According rites of passage are essential ingredients in the rejuvenation of society. (7). To Van Gennep, all human societies use ceremonial rites to mark significant transitions in the social status of individuals. These rites highlight and validate changes in a person's status, particularly on the occasion of such life-

transforming events as birth, puberty, marriage, parenthood, and death, but also may occur upon taking a political office or joining a secret society. Comparing the structure of such rituals in diverse cultures, Van Gennep discovered that rites of passage often share similar features, including a period of segregation from everyday life, a liminal state of transition from one status to the next, and a process of reintroduction to the social order with a new standing. This implies that rites are transitional dramas which justify certain fundamental stages in human life.

Death as a transition is an inevitable end of mankind separates the deceased from their statuses of living parents, spouse, relations or friends. In the Umulumbe community, the funeral ritual commence the moment a person dies and continues even after burial. Accordingly, people pay their respects to the dead, marking their former identity with them, express sorrow for the bereaved and, by so doing reaffirm their continuing relationship with them. Sometimes, a separate ritual is performed by the deceased's family recounting the achievement or character of the dead, and supernatural powers may be invoked to forgive any evil the deceased may have perpetrated and to guide them into afterlife. A more suitable word for this interstitial engagement between the living and the dead is what Turner calls idea of limen (25).

Turner in his article titled "Social Dramas and Stories about Them" further argues that every social drama is performed along generative, familiar, but nuanced mythical narratives which seemingly represent the peoples' experiences, beliefs and values (149). Therefore, when a ritual is being performed by the deceased family, friend and relations; either to appease the gods of the land to accept their dead one in the other world, or to celebrate the deceased life on earth, a narrative is generated in different forms. There is

also a particular dialogue which is generated between members of the family performing an appeasing ritual to the gods of the land; there is also a dialogue between a member of the deceased family and the diviner, and even between the diviner and the gods. So, this study is a stylistic analysis of socio-dramatic and thematic examination of the gender contestation in performance of the ritual of the Umulumbe community (see the appendix for the history of the community).

1.2. Definition of Terms

Ritual

In this study, the term ritual is used to mean a set of actions, performed mainly for their symbolic value, and it is always performed by people that share the same belief. I have derived this dimension from the definitions of Victor Turner and Richard Schechner. According to Turner a ritual is “A standardized unit act” (1987: 5). Schechner defines rituals as follows:

Rituals are ambivalent symbolic actions pointing at the real transactions even as they help people avoid too direct a confrontation with these events. Thus rituals are also bridges – reliable doings carrying people across dangerous waters. It is no accident that many rituals are “rites of passage” (Schechner 1993, 230).

So rituals are collective memories encoded into actions. Rituals help people to deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies and desires that trouble the norms of daily life.

Social Drama

Social drama to this study is understood as a social performative event which occurs within group of people that share values and interest and who have a common history;

and for there to be drama in this social event, there must be a breach, crisis, redress and reincorporation. Turner (1982) observes that social drama “redress” to occurrence against normalcy and is meant to prevent recurrence of such occurrences. He further argues that redress usually involves “ritualized action”. (92). Social drama is thus a performance meant to solve problems in the society.

1.3. Statement of the Research Problem

The Umulumgbe funeral ritual is a post burial social ceremony performed to settle the deceased among the ancestors and the spirits and to settle the survivor. It is carried out in an elaborate process of actions characterized by intricate symbolism and play. Though the event is performed as a mundane social activity, there are apparent indications that this ritual can be regarded as drama and particularly of the category of social drama. This study thus seeks to answer the question regarding the extent to which the Umulumgbe funeral ritual can be described as a social drama. Secondly, the Umulumgbe funeral rituals’ major roles are notably performed by women. Being a very profound event among the people and a social drama, this study sought to examine the dramatic significance of the roles of women as “actors” in the ritual with particular concerns on the implication of gender contestation patterns among the Umulumgbe.

1.4. Objectives of Study

This study aimed at exploring the social dramatic elements of Umulumgbe funeral ritual and the portrayal of women. In particular, the study sought:

- a) To evaluate the performance of the Umulumgbe funeral rite as a social drama. This study has been concerned with the extent to which the performance of Umulumgbe funeral ritual can be viewed as social drama

- b) To examine the role of women as major stakeholders and actors in the ritual; the way the social dramatic features in the ritual manifest gender contestation patterns among the Umulumgbe.

1.5. Hypothesis

This study has been developed from the assumptions that:

- a) The Umulumgbe funeral ritual has the dramatic features which qualify it as a social drama.
- b) Women play a more elevated role than men in the performance of Umulumgbe funeral ritual.

1.6. Justification

This study was justified by the following observations:

The Umulumgbe ritual is both a quotidian social experience as well as drama. The participants are fully aware that they are performing a socially non-fictive activity; the process of the activity is expressly theatrical. The ritual activity is made of characters, actions, dialogues and symbolic effects which resemble the criterion of social drama.

Again the ritual is mainly driven by women. Women are required to participate in large numbers in the ritual, occupying some special roles and positions in the rituals. The ritual performance during funeral rite is a very important event in the social life of Umulumgbe as a community.

From the literature I have reviewed, similar researches have been conducted on different communities in Africa including some communities in Igbo land of Southeastern part of Nigeria but none has been researched on the funeral performance of Umulumgbe. It is, thus, expected that the results of this study adds to the earlier studies

on the configurative power of social dramas. Little has also been studied to explicate the socio-culturally elevated position of women among the Umulumgbe. Therefore, it is expected that the findings from this study enriches the body of literature on the subject areas which is not often documented.

1.7. Scope and Limitation

This study is a stylistic as well as a thematic critical analysis of Umulumgbe funeral rituals with specific case analysis of two rituals which I carried out during the fieldwork: The funeral ritual of Mr. Elias Odoh and Mrs Susana Ozor, and thus only the actual features observed during the performance place, space and time are central to this study. The two funeral rituals have been used: one for a man and one for a woman with key focus on the socio dramatic features and the role of women in the ritual.

1.8. Literature Review

This study has engaged in a review of two categories of works. The first category consists of studies on social dramatic features of the funeral ritual and the second category is about the role of women in the rituals.

In the first category, Julia Kim Werts in “Visualizing Rituals Critical Analysis of Art and Ritual Practice” argues that language in a ritual is a crucial communicative and relay element of analytic engagement of a people’s beliefs (14). To her, a ritual is best understood by engaging in analysis of its performance. This is corroborated by Mieke Kolk in “From Cultural Heritage to Theatre”, where he observes that the ritual practice of coronation should be “read “as performances; as medium of expression of the society and the socio-political system of the people due to their dramatic nature (5).

Frits Staal, in "The Meaninglessness of Ritual", argues that rituals must be studied for their own sake, because they do not 'mean' anything. According to him, it is wrong to assume that ritual "consists in symbolic activities which refer to something else" (15), and he claims that ritual performers are only concerned with the proper execution of rules. Taking ritual action as completely self-absorbed and self-contained, he defines ritual as pure activity, in which the faultless execution of rules is all that matters; what the performer does matters, not what he or she thinks, believes, or says. For Staal ritual action is performed for its own sake implying that ritual action is meaningless—"without function, aim or goal, or also that it constitutes its own goal." (16). This study, however, has sought to refute this claim because a ritual among the Umulungbe is not just performed in abstraction but rather within a web of traditions and beliefs which are embedded in external social beliefs and ideologies.

Richard Bauman in Verbal Art as Performance argues that "the touchstone of verbal art lies in a maximized use of the devices of the language in such a way that this use itself attracts attention and is perceived as uncommon" (7). Here he examines how communities classify, and appreciate a good performance through a performer's creative ability in his usage of words. Bauman further argues that performance cannot only be seen in acting but also as a mode of speaking. In other words, performance is seen as an essential aspect of human communicative capacity that cannot be completely understood without a full appreciation of the roles of language and other semiotic behavior in human life. In cultural terms, performance is seen as pervading virtually all institutions of public expressive behavior.

Marvin Carlson in Performance: A Critical Introduction also argues on the development of performance by stating that "... within every culture there can be discovered a certain kind of activity, set apart from other activities by space, time, attitude, or all three, that can be spoken of and analyzed as performance"(13).

Erving Goffman defines performance as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. In The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Goffman analyzed human daily life world from the perspective that all of human actions can be named performance, and that the interpretations and meanings given to these actions are fundamentally social in nature. His adoption is that of the analogy of the everyday life to the theatrical, or the dramaturgical, performances. So, in this perspective, human beings cannot merely act for the sake of that action. Rather, all actions are social performances - with the aim of not only achieving whatever the "inherent" purposes the action may have had, but also that of giving off and maintaining certain desired impressions of the self to others. So, human actions are seen as inherently involving these social and relational aspects with the desire to give off the impression that people want others to have of themselves. Goffman argues that the self is simply nothing more than "Self Presentations" and "Role Performances." That social life is like a theatre, with social scripts, performances and actors and roles that are performed in the front and back regions of self (7).

The second set of reviews surveyed the specific case studies of gendered roles in various West African ritual performances. Three major works have been crucial to this study. The first one is Osei-Mensah Aborampah's "Women's Roles in the Mourning Rituals of the Akan of Ghana". In this study, Aborampah is similarly on the trail of

understanding the performance of a ritual not only as a traditional or popular culture but more so as a medium of appreciating the impact of social issues. This study took a critical analysis of different kinds of works performed by women in mourning with special consideration of the dirges. In this Akan ritual, women are similarly observed as occupying elevated roles. Matrilineality is here seen as taking the centre stage with the body of the deceased being considered as a “property of the matrilineal” (261). Special focus is on the special roles of women in the event like widowhood ritual where women protecting the widow “from the deceased”; and preparation of the body in lying state such as washing and dressing. These elevated roles seem to imply that women are special gender category of breaching crises of death, but whose elevated positions are not declared openly. The women operate on these roles from a masculine reference. In this study I have sought to illustrate the extents to which women occupy special roles within the veils of masculinity. Aborampah’s study more so took a cultural approach; my study will approach it from performance and feminist approaches.

The second is Christian Onyeji’s “Igbo women in Africa as Creative Personalities: Musical Processing of Socio-economic Solidarity”. Although this study is not about rituals (but musical texts), it has been crucial in my study because it is about indigenous songs performed during the staging of a rites of passage such as birth, initiation and death, and again because it is concerned with the role of women within the same community my study is based. The element of reflexivity is here examined, with special focus on the inversion strategies women use to affirm their self experience. The rural Igbo women are seen in an engagement of foregrounding of their feminine potential of solidarity to advance themselves socially and economically. Using the example of the

institutionalization of *Otu umunwayi anuanu* “the married women club”, Onyeji has illustrated powerful potentialities of women within even within covering the veil of patriarchy.

The third is Alaba Simpson and Aretha Asikitipi’s “Women and Ritual Communication in Badagry and Owo towns of South Western Nigeria”. This study is about the relevance of the religious ritual in the construction of gender in Africa. This study has emphasized an ethnographic approach - the need to closely consider the socio-cultural contexts within which nuances of the rituals can be adequately understood. The study also noted the dominant and prominent roles of women in such importantly held rite of passage - “female leadership in ritual matters” (1179). Reference is here made to the Yoruba mythological ritual of *Kubito*, where the females are seen as dominating in the ritual. In spite of the notions that the women participate in these rituals with dominance and prominence to please the man, it is interesting to note that potentialities of power among women is enormously vested among them.

From these reviews, it can be seen that studies on African rituals as literary texts, and particularly among the Umulumgbe, have not been adequately studied. This study has sought to add knowledge to these existing studies by inputting, one, the literary approach to African rituals, and particularly the Umulumgbe, and, two, findings from performance and feminist conceptual approaches.

1.9. Theoretical Framework

I have approached this study from two perspectives: performance theory and feminist theory. Performance theory operates on the premise that a performance is an imagined process that activates a “second plane of reality” (Schechner, xiv). The second

plane of reality is experienced in a ritual through transportation and transformation (13). Transportation is the temporary change in consciousness, space and time manifested through, “experiencing” and “return” “entering” (13) while transformation is the irreversible effects on the subjects (14). The task of the critic is, thus, to delve into the relationship between the surface and the secondary plane of reality of the performance. Victor Turner, Schechner’s exponent, observes that social processes are indeed performative. In his treatise in the ritual as action, he notes the “creative, often carnivalesque and playful” features as qualifying a ritual as an aesthetic drama (7). To Schechner’s perspectives of transportation and transformation, he adds the element of symbolic contrivance as being central to the making of a ritual (25).

The study has used the feminist theoretical approaches to analyze the portrayal of gendered power in the ritual. Michel Foucault’s treatises on sexuality and power as espoused by Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray have been crucial to this study. Judith Butler’s trajectory of feminism commonly known as “performativity” has been crucial here in the sense that it posits that identity is configured through performance of beliefs, ideas, ideologies and identities. Butler observes life as full of performances. These performances include those repeated socio-cultural acts, such as gender roles which, with time, set ground to fix ideas, beliefs and ideologies as given and natural. Performance in this regard is evident in both linguistic and non-linguistic mediums. To Butler, the end scenario is “performance of a being” (141). In this regard it is the “performance” of the woman in the ritual which has formed the basis of this study.

More so, I have employed the concepts of “language machine” and “theory of difference” propounded by Luce Irigaray in her work, The Sex Which is Not One, to

augment Butler's notion of performativity. Irigaray, from a psychoanalytic point of view, opines that language, as expressed in both linguistic and non-linguistic mediums, is a powerful machine with which meaning, knowledge and presence are produced (23). I have, thus, explored the performance of the Umulumgbe funeral ritual with focus on the machinations of language which seem to express gender roles and perspectives.

1.10. Methodology

To arrive at the objectives of this study, I set to handle this study in the following way. First, I have engaged in a critical observation and analysis of the performance process of two naturally occurring (non-induced) funeral rituals in Umulumgbe. This choice of non-induced events was a strategy to obtain the most illuminating socio-cultural contexts which inform the performance of the ritual. One of the funerals is a man's and the other is a woman's. This preference for both a man's and a woman's has been founded on two reasons. One is to have a complete perspective of a funeral ritual among the Umulumgbe and, subsequently, to obtain differences and similarities of the two dimensions.

Of more importance to this study have been the audio and visual aspects and processes that constitute the performance. The audio-visual aspects include the space and place of performance, and the cultural medias used in the ritual: song, dance, concerts, recitations, chants, movements, actions, setting, costume and décor, and the general effects. The processes involve the technical elements of social drama: breach, crisis, redress and reincorporation. (Turner, 1982:25). With these elements I have been able to evaluate the nature and functionality of the ritual as a social drama. From these elements

of social drama, I have also explicated the meaning of the prominent role of women as the major participants in the ritual.

The study has obtained materials through fieldwork. According to Finnegan, African oral literature “depends on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion” (45). From this trend, I have engaged in ethno-methodology¹ to obtain deeper details of social, historical and cultural contexts which found the Umulumgbe ritual. I participated in the ritual and spent several days engaging in focused interviews and discussions on the ritual and the contexts with which the performance of the ritual are founded.

Again, I critically listened to the performance and recorded all the funeral performance during this period. I also conducted an interview in order to learn and study the people’s culture, belief, and funeral rites among the Umulumgbe. This exercise was recorded in a VCD and DVDs. I have transcribed and translated the songs performed in the funeral into English for further reference. To retain reliability of my material, I have used a combination of both formal (lexical inclination) and dynamic equivalences (semantic inclination) of translation espoused by Eugene Nida in “Theories of Translation” (25) because I am aware of linguistic challenges between Igbo and English, and I am persuaded that the two approaches suitably complemented one another. Where English has not adequately captured the material from the source language, Igbo, I have provided annotations to make up for the losses. I used more than one translation assistant to help edit the transcripts in order to minimize error.

¹A research method developed by an American sociologist Harold Garfinkel which advocates for critical focus on the contexts in which a people being studied make sense of their world.

CHAPTER 2

UMULUMGBE FUNERAL RITUAL AS A SOCIAL DRAMA

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present the features in the performance of the ritual which validate the performance of the event as a social drama. The chapter critically analyses the key features of the ritual in an attempt to draw parallels with mainstream theatrical drama as an imitation of action but more so as social drama. The chapter considers major postulations on the nature and functionality of drama, and particularly the social drama category, in identifying and examining striking features in the performance of the ritual which may suitably be used as key elements of social drama.

2.2. The Making of the Umulumgbe Funeral Ritual as Social Drama

There is a close relationship between rituals and the mainstream theatrical drama in that the later has been traced to have originated from ancient ritual performances. Drama is thus much more a product of the oral tradition than the written tradition because the conceptualization and the execution of the action has generally been an oral activity. The category of the social drama (drama which occupies the space between the real and the imagined because of its close association with myth) is more so the foundation of drama mainly because of its profundity of purpose and method. The purpose of social drama is to accomplish certain profound requirements in the society which practices it, and the method of execution of the activity is accorded maximum meticulousness. The most salient purpose of a ritual is to reorder things in life; it is a “restorative” experience (Jacek Smolicki, 19). Aristotle identified a salient element of drama being catharsis; an experience of purgation of emotions. Being an activity of profound intention, social

drama is thus performed with carefully crafted art and design (18). This is seen in the way quality of performance in drama is founded on meticulous observation of methodical rules. The rules according to Smolicki hinge on three elements: time communication and social perspectives of the people who practice it. And so a ritual is an imagined activity which addresses real issues among the people who practice it; a funeral ritual for example is a ceremony for celebrating of the life of a person who has passed on.

There is a strong belief in Umulumgbe that the spirits of one's ancestors keep a constant watch over the living, and must be appeased through rituals which is performed during funeral. Ancestors who had lived well, died in socially acceptable circumstances, and were given appropriate funeral rites, were allowed to continue the afterlife in a world of the dead. In Umulumgbe, it is always believed that a person's relative can reincarnate or come back as the person's child or grandchild, and this is why the first child of a family is always given the name of the paternal grandfather (if a boy) or the paternal grandmother (if a girl). Those who died in morally unacceptable circumstances in which funeral rituals are not performed are believed to "return" to the world of the living unless a special ritual is performed by a strong and powerful *dibia* (native doctor). This is because they wander homeless, expressing their grief by causing destruction among their living counterparts.

The difference between burial and funeral in Umulumgbe is that burial is "safeguarding" of the body of the deceased on earth while funeral is "safeguarding" the soul of the deceased in the world of spirits (ancestors and gods). A funeral performance is very important to Umulumgbe because if any family does not perform it, they will face the wrath of the deceased and the ancestors. A further complication will arise in that

another member of the family who will die later will not be feted with a funeral until the pending one is completed.

An exploration of the intersection between the Aristotelian criteria of drama: action, character, idea, verbal expression, music, and spectacle (Jeffery Hatcher, 7) and Turner's four phases of social drama: the breach, the crisis, redress and reincorporation, which explain the symbolic presentation of conflict and crisis resolution by use of ritual (Turner 1980, 144), are useful dimensions with which the extent to which an event can be evaluated as social drama. This is because, while Aristotle finds the basic criteria of identifying drama, Turner specifies the key features to which a social drama can be identified and analyzed. Rituals are thus viewed as the "dramas of the living" (Turner, 149). For the ritual of Umulumgbe nature, the play part usually surfaces at the phase of redress and reincorporation, the point when the drama is seeking to resolve. Social dramas disrupt the temporal character of the mainstream drama whose emergence is strictly situated only in the moments of its staging and the whims of the director. For social drama, performance is a continuation and necessity of life; "a spontaneous unit of social process" within a social group (Turner 149), and hence the moment ritual is set to a public ceremony is a finalization phase of a process that had been initiated earlier.

Using Aristotle's maxim that drama is an imitation of action, what makes drama meaningful to human beings is its intersectional occupation of the imagined and the "real"; the occupation of the space between the imitation and the action. It is used as a portrayal reflection on a wide variety of human behaviour, emotions and epistemologies through the use of "masking" (203) as opined by Francis Harding where masking is the "re-presentation of the self" through "suspension of the ordinary" (198). Human beings

are made to operate on the reflexive plane of “as if” (Schechner, iv). The imitation and play elements of drama allow expressions and actions which may, in ordinary life be impracticable, to be put to play. The Umulumgbe funeral ritual exhibits this element; it is a site for play of the impracticable (engagement with the dead, spirits and gods), but which seem to fill critical gaps in the practicable aspects of human life (the satisfaction among the participants that life has returned to normalcy after the demise of their member).

The art and design of the Umulumgbe ritual, thus, conform to four dramatic aspects: characters, conflict, costume, and time and space. These aspects are also intertwined with Turner’s four phases of social drama (breach, crisis, redress and reincorporation). This is because as much, as social drama is a specific genre of performance, it remains to be understood largely within the domain of all-purpose drama. Although there are more similarities than differences in rituals of men and women in Umulumgbe, the differences are given more distinctive importance in the performance of the rituals. In the foregoing section, I present an analysis of these dramatic aspects in the ritual and their intersection with Turner’s phases of social drama. For each element discussed I draw illustrations from both cases observed (man’s and woman’s).

2.2.1. Characters and Characterization in the Ritual

These are the symbolically contrived actors who are tasked with the responsibility of bringing characters to life (even the dead) in the ritual. In this ritual, the distinction between the actors and the audience is indistinguishable because everyone is a participant in the event and it is only at key moments when the major actors play prominently. At such times however, the others (audience) are always in support the major actors and thus

the term “participant” in the next discussion cuts across the actors and spectators. The actors’ roles are specifically defined for the purpose of the execution of ritual. They are governed by a sense of “masked” figurativeness (Francis Harding, 203).

The Umulumbe funeral ritual is a post-burial event that is both a duty as well as an obligation. It is a duty to the family members to ensure that the deceased is suitably received in the world of the ancestors, and it is an obligation because the survivors perform the ritual to “correct” the wrongs committed by the deceased to avert the wrath of the deceased. The nature and functionality of this event is summed by Paul Omukwa that a funeral ritual is the last respect people accord to the dead and a means of giving an everlasting peace to the dead and the survivors.

The funeral ritual, viewed as a ceremony, is thus a measure aimed at correcting the breaches committed by the deceased. The performance of the ritual emerges as the climax of the greater social drama which begins at the moment contravention of existing moral orders is committed. The performance of the ritual is the moment when theatrically dramatic aspects are fully employed. Although the participants usually do not consider themselves as acting they are governed by a modality of pretense (Francis Harding, 198). The major participants thus operate in double consciousness. On one hand they are conscious they are their natural selves while at the same time they allow themselves to be transported to act as somebody or something else. This double consciousness can be seen in the characters I present here below.

Characters and Characterization in a Man’s Funeral

The most significant participant in the ritual is the eldest daughter of the deceased (*Nwada*) – whose presence is held with high esteem. The *nwada* include the first born

daughter of the deceased or the first born daughter of the eldest son in case of a ritual for a woman. The belief is that *Nwada* “owns” and therefore they play the role of leading the funeral process. The daughter can be represented by a woman from the household if deemed too young to understand the ceremony. Every action is done for or on behalf of the girl or woman, and her whereabouts in the compound during the funeral is guarded by the other women. In the ritual, the daughter is momentarily transported during the performance to the position of *nwada* and although the girl and the audience are aware about her ordinariness, the girl is viewed as representing the deceased. According to Schechner, transportation is the temporary change of one’s consciousness characterized by “entering”, “experiencing” and “return” (13).



Fig 1: The *nwada* in her special funeral attire

Related to the role of the *nwada* is the role played by the first born son of the deceased. Although not a major participant, the role of the first born son of the departed is quite crucial. He is also specially donned with the necklace of large red beads and his presence symbolizes the presence of his father in the ceremony. Unlike the *nwada*, however, the first born son does not play the role of agency of fulfillment; the

symbolization of the presence of his father is basically based on gender and the expected position of the son will be to replace his father in providing needs for the family.

The second most important category of actors is the *umuada* which loosely translates to “The daughters of the land” and *Ndi-Nwunye di* (co-wives). These groups comprise of the aunts, sisters, daughters, nieces and sisters-in-law of the deceased. In the performance of the ritual, they act as the owners of the land in the way they take part in the most fundamental stages of action in the ritual. The other category of the co-wives is the invitees. The invitees are the co-wives of one of the daughters (*umuada*) who is inviting them (but which does not necessarily mean they are married together by the same man, rather, within the same clan or neighbourhood). Usually, for purposes of funerals, the co-wives join themselves in organized groups and a self-help agenda. Women from various groups play a very crucial role in the ritual.

Their general role is to elevate the estimation of a funeral. Therefore, the more the women groups and the more stylish they enter the scene, the higher the esteem the family of the deceased will be given. Women thus have strong attachment to their homes among Umulumbe, and at such time of bereavement they do everything to put this attachment to practice, and the best way is to marshal a fleet of her co-wives to accompany her. A high ranking funeral will thus be that which registers a high number of such women groups.

One of the specific roles of the co-wives is to sing and dance. Song and dance in the ritual appear as a vehicle for communing with the deceased, the ancestors and the gods. As studied by Smolicki, sound is a very important aspect in a ritual because of its emotional powers to express and impress (28). He notes that music has the Aristotelian

cathartic power to “carry the burden of unspeakable states of mind” (28). In the Umulumbe ritual there are many issues that surround the death of an individual. These issues include dissatisfactions, queries, directing blames, confessions, anxiety, wishes, and supplications. These issues are impracticably uttered ordinarily the funeral and thus music is vested with this function of subtly addressing them in the most effective way. Women being the custodians of singing in the funeral adopt this subtle role and importance; they are vested with the cathartic powers to express their feelings and also to impress the participants of the ritual (the living, the dead and spirits).

Another role is twofold: presence and to embellishment of the occasion. This is achieved through their creation of spectacle. Each of the women groups enters the scene in style usually as if to outdo each other. Their entry is accompanied by canon shots, song and dance. Usually there is a lead singer or dancer who rotates vigorously to the tunes seemingly to attract the attention of everyone to them. As the number of the women groups increase therefore the spectacle created will be very fascinating. This is added by their seemingly competing attires and songs and dances.



Fig 2: A typical entry of a women’s group into the funeral.

Men in the Umulumgbe funeral rituals emerge as minor actors, but whose role in the ceremony is quite crucial. Men are also drawn from the extended family or clan, neighbourhood. The others are usually the husbands of the daughters of the land (*umuada*) who accompany them (*umuada*) to the funeral. Some are also friends of the deceased who come from near and far. That is to say the presence of men is very important in the ritual to join hands in ensuring their friend (the deceased) is amicably settled in the spiritual world and that his family is also befittingly stabilized. The first crucial role of the men is to support, escort and protect their women in their journey to the home of the deceased, at the funeral ceremony and as the women return. Usually the women start the journey a little earlier to be trailed by their men. As they arrive at the scene, the men take their seats and watch the women sing and dance. The other role of men is to “shower money” (from the Igbo “*ibe ego*”) to the women dancers, and to the key figures in the family of the deceased. The imagery of showering is used in this regard because men are required to give out money in abundance like rain. As men prepare for such an occasion, thus, they ensure they find enough money for this action. The women are showered with money because the men see them as their daughters, sisters, wives, and more especially as their mothers. The men shower them with money not only to appreciate their musical performances in the ritual, but mainly because of their important space they occupy in their lives from birth to death. Women are thus required to appreciate their women in every way possible. In such occasions, men choose appropriate names to refer to the women. In Igboland generally, women have celebratory names of womanhood and motherhood such as *Nneka* “mother is supreme”; *Nneoma* “kind

mother”; *Nneamaka* “mother is good”; and *Nnebuisi* “mother is the head”. Such are the names which men use while showering the money.

Characters and Characterization in a Woman’s Funeral

In the case of a woman, for instance, the first granddaughter of the deceased is the most important actress in the funeral. In cases where the deceased has no granddaughter, one of the younger *umuadas* plays the role. She plays the role of embodiment of the deceased and in practice she is seen as an incarnation of the departed. As such, she will be the “owner” of the horse (which is bought as a gift to the deceased) throughout the ritual. She will be expected to ride “her” horse and only in circumstances where the daughter is young or unable to ride on the horse is when an assistant comes in. The assistant is to hold the girl close to the horse and make her touch the horse’s back or sit on it. This is to happen strictly throughout the ritual. During the ritual of this study, the girl in question, barely three years old had fell asleep but an assistant had to carry her in spite of her sleeping. *Nwada* is therefore seen as playing double role: while, on one hand, she is traditionally acknowledged as a special child to the father in life because she is usually named after the man’s mother, *nwada* dramatically becomes the “representative” of the dead father in the ritual, and more so the agency of fulfilling the wishes of the deceased. This is evident in the way she is foregrounded in the most fundamental stages of the ritual.

The role of the first born son of the deceased is more elevated in the ritual. He has the responsibility of carrying out the burial and the funeral ceremony of his mother. The other people who attend the ceremony are mere helpers. He is, thus, required to be present in all the significant phases of the ritual process.

However, minor in this process, a church priest also plays an important role. He prays for the participants at the church and more so the departed to have her soul rested well in heaven. There is a way in which the Christian faith, especially as professed by Catholic Church, has suitably blended with the traditional religion. Similar to the Platonic notion of mimesis, the catholic priest thus suitably replaces the traditional priest. His appearance and prayer quenches the thirst of the participants who upon being prayed for breaks with satisfaction to song and dance. Traditionally, the scene of the horse was done in a market but still the day has never changed from *Nkwo*. The market has thus been aptly substituted by the church while the traditional priest has been substituted by the catholic priest. (Refer to the appendix: The Umulumbe people).

These participants operate on the Schechner's notion of secondary plane of reality where art and design rule actions in the ritual act (Smolicki, 18). The art and design in the ritual is a major element in understanding the ritual as drama. The participants are thus seen in temporary suspension of being their real selves to enactment of imaginary selves. Participants are seen being transported onto the second plane of reality through orchestration of consciousness, time and communication. The roles are further seen as symbolic in that the presence of a character implies fulfillment of specific issues regarding the ritual's objective. The first-born daughter of a departed man, for example, stands for fulfilment of the cultural expectation of a daughter to provide a suitable send-off of her father to the spiritual world.

2.2.2 Conflict in the Ritual

The most important element in the action of performance of the ritual is the performance based on conflict. Conflict is the incompatibility between what a

character(s) wishes to achieve and what another character(s) or forces aim to achieve. (Hatcher 8). Conflict is one of the main Aristotelian features of drama because it is the basis of the flow of performance. At the same time the flow relates to phases, and thus Turner's four phases of social drama (breach, crisis, redress and reincorporation) are more intertwined with conflict than the other dramatic elements presented in this study. As Hatcher further notes, conflict is the logical connection between the events and the characters which enact the story, and which form an integral part of the plot of drama (8).

The Feature of Conflict in Man's Funeral

The major conflicts in the ritual exist between mankind and spirits and also between the living and the dead. Death is seen as a disciplinary measure on the living for contravention of the moral order set and safeguarded by dead. The livings are seen in a struggle to abide by the expectations which at times are contravened for example in cases of murder, suicide or illness. There is thus a form of a tussle between the living and the dead. These conflicts form the initial beginning of the ritual. As the performance commence, the aim is to resolve the conflicts. I have illustrated in, the redress section, how the three conflicts are resolved. Conflict is initiated the moment breach is caused. Breach is "the act or result of breaking; break or rupture" (Dictionary.com). In Turner's perspective, breaches are results of contravening the existing moral orders of a social group (Turner 1980, 150). The act is either a severe commission of a wrong or an omission of a right by an individual or a group but whose consequences will be borne communally. Breach is thus the crucial phase of the social drama in the sense that it forms the cradle of the conflict with which the play will be centred on in the process of seeking to resolve it. The breaches include wickedness, failure to take social, cultural and

religious obligations, and disruption of moral order. Breaches are either deliberate or accidental, but are usually followed by a retributive crisis. In Umulumbe death is double-faceted: it can be seen as a key result of breach, at the same time it can be viewed also as breach itself.

From the information I gathered in the field, on one hand, the Umulumbe believes that every death is planned by gods and ancestors for a reason, and thus, a result of a breach. There are two perspectives of breaches among the Umulumbe which result in death. One perspective death comes in to eliminate an evil person whose existence among the people is detrimental. The person may be a witch, a murderer, a violator of any sort, or contravening certain moral orders such as taking poison or failing to take care of oneself. Death, thus, comes in to eliminate such a person. The breach in this case therefore is the wickedness of the individual, in that the moral order provided for by the gods and ancestors have been contravened. The other perspective is that death is also a reliever of a good person. In this case death is seen as having done a favour to the departed. This is because life after death is seen as better as and more meaningful than that of the earth and that life after death is a form of rest after turmoil of the earth. This maxim seems to suitably explain why a good person dies. The breach in this case is the dreariness and sufferings of this world meted on a good person; the gods and the ancestors appear to wield dissatisfaction of seeing a good person suffering on earth.

Another way in which breach is manifested in this initial phase of the ritual is death itself. Death is here seen not as an aftermath of a breach but as a breach to ordinary order of existence. Death is a disruption of the flow of life and dire consequences among the survivors and the departed follow after death of someone. Among the living, the tasks

of filling the gap left by the departed, the task of burial and funeral and the task of providing for means of livelihood are some of the consequences of the breach. On the side of the departed, the consequences include the task of settling among the ancestors which implies the task of re-presentation of self, according to the expectations of the ancestors. In the song *Egbe egburu akwu* (A kite has carried away a palm fruit) the singer decries the taking of a ripened palm fruit by the kite:

<i>Akwu characha ya ka egbe biara buru</i>	A ripened palm fruit is what a kite carried away.
<i>Egbe biara buru</i>	A kite came and carried away
<i>Akwu characha</i>	A ripened palm fruit
(Song 16)	

Death is presented as having two characters. One, death is a scavenger as kite is; it feeds on others' flesh, and so when it strikes the impact is big because it seeks to satiate its hunger. Second, death targets only the ripened fruit meaning that the blow to those who waited upon the fruit is immense. This shows that death is itself a breach; a disruption to the smoothness of normalcy because death strikes when it is most unexpected and aims at the most crucial persons and moments. Death is therefore a vehicle of transformation: states such as the dead, widowhood, and orphanage are made possible by death. These states are more so permanent making the consequences of breach quite critical.

From these two perspectives of death, the very origin of an occurrence of conflict goes back to the moment a breach is done. In this case the gods and ancestors are in conflict with either the wicked person, or with the hostility of the world to the good person. Thus, the gods and the ancestors are seen as wielding their programs on earth through dramatic actions. The dramatic actions of death include accidents, murders,

sicknesses, old age and even suicides. Conflicts heighten tensions and prepare grounds for action of wielding of the tensions. As such the major players of an action

After the phase of breach comes crisis. Crisis encompasses the unpleasant consequences of the breach. Crisis is “a momentous juncture or turning point in the relation between components of a social field” as a result of a breach (Turner 1980, 150). Crisis is about the retributive disruption of normalcy among a social group as a result of breach. The measures are sudden and often unpleasant. For mankind death is seen as a weighty phenomenon that dislocates the flow of life and seems to threaten the existence of those who are still living. As explained by Ezeugwu of Umulumgbe Deity, death is as universal as the Catholic Church and everyone is expected to keenly participate in addressing the crisis (Respondent 3). This analogy is meaningful to the people of Umulumgbe because the Catholic Church has spread all over the region.

Crisis is seen as an existential threat and a challenge that must be addressed. At this phase sides are taken and factions are formed (Turner 1980, 150). Among the Umulumgbe, death is a coded message of dissatisfaction from the gods and the ancestors, must be strictly examined to arrive at the cause of the death. The people thus live in a continuous self-search for wrongs which they may have done to the gods and the ancestors so that they seek to redressive measures before it is too late, to settle the dead and the survivors with an “everlasting peace” (Respondent 2).

Death results in several crises all of which the survivors bear the brunt. Among the Umulumgbe, death means a halt in normalcy and a beginning of trouble to the immediate relatives and even the neighbours. For a case of a man, the widow bears the weight most. This is the time when she undergoes seclusion characterized with hard life

and deprivation. It also means hard life to the women of the clan in inspecting and guarding the body and the widow. This is also a moment when resources must be made available to cater for the burial and funeral costs. Then there is the task of dealing with the gap left by the deceased in terms of providing for the orphans and the widow. The song, *Onye ka m naya ga ebi?* (Who will I live with?), expresses the crisis of having to reckon with the space left by the departed:

<i>Onwu eh ana m aju onwu m n'onye ga ebi?</i>	Death eh I am asking death who will I live with?
<i>Onwu gburu nwokorobia</i>	Death that kills a young man
<i>Onwu m n'onye ga ebi?</i>	Death who will I live with?

In a personified tone, the singer is interrogating of death in an attempt to come to terms with the crisis brought by the demise. The repetitive tone such as (eh I am asking) implies that death does not listen to mankind. On the other hand the crier appears to accept the fate of death by not asking *why* it has killed a loved one but instead the crier's issue is loneliness (Who will I live with?). This scenario supports the second view among the Umulumgbe that death comes to take a good person away from the troubles of this world.

After breach and crisis comes a moment of redress. Redress refers to the "adjustive mechanisms" of seeking to restrain the crisis or effects of the crisis (Turner 1980, 151). It involves a drastic measure such as sacrifice in order to return things to normalcy. It is about conflict resolution. At this phase the whole group is involved as the crisis appear to threaten the existence of the whole group. The redressive gestures are often ceremonial, but involve the use of both symbolic and real sacrificial paraphernalia. The side which has been wronged or its symbolic representative is appeased often by remorse and prostration. This is the moment when the Umulumgbe engage in the funeral

rituals. The following is a description of the funeral rituals for both man and woman, as observed in during the performance, with an attempt to illustrate the dramatic redressive elements of the ritual. As Augustine Akpa explains, a funeral is a key redressive strategy of ensuring the welfare of the departed as well as the survivors; it gives the participants a mental assurance that they have given the dead peace and are now free from wrath of the spirits and the dead (Respondent 1).

Another illustration to why various factions and sides await the ritual for redress can be seen in the man's funeral where the men from his mother's side set to destroy the house of the deceased. Their move appears to imply that they are accusative at the people responsible for the death of their grandson. They seem to be pointing a finger at the members of the household for the cause of the death. Hence, their fury in seeking to destroy the house, the deceased uncles can be seen as seeking to reprimand their in-laws for the demise. What ensues is a tussle of revenge versus remorse. The hosts plead with them to spare the act, and it is only after a more profound sacrifice, the makeshift house, is made that the aggrieved men descend from the roof top of the house. Again the furious destruction of the makeshift house can be seen as a moment of releasing anger among the stakeholders. It is after the destruction that the situation suddenly eases to normalcy.



Fig 16: The brother to the deceased man with a gift of appeasement so that the people from the mother's home could not "destroy" the house of the departed.

The generosity is another redressive gesture. Gifts are brought and money showered. Visitors stream in with gifts such as rice, drinks, yam and wrapper material and money. The gifts are brought in large metal trays mainly to show off. The showing off is partly to impress the people around but much to the gods and the ancestors to show that they (the mourners) are going to do everything to have their departed rest in peace. The in-laws are expected to lead in the bringing of the gifts. This is to prove their appreciation for having got wives from the home. The eating is believed to be done on behalf of the departed and the spirits as a feast of the spirits to welcome the departed. Similarly, the presentation of the gifts is a reflection of the same by the departed to the ancestors in appreciation.



Fig 17: Men preparing to slaughter a pig to be eaten exclusively by the *umuada*.

After the redress phase comes the phase of reincorporation. This is the repair stage, the moment at which the social group takes an effort to adopt the new changes brought by the breach. It involves a ceremony of realigning states of affairs; filling in situational and philosophical gaps brought by the incident. At this phase the effects of the crisis are directly dealt with by drawing maps of returning to life even at the face of the damages. During such functions every major activity in the neighbourhood, such as farming or going to the market, is halted to pave place and ample time for the execution of the event.

The last day of a man's funeral ritual is ends with the sounding of the cannon shots. At this time mourners are preparing to leave to their home except the *umuada*. The sacred drum is carried off safely to where it was brought. Then everything is calm with normalcy. The taking away of the sacred drum is a signal to the start of normal life. The taking away of the sacred drum, again, marks the end of one of the three reincorporating strategies among the Umulumgbe. The second reincorporating strategy is carried out the next day after the clan and friends have left. This is usually at the morning of the next

Eke day. The members of the family shave their heads clean. This is to signify the passing away of bygones. What is expected is the growth of new hair to symbolize new life. The rebirth implies a reincorporation to life. The third and the last, reincorporating strategy involves the widow. This takes place after twelve months (one year). The ending of the period involves the woman inviting a guest to whom she will cook for the first time. The cooking implies a dramatic return to the usual life. In some cases the widow is feted at a church function marked by celebrations. This is to show that the widow has been reborn and usual life now starts.

The special roles assigned to specific people in the ritual are examples of reincorporation strategies. They are meant to assign new role the individuals to deal with the demise. The first daughter of the departed is being assigned with the task of providing *ihe ikpor ihu* (this is a special animal which the first daughter of the departed presents to the *umuada*). The same case applies to the son who presents *ewu eda* to the kinsmen of the departed. They are being made to realize that they will be depended upon in many things in the family just like the *umuada*. The whole action is, thus, a way of dealing with the loss. It is also a way of “ending” the mourning and setting life to normalcy. In the ritual of the woman the key figures, the first grandson, the first daughter and the great granddaughter are seemingly being taken through similar initiation. As a matter of consciousness of life after death, the Umulumgbe know the specific places the various clans occupy in the next world. According to the Umulumgbe myth of Ojebe Ojene, the geography of Umulumgbe is has a precise replication in spiritual world (Respondent 4). In this myth, the parallelism of the earth and the spiritual world is a re-incorporating

strategy although the deceased has gone, through the funeral he has been settled in his very village in the next world.

Similarly, the process of secluding the widow is an initiation strategy in a bid to enable her to realize she is not to carry out issues like before. She is to take care of the family as a single provider. The gift session, which targets key persons in the family, is similarly to make the members of the family feel relieved of mourning. All these are done to avert any possible for contravention:

The Feature of Conflict in Woman's Funeral

Conflict is the basis of breach, crisis redress and re-incorporation and participants perform the ritual in an aim to resolve conflicts which are associated with death. Again death is both a breach and a consequence of breach (crisis). On one hand, the living engage in activities aimed solving the puzzle created by death, and on the other hand, the living begin to bear the unpleasant consequences of the demise. I gathered from the field that widowers, like widows, undergo moments of seclusion as a consequence of the demise of his wife. More so, the ultimate desire behind the ritual is to re-incorporate the most affected individuals (by the demise) to normalcy.

It emerges that death strikes as a big blow to the survivors. The burial process in the Umulumbe marks the climax of the crises which arise as a result of death of an individual. The dramatic aspect of this phase is the suffering "on behalf" of the departed. As explained earlier, the community believes death is caused by specific reasons by gods and ancestors, and subsequently, the survivors remain to face the effects of the passing on. The deceased seems to occupy an inactive state requiring the survivors to act on his or her behalf. For a woman's funeral, the children ensure that they obtain a horse for the

funeral, and to “purchase” the corpse in order to bury the dead in their home. The in-laws are also affected in that they are required to dig the grave. The intricacy of a woman’s burial and funeral is that her children must arrive before the burial. Another intricacy is that the body should be returned to her home for burial, and where her children and the relatives of the husband insist on burying her; they must perform a ritual of “purchasing” the corpse. This ritual involves offering yams, a gallon of palm wine or crates of beer. At the same time, all debts pertaining bride price will have to be settled at once if it has not been settled. The woman’s funeral, unlike the man’s, is never graced by the masks (*odo*) because the masks are considered to be male ancestors. Again, a horse is made available to be ridden by the eldest daughter of the eldest son of the deceased. This is used to symbolize a process of giving the deceased the title of *onokoro* (“the one who has ridden on top”)

In the woman’s funeral, however, there is an incidental conflict that is not directly linked to death of the deceased but which the participants engage in an active effort to resolving it. This is the conflict between Christianity and traditional religion. This conflict is incidental in the sense that it is not specifically tied to the death of the deceased but in the funeral process emerges as a strategy to resolve the general conflict relating to death (between mankind and spirits). This resolution is more so subsidiary because the way it is resolved is subtly tied to the resolution of the general conflict of the living and the spirits. Although many people appropriate them to one another, there are disagreements in regard to the understanding of death. Non-accommodating Christians for example regard the ritual as idol worship because of the communion with the dead.

The appropriation of Christian ethos into the funeral is more evident in a woman's funeral than a man's.

In a woman's ritual for instance, on the second day, activities take place in a church and Christian songs are performed. Young girls from the dance troupe engage in a special dance as if to adorn the drum beaters. The drum beaters wave flywhisks over the dancers in a gesture of blessing them. This blessing is a preparation for the procession to the church. The singers will lead the procession in song and dance. The horse is the "leader" of the procession; the girl is dressed in special attire, she is held closely and high near the horse with an imagination by everyone that she is riding on the horseback. The pace is solemn as rendered by the songs whose tempo is slow. Some of the songs are Christian. It appears that women outnumber men in the procession. More participants join the procession and by the time they reach the church the crowd is huge.

The redress action for the conflict between the mankind and the spirits is seen at the church. At the church compound, the priest waits for the procession dressed in his Christian priestly outfit. He receives the procession by heading towards the horse. The procession and the singing halts the moment the priest reaches the horse. The priest dedicates the horse by blessing it as the participants sing a Christian song. The dedication is conducted in an Igbo Christian prayer. While the priest dresses in Christian attire, the dancers retain their African regalia; there seem to be undisputed harmony in the appearance. The priest then blesses the participants by sprinkling of water on the horse, followed by the girl, then the family members and the rest of the participants.

The girl is then raised to ride on the "blessed" horse amid cheers and showering of money. Even as the girl cries from the fear of sitting on the horseback, everything

possible is done to ensure the girl sits there. A case in point is when the girls cried and wanted to get off the horse. Being the mother of the girl, I was forced to go near her to entice her to sit on the horse back. With my assurance the girl momentarily accepts to sit on it. The participants break into jubilation on the action. At this moment, the participants feel satisfied that the deceased has accepted their appreciation, and most importantly that the spirits have appreciated her. This reception and blessing is a strategy towards averting more trouble after the demise of the deceased. The appropriation of Christian and African ethos to one another is a strategy of resolving the conflict between the two religions.

Resolving the conflict of Christianity and Umulumgbe religions has been captured in the performance of the song *Omenala* (Tradition). This song is about celebrating the presence and usefulness of traditions among the Umulumgbe. The singer engages in outlining the advantages of having traditions which unite people and help them solve problems among them. The performance of the song involves rhythmically raising one's hands to point the sky and lowering them to towards the ground. As the singers point at the sky they say the modern and Christian values may be fashionable and useful to the people but (as they point at the ground) the indigenous traditions are still the best among them. This symbolic analysis and harmonization of the two cultural inclinations is a strategy of resolution of the conflict of the two faiths in the sense that the singers equally acknowledge the importance of the faiths to them. The body of the singer is portrayed as the centre from where it can eclectically reach both faiths as seen in the dance style. Consequently, the Umulumgbe consider the spiritual world to equally encompass the world of ancestors, the Umulumgbe spirits and gods, and the Christian God and spirit. This can be seen in the appropriation of the Christian priest to play the role of blessing

the horse and the granddaughter in a gesture meant to appease the “spirits”. It can also be seen in the practice of appropriating Christian songs such as “Immanuel” into the performance of a traditional ritual.

The most important point in these resolutions is the role of the woman in the process. The woman is seen as the initiator. The Christian songs infused into the ritual, for example, are initiated by the women. The women are seen in a symbolic proposition for forms of redresses where men are seen as meek to accept. The same case is seen in the dance to entice men to shower money on the women. The women engage in a deliberate dance style which sets men to join women by way of showering money on them, which can be seen as a symbolic gesture of accepting the strategies women offer.

In the case of a woman, the shaving of heads among the family members is also done to signify a start of a new life devoid of the past. Similarly, the widower may also undergo the secluded moment for one year after which he is reincorporated to the society. Meanwhile the wrappers distributed to the daughters and the granddaughters of the bereaved are put on. This gesture implies that life has started afresh.

A major conflict resolving strategy more evident in a woman’s funeral is dialogue through music. According to Gary B. Palmer and William R. Jankowiak a dramatic performance is a “cooperative enterprise of actors” (240). This cooperation is put to practice by the actors majorly through the activity of dialogues. The verbal dialogues in the ritual employ the uses of speech and music. The speech of drama is, however, elevated from the ordinary conversation (J.L. Styan, 11). Although the songs which are performed in this ritual are folkloric in nature, most of them are the antiphonal type which allows the lead singer to create new utterances in to the convenience of the

situation. Songs also seem to explain myths surrounding the performance of the ritual. Gaps in the understanding of the various aspects are filled from the discourses of the songs. Songs therefore emerge as sites with which the participants resolve puzzles, pains and anxieties of death.

The song *Onye ahapuna nwenne ya* (Don't leave the sister) seems to be dialogue among the members of the institution of the *umuada* celebrating the benefits of relating to one another as united sisters.

<i>Oh oh onye aha nwenne</i>	Oh oh no one should leave her sister
<i>Nwenne n'acho nwenne ye</i>	A sister wants her sister
<i>Ne mgbe oruru ubochi onwu</i>	When the day of death comes
<i>Maka ne nwenne n'acho</i>	A sister wants her sister
<i>Nwenne eye</i>	A sister wants her sister

The singer is expressing the advantages of having sisters yet the expressions are seemingly meant for the fellow "sisters". As the women sing then they dialogue with one another on the need to keep the spirit of performing duties up. The same dialogue is being emphasized in the song *Nmekota* (Relationship):

<i>Nmekota, nmekota ka nwanne ji ama nwanne ya</i>	By relating, relating that we know each other
<i>Okwa nmekota</i>	Through relating
<i>Okwa nmekota ka nwanne ji ama nwenne ya</i>	It is through relating that we know ourselves
<i>Okwa nmekota</i>	Through relating

The singers are seen in a dialogue of encouraging one another to keep the spirit of working together as sisters up. They emphasize the need to do so that they gain to know each other. Knowing one another is being for grounded as an important

requisite seemingly to imply understanding one another especially at such time of trouble.

The song *Nyayo bu ije* (Slowly is the journey) appears to be a dialogue between the women singers and the participants:

<i>Nyayo bu ije</i>	Slowly is the journey
<i>Nyayo bu ije</i>	Slowly is the journey
<i>Nyayo bu ije</i>	Slowly is the journey
<i>Nyayo bu ije</i>	Slowly is the journey
<i>Eh nyayo bu ije</i>	Eh slowly is the journey
<i>Nyayo bu ije</i>	Slowly is the journey
<i>Eh nyayo bu ije</i>	Eh slowly is the journey
<i>Nyayo bu ije</i>	Slowly is the journey

The singers and the participants seem to be dialoguing towards understanding life. They seem to be in an agreement that life should be led “slowly” implying caution. The discourse appears to address the breaches people commit in life which result in deaths. The song *Ana eje ogu be mmuo* (Can we battle the spirits) appears like a dialogue with the spirits; *Amara m chi nke m n’efe* (I know the god I worship) is a dialogue with God; while *Abu m adaeze* seem to be a dialogue with the departed (I am a princess)

2.2.3 Costume and Props of the Ritual

The second feature of drama in the ritual is dramatic art and design of costumes and props of the ritual. This feature can also be defined as “particular construals of scenes” (Gary B. Palmer and William R. Jankowiak, 227). Subsequently, the choice and use of costume and props in the ritual renders it with stage elements of a theatre. Costumes and props create spectacle. According to Andrew Sofer, spectacle injects a play with emotional attraction (iii). What cuts across is the efficacious use of imagery being the mental, “idealized cognitive models, scenes and categories from both the universal

and culturally determined physical experiences” (Palmer et al, 227). The participants in the Umulumgbe ritual, however, usually do not regard the items they use as costumes and props because the items are seen as tools of fulfilling a non-fictional activity in life.

Costume and Props in a Man’s Funeral

Musical instruments are played during the performance of the funeral ritual both as accompaniments to the funeral songs and as symbolic representations of issues. The most significant musical instrument in a man’s funeral is the sacred drum (*Ikpa*). The drum is handled with utmost fear and is brought out to be played only during a funeral ritual. As Ezeugwu of Umulumgbe Deity explains, the process of ensuring the dead has been interred to completion is crucial. The drum is only supposed to announce that a deceased man has been buried (Respondent 3)



Fig 5: The *Ikpa* and its beaters at play at the commencement of the man’s funeral.

Usually the drum is kept in shrines, or in exceptional cases kept in a house of a highly respected priest. The drum is played by special people, usually selected by priests, and

the play is done with the greatest care. The drum is further played at specific sites of a compound, the commonest site being the entrance to the compound. Near the entrance to the compound a spot is identified which will be used as the sacred place for the ceremony. It is here that the sacred drum is played. It is only a special group of men who are allowed be present at the sacred place. At no time is a woman (even a female child) is allowed to near the spot. This choice of site is believed to be where the man exited from existence and so the drum serves to heal the exit point so that more deaths in the homestead are averted. The drum is strictly played by men and never should a woman touch or go near it even a female child. The drum is to be played on the eke day that *odo* comes from land of the spirits, and also on the night of eke day that he returns to the land of the spirits. Similarly, the drum is played after the burial of a man and at the commencement of a man's funeral. The *ikpa* is so sacred that it cannot be used for any other purpose. In this funeral the drum is used as a means of transportation of the participants onto a sacred realm where communing with the gods, spirits and the departed is amicable. The initial beating on *eke* implies "entering" of the second level of reality while the last beating signals a "return" to the ordinary level of reality.

The other musical instruments are *ogene* (small metal gong), *udu* (pot drum), *ichaka* (guard jingle), and *aro* (conical iron gong). Cannons- (*mkpor n'ala*) – made from a mixture of charcoal. They are also applicable for a man's and a woman's ritual. There is also the explosion of the cannon powder. This homemade device is set to explode in special stage of the event such as to announce the commencement of the funeral, the arrival of the various women groups and important persons, and to mark transition of one

dramatic movement to another. These percussive instruments are used to set the rhythm and pace of the ritual.



Fig 6: The setting of cannon shot. Notice the explosive powder



Fig 7: A man setting cannon shot to announce the entry of a women's group.

Wrapper material has become a central item in funeral ritual because the key figures in a funeral ritual are women. These materials are to be distributed among the women of the homestead, the *umuada*. The materials for new wrappers symbolize a new

beginning for both the departed and the survivors; a strategy of seeking to start life afresh after the fall of the departed. Thus, the main beneficiaries of the will be the representative of the departed in the funeral. As she receives the wrappers, the participants consciously believe that the departed is receiving them in the other world as well.

The other key item in Umulumgbe funeral ritual is money, particularly notes. Showering money on a person is a sign of appreciation. For Geraldine Anidiogo, this is the main role men should play in the ritual (Respondent 5). It can also be seen as a gesture of showing off one's financial worth because the more notes one showers the richer he is considered and thus the more esteem they are accorded.

There are special attires for the participants of the ritual. The women groups from various villages enter the funeral dressed in various uniforms of their choice. There is no particular colour choice, and so the choice of uniform is meant to outshine a group from the others. This resembles what Francis Harding notes in regard to what he calls "symbolic matrix"; the situation where the participants are not aware that they are in costume yet an observer would do (210). The first born daughter of the deceased (*nwada*) puts on a necklace of large red beads (*Chikida*) worn around the neck and sometimes the waist. She is also donned with special uniform, usually, a wrapper dyed with crimson (*uhe*). The crimson seems to symbolize either close blood ties with the deceased, or the gravity of having lost a father.

A special category of props in the ritual is food. Food and drinks form a special part of the ritual and feeding is the crucial necessity and activity of the ritual. Activities are carried out in such a way that food and drinks form major transition moments both for symbolic and realistic purposes. On one hand food being symbol of livelihood is served

to console the mourners, while on the other hand it is served to be eaten by the people on behalf of the ancestors. From the way in which the food was prepared and eaten in the two funerals, the people prepare food in plenty for the departed to present to the ancestors therefore for his acceptance into their world. The more the food and the more the relish imply that the ancestors have duly accepted the departed, which is the pleasure of the living.

In this funeral ritual, food is not just meant to satisfy hunger but is symbolically designed to play fundamental effects in line with the purpose of the ritual. Usually, the various edibles are prepared and consumed “on behalf” of the departed and the ancestors. This explains why the foods are prepared in plenty and in specific style, and are to be consumed in plenty and also in specific pattern for example there is food strictly meant for the *umuada* while others are meant for the other participants. The kola nut has great significance in a funeral ritual just like in other major events in Umulumgbe. A kola nut is held as sacred, and the ceremonial breaking and eating of the nut is a communion with the gods and ancestors (Gladys I. Udechukwu, 1). During a funeral rite, the gods and the ancestors are considered to be crucially in need of supplication and appeasement. The kola nut is thus broken and eaten at several junctures of the ritual such as arrival, departures, and transitions from one activity to the other. The symbolisms of the Kola nut are numerous and basically it depends on the contexts of the various occasions. The major one, as explained by Udechukwu is that the nut’s non-poisonous quality and medicinal value ascribe the nut with a “life affirming” property (25). This explains why the Igbo proverb “He who brings kola nut brings life” is paramount. As used in the funeral ritual, this aspect plays the Aristotelian role of “purging” the desires to ensure

continuity of life even after death. As participants troop in with kola nuts, and the ensuing exchange and chewing, they satisfy themselves that they are putting a fundamental effort of ensuring life is sustained even beyond the grave. The other symbolism is that the nut has more than one lobe; they range from being two-lobed to even eight-lobed. This plurality of lobes signifies unity (26). This unity is appropriated in the funeral ritual to two purposes. One is fulfill the cosmological communion between the living and the dead with the gods. The other is to set the people to participate in the process in unity. So as the participants chew the nuts, they remind themselves of the communion with the spiritual world as well as unity among themselves.

Another very important food prop to a funeral ritual is the yam (see Appendix 1). Yam is one of the staple foods among the Umulumgbe, and is thus symbolic of livelihood (Chris Manus Ukachukwu, 244). The major reason why the yam is held with high esteem is that mythology of the Igbo (The myth of Eze Inri) has it that the crop was given to man as a gift to end a critical famine that befell the first family of the Igbo. In the myth, Chukwu the supreme god had ceased to feed mankind with *azu* (fish) and there was a food crisis in the first family (of Eze Nri). Chukwu advised them to kill their firstborn son and daughter to avert the crisis. From the graves of the children sprouted *Yam* and there was no famine anymore (250). A yam is therefore symbolic to a God-given form of livelihood whose emergence was paid with a fundamental price.

As the Mourners stream to the home of the departed carrying carefully selected tubers of yam, usually the big ones. As the chief food, the yam is used to symbolize livelihood and wish for sustenance because as the participants present or partake in receiving or eating of the yam, they play the role of demonstrating their kindness at the

same time asking the gods to ensure their livelihood. Also considering that the yam is a man's crop, this is thus a sign of appreciation coming specifically from men. The yam is a man's crop because it is the chief staple food, and man being the chief supplier of food to the family is closely associated with this crop. This seems to be in line with the view that among the Umulumbe, the man's role emerges in the funeral as the helper of the woman. Again, the yam presents are to be distributed among the women of the clan.

These items are prepared in such a way that they symbolically represent key issues in the understanding of death as addressed in the ritual. They are set imaginatively to create special effects in the understanding of death as a profound occurrence in human life. Seen from this perspective the ritual is an experience of imagination and manipulation of the scenes make the imagination meaningful to the participants.

Costume and Props in a Woman's Funeral

A horse is considered a special animal to be given to a loved one especially a woman because of its beauty but more so because of its service and faithfulness to mankind. During this ritual, thus, the family carefully looks for the best horse depending on their ability. The horse is the central figure throughout the ritual. It is tied in the compound and during processions the specially trained horseman leads the horse in front of the procession group. The horse is considered a special gift presented by the family to the deceased, but most significantly, for the deceased to show off at the world of her ancestors that she had been good while on earth as shown by the appreciative gift given to her by her people.

During the performance of the funeral, the women groups arrive in uniforms of their choice. The closest relations put on the large red beads around their necks. Song and

dance similarly rule the ceremony except that here the women groups seem more active than in a man's ritual. During processions, the singing and dancing is done by everybody. The funeral songs, which are generally, antiphonal, are open to modification to suit specific occasions and specific persons. It is therefore the soloists and the lead dancers who suitably contextualize their songs and dances through careful choice of solos. Soloists and lead dancers emerge spontaneously from the group and are accepted without suspicion. One reason why soloists emerge from anywhere among the participants is that the funeral act is considered highly communal and thus no specific individuals are vested with the monopoly of running the process. Another reason is that the ritual act is very profound activity among the participants; there is no room of taking chances and, as noted earlier, it is music which sums up all the relevant issues to be addressed in the funeral. This being the case, participants use this strategy of allowing as many soloists as possible to ensure that all the relevant issues are duly addressed unlike if one soloist is employed. The various percussive instruments are also played to keep the dancing alive. Usually the young men in the troupe play the instruments while the girls dance.

In a woman's funeral, money is also showered much more than in a man's, as a way of appreciating the deceased. The showering is done mostly by men and occasionally by visitors and members of the family. In this ritual, however, affluent women also shower money on the singers and dancers. Food and drinks are served and eaten in plenty to appease the spirits of the ancestors in order for the spirits to accept the departed.

2.2.5 Time and Space of the Ritual

Time and space are the elements which form the specific context of the performance of the ritual. Time is about the moments and the circumstances for the

choice of the moments. Space is equally the environments of the performance of the ritual and the circumstances for the choice of the environments. Time and space emerge as scenes in the general drama because in the description of a scene both details of space and time are provided. In the Umulumgbe funeral ritual the scenes are marked by days and time (morning, afternoon or night).

Time and Space in Man's Funeral

The performance of a man's ritual takes place at the home of the departed. It takes place for four market days (*Eke* night to *Nkwo* evening. In Umulumgbe, *Eke*, *Nkwo* and *Afor* days are regarded as man's days. This is because there are very important days for ritual performance. As noted in the appendix, The Umulumgbe People, a man's funeral should coincide with the return of *odo* who returns from his travels to his abode only on *eke* day. *Odo* is the Umulumgbe representation of their god on earth. *Odo* is always masked and his true identity is hardly known. *Odo* is masculine and that is why male children in Umulumgbe are named "Odo". On *nkwo* day, *Odo* goes to his first market where people can see him, and makes his first climbing to Umulumgbe mountain on *Afor* day.



Fig 3: A typical appearance of *Odo* in his mask

Eke day is thus regarded as masculine and a woman's ritual cannot be held on the day. This is another pointer that the dramatic elements of a ritual are closely knot with the community's myths. The home is chosen because it is where the departed came from, and is thus believed to be present at the scene both as an active participant. A photo of the departed is hung spectacularly on a tree at the centre of the compound. The departed's role includes setting right the mood for the performance of the ritual. Every participant carries on as if the departed is actually present with them and watching every activity being done. All the activities are thus performed with a lot of seriousness. Another role of the participation of the departed is to unite all the participants in the ritual. All the

mourners, close or distant to the departed are united by the common figure of the event: the departed.



Fig 4: The picture of the deceased (Late Mr. Elias Odoh)

The ceremonial aspect of the ritual is a means of resolving conflicts. The first and the most significant conflict being resolved is the one between the living and the dead. The first strategy of resolving this is the stringent regard to the process of the performance. The participants are seen in strict observations to ensure all procedures are followed with all the necessary observations. The ritual of a man starts at the evening of Eke day, the day of resting. Eke is held as very special to every man's activity because it is associated with the *odo* that on this day the *odo* spirit returns to his resting place only on the eke day. As Augustine Okpa explains, the consequences of an improper funeral can be far reaching considering the power *odo* society has in the lives of the people because a man may reincarnate as *Odo*, and so the coincidence of a man's funeral and *odo*'s day should be held crucially. He further illustrates the seriousness with which the funeral must be handled by showing how sacred items (the *ikpa* and the branches of

ahaba tree) are employed. To him the drum and the branches symbolize peace for both the deceased and the survivors.

During the return of *odoh* to the land of the living, the women stay indoors, and men do every outdoor activity including fetching food from farms or the market. The passing away of the man is equaled to the passage of this spirit. At this time the widow is made to stay indoors and no one is allowed to see her except the women who are specially assigned to guard her even when she is going out to relieve herself. This guarding is believed to protect her from evil spirits.

The action of the ritual is designed in a way that the ritual's time and space aspects are symbolic to the objective of the performance of the ritual, which is to settle the deceased and the living following the death. Only men participate on the first day, and much of the activity is present at the home of the deceased. The sacred drum is also played along eating and drinking. The few women in the homestead, usually the *umuada*, prepare the food for the men and attend to the widow, and to watch the men play and dance to the sacred drum. The first person and the only person who qualifies to dance to the drum beat is a man who must be younger than the departed. On the second day (*Orie* day) women enter the scene. They arrive earlier than their men. The men trail them merely for protection and escort. The women's first action is to prepare food.

The special food they prepare is *okpa* – this special food is made from mashed peas which is held so special that it is taken only by the *Umuada*. The women also bring the palm wine, which is also held with esteem and is also preserved for the *umuada*. The other women and men are fed with rice and ordinary stew, soft drinks and beer. Food is prepared and served in excess for prestige.

As women go about preparing and sorting food and drinks, the men sit around the portrait of the deceased usually to “keep him company”. Meanwhile, at the sacred site, the men’s special drum is continuously played. The players drum, dance and yell in carnival mood usually as if possessed. Some of the young men dispatch in periodically to the forest to fetch branches from a special tree called *ahaba* (*Acioa barteri*) to be carried around and heaped before the drummers at the sacred site.



Fig 8: *Ahaba* tree (*Acioa barteri*) branch



Fig 9: A participant in a frantic spirit bringing tree branch to the funeral from the bush

As groups of women and special persons arrive cannon shots are made to announce their arrival. The cannons are shot at the inlet paths not far from the compound. There is much activity when a canon is shot. The women who are already in the compound start their song and dance, and if they were already singing, they raise their voices and dance as if to outdo the new guests yet the new guests take the gesture as welcoming.

At midday, the climax of ceremony is reached and a formal meeting is held usually with speeches from special family members and special guests. The meeting begins with a prayer. The prayer is mainly for the soul of the departed to be accepted by God and the ancestors. The speeches are mainly selective praises of the deceased, and at no time would one make disparaging remarks about the deceased. After the meeting is concluded, the action goes to an informal session of mingling with dance and song. A

carnival mood is created. At this time there is no restraint for anyone to mingle with the others except near the sacred site.

Women dance around the compound followed by men who are enticed by their songs showering money on them. The lead dancer for each women group is usually the daughter of the family, seemingly, to ensure that her women group outshines those of the other *umuada*. There is no formal order for the performances by the various groups; instead they perform as if to outdo each other though the effect is harmonious mainly because the songs and the dances are similar. Percussive musical instruments accompany the performances- drums, *udu* (pot drum), *ichaka* (guard jingle), and conical iron gong (*aro*). The instruments seem to go well with the songs and dances because the songs and dances require instruments which yield faster beats for the vigorous gyration. There may be some men, usually the friends of the departed, who may also get into the frenzy of singing and dancing alongside the women groups. For each dance there are no rehearsals rather the lyrics of the soloists are created spontaneously seemingly because the songs are communal rather than individual, and that most of the songs are antiphonal, thus, allowing easy moments for the members to learn the funeral songs (Appendix 3). One such song is *Asa idi m mma* (You are good to me):

Asa m oh idi m mma na m na gi ga ebi My pretty lady you are good to me
me and you will live

Asa m oh idi m mma na m na gi ga ebi My pretty lady you are good to me
me and you will live

(Song 12)

The singer is expressing admiration for the deceased. The physical prettiness is compounded with the goodness of the heart to describe the deceased. To the singer the two combines equals to life as she sings /you will live/. Such expressions are often

created by the soloist to suit a specific occasion. The participants will follow by echoing the sentiments of the soloists. In the man's funeral, the words are changed to describe a man and his prowess. The soloist is thus a director of words and actions during major stages of the ritual.



Fig 10: A *Nwada* with several funeral wrapper gifts



Fig 11: A member of the *umuada* with her share of the gifts



Fig 12: *Umuada* with an assortment of gifts they have received in the funeral

The fourth and last day (*Nkwo* day) is another repetition of the activities of the first day for a man's funeral. The sacred drum continues to be played at the sacred spot. One of the drum beaters bears the name "Who-owns-death?" seemingly to imply that death affects everybody. More fetching of the branches is carried out. At this time men assert their presence through antics and scary acts as if possessed: they menacingly run around wielding machetes and threatening to cut trees. Others climb trees and threaten to release themselves to fall, or throw in big logs of wood, so that women and relations plead with them to abandon the act. This is only done at a man's funeral.

The climax of the men's frenzied actions is seen at the moment when the house of the departed is threatened to be pulled down by men from the departed maternal home. These men from the side of the mother of the departed ("the uncles") seek menacingly to demolish the house by setting ladders to climb on to the roof, and wielding machetes. Everybody gathers around them to beg and plead with them to spare the house. They offer money and fowls but the men act stubborn. Eventually a makeshift structure of a

house (which had been earlier crafted) is brought and offered to the men in exchange of the real house. To the relief of everyone the men set on the offered structure with fury, cutting down every piece of the structure.



Fig 13: Men from the mother's side of the deceased setting to "destroy" the house of the deceased. Notice another man appealing the lead destroyer with a fowl.



Fig 13: A makeshift house set to be demolished "on behalf" of the main house.

Time and Space in a Woman's Funeral

The scenes of a woman are similar to that of the man except in the following aspects. First the woman's ritual starts on the second day (*Orie day*) thus taking only three days. This is observed because the *Eke day* is considered a day of men. Women are

expected to be inactive on the day and probably stay indoors. The men similarly are expected to be good to everyone including their women. Thus, the ritual starts on the morning of *Orie* day and ends on *Nkwo* day. *Orie* is a woman's day; it is regarded as a neutral day. It is the day when everything about woman is performed such as traditional marriage, payment of bride price, and more importantly the commencement of a woman's funeral. A woman's day is thus accommodating while a man's day is exclusive.

A woman's funeral takes place in three locations, namely, her home, the church or the market place and her parental home. The church is a symbol of God's presence and, thus, the participants visit the church to ask God to accept the soul of the departed. The deceased's parental home is seen as the cradle of her life, and hence the process is completed by homage to this place for appreciation of the role her parental home played in her growth. This scenario shows that a woman is accorded a more intricate ritual activity than man. The horse for example is an expensive animal in Nigeria and one hard to come by yet it is held as a crucial requisite for a woman's funeral. The participants feel more indebted to a woman than to a man and so they perform her funeral with thoroughness to ensure their lives on earth is restored most amicably. It can also be seen that the involvement of the church on top of the traditional procedures is a quest for more intricacy which implies more acceptance from the departed.

The same strictness of procedure is evidenced in a woman's ritual similarly to ensure that the ancestors appreciate the gesture towards alleviating the effects of death among them. The ritual starts on *Orie* day. The action begins in the morning at the compound of the deceased. Much of the action is singing and dancing by the women and the dance troupe, as visitors stream in carrying various gifts. There are some few men's

organized singing groups who grace the occasion. The singing and dancing is accompanied by showering of money on the dancers and the key family figures led by the granddaughter of the deceased. A few women shower the men and youth dancers with money. This has been rare in a man's ritual. The horse has been tied spectacularly at the centre of the homestead. A young man has been assigned to attend to it. The granddaughter is being held closely next to the horse by her father..

This time the procession heads to the parental home of the deceased, at the entrance of the home, several canon shots can be heard ushering in the procession to the compound. At the compound a lot of activity goes on in preparation to receive the participants. Food and drinks have been prepared. An elder from the family, usually the brother of the deceased comes to receive the procession followed by welcoming shrieks and ululations by women both from the procession and from the hosting home.

A special chair is placed for the girl to sit in a square so that everyone sits facing her. Beers, palm wine and food served in a square sitting arena. An elder leads the group in a Christian prayer, followed by a solemn singing of a Christian song "*Immanuel*". Then the participants settle at their seats to eat and drink. The setting of every activity here is meticulous and nothing is left to chance. There are two calabashes on the table to be used strictly to serve palm wine. The wine are in special containers placed carefully on a stand before the girl. The elder then cuts kola nuts and offers to the girl amid cheers. A large tray of egg plants has been placed on the table before the girl. The girl is served with the fruit and drinks first. A lot of food is served, mainly rice and stew, which is eaten with relish to show appreciation. The stay in the home is brief and immediately after feeding, the more money is showered on the girl, and the procession begins heading

home. At this juncture the horse is left at the home as a present from the departed. The girl is held high in return home amid more cheerful singing and dancing.

At the home more actions await the participants. These include singing, dancing, and eating and drinking. The dance troupe dominates the singing and dancing as mourners are served with drinks and food. Again, the boys do most of playing instruments while girls gyrate to the tunes. The songs performed at this juncture express the suddenness and pain of losing a loved one. An example is *Ugegbe akuwala* (A mirror is broken):

<i>Ugegbe akuwala n'okuwala</i>	A mirror is broken
<i>Ezigbo ugegbege akuwala n'okuwala</i>	A good mirror is broken
<i>Okuwala n'ike.</i>	It is broken by force.

(Song 14)

The singers liken the deceased as a broken mirror because of two reasons. One is that a mirror is a means of reflecting oneself and a means of improving one's appearance. The singers acknowledge that without a mirror there is no means of improving themselves. The breaking of the mirror is therefore a big blow to them because their means of self-improvement has been destroyed. The deceased is considered a mirror because of guidance, wisdom and counsels he or she has been giving to his/ her people. The second aptness of the mirror imagery is that the singers are aware that the once a mirror is broken it is hard to mend.

In the ritual a lot of sacrifice and supplication is involved. Time, money, strength and every other resource are put to use in an attempt to redress the situation. The members of the affected families find enough money to cater for the ritual expenses:

food, animals, drinks, clothes, and canon shots. The horse is purchased by the members of the family only to be left at the home of the deceased. The cost may be reduced as the neighbours and relatives stream in with gifts. As each and every person sacrifice to offer for the ritual, they are seemingly striving to heal the wounds that may have caused the crisis in a strategy to avert a similar catastrophe from occurring. It is believed that the gods and the ancestors protect the living only when they are satisfied with their deeds.

Subsequently, the participants obtain immense satisfaction at a successful completion of the ritual, seemingly because their anxieties have been eased. As the girl is made to ride on the horse, for instance, the participants are eager to see the girl agree to do the act, and her refusal seems to heighten their anxiety. Her acceptance, as seen thus, is a reprieve to them. That is why they break into jubilation. A moment of transition from grieving to celebration is created. At this moment, the factions and sides created by the breach are subtly bridged.



Fig 15: The first daughter of the first son receiving the horse on behalf of the deceased.

2.3. Summary

In this chapter, I have illustrated how the Umulumgbe funeral ritual can be analysed as drama in general and social drama in particular. I have used the theory of drama as postulated by Aristotle, and I have shown how the features suitably qualify as parameters with which rituals can be examined as creative texts. Subsequently, the ritual can be seen as imagined dramatic activity with most of its major aspects being set in character. The setting, attire, dialogue, thoughts and action of the ritual point towards drama. As social drama particularly, I have situated the ritual in the tenets of Turner in his analysis of the social drama category and the ritual of this study suitable yielded many insights to the nature and functionality of the ritual.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN AND GENDER CONTESTATION IN THE RITUAL

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present the significance of the specific places of women among the Umulumbe as manifested in the funeral ritual. I focus on the specific roles women occupy as the most outstanding participants in the ritual, and the gender configurations that govern the people. In the assessment, I establish the relationship between gender studies and social drama. In the process I seek to explain why gender dimensions, as a major social discourse and ideology, is suitably explicated within the understanding of a ritual as a social drama. I also outline the major roles observed in the performance of the rituals in order to illuminate on the specific beliefs on the stakes of a woman vis-à-vis those of a man. I have further reflected on the roles in a critical interpretation of the manifestations of the roles in order to establish power relations between men and women among the Umulumbe whether acknowledged or unacknowledged.

3.2. The Role of Women in the Performance of the Ritual

Performance of a ritual is a site where traditions and ideologies of the participants are luminously presented because at this moment, the participants are seeking to accomplish fundamental requisites for continuation in life and thus employ every earnest means to appease the stakeholders of life. As a social drama thus, a ritual is to be viewed as an enterprise of social reflection and not artistic form for art sake. This is because social drama is performed by the participants as a functional experience weaved in art with which specific objectives in real life are being addressed. This means that the funeral ritual is a form of art whose nature and function is closely situated within the

social reality (the way people think and organize their lives and specify individual and group values) of the people who enact it. Ritual performance, the aesthetic closely meets the historical (Turner 1988, 5). From this observation, the social dramatic aspects of a ritual provides a very powerful tool of configuring and sustaining people's beliefs, knowledge, and ideologies because, and thus a powerful lens of understanding the nature and functionality of the beliefs, knowledge and ideologies.

From the foregoing discussion, a ritual, viewed as a social drama; as art occupying a liminal position with the quotidian, and as a process whose experience is more prized than the product, is more valuable in examining the politics and ideologies of a people. Subsequently, gender relations are understood from examination of the artistic elements of a ritual because, as said above, an artistic performance is detached from the mundane, it is nuanced, and it is sublime and complex. The case is further supported by Butler's ideas of performativity that a performative genre constitutively powerful because an artistic performance has "phantasmatic" qualities; a magical effect of having ideologies legitimated without question (141). She opines that gender is "tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts" (1993, 141). From this observation, the "stylized acts" imply performance and the aspect of repeatedness of the performance is suitable related to how a ritual is carried out. A ritual's ideological inclinations repeated over time constitute ideological persuasions whose legitimacy is founded in the repeatedness.

As observed, the major players of every ritual are the women, and the success (or status) of a funeral depends largely on the presence, number and performance of women. This does not mean that men are unimportant in the event but that their role is less

significant than that of women. They are in Harding's term "stagehands" or those participants who, while they are very important in the performance, only serve to support the major actors (197). The four major players among women, whose roles have been analyzed here, comprise of the following: the widow, "daughters of the land" (*umuada*), and the co-wives.

Further to presentation of the role of the three major categories of women participants in the ritual, I examine the foundations of gender power among the women of Umulumgbe as portrayed in the performance of funeral ritual. As Butler puts it, gender is a result of performative repeatedness on beliefs on sexuality (1993, 141) and that the enterprise of gender is based on the dynamics of power. She further adds that "gender is only real to the extent that it is performed" (1988, 527). This expression of power is "manifest" only in "acts" (524). According to Michel Foucault in his treatise The Subject of Power, power is "a way in which certain actions modify others" (1982, 788). This implies that power only exists in practice and when there are subjects to practice the power upon; power is realized when in the process of exercise. It appears that the space for this practice is culture as Stanley R, Barret, Sean Stockolm and Jeanette Burke note that power is never "a substance of force" but intertwined in culture. He also notes that culture constitutes "power rationality" (468). The Umulumgbe women play the most significant role in the Umulumgbe funeral ritual and thus powerful because cultural traditions and beliefs allow them to occupy the major positions in the ritual. This observation is sustained by Foucault who opines that the results of power elevates the holder to "conduct" and to "lead" others in a "system of differentiation" in which the consequence of the differentiation is "domination" (1982, 789, 792 and 798). Again

Umulumgbe women have gained more significant power than men because of the major roles they have repeatedly performed over time until time itself has legitimated their supremacy.

This study, in assessing the significance of dominance in the performance of the ritual, presents the three matrices of gender power as the major driving factors in role configuration and validation among the Umulumgbe people. To Irigaray, sexuality and gender are both real and apparent, for instance, sexuality is real in the context of the traits of biological differences as a result of one's sex, and on other hand, it is apparent when sexual myths mediate the understanding of a person sexual behavior (34). Considered as one of the most weighty phenomenon and rite of passage in human existence, death is attended to by participants with profundity and strictness to method. As such, because of these strict observations, major arrays of observations with which insights of the participants' philosophies are obtained. For this study, the method is central to the performance of the rituals. The relationship and reciprocity of sex, gender and power is profoundly manifest in these rituals. This interplay has posited crucial interpretive insights to the gender dimensions among the Umulumgbe.

As examined by Julia Walker, social drama is living in drama as well as dramatizing life (149). Social drama is thus contrasted from the canonical theatrical drama in that the divide between reality and improvisation of the setting and props, and rehearsal is almost absent. What we see in the performance of social drama have close bearing on what takes place in real life. Thus the way in which women occupy the major roles in the ritual of this magnitude imply that women hold colossal power among the people who create (as well as those who consume) the ritual. Butler's dimension of lived

repetitive experience of gender consciousness as having truth “making capacities” (141), further supports the argument of this study that the performative aspects of the socio-cultural mediums of a people are responsible for the reification of gender perspectives the people where the reverse is similarly plausible. As explicated by Foucault, power is accompanied and mediated by various matrices which manifest as interplays of assets at one’s disposal governing the location and magnitude of power (141). Some of the assets are directly manifest while others are nuanced (141). In this study I present three major assets available to women which explain why power rests appropriately among the women: motherhood, indeterminateness, and knowledge.

3.2.1. The widow

The first major role player in the performance of the ritual is the widow who manifests as the “sacrificial lamb. This participant is particularly crucial in a man’s funeral. As the companion of the deceased and a co-founder of the family, she is the one who bears the effects of loss more than everyone. The widow is required to embrace the grieving in the same way she embraced her marriage to the dead husband. She is therefore playing the embodiment of grieving because her appearance is supposed to remind people of the demise. She is made to put on black attire during the mourning period and will not participate in ordinary activities such as cooking or farming during the period. Thus, wherever she goes people will remember the deceased through her.



Fig 18: The widow in mourning.

The widow is also a sacrificial lamb for the relief of the crisis. The pain of the loss is to be borne by everybody around but the widow has her part which she plays alone. This part, as Paul Omukwa and Magdalene Okeamuma explain, encompasses undergoing the longest and the most involving process during the ritual (Respondent 2 and 4). She is required to put on the character of the “unattractive” as a form of a “punishment” for the death of the husband, which does not mean she bears the blame for the death, but that a sacrificial lamb is requisite and she plays the role. Immediately the news of death of a man is announced, the hair in the head of the widow is shaved. Knowing that a woman’s beauty is associated with her hair, the shaving is a strategy of denying her that beauty. In theatrical view, she is being donned in the costume of the “unattractive” character. She is then taken to live in seclusion and deprivation for a month, and a further twelve months life of isolation from normal life (Respondent 2 and 4). In the first one month, the widow is kept to stay in a kitchen where she sleeps on the floor and is never allowed to cook, go to the farm or market, and is always escorted whenever she goes to relieve herself

(Respondent 2). The challenging situation of the widow is further described by Magdalene who has undergone the process as a widow. She says that a the widow is to be kept indoors by other women for four *orie* market days after which she another widow is sent to fetch water from Okaeze river for her to bathe. She adds that a widow is not even allowed to use the same toilet with other people. (Respondent 4)

The situation implies that the widow plays the role of embodying the spot at which the arrow of death has hit among the people. She then becomes an acknowledgment that the effects of death among people are hard to bear. In the perspective of social drama, the means redress of the crisis is a challenging one. The widow plays the role of the heroine who must first carry the consequences of fate in order to emancipate herself. She is seen as the sacrificial recipient of undeserved misfortune and evoking in the audience a sense of pity and fear. The sacrificial aspect is to transform the subject to becoming a better person. Comparatively, a widower is also expected to go mourning for a similar period of one year but does not undergo the initial stages of the first one month like a woman such as being excluded from the people, being closely guarded whenever she wants to do everything. The intricacy of a widow's role in settling their deceased spouse is greater that than that of a widower because the sacrificial component is more suitably situated in a woman than a man. A woman is seen as having the most suitable potential to appease gods than a man. Further, the water from Okaeze River, which is used to cleanse and return a victim to custom, (in either a man's case or a woman's) is fetched by a woman.

Motherhood, the state of being a mother, is the heaviest asset women have which makes the widow be revered and accorded the most fundamental roles in the ritual. There

is a proverb in Igboland that says *Nne bu isi azu n'adi efu n'ofe* "A mother is the fish's head that can never get missing in every soup". As observed by Nancy J. Chodorow, the mother is the child's "primary parent" (3). The woman has always been associated with the role of biological mothering - pregnancy, childbirth, childcare (xiv) and thus motherhood is the most natural and distinctive attribute of a woman. This is more so the case because a child's pre-Oedipal experience and knowledge depends on bodily contact primarily with the mother. This study observed that the way in which the Umulumbe woman is highly revered in events of this nature is because she strikes participants as belonging to the category of "mother". Mother has always been revered especially by men because of her being the source and sustainer of livelihood. In Chodorow's words the "internal world", "sense of mothering" and "sense of self" are developmental configurations necessitated by the "unconscious communication between mother and child" (viii). The Freudian Oedipal perspective further confirms this condition that the man develops a strong tie with the mother at the expense of the father. As Chodorow further opines, there is a "psychological subjectivity" (xv) of reverence inherent in children by their perception of women as "women mother" (3). Thus the man does not take the superiority of his mother for granted, and are suitably persuaded that women are their mothers. In this regard women hold power vested to them by virtue of the special character and condition of being mothers.

As observed in the rituals, death is a rite that fulfills one's exit from life on earth. It is thus a celebration of one's birth and wellbeing while on earth. This can also be viewed as a celebration of motherhood as this is the source of birth and wellbeing. Subsequently, it appears that the participants of the ritual are persuaded that the most

suitable actors in the event are the women. As explained by Paul Omugwa, the mother participates in the special ritual of going for *omugwo* when the baby is born which involves a special woman, usually the mother or mother-in-law keeps company to a woman who has just given birth (Respondent 2). This is a practice which is carried immediately a child is born. The mother is to be assisted to settle after childbirth and tutored on parenting skills by her mother or her mother-in-law for a couple of weeks until she regains strength. In this process, the mother is believed to be imparted with the requisite maternity for the growth and wellbeing of the child. This is a practice that is never done by a man. People in Umulumgbe thus attribute their livelihood to the mothers.

As expected thus, a woman's death is more involving than a man's because of the attribute of maternity as Okpa Augustine explains that in Umulumgbe a man is expected to be buried the same day because a man's burial conditions are simple, while a woman should wait because of several customary complications associated with a woman (Respondent 1). Unlike in a man's case, the body of a woman can never be buried the same day because some conditions are mandatory. One is that the body must be taken to the family where she was born for inspection to confirm that the person did not die of witchcraft or murder. Secondly, her children must be present, unlike for a man whose key persons are only the first born daughter and a few kinsmen. Again the women are the ones to inspect the body to ensure the person died in non-foul circumstances. They are also responsible for guarding the body throughout the night if the body is not buried the same day. Also the women are responsible to ensuring that there is plenty of food in the same way a mother ensures her children get enough food. (Respondent 1). Thus the roles

played by women in the areas explained above imply that women are vested with the power of executing and managing the most important occurrences in life such as death.

The passage a widow undergoes after the death of her husband (the seclusion and deprivation of ordinary life) is another illustration of how maternity is synonymous to power. As noted by Paul Omukwa, a wife is also a mother and that all women combined are better understood as belonging to the category of mothers. (Respondent 2). One's wife is thus one's mother by virtue of "taking care of human beings". Therefore the widow is attended to with the greatest solemnity and caution at the death of her husband. The usual order of things is disrupted because her duty of providing livelihood has been breached by the demise of one of the people she is supposed to provide for. This disruption must be redressed in a special way, and as observed, she undergoes a moment of separation at which she communes with the gods and ancestors to intervene so that the same calamity does not strike again.

The Oedipal scenarios that seem to prove the power hinging on motherhood is seen in the patterned strategies of choice of the major actors in the funerals. For a man's funeral it is the daughter who owns her father's funeral while for a woman the firstborn son (who is the father of the granddaughter to represent the departed) must ensure a successful funeral for his mother. In the funeral the following scenes support this argument. The first is the value attached to the body of a departed woman. Her body is to be returned to her home upon which her children are required to "purchase" the body for interment where she has been married (Respondent 1). This implies that being a mother is not to be taken for granted and that it has a cost. The other scene is the mock demolition of the dead man's house by the men from the departed mother. The men descend to the

structure in a fury symbolic to dissatisfaction with how the “child” of their daughter has been left to die. They seem to be pointing an accusing finger on the people who have married their daughter. In these two examples, motherhood is performed here to show how the participants value their indebtedness to their mothers.

The widow in the ritual is therefore a major actor in whose role can be summarized into two: to bear the pain on behalf of an imagined cause of death of the husband, and be a reminder to the people of the absence of the departed. It appears that the role cannot be substituted, and that in the case of a widower, the magnitude is not as much as that of the woman. A man whose wife effectively performs this requirement after his death is considered to be enjoying a warm welcome from his ancestors in the spiritual. Therefore, a successful funeral, one in which the departed is considered to have been settled most, is determined by the performance of this actor.

3.2.2. The *Umuada*

The *umuada*, which translates to “the daughters of the land” comprise of sisters, nieces, aunts and daughters of the deceased. *Umuada* is a very crucial institution of women in Umulumgbe funeral ritual. It comprises of all the women who are born in the clan. It is an institution of relatives as well as a society of self-help. This means the members are tied to one another because they are “sisters” but more so because they need one another in times of difficulties. The most significant *umuada* in the performance of the ritual is the first born daughter (in the case of a man) or the first born daughter of the eldest son (in case of a woman) of the departed who appear as “the image of the departed”. In a man’s case, his first born daughter must play the role but may be represented if unavailable. In a woman’s case, this position is extended to the first

daughter of the first born son, and her presence is very important. Every means is exploited to make sure she is present in the funeral. Whichever the case the position is so crucial to the ritual that the first born daughter is the lead “owner” of the funeral and is only supported by the *umuada*. As observed in the two rituals studied, the daughters played the roles of lead figures. Their positions were held central in the performances. The daughter of the man, for instance, is donned in brown beads and crimson dress which symbolize mourning. Wherever she is in the compound, a group of *umuada* stick close to her to ensure that she is physically present at the most central positions and junctures during key ritual moments and that she gets what she needs. The granddaughter of the woman is similarly made to appear conspicuously crucial to the occasion. She appears to hold the key and means of executing key steps in the ritual and must thus be depended upon for the success of the event. Thus the most significant role of this participant is to hold the process of the ritual in unity seemingly because of consolidating focus.

The other significant role of the daughter is to represent the departed and this is more so in a woman’s funeral. She is taken as a representation of the person for which the other participants have come to pay their last respect and assist her in securing the best space among the dead. On behalf of the departed thus, this participant provides for and executes the funeral process; if she is young or unable to do so, the other people shoulder the task as “helpers” of the daughter. This is further evident at the time of receiving gifts of the funeral, where most of the gifts are given to her. The other “helpers” (the *umuada*) come in to also “help” in the reception of the gifts.



Fig 19: *Ihe ikpo ihu*, the gift presented by the first daughter of the deceased to the *umuada*.

The actor thus plays the role of enacting the presence of the departed. This role is very important in the ritual because the imagined presence of the departed convinces the participants that the process they are engaging in is being received by him or her as targeted. Thus, the participants are interested in how this actor performs. If she remarkably receives the presents, the horse, or the food, it is a sign that the departed and the ancestors are similarly remarkably doing the same.

The second category of the *umuada* are the “others” – the other members of the *umuada* other than the first born daughter (sisters, nieces and aunts of the deceased). They are the women who “own” the home of the departed. The owning involves handling the most crucial tasks in the process, and directing the flow of action in the ritual. They also eat the best meals in the occasion. There is usually a pig and a goat presented to the family by the in-laws which is specifically to be cooked and eaten by the *umuada* alone. This implies that among the Umulumbe a woman’s home does not change when one is married “away” and that her birthplace will always be her home even after death. This is the reason why in the burial of a woman, the body is supposed to be taken back to her

home unless it is “bought” back. The buying back is a ritual involving the in-laws paying a price to the relatives of the deceased woman to be allowed to bury the woman in their homestead. This observation has been hinted in one of the funeral songs:

<i>Mete onye di mma enyi</i>	Get a good friend
<i>Oh oh mete onye di mma</i>	Oh oh get a good friend
<i>I n'eme oyi meta onye dim ma</i>	When you are making friend
<i>Maka onunu</i>	Get a good person because of marriage
<i>Maka onunu eh</i>	Because of marriage eh
<i>Maka onunu</i>	Because of marriage
<i>Maka onunu eh</i>	Because of marriage eh
<i>Maka onunu</i>	Because of marriage

(Song 6)

In the song, the singer is celebrating the process of a good marriage; the one involving “a good person”. To her the marriage is a site for making friends. This is seen at the entry style of the *umuada*; each member ensures that she comes with the most outstanding group of “friends” in terms of number, costume, song and dance, and gifts.

In Paul Omukwa’s words, the significance of institution of the *umuada* in every funeral is not gainsaid; that the event is almost entirely driven by the *umuada* alone. He says that without the permission of the *umuada* the funeral cannot take place, and he links this conviction with the *omugwo* ritual which is performed when a child is born among the Igbo. In this ritual, mothers are attached to a woman who has just given birth to teach her parenting skills. A woman is thus revered here because of being endowed with knowledge of the most fundamental skills in life. (Respondent 2). The mother/wife motif is being appropriated to justify the centrality of the role of women in the event. The *umuada*, thus, play the role of representing livelihood as implied by the imagery of

motherhood/wifehood. This subject implies an acknowledgment that women are the owners of livelihoods of everyone in every family setting.

Another key role of the institution of the *umuada* is to shoulder basic activities during the event such as preparing, serving and taking of food and drinks. They are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that everyone eats well and eats the right food. This because in the ritual food is symbolic; the participants consume the food “on behalf” of the departed and the ancestors. Subsequently, the *umuada* play the role of leading in the “taking food and drink”. As they eat the most special food (*okpa*) and drinks (palm wine) in the occasion, the feeling among the participants is that the ancestors of the family are similarly doing so in their world. Further, they will partake in the reception of the gifts of the funeral in similar enactment.



Fig 20: The *Umuada* preparing food. Notice the yellow stew in polythene tubules is the special *okpa* stew to be specifically consumed by the *umuada*.

The major aspect which is closely linked with the power of the *umuada*, other than motherhood, is indeterminacy. I have used indeterminacy to refer to that state at which one is indefinite, elusive or mysterious to understand. This argument dwells on the

nexus of the mystery of the body, mind and materiality of a woman, and the mystery of death. There seems to be reverence directed to those whose many sides of their nature and lives are either vague or completely unknown. Thus, there is a link between mystery and power. The *umuada* emerge to the Umulumgbe people as occupying the area of the indeterminate, first and foremost, by virtue being women, and more so, being a special category of women - "daughters of the land" who at the same time are wives of other people.

In the above context, women are usually the mysterious category. As Irigaray observes, the phenomenology of a woman has been a central trope in the discourses of gender subjectivities (35). All the oppressive practices as well as emancipative strategies on women have always have got to do with the puzzling nature of the woman. In History of Sexuality, Foucault observes that a woman's body has been a center of mystery because it is "thoroughly saturated with sexuality" (104). Although in his analysis he uses this observation to illustrate how patriarchal systems have taken power from women, there is another way in which women have taken power from men through this concealment. Foucault however agrees that power usually come from "below" (94) and that patriarchal systems have used a strategy of censorship on sexuality of women to usurp power from them (83). This strategy involves negative relation on the sexuality, concealment, masking and limit (83). This explains Umulumgbe's women supremacy in the sense that their mystery by virtue of their sexuality has left their male counterparts indirectly revering them. There are two major areas of indeterminacy associated with women: the paradox of weakness, and the mystery of aesthetic excellence.

The first puzzling paradox, the mystery of a woman's weakness, is about the irony of male supremacy together with the myth that women belong to the category of the "weak sex". This has been paradoxical because women have manifested immense strengths in handling various tasks. The woman's huge responsibility of feeding the family is one of the most striking features that disrupt the myth of weakness among women. Contrary to this patriarchal discourse, a woman emerges in the web of human activities as having more significant strengths and abilities. In these rituals, there is a way in which power is vested to the women by this virtue. The *umuada* especially the married ones are able to play both the role of being guests (by virtue of belonging to the "other" families where they are married to) and also belonging to the home of the deceased. Other than feeding, all the important tasks are left for the women to execute. These tasks include inspecting, shaving and watching of the corpse. This implies people acknowledge that women are stronger than men and are able to effectively execute tasks which men may not. The strengths of a woman can be further seen in her creativity, dexterity and patience where they seem to immensely surpass men. These attributes appear as assets with which men subtly lend women power to handle tasks of greater profundity. Subsequently, the overall success of a funeral ritual depends largely on women because the core tasks are carried out by women.

The other asset of power is the mystery of aesthetic effect. The idea observed is that beauty is power. As observed in the performance of the ritual, song and dance is the major ingredients to what the participants would remark as a "fine" funeral. Given that this is to a large extent a woman's duty, there is a connection between this prowess and power. The songs and dancing are to be performed throughout the day and they involve

intricate acts which require endurance yet women handle the task to the end. This prowess is what is responsible for the creation of beautiful spectacle, and this ability to exceptionally embellish the occasion is what ascribes women with power. The effect of the power is evident in the way such spectacles move men to shower money on the women.

3.2.3. Co-wives

Last but not least, there are the co-wives who play the role of “Enhancers of Spectacle” or “embellishers” of the event. There are two categories in the ritual: the co-wives who are invited by the married *umuada* and those who belong to the homestead having been married by the brothers and other clansmen of the deceased. The group whose presence is felt most are the invitee co-wives. These are the women who enter the performance of the ritual in groups and style. The groups are identified by a member of the *umuada* who has been “married away” because they participate in the ritual as invitees of the member of the *umuada*. They are co-wives in the sense that the women are usually drawn from wives of one extended family or clan. These women are driven by the belief that an entry of a member of the *umuada* to a funeral ritual is more dignified when it is accompanied by a group of women. The other group of co-wives comprises of those women who are married into the family of the deceased. These co-wives, whether they are invitees or those married into the family play very crucial roles in the ritual. The local co-wives play the crucial role of guarding the corpse, shaving the corpse, and providing support to the widow. They are also expected to support the *umuada* and their entourages. The more the women groups and the more stylish they enter the scene, the higher the esteem will be given to the family of the deceased. As observed, women thus have strong

attachment to their homes and a predicament affecting their home is profoundly addressed by the women. At such time of bereavement they do everything to put this attachment to practice and the best way is to marshal a fleet of her co-wives to accompany her. A high ranking funeral will thus be that which registers a high number of such women groups. These women play crucial roles in the funeral.

The first major role is to sing and dance. As noted, song and dance in the ritual is used to keep the ritual lively with rhythm and melody. Song and dance is also used as a vehicle for communing with the deceased, the ancestors and the gods. They are also means of exchanging words of encouragement and assurance. The song *Jesus ibu chi ji nma* (Jesus the lord) is an example of singing to communing with the spiritual world seeking to have people to be spared from death:

<i>Jesus ibu chi ji nma</i>	Jesus you are the one that holds the knife
<i>Jide ji n'aka</i>	You hold the yam in your hands
<i>Jesus ibu chi ji nma</i>	Jesus you are the one that holds the knife
<i>Jide ji n'aka</i>	You hold the yam in your hand
<i>Onye i wanyere ya ga eri ya</i>	Whoever you give is the one that eats it
<i>Wanye m ka m rie</i>	Give me to eat
(Song 9)	

In Umulumgbe community, Christianity has gained a harmonious nexus with the traditional religion. Consequently, the Jesus easily substitutes the Umulumgbe god, similarly, as church can substitute the shrines of the Umulumgbe gods. Therefore as the singer addresses Jesus in this song, she has in mind the supreme God who gives and takes life. In the song, the singer engages in a dialogue with Jesus where she pleads with him to give much of yam than wield the knife. The yam is used to symbolize life while the knife stands for death. Being the players of this role, women thus carve a special space for

themselves: they occupy the position of interceders of the people to be spared of God's wrath. They emerge as a category of persons who are specially favored by God. This is confirmed in the song *Abu m ada eze* (I am a princess):

<i>Ihe n'enyè m onu bu</i>	My happiness is that I am a princess
<i>n'abu m adaeze</i>	I am a princess
<i>mgbe m gaa hapu uwa</i>	When I leave this world
<i>aga m esoro nna m naa n'igwe</i>	I will live with my father in heaven

(Song 8)

In the song, the persona is celebrating her womanhood. This is illustrated in the line (My happiness is that I am a princess) in which womanhood is equated to being a princess. This is in allusion to their position of being the people responsible for the funerals of their fathers. As such the singer celebrates her royalty by drawing a connection with the world of the departed. This serves to ameliorate the effects of death to appear that it is the way of re-uniting with the ancestors and a way of attaining full royalty as a woman. As the women go about their tasks they do so passionately because of the consciousness that they are "princesses in waiting"

Again women play the role of being the custodians and practitioners of customs of the community. In predominantly oral societies, the traditions are stored mainly in the medium of folklore. As observed, the folkloric mediums in the funeral composed mainly of songs, and the transitions from one scene to the other are marked by songs. This implies that the singers especially the soloists are the persons to be relied upon to offer acceptable procedures of carrying out the event. The song *Omenala* (Tradition), for instance, is an affirmation that the women cherish traditions for the welfare of the community:

<i>Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, obodo anyi omenala</i>	Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, our community's tradition
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<i>Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, obodo anyi omenala</i>	Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, our community's tradition
<i>Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, obodo anyi omenala</i>	Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, our community's tradition
<i>Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, obodo anyi omenala</i>	Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, our community's tradition

Given the profundity of the songs in the rituals, and singing being a women's role, the women are thus special persons entrusted by the community to reduce the effects of death among the living. They emerge as suitable healers of wounds caused by death and more so as providers of wise counsel among the living as seen in the song *Ana eje ogu be mmuo* (Can we battle the spirit)

<i>Ananan eje ogu be mma?</i>	Can we battle the spirits?
<i>Ananan eje ogu be mma?</i>	Can we battle the spirits?
<i>Aniri eje ogu be mma</i>	If we can battle the spirits
<i>Anyi vuru ogu wee jee</i>	We would have gone to fight them

The singer is seen attempting to explicate the nature and implication of death. She insinuates that death is spiritual and that it is the spirits who are vested with the power of deciding who and when to die. This is another element which harmonizes traditional Umulumgbe traditional religion with Christianity in the sense that Christianity too provides that death is an effect of "the will of God". As the participants console one another, they exploit this mythical provision because it suitably "demystifies death". This song thus serves to counsel the people, using a strategy of reducing the destructive effects of death with an explanation that it is caused by spirits who they cannot wrestle with.

Another role of the co-wives in the funeral is twofold: presence and to embellishment of the occasion. Each of the women groups enters the scene in style usually as if to outdo each other and their entry offers the much needed spectacle which is believed to be watched by the deceased and the ancestors. Their entry is accompanied by

canon shots, song and dance. Usually there is a lead singer or dancer who gyrates vigorously to the tunes seemingly to attract the attention of everyone. As the number of the women groups increase therefore a fascinating spectacle created, which is suitable not only to the participants but more so to the spirits who are felt by the participants as ever being present in the ritual. This is added by their seemingly competing attires and songs and dances. One of the songs of this nature is *Asa idi m mma* (You are good to me):

Asa m oh idi m mma na m na gi ga ebi My pretty lady you are good to me
me and you will live

Asa m oh idi m mma na m na gi ga ebi My pretty lady you are good to me
me and you will live

The song is a parody of men's romantic expressions to their beloved women. Such song provides light moments during the ritual and is also a celebration of being associated with beauty. The man is parodied as implying that prettiness yields life. As observed during the ritual of the man, the song elicited excitement among the participants and this is the time when the singers are showered with money the most.

The co-wives, seen as an institution is thus very important category of actors in the rituals, but more so, the institution seems to be a suitable answer to Irigaray's feminist call for unity among women. Reacting to Freudian Oedipal perspective, she identifies and advocates unity of women using the metonymy of mother and daughter relationship. This thought seems to have close semblance with this institution and also that of the *umuada*. To the women this unity is seen as a strategy of confronting male subjectivity and subverting male dominance. The members see themselves as comrades, for instance in the song *Oyi m oma* (My good friend):

Onye neme ka m sieme Who behaves like me

Onye neme ka m sieme oh Who behaves like me oh

<i>Ony eneme ka m sieme oh</i>	Who behaves like me oh
<i>Ya ka m na-akpo oyi m oh</i>	He is my friend oh
<i>Oyi mu oma</i>	My good friend
<i>Obuliwo m elu</i>	He has lifted me up
<i>Aya aya</i>	Aya aya
<i>Obuliwo m elu</i>	He has lifted me up
<i>Aya aya</i>	Aya aya

The singer engages in a carnival strategy of celebrating friendships from her fellow women. This is requisite because of the roles they play of accompanying a member during times of crisis like bereavement.

The co-wives are revered to perform the above special roles because of the aspects of womanhood. The aspects of motherhood and indeterminacy further apply in the category of the co-wives; however knowledge is the aspect which empowers the co-wives most. Foucault identifies a kind of power he calls “epistemic sovereignty” in which he says is vested in an individual by virtue of knowing more than the others (Joseph Rouse, 9, 13). Knowledge is thus equivalent to power and reverence is accorded to the individuals who know than the others who do not. The fact that the women are the custodians of crucial ideas and skills for the execution of the ritual implies that they are vested with a more powerful position than men in the community. A skilled person is, for instance, more superior than the unskilled. The women in the rituals appear to own the skills of preparing and interring the body, and the skills of running a funeral. Men appear as helpers while the processes are executed using the knowledge of the women. Thus women among the Umulumgbe emerge as the experts of the protocols of such profound events. Considering the intricacy and dreariness of such events, women thus appear as having been subtly vested with the power to offer practical solutions during hard times.

Power is also vested on women by virtue of being the ones who hold better knowledge on parenting. This is evident in the ritual of *omugwo* when a child has just been born as observed by Omukwa (Respondent 2). This seems to imply that men do not possess the necessary skills and ideas of parenting as women do. This may explain why men do not participate in the process although they are parents as well. Furthermore, the creativity exhibited by women in the performance of the song similarly suggests they are revered. As explained earlier in the role of the co-wives, the discourses in the song are carefully crafted by the women. This means that women are the ones who know what to be uttered and what not to be uttered in the funeral. It means, unlike men, they are trusted to make the most suitable discourses during the event.

The special role of the local co-wives inspecting the dead to ensure that there was no murder or witchcraft implies that the women possess rare skills which men hardly possess; they can distinguish between the natural and the evil. Thus everyone guards against committing murder or witchcraft knowing that in the event of such an act the women are able to expose it. Similarly, women are seen as possessing the knowledge to intercede on behalf of the people. They appear as knowing best how to win mercy; having the strategies of drawing sympathy from gods and spirits to change course for the people. This is evident in the mercy-begging tone in some of the songs they perform during the rituals for instance the song *Jesus bu chi ji nma* (Jesus the lord). The effect of the song among the participants is a satisfaction that the prayers have been accepted in heaven by virtue of a suitably crafted tone and choice of words.

3.3. Summary

In this chapter I set to describe and explicate the role of women in the funeral ritual of the Umulumbe, and to assess the implications of the role to power relations between the two genders. I have illustrated how women play the most significant role in the ritual seemingly outdoing men in the process and that it appears that men participate as mere “helpers” while the main actors are women. Owing to the profound nature of the ritual among the people, I have used the ritual as a valuable mirror of the society, which cherishes and practices the ritual, to explicate the nature and functionality of the apparent supremacy of women in Umulumbe. I have, thus, reflected on the observed roles and sought to illuminate the possible connections of specialty of roles and power. It has emerged that women seem to possess special attributes (which I have called assets) which are usually associated with power. These assets seem to be highly felt among the Umulumbe much more than other African societies, and thus it has emerged that women in this society wield more supremacy than men.

CONCLUSION

This study has engaged in a critical inquiry into the Umulumgbe funeral ritual, first, to examine the nature and functionality of the ritual when viewed as a performative genre, and particularly, as social drama, as propounded by Victor Turner. Secondly, I have narrowed my analysis by engaging in an assessment of the role of women in the performance of the ritual with critical focus on the implications of power dimensions among the Umulumgbe. This line of inquiry has been obliged by two features in the performance of the ritual. The first feature is the way the ritual is performed by the people as part of the quotidian life with little consciousness of engaging in fiction yet the actions seem to take after the canonical theatrical drama. This interplay of the real and the fictitious typically takes the form of the category of social drama. Social dramas, especially rituals, have been valuably used as mirrors of understanding salient socio-cultural issues of the people who cherish and practice the ritual. The second feature of interest to this study has been the elevated role women occupy in the ritual. I have subsequently sought to understand the role of women among the Umulumgbe using the ritual as the mirror. From the foregoing explications, this study has drawn the following conclusions.

The funeral ritual of the Umulumgbe can best be understood as a social drama. This is because by looking at it as a dramatic text, one will be able to employ Aristotelian explicative features of drama to effectively understand the interplay of the imaginative and the real aspects of life as evident in the ritual. In the process of employing Aristotelian templates of drama (action, character, idea, verbal expression, music, and

spectacle), the Umulumbe funeral ritual, on one hand suitably passes for a dramatic text, while on the other hand emerges as a special kind of drama.

The ritual qualifies as drama most significantly because the idea and the action are imagined; the ritual is a classic experience of imitation of action. The setting is a parallel to a dramatic stage in that, although it is the real grounds such as homes, for example, the place is made to appear as grounds for which human beings and spirits meet. Secondly, the participants assume imagined roles. There are those who act as the departed, such as the first daughter of the first son; others act as the aggrieved spirits such as the young men who threaten to attack or demolish houses; while others act as the ancestors, such as the *umuada* who have to eat special food and drink ostensibly on behalf of the spirits. Thirdly, the effects and spectacle are symbolic. The choice of attires, the beads, colours of attires and the effects such as the horse, the *ahaba* tree branches and the *ikpa* drum are parallels to a theatrical performance. From the *ikpa* drum which symbolizes the presence of the gods at the site, to the makeshift “house”, the crimson beads for the *umuada*, the various colours of the co-wives groups, and portrait of the deceased, a viewer is made to feel an experience of performance of drama. Fourthly, the action is also imagined. The preparation of plenty of food and the eating is done as an enactment of how the spirits would eat the food “served by the deceased” seeking to be welcomed into the spiritual world. Imitation is also illustrated in the way men from the mother’s side set to demolish the makeshift “house”. All these features qualify an exegesis of the ritual from a perspective of drama.

As a special kind of drama, this study found out that rituals are usually executed and consumed by the owners as real; the participants never imagine they are performing a

fictional process but they do it as a practical duty. As the participants and the audience carry on with the ritual process, the consciousness of “acting” is suspended; thus they do not operate within awareness costumes. Instead, they talk of customary attire for the occasion; and participants instead of characters. The participants also uphold seriously that they are performing the action for functionally and practical purposes unlike the canonical drama where functionality is indirect and is meant to affect others in subsidiary ways. Here, the action is to fulfill a social requisite and the actors are consciously aware of this situation. The ritual is also special kind of drama because its temporality follows the quotidian one. It is performed for only during the right occasions and its meaningfulness may not come out effectively if staged out of its contexts.

The uniqueness of the ritual drama closely follows Turner’s four phases of social drama: breach, crisis, redress and re-incorporation. The ritual starts at the time a breach is committed. This goes back to the time a mistake, a sin or a contravention of certain accepted moral orders. As the ceremony of the ritual is being performed, the process had started earlier. This is because the Umulumbe, like many African cultures, believe in death being a result of an anomaly in which gods and ancestors have not liked. The breaches range from taking poison, taking wrong measures in life to having stayed on earth for long. After the breach, there comes crisis of which in the regard of this ritual it manifests as death. Death appears as a critical occurrence and those who have been left behind suffer the brunt most. The widow in case of a man undergoes a long moment of seclusion and desolation. After the burial comes the moment of seeking to correct things – redress. The redress comes as the ritual for realigning the anomalies, often involving appeasing the gods and spirits in an attempt to ensure acceptance of the departed in the

next world, and to keep death away from visiting again. After the funeral ritual, there are mechanisms of reincorporating the subject back to normalcy. The widow, for instance, is shaved and then she invites a guest to cook and eat with her. The funeral ritual of the Umulumgbe can be understood from the two perspectives.

The second line of inquiry of this study has been about the gender dimensions of power as exhibited in the performance of this ritual. Death, being an occurrence that affects people greatly, enabled this study to rely on the observations from the performance of its funeral as applicably reflecting on gender power dimensions of the Umulumgbe people. This is because at such moments participants engage in solemn actions characterized by sincerity and strict reference to traditions and beliefs. In this study I focused on two ways in which gender contestations are evident in the performance of the ritual. In the first way, I compared and contrasted the social dramatic features of a man's ritual with a woman's to evaluate the importance being accorded to both genders, and it emerges that although a number of aspects are practiced for both genders, a woman's funeral is handled with the greatest adherence to the practice and method. In the second way, I focused on three categories of female actors (the widow, the *umuada* and the co-wives) show that men are minor actors whose main role is to provide support to the actual actors who are the women. From this observation that such profound event is "owned" by women - the condition of motherhood, the condition of indeterminacy and custodianship of knowledge. With evidence that the women of Umulumgbe are ascribed with these features more saliently, this study concludes that womanhood is the subtly revered gender in Umulumgbe.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: THE UMULUMBE PEOPLE

The Umulumbe is a sub-tribe of the larger Igbo community of Nigeria, which is in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu state of the South-Eastern region. It is one of the major sub-tribes of the larger Igbo. Much of the history of the Umulumbe has not been documented and thus this study used oral histories from renowned elders for this background information. The Umulumbe people are very religious; the spiritual life is held with both esteem and ceremony. Christianity has infiltrated into the community but the major traditional events are still observed with strong traditional ideas and methods. The Umulumbe have, thus, harmonized Christianity and traditional religion to fit into each other. The chief deity of the people is *Ugwuegba Edem*, and his chief priest is Ezeugwu.

Umulumbe as a community has chiefdoms but are mainly administered through the council of elders of several villages. The most formal administrative unit is the family. A family usually occupies homes characterized by established compounds with houses build according to the number of wives and married sons. The family heads, which are usually men, actively participate in the council of elders. Generally, the Umulumbe are very communal in nature. The communalism is even stronger within clans, and that during social events people strive to show support to one another. Individualism is regarded as evil. Among the elders, major decisions, especially on disputes are taken; there are those who have been given titles because of certain successes, whose decrees are highly respected. Other than ostracism, the greatest sanction an offender is given is denial of a decent burial and funeral. Solving disputes and maintaining order is reinforced

by the *odo* institution. *Odo* is a religious society of masked representatives of spirits, and only the men are initiated into the group every two years.

The chief economic activities of the people are agriculture and trade, with key crops being yams, cassava, cocoyam, beans, cashew nuts, mango, kola nuts, palm tree, melons, and okro. The yam is the chief crop and is considered a man's crop. A man's worth is thus gauged by the number and sizes of his barns. The yam is also used in major rituals as a sign and symbol of appreciation and appeasement. As such, the yam is sold in the market by men and women only deal with the crop if she has been commissioned by a man. The other crops "belong" to the woman. Much of the manual farming work is done by men while activities requiring skills such as placing seeds in holes and burrows is woman's work because of her acknowledged expertise and dexterity. During heavy manual work, a man invites men from his in-laws in a work set up called *oru ogo* ("by turn"), to assist clear the work. This set up is highly respected and no man who has benefited fails to assist his in-laws in return. The in-law relation is thus held with high regard because it is a sign of appreciation of having got a wife.

Umulumgbe, like all other Igbo tribes, have a four-day week being *Eke*, *Orie*, *Afor*, and *Nkwo*. After *Nkwo*, *Eke* starts again. *Eke* day is considered a sacred day and all caution is put to practice on this day. Even where there are urgent disputes, peace are instantly restored. Also being a man's day, most of the activities are performed by men (Chukwu M. Ugwu, 38).

Umulumgbe people strongly believe in reincarnation of the dead and therefore attend earnestly to sickness, death and burial, and also spend significant resources during funeral ceremonies. Sickness is taken with great concern among the family members,

relatives and neighbours as it means dissatisfaction among the ancestors; sickness and death are never ordinary. All forms of treatment are administered: taking the patient to hospitals as well as consulting the local medicine man (*Dibia ngorogwu*) and the seer (*Dibia afa*). The death of a child is usually suspected to be a form of punishment in form of a “bad” child (*ogbanje*) who recurrently comes to the world shortly simply to mock. In such case then the child is buried immediately, and seers are promptly consulted for messages from the spiritual world. Intricate rituals and observations will be carried to ensure the child does not “return and re-enter the womb” of the mother. Generally, when a young person dies it is considered a big loss since the persons to bury one should be the children and not the parents. As spoken by Akpa Augustine, it is expected that the young should bury the old:

In Umulumbe funeral ritual, everybody participates but the main people that participate actively are those younger than the deceased. This is because it is believed that it is the duty of the child to bury the father, not the father to bury the child.

(Respondent 1)

The Umulumbe handle burials and funerals very cautiously as they believe that the deceased is watching them. They never bury their dead in cemeteries because they consider this as “throwing away”, and they are aware of the consequences of such a deed. Once a person has died burial arrangements are carried out immediately with an aim of burying the corpse the same day. However, this is usually hard in the case of a woman because of some necessary rules that have to be followed and as Augustine Okpa explains, burial for a woman is a complex process: (see Respondent 1)

In Umulumgbe, Eke is the main market day. It is also the day in which major communal events and rituals take place such as cursing an offender. Both men and women participate in Umulumgbe funeral ritual and they seem to have specially prescribed roles. Women for example are required in larger numbers than men. This is because the women have more roles to play than the men. A myth among these people goes around that it is women who “own” a corpse. On the following morning after the last day of the ritual, which is usually the next *eke*, the family members shave their hair so that the baldness stand to symbolise the loss of the departed and the beginning of a new life among the survivors.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEWS

Respondent 1: Mr.Okpa Augustine

Key:

G stands for Gloria, the interviewer.

A stands for Augustine.

G: Please what is your name?

A: My name is Augustine. I am from Lett village in Umulumgbe.

G: Please what is death?

A: Death is a debt that everyone owes to his/her maker. This is also the time that a person leaves the living and unites with the ancestors.

G: How does Umulumgbe handle death?

A: Umulumgbe handle death by paying their respect to the deceased. They make sure that no one from that clan goes to farm or to market until the person is buried.

G: How will they know that somebody is dead?

A: When somebody dies in Umulumgbe, somebody from the family goes to the group leader of the married women in that village to announce that somebody has died. If the person died in the afternoon, the announcement is also made so that those in the farm and in the market can stop whatever thing they are doing and come home. A man is expected to be buried the same day, but a woman can take more than a day to be buried. This is because a man's burial is simpler than that of a woman, when a man dies, the main people needed are the man's first son, the first daughter, and the kinsmen. But a woman's burial is always a complicated one; this is because a woman can never be buried without the approval of her

family and the kinsmen. When a woman dies, her corpse is to be taken to her family but this is after her corpse has being inspected by some women of her kindred to make sure she died in a good shape. After this, they will now tell her husband people to bring back their daughter home. But the husband people can also be allowed to bury her in her husband's compound if the children are too young so that she can protect them. She can also be buried in her husband's compound if a ritual is performed. This ritual which is performed represents the purchasing of the woman's corpse and in order for the husband's family to complete this ritual; the woman's wrapper is taken to the family home in place of the woman. It is also very important that if a person cannot be buried the same day, it is the duty of the daughters of that village to watch over the corpse until it is buried. It is also these women's duty to make sure that they are food for the family of the deceased. It is also the duty of other widows to shave the woman's hair, and if is a man, it is the duty of the widowers to shave his hair, but the watching over of a corpse is strictly for the women.

G: What else do they do after the burial?

A: After the burial the family members come together to fix the date for the funeral, if is a man it must start on the night of Eke day, and if is a woman it must start in the morning of Orié day.

G: Please what is funeral?

A: Funeral is a ritual which is performed for the dead after the person has been buried in Umulumgbe. In Umulumgbe it is believed that the dead cannot reach home without the performance of this ritual.

G: Please can you explain the procedures for this funeral ritual?

A: The procedures are the same except that a man's funeral starts on the night of Eke day, while a woman's own starts on the morning of Orié day. On the night of Eke day, village cannon are used to announce the beginning of a man's funeral and after this the ikpa drums are being beaten by men. On this Eke night the young men go to the forest to fetch the Ahaba tree. Then on the Orié day, the women start their performance. So, the funeral of a man starts on the night of Eke day while a woman's own starts on the morning of Orié day, but they all end on Nkwo day.

G: What is the importance of Ikpa in a man's funeral ritual?

A: Ikpa is a special drum for the men. The beating of Ikpa shows that a giant has departed from us. It also announces to the ancestors that one of their sons is returning home. So Ikpa and village cannon serve as instruments of announcement to both the dead and the living.

G: Why is there a difference between a man's funeral ritual and a woman's funeral ritual?

A: The difference is because Umulumgbe is an Igbo Odo community, and it is believed that a man can reincarnate as Odo, so it is proper for a man's funeral to start on the same night of Eke day that Odo goes home, that is to the ancestors. Orié day on the other hand is a free day for women of Umulumgbe and this is why everything about a woman is performed on Orié day.

G: What are the importance of this funeral ritual to the dead, the bereaved, and the community?

A: First this funeral ritual is very important to the dead because it gives him/her a place among the other dead. Secondly it gives the family the assurance that they have performed their part by giving the dead peace, and if possible that the reincarnation of the dead will bring peace not havoc. Thirdly, it frees both the family and the villagers from guilt.

G: Who is qualified to participate in this funeral ritual?

A: In Umulumgbe funeral ritual, everybody participates but the main people that participate actively are those younger than the deceased. This is because it is believed that it is the duty of the child to bury the father, not the father to bury the child.

Respondent 2.Mr.Paul Omukwa

Key: G stands for Gloria, the interviewer.

P stands for Paul.

G: Please what is your name?

P: My name is Paul Umukwa, I am from Eminyi clan in Lett of Umulumgbe, in Udi Local Government of Enugu State.

G: Please what is death?

P: Death is something that occurs to everybody, but we always pray and wish to die at our old age.

G: How does Umulumgbe handle death when it occurs?

P: Umulumgbe handles death by making sure that the dead is buried.

G: What is funeral to you?

P: Funeral is the last respect we pay to the dead in order for him to have a place in the other world. It is believed that without the performance of funeral, a dead person is like a slave among the others. So, funeral performance for the dead in Umulumgbe is a means of giving your dead relative everlasting peace and also helping your dead relative to secure his/her rights in the other world.

G: What is the importance of funeral performance to Umulumgbe?

P: Umulumgbe believes in reincarnation, so funeral performance is believed to help a dead one to reincarnate as a good person. It is also believed that if someone's funeral is not performed, the person may decide to reincarnate as a bad child, that is the child can become an armed robber, or can be born blind, deaf, or paralysed thereby causing trouble for the family and the society.

G: Can you explain the procedure for this funeral ritual?

P: The procedure for every funeral performance in Umulumgbe is the same, except that a man's funeral starts on the night of Eke day with the sound of a village cannon which will not be less than two, the beating of ikpa by men, and the fetching of ahaba tree from the forest by younger men on the same Eke night. This is a way of announcing to the entire community that a man's funeral has begun. The woman's own begins on the morning of Orié day with the same sound of a village cannon which will not also be less than one. Also in every funeral performance in Umulumgbe, it is the duty of the first daughter of the deceased to present to the Umuada what we call ihe ikpo iru. And it is also the duty of the first son to present to the kinsmen the ewu eda, all these are the gift which are believed that the deceased person takes to the other world.

G: Do the performers need any special skills in order to perform in this ritual?

P: Funeral performance is a compulsory ritual in Umulumgbe so everybody is involved and nobody needs a special skill in order to participate. The only part that an experienced person may be needed is in blowing the village cannon; this is because it is not everybody that knows how to do it.

G: What is the importance of ikpa to a man's funeral performance?

P: Ikpa is very important in a man's funeral because as we are beating it here so it is being beaten on the other side. If the dead person is from Lett for instance, the sound of ikpa will be heard from the river, which is orfie where they return to when they die.

G: Where and what time is it ideal to perform this funeral ritual?

P: The men perform their own part in the morning, which is around 11a.m after the sale of palm wine. This is because that is the time people come to buy palm wine for any occasion. While the women group start their performance by 2pm. The women's performance is fixed by 2pm in order for them to take care of their homes before leaving for the funeral.

G: What is the role of women in this ritual?

P: In our culture, the people that own every funeral are the women especially the umuada. If the deceased is a man, the umuada of the man's clan are the organizers of the man's funeral and if the deceased is a woman, the organizers of the funeral will be the umuada of the clan where the woman comes from. Without the approval of the umuada no funeral can take place in Umulumgbe. This is because the umuada are not just the daughters of the land but they are also our wives and

our mothers. You know in Umulumgbe and even in Igbo land in general it is the women that go for omugwo when a baby is born. So, the duty of taking care of human beings from the day the person is brought into this world and the day the person leaves this world is left for the women in Umulumgbe. As mothers, they know the best way of handling us.

G: What is the role of the widow in the ritual?

P: Immediately a man dies, the wife's hair is shaved, she is also taken away from their main house and kept in the kitchen where she sits and sleeps on the floor of the kitchen for one month. She cannot cook for anybody, she cannot go to the market and she cannot also go to the farm until the end of one month of indoor mourning. When she wants to go anywhere outside the house, it is the duty of the umuada to escort her to the place. After the one month indoor mourning she can then start cooking for her family, she can go to the market, she can go to the farm and she can also go to church if she is a Christian.

G: Is one month the duration for mourning for a widow?

P: No, one month is just the time she stays indoors and cannot go anywhere or visit anybody. But at the end of that one month, she is clothed in black attire which she wears for one year. This attire shows that she is mourning her husband. After the one year mourning she will remove this black attire, burn them and then call her relatives and friends to celebrate with her.

Respondent 3. Ezeugwu of Umulumgbe Deity

Key: G stands for Gloria, the interviewer.

E stands for Ezeugwu.

G: Please what is your name?

E: My name is Ezeugwu, the chief priest of Umulumgbe diety.

G: Please can you tell us the name of your diety?

E: The name of our god is Ugwuegbe Edemu.

G: Please can you tell us about the history of Umulumgbe?

E: Umulumgbe is in Ojebe Ogene because he is one of the sons of Ojebe Ogene. Ojebe Ogene their father gave birth to Ebe, Abor, Ukana, Awhumu, Okpatu, Umulumgbe, and Ukehe. So Umulumgbe is the sixth son of Ojebe Ogene. Umulumgbe got married and gave birth to many sons who are Akpani his eldest son, followed by Lett, and Edem, these three sons of Umulumgbe are called the Ikege. The fourth son is Akpator, followed by Amuwelu, and Amebor and these are the Ibite. So this is how we got the six villages we have today in Umulumgbe. These six sons got married and gave birth to other sons which represent different clans in Umulumgbe.

G: Please how can you define death to us?

E: Death is catholic because it is universal, that is, it reaches everywhere and affects everybody. Nobody can run away or escape from death. When a man dies in Umulumgbe, his relatives from his mother's side are sent for followed by his kinsmen and then his in-laws. These people are the one to discuss about the burial of the dead man. It is the duty of the maternal relatives to provide the ritual items needed for his burial which are a gallon of palm wine and a tuber of yam. It is the responsibility of his kinsmen to provide the cutlasses and the hoes needed for the digging of the grave. It is also the duty of the young men from his clan to dig the

grave. After the digging of the grave, the able young men will now take the corpse for burial. The blowing of the village cannon and beating of the ikpa drums are performed to announce that the deceased man has been buried. Also during the beating of the ikpa drums, the young men go to the forest to fetch the ahaba tree which is very sacred to the final passage of a man. This ahaba tree symbolizes peace both to the deceased and to his village. It is compulsory that everybody visits the family of the deceased the following morning. The men pay their respect in the morning while the women also pay their own respect the same morning. It is also the duty of the women to bring food, water, and firewood to the family of the deceased. It is also the women's duty to sleep in the deceased house for four market days after the four market days everybody goes about his or her business. On the fifth day after the burial the women who are related to the deceased shave their hair.

G: Why does a woman's funeral starts on Orie day?

E: It starts on Orie day because a woman is a woman.

G: What is the difference between Orie, Afor, Nkwo, and Eke?

E: A woman is Orie and God said that a woman must be under a man. This is why the goddess of Umulumgbe is worshiped only on Orie day.

G: Where does the dead go to?

E: Every village in Umulumgbe has where their people return to when they die. People from Amabor village return to Iyiukwu river, people from Amauwenu village return to Onuenwe river when they die, people from Akpator return to Offia ikpere river, the people from Lett village return to Nwaenyim river, the

people from Akpani village return to Offie river, and the people from Edem village return to Ugwuegu river.

G: What is the condition of a woman when her husband dies?

E: When a man dies, the women help to undress the widow and cloth her with a dirty cloth or her casual attire. After this her hair is shaved and she is taken to her kitchen where she will stay for four week. During this period of isolation the widow will only depend on the food brought to her by her co-wives and relatives; at the end of the four weeks another widow will go to a river called Okaeze to fetch the water which she will use to take her first bath. So, after taking her bath with this water, she will now be dressed in black attire which she will wear for one year, and during these twelve months of mourning she will not shave her hair nor attend any celebration. The same water which she used after the four weeks of isolation will be brought for her after the completion of the twelve months mourning for the final cleansing. But before the final cleansing with the water from Okaeze River she will have to shave her hair for the second time which will also be the final hair shaving for her husband. So, after the cleansing, the black attire will be set on fire which signifies the woman's freedom and re-acceptance in the society. After this she will now dress herself with new attire and she will also cook and celebrate with her friends and relatives.

G: What is the state of a man that the wife died?

H: Umulumgbe has the same rule for everybody whose spouse died whether the bereaved is a man or a woman. The only difference is that it is only a widow who can fetch the Okaeze River's water for their cleansing.

Respondent 4. Magdalene a widow from Akpator Umulumgbe

Key: G stands for Gloria, the interviewer.

M stands for Magdalene.

G: Please what is your name?

E: My name is Magdalene Okeamuma, I am a widow.

G: What is the state of a widow in Umulumgbe?

When a man dies the wife stays in her kitchen with other women whose duty it is to keep her company. The woman will have to stay there for four Orie market days after which another widow will go to Okaeze River to fetch water for her to take her bath before putting on black attire. She will wear this black attire for twelve months. During this period of mourning, the woman is not allowed to use the same toilet with other people. A special toilet is made for her.

Respondent 5. Geraldine Anidiogo, one of the women singers

Key: M stands for Me, the interviewer.

G stands for Geraldine Anidiogo, the respondent.

M: Please can you us me name?

G: My name is Geraldine; I am the lead singer of our co-wives' group.

M: Where do you come from?

G: We are from Oro in Eziagu Local government of Enugu State, Nigeria.

M: What is the name of your group?

G: We are called Ugo Bere N'Orji.

M: Can you tell me the reason why you are called Ugo Bere N'Orji?

- G: Ugo is seen as the most beautiful and precious bird in Igbo land and the roof of a house can only last when built with orji tree. So, we the women from Oro in Ezeagu see ourselves as beautiful, precious, and the shelter of every home.
- M: Why are you here today?
- G: We are here today in order to pay respect to our co-wife's brother who died last year, December 2011.
- M: Can you tell me how you learnt to sing?
- G: I did not learn to sing from anybody. I started singing from my childhood, and this is why they call me omutara tewe.
- M: Why is it that there is no man that accompanied your group?
- G: There are men that accompanied us, but their work is not to dance but to encourage us by spraying money on us. They are also here to protect us from harm.

APPENDIX 3: SONGS**1. AMARA M CHI NKE M N'EFE**

Nezie amara m o o chi nke m n'efe
 Nezie amara m o o chi nke m n'efe
 Umunne m o o n'amara mo o chi nke m n'efe

Nezie amara m o o chi nke m n'efe
 Umunee m n'amara m o o chi nke m n'efe
 Nezie amara m o o chi nke m n'efe

2. EMILI

Emili e e nwanyi n'eri ego
 Emili e e oyo oyo o o
 Unu ahula na nwanyi abiala igba egwu m o o
 Emilie e oyo oyo o

3. ONYE AHAPUNA NWENNE YA

Oh oh onye aha nwenne
 Nwenne n'acho nwenne ye
 Ne mgbe oruru ubochi onwu
 Maka ne nwenne n'acho
 Nwenne eye

4. ANA EJE OGU BE MMUO

Ananan eje ogu be mma
 Ananan eje ogu be mma
 Aniri eje ogu be mma
 Anyi vuru ogu nwee jee

5. NMEKOTA

Nmekota, nmekota ka nwanne ji ama nwanne ya

I KNOW THE GOD I WORSHIP

Truly I know o o the God I worship
 Truly I know oo the God I worship
 My sisters I know the God I worship

Truly I know the God I worship
 My sisters I know the God I worship
 Truly I know the God I worship

EMILI

Emili e e a woman that enjoys money
 Emili e e oyo oyo o o
 Have you seen that a woman has come
 to dance to my song oo
 Emili e e oyo oyo o

DON'T ABANDON YOUR SISTER

Oh oh no one should abandon her sister
 A sister needs her sister
 When the day of death comes
 A sister needs her sister
 A sister needs her sister

CAN WE BATTLE THE SPIRIT

Can we battle the spirits
 Can we battle the spirits
 If we can battle the spirits
 We would have gone to fight them

RELATIONSHIP

By relating, relating that sisters
 know each other

Okwa nmekota

Okwa nmekota ka nwanne ji ama nwenne ya

Okwa nmekota

6. META ONYE DI MMA ENYI

Mete onye di mma enyi

Oh oh mete onye di mma

I n'eme oyi meta onye dim ma

Maka onunu

Maka onunu eh

Maka onunu

Maka onunu eh

Maka onunu

7. NYAYO BU IJE

Nyayo bu ije

Nyayo bu ije

Nyayo bu ije

Nyayo bu ije

Eh nyayo bu ije

Nyayo bu ije

Eh nyayo bu ije

Nyayo bu ije

8. ABU M ADA EZE

Ihe n'enye m onu bu

n'abu m ada eze

mgbe m ga ahapu uwa

aga m esoro nna m naa n'igwe

Through relating

It is through relating that sisters
know each other

Through relating

MAKE A GOOD FRIENDSHIP

Get a good friend

Oh oh get a good friend

When you are making friend

Get a good person because of

Marriage

Because of marriage eh

Because of marriage

Because of marriage eh

Because of marriage

SLOWLY IS THE JOURNEY

Slowly is the journey

Slowly is the journey

Slowly is the journey

Slowly is the journey

Eh slowly is the journey

Slowly is the journey

Eh slowly is the journey

Slowly is the journey

I AM A PRINCESS

My happiness is

that I am a princess

When I leave this world

I will leave with my father in

heaven

9. JESUS BU CHI JI NMA

Jesus ibu chi ji nma
 Jide ji n'aka
 Jesus ibu chi ji nma
 Jide ji n'aka
 Onye i wanyere ya ga eri ya
 Wanye m ka m rie
 Onye i wanyere ya ga eri ya
 Wanye m ka m ka m rie

10. OMENALA

Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, obodo anyi omenala
 Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, obodo anyi omenala
 Oyoh oh, iyoh oh, obodo anyi omenala
 Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, obodo anyi omenala
 Aka n'elu oh, aka n'elu oh, ukwu n'ala
 omenala
 Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, obodo anyi omenala

11. OYI M OMA

Onye neme ka m si eme
 Onye neme ka m si eme oh
 Onye neme ka m si eme oh
 Ya ka m na-akpo oyi m oh
 Oyi mu oma
 Obuliwo m elu
 Aya aya
 Obuliwo m elu
 Aya aya

12. ASA IDI M MMA

Asa m oh idi m mma na m na gi ga ebi

JESUS THE LORD

Jesus you are the one that holds the knife
 You hold the yam in your hands
 Jesus you are the one that holds the knife
 You hold the yam in your hand
 Whoever you give is the one that eats it
 Give me to eat
 Whoever you give is the one that eats it
 Give me to eat

TRADITION

Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, our community's tradition
 Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, our community's tradition
 Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, our community's tradition
 Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, our community's tradition
 Hands raised oh, hands raised oh, legs on
 the ground is a tradition
 Iyoh oh, iyoh oh, our community's tradition

MY GOOD FRIEND

Who behaves like me
 Who behaves like me oh
 Who behaves like me oh
 He is my friend oh
 My good friend
 He has lifted me up
 Aya aya
 He has lifted me up
 Aya aya

YOU ARE GOOD TO ME

My pretty lady you are good to me

Asa m oh idi m mma na m na gi ga ebi

Asa oyi m oma na m na gi ga ebi

Asa m oh idi m mma na m na gi ga ebi

13. ONYE KA M NAYA GA EBI?

Onwu eh ana m aju onwu m n'onye ga ebi?

Onwu gburu nwokorobia

Onwu m n'onye ga ebi?

Onwu eh ana m aju onwu m n'onye ga ebi?

Onwu gburu nwa agbohobia

Onwu m n'onye ga ebi?

Onwu eh ana m aju onwu m n'onye ga ebi?

Onwu gburu agadi

Onwu m n'onye ga ebi?

14. UGEGBE AKUWALA

Ugegbe akuwala n'okuwala

Ezigbo ugegbege akuwala n'okuwala

Okuwala n'ike.

me and you will live

My pretty lady you are good to me

me and you will live

My pretty lady you are good to me

me and you will live

My pretty lady you are good to me

me and you will live

WHO WILL I LIVE WITH?

Death eh I am asking death who will
I live with?

Death that kills a young man

Death who will I live with?

Death eh I am asking death who will
I live with?

Death that kills a young woman

Death who will I live with?

Death eh I am asking death who will
I live with?

Death that kills an aged

Death who will I live with?

A MIRROR IS BROKEN

A mirror is broken

A good mirror is broken

It is broken by force.

Ugegbe akuwala n'okuwala

A mirror is broken

Ezigbo ugegbe akuwala n'okuwala

A good mirror is broken

Okuwala n'ike.

It is broken by force.

Akwa nwanne o o

A sister's cry o o

Akwa ariri

A grievous cry

Akwa nwanne o o

A sister's cry

Owekara m iwe

Saddens me

15. ONWU BU ONYE ORI

DEATH IS A THIEF

Onwu bu onye ori

Death is a thief

Onwu bu onye ori

Death is a thief

Ozuru ogbara laa

He disappears after stealing

Onwu bu onye ohi

Death is a thief

Onwu bu onye ohi

Death is a thief

Ozuru ogbara laa

He disappears after stealing

16. EGBE EGBURU AKWU

A KITE HAS CARRIED AWAY A PALM FRUIT

Akwu characha ya ka egbe biara buru

A ripened palm fruit is what a kite carried away

Egbe biara buru

A kite came and carried away

Akwu characha

A ripened palm fruit

Akwu charach ya ka egbe biara buru

A ripened palm fruit is what a kite came and carried away

Egbe biara buru

A kite came and carried away

Akwu characha

A ripened palm fruit