



Research Paper

Omabe Tradition and Sculptures of El Anatsui; Connecting the Missing Link in the Making of Legends

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ABSTRACT

Omabe is the visual symbol upon which deep philosophical and aesthetic values of the Nsukka-Igbo were built. It is a tradition and had great influence on the way of life of the entire people in the area. El Anatsui dwelled and explored artistic forms in this environment for many decades but the relationship of his works and tradition is not given adequate attention. Often, sources of inspiration and influence for Anatsui's works are rather attributed to his root in Ghana and presently, the potency of Omabe tends to be shaded by modernism; but after an analysis of their contents, this paper discovered significant relationship between this tradition and his sculptures. Strong influence of Omabe is noticeable in the subject matter, form, material and style of work in many sculptures of this legend. On the other hand, Anatsui has given visible form to many performances and other intangible elements of Omabe tradition, thereby widening the scope of its appreciation. It was therefore recommended that as Anatsui is being honoured by the academia, his sculpture exploit and style can be described in no better way than 'Omabeism'.

KEY WORDS: Omabe-tradition, Sculptures, El Anatsui, Missing-link

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I. INTRODUCTION

As renowned sculptor, El Anatsui, is being celebrated around the world, it is only right that pieces of information on the contributory factors in the making of this Guru be properly knitted and missing links be well accommodated in the archive of his work. Influence of *Omabe*, a great tradition, on his sculptures is one of the areas hitherto not given significant attention in presentations of Anatsui. And probably due to the high level of esotericism in it, many people have no deep understanding of the values in *Omabe* tradition as well.

Among the Nsukka-Igbo of Nigeria, *Omabe* has been the central visual symbol upon which the people's philosophy and life forces are expressed. It is a culture, centered on the belief of the physical presence of the ancestral spirits, in form of deity. The *Omabe* deity is represented or given visible form by special agents, including masquerades, initiated persons and adopted plant and animal objects. It is characterized by periodic festive presentation and performance, for entertainment and chastisement of the people. Aniakor (1978), notes that, *Omabe* was used as an agent of social control because its forces were harnessed to check the excesses of the people.

Under its influence, people of all classes were controlled, as they shared common belief and common fears. *Omabe* forms, physical and imaginative, were everywhere and in everything; and are hither-to, directly or indirectly touching everyone in the society. Names the people bear, architectures and crafts they make, proverbs, folks or wise sayings they express, and abominable acts they abhor, have *Omabe* cultural connection and are still active. As David Suzuki in Whitehand (2009) would say, traditional values, like those of *Omabe*, have been built into human psyche over thousands of generations and hundreds of thousands of years.

The name Nsukka connotes three levels of socio-political organization of people, who share related topography and cultural affinity. First, Nsukka is the name of a community of the descendants of Asadu Ideke Arumona. Secondly, Nsukka is a name of a local government area, which comprises communities like Nsukka, Obukpa, Edem, Lejja, Ede-Obara, Opi, and Eha-Arumona. Finally, Nsukka is used to refer to, all the people of Northern part of Enugu State, who share related culture, under a political arrangement in Nigeria, known as Senatorial Zone. It is comprised of seven local government areas, namely: Igbo-Etiti, Uzouwani, Nsukka, Igbo-Eze South, Igbo-Eze North, Udenu, and Isiuzo. According to the Diary and Directory of the Catholic Diocese of Nsukka (2012), the name Nsukka, is used to designate the political, cultural, and religious

identity of the entire people of Northern part of Igbo-land. It is in this broadest sense, as a socio-cultural and political zone, that the name Nsukka, with estimated population of 1,377,001 people, in the 2006 census (Ugwu, 2012), is reflected in this research.

The Nsukka are accommodative; with people of diverse ethnicity and nationality settling, not only at the urban but also the rural areas. The region is also endowed with rich artistic resources, both in its topography and culture. Obiechina in Nwoko (1989) captures the picture of Nsukka landscape poetically, seeing magnificence in:

its breath-taking scenic beauty, its round, green hills that roll away from the observer's view till they embrace the distant skyline, revealing in this embrace exquisitely formed breasts of the earth-mother goddess, its enchanted sunsets splashed over with known and unknown colours, from the deep rusty yellow that forms a halo round the hills to the multiple-tinged red and orange mix that hangs down like a magic tapestry between the hills. Surmounting the riot of colours is the majestic sun itself, a huge, round, like a ball of fire. Divinity and mystery are compounded here to create a thing of grandeur and primeval fear.

El Anatsui settled in Nsukka since 1975. As an adventurer and explorative artist, and in the accommodative nature of the people, he freely moved about in almost every part of the area, maintaining an art studio in Obukpa, an interior area outside the university where he worked and resided. Chic(2013) notes that, El Anatsui has spent most of his adult life working in Nigeria and that his sculptures are 'experimental in their mix of media, form and tradition'.

With regards to artistic influence and inspiration, the beliefs that environment informs creativity and that, creative expression influences and stimulates observers to related action, have not been disputed. According to Fosu (1986), even the coming to contact between the Europeans and Africans naturally made the artists from both sides to imitate aspects of each other's work in their own expression. So, it is only natural that the master experimentalist, El Anatsui, must have interacted with the creative forces of an environment he has so acclimatized to. Ironically, sources of inspiration to Anatsui's work are often attributed, by many scholars, to his origin in Ghana, without a mention of his life-time dwelling place. When Nsukka comes into his citation, it is usually in relation to the abode of his academic career and not as the cultural background to his art practice. It is also common to hear Anatsui being addressed, by such scholars, as Ghanaian artist, instead of Nigerian artist. Paget(2010) notes that, "El Anatsui is a Ghanaian sculptor; his work is based on traditional Ghanaian beliefs and other subjects". Cotter (2013) wonders thus: "El Anatsui. Hard to place geographically ... He's from Ghana... or Nigeria". Contrarily, Pablo Picasso, a related master artist, is more associated to France, where he lived and worked, than his native Malaga, Spain. The making of the legend, El Anatsui, is not complete without looking at the effect of his living environment and documenting it properly.

This paper considers the influence of *Omabe* traditional art on the sculptures of El Anatsui, as well as, the effect of his works on the tradition, especially in this occasion when he is honoured by the academia. It presents an analysis of the philosophy, subject matter and form (material and style) of *Omabe* traditional art and their comparison with six sculptures of Anatsui. It also points to the specific contributions of Anatsui's sculptures to the development of *Omabe* traditional forms. This research is important as it provides concrete evidence for deeper understanding and appreciation of the sculptures of El Anatsui, for undistorted development, because, improper acknowledgement frustrates creative effort. It is important to state here that all the non English direct quotations accommodated in this write-up are in Nsukka-Igbo dialect and are used and translated literally to retain the aura and mood of the discourse.

Omabe Traditional Art

The philosophy and religious belief of the Nsukka-Igbo varies remarkably, between traditional and modern settings and should be reflected along the two lines, for better understanding of the people. However, particular attention is paid to traditional or *Omabe* philosophy in this paper. *Omabe* philosophy can be said to be based on the principles of duality and concealment (masking). As Ugwueg (2012) notes, in the typical traditional Nsukka philosophy, people's attitudes are guided by the principle of dual balance, upon which, the natural creative forces radiate. The belief is that, all things are in pairs or twos (Ihe dhEboo), working perfectly in a good balance, but can counter-move at any alteration in this dual radiating line. Thus, they maintain that there are *Ujeneh Ula* (Going Out and Coming Back), *Elhneh Alh* (Up and Down), *Okeneh Ne* (Male and Female), *OnwunehNdu* (Death and Life), *OchanehOjii* (White and Black), *OgologonehNkp-nkp* (Long and Short), *Maa neh Madu* (Spirit and Human), and so on, each occurring at its appointed time, for the good of all.

To the people, death is for good and birth is for good also, and each is celebrated, provided that it is coming at an appropriate time. Death, birth, or wealth, coming at a time considered inappropriate is detested, not welcome and not celebrated. Appropriateness of time in occurrence, is determined here, by the elders and the gifted or wise ones, especially the *Onyish* (the eldest person) and the *Dibia* (Shaman), who are the special agents or the 'go-betweens' in human and spirit matters. Such views and beliefs are exemplarily transmitted to the younger generations in form of folk tales.

In line with this philosophy, the religious belief of the Nsukka-Igbo is that, there is a Supreme Being, the Creator (Chi-ukwu-okhke or Ezechitoke), at the centre of everything and from whom all creative forces emanate, passing through the hierarchies of spirits, the lesser gods (chi) to every physical object, with *Omabe* as the go-between. Ugwu (2012) points out that, behind every seen (physical) is an unseen (spiritual, personal chi) and the affairs of the physical is determined, to a large extent, by the spiritual but physical activities or operations of a person also affect the potency of his spirit. Thus, every spirit and every physical being, possesses some powers and each, is appeased or chastised, when suspected to be using such powers to cause obstruction, in the smooth running of the latent forces. This necessitated application of concealment or control in their affairs, to avoid clash. Spirit is concealed from the living as darkness is separated from light. The people are therefore, guided by the principle of controlled expression, centered on “know but ignore”. This principle of concealed expression is in the features of most great art forms and Anatsui has imbibed it. According to Beidelman, (1993), there is paradox and double significance of concealment and revelation in symbols, a quality necessary in maintaining secrecy and central to art production and all human affairs.

Nature of Omabe: It is important to point out that in line with the duality principle, the nature of the tradition is that there is *Omabe* and there is *Odo*, which splits Nsukka communities into two groups: *Omabe* operating communities (Igbo Omabe) and *Odo* operating communities (Igbo Odo). Nzuteigbo(2009) notes that, *Odo* tradition is performed in almost all the communities in Igbo-Etitiand IsiuzoLocal Government Areas whereas Omabe tradition is performed in communities in Uzouwani, Nsukka, Igbo-eze South, Igbo-eze North and Udeno Local Government Areas. As Aniakor (1978) and Ozor (2012) pointout, however, there is no significant difference between the two traditional nomenclatures, except for the maintenance of the philosophy of duality and balance,because,*Omabe* is associated with masculinity and his festivals are marked on *Eke/Orie* market-days whereas *Odo* is inclined to femininity and her festivals are marked on *Aho/Nkwo* market-days. *Omabe*can therefore, be used interchangeably with *Odo*, in this paper, to refer to the same ancestral spirits that shaped the cultural practice of Nsukka-Igbo. Masculinity and femininity is a regular occurrence in Anatsui.

Subject Matter of Omabe: Operational activities of *Omabe* are centered on the welfare of man (human). Basically, activities of *Omabe* are used for entertainment and chastisement of the people and there are masquerades, initiated persons, as well as, possessed animal and plant objects, used as special agentsfor each purpose. In the area of entertainment, *Omabe* presents attention-arresting music, melodious song, deeply thought proverbs, riddles and genealogy linking ballad, as well as colourful dance. These types of presentation occur regularly to keep people’s heart warm, merry and cheerful. Onyeke (2009) notes that, ‘each day is an occasion for feasting and dancing the music of the particular *Omaba* masquerade’.

On the other hand, chastisement by *Omabe* comes in forms of reprimands, placement of fine, physical beat-up and demolition of property, isolation and banishment from the land by its masquerade and human agents, and deadly attack or strike through animal, plant, weapon and mysterious sickness and misfortune, being mated on cultural defilers; depending on the weight of the offence committed. Again, *Omabe* redeploys women and youth to community services and enforces lazy people to engage in fructifying ventures. Onyeke (2009) remarks that, at a stage in their operations and patrol, law-enforcement agents of Omabe use palm fronds to camouflage, so as to catch and punish people who play about.

The overall motive, both in the entertainment and chastisement by *Omabe*, is that man attains a level of purity and innocence, latently required for acquisition of true happiness, during the course of his earthly and underworld circulations (reincarnation). Ugwu-Omeyer (2012)emphasizes that ‘*enwuru ga-nesoonye ji okh*’ (smoke must continue to follow the person who holds fire). In other words, course must continue to be upon a person whose being is dented with abominable act ‘*uwa-tu-uwaanyalile*’ (throughout all his circulations). Although these activities of *Omabe* were more effective in the past than the present day, shades of them still abound.

Forms of Omabe: As mentioned earlier, *Omabe* appears in the forms of masquerade, initiated person, and possessed animal and plant object. Few contemporary forms of *Omabe*, especially those considered to be related to referenced works of El Anatsui, are presented and discussed below: It is however, important to point out that there are variations in the dialect of the Nsukka and although forms are presented with a level of confidentiality, without exposing village ownership identity, their names might not be all-encompassing, but their usage is the same. As a respected initiate, I should not be seen as committing the abominable act of *ika-maa* (divulging Omabe’s secrets) by my own self; *tusfeh-kwa* (utterly reje



Figure 1: (A) Oho-Tree-Log and (B) Akpaa, as Omabe Agents, Photograph, 2012

Ancient wood and logs (Akpaa) are preserved as forms of *Omabe*. Most of them are pieces of tropical hard wood, used as totem poles in *Omabe* shrine and no matter the level of tear and wear, they are considered sacred. Figure 1(A), is an ancient log of an *Oho* tree, preserved at the *Omabe*-square of an Nsukka village as Enya Maa (Eye of the Spirits). Similar plant and animal objects are scattered by the roadsides, in the length and breadth of Nsukka. Sometimes, it comes in the form of circumvention (Ith-chi Maa) in which a piece of *Omh*(virgin palm leaf), Charcoal or *Nzu* (native chalk) is placed on a heap of firewood or other farm produce, to secure the ownership. By so doing, the owner has committed the commodity or object to the protection of the spirits and no other person dares collect it without his or her permission.



Figure 2: Three Special Human Agents (Ogbanukwu), Manifesting Odo-Omabe, Photograph, 2012

Initiated persons perform incantations in the name of *Omabe*. Figure 2, is a set of *Ogbanukwu* (special agents), performing incantation in the name of *Odo-Omabe* in an Nsukka village. Related dispositions are frequently presented by diviners, farmers, palm wine tappers, and hunters, all over Nsukka area; and people regard their voices at such occasions as voices of the gods. These agents are not seen by the uninitiated but they can hear their voices and pronouncements. So, these types of *Omabe* agents usually move about at night time but if an occasion warrants their coming out in the day time, night is automatically created for them; women and *ogbodu* (the uninitiated) being restricted from movement throughout the period. These days, however some 'burn-again' Christians are challenging and defiling such restrictions. They urge their women and most of their men who are *ogbodu* to come out on such occasions and 'see the unseable, touch the untouchable, know the unknowable, say the unsayable and do the undoable'; prevalent these days.



Figure 3: Oriokpa (Akatakpa) and Ekewo, Chastisement Masquerade Agents of Omabe, Retrieved Online, July

2, 2012 @ <http://www.nsukkamasquerades-chase.blogspot.com/>

Law enforcement masquerades often parade roads and sometimes, market places, to ensure total compliance to law and orders of *Omabe* in a community. Figure 3, shows the most common law enforcement masquerades of *Omabe*: *Oriokpa* (also known as *Akatakpa* in some quarters) and *Ekewo*. Like a good father, *Ekewo* chastises with one hand and pacifies with the other (see the tantalizing fruits it camouflages with). *Oriokpa*, on the other hand, does not 'spare the rod', so that 'the child' does not get spoiled.



Figure 4 (A): Ujam/Ugele, (B): Ozigbo/Ishi-Maa, Entertainment Masquerade Agents of Omabe, Retrieved

Online, July 2, 2012 @ <http://www.sukkamasquerades-chase.blogspot.com/> Occasionally, richly adorned *Omabe* masquerades make well celebrated appearance, dancing to the astonishment of the people. Usually, richness of costume, elegance and massiveness of the size, dexterity of dance, and power of oratory are the qualities considered in judging an *Omabe* masquerade, a good entertainer of the people. Due to its elegance and richness of costume (dress covered with stripes of precious metallic buttons, carefully knitted on fabric and interjected with leopard skin, eagle feathers and ram's manes), *Ujam*, known as *Echaricha* and *Ugele*, in some quarters (Figure 4[A]), is the most outstanding form of entertainment *Omabe* masquerade. Aniakor (1978) describes *Ujam-Omabe* as "leopard incarnate". Similarly, *Ozigboor Ishi-Maa* (Figure 4[B]), is appreciated upon elegance and oratory. There are different shades of entertainment masquerades of *Omabe* in Nsukka region.

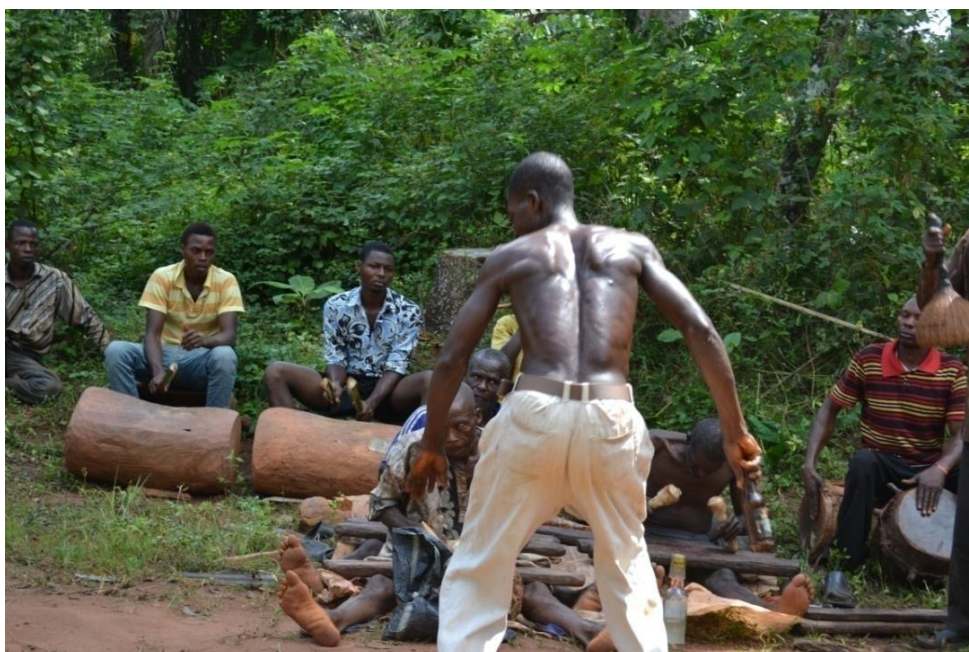


Figure 5: Omabe Musical Entertainment, Ojen'ikpogwu Feast, Photograph, 2012

Festivals of *Omabe* are characterized by heavy consumption of food and liquor or alcoholic drinks, during which it stages merry-arousing musicals. In such occasion, men walk in staggered steps, to demonstrate affluence and abundance in their abilities to satisfy members of their households (including the ancestors) and special friends. Figure 5, is a staged *Omabe* musical and a man staggered in dance movement, with a liquor bottle in his hand, during an *OjenikpogwuOmabe* festival. Staggered movement by men has followed till date, anywhere there is ceremony involving alcohol, and it is frequently seen across the region. Ugwueg (2012) notes that, *umu maa bhoriehokata, dh gehOmabenh-eme meh emenyi-meh* (children of the spirit are highly appreciative, just like *Omabe* does when satiated).



Figure 6: *Omabe* Musical Instruments: Abia, Osha, Okpiyi, Ogwe-alh, and Kporokpoto, Photograph, 2012

Due to the frequent staging of music, *Omabe* musical instruments, many of which are dilapidated, are often displayed in open spaces. As they are sacred objects, symbolizing *Omabe*, even the dilapidated ones are not abused, and therefore, cannot be used as firewood. They are left alone to exist to the best of their abilities. Figure 6, is a set of *Omabe* musical instruments, left in an open space of a village square, after a performance. *Omabe* musical instruments, dilapidated or un-dilapidated, are commonly sighted in grooves and village squares, across Nsukka region.

Sculptures of El Anatsui

The following works, by El Anatsui, considered to be related to the philosophy, subject matter, and forms of *Omabe*, are presented. Apart from the legendary, analysis of the work is simplified by only pointing out its specific resemblance to the *Omabe*. Quality of work is not analyzed here, because most of them are internationally acclaimed pieces. They cannot be subjected to further criticism or fresh introduction unless there is a disproving discovery against any of them. Here, there are no disproving discoveries against these works. They are really what have been said about them, both in content and context; the effort here is just to point out *Omabe* features or characteristics in each of them.



Figure 7: Ancestors' Conference, Wood and Tempera, 1995, El Anatsui. Retrieved Online, May 27, 2015, @ <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/543668986243802921/>

Although the theme or subject matter of this work, the gathering of the ancestors, is not peculiar to the Nsukka, it is central in *Omabe* cultural ideology and the materials adapted are direct remnants of ancient, *Akpaa-Omabe*, known as tropical hard wood (see figure 1). Anatsui simply incised lines with power-saw and coloured some parts of the ancient wood and repositioned them creatively, as wall panel. The colours applied are a combination of warm and cool, taken after the duality principle of *Omabe* philosophy and the representation of the facial organs with simple geometrical forms resemble *Oriokpa* facial expression (see figure 3). It also takes after the dispositions of the *ndish* (the elders), gathered to deliberate on urgent communal matters; a frequent occurrence in Nsukka village settlements.



Figure 8: Tapper, Wood, 180cm (height), 1996, El Anatsui. Retrieved Online, May 6, 2015, @ <http://www.indyweek.com/artery/archives/2012/03/19/el-anatsuis-optimistic-objects>

An assemblage of distressed pieces of wood into a figure, resembling the outfit of a traditional Nsukka farmer, Tapper is an installation art, which gives insight in direct consideration of *Omabe* forms in sculpture. In the work, Anatsui, simply raised a dilapidated *Omabe* musical instrument, *Ogwe-alh/ Ikwe-ekwu* (see figure 6) to stand by one of its two horizontal ends and inserted fabric cap, halfway into the handle at the other end, to symbolize the head. He also fixed pieces of ancient *Akpaa-Omabe* and *Agbh-nkwu* (palm tree-climbing rope) across the hollows and shoulder-like curve at the upper part of the structure, to suggest the collection of wine tapping implements and harvests, usually associated with the profession (see figure 1). Both the subject matter and object or content of this piece are common sights in the length and breadth of Nsukka environment.



Figure 9: Leopard Cloth, Wood, 1993, El Anatsui. Retrieved Online @ Andy Keate, October 2006, telephone interview with El Anatsui in Stockholm

Leopard Cloth is a distressed log on which stripes of coloured wood are fixed. On the coloured wood stripes, multiple cuts were crisscrossed, leaving button-like rough surfaces which stood out after burning and sanding, thereby leaving the underneath lines dark. Both the theme and the surface appearance of this piece resemble *Ujam-Omabe* masquerade (see figure 4[A]), which Aniakor (1978) describes metaphorically as leopard.



Figure 10: Wonder Masquerade II, Tropical Hardwood, keys and padlocks, 159x 20x 14 cm, 1990,ElAnatsui.RetrievedOnline, May 27, 2015, @http://www.octobergallery.co.uk/art/anatsui/wonder_masquerade.shtml

Cubes of hard wood, bounded into a pole, figure 10 (Wonder Masquerade), is a very clear adaptation of *Omabe* formation. From the arrangement pattern of the lines thereof, to the pursuit of elegance in the height of the work, and to its theme or work-title, representation of *Ozigbo* or *Ishi-Maa* (figure 4[B]), is very obvious. Thus, Wonder Masquerade was informed by *Omabe*.



Figure 11: Signatures, Coloured Wood, 2005, El Anatsui. Retrieved Online, 17 April, 2015 @ <http://blog.bricartsmedia.org/457/>

Figure 11 is a heap of colour-stained pieces of wood, left by the roadside. The use of colours, resembling Nzu (native chalk) in contrasted pairs, and the location of the work by the roadside, are after *Omabe* philosophy of duality in the creation principle and the property circumvention (Ith-chi Maa) ideology, practiced in Nsukka. The colours are the seal of ownership (signatures), placed, to circumvent the produce. Circumvention or commitment of property to the protection of the spiritual forces, by placing a sacred item on it, is a common practice, visible at roadsides in all corners of Nsukka.



Figure 12: In the World but Don't Know the World, Aluminum and Copper Wire, 2009, El Anatsui. Retrieved Online, May 18, 2015, @ <http://www.octobergallery.co.uk/artists/anatsui/>

In the World but Don't Know the World is a huge wall hanging, composed of aluminum bottle tops, flattened and knitted together with copper wire. Although this piece is part of the Kente series, believed to explore Ghana textile tradition, it is actually influenced by *Omabe* philosophy and associated items. The subject matter (title of the work), the gigantic nature and the contrasting effect of warm and cool, small and big, are all features of duality principle in expressions of *Omabe* forms.

It dwells on the 'know and conceal' matter, especially the popular traditional sayings that, *ogbodu no n'ikpo maa, meh nehogbodumagh maa* (the uninitiated is in the midst of spirits but the uninitiated does not know the spirits); and, *onyenyeh-achogehnyamarh Omabe, obh-dh onyenyemarh Omabeoga-shikoghokpa Omabe* (a woman that is wanting to know Omabe, is it that if a woman knows Omabe that she would not cook Omabe's food)?

Furthermore, the process of work here, knitting pieces of shiny button-like metal together, in stripes, to symbolize fabric, is taken after *Ujam-Omabe* masquerade costume-design (see figure 4[A]). Again, the magnitude of material employed, liquor bottle tops, can only result from *Omabe* festivities (see figure 5). UN Education Outreach (2015) informs that, to create these cloths, Anatsui used labels from local Nigerian brands of whiskey and Cotter (2013) notes that, "One day, by his own account, on a routine scavenging hunt through Nsukka, he picked up a trash bag filled with twist-off liquor bottle tops of a kind manufactured by Nigerian distilleries. Although it took him a while to realize it, he had found his ideal material: locally made, in ready supply and culturally loaded". Loaded in which culture? Nsukka!

II. CONCLUSION

It can be seen that El Anatsui has deeply interacted with *Omabe* cultural forms of Nsukka. He exploited the philosophy and forms of *Omabe* both in the concepts and materials of his works. Like *Omabe*, the subject matter of Anatsui's sculptures is centered on the affairs of man, considering the titles of the works presented here. Indeed, he penetrated the nucleus of *Omabe* and the creative expedition yielded fructifying result. Specifically, Anatsui has worked directly on dilapidated *Omabe* traditional materials like akpaa, ikwe, ekwe, and agbh in the creation of some of the sculptures presented above. He also worked directly, creating some of the sculptures after the formations of agents of *Omabe* like Ndish, Ujam, and Ozigbo

Indirectly, Anatsui adopted Omabe traditional beliefs or philosophies like duality in balance, circumvention, reincarnation, proverbs and wise-sayings in contextualizing most of the sculptures presented above. . Directly or indirectly, he sourced all the materials- wood, colour, bottle-top, rope- which he used in creating all the sculpture form presented above from Nsukka environment. Indeed, almost all the popular works of El Anatsui were inspired by Omabe traditional values.

May it be said here that Anatsui indirectly introduced the use of power machines like chain-saw, jig-saw, grinder, and perforator into the traditional mask-carving of Nsukka. Ngwu (2017) informs that people who worked in Anatsui's studio have introduced modern tools, making it easier for the production and supply of masks and other related Omabe traditional objectifications in Nsukka area. He further clarifies that although not formally initiated, Anatsui is seen as part of the people and his artistic activities are taken in symbiotic relationship, quite welcome in Omabe tradition. As is evident in the works presented above, Omabe is seen and recognized and made famous in all the sculptures which Anatsui has produced and taken to the ends of the world. It does not really mater, where his birth place is, Anatsui is in Nsukka and Nsukka is in Anatsui.

Though not adequately acknowledged, but I believe that it can now be seen, that Anatsui has placed Nsukka and its artistic tradition on international creative limelight. Cotter (2013) and Bric(2009) are synonymous, and I share with them, in the conclusion that, sculptures of El Anatsui are 'the art of someone who, through a combination of brilliance, hard work and circumstance ... has become a global star and has achieved that status by working at home, finding a grand and modest beauty there, and spreading that beauty everywhere'; but I add to it that, that home of Anatsui is Nsukka. In fact, there is no better way of immortalizing or remembering El Anatsui's creative ideology than describing it as OMABEISM.

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