



Àgbó Masquerade Costumes in the Service of Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract. There are many masquerade types in Nigeria. Most ethnic groups in Nigeria have their peculiar masquerade varieties performing different socio-cultural and religious functions in the societies. This accounts for the multiplicity of masquerade types in Nigeria. The Yorùbá, an ethnic group, occupying southwestern parts of Nigeria, have masquerade types namely: Egúngún, Epa, Àgbó, Gèlèdè, Ìgunnu, Èyò and Agemo among others. What differentiates the masquerade types are their unique costumes. For Egúngún, Gèlèdè, and Àgbó their wooden headdresses, fabric costumes, and other accouterments allow for displays of symbolic images that communicate socio-cultural and religious messages to the beholders. Right from 1999 when the Forth Republic was ushered into the country, masquerade costumes among the Yorùbá, apart from their socio-religious connotations, also serve as media for promoting democratic values among the people. Therefore, the paper examined the symbolic images of some Àgbó costumes in the services of democracy in Lagos State. The study focused on Àgbó masquerade from Àgbowá-Ìkòsì, a coastal Ìjèbú town in Lagos State. Data for analysis were gathered from primary sources. The data were analysed using formal and contextual methods. The study established that the sacred costumes of Àgbó masquerade are now also veritable media for promoting democratic values and peace in the study area.

Keywords: Masquerade costumes, Àgbó, service of democracy, Àgbowá-Ìkòsì

1. Introduction

Masquerade traditions are widespread among the peoples of the south of the Sahara Africa. It is one of the important ways of life of the people. Being part and parcel of their cosmology, it permeates almost all their socio-cultural and religious lifestyles since masquerades always appear during all-important cultural activities of the peoples. The backing of the spirit beings believed to be embodied in the masquerade is also often sought after in some cultural ceremonies without which they are considered incomplete.

In Nigeria, the story is not different. This is a result of the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic nature of the country. Therefore, masquerade types are multifarious in line with the cultural diversity of the Nigerian peoples numbering over 250. The different masquerades of the ethnic groups perform different social-cultural and religious functions in these dissimilar societies. Their functions vary from place to place depending on the purposes for which they are founded. These functions include ancestral worship, rites of passage, agricultural production, age-grade ceremonies, social commentaries, healings of the lands, blessing of the people, settling of the family squabbles, warfare, burial rights, entertainment, kingship ceremony, judiciary, among others.

Popular Nigerian masquerades include *Ijele* among the Igbo, *ekpo* from among the Efik, Ibibio, and Anang people of Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, and *Zangbeto* among the Ogu people of Badagry to mention a few. The compulsive nature of political governance in Nigeria coupled with some factors of

westernisation, have led to some changes to the functions performed by masquerades in the country, which include using their costumes for political campaigns (Plate 1).



Plate 1: A masquerade carrying a campaign poster of political aspirants in South-eastern Nigeria.

Source: <https://www.ackcitynews.com> Retrieved 10th January 2023.

When Nigeria gained independence on October 1, 1960, it experienced a severe political setback. Johnson Aguyi-Ironsi became the first military Head of State after Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and Immanuel Ifeajuna staged Nigeria's first military coup on January 15, 1966. Later on, several coups d'état were triggered by this unusual occurrence. Each time, the intermittent coups d'état disrupted successive democratically elected governments. The recurrent military takeovers that ended the first, second, and third republics denied Nigeria and her people the benefits of democratic governance, widened the scope of corruption and corrupt activities, and impeded Nigeria's socio-political and economic advancement.

In 1999 however, Nigeria elected Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the fourth republic President, and all other democratic structures were installed. This relatively stable era has brought about steady progressive democracy and democratic institutions in Nigeria. The 25 years of democracy have influenced all aspects of the people's lifestyles including their religious and belief systems. Masquerades, who represented the presence of spirits and ancestors, now mingle with politicians and the political process are now veritable partakers in the political activities in public places. The sacred masquerade's costumes have also become media for displaying contemporary societal dress

culture and artistic forms for communicating democracy-induced messages.

Unfortunately, in the last decade in Nigeria, masquerades have been hijacked for frivolous purposes by political actors leading to acts of sacrilege to the sacred costumes of the masquerades. In some cases, masquerades have been arrested, detained in police custody, and sometimes de-costumed in public. As such, checks were put in place by governments to restrict the spirit's incessant involvement in secular activities such as making masquerade cult groups obtain police permits before festivals and the need to deploy the services of the police during masquerade festivals for the security of life and guarantying of peace by preventing hoodlums from hijacking the process and to arrest of wild masquerades. The use of masquerades for direct political purposes like snatching of ballot boxes, electioneering campaigns, political unrest, fighting maiming, and carrying weapons are reasons they have been curtailed through legislation that prevented masquerades from participating in political activities in the last couple of years.

The Bauchi State Commissioner of Police on November 25, 2012, issued a ban on the use of masquerades for political rallies (Maffi, 2002). Likewise in August 2022, Police in Akwa-Ibom reiterated an earlier ban on masquerades to prevent violent and lawless activities that led to murders, threats to lives, assaults, and other breaches of fundamental rights (Sunnewsonline.com). In August 2022, the Buhari-led administration signed into law, the Electoral Bill 2022 which bans masquerades from attending political campaigns. It states as follows: "Masquerade shall not be employed or used by any political party, aspirant or candidate during political campaign or for any other purpose" (Oludare, 2002).

Different masquerade traditions of the Yorùbá pervade the entire landscape of the region. Èyò masquerade is found in the Lagos area of the region occupied by the Àwòrì, while Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ is found mostly among the Yewa (Ègbádò) subgroup in the southwestern parts of Nigeria and the Ketu people in the Eastern part of the Republic of Benin. Epa is unique to the southwestern parts of the region occupied by the Èkìtì and Ìgbómìnà, and Agẹmọ and Àgbó masquerades are prevalent in the southern part where the Ìjẹbú are predominant. Ìgunnu or Ìgunnukó are found everywhere in the region where we have the Yorùbá of Tapa extraction and Egúngún is the most widespread among the Yorùbá region. Each of them is easily identifiable by the configuration and materials or media employed for its unique costume. It is worthy

of note that the masquerade costume types, materials, and forms have changed but still retain some of their old elements. These changes have also affected the usage and functionality of the Yorùbá masquerade costumes such that they are now democracy-induced messages since 1999, which, is the beginning of the fourth democratic dispensation in Nigeria.

Field experience has revealed that Àgbó masquerade costumes of the Yorùbá have been more reflective as media of communication to the beholding audience. According to Adepegba (2016) the masks headdresses, and other components of the costume are themselves objects of artistic forms and expressions of the people's creative ingenuity, which bear esoteric symbolism and contextual meanings on quite a wide range of issues from cultural, to economy, to politics, to society and religion.

The masquerade cult groups especially those of Àgbó have devised subtle, effective, and sublime ways of playing political-induced roles by including symbols that promote political values using their costumes. This paper, therefore examines the costumes of Àgbó masquerades in Àgbowá-Ìkòsì Lagos State, which has been in the service of democracy in Nigeria. Fifteen (15) selected costumes communicating the ideals and values of democracy were analysed using formal and contextual methods.

2. Àgbó Masquerade in Àgbowá-Ìkòsì

Àgbó masquerade tradition is celebrated with pomp and pageantry in Àgbowá-Ìkòsì of the Èpé division of Lagos State. Àgbowá-Ìkòsì is one of the Ìjèbú-speaking coastal towns in Lagos State. Its boundary extends westwards to Ìmota, Ìsìù, and Ìkòròdú; eastwards to Ajébò, Òrúgbò and Itòikín and southwards to Àdò and Ìkòsì beach, and bordered in the South by Lagos Lagoon (Olufuwa).

Most of the communities in the Èpé division speak Ìjèbú dialect. This is because the Ìjèbú are concentrated along that region from Ikorodu to Èpé to Ìjèbú-Ode and back to Ìkene and Sàgámú. Ìjèbú is one of the multi-groups of the Yorùbá people that occupy Southwestern parts of Nigeria and spread southwards of the Nigerian borders to the People's Republics of Benin and Togo (Abiodun, 1991). These Yorùbá sub-groups include Ifè, Òyó, Òwu, Ègbá, Ìjèbú, Èkìtì, Ìjèsà, Ìgbómìnà, Ìbàràpá, Òndó, Ìkálè, Ìlàjè, Àwòrì, Yàgbà, Akókó, Òwò and Yewa, among others. These Yorùbá subgroups are found in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Kwara, and Kogi States in the present Federal Republic of Nigeria (see Figure 1).



Fig. 1: Yorubaland showing major towns and Yorùbá sub-groups in Nigeria, Republic of Benin and Togo. Source: Cambridge.org (July 18, 2020).

The Ìjèbú sub-group is found in parts of the present-day Lagos and Ogun states of Nigeria. These two states have bodies of water around and within them, some of which they share. Their indigenes and inhabitants are either living in the hinterland or around the coastal areas. Consequently, Àgbowá-Ìkòsì by its location in the Èpé division occupies a coastal area of Lagos State along with ancient communities like Ìjèdè, Ìkòròdú, Ìgbogbo, Ejirín and Itòikín among others. Adenuga asserts that the nearness of the town to Ìkòsì water has positively affected their social lifestyle and made them to be predominantly fishers and also to engage in crop farming.

The division of Àgbowá-Ìkòsì into three quarters has been the platform for the celebration of Àgbó masquerade festival. The quarters are: Itún Agbówá, Itún Aledò and Itún Oríwù. Everyone living in the town belongs to one of the quarters and this is by location or residency within the quarters and/or by individual's choice.

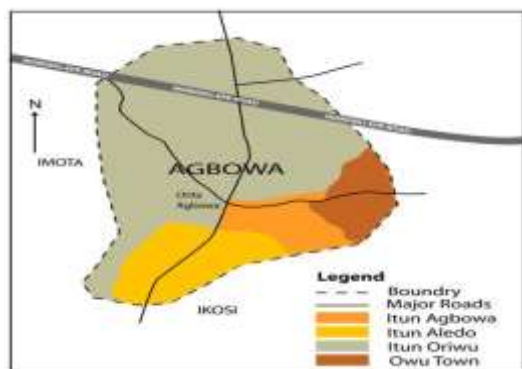


Figure 2: Agbowá-Ìkòsì map showing the three main quarters (*itún*) of the town. Òwù Ìkòsì town is part of the geography of Agbowá-Ìkòsì but does not partake in Àgbó Rémirékè masquerade celebration.

Adapted from Google map by Kehindé Adépegba, 2014.

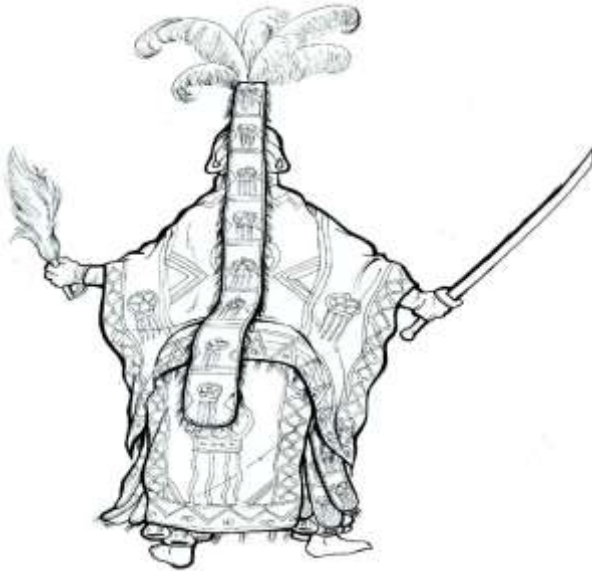
Àgbó Rémirékè is the most popular traditional religious activity in the town. It is a celebration that brings all the residents and indigenes of the town together. The three quarters are deeply involved in healthy rivalry as they present their Àgbó masquerades in arrays of appealing regalia, best costumes, and dance skills during the festivals. The competitive spirit has increased the quality of its headdresses and applique fabric, which are the main components of the masquerade's regalia. Adepegba and Ademuleya (2015) trace the history of Àgbó costumes as follows:

Historically, the Àgbó Rémirékè appliqué costume of today started with donations of head-ties by women with the view of clothing the masquerade. This gesture later led to the elaborate use of contemporary textile appliqué that has the characteristics of modern machine-generated embroidered patterns and now incorporates attachments of fanciful lace patterns, shining stones, beads, buttons, ribbons, synthetic flowers, sequences, rosettes, etc. Lace, velvet, and damask cloths are the common textile materials used for the applique.

The components of the Àgbó costumes are the wooden headdresses, which depict beautiful woman faces with (or without) facial marks, elegant hair-do showing interesting coiffures, and the attachment of superstructures that embody important symbolism and message. This wood headdress is combined with an appliqued fabric costume. The fabric costumes are segmented into parts that are worn together as one complete whole. The complete costume also reflects a female figure with beautiful facial features, while the headdress serves as the *adé* (crown), and fabric regalia shows protruding buttocks that enhance the masquerade's beauty. The fabric components include *iró* (wrapper), *àwòtélé* (underwear top), colourful plumes, *ibòjú* (veil), *agò* (main fabric applique membrane), *iròyè* (long vertical panel), *ilédíí* (buttocks panel), and *igbáyà/ilèdò* (chest panel). The masquerader also wears anklets made of seedpods around his legs to give a rattling sound to his dancing steps. A completely dressed Àgbó with gloves in his hands also holds a metal sword in his right hand and a horse whisk (*iyà*) in his left hand during the performance (see Figures 3 (a) and (b)). Every Àgbó that is not costumed with all the costume components is not qualified to inhabit the spirit and cannot reach out nor dance during the festival.



(a)



(b)

Figure 3(a) and (b): Front and back views of Àgbó Rémirékè masquerade in full costume with crown imagery. Illustrated by: Oluseyi Awosika, 2015.

The Àgbó costume tradition is witnessing a lot of transformation and contemporaneity. This is a result of the influence of modernity on the artistic tradition of Àgbó Rémirékè such that new materials, techniques, and concepts are now employed in the design of the costume as evidenced in the depictions of political, sports, and other everyday life objects.

3. Àgbó costumes in the Service of Democracy

The Yorùbá masquerade regalia is a multi-art form. These forms integrate visual, theatrical, and musical art. Poynor (2001) affirms that the Yorùbá masquerade is a component of a large multimedia art that includes costume, dance, music, poetry, and interaction with a participating crowd of onlookers. The masquerade visual art forms (wooden sculpture and fabric costume) utilise colour and other visual elements, signs, and symbols, making it a multi-media art platform.

Àgbó in Àgbowá-Ìkòsì is very profound in the use of masquerade costume art for communicating all kinds of values, especially in the service of democracy, justice, and peace among the people. Àgbó masquerade costumes usually carry their expressive messages on the headdresses and other components of the fabric costumes. For this study, the headdresses and the (*agò*) main membrane of the costume components, which have been the main platform for imprinting of artistic design are selected for this purpose. This is even though the homogenous images are usually fixed on all other parts of the costumes.

As they say among the people: *Ilé la ti n kó èşò ròde* (charity begins at home) The Àgbó masquerade cults members are aware of the political structure of the government in the state, which brings Àgbowá-Ìkòsì community under the Ikosi-Ejirin Local Council Development Area (LCDA) of Lagos State. As a way of expressing this knowledge, the logo of the LCDA was always depicted on their costumes (see Plate 2) using the machine embroidery method. This is an indicator of their acceptance of the democratic structure in place and the love they have for their grassroots constituency. The logo reflects images of a fisherman paddling a canoe, tree, convocation cap, hoe, and cutlass. These are elements showing what the LCDA stands for that is Fishing, farming, and education. The Àgbó cult members are proud to be associated with these hence the depictions of the Ikòsì-Ejìnrin LCDA logo on the Àgbó costumes.



Figure 2: *Agbó's agò fabric costume spotting the repeated logo of Ikosi-Ejirin LCDA.*
Photo by Kèhìndé Adépegba, 2014.

Aside from this grassroots affiliation, the community has always shown their pride for Lagos State, its government, and its people, thereby creating images about the state on the Àgbó costumes. Plate 3 is a depiction of Lagos State's coat of arms. This is toward projecting Lagos as the ideal state in terms of providing 'dividends of democracy, such as good roads, education, health services, security, etc. to his citizens. It is believed that that state was lucky to have been led by governors successive over the years from the 1st Republic to the 4th Republic. As a result, it is common to find diverse depictions that relate to Lagos in their Àgbó costumes. The costume has the state catchphrase: *Èkó ò ní bàjé* (Lagos shall not ruin) emblazoned on it as a form of prayer.



Figure 3: *Agbó's agò fabric costume showing the coat of arm of Lagos State Government.*
Photo by Kèhìndé Adépegba, 2014.

The logo of Lagos Television, popularly known as LTV, is one of the designs that support their love for the promotion of Lagos State and other things related to it. Àgbó costumes in Plate 4 (a) and (b) project LTV as the first state government television station in Nigeria. The first civilian governor of the state, Alhaji Lateef Jakande to disseminate information and entertain the people, established it in October 1980. LTV has been a major mass communication medium owned by the state government to promote democratic values in the state and beyond. Reproducing the logo on the Àgbó costumes towards associating themselves with the missions of the television, which include closing the communication gap between the government and the populace. The logo brings the audience to an awareness of the main purpose of the television station, which is bringing the government closer to the people



(a)



(b)

Figure 4: Àgbó's *adé* (a) and *agò* fabric costume (b) showing LTV logo.
Photo by Kèhinde Adépégba, 2014.

In the same way, the rendition of the Lagos Inland Revenue Services (LIRS) logo (Plate 5) on Àgbó costumes promotes the payment of tax among the community dwellers. LIRS is a parastatal charged with the responsibility of collecting tax in Lagos State. Tax payment is a civic responsibility that has been evaded by some of the state's residents. In their show of love for Lagos state, they encourage all and sundry to pay tax. "Pay your tax" is boldly written on the logo, which forms the superstructure of the headdress, and on the fabric costumes, bringing the advocacy for tax payment closer to the people. It communicates the importance of tax payment to the development of the state towards ensuring that the dividends of democracy get to all.



(a)



(b)

Figure 5: Àgbó's *adé* (a) and back view of fabric costume (b) in the arena of performance showing LIRS logo. Photo by Kẹhìndé Adépegba, 2014.

These three logos: Lagos state coat of Arms, LTV, LIRS are in support of the state towards entrenching democratic values on the audience at the celebration where such Àgbó costumes are performing.

Àgbowá-Ìkòsì indigenes and members of the community are well informed about the Nigerian project, which is yet to be actualized. Plate 6, Nigeria's coat of arms is a national emblem just like green-white-green national flag. The national coat of arms bears the Nigerian motto: Unity and faith, peace and progress. In 1975, the Nigerian government to reflect the change brought about by independence in 1960 and becoming a sovereign state in 1963 adopted the coat of arm. The black shield stands for the country's fertile soil, the 'Y' shape in between the shield represents River Niger and River Benue, two horses symbolising dignity, red eagle represents the country's strength, green and white wreath

at the top of the shield and beneath the eagle represents agriculture and the grassy field and flowers stands for the country's beauty. The values brought to life by the coat of arms are parts of the vision of Nigeria's founding fathers. These are brought to bear through this representation during this fourth republic to support democracy. This particular image shows that they have not given up on Nigeria despite her many political woes, and economics challenges as they wish for their beholders.



(a)



(b)

Figure 6: Àgbó's adé (a) and back view of fabric costume (b) in the arena of performance showing Nigeria's coat of arm. Photo by Kèhìndé Adépégba, 2014.

Plate 7 is a depiction of the Nigerian map, showing river Niger and river Benue. In the headdress three hands are seen holding the Nigerian map. The three hands represent the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria-Yorùbá, Hausa and Igbo. The work promotes the unity of the three ethnic groups as represented by the three hands holding Nigerian map in place. The map is painted in green-white-green color of the Nigeria flag. The Nigeria flag was designed by Taiwo Akinkunmi symbolising agriculture (green) and peace (white). The work therefore, represent unity, cooperation and love for the country. When there is love, unity and cooperation between the federating units there will be good peace in the country, this in turn will enhance governance.



(a)



(b)

Figure 7: Àgbó's adé (a) and agò fabric costume (b) spotting Nigerian map.
Photo by Kèhìndé Adépégba, 2014.

Justice is very vital in any democracy. The Àgbó costume in Plate 8, displays the symbol of lady justice. Lady Justice is an allegorical personification of justice where the sword represents power and the scale represents impartiality. It originated from Roman Art and was employed by Emperor Augustus. The lady known as Lustitia and Justitia was introduced by Augustus to celebrate justice as an important virtue during his reign (em.m.wikipedia.com). The colorful headdress and fabric costume preach the essence of justice as an important tenet in any democracy. As they say: 'Justice delayed is justice denied'. The purpose of the costume design is to communicate the need to have a state where equality and fairness reign. It makes both the low and the mighty appreciate the importance of justice as an integral part of democracy.



(a)



(b)

Figure 8: Àgbó's *adé* (a) and back view of fabric costume (b) in the arena of performance exhibiting Lady Justice, the global symbol of Justice. Photo by Kèhìndé Adépégba, 2015.

The Àgbó masquerade in its full costume is comparable to the symbol of lady justice. Àgbó appears like a veiled lady who is armed on the right with a sword and the left with a horse-whisk, which is an insignia associated with kingship among the Yoruba, which the king blesses. While the sword represents power, the horse-whisk characterizes authority. While the sword is sharp and painful, the horse whisk soothes, thus signifying the two sides of justice. The Àgbó masquerade's ceremony has always also served the purpose of passing verbal judgment on the evil-doers in the community. They sing songs to expose evils carried out in the community. In Àgbowá-Ìkòsì, the three quarters (*itún*) try to fish out the bad elements in the other quarters and subject them to verbal and musical social commentaries during the celebration. Examples of such verbal/musical commentaries are:

Itún Àgbowá:

Àwa laládé mēta
 Àwa laládé mēta
 Itún Àgbowá Alóba
 Àwa alaládé mēta.

Meaning:

We are the ones with three crowns

We are the ones with three crowns
Itún Àgbowá the royal ones
We are the ones with three crowns.

Itún Alẹdò:

Omọ Alẹdò, ó yá o
Káwa méfà ó yá ní pópó
Àwa ti rówó raşo ọlá, raşo ọlá
Àwa ti rówó raşo iyì, raşo iyì
Àwa ti di milọnà nitún wa ò.

Meaning:

Children of Alẹdò, it is time
Let us all hit the roads
We have bought the garments of honour
We have bought the garments of prestige
We have become millionaires in our quarter.

Itún Oríwù:

Ayé rè o, Òríwù ọmọ Òréke
Ayé rè o, Òríwù ọmọ Òrékelẹwà
Arówó şana iyàwó.

Meaning:

See for yourself, Oríwù are the offspring of Òréke
See for yourself, Oríwù are the offspring of Òrékelẹwà
We have money to pay to the bride's in-law.

The ruling party in Nigeria is the All Progressive Congress (APC). The party, which was formed on 6th February 2013, wrestled power from the hands of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 2015. APC has equally been in power in Lagos since May 29th 2015. In the wisdom of the Àgbó masquerade cult members, they decided to support the ruling party by depicting its logo in one of their Àgbó costumes in the December 2015 celebration (Plate 9). The depiction became necessary because the APC, in 2015 defeated Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the then ruling party People's Democratic Party (PDP) at the national level and the majority of states in Nigeria. It served as a celebration victory of democracy through the power of ballots. This is one of the ways of promoting democracy and celebrating election victory in a democratic era with peace. They might have as well been drawing the attention of non-partisan people to fall in love with the party in the state through the exceptional rendition of the APC logo.



(a)



(b)

Figure 9: Àgbó's *adé* (a) and back view of fabric costume (b) in the arena of performance spotting APC logo. Photo by Kèhìndé Adépégba, 2015.

The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) logo is on Plate 10. EFCC was established in 2003 by the Federal government of Nigeria under the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as a law enforcement agency to investigate financial crimes such as advance fee fraud and money laundering. It is one of the many efforts by the government to curb corruption, which is the bane of our democracy. One of the reasons the dividends of democracy are slow in reaching the masses is because of the monster called corruption. As people who are also feeling the brunt of corrupt practices, they use the Àgbó costume design to drum up their support for the EFCC towards paving the way for democratic progress in Nigeria.

This brings to the awareness of the public the fact that the commission is around the corner while warning them to be weary of corruption as it has devastating effects on our nascent democracy. The logo has the image of an eagle, which symbolizes watchfulness as the EFCC is watching every act of corruption and poised to nab practitioners of corruption.



(a)



(b)

Figure 10: Àgbó's *adé* (a) and full costumed Àgbó (b) in the arena of performance spotting the logo EFCC. Photo by Kèhìndé Adépégba, 2014.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) logo in Plate 11 points the attention of the audience to the role played by the apex bank in putting in place the right economic and fiscal policy to make a successful democracy. The image reflects the people's awareness of the role played by the banks in ensuring a good life for all.



(a)



(b)

Figure 11: Àgbó's aḍé (a) and agò fabric costume (b) spotting the Central Bank of Nigeria logo. Photo by Kèhìndé Adépégba, 2014.

Since democracy is incomplete without the parliament, where laws are made, the Àgbó costume showcase a maze of office an important symbol of the power of the parliament. In Nigeria, the parliament comprises of national and state parliamentary houses: Houses of Representatives and Senate, and the State Assemblies. They are people's representatives at the hallowed chambers to make laws that strengthen democracy. The depiction of the maze (Plate 12) is to appreciate their contributions to make democracy worthwhile.



Figure 12: Àgbó's agò fabric costume showing maze of office of a typical Nigerian parliament. Photo by Kèhìndé Adépégba, 2014.

4. Conclusion

The paper has established how masquerade costumes serve conventional and contemporary purposes. Àgbó which is a Yoruba masquerade type as practiced among the Ìjẹbú who reside in coastal areas with particular reference to Àgbowá-Ìkòsì, has been the focus of this study and has thus revealed how masquerade costumes are used in the service of democracy in Nigeria.

Fifteen (15) examples of Àgbó costumes in the study area were employed by the author to justify the objective of the study. It was proven beyond doubt that apart from the socio-cultural and religious functions performed by the Yoruba masquerade costumes, Àgbó's costumes have also served as a veritable source of communicating vital information to the audience which includes the commonplace issues that affect the populace, creating order within the society and promotion of democratic governance, justice and peace in Nigeria.

The paper infers that the spirit, which Àgbó represents, has always been interested in the affairs of men, that is, it interferes by overseeing their worldly family and group members. Thereby, the visitation of the spirit creates an atmosphere of family and community peace; and its costumes, with their sublime images, have become effective media of communicating virtues that will bring harmony to the society. In this case they as well serve as a veritable channel of promoting democratic values and peace among the people of Àgbowá-Ìkòsì, Lagos and Nigeria at large.

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