

African traditional religions

[History](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Number] African Ceremony African Religious and traditional practices are highly influenced with arts, rituals, performances and festivities. These festivities are either celebrated in the honour of a specific blessing or to protect from any certain harm. However, these communal celebrations are an integral part of African culture. Religious practices in Africa significantly contain social festivities and dancing. These masquerade performances have always been a part of social celebrations in public reunions. One of the most widely anticipated and investigated festival in Yoruba of Nigeria is Gelede Festival. This festival is celebrated in the honour and recognition of the power of women.

However, this festival does not allow African women to perform dance in public spheres and demonstrate their influence; instead men most passionately perform masquerade dance with their wooden masks, and phony breasts and hips entailing costumes. The masquerade dance is supposed to support female spirit and their mystic attributes in African society. Simultaneously, it is believed to enhance communal accord between diverse tribes of Africa, the potential of survival as a tribe, and most importantly the aspect of fertility either in terms of land, cattle, or women. Yet, Gelede festival significantly portrays the influence and inevitable need of women in African society for the sake of progress and harmony (Ray, 79). Nevertheless, there is one region in Africa which actually allow women to wear wooden masks and dance in the Gelede festival and that is Mende. Mende has its own secret society which is known as Sande and its female members are the ones who wear Soweï and dance masquerade in open. These courageous women return from the dance wearing the Soweï mask, which is believed to entail many moral, spiritual and visual meanings of

<https://assignbuster.com/african-traditional-religions/>

beauty in general and also qualities of Sande society as well.

Every feature of the mask holds a different meaning and significant traits, like different carved hairstyles depict inner contentment of the person wearing it, small mouth depict the moral, religious and ethical values of women to avoid gossip and eventually small ears depict that women of strong character do not surrender to worldly allures of the heart and mind and ignore them by all means. Furthermore, if the wooden mask has an illustration of animal at the top of it, this representation can behold a lot of meanings either it is showing a connection between the dancer and an appreciable animal trait. Like speed, cleverness or fertility, or it shows the link of the dancer with the God or his deceived relatives (Ray, 80).

It is believed that Masks do hold supernatural powers and they can influence the person's life wearing it, but they are not the core idea of religious festivities, but only a part of it. In Gelede festival, masquerade dances and masks have major contribution, but masks are not supposed to be the centre of attention, but the theme and performance is; which can be any new or old relevant one according to the need and audience of Gelede Festival.

Work Cited:

Top of Form

Ray, Benjamin C. African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, and Community. Upper Saddle River, N. J: Prentice Hall, 2000. Print.

Bottom of Form