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JUST Dance: The Dance for Justice. A Study to Produce a Creative Work of Mae Nak Legend to a Dance Performance.

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the creative process to recreate a dance performance that has been staged as “a spoken play” from Mae Nak legend named “*Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong*.” The first stage play of “*Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong*” was performed in June 2015, at Assumption University Black box Theatre and at the Prague Quadrennial 2015, Czech Republic. The love legend of Mae Nak Phra Khanong was perceived and portrayed as a haunting, revenge and furious ghost story for almost a century. Mae Nak legend has been told and retold for nearly hundred versions since 1911. This research particularly draws politics aspects in dance history and examines the correlation between politics of dance and politics in Mae Nak legend. The performance of “*JUST Dance*” highlights the final scenes from “*Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong*” where the fights between Nak (Individualism) and People of Phra Khanong (Collectivism) occur. Ann Brooks clearly stated in her book “*Popular Culture: Global Intercultural Perspectives*” that the prohibition around dance practices for woman are often corresponded with restrictions in women’s bodies. Where living women are judged by beauty; the opposite of both are explored and questioned in this research paper. “*JUST Dance*” performance has examined the distortion of dance aesthetics, interpreted and transformed all acting and spoken dialogues into two parts 1) non-human progressive dance movement and 2) the traditional classical and beautiful dance practice. The research aims to experiment and study creative process extracting from the aesthetics and politics of dance from Mae Nak legend.

Keywords: Reinterpretation, Mae Nak, Dance, Politics.

Introduction

Mae Nak Phra Khanong Resurrection.

The legend Mae Nak Phra Khanong has been known for being a beautiful and devoted her life to her husband. In 1999, Nonzee Nimibutr’s version of Nang Nak was the first version that humanized Mae Nak and depicted tragic aspect of her as a mournful young lady who devoted her life to her husband, a strong stereotype of how Thai girl (in the past) should conduct. The truth is Mae Nak has never died.

Wong (2004) stated in his paper “*Nang Naak: The cult and Myth of a popular Ghost in Thailand*” that the twofold sense of Mae Nak (or Mae Naak in Wong’s article) portraying both a malicious killer and a maternal guardian. Wong saw Mae Nak’s purpose of physical and spiritual existence is solely for love, or more precisely to serve and care for her husband forever. Wong looked at Mae Nak’s

devotion love and asked in his paper the men’s role to hold a dubious standard to women? (2000:131).

In “*Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong*” the performance produced by Arunwadi Leewananthawet, performed at the Prague Quadrennial 2015, the researcher asked similar questions, yet emphasizing on the individuality of Mae Nak and Mak.

Reinterpreting the legend and investigating the three main questions in Mae Nak’s legend

- 1) What is actually Mae Nak’s voice (besides from being with her love ones)?
- 2) Why Mak does not voice?
- 3) What positions Nak and Mak play in the society?

The character analysis of Mae Nak is vast and various, Mae Nak’s resurrection has endowed with superhuman power. It is to a method in the myth creation to empower and enlarge a seem-to-be submissive character to become a dominant character in the story. Jinjing Sun investigated female ghosts in her paper “*When Female Ghost Come Back*” (Sun, 2013: 261) that compared Arnika Furrmann’s study of “*Nang Nak—Ghost Wife: Desire, Embodiment, and Buddhist Melancholia in a Contemporary Thai Ghost Film*” (Furrmann, 2009) and the ancient Chinese literature and the concept of Confucianism, Sun has summarized the over human being known as “ghost” especially in female ghost character to be the mixture of two understandings: the first interpretation is when the beauty of the ghost who chased after the man and the man died.

According to Sun, the strong emotion of love has been interpreted to bring life back called “resurrection” The second interpretation in Sun’s study is the feminism

that drew from Judith Zeitlin's research paper "*The Phantom Heroine: Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth-century Chinese Literature.*"

Jinjing Sun believed that the transformation from the fragile and negative attributes to the power and freedom of female ghosts has been endowed with the death that eventually becomes the superhuman power. Sun summarized the two interpretations as,

"The mixture of these two understandings, interestingly, reflected itself in Fuhrmann's paper on Nang Nak (the movie), a famous ghost wife in a classical ghost story in Thailand. Fuhrmann believes that it is both love and power that give her a period of posthumous life" (Sun, 2013: 261)

Harry C. Triandis and Michele J. Gelfand have proposed in "A Theory of Individualism and Collectivism" in 2012 that the construct of individualism and collectivism were indicated in religious institutions throughout the centuries." It became obvious that the concept of individualism and collectivism organically derive from the smallest unit in the Western society as an individual. In the East, the Asian culture, the roots of the society deeply and clearly depend on the social status and religious therefore when people gathered for rituals or religious purposes, the collectivism began. Triandis and Gelfand further pointed out in the paper that "Religious in the East were much more focused on duties and obligations within a hierarchical structure which is associated with some forms of modern-day collectivism." (Triandis and Gelfand, 2012: 500).

In "*Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong*" when Mak insisted to stay with his family (Ghost Nak and the baby), it is a bold statement of shifting himself a clan. Mak persisted to continue his desire, not Nak's desire, instead of being drawn by society's norms and accept it.

In "*Ghostly Desire*" a newly article compiled on Buddhism in Contemporary Thai Cinema by Fuhrmann, investigated on the term "liberal" firmly that it is to describe an Enlightenment-heritage political view on sexually minoritarian personhood that conceives of sexuality as a component of citizenship and a question of rights. The reexamination of liberalism and minoritarian could be well-illustrated throughout Mak's three monologue scenes in "*Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong*" as well as "Nak's Ghost Dance" in "*JUST Dance.*" Against the background of critiques in religious, cultural and traditional Thai notion.

While the love legend in Nimibutr's movie, "*Nang Nak*" had highlighted the aspect of Buddhist Animism that finally ended "the life of Mae Nak" in this story. Arnika Fuhrmann declared in her paper that the role of Buddhism in "*Nang Nak*" became nationally politics. Fuhrmann pointed out how this version of Nang Nak has been interpreted the Mae Nak character to bear its position in Buddhism truths of impermanence and of futility of desire which would then became what Fuhrmann firmly stated

that "it legitimates a contemporary nationalist outlook."

Throughout the story of '*Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong,*' not only Nak who persisted with her desire to be with Mak, Mak also insisted and declared his sole statement to do what is right for his family (Nak and the baby). Mak decided to ignore the society and norms and fully understand the consequence of giving up another of his family (his mother). Mak's mother continued to request, forced and asked him to accept Nak's deception. Mak showed ignorance; the truth is Mak already knew and he has also already been ready to be with Nak which meant to enter the death. Even though, in the end, Mak decided to enter the monkhood; it is also solely his own intent (desire) to make his own choice which is different interpretation from what Nonzee's Nang Nak represented Mak in the monkhood. As Fuhrmann illustrated the last scene in "*Nang Nak*" that when Mak stands in the Buddhism robes, watching Nak's burning body with sorrow and Nak's forehead was taken out as a symbol of the monk to sustain Nak's power.



Figure 1: Nak resisted the power of Buddhism in "*Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong*"



Figure 2: Three scenes from *'Mak, Nak, and People of Phra Khanong'* when the three asking the audiences whether they are wrong for wanting and doing everything to be with their love ones.

Dance, Politics and Sexuality.

Ann Brooks (2014) expressed her view on dance and politics in "Popular Culture: Global Intercultural Perspectives" that dance is one of a very few cultures where women have historically and cross-culturally been able to legitimately perform in public. Brooks added "Through dance, gender and sexuality as significant facets of one's identity are performed." The suppression of gender in *"Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong"* putting strong emphasis on community over individual, yet in *"JUST Dance"* the shift has been explored through language of dance and gender where Nak is dance-fighting with the masked men whom symbolized as people, Buddhism, community, society norms. The scene represents the fight between the majority and the marginal groups.

The histories of social class, gender, race struggle in dance prevails as well as the male dominance and an emphasis on female sexuality (Brooks, 2014). To reconstruct this view, *"JUST Dance"* has embodied the trauma of posthumous stage of life in the part one and continued to part two when the disembodiment of life has appeared and the enlightenment has emerged at the end of the performance.

The interpretation of the life after death of Nak has been extensively discussed and rationalized in *"Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong"* where her sudden death during her child birth on the night of the eclipse. In the past the eclipse had been believed and interpreted as 'bad luck,' and to combined with the actual circumstance of the sudden dark where the accident could occurred in this scene could cause Nak to become panic and she would be in deep sorrow and agony to lose both herself and her son during the absence of her husband.



Figure 3: The eclipse scene from *'Mak, Nak, and People of Phra Khanong'*

According to the legend and the ancient Thai belief, the ghosts of women who have died during childbirth are an extremely feared type of ghost in Thailand. The conflicts between Nak and community began prior to Mak's return. In *"JUST Dance"* the pregnant dance part has been symbolically incorporated in this first scene. Her death agony revealed in her distorted dance and venomous eye contacts towards the audiences.



Figure 4: Nak's Ghost Dance in *"JUST Dance"*

In *"Nang Nak—Ghost Wife: Desire, Embodiment, and Buddhist Melancholia in a Contemporary Thai Ghost Film"* (2009) Fuhrmann thoroughly discussed and correlated the politics in terms of the return of Mae Nak in *"Nang Nak"* the movie in 1999. Fuhrmann stated that "Haunting is often described as the eruption of the past into the present in a manner that effects the reexamination of past injustices and

possibly leads to reparation.” Fuhrmann identified distinctively that as a ghost, Nang Nak could be viewed to represent “the minority subjectivity.” People’s lifestyles and cultures in Thai ancient community were strongly based upon Buddhism. Buddhism rituals were conducted rigorously to discipline people in the community. Fuhrmann also further discussed that haunting becomes the cleanse of antihistorical context and the fight between Nak’s devotion to her husband as an individual and the villagers’ effort to exorcise Nang Nak became the political tension itself. Once Mak has gradually realized that his wife is dead, the shift of the decision making has weighted upon Mak.



Figure 5: *Nak* is fighting with *People* in the community. Upper image from “*Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong*.” Middle and lower images from “*JUST Dance*.”

Musicalization VS Characterization.

In order to make a powerful political statement, the music plays a critical part of the performance. The music composing was the earlier process to create and set the tone of the performance. The music will be divided into two parts: 1) *Nak’s Ghost Dance* and 2) *Nak’s Revitalization*. In “*Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong*,” the Thai musical instruments were utilized, while for “*JUST Dance*,” the synchronizations of the modern ballet dance and the

music have been chosen so when director and the music composer were discussing on characterization music instruments, the Thai musical instruments were omitted for “*JUST Dance*” performance.

To provide the background of each character, at first, both the director and the music composer agreed on each characterized music instrument. To set Mak as the spine character of the story, even though the character Mak will not be performed in “*JUST Dance*”, Mak still exists in the story. Mak was set as the percussion of the drum. The powerful and deep booming sounds of drum play its part to feature the unseen character of Mak in this performance. The fabrication of Nak character and music instrument has agreed on the string instruments. The variety of string instruments were discussing and the director is considering piano for Nak as the counterpart percussion of the drum. The rain and the thunder effects were played on the top of show when Nak was ebulliently emerged up-side down position from the top of the Buddhist sanctuary.

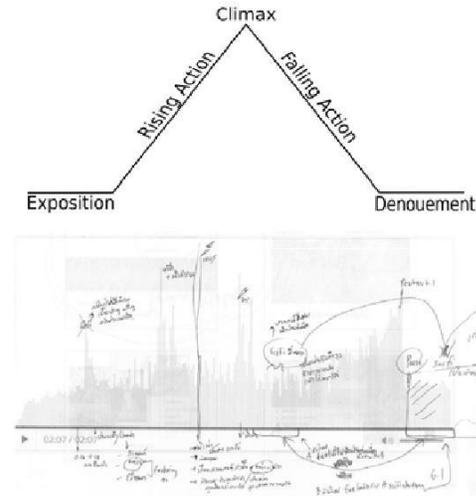


Figure 6: Sound Wave Plot of *Nak Ghost Dance*

The Choreographic Language of ‘*JUST Dance*’

In his paper “*Thailand Haunted: The Power of the Past in the Contemporary Thai Horror Films*, (2005: 145) Adam Knee pointed out one significant aspect on how “*Nang Nak*” stands its points to place Mae Nak as a female ghost individual character who stands herself against the norms and this had led to the opening act of the dance in “*JUST Dance*” to depict the insurgent and non human posture.



Figure 7: Nang Nak's hanging from the Buddhist sanctuary to haunt and fight with the monks.

In the creative process to discuss the up-side down position of Mae Nak's dance or the hanging dance, the director and the choreographer have discussing thoroughly, the appearance and disappearance of Mae Nak on stage also play vital role on how Nak could be seen and unseen on the first scene in the Buddhist sanctuary and how she reacted with the authority of the Buddhist power.

Knee stated that even though Ghost Nak was reminded about the high Buddhist dignitary, Nak was in the state of indifference and the striking visual image represented in the movie symbolized the opposition and the state of ignorance to any religious or authority power.

"In one sense, the striking image of Nak upside down on the ceiling of the wat (temple) nicely sums up the opposition she poses to male order. She literally inverts the male frame of reference – a notion previously suggested in the monk's instruction to Mak to bend over and look between his legs if he wants to apprehend Nak's true nature. She is upside down to the men's right-side up, one the their many, feminine (indeed, she again appears here holding her baby) to their masculinity, spectral to their eatherliness. But while this is an over determined image of compositionality, it is also one of complementarity; Nak completes the picture, dwells in the space where the men do not, and wields a power of fertility (the presence of the baby reminds us) that the men on their own are lacking." (Knee, 2005: 145)

The contrasting forms of dance and death in "JUST Dance" aim to illustrate the conflicts between the following messages

- 1) Individual and Community.
- 2) Life and Death.
- 3) Joy and Agony.
- 4) Symmetry and Asymmetry.
- 5) Wholeness and Distortion.

In "Ghost Dance" by Christopher Bruce, the clear message of dance and human right has been placed in the context of music, design and choreography as well as in "JUST Dance."



Figure 8: The up-side down poses were designated and interpreted as haunting ghost and rebellious message.



Figure 9: Mak Saves Nak. Left image from "Mak, Nak and People of Phra Khanong." Right image from "JUST Dance."

The wandering from life to death in the first scene, the choreography has been directed to exhibit the two worlds, the living and existing world of the masked men represented “People” and Nak’s death world. As soon as Nak decided to break the rule of life, the two worlds collapsed and the fight began.

The threads and ropes in the scenes were developed to engage in a wide range of meanings in the performance: the bonding, the imprison, as well as the holy thread using in Buddhist rituals to bring luck or subdue evils.

The direction and choreography of the two parts were directed contradictory on purpose. In order to develop a series of dance in the first part, the director and choreographer experimented, redesigned, and challenged themselves to work on the different weigh transfer, push-off, and landings. To understand the dancer, the director has studied the fundamental of dance anatomy and decided that for “JUST Dance” the director wanted to the put a significant emphasis on the each joint in human body to create a non-human pose.

The entire journey of part one ‘Nak’s Ghost Dance music could be structured as the plot diagram of the story (shown in Figure 6). The distortion and dramatized action of the music leads to the contraction of dance in this part and the major poses in Nak’s Ghost Dance were mostly on the ground, upside down, distorted, deformed and asymmetrical versions of dance.

While music part 2: Nak’s revitalization, the exuberance living beats of the string instruments were thoroughly employed to accompany the dance that has mostly been directed to perform upright postures and more vertical lines. The grand jete, light tripping step, triplet were occupied throughout these music parts.



Figure 10: Threads and Ropes exhibited and employed in “JUST Dance”

Similar to music interpretation, part one: Nak’s Ghost Dance were choreographed mostly on the linear line of dance and each joint of the dancer was twisted aesthetically to convey the main message of part one.



Figure 11: Joint Movements and Choreography in “JUST Dance” Part One, Nak’s Ghost Dance.

The uplifting of part two portrayed the blooming flowers, the sun rising, the bird singing in dancer’s head or the lotus blooming in Buddhist term. It was the music in part two that provided the unity of whole ballet and the dance posture in part two was created to move the audiences’ emotions away entirely from the first part and added hope to life in the end. The body language generated from dance in part two simply enhanced the mood of the performance as well as provide a movement motif at the end of the show.



Figure 12: Whole Ballet Dance in “JUST Dance” Part Two, Nak’s Revitalization.

Future Study.

To illustrate the purpose of this research paper, it intends to voice another perspective in Mae Nak’s tale and look carefully on how to consciously pass this popular legend along to the next generation without indoctrinating

the concept of furious and jealously female ghost trying to be with her husband. To a degree, Mae Nak Phra Khanong tale could be inserted with the aspects of how ones should conduct and follow his/her intention and never give up, the ones who stand up for herself and also himself. How responsible ones could be as an individual and how the society should act towards individual. Framing its legend to only the haunting, lovelorn ghost will not only be anachronistic and outdated as well as will lead the more generations of fault idolatry in this century. Instead Mae Nak Phra Khanong could be portrayed as a heroine in her legendary tragic tale and Mak as a hero even though they lost the battle to the society and the dhamma. The enlightenment of both characters led them to their own separated ways. It is the vital ending part when you tell, and retell the stories to the next generation and when we decided to overcome the black magic, lust and anger parts of the stories, there will be more to add on to life and the life after death.



Figure 13: Mae Nak fights.

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Notes:

- 1) เอกสารอ่านเพิ่มเติมฉบับที่1 “ทำอะไรให้งานศิลปะเป็นวิชาการ” โดย ศาสตราจารย์กิตติคุณ ดร. สุรพล วิรุฬห์รักษ์ราชบัณฑิต สาขาวิชานาฏกรรม ในงาน “การนำเสนอผลงานวิจัยแห่งชาติ๒๕๕๕” เรื่องการสร้างมาตรฐานวิชาการงานศิลป์สำนักงาน คณะกรรมการวิจัยแห่งชาติสาขาปรัชญา ณ เซนทรัลเวิร์ด กรุงเทพมหานคร ๒๖ สิงหาคม ๒๕๕๕.
- 2) เอกสารอ่านเพิ่มเติมฉบับที่2 “Dance Anatomy” by Jacqui Greene Haas.
- 3) เอกสารอ่านเพิ่มเติมฉบับที่3 “Theatre, Performance and Technology: The Development of Scenography in the Twentieth Century” by Christopher Baugh.

- 4) เอกสารอ่านเพิ่มเติมฉบับที่ 4 “Devising Performance: A Critical History” by Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling.
- 5) เอกสารอ่านเพิ่มเติมฉบับที่5 “Actor Training” by Alison Hodge.
- 6) เอกสารอ่านเพิ่มเติมฉบับที่6 “Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre” by Helen Nicholson.
- 7) เอกสารอ่านเพิ่มเติมฉบับที่ 7 “Theatre and Education by Helen Nicholson.
- 8) Dance by Pina Bausch
 - <http://www.pina-bausch.de/en/dancetheatre/>
 - The Fall Dance
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS8hEj37CrA>
 - Dead Can Dance
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ys5xfdn5rlo>
- 9) Ghost Dance by Christopher Bruce
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYPBIailSn8>

Nurses' Decisional Involvement in Government Hospitals or Region VIII, Philippines

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Abstract

For decades, enhancing decisional involvement of staff nurses in matters of nursing practice and patient care has been identified as long term strategy to improve quality of healthcare. Numerous evidences have shown that involvement of staff nurses in decision making in matters of nursing practice and patient care increases investment in providing quality patient care and other positive outcomes. This study aimed to investigate nurses' perceived actual and preferred decisional involvement in government hospitals of Region VIII with the end view of developing a basis for policy redirections. The researcher primarily employed a descriptive correlational research design. A total of 159 nurses in five government hospitals in Region 8 participated in the study. Meanwhile, Decisional Involvement Scale by Havens and Vasey was used to assess the nurses' level of decisional involvement. The study revealed that staff nurses have less actual decisional involvement and preferred more involvement in the decision making. This study also suggests dissonance between staff and nurse manager's actual and preferred decisional involvement. Finally, a redirection policy was proposed based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: Nurses Dissonance in Decisional Involvement, Actual Decisional Involvement, Preferred Decisional Involvement.

Introduction

Years ago, there was a general false impression globally that the nursing profession revolved around sponge baths and bedpans. Generally, people around the world are more educated today about the important role nurses play in the medical field. Yet, the truth of the matter is, unless you or your loved one has spent time in hospital, you may not fully understand the breadth of expertise and knowledge nurses bring to the table. In the new era, even doctors have no more impression that nurses can be belittle in their field, because today nurses are the partners of the doctors and nurses have the ability and responsibility to a right decision making. According to R.A. 9173 or the "Philippine Nursing Act of 2002" article VIII section 11, the registered nurse should be in solidarity with other members of the healthcare team in working for the patient's best interest. Also, the registered nurse must maintain collegial and collaborative working relationship with colleagues and other health care providers. Through this code of ethics, nurses in the Philippines will be guided for carrying out nursing responsibilities which would tackle difficult issues and decisions that a profession might be facing, and give clear instruction of what action would be considered ethical or right in the given circumstance (Venzon, 2006). Nurses are the front liners of the care provided at the hospital, and comprise the major part of the health care staff. Without them, the journey to nursing service excellence is impossible. Indeed, they have great influence on how your organization is perceived. In fact, nurses are increasingly regarded as key decision makers within the healthcare team; they have probably always

known that their decisions have important implications for patient outcomes (Wise, 2015: 5). Although literature and studies on staff nurses decisional involvement is extensive, relatively little attention has been given to staff nurses decisional involvement in the Philippines. Hence, the conduct of this study is deemed necessary.

Materials and Methods

This study utilized a descriptive method of research in investigating the nurses' perceived actual and preferred level of decisional involvement in government hospital of Region VIII, Philippines. The respondents of this study was participated by 159 nurses assigned in medical, surgical, OB wards, and ICU. The study was conducted in Northern Samar Provincial Hospital, Samar Provincial Hospital, Southern Leyte Provincial Hospital, Western Leyte District Hospital, and Ormoc District Hospital. All these hospitals are government hospital in Region VIII. A Standardized instrument named Decision Involvement Scale (DIS) adopted from Havens & Vasey was utilized in this study. This is a 21- item standardized tool that measures actual and desired decisional involvement of registered nurses on a nursing unit related to six constructs (subscales). These subscales include: unit staffing, quality of professional practice, professional recruitment, unit governance and leadership, quality of support staff practice, and collaboration or liaison activities. The DIS uses a 5-point scale in which the response choices were as follows: administration/management only=1, primarily administration/management with some nurse input=2, equally shared by

administration/ management and staff nurses=3, primarily staff nurses with some administration=4, and staff nurses only=5. The items can be considered individually, by the six subscales, or by the total DIS scale. A high score suggests a high degree of staff nurse involvement, a low score suggests a low degree of staff nurse involvement, and a midrange score suggests a state of sharing of the decision making between the administration/management and staff nurses (Jaafarpour & Khan, 2011).

indicators 1,2,3 and 4 are decided primarily by administration/management with some staff nurse input. Meanwhile, when it comes to professional recruitment the administration alone made the actual decisions. Furthermore, result also show that administration and staff nurses share decision making when it comes to collaboration/liaison activities. Lastly, the result revealed that decisions are made primarily by administration/management with some staff nurse input (m=2.01). The result suggests that staff nurses have perceived they had less actual involvement in four areas of decisional involvement than did the nurse managers.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the summary of the perceived actual level of decisional involvement of nurses. As seen in the table,

Table 1: Summary Table of the Means and Standard Deviations on the Perceived Actual Level of Decisional Involvement of Nurses

Indicators	Staff Nurses			Nurse Managers			Overall		
	Mean	Desc	SD	Mean	Desc	SD	Mean	Desc	SD
Unit Staffing	2.94	E	0.751	1.25	A	0.445	2.50	PA	1.013
Quality of Professional Practice	1.62	PA	0.822	1.24	A	0.406	1.52	PA	0.753
Professional Recruitment	1.36	A	0.584	1.31	A	0.850	1.35	A	0.662
Unit Governance and Leadership	2.19	PA	0.514	1.64	PA	0.400	2.04	PA	0.543
Quality of Support Staff Practice	1.63	PA	0.715	1.20	A	0.321	1.52	PA	0.662
Collaboration/Liaison Activities	3.06	E	0.793	3.42	E	0.695	3.15	E	0.783
OVERALL	2.13	PA	0.428	1.68	PA	0.295	2.01	PA	0.445

Legend:

- 4.51 – 5.00 (S) Staff Nurses Only
- 3.51 – 4.50 (PS) Primarily Staff Nurses – Some Administration/Management
- 2.51 – 3.50 (E) Equally Shared by Administration/Management and Staff Nurses
- 1.51 – 2.50 (PA) Primarily Administration/Management – Some Staff Nurse Input
- 1.00 – 1.50 (A) Administration/Management Only

Table 2: Summary Table of the Means and Standard Deviations on the Preferred Level of Decisional Involvement of Nurses

Indicators	Staff Nurses			Nurse Managers			Overall		
	Mean	Desc	SD	Mean	Desc	SD	Mean	Desc	SD
Unit Staffing	2.53	E	0.733	1.54	PA	0.629	2.27	PA	0.832
Quality of Professional Practice	2.54	E	0.832	1.24	A	0.458	2.20	PA	0.947
Professional Recruitment	2.57	E	0.747	1.24	A	0.795	2.22	PA	0.959
Unit Governance and Leadership	3.02	E	0.488	2.01	PA	0.498	2.75	E	0.663
Quality of Support Staff Practice	2.28	PA	0.786	1.72	PA	0.986	2.13	PA	0.876
Collaboration/Liaison Activities	3.09	E	0.550	3.39	E	0.682	3.17	E	0.600
OVERALL	2.67	E	0.376	1.86	PA	0.346	2.46	PA	0.515

Legend:

- 4.51 – 5.0 (S) Staff Nurses Only
- 3.51 – 4.50 (PS) Primarily Staff Nurses – Some Administration/Management

2.51 – 3.50	(E)	Equally Shared by Administration/Management and Staff Nurses
1.51 – 2.50	(PA)	Primarily Administration/Management – Some Staff Nurse Input
1.00 – 1.50	(A)	Administration/Management Only

Table 3: Test of Significant Mean Difference between the Nurses’ Perceived Actual Level of Decisional Involvement and Preferred Level of Decisional Involvement

Indicators	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value
Unit Staffing	0.226	2.177*	316	0.030
Quality of Professional Practice	-0.682	-7.113**	316	0.000
Professional Recruitment	-0.869	-9.399**	316	0.000
Unit Governance and Leadership	-0.711	-10.467**	316	0.000
Quality of Support Staff Practice	-0.618	-7.095**	316	0.000
Collaboration/Liaison Activities	-0.016	-0.207ns	316	0.836
OVERALL	-0.446	-8.253**	316	0.000

Legend:

* – Difference is significant at 0.05 level (p-value < 0.05)

** – Difference is highly significant at 0.05 level (p-value < 0.01)

ns – Difference is not significant at 0.05 level (p-value > 0.05)

As shown in the table, “collaboration/liason activities” is the only subscale with a p-value greater than 0.05, which means the difference is not significant at 0.05 level. Whereas, subscales like quality of professional practice, professional recruitment, and unit governance and leadership got a p-value of 0.000 which is lower than a p-value of 0.01 indicates that the difference is highly significant at 0.05 level. While unit staffing also shows significant difference at 0.05 level. To conclude, the

overall computed p-value is 0.000 which indicate that the difference is highly significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states “there is no significant difference between the nurses’ perceived actual level of decisional involvement and preferred level of decisional involvement” is rejected. This only denotes that nurses have dissonance when it comes to the actual decisional involvement and their preferred decisional involvement.

Table 4: Test of Significant Mean Difference between Staff Nurses’ and Nurse Managers’ Perceived Actual Level of Decisional Involvement

Indicators	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value
Unit Staffing	1.694	13.766**	157	0.000
Quality of Professional Practice	0.379	2.864*	157	0.005
Professional Recruitment	0.056	0.466ns	157	0.642
Unit Governance and Leadership	0.550	6.286**	157	0.000
Quality of Support Staff Practice	0.433	3.782**	157	0.000
Collaboration/Liaison Activities	-0.367	-2.651*	157	0.009
OVERALL	0.457	6.384**	157	0.000

Legend:

* – Difference is significant at 0.05 level (p-value < 0.05)

** – Difference is highly significant at 0.05 level (p-value < 0.01)

ns – Difference is not significant at 0.05 level (p-value > 0.05)

As reflected in table 4, having an overall p-value of 0.000 which is lower than 0.01 p-value, the difference between staff nurses’ and nurse managers’ perceived actual level of decisional involvement is highly significant at 0.05 level. However, the subscale professional recruitment got a p-value of 0.642 that is greater than 0.05 p-value implies that staff nurses and nurse managers perceived actual

decisional involvement has no significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states “there is no significant difference between staff nurses’ and nurse managers’ actual decisional involvement” is rejected. The study of Scherb (2010) is consistent to the result of the present study that there is a significant difference between nurses perceived actual decisional involvement. However,

Scherb's findings showed no significant difference between staff nurses' and nurse managers actual level of decisional involvement in terms of collaboration/liaison

activities. Meanwhile, in the present study, it was the professional recruitment that shows no significant difference.

Table 5: Test of Significant Mean Difference between Staff Nurses' and Nurse Managers' Preferred Level of Decisional Involvement

Indicators	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value
Unit Staffing	0.998	7.847**	157	0.000
Quality of Professional Practice	1.307	9.659**	157	0.000
Professional Recruitment	1.332	9.748**	157	0.000
Unit Governance and Leadership	1.011	11.453**	157	0.000
Quality of Support Staff Practice	0.561	3.698**	157	0.000
Collaboration/Liaison Activities	-0.301	-2.852*	157	0.005
OVERALL	0.817	12.326**	157	0.000

Legend:

* – Difference is significant at 0.05 level (p-value < 0.05)

** – Difference is highly significant at 0.05 level (p-value < 0.01)

As presented in the table, having an overall p-value of 0.000 which is lower than 0.01 p-value, the difference between staff nurses' and nurse managers' preferred level of decisional involvement is highly significant at 0.05 level. As the result revealed, 5 subscales got a p-value lower than 0.01 p-value which suggest highly significant difference at 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states "there is no significant difference between staff nurses' and nurse managers' preferred decisional involvement" is rejected. The findings of Scherb et al (2010) also confirm the result of the present study that there were statistically significant difference between staff nurses and nurse managers overall preferred decisional involvement.

Conclusions

Staff Nurses' perceived they had less actual involvement decision making than did the nurse managers. In conclusion, Nurses' perceived actual level of decisional involvement is "Fair". Nurses' perceived preferred level of decisional involvement is also "Fair". The difference between nurses' perceived actual level of decisional involvement and preferred level of decisional involvement is highly significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states "there is no significant difference between nurses' perceived actual level of decisional involvement and preferred level of decisional involvement" is rejected. Furthermore, the difference between staff nurses' and nurse managers perceived actual level of decisional involvement and preferred level of decisional involvement is highly significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states "there is no significant difference between staff nurses' and nurse managers' perceived decisional" is rejected. Within an organization, it is unusual for an individual to complete the decision making process alone. Even if decision making is a continuing responsibility of

nurse leaders and managers, staff nurses' are involved in the implementations who are confronted by a variety of situations. Therefore, creating a Hospital policy or guidelines that will include staff nurses' in the decision making is highly recommended. However, these policies should still be in lined according to the standards of nursing practice where the final decision will come from the highest authority.

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Re-Imaging Mae-Naak Through Mise-En-Science: The (Re) Construction in Scenic and Costume Designing Work

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Abstract

This paper is a study of the conceptualization and the creation of scenic and costume designing for the experimental dance performance entitled 'JUST DANCE', in CA Creative Research Project 2016. The creative work study is aimed at illustrating and explaining, the analytical interpretation of performance concept, with critical perspectives on stereotypical formation, to create theatrical designing works. The study shows the concretization of ideas from critical perspectives into creation of scenic and costume designing work. The creation was executed with composition of utilized elements by means of artistic and functional effects. The working outcome, through the crystallization of critical thinking, was the concrete objects that reflex and transform the ironic (or ambivalent) status of the protagonist, from the position of otherness to become a female active agency for own subjectivity.

Keywords: theatre, design, scene, costume, critical theory

Introduction

'*JUST Dance*' is a creative and collaborative performance project. This performance is an expanding continuum from the play '*Maak, Naak and People of Phra Khanong*' performed in Prague Quadrennial 2015 which conveyed the controversies between 'Individualism and Collectivism' through the characterization of *Mae Naak* as an individual who was determined with her own 'free will' against the world around her(self). As an extensive version, '*JUST Dance*' 2016, the dance will hi-light the climax part of story when *Naak* and *Maak* ask for "justice" as individuals and fight with the "just" society.

And, essentially, theatrical *designing* works, both scenic and costume, are important to create the visual world in which the play unfolds. The visual quality of designing works indicates the kind of world for the performer as well as for the performance. In doing so, designer must deal with practical, functional, aesthetic and symbolic considerations. Hence, especially for such 'progressive' work which plays with abstraction, the study of conceptual ideas of performance is indispensable for creativity in designing.

Historicizing 'Mae-Naak' and her ambivalent existence through Thai Narratives

The story of *Mae-Naak* of *Bang Phra-Kha-Nong* is one of the most classical ghost story in Thailand. *Mae-Naak* (or Mrs. *Naak*) was depicted to be one of the pregnant-woman-ghost (*Phii-taay-thang-klom*) who had died and had been longing determinedly for her husband's return. The story of *Mae-Naak* has been fascinating and been adapted into plenty of various media productions;

such as stage play, TV *dramas* and films. (Smith, 2008: 176-180.) In contemporary, reproductions such characters have been presented in a feminist light, which exposes the misogynistic structures leading to their predicament. (Diamond, 2006: 111-148.)

A common version of her [*Mae-Naak*'s], as Catherine Diamond points out, relates that she, a girl from rich family, married poor boy against her parents' wishes. They were expecting their first child when her husband *Maak* was called up to serve in the military – her antipathy toward the army now attracts potential conscripts to her shrine to enlist her aid in avoiding service. After suffering the horrors of the battlefield, *Maak* returned home to his wife and son, not knowing that both have died in childbirth and have become ghost. She avoids sunlight but otherwise acts as the perfect companion, persuading *Maak*, over the warnings of the townspeople, to accept the status quo: '*No shame, no guilt, no recognition of error and regret occurs to her; she is loyal to her passion at the end. Though the Buddhist powers store peace and order, they do not erase the sympathy of for Mae-Naak's fate of double unhappiness. She never made a figure of fun or humiliation; although defeated, her passion loses of its potency. Her behavior is monstrous but her motives are pure.*' (Diamond, 2006: 114.)

The existences of *Mae-Naak*, as being narrated within Thai culture, are oscillating between her devotion of 'undying love' and 'horrible female ghost', between 'a malicious killer' and 'a maternal guardian' or between 'a man's dream' as well as his worst nightmare.' (Wong, 2000: 131.) At the same time, ironically interestingly, she becomes an iconic figure of a woman possessed by a love

so powerful that it starves off death and must both a bona fide legend and a deity whose potency seems grow over time.

Performing with critical perspectives

As the performance was initiated with politically questioning, critical theories are brought about to be engaged into the conceptualization for the designing works, with dramaturgical perspective which impressively bring my conceptual ideas to light. At this point, dramaturgical perspective is benefited, here, to the creation of context for a production especially for considering what possibilities and challenges the play (or a performance) opens up when thought of living composition in time and place. Dramaturgical analysis can create the basis for a specific production exploring different options which the director develop[s] into the specific mise-en-scène of the production. (Rokem: 2006, 260-269.)

Particularly, from my point of view, it appears that that the representations and repetitions of *Mae-Naak* in former times were passively structured her (self), as 'stereotypical formation.' She was, in a way, positioned as and in 'the Otherness' not only from the cultural code of proper woman, as decided to live her married life against her parents' wishes, but, also she was accused and chased by the townspeople to be, live or died, in a 'marginal' area, at the rim or outside the village. Under some ideological repressions on voiceless femininity, this performance is, in some ways, an attempt to refigured *Mae-Naak*, formerly as a type of iconic Thai woman or as a character, to have her agency as a self-contained and independent individual woman.

With an attempt to support the ideas of the performance, the formation of design concept is preceded with the critical perspectives on relocation and reinterpretation of stereotypes of 'otherness.' With concocting of several shades of critical theories on 'Otherness', such repetitions and representation of *Mae-Naak*, are considered to be integrated with Homi K. Bhabha's deconstructionist (psycho) analysis on dynamism of stereotypical formation, or in other words, the concepts of the politics of 'Ambivalence' and 'Uncanniness' which he has argued theoretically to be brought into strategical methods of redefinition and resistance.

Through sophisticated elaboration with psychoanalysis, Bhabha has argued in his article entitles 'The Other Question,' that the stereotypical construction of the 'Other', as a result of cultural production power

through discursive practice(s) which positioning in comparison with to 'self', is never separated from anxiety, either personally or socially. The entity of the se-called 'unspoken' or 'unacceptable' always exists out there, positioned at the opposite side of normative (or acceptable) representation. This ambivalence results in what Bhabha terms the 'fetish/phobia' phenomenon. The 'Other' is at once attractive and frightening/ repulsive. (Nayar, 2015: 80.) Thus, the formation of stereotype(s), by race, gender, class and so on, with fixity and rigidly, are always dynamic negotiations between 'what to be accepted' (attractive) and 'what to be oppressed' (repulsive): *The stereotype (...) is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something must be anxiously repeated (...)* It is this process of ambivalence, central to the stereotype, (...) *The analytic of ambivalence questions dogmatic and moralistic positions on the meaning of oppression and discrimination.*' (Bhabha, 2007: 107)

This concept of haunting ambivalence is brought to another framework that related closely to each other, the 'Uncanny' or 'Unhomely' (*Unheimlich*). Metaphorically, the uncanny is the concept which is implied similarly to the existence of ghost, mysterious, strange to the position which once belongs: *The uncanny is ghostly. It is concerned with strange, weird and mysterious, with a flickering sense (but not conviction) of something supernatural (...).* More specifically, it is a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar. It can take the form of something strange and unfamiliar unexpectedly arising in familiar context. (...) *The uncanny can be a matter of something gruesome or terrible, above all death and corpses, cannibalism, live, burial, the return of the dead. (...)* It can involve a feeling of something beautiful but at the same time frightening as in the figure of the double... ' (Royle, 2003: 1-2.)¹

Henceforth, either these ironical aspects that also seem to be the part of Thai culture or the appropriation with the prism of critical theories are fostered advantageously the initiations of creativity for the Project.

Working with design concepts: Concepts of designing works

During working collaboratively with Arunwadi Leewananthawet, the Project Director, she brought the narrative of *Mae-Naak*, as an extension, into light on stage once again to explore her questions on the issue of 'Justice' through the experimentation of body movement-base performance. The performance is intently showing for 15-20 minutes. Structurally, the script is split broadly

light, (...) The unhomely moment realtes the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence.' see also in Bhabha (2007: 2-15.)

¹ Interestingly, Homi K. Bhabha also developed this concept in his arguments on the staus of borderlives, in liminal time and space which called 'in-between' that '... the unheimlich is 'the name for everything that ought to have remained ... secret and hidden but has come to

into 2 parts; the haunting and horrifying *Mae-Naak* after her death, then transforming into some sort of dancing semi-celestial figure. The given keywords, derived from the discussion with her directing team, circled around progressive terms in critical thinking, for instance; *Grotesque, distortion, deform, unbalance, gloomy, unbalance, Black and white, grayscale* and so on. I re-encapsulated these words to be developed and constructed the Design Concept to bring about *mise-en-scène* in the designing work (as reconstruction) of *Mae-Naak's legacy* (scenic) and *body* (costume).

Essentially, through my decisions, the overall design concept for this experimental performance was preferably called as '*Gothic Malai: a posthumous awakening of a woman spirit.*'

As a concept, the word 'gothic' in literary and artistic traditions is largely known by the subgenre of Gothic horror, is a genre or mode of art, literature and film that combines fiction and horror, death, and at times romance. As Umberto Eco reviewed that: '*a characteristic of visual universe, it also spread to literature (...) which lent themselves to nocturnal visions, dark crimes and ghosts. (...) Thus, while some represented gloomy landscapes, specters and terrifying situations, other wonder why it was that horror could give pleasure, given that then the idea of pleasure and delight had been associated with the experience of Beauty.*' (Eco, 2004: 288.). It becomes clear that, the word has already connotes the co-existence dually between 'horror' and 'beauty', 'mystery' and 'demystification' together with atmospheric tone: gloomy dark, grayish, and blackish. In other words, it helped potentially to signify the mood & tone in design works for the performance.

Another is '*malai.*' Actually, '*malai*' literally means flower or garland, made of various kinds of flowers. Making a '*malai*' requires skillfully training in handicraft with high delicacy, aesthetics and concentration. The mostly shape of '*malai*' can be varied in numerous types, but the popular format which can be found widely, is composed of 2 parts: the shape of ring part in connection with the dangling part, so-called as '*u-ba.*' In Thai culture, '*malai*' is used in many occasions; the object itself is implicit with respects. (see also in Intakul, 2009.)

Definitely, in connotative level, *malai* can be symbolized with other various things. Herein this project, I would prefer to split, but bring them together, the dual and double layer of meanings in. (1.) First, '*malai*' as metaphorical (or metonymical) representations of Thai woman² were conducted under the norm or conventions which connotes the qualifications to be 'a good or a proper

woman.'³ The cultural ethics of being '*kulasatri*' plays, more or less, in important part in female cultivation and enculturation. An idiomatic phrase such as '*Nang-phab-phiab-roi-malai*' (sitting in a properly beautiful gesture while making a flower garland) clearly relates to expected appropriate behaviors that intertwined with sophisticated etiquettes. To some extent, ideologically, those bring the qualifications of being obedient, docile, somehow submissive, manner, *savoir-faire*. Up to this point, the 'representation' of this propriety has become 'repression' on woman at the same time.

The second one, at the other side, (2.) the meaning of '*malai*' was brought to be appropriated precisely to *Mae-Naak's* legend, connected to her reputation as one of a sacred sanctuary in Thai folk believes. In some shades of shadow outside the range of Buddhist legitimacy, *Mae-Naak* exists as a powerful deity who possessed some sorts of overwhelming superpower which can fulfill wishes of anyone who asks for, and worships her with offerings, as described that: '*Offerings of dolls, flower garlands, baby bottles, incense, lipsticks, compacts, cakes, and fruit have been set before a female figure covered in flaky leaves of gold that her worshippers have pressed upon her. Fingers have been busy outside the shrine, too. Several of the trees have had their bark worn smooth by devotees rubbing perfumed oil into the wood, hoping the trees' auspiciousness will rub off on them.*' (Diamond, 2006: 112-114.) More or less, '*malai*' become one of the objects which people used, connected, endorsed and also be subjected to, *Mae-Naak* as a special sacred entity. And this existence is never separated from senses of mercy and fear, or precisely saying in other words once again: the 'ambivalence'.

This design concept is the thematic ideas which had been developed, infusing with critical perspectives and several sorts of cultural symbolism, which I will bring into development of the main artistic direction and the creation.

Mise-en-scenic design: the reconstruction of *Mae-Naak's* legacy

Clinging to the concept of the 'Other' or the 'Otherness' as mentioned above, the scenic designing for this performance is considered to be executed as '*in-between space.*' The realm of *Mae-Naak* in this version was planned to be presented as a space (or a locus) that remains unclear and 'uncanny' or 'unhomely' (*Unheimlich*), the places that are neither here nor there, by playing with senses of unfamiliarity which related to what

² In general, there are female names, traditionally, come from numerous flowers for example; 'Malee', 'Bussaba', 'Phuang-roi'(garland), 'Bua' (Lotus), 'Dao-ruang' (marigold), 'Kaew' (Orange jessamine), 'Mali' (jasmine), 'Chaba' (hibiscus) etc.,

³ As can be seen in description of the classic didactical text, 'Su-pha-sit-sorn-ying' (the Poem of proper female lessons), written by Suthorn Phuu.

is known of old and long familiar, (Freud, 1919: 193-233.) surrounding the figure of *Mae-Naak* on the stage.

Instead of building up scenic construction, the scene designing was, rather, selected to be designed by emphasizing on decorations of details, in modern minimalistic spirit. The designing work is, hence, intended to play with abstract ideas, crystallized from the critical perspectives and make the performance visualized as a progressive work. The application and appropriation of critical point-of-view as mentioned above are provocatively suited to the approach with the '*New Stagecraft*' that inspiringly play with abstracted ideas by embellishing with colorizing, detailed patterns and complex arrangement of shapes. (Feinsod, 2010: 162.) In connection with this, as Feinsod argued, although the conceptual ideas were complicated, scenic designing should be executed in the ways to simplify rather than ornament the stage: *Striving to create 'more is less'; scenic design is limited to a bare minimum of scenic elements. Implicit in these efforts was the idea that suggestion and simplicity were higher values than elaborate depiction, that limiting the means of artistic creation freed the limitless imagination of creator and viewer alike.'* (Ibid.)

This designing direction supports the intention to create the place of 'nowhere,' that remains unfixed to anywhere specifically, beyond the order of time and place, in which dead was appearing as alive. Haunting yet (un)homely, the space of stage area was turned to be the site of desire, of redefinition and of resistance. On one hand, the overall procedures of design execution are focusing on minimalist stylistics, to be created and be looked as simplest as possible, in some level. But, on the other hand, the design aimed at grasping attention and curiosity of audiences with its aesthete, yet, functional in its proportion.

At first, the performance was planned to show with projecting video, (but finally the part of video was decided by the director to be removed from the performance.) The cyclorama screen, which has been painted in brownish sepia tone to be looked as contaminated with dirt and to create optical texture effects, was positioned at the middle, that occupying around 2/3 of the whole area of the Adaptable Theatre. The screen is well utilized to absorb the dynamism of lighting changes, along with the order of each sequence of the performance. The decorative elements, by applying installation art methods, which were intentionally designed to be looked as a kind of the frame of the overall picture would be positioned at the 2 sides of the tremendous fabric screen. (Figure 1 and 2.) The installed pieces were designed with an attempt to illustrate such complexities and ironies of feminine identity. The installations of the net-like objects are stretching in wide-ranged, around the area in front of audiences, look like cobwebs in the haunting graveyard. The position of the objects connotes the unclear

boundaries of stage area and the audience area, as if the separation between both of them is not clear-cut from each other, not even indicating whether 'inside' or 'outside' of any places. Up to this point, the stage is referring to nowhere in real, but can be interpreted as anywhere.



Figure 1. The decorative net-like objects in scenic design for '*JUST*' dance

The principle materials in making the nets are textiles in 3 black-grayish colors. They were cut to split off from each other as fragments, which make them look alike old, pale, dusty and dirty shrouds, (Figure 3.) in general, covering and binding dead body to signify mortem status of *Mae-Naak*.



Figure 2. The connection between 2 parts of the objects: The body of net and the dangling part.

Entangled with the stylistics of movement performance which working on performer's body joints, similarity, the huge net was created by applying techniques of weaving and intertwining. Similarly to '*malai*' the net-like objects are structured into parts, (A.) the body of net and (B.) the dangling part, the latter is inspired by the part of '*uba*' of '*malai*'. Pursuing this further, actually, the techniques is inspired by the knot weaving method of '*Plae-yuan*' (hammock) and the structure of '*Ra-ya-song-khruang*' (courteous floral chandelier), a kind of '*malai*' creation, (Figure 4.) to be connected with complications of being as a woman's craft-working and mother's child-rearing burden. Moreover, both of them are intently designed almost balanced, but a symmetrical reflection from each other. Even so, the objects are attached to the scenery simply by binding ropes and the fabrics with main construction inside theatre. The overall attachments are intentionally created not to be seen as too solid, but tight

and flexible in order to signify *latent* ideology or cultural codes of on womanliness.

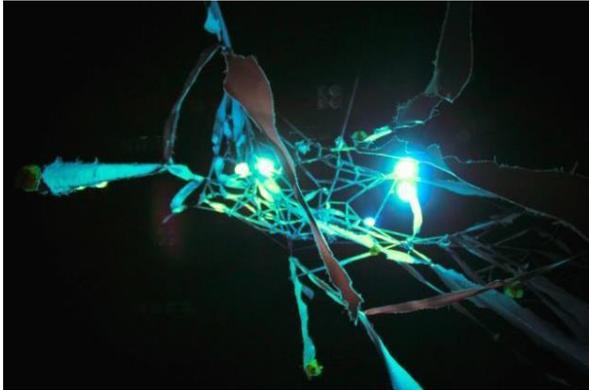


Figure 3. The strip lines fabric that was made to look like rags or shrouds.



Figure 4. 'Ra-ya-song-kruang' and the 'uba' part of 'malai'

Besides the grayish and gloomy chromatic scheme, the details at the unshaped rim of fabric strip-lines were made as tattered as rags, but at the same time it renders inverse effects to be looked delicate in composition with other elements. At this point these net-like objects can be perceived as beauty but at the meantime it fosters the effects and the atmosphere of gloomily and ghoulishly haunting.

Furthermore, the installed net-like objects are decorated with 'dork-mai-chan' (cremation aromatic sandalwood flower), another mortem symbolism which, in general, will be used in funeral as object to express condolences and respects to the one who passed away. The flowers are attached in all over structure of the nets, but focusing more significantly with the dangling area. (Figure 5.)



Figure 5. Attached 'dork-mai-chan'

The attachment of 'dork-mai-chan' was reminding about the scattering of heaven flowers 'mon-tha-rop' that, as described in *Tripitaka*. This kind of divine flowers would be falling down to human world, as blessing, only in special occasion including the day that Buddha completed extinction of all passion, especially at the sequences that she is dancing with joy and delight in her realm as if *Mae-Naak* herself was also blooming from the ash of her death. After all, functionally and aesthetically, the outcome of finalized scenic design was dramatic with lighting. The grayish net-like objects helps creating dynamic of lighting colors which changing along with the sequences of the performance. In addition, the structure of net-like of them also provoke cast of shadows pattern as gobo or silhouette. (Figure6.) These are effectively, more or less, enhancing the atmosphere of 'uncanniness.'



Figure 6. The overall scene design while composed with lighting

Reimaging and reconstructing body: the creativity embodiment of characterization

For the costume designing, rather than focusing on the locale (place) in the situations, costume designing is emphasizing on construction and encodings of characterization through creation of clothing. Along with scenery and lighting, costumes for this performance share the same design concepts in creativity. But, specifically, costumes are directly attached onto performer's body and make the performer coherently construct the character in her(self) at the same time. The costume, on stage, helps communicate the information and conceptual ideas, which magnified and being brought to be in focus attention onto the character. (Wilson, 2008: 288.)

By recognizing with the function in movement-base performance, the main structure of clothing is created as flexible as the performer could move freely on the stage. That's why, at first, the costume design is starting with professional dancer's bodysuit, and then later decorated with other components. Similarly, the creation of costume for the character *Mae-Naak* in this version is attempting to reflect duality with double layers of concept of 'ambivalence'. Intentionally, costume designing for this performance, I hopefully needed to create the effect which derived from and inspired Bhabha's saying '... almost the same, but not quite' to reflect the 'liminal' or 'unfixed' conditions of 'in-between' onto the character's body. And also, the clothing by concepts and techniques of creation has its own 'performativity' in itself.

As a result of the transition between 2 main

sequences of the performance, the costume designing should help to maintain and support the vacillation of overlapping 'ghastly dark demonic carcass' and 'graceful as celestial being' within the same body. Aspiring collectively by traditional costume of Thai woman, the costume of *Mae-Naak* was an outcome of mixture between various forms of Thai women costume throughout the history. By mingling the shapes of 'sa-bai' 'chong-kra-ben' and 'pha-thaeb' (Figure 7.) symbolized that the embodiment of *Mae-Naak* figure is to reconstruct and recollect experiences of Thai femininity throughout history, appear in semi-modern stylistics.

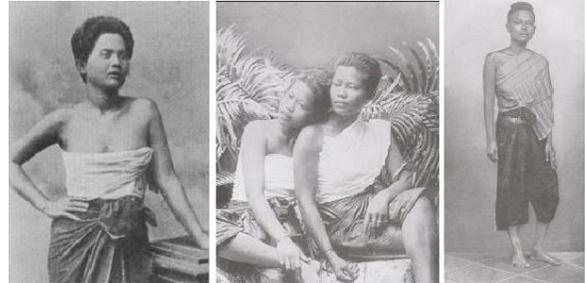


Figure 7. the various type of Thai traditional female wear; 'sa-bai' 'chong-kra-ben' and 'pha-thaeb'

Starting with the lower part, the pants for the show was derived from the shape of 'Chong-kra-ben' but in Modern stylistics. As means of the requirements of movement onstage, the pants were also designed in minimalist the same way as in scenic design, flexible for stretching and free for moving

The upper part of the embodiment was created by decorating with pattern-less interwoven grayish fabric stripped lines. The fabric lines, with mingling of different shades of gray colors, were attached to the main body by the techniques of sewing intimately to performer's body. The overall grayish costume was covered with another black flexible textile piece, (Figure 8.) to signify the binding with repression under rules of death and repression into the codes of womanliness. The piece that was cut in to stripped lines to be looked as demonic and dreadful skeleton, to expand her struggling for the 'Just [ice].



Figure 8. The costume of Mae-Naak covering with the skeleton black piece

And after the turning point of the whole performance, the black piece was designed to be easily removed. The removal of dreadful piece brings her to another level of her entity. Being more graceful being, and more compatible with the overall of scenic design, regarding to the similar color and materials, the whole picture becomes more aesthetic, attractive and coherent the change of mood & tone in music and movement gesture, even created from tattered shroud-like materials. The existence (or representation) of her (self), identification of *Mae-Naak* was brought into the new form, ambiguously like rebirth or reincarnation, to be signified to be in alternative status. (Figure 9.) Even composited with rags-like or shroud-like fabric, the beautiful appearance of her was embodied (or redefined) this character to be identical to some kind of semi-celestial being.



In doing so, it makes the embodiment of Mae-Naak's body, within in her liminality, constructed complicatedly. The representation of *Mae-Naak*, though this apparition was driven back and forth with ambivalence of her existence.

Conclusion

The concentration of theatrical designer is aimed at inventing visual support onstage for the performance. In the light of such progressive work, especially for the marginalized people who are repressed the subjugations of normative and discursive practices, critical perspectives are essential to open up new possibilities, and new territories into the process of creativity. In this project, according to the stream of artistic and critical framework, the characteristics of legendary figure was brought into light (and into live) to explore some aspects, what we behave, what we behave what we recognize within our culture.

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The Concept of IGBO Spirituality and Environment

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Abstract

In a techno-scientific age where conflicting views on the reality of environmental ethics as well as ethical, environmental and ideological concerns emerge continuously, there is the need to constantly reinstate the vertical-horizontal dimensions of man's peaceful co-existence with living and non-living things. Added to the above task is also the need for a thoroughly grounded work that sifts pragmatic ideas within some indigenous beliefs and practices which will be relevant to sound environmental and social development. As such, this research arises, among other reasons, from what the Igbo people actually believe and practice by focusing on the environmental values inherent in the Igbo spirituality. Adopting the expository and procedural tools of hermeneutics, the study contends on how to develop new environmental values that are parts and parcel of the Igbo spirituality. A major finding in the study is that in spite of the dialogue with modern styles, various features of the Igbo spirituality are still reserved and practiced, and have been practical means of existence and sustenance of the environment, peace and development to the entire community and each human person sharing the community life. Considering the nature and diversified forms of challenges to the Igbo spirituality in this age of science with some environmental devaluating attitudes of the human person, the study proposes that mankind should develop a deeper sense of love and care for the mother earth as a surer route to harmonious co-existence between the living and dead in the Igbo spirituality.

Keywords: Igbo, spirituality, environment, belief, culture, religion, spiritual guide

Introduction

Man is a social animal that lives in a network of relationships! In his numerous life endeavors: political, religious, cultural and economics, man is found in a deep-rooted sense of belonging and oneness with both animate and inanimate things. However, in a techno-scientific era where the world is fast becoming a global village, there is the need to constantly reinstate the vertical-horizontal dimensions of man's peaceful co-existence with living and non-living things. Thus, in recent times, a regular clarion call for the conservation of nature has emanated. Within the African perspective, this call goes beyond the mere care of the environment to revealing the African sense of value and respect for the order of created things; especially the mother earth. In such a deep rooted tradition, the sacredness of the earth (land, trees and other natural endowments) forms a great part of the African traditional religion, thereby showing the sources of the rich African cultural and spiritual heritage. Based on these assumptions, words of wisdom embedded in the African folklores, myths, proverbs and other traditional practices confirm a sense of reverence and respect accorded to the natural world. Focusing particularly on the African perspective, this study on *The Concept of Igbo Spirituality and Environment* seeks to examine man's harmonious encounter with the environmental values and his fellow men by investigating the role of environmental care and respect for the human person in the Igbo spirituality; which is capped in the commensally-oriented attitudinal approach to life.

The concept of spirituality from the IGBO perspective

Spirituality is not a peculiar property of one religion or the other; thus, it remains eminent in several

human practices. This aspect is therefore an exploration of the concepts of spirituality from the African, especially Igbo point of view, a spiritual guide and the possible roles of the spiritual guide in the attainment of spiritual excellence. Additionally, in line with the Igbo cosmology, the earth which is called *Ani* in Igbo is regarded as the handwork of God, the Creator and Maker of all things. For F. A. Arinze, the Earth Spirit is the most important spirit after *Chukwu* and she is the Great Mother Spirit in the Igbo hierarchy of beings (Arinze, 2008, p.27.). Furthermore, the ancestors believed that God can be worshipped through the created natural things like trees, water bodies, and animals among others. This supposition characterizes some of the various religious rituals in traditional Igbo society in an attempt to attain spiritual growth. This implies that conservation and preservation of these sources of their spiritualities remain an essential part of the traditional practices of the Igbo people. Nonetheless, there is a need for this attitude to be upheld and promoted in the light of the current environmental pollution and crisis that is daily emanating across the globe.

However, the Igbo holistic understanding of the inter-relationship that exists in the eco-system negates the nature-culture, rural-urban polarization. Worthy of mention is the fact that the nature of the Igbo spirituality cherishes the need for the interaction of beings for efficacy. It is this understanding that helps the community of persons to develop and practice the culture of environmental preservation of existing realities which equally creates a balance in the natural world; trees, animals and other things in nature that today face extinction. Fundamentally, the Igbo approach to spirituality is built on the belief in a Supreme Being-God- *Chiukwu*, lesser deities, and ancestors and in the

after-life. These are the anchors unto which spiritual orientation for the Igbo is rooted. This clue thus throws more light on the nature of the Igbo and their interaction with both temporal and non-temporal life forces within their vicinity. In the view of the Igbo traditional perception of reality, the world is made up of two main interrelated parts: the heavens (*Eluigwe*) and the earth (*Elu-Uwa*) the house of man, animals, plants and a host of other created beings. It is a place where two realms of existence: (Ala mmadu and Ala mmuo), man and deities interact (Nwala, 1985, p. 30). According to Metuh: "All beings known to African worldviews belong to either worlds - the visible world (Ala mmadu), and the invisible world (Ala mmuo). The invisible world is made up of the heavenly realm, said to be the home of the creator and deities; and the spirit land; the home of the ancestors" (Metuh, 1992, p. 51).

The ancestors in Igboland are believed to participate in all important family affairs. It is believed that there is a continuous interaction between the Supreme Being and the other beings in the universe irrespective of the realm to which each belongs and operates. They inhabit the natural phenomena and are involved in men's daily activities. It is thus difficult to talk of a strict dichotomy between the natural and the spiritual worlds because they are in constant communion and communication (Nwala, 1985, pp. 31-34). In a similar vein, in Igbo tradition, an indispensable channel through which spiritual communication, worship and atonement ensues is music. It permeates all religious and social gatherings and ceremonies meant to establish harmony with God and the community. For example, music accompanies child naming, marriages and other festivities. Prayers, invocations, and blessings are also made. Prayer is the first act of worship addressed to God to intervene in the lives and workings of the people. Formal blessings are also made and declared on all or specific people and purposes. After this comes the final greetings and salutations. There is also the belief that the spiritual worlds inform belief in the afterlife because death is not the final end of human existence in the Igbo belief system. It is believed that every person has a spiritual quality or characteristic that transforms into another form of existence after death. Hence, it is only those who live a good life that go to the world of the ancestors (the spirit land) where they continue to have influence on earthly life and family matters. The ancestral home is a perfect prototype of a good life on earth (Nwala, 1985, p.34). Living a good life in the Igbo sense means to carefully observe the customs, taboos, laws and traditions of the land called *Omenala*. *Omenala* (tradition) is the hidden point of reference in any moral discourse among the Igbo (Ekennia, 2000, p. 166). In a nutshell, *Omenala* is the embodied spirituality of any existing Igbo community and is meant to provide and protect all values inherited from the ancestors.

Chi in the Igbo Spirituality

Chi is a unique personal life-force and the principle that determines each individual's destiny. Each person possesses his own *Chi* believed to be the spiritual force that accompanies the life journey of the individual (Mozia, 1982, p.212). Thus in the submission of Ekennia:

Chi gives each person infinite possibilities to realize himself in the community and this personalized inner force in each individual, is always in harmony with the person. When the person acquires mastery of himself or has attained certain self-knowledge, he examines the inner force and becomes fully in control of any situation. It is at this point that the Igbo say "Onye kwe, Chi ya ekwe" (Ekennia, 2000, p. 154).

Consequently, the Igbo person regards his *Chi* as the explanatory principle for his successes or failures in life. Even though the Igbo person can have some control over his *Chi*, there is an aspect of determinism in his life which is usually manifested when the person records failures in his life despite his determined efforts. He sees himself as ('onye Chi ojoo') an unlucky man while on the other hand, he is seen as ('onye Chi oma') a lucky one with good *Chi* (Mozia, 1982, p. 184). Religiously speaking therefore, the Igbo are united by their belief in one God (Chukwu) and in the spirits and ancestors. Their belief in God is responsible for their inseparable relationship with God and the members of the community. This relationship also extends to non-Igbo. Worthy of note is the fact that the Igbos have dual notions of *Chi*- the material and the immaterial nature of *Chi*. The material part of man (*Ahu*), body (*Ahu*) is the Igbo term that stands for the material aspect in him, which is without the soul. Nevertheless, the same *ahu* came into used in various contexts by the Igbo to mean different things like- *ahu gi kwanu* meaning 'how is your body?' This is a way of further greetings among the Igbo.

The immaterial part of man (mind and soul) which is the spiritual or invisible part of the human person is the defining principle of his personhood and actions. With this very dimension of his being, mankind cultivates a relationship with the transcendental world. Man being a composite of soul and body, the Igbo runs into the conflict of choice of words in defining the human soul. For instance, Edeh employs three terms in identifying the soul- 'Mkpuruobi', 'Chi' and 'Mmuo'. 'Mmuo' is the most suitable that conveys the idea of the soul. This is so because immortality suggests that which is unseen as against that which is seen. Thus, every activity that is not of the body must be from the soul (Edeh, 1985, pp. 80-82). This view is not however conclusive as some other scholars like Metuh have other notions. These arguments notwithstanding, the respective functions played by either of the terminologies employed in describing soul or body point to the different aspects of the human person. All these considerations point to the fact that 'Mmuo' (spirit) refers to something immaterial (Ekennia, 2000, p.155).

Fundamentally, it designates the invisible spirit world. This leading analysis points to the impact of the Igbo people and their anthropology on their approach to spirituality.

God in the Traditional Igbo Belief System

The Igbo system of belief in the Supreme Being anchors heavily on their understanding of the hierarchy of forces/being. The Igbo hold tenaciously to the interplay of forces in their life which forms their concept of a higher being that is superior to all other beings. This explains the genesis of some terminologies like 'Chi-ukwu', 'Olisa-ebuluwa', and 'Onye-Okike'. For the Igbo, it is this Being that sustains every other being. E. Edeh argues that the existence of things in the universe coupled with the Igbo concept of 'Chi', life after death-reincarnation stand as reliable proofs for the reality of such a Supreme Being in whose reverence their spirituality anchors (Edeh, 1985, p.59). More so, the Igbo believe that no one equals this Supreme Being in power and he knows everything, he is altogether a good and merciful God (Arinze 2008: 18). Hence, it is widely believed among the Igbo people that 'Chukwu' controls and directs everything that happens in the world of men, and indeed the entire universe. The Igbo man believes firmly in the omnipotence of 'Chukwu'. Arinze (2008, p.15) opines that 'Chukwu' has three chief names: 'Chukwu' (Chi-ukwu, the Great Spirit), 'Chineke' (the Spirit that creates) and 'Oseburuwa' (the Lord who upholds the world). These names however, portray the three dimensional functions of 'Chukwu' among the Igbo. 'Chi-ukwu' represents the Spirit that is above and beyond all other smaller spirits. 'Chineke' represents the Spirit that causes everything into being out of nothingness. Finally, 'Oseburuwa' represents the Spirit that governs, sustains, controls and guides the activities of human beings. Thus, these local names for the Supreme Being were mostly culled from the Igbo people's perceived level of relationship and activities between human beings and God; and this is their spirituality.

Peace and Personhood in the Igbo Society

This portion focuses on peace and personhood in the Igbo society by positing that a habitable environment is the key to happy living in the Igbo society. This explains the Igbo people's high sense of value for the earth and why they see nature as the ultimate in human life.

Spiritual Guide and the Human Person in a Traditional Igbo Society

Existent in every traditional Igbo society are institutions traditionally set up by the people through which law and order are kept in such a society. Therefore, the functionality of the government of Igbo society is built on the workability of institutions like age grade, *ozo* titled men, women folk- *Otu Ada*, among others. These social setups are not far from the religious aspects of the people's lives and practices (Arinze, 2008,

p.18). In this same line of thought, spiritual guide and the human person in a traditional Igbo society becomes crucial. In these spiritual guides among the Igbo, strong reference is always made to human traditional grounded sage wisdom, folklores, and myths, among others. Here, the people's historical account provides the horizon on which moral issues regarding the conservation and distribution of resources are evaluated in juxtaposition to environmental ethics. Nature embraces a wider scope which includes history and religion which has the person at the centre of the entire drama. The human person cannot exist outside of the natural environment because environmental quality is a necessity for human life. This quality means that humans must develop a sustainable relationship with their environment (Rolston, 2003, p. 515).

Peace: A Necessity in Human Society

Peace according to Godfrey Igwebuikwe Onah in his article, "The Meaning of Peace in African Traditional Religion and Culture" is a good relationship well lived; health, absence of pressure and conflict, being strong and prosperous. Peace is the totality of well-being, the fullness of life here and hereafter, what the Yoruba call *alafia*. This is the sum total of all that man may desire - an undisturbed harmonious life. This by extension explains some of the names the Igbo people answer like *Obiajulum*, *Nwaforaku*, *Udochukwuka*, among others. In addition, peace denotes the absence of physical violence, war or conflict, as such; Ikenga Metuh proposes that peace as a beneficent adjustment of harmony between the individual and his Creator on the one side, and his fellow men on the other side all in relation to the environment in which mankind inhabits. In this, one discovers the concentric dimensions of peace between individuals, communities and nations. In the Igbo worldview, correlated to the concept of peace are justice and development (Metuh, 1992, p. 55). For the Igbo, peace entails a just relation among men and with the community in whose life they share. Contrary to this, a person can fight like a wounded lion whenever his rights are trampled upon and can even call upon the gods for remedy. When on account of one's misdeed the peace of the land is contravened by involvement in any sort of abomination or taboo, the communal dimension of peace is still seen.

Peaceful Co-existence in a Traditional Igbo Society

In no way is the Igbo society known and identified with individualistic or self-centered way of life. For instance, the Igbo family system is usually extended to clan and that is why people of the same clan cannot intermarry, but people of different clans cannot be included in the family cycle since they have their own lineage. The philosophy "We are better than animals because we have kinsmen" is so pronounced in the Igbo communalistic way of life. According to Achebe, "an animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him" (Achebe, 2008, p. 132). He considers the support a family gives one another the

defining characteristic of humanity. Without family or respect for one's family, one might as well be an animal. In Igbo society, family feast celebration is a sign of communal reunion and not only for eating and drinking since each family can afford what to eat and drink. This is properly expressed in an Igbo proverb, "*ihe e ji aputa ama bu ka ihu na ihu hukorita, o nweghi onye onwa anaghi eti na mpku ya*" Hence, "we come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so" (Achebe, 2008, p.133). This brings together both the living and the dead members of the family and kinsmen.

Traditional Igbo Approach to Conflict Resolution

Significant to Igbo life is the close knit to culture and tradition. The traditions and customs are considered to be uniting factors in Igbo society. To be recognized and respected in Igbo land, one must follow the traditions and customs. Just as the success of the individuals in the society depends on the communities' effort as well to keep to the dictates of the gods, so does the entire community also suffer the consequences of disobeying the gods. Nevertheless, conflict resolution in any Igbo society has some peculiar approaches. The Igbo worldview holds that the purity of the land is determined by the purity of the people. In Igbo tradition, it is believed that no wise and normal human person will ask his *Ch'* for a duel. Tending to go against the wish of the gods is risking one's life. No one fights the spirits and remains the same (Achebe, 2008, p.149). Since the oracles are human beings but speak and interpret the minds of the gods and foresee the future, even on the most difficult and controversial issues, the people have to accept the words of the oracle.

From the foregoing, conflict resolutions are often given communalistic approach when they arise between a man and his fellow man, between communities or families, and towns are often given communalistic approach. From the *Okpala*, to the kindred, titled men, *Umuokpu* (for women's folk), the elders representing each town or community- *ndi Ojani*, conflicts are addressed in every traditional Igbo society whenever they arise. These men are regarded as the upholders of the truth and justice in each community and their duty is to see that truth reigns in each case and peace restored. The practice of making sacrifices to appease the gods, for atonement and reconciliation is equally an indispensable part of conflict resolution in Igbo society. This is based on the fact that every offence in the community is of two dimensions. It affects both the living and the dead and their interactions with the community.

Traditionally, a successful conflict resolution in every traditional setting is marked by a common sharing in kola nut and drinking of palm wine often with the same cup. Respect for kola nut is one of the most important traditions in Igbo society. Igbo people show much respect to kola nuts for what it represents in Igbo culture. Kola nut is a symbol of life and life is sacred, as the common Igbo adage says '*Onye wetara oji wetara ndu* (he who brings kola brings life as well). Much

significance is attached to kola nut in Igbo culture. Kola nut is a symbol of acceptance and unity. For an Igbo man to tell his neighbor, "We do not share, eat and drink in common" means that there is a great problem.

This approach to conflict resolution is however informed by the Igbo notion of sin. Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* defined sin as a "crime against the gods". Such transgressions occur when a member of a society violates bonds of family or insults an ancestral spirit. As the gods are not slow in anger, sinners get quick and severe punishment from the gods, and some of these punishments are known and carried out by the community where the sin was committed. The punishments are meted out as a deterrent and also to appease the gods who are directly offended. Animal sacrifices, a heavy fine, exile from one's fatherland, or even death are instances of the punishments (Achebe, 2008, pp.8-17). If such atonement is not done, not only is the sinner subject to the wrath of the gods, the entire community suffers.

Social and Environmental Challenges In Igboland

The Igbo are united by ethnicity, culture and the geographic features of their location. Their location has a rainforest climate. The ecosystem is rich in rain forest reserves, rivers, etc., and this defines the livelihood of the local people as farmers, traders, food processors and local manufacturers of items linked to subsistence economies. There is a rich biodiversity of various species of plants and organism in the ecosystem. There are lots of palm trees, cassava, yam, plantain, pepper and palm kernel. Some environmental challenges in Igboland are deforestation, toxic waste dumping, soil destruction, flooding and erosion, noise pollution, lack of community participation due to failed government promises and policies, indifference and aloofness, weak or non-existent environmental policies, low agricultural production, socio-economic problems like poverty, joblessness, loss of farmlands, and low living standards. Other challenges include air pollution with poisonous chemicals and greenhouse emissions leading to increased cases of heart and lung cancer and diseases. Environmental challenges are community problems and go beyond the condition of the soil, land, water and atmosphere. The issue also touches on the quality of living conditions since human persons are "at the center of concerns for sustainable development and are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature" (UN, Rio Declaration, 1992). People make up part of the environment; therefore environmental degeneration will lead to human degeneration. Onuoha notes that:

Environmental degradation deals with the misuse or overuse of the resources of the environment which include fresh and safe water, fisheries, arable land, plants, animals, mineral resources, air, wildlife, and flora. One notable implication of environmental degradation for social existence is that it usually disrupts socio-economic life of the immediate human population that depends on natural resources for sustenance (Onuoha, 2008a, p, 1027).

The Igbo face this challenge more because they are agrarians who depend more on land resources for sustenance than on government. The solution to this issue will be the effective application of environmental laws that regulate the use of resources and also sanction individuals' acts like careless waste disposal, unhygienic conditions and dirty neighborhoods, destruction of trees and plants. In line with this, the United Nations declared:

Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop, and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies, the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites, the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects, and the right to the repatriation of their human remains. Indigenous people have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons (UN, 1992).

Thus, one of the many ways of preserving and promoting the Igbo ecological thought is to engage it as a rational discourse and make it part of the educational curriculum. Igbo traditional thought must dialogue with other disciplines so that it will not be rendered redundant. Dialogue makes ideas and values relevant without loss of the basic tenets. It also contributes to knowledge to show its epistemological relevance given its raw data form. Agbakoba, who supports the transition from intuitive to a rational inquiry, opines that such a move is important as it makes no difference schooling pupils in science and technology without a corresponding attention to the cultural thought and praxis that form their socialization and outlook. Thus, it is important to engage the Igbo spirituality as it contains scientific discoveries from its observation and interaction with nature (Asiegbu and Agbakoba, 2006, pp. 309-328).

Call for A New Igbo Environmental Awareness

The western denigration of Africans as a primitive people lacking rationality contributed to the neglect of their ideologies, perspectives and cultural experiences. Thus, inadequate attention to their epistemology and worldviews stems from this marginalization. African ideologies have been in quest for identity and recognition in the midst of other universal ideologies. To put this study in the right perspective, it is imperative to reflect on the crux of the argument which questions the possibility of an African philosophy. For instance, such question as whether the "untutored African" can conceive of God raises alarm among the people of Africa. It is a question that borders on the validity or ability to have a body of knowledge that is typically African and without any western influence or imposition. To do justice to the issue then, environmental ethics in Africa requires a dialogue with other ideas while maintaining the African concrete thoughts and experiences. The data of experiences about

the African environment remains the platform for any further discussion on fashioning a new environmental ethics for Africans and by implication, the Igbo.

In addition, attention must be paid to differences in the climatic inclinations across nations as a guide when considering any ethics or indigenous thoughts. Oladipo is of the view that what is needed is not a restoration of traditional culture as such but a retrieval of the humanistic impulse already present in traditional thoughts (Oladipo, 2009, p. 86). In other words, the rich elements in the tradition must be engaged with the Western intellectual traditions. To do justice is to recognize that traditional thought plays a big role in the rational discourse even if it is not complete in itself. To be relevant, it must converse with other ideas from across its boundaries. Western ideas must not be totally absorbed without examining them because some were not developed in or for Igbo contexts. Thus, all environmental ethical theories have western perspectives and cultural experiences signaling the need to embrace other enterprises in the world that is not western.

Furthermore, Africa has suffered the problem of identity crisis as an effect of her involvement with colonialism and neo-colonialism but the way for the traditional-modernity relationship is not one in which they remain *incommunicado*. Nkrumah holds that it must be done in such a way that both sides are "in tune with the original humanistic principles underlying African society" (Nkrumah, 1968, p. 268). The question we are asking is: what is the current and real situation in the midst of current discourse on the African environmental ethics? The real situation is that the Igbo cultural and moral values that make up the indigenous mindset of the people are challenged by the scientific and technological community and values. The latter runs counter to the former and the danger is to overrule or believe that those who subscribe to the traditional ways of relating with nature or doing things are archaic or their thoughts moribund. The Igbo are prone to borrowing from other cultures uncritically without considering the implications because of western education and the fact that the society already operates on western developed policies, images, ideas, values and programs (Mbon, 1991, pp. 101-109). The Igbos need a re-evaluated environmental ethics since they operate neo-colonialist ideas based on land usage and ownership. The problems with this is in the erroneous conception of seeing land solely as a commodity for economic use identified with erroneous modern thoughts that consider not the intrinsic value of the human person but only by what he produces. It is such view that does not represent the indigenous understanding and values about land preservation and conserving its natural cycle which is closer to the much needed universal planetary ethics championed by the modern environmental movement.

Without the value of the Igbo thought system, life will be artificial and synthetic thereby compounding more of the environmental problems plaguing the

society. This is because traditional ethics is regulated by law based on sacred sanction (Mbon, 1991, p. 102). What is needed is a critical and creative synthesis of existing creative ecological values (Dirkirk, 2008, p. 28), keeping in mind the peculiar nature of our struggle to create a sustained growth and development for our people. Such reconstruction is central to a culturally developed environmental ethics because no ideological principle or policy alien to the African people in its totality would last (Onunwa, 2005, p. 185).

Evaluation and Conclusion

In sum, the focus of this study so far has been on the reality of peaceful environment as a fruit of the practices of Igbo spirituality. From the deliberations in this work, the Igbo spirituality is no doubt a spirituality of peace-making. Since definitions and deconstruction of main ideas and concepts are key ways to the in-depth comprehension of any study, this research has taken into consideration such concepts as peace, spirituality, environment, traditional Igbo society, among others and their vitality in the building of a peaceful environment. As viable *instrumenta labores* in the realization of this peace mission in the human Igbo society, the study employed the functionalities of spiritual guides, spiritual disciplines, traditional approaches to conflict resolution, to mention but a few. These views factorized together drive home the truth of peaceful environment in Igbo spirituality which is the core of this study. As such, this study concludes by making a few recommendations for a better cultivation of peaceful environment in the practice of Igbo spirituality.

As a result of the current environmental challenges facing mankind today *via* deforestation, incessant bush burning and other unhealthy exploitations of the mother earth, it becomes crucial for the government and all other law enforcement agencies to consider providing policies that will aid man in being friendlier to the mother earth. Earlier inadequate government policies have given room to the demolition of forests by the local people and allowed for the government to satisfy economic ambitions. All these policies can be revised in a way that will help promote environmental preservation.

On the side of the Igbo spiritual practices, the human person must not in the name of civilization jettison cherished traditional practices that have helped for centuries to preserve the environment. Among the Igbo, history accounts for the praiseworthy lifestyles of their ancestors and how eco-friendly they were. The same demand is today being made on mankind. To achieve this, plantation must be encouraged in sync with love for nature.

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