*Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.6 No.3 September, 2023; p.g. 217 – 230; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)*

# ETHNO-DRAMATICS AND TENSION OF POSTCOLONIALITY: J.P. CLARK'S *THE MASQUERADE* AND UWEMEDIMO ATAKPO'S *ISADOK*

**DAVID EKANEM UDOINWANG**
**Department of English, Akwa Ibom State University**
**Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.**
**davudoinwang@gmail.com & davidudoinwang@aksu.edu.ng**
**https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7384-6782**
**+234 8023723663**

**&**
**MONICA UDOETTE**
**Department of English, Akwa Ibom State University**
**Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.**
**monicaudoette@aksu.edu.ng**
**https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4761-896x**
**+234 8038021551**

**Abstract**

*The two drama texts, J.P. Clark's The Masquerade and Uwemedimo Atakpo's Isadok, draw their creative energy on the mainstream inter-cultural dialogue while foregrounding their artistic vision on the ethno-cultural pre-texts and the tension of resilient traditional cultural heritage existing side by side with postmodern world order. The tensed relationship among the characters, the atmosphere and the disharmony that pervade the two dramatic ambiences, depict the confused momentum and the socio-cultural chaos which result from competing worldviews as aptly depicted in the two enactments. It is this tension that defines the rhythm of the two performances and informs the critical context of this work. A critical exploration of the dialogues, actions and settings of the plays buttresses the convergence between the pre-colonial and the postcolonial worldviews in which the indigenous cultural cosmology contends with the postmodern knowledge systems in a continuum of struggles for ideological assertiveness and in resistance to imposition, domination and subjugation. The performances thus signify artistic mediation with the discordant tendencies of contemporary knowledge systems that continually contend with the indigenous cultural heritages of societies.*

**Keywords**: **cultural tension, ethno-cosmology, artistic mediation, Clark, Atakpo.**

## Introduction

From the early stages of its development, African dramatic literature has continued to evolve in its agenda of asserting and strengthening the resilient cultural continuum of traditional African world, as part of the undying cultural heritage of the people, demonstrating the relevance and indelibility of its values despite the inroads and trappings of postmodernity. Indeed, African drama continues to mutate radically in the process of retrieving and accentuating knowledge about the cultural past while ascertaining its relevance for the

present and the future. Indeed, modern African drama is firmly rooted on the heritages, memories, cultural histories and on the rudiments of ancestral ontology cosmos of the people. African writers have continued to draw on the indigenous cultural traditions as muse of energy despite the influences of "the elitist historiography" (Ranajit Guha, 3-4) that came with colonial incursion. The critical onus of this artistic concern is underscored by Anietie Udofia, Uwemedimo Atakpo and David Udoinwang as they state that "One of the instruments for determining progress presently in the society is the creative practices that characterize a specific time and the innovativeness emanating from the system that makes it to function" (1). In other words, the artist reputedly holds the mirror of society through which the world reflects back at itself.

In J.P. Clark's *The Masquerade* and Uwemedimo Atakpo's *Isadok*, there is a persistent interplay between drama, traditional value system and African cultural epistemology at the meeting points with Euro-modern worldviews, thus making the ethno-cultural dramatic subgenre a veritable tool for retrieving valuable African traditional cultural heritage. In the words of Kufre Akpan, African drama constitutes the "… creative tool for conciliation of the socio-cultural crisis that pervades the sphere of [this] enactment" (1). Through the instrument of artistic ingenuity and vision, African writers take it as a veritable task are able to write back to Western visitors and historiographers (Awheada, 172) such as Joseph Conrad and other European cultural anthropologists and immigrants typified by Conrad is *The Heart of Darkness* in order to mediate historiographies that stripped the Africans of their humanity, intellectual resourcefulness and cultural-technological capabilities. Kufre Akpan and Monica Udoette aver that human "migration has… has also received prominence in socio-political, economic and literary discourses around the globe" (64). Yet, much of the throwback in European migration into African continent has remained opportunistic and exploitative in every ramification.

In their critical analysis of J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's collection of poems in *State of the Union* (1985), David Udoinwang and Chinenye Amonyeze refer to the postcolonial state as a symbolization of "... incoherent leadership failure and acute underdevelopment that have defied known prescriptions", as they conclude that "It is this manifest state of lack that puts the Black continent in perpetual despondency, nagging negativities and state of self-pity" (159). Matlotleng Matlou asserts of the cultural complications and tension of colonial contact by stating that "Africa's own trajectory of growth and development was muted and her destiny was now determined externally; a situation that has continued after the post-independence period" (8). The present socio-cultural system appears gronded more on self-seeking and moral depravation, described by Uwem Affiah as a cultural universe where "…Very few aspire to leadership positions for the purpose of service to the people" (376).

The imposition of imported technologies at the expense of indigenous traditional modes and thought from the earliest imperial contacts has remained till the present digital age, where the crisis of transition from the indigenous to the 'modern digital' ways of communication technology continue to pose serious challenge, because such knowledge imposition gave no room for indigenous inputs in terms of contents and implications. This is because over the centuries, rather than negotiate and share knowledge infrastructure, the West tended to

knowledge hording and imposition, and this has been the undoing that amount to uneven development that characterize third world societies. Mercy Oduyoye (cited in Udoette and Akpan, aver that: "hording power has often proved disastrous in human history" (56), and this is still the case in the present experience. It is in this regard that David Udoinwang and Ikpe Akpan point out that: "Digital transformation comes with baggage alien to the African culture" (1).

The critical contexts in the plays analyzed in this work thus center on the need for synergy between Western and indigenous cultural praxis. Such creative acts serve in stabilizing values and giving remediating insights which "…have something to do with the inner nature of the universe and of human life" (Emma Ngumoha, 18); and, this is part and parcel of African literary engagements. Mary Kolawale thus states:

> The root of the world culture is crucial to an understanding of the status of literature as a repository, an arsenal, a storehouse of cultural values and codes… Literature is one of the best transmitters of cultural values and a tool for nurturing it as it tends and carries it from one generation to another. Literature as a form of cultural production derives its definition, essence and functionality from this conceptualization of culture (19).

The statement above is apt in the context of this critical work which seeks a conciliatory ground for cultural diversity as opposed to cultural imposition through literary codifications.

The work seeks a mediation of the epistemic struggles that resists imposition and domination. Uwem Affiah, David Udoinwang and Offiong Amaku aptly state of African drama thus: "From the moment of its first contact with the West, from the yester years of colonialism to the present days of neocolonialism, Africa has been locked in a struggle against foreign domination. The struggle against the dominance of the imported culture over the indigenous is on – going" (13). That is not assuming that every aspect of African culture is/was right and must be preserved at all cost. Rather, cultural practices that are, in the words of Kufre Akpan and Isonguyo Akpan, "… repugnant even to natural justice" (30), cannot receive the positive criticism for whatever reason. Due to its oral backgrounds, what has been constructed as 'subaltern' lore, indigenous heritages and cultural practices transmitted across generations, have become veritable reservoir useful as alternative sources of knowledge and development.

It is noteworthy to reflect on Fredrick Jameson's (1981) discourse on the concept of 'subalternity' as a constructed category that is being woven around the discrimination, subservience and inferiority profiling of colonized peoples by the colonizers and the attempt of the colonized to repossess their histories. To this extent, Affiah and Osuagwu opt for 'ethnodramatics' technique' as an essential option for exploring and analyzing the utilities of indigenous African drama, as they state that "…indigenous African drama, though it contains what might be the universal element of drama…is homegrown and different from European drama in some respects" (6). The creative scenarios projected in the dramatic episodes analyzed in this paper serve as profound medium particularly useful for the didactic value

they embody and for the perpetuation of memories and values of indigenous cultural epistemology and identities.

Such creative consciousness adds to the illumination of the past and for cross-generational knowledge transmission. James Tsaaior thus asserts that such expectation is privileged in postcolonial textualization, thus:

> The postcolonial text, inevitably, imposes on itself the project of recuperating and reconstituting the social and cultural histories of the postcolony as part of the knowledge infrastructure with which to assert its energies and cultural self-presence… it calls for re-articulation and reaffirmation of cultural verities that can galvanize the embattled society on the path of self-knowledge and self-discovery as a basis for the re-vindication of its self-identity" (6).

The tension that plays out in the two drama texts evolve around the struggle to assert cultural power in resistance to imposition and domination by predatory knowledge system that appropriates power of superiority. This is similar to female negotiation of power to confront male domination resulting in "models of the ideal, independent women figure marking the pages of Black women's work" (Monica Udoette 75). Ademola Dasylva affirms that the substance of indigenous African cultural form "is not just story-telling; it is the telling of a life experience" (1); an aspect of knowledge production and dissemination that is historically significant, and, in the words of Raka Ray and Smitha Radhakrishnan, "…can enrich the sociological understandings of culture" (38), and revitalize memories of who we are as human beings in every racial diversity.

In the masterpiece, *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said puts it succinctly about the utility of cultural heritage of any people in the following assertion:

> Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and .what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps. This problem animates all sorts of discussions--about influence, about blame and judgment, about present actualities and future priorities (4).

In the continued intellectual search for African renaissance and the integration of African values, ethics, norms and identities, the cultural material that was commonplace in the past but seems remote or eroded in the present has to be continually served across generation as diet of intellectual nurture, for the pedagogical purposes they represent (Matlou 2009, Babawale 2007, Marui 2000). It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the cultural as well as the socio-historical contexts of Clark's *The Masquerade* and Atakpo's *Isadok*.

**Cultural Epistemology and the Utility of Ethno-dramatic Heritages**

The two drama texts, *The Masquerade* by J.P. Clark and *Isadok* by Uwemedimo Atakpo re-rememorize Africa's ancestral yet resilient socio-cultural past with its informing epistemologies. As Rebecca Usoro and Monica Udoette aver, "A people are identified, to a large extent, by their language, cultural artifacts, and the different literary outputs…" in the forms of "…ancestral lineage, language and homogeneity in culture, which include dance, songs, folktales, mode of dressing, food, occupation…and other literary expressions through which they express their personhood" (240). This assertion can hardly be contradicted.

The tension and dilemma that characterize the momentum of dialogues and communications among the communities together with the place of the supernatural forces in the two dramatic scenarios, make the performances contextually momentous, artistically illuminating, aesthetically spell-binding as well as intellectually engaging. The setting and scenes of the enactment in Clark's *The Masquerade* is located in a traditional communal Niger Delta coastal community that now finds itself torn apart by 'strange' values and alienating practices. From the exchanges at the different scenes, it is the encroaching forces of 'predatory' modernity that create disharmony and tension in the socio-cultural order of this rural communalistic cultural milieu. Three major segments of the community are besieged and captured at the meeting point between the indigenous values and conflicting episteme of the modern that tends to rupture the long-held cultural norms, beliefs system and lifestyles of the community.

The conflict which brews in the household of Diribi, the famed native hunter with his wife Umuko, and their daughter Titi - a young, fair-looking damsel who is torn between the love for Tufa, the handsome urban-oriented suitor, whose true identity is foggy among the communal kinship society, portrays the aspect of cultural shock with its 'strangeness', as far as the traditional world is concerned. Tufa, the 'strange one' is to be later described by the neighbors and kinsmen of Diribi as "the stranger" from a distant village of the creek, whose identity and cultural lifestyle departs from the established traditional norms. The tension of the play rests on the shady identity of Tufa and the strangely and shocking defiance of Titi, which contradicts the known practices of the ethno-lineage society. The fear and suspense is that his foggy background might become a contamination or portend something uncanny to the young, innocent maiden's Titi's destiny. Diribi who initially accepted Tufa as suitor for his daughter Titi did so for reasons of personal gratifications, thus depicting the enticing trappings of modernity, but later he is to discover that Tufa is an outcast and thus a pollution or taboo to the tribe and lineage of Diribi. The belated discovery of this offensive identity of Tufa puts Diribi's family and kinship community in a dilemma which would be difficult to undo. By this creative strategy, the artist exposes the deception and trappings of modernity.

Prompted by his ethno-cultural values and beliefs, Diribi is left with no option than to scuttle the marriage in his attempt to save his progeny from the abomination and cultural. But he commits murder by killing his daughter, since the daughter is adamant on marrying the stranger, Tufa. From the dialogue and the role-play of each party in the situations of the play, the tension and crisis result from the epistemic clash between tradition and modernity.

Atakpo's *Isadok*, is in a similar vein examined through the creative deployment of characterization, actions and incidents together with settings and dialogues that add up to intensify the tensed atmosphere that characterize the enactment. In *Isadok*, the imagined audience firstly encounters an atmosphere in a location purposefully described as "desolate homestead". In addition, the key characters that propel the events and tension in the drama are Eka Itabi, her fugitive son, Itabi, Mama Koko, Eka Isa, Ukpabi, Priests, Prophets, and they portray the trado-cultural setting and characteristics. Others are Lemmy, Keina the lawyer and the character Man, who both represent the urban topography with its 'strange' modern lifestyle. The actions in the play shift between the two classes of people used by the playwright to mirror the two opposing socio-cultural epistemic ferments. Mma Itabi has an absentee son Itabi, who had abandoned his aged mother and wife –Mama Koko with the unhealthy, fragile son that the priest seeks as substitution for the fugitive Itabi, who had ran away from his native roots to the modern city and got trapped by the allures of modernity. From the artistic indications, Itabi has become a fugitive of his traditional communal universe, imbibed the modern day gods of materiality, and is now disoriented and estranged.

The quest for his return to his natal cultural roots as the 'bride' of his tribal deity informs the presence and audacious role of the Priest in the drama. The Priest is metaphorically supposed to be the resilient moral yardstick of the clan and mediator of the jinxed situation in the ethno-cultural community; but he comes with his costly ritual demands that bring him into conflict with the benighted Itabi family of aged parents in this apparently morally benighted village. This scene symbolizes the resistance and difficulties of restoring the traditional cultural universe to its former equanimity against the predatory tendency of the obviously materialistic world order with its infective ethos. Each time the setting of the play shifts from the rural, traditional community to the city, Itabi, Lemmy, Keina the lawyer and Man, tend to depict the modern and morally debased, fluid and materialism-oriented existence. The city symbolizes the postcolonial perversities with its deceptiveness, alienation and estrangement, while the rural traditional world projects a calm, ordered ambience where traditions that modulate and regulate conducts, constitutes communality and affinities, and exemplify mutually humane relationships through definite moral codes, ethos, value system and social order. The society subsists based on the codes of the supernatural and mutual relationship between humanity and the supernatural neighbors. The alternation of the settings shows the interlocking atmosphere between the traditional cosmos with its equanimity and the crisis that pervade modern world-order.

The two dramatic situations thus reconstitute the tension, interlocking irruptions and indeed, the ruptures of postcolonial power struggles. James Tsaaior clarifies further as following:

> The African postcolonial text in its political temperament consists radically the Western erasure of African/Black history and ruptures the essential assumptions of the imperial centre as having the only history that validly exists and as possessing the exclusive preserve or prerogative of fabricating knowledge in its imperial strategy of universal truth-telling and empire-building rhetoric (8).

In the article 'Minority histories, subaltern pasts', Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that the historical consciousness of the subaltern aboriginal societies have "fuelled discussions of minority histories…", the cultural "… histories of groups previously excluded", referred to as "histories from below" (15). The two dramatic situations seek to recalibrate the resilience of traditional epistemology and a re-evaluation of traditional knowledge systems, based on the ethno-traditional lore and moral codes, power structures against the invading influence of Euro-centric technology of knowledge and modernity.

In Clark's *The Masquerade*, the rural, animistic world is constantly in communion with the supernatural agencies, and they exist in harmony with the natural environment; without contradiction the subalterns can read the signs of the time; they have firm knowledge of who they are, and can interpret the existential ordering of their world, and can as well make imputations and mediations when uncommon occurrences of the elements take course. It is noticeable in the play that the society captured in the play live and progress by the dictates of the traditional codes, values and mores that ensure and sustain existential equanimity. The playwrights seem to be arguing that knowledge does not begin and end with the western thought about human reality and should not necessarily be seen as exclusionary and predatory.

As depicted in the play, members of this communal world have the wherewithal to interpret, impute, contemplate and generate the codes to guide moral conducts with the consequences of infractions or infringements as it were, and this leads to social order and sustenance of such cultural wholeness. The flourish of imported values is not necessarily condemned, but for the fact that it is not adequately negotiated or mediated, and as a result creates disruptions that tend to dilute the stream of traditional thought system, but does not easily erased as portrayed in the plays. In Clark's *The Masquerades* this reverberates in the setting below, where the community is found to be on top of every untoward happening that could threaten human existence:

SECOND NEIGHBOR: Surely, there must be explanation
For this unnatural phenomenon. One tide
Holding on as long as it normally
Takes to rise and fall. It's foreboding enough,
But conjoined with a new moon that has sprung
Such a list, there must be a terrible leak somewhere (*Three Plays*, 52).

The traditional people of this rural world appear very knowledgeable in traditional cosmology and cultural lore, and they have answers to existential problems they surface from time to time. For instance, the actions of Titi, the beautiful maiden, who falls in love with Tufa the stranger, only results in calamity because the approach contravenes the laid down traditional codes of conduct. As the character FIRST NEIGHBOR rightly observes:

… Such
A mermaid of a girl. Now, I get it!
It's on such account of her abandoning us
Heaven and sea have put up this show
Of anger (53).

The implication of this revealing dialogue is the fact that there are natural ways, sanctioned by the communal value system, that a girl and a suitor should follow before marriage is consummated and for such union to receive the blessing of the living, the spiritual (supernatural) and the ancestral of the traditional universe. Any infraction in the ordered existential patterns would only portend some untoward outcome. This is suggestive in the following lines:

TUFA: No, it was one girl's coyness
Than customs of the clan whose tenuous web flies
Many dart through… (55).

Soon enough the audience comes to learn that Tufa whom Titi defiantly accepts to marry in contradiction of the traditional codes, has a troubled destiny that needed to have been resolved before such marriage was sealed by the kinships. But Titi represents the child of circumstance who in her naivety got trapped in the web of self-aggrandizement and individuality. So was the father who was carried away by the outward deceptiveness of the modern suitor by being carried away by the handsomeness and monetary wealth of Tufa the suitor, whom he accepts at first glance without drawing on the wisdom of the ethnic community.

So many questions surround Tufa's real identity, but he appears excellent to the unwise. The community is in doubt and suspicious of who Tufa is. Tufa represents the tricks and deception of a morally bankrupt and corrupted modernity. One of the neighbors retorts:

FIRST NEIGHBOR: Reports have it in the market he is
Somewhere from the creeks about Deinogbo,
Oloibiri, or is it Odi? I am not quite
Certain now, but we could find out. For come
To think of it, none has told us exactly
Who the young man is that is bearing
Off our mermaid (59).

In the dialogue between Diribi and her modernity 'bewitched' daughter while lately persuading her to dump the idea of marriage with Tufa, he tells the daughter that the revelation he now has is that "This man's mother died bearing him" (59), which to this tribal world, is a sign of misfortune, reproach and disaster that should require mediation. Moreover, Diribi pleads further:

DIRIBI: Has he? Did he tell you also his father
Usurped the bed of his elder brother, yes,
Brazenly in his lifetime, and for shame
Of it after hanged himself in broad daylight
While this unfortunate abused husband
Walked of his own will into the sea? (68).

But Titi's response to her father in this moment of her father's entreaty and fears aggravates the tension that characterizes the scenarios of the dialogue because what her father describes as "this prospect of pollution" (69) that is now bringing the household and indeed, the ancestral community to disrepute. Her response is, as far as the kinship world is concerned, strange and disheartening as represented below:

> TITI: Well, is the seed to be crushed and cast
> Away because of aberration
> And blunder by those who laid out
> The field? (68).

This heady, arrogant response hits Diribi like thunderbolt from the blues. He has nothing to fall back on than to seek the counsel of the gods and ancestral guardians of the land. This incident could be taken as clearly the artistic illustration of the wholeness of the ethnic communities before the disruptions of postcolonial modernity, which tends to jettison everything indigenous in order to embrace what is foreign.

When he goes before the shrine of Orise, the sky-Gods, the cock crows until the third time, symbolizing the dreadful presence of the gods at the shrine, and this is the height of the suspense that predicts what calamity is in the offing. The ill-fated stranger called Tufa is described by Diribi as "That mongrel" that has run into their midst "to foul us all" (75), and the strange behavior of his daughter Titi, is heart-rending and shaming to the father and the lineage. Also, Diribi's wife – Umuko, in her response to the calamity that Tufa the strange suitor and Titi her daughter have brought, not only accentuates the dilemma of Diribi's family tree, but shows the relationship between humanity and the supernatural and the gods in the affairs of the natural societies. All this is the artistic projection of the disruptions and tension of cultural contact.

In the course of lamenting the sudden untoward occurrences in her household, Umuko curses her daughter Titi "Who has quite infected her breed and now makes corruption of all that is sacred" (76). In a sudden flashback she recalls that there were enough intuitive pointers that should have served as sign of the present unease and the pending evil occurrence in the lineage of Diribi. In the words of UMUKO:

> …I knew it was coming. Why,
> Only this morning I opened my fish basket
> To have stock for our pepper soup; but
> What was it I told you I found in there?
> A python, coil after coil, had engirdled
> It close, and poor old man, he was fast
> Asleep. Now I know his burden (76).

This is suggestive of how traditional knowledge system serves the need of the communal folk and societies. The breach of cultural values, norms and codes brings disaster to her and her community. In Diribi's attempt to scuttle the impending dent on his progeny he commits murder by murdering her daughter Titi, but such act only brings more trouble to this

traditional world. This is clearly a metaphoric projection of the tension, disruptions and crossroads of postcolonial modernity.

In Atakpo's *Isadok*, a related scenario also unravels. This time the scene opens with a Prologue which gives foresight into the looming tragedy and crisis in the arena of the drama. The lyrics of the dirge rendition of village women at the inception of the enactment paints an atmosphere of grieve. By the interpretation of the chorus, a calamity has befallen the world in the artistic focus. Following up to this is the opening scenario at a scene of a homestead where the audience witnesses vivid picture of desolation, dilapidation and disarray. In the play, the character Mama Koko is found attending to her sick child and soliloquizing, lamenting her sorry state, and indeed, the sorry state of the world around her.

The story is that Mama Koko's husband Itabi, who was supposed to be the next in the lineage to serve at the shrine of the traditional deity – Atakpo, has abandoned the homestead and gone to the city, and now lusts after the attractions and enticements of modernity, forgetting his natal cultural roots. His aged mother, Eka Itabi and the grandmother and kindred family members like Eka Isa have been having the dreams of Itabi's death. Metaphorically stated, Itabi the fugitive has been pronounced spiritually dead by the kindred society. He is now but a mere shadow, fully uprooted from his culture. Mama Koko recites this dream again and again. Itabi holds the fate of his ancestral progeny and tribal destiny. The fate of Itabi runs through previous epoch because his father also turned recalcitrant when he was supposed to take the noble place of the traditional priesthood. As far as the tribal community is concerned, this anomaly is offensive and portends an eventual disaster that befalls a people who have lost their ways. In other word, there is a generational curse pending in this community because of the negligence of the ancestral norms and spiritual essences of this obviously benighted world. Eka Itabi's response points to the conflict situation of this dramatic moment. But the Priest opens up to her that it is the lineage that supposes to offer their children as substitute since Itabi has absconded to the city and got carried away by its materialistic trappings:

> PRIEST: The great wetting of the lips of ATAKPO is due. Your family must bring the fugitive back. The god wants him. The land wants hm. You are witnesses to the confusion and deaths that have set in, just because you do not want to give to the god what you promised. Yes the son (*Isadok*, 6).

The tradition of the kindred tribe is that where the father passes on, the son takes over; but as it is found out from the priest of Atakpo's exchange of words with Eka Itabi, it is revealed that like his father, Itabi keeps "running away from the gods, his source, his life, roused from the bosom of the great god Atakpo" (*Isadok*, 7). Indeed, Ukpim Ekpo Eyen Amamkpa, the priest of the traditional god Atakpo, gives a frightening sentence to the family of Itabi, and by extension, the whole kindred tribe:

> Priest: The message of Atakpo. The family must rise, from where it fell. Deaths, abomination and more will return. The children will be wanderers. They will never settle in peace until they return… (*Isadok*, 8-9).

But unfortunately, as it is found out in the situations of the play, ITABI appears again and again at the point of no return- at the "crossroads" leading to eternal confusion. It is obvious that this is the way the playwright paints a despairing parable of the postcolonial African condition where the entrenched cultural values have traded on the altar of greed and vanity..

When the setting of the play shifts to the city, the fugitive Itabi is sighted with other renegades symbolized by Lemmy and Keina who are sighted as being traditionally and culturally lost to the influence of modernity. The city is the metaphor of cultural disruptions. The young and energetic men of the tribe have run away to the city to make wealth and live big, and find themselves engaged in what was culturally immoral, abominable and reprehensive. Itabi represents the disruptions in the traditional cultural lineage, having rejected the glowing ancestral traditions of the great god Atakpo with its fount of wisdom and purity. He is often noticed to frequently relapse into insanity or split personality as a curse for neglecting his original tribal cultural identity. This is the artistic statement on the present disorder brought about by imported values.

The payer of the Priest of Atakpo's at the sacred shrine in one of his ritual cleansing performances is instructive concerning the crisis of the postcolonial moment that the African world finds itself:

> PRIEST: ATAKPO, ATAKPO, ATAKPO, Ndem Uruan Inyang Ifako. Our elders believed in you. They worshiped you. They did no evil and abhorred hate. The people knew in-laws, grandchildren, Iman, names sakes. They hated evil and did good. Good things came their way. Now the people hate you. They ignore you and follow other gods… They run from you and find no peace. Even in riches they weep, let them return, make them return,.. return… return…return (*Isadok*, 12).

Simply stated, there is a great epistemic crack on the pillars that held the traditional world together and assured social equanimity, communality and continuity. Itabi's family tree is, as the Priest, attests, full of "incest, lust, thievery, boasting" and they "desecrate the land", rejected the god because they thought they were wiser" (*Isadok*, 20). Ukpabi is now playing ostrich game, the younger generation, having been corrupted go wandering like vagabonds without spiritual roots in a troubled and confusing world that they find attraction.

The younger generations of ITABI's father and ITABI's generation are being morally torn, spiritually dislocated and socially assailed. The tension of the moment is accentuated in the exchange between Eka Itabi in her dialogue with the Prophet of modern religion thus:

EKA ITABI: We have suffered. We have died. The crack can never be sealed (*Isadok*, 42).

In the dialogues, Ukpabi is struggling to seal the crack in his ancestral home; Eka Itabi and Eka Isa are also caught in a scene of altercations full of confusion. As the scene moves again to the city setting, Itabi, Lemmy, Keina and others are seen as being caught in the act of

committing frauds, deceits, cheating people, leading false lifestyle and hustling in the mad rush to grab and live big as dictated by the taste of postmodern vanity.

**Conclusion**

Through the mirror of the two texts, Clark's *The Masquerade* and Atakpo's *Isadok*, which are creatively set in a typical traditional cultural milieu, the cultural heritage and knowledge system of the folk traditional cultural societies are revitalized and simulated for a better understanding. The analysis of the two reveals the resilience and invaluable power of pre-colonial knowledge system, human ingenuity and existential order that defined existence in the past and persists in the midst of tension of the present. The tension and system of mediation of the crisis prevalent in the two texts creatively portrays the wholeness and dynamics of African cultural ferment and the patriotic attempts at artistic mediations of postcolonial encounter. But the overall advantage of investing creative energy on deconstructing the past is echoed in Babawale's postulation in his discourse entitled, '*Restoring the Dignity of the Blackman*' as following:

> The lesson for us here is that we need to revive those positive aspects of our culture that promote self-reliance, brotherhood and development. We need to ask why we have embraced the suffocating winner-takes-all democracy of the West at the expense of our own consensual democracy that is rooted in tolerance, constant mediation and negotiation (8).

The above is the consciousness that informed the critical thrust of this work, which has demonstrated the vitality and resilience of the traditional, communal affinities and values for the sustenance of human cultures and dignifying identities.

**Works Cited**

Affiah, Uwem; David Ekanem Udoinwang, & Offiong Ene Amaku. Enriching African Literary Drama with the Creative Technicality of Indigenous Story Performance Approach: The Example of Femi Osofisan. *European Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics Studies*. Vol. 6, Issue 3, 2023.Pp.12-26.

Affiah, Uwem. Vultures in Parliament: Perspectives of Emeka Nwabueze. *American Journal of Social Issues & Humanities*. Vol.2(6) pp. 375-383 November. 2012. http://www.ajsih.org

Akpan, Kufre. Cultural Tension and Artistic Mediation in Uwemwdimo Atakpo's *Return to the Sun-god*. *Middle East Research Journal of Linguistics and Literature*. Vol.2, No.1 2022.pp.1-6

Akpan, Kufre and Isonguyo Akpan. "Cultural Matrixes, Trauma and Female Voices in Yejide Kilanko's Novels". *Voices: A Journal of English Studies*. Vol. 7, (2022) Pp. 29-38.

Akpan, Kufre and Monica Udoette. "Migration, Identity and Reconstruction of Female Migrants'Experiences in Chika Unigwe's *Better Never than Late*. *European Journal of Literary Studies*. Vol. 4, Issue 2 (2023). Pp. 63-80.

Atakpo, Uwemedimo. *Isadok*. Modern Press, 1998.

Awhefeada, Sunny. History and the Politics of Representation in Postcolonial African Texts. *Politics of the Postcolonial Text: Africa and its Diasporas*. (ed.) James Tar Tsaaior. LINCOM Textual Analyses, 2010.Pp.172-187.

Babawale, Tunde. *Restoring the Dignity of the Black Man*. CBACC Occasional Monograph.No.6, 2007.

Bello, Sule. Africa's Cultures: Paradigm for Technological Development. Institute of African Studies Occasional Publication N. 37, 2011.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts. *Postcolonial Studies*, (1998) vol.1 No.1, Pp. 15-29.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh (b). Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography. *Nepantla: Views from South* 1:1. Duke University Press, 2000.

Clark, J.P. The Masquerade. *Three Crowns Books*, 1977.

Clark-Bekederemo, J.P. *State of the Union*. Longman, 1985.

Dasylva, Ademola. O. Classification Paradigms in African Oral Narratives. Ibadan Cultural Studies Group: *Isese Monograph Series*. Vol.1, No.1. 1999.

Guha, Ranajit. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. Oxford University Press, 1984.

Jameson, Fredrick. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Cornell UP, 1981.

Kolawale, Mary. Text, Textuality and Contextuality: Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained in Literary Theory. [An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile–Ife in April, 2005]. Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2005.

Liu, Linjing. When Silenced Voices Meet Homi. K. Bhabha's "Megaphone". http://www.ep.liu.se/

Matlou, Matlotleng P. *Advancing and Integrating African Values, Ethics and Norms in the Interest of Africans and the African Diaspora*. CBACC Occasional Monograph. No.10, 2009.

Mazrui, Ali. A. *The African Renaissance: A Triple Legacy of Skills, Values and Gender*. CBAAC Occasional Monograph No.9. 2000/2008.

Murray, K. C. Arts and Crafts in Nigeria: Its Present and Future. *Africa: Journal of the Institute of African Languages and Culture*. Vol. IXIV, 1942.PP.3, 162-3.

Ngumoha, Emma. *Creative Mythologies in Nigerian Poetry.* Enugu: Jemezia and Associates, 1998.

Ray, Raka., Radhakrishnan, Smitha. The Subaltern, the Postcolonial, and Cultural Sociology *Handbook of Cultural Sociology*. Routledge, 2010.
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203891377.ch3(Accessed on: 28 Mar 2021).

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books, 1994.

Tsaaior, James Tar. (ed). Of Origins, Politics and the Place of the Postcolonial Text in African/Black History and Culture. *Politics of the Postcolonial Text: Africa and its Diasporas*. LINCOM GmbH, 2010.pp.5-37.

Udoette, Monica and Kufre Akpan. "Gender Roles, Women and the Politics of Becoming in Abimbola Adelakun's *Under the Brown Rusted Roof*. *European Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics Studies*. Vol. 7, Issue 1 (2023).pp.55-66.

Udoette, Monica. "Female Consciousness in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*." *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, Vol.2, No.5. 2014.pp. 74-80.

Udoinwang, David and Kufre Akpan. "Social Hysteria, Moral Panic and the (Dys)fuctional Order of Postmodernity in Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bolaji Abdullahi's *Sweet Sixteen*. *Lwati: A Journal of Contemporary Research*.Vol.19, no.4, 2023. PP: 185-200.

Udoinwang, David Ekanem and Amonyeze, Chinenye. Of Africa's Underdevelopment and Deceptive Intellectualism: A Pan- Africanist Inquiry into J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's *State of the Union*. *ANSU Journal of Language and Literary Studies* (*AJLLS*). Vol.2, No.1.pp.159-170.

Udoinwang, David Ekanem and Ikpe Justice Akpan. 'Digital Transformation, Social Media Revolution, and e-Society Advances in Africa: Are Indigenous Cultural Identities in Danger of Extinction?' Social Science Research Network (SSRN). https://papers.ssrn.com › sol3 › papers, 2023.

Udofia, Anietie; Uwemedimo Atakpo and David Ekanem Udoinwang. *International Journal of Arts and Social Science* www.ijassjournal.com ISSN: 2581-7922, Vol. 6 Issue 4, April 2023, pp.1-58.

Usoro, Rebeca and Monica Udoette. Authenticating Performance with Oral Forms: The Case of Uko Akpan Cultural Troupes. *LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research*. Vol.12, 2015.pp.340-354.