

CHAPTER 46

THE TRADITIONAL DANCE IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF SELECTED INDIGENOUS DANCE

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Abstract

Nigeria is a country with a lot of tribes-each of them varying in culture and tradition. Traditional or cultural dance had been a mainstay in the history of Nigeria. There are several aspects of cultural differences, most of them symbolically representing the same things but done in a completely different context and one of the major aspects of culture in Nigeria is dance. Nigerian traditional dances have a way of unifying the people in one way or the other and sometimes telling stories via accompanying music. These stories may differ from tribe to tribe and most often reflect on victory, beauty, honesty, love, wars and the like. Dance is a language which expresses the geographical locations, biological temperament, religious beliefs, political and historical experience, social practice and economic peculiarities of the people that own it. Dance in every community is appreciated for its aesthetic appeal as well as religious and communication significance. The beauty of the Nigerian dance lies in its combination of purpose and high aesthetic concern, its celebration and reflection of communal life and virtue, and its embodiment of the collective beliefs and symbols, which constitute both the structure and content of the art and its ideal frankness and intensity of expression. Based on this, this paper selected a few popular traditional or cultural dances in Nigeria, studying their origin, their techniques and styles, the costume, the instruments used (instrumentation), and the performance context.

Keywords: Nigerian Indigenous dances, Performance contexts, Cultural differences and Dance as a unifying factor

Introduction

Dance has been variously defined by scholars of different learnings as the rhythmic movement of the body in space and time to make statements (Bakare, in Abbe 2007), as a non-verbal medium of communication which needs clarity and precision (Ugolo, 1998), and as culturally patterned sequences of non-verbal body movement and gesture which are not ordinary motor activities

(Agu, 2010). Dance can be viewed as one of the best art forms for expression. Lee Warren rightfully observes that 'dance is a direct form of dramatic and theatrical communication' (63). Onyekwelu (2011: 1), also sees dance as a response of the physical body to the stimulus of organized sound. Dancing is said to be "as old as man and his desire to express himself, to communicate his joys and sorrows, to celebrate and to mourn with the most immediate instrument: his body (Sorell, 1967). As a universal phenomenon, dance has a biological base. The possibility it gives to man for both physical relaxation and psychic/emotional release has engaged the attention of scientists, who have demonstrated that movement is essential to both human beings and animals for the release of emotional tensions caused by both joyful and painful events. However, in man, dance acquires a new function of expressing abstract ideas. Through dance, a man can communicate messages, tell stories, showcase culture etc, and can formulate meaning about the nature of the world he lives in. Thus, dance reflects society- its beliefs, values, struggles, and experiences.

Nigeria is a country with diverse cultures and traditions with over 300 ethnic groups, which is blessed with lots of music and amazing dance steps. With varieties of folk and tribal dances in regions across Nigeria, dance is one of the major aspects of their culture. Therefore, the paper tends to present ten (10) traditional dances indigenous to the people it belongs to.

1 **Girinya Dance: An Overview**

Girinya is traditional cult music and dances strictly for men and women of valour distinguished by their dexterity in *Ityav* (war), *Biem* (organized group hunting) and general adventures. For one to be initiated into this dance group, he/she must be *nomor* or *nomkwase* (strong man or strong woman), implying that you must have in your life accomplished great feat and killing of an enemy or enemies in battles (*ityav*); or killing of *nyam-azov* (spirit beast) like Lion, Deer, Hyena or Elephant in a hunting competition (*Biem*) or an *uvaan-u-yer-an* (deadly deserting jungle).

According to Nyitse (2006), he opines that *Girinya* did not originate in *Tiv* land, rather it was borrowed from the Kwa-speaking peoples of Ogoja in the late 19th century. Borrowed by the *Tiv* of *Gaav* and *Kunav*, *Girinya* was used to mobilize warriors to repulse the *Kwa* during the wars in the late 19th century. She further notes that *Girinya* depends on drum language, accompanied by the horns, which only the initiate can decipher.

The Origin of *Girinya*

The *Girinya* developed originally, as a warrior cult to defend the territorial integrity of the *Tiv* people as they migrated and acquired lands for settlement. Then, it was known as *Gber tyo* (beheaders). As the *Tiv* settled into their acquired lands, they observed the formation and sustenance of similar cults amongst their neighbours. These included the *Oju* (Igede), the Idoma, all of the Benue State and the Gakem of the present-day Cross-Rivers State.

The *Oju* (Igede) form of the *Girinya* is known as *Oglinya* and incorporates an active masquerade form. The Idoma form of *Girinya*, known as *Oglinya* or *Ogalanya* (practised mostly by the

Edumoga people of Benue State), also incorporates masquerade forms into the warrior cult. From the late 18th century to the early 19th century, the people *Tiv* form these cults, to protect themselves from attack by other people, secondly, they use dance as a means of exercise and also as a means of sharpening their skills and techniques needed in warfare or battle.

Dance Technique and Styles

According to Akpede (2010), *Girinya* dance starts with the blowing of horns imaginatively following the beating of the drum before the dancer comes in, the dancers take their turn in the dancing arena; the *Tor Girinya* (Chief of *Girinya* of the leader of the troupe) is always the first. He comes over to perform a solo dance of cleansing. Greeted by cheers from the *ilu* (wooden gong), or *miar* (flute man) and the spectators, the *Tor Girinya* dances in slow, but regal shuffles around the dancing arena. He dances around making 'clearing' or weeding gestures with his machete. He does this movement around the dancing arena and back to the entrance point, where the dancers are waiting. The dancers then file out in a single formation and scatter around the dancing arena; with the *Tor Girinya* and the musicians in the middle. Thus scattered, the music changes beat. This serves the dance movements and the display of technique and ability as in war; that is. The stalking, leaping on prey and beheading movements.

Costume

Girinya dancers appear in the dancing arena dressed in singlets (vests), a loin cloth around the waist and trousers or shot pants underneath; brandishing machetes.

Musical Instrument used

Musical instruments involved in this dance are *korugh* (horn), *gbande* and *bibi* (shatters.). *Korugh* comes in the type of *ngokor* and *kpyamka*; the drum in *ngogbande* or *nomgbande* and the *bibi* in the type of its colors as *bibi i il* (black *bibi* or *bib Inyian* (red *bibi*)).

Performance Context

Girinya was a cult dance formed by men and women of the Idoma people of *Tiv* to use the dance as means of exercising and sharpening skills and techniques needed in warfare or battle in the period from the late 18th century to the early 19th century. But in its present form, the *Girinya* is performed on occasions of the *Tiv* people; occasions such as the visit to the locality of a Governor, a distinguished son of the land, the coronation of a chief or the death of a prominent son of the land and its members. Thus, the *Girinya* is performed as a dance to entertain and as a rite of passage.

2 Idu Dance: A General Overview

Idu dance is a cultural dance of the people of Akpo in the Aguata local government area in Anambra State. According to Akas (2014), the *Idu* dance was believed to have been performed by

the strongest man in Akpo village in Aguata. This man was declared the strongest man because he was a strong wrestler, a good farmer and a fearless man, on several occasions, it was said that he fought with spirits unconsciously and defeated them (p. 198). *Idu* dance is a dance group for able-bodied men of Akpo who were also considered to be strong in the village.

The Origin of Idu Dance

Idu cultural dance was borrowed from Umuomaku town over 50 years ago. The idea of borrowing the dance was initiated by Late Azubuike Okemili, Late Ezechi Ezeno and Late Alaedum Dimnwaeze. After negotiation, the conditions given by the owners of the dance were fulfilled; the teaching and learning period commenced and it lasted for two years. This act established a lasting relationship between not only the villages but the entire Akpo and Umuomaku communities.

Costume

In the African context, the selection of costumes in folk music performances is not a random one. Rather, in doing so, many factors are put into consideration. Costumes are carefully selected to portray the mood of the music and also to transmit the message of the group to the audience. As a result, not all folk dances require beautifully designed costumes. Some even require the barest minimum of clothing (Agu, 2000). With this statement, Agu clearly states that the type of dance determines the type of costumes to be used. The choice of costume in *Idu* falls in the category of folk dances that do not require beautifully designed costumes but the barest minimum of clothing. The costume worn by *Idu* dancers are just shorts and sliced dried goat skin sowed together and tied around their waist. The sliced goat skin is also used to make caps. They also make use of neck beads and secondary seed rattle on both legs, with a knife clipped on the waist of each of the dancers. Their faces and bodies are decorated with charcoal paste. This makes the dancers look fearful and dreadful.

Instrumentation

Musical instruments are indispensable in any dance performance. Different performing groups choose the musical instruments that appeal to them based on their orientation and the type of performance. Therefore, *Idu* cultural dance instruments are predominantly instruments of the idiophone family. The dance group employed eight local instruments in their dance, which are *nne igba* (membrane drum), *oke igba* (membrane drum bigger than *nne igba*), *ekwe* (wooden drum), *oyo* (basket rattle), *opi* (horn), *okpokolo* (wooden block), *oja* (end-blown flute).

Dance Technique and Styles

Idu cultural dance ensemble is a stylized dance that has four categorized dance movements. The performance of the four dance movements in any function depends on the performance context. The duration of each of the four dance movements/segments is determined by the lead

instrumentalist. The first movement is in a lively tempo introduced by the *ekwe*, the master instrument, and the second segment begins in a moderate tempo. The third segment is the climax of the dance. The fourth segment is an introduction by the master instrumentalists in a lively tempo also. All these segments are performed in a circular formation.

3 Abang Dance: An Overview

Abang dance is a cultural dance of the Efik people of the Cross River State of the southern part of Nigeria, solely for the female folks. The word *Abang'* when translated means 'waterpot' in the Efik language. Therefore, *Abang* dance is an indigenous performance which seeks to extol the importance of the sea/water, because the river plays a dominant role in the lives of Efiks, for not only is it the habitat of their Ndems (marine deities of the female colony), it is also, the mainstay of their economy and the river essentially features largely in almost all their orature.

Origin and Development of Abang Dance

Lots of Efik folktales, legends, dramas, songs and stories have it that, whenever the Ndems were appeased, they appeared and disappeared on the river surface, often caught dancing beautifully on the surface of the river. But the mermaids never danced in the full glare of anyone, albeit, female acolytes of the Ndem cult and several Efik maidens of old, allegedly claim that while going to fetch water or offer sacrifices in the river, had stumbled upon dancing mermaids on the river surface. The women or the female worshippers of Ndem, who espied this spectacle on the river bank, in an attempt to communicate and relate with the supernatural naturally, attempted a re-enactment of what they had witnessed as a form of adoration to the marine deities. These maidens as they made their way home, naturally engage in this serpentine dance with their water pots securely balanced on their head. These maidens continually tested out their new dance steps in the village square, the market place and at marriage ceremonies. The moves that were not humanly possible were altered and replaced with feminine dance moves, but the sole intent remained that of communion and worship. However, this dance grew to become more than a ritual at the river bank to a scintillating performance at the village square.

Costume

With colourful fabrics made of damask, brocade which these dancers decorate themselves with, all tied on their waist, they wore nothing on the upper part of their body except the heavily patterned neck cape and the breast in full view, was the costume of the female *Abang* performer but as a result of westernization, a camisole is donned to cover the upper part with long crisscrossing beads (*ekpa nku nkwa*) that drop from her neck across both sides of her ribs. Around the lead dancer's waist is a hoop, around her arms and wrist is a patterned woolly band (anana ubok) and on her shins are the *nkparetim* which is hidden under the *ofong akasi*. The *nkparetim* is made of velvet and cross-stitched with little bells and jingles. The primary function is that of

instrumentation. Also tied to the ankle of the dancers are the string of ankle-rattles (nyok), which serves the same purpose as *nkparetim*.

Instruments Used

The instrument used in *Abang* dance is the talking drum (Eyara ekomo) which comes in different sizes and shapes. The slit drum (Umon ekomo), is a large cylindrical drum with two square openings at the top. The metal gong (Nkong ekomo) and rattles (Nyok).

Dance Style and Technique

Abang dance engages the movement of the entire body when dancing. The performance commences with the 'four beat count', this rhythmic count is observed by the dancers, as they turn toward the right all lined up in a single file. *Abang* songs are fast-paced and energetic, the dancers run into the arena singing. With their palms outstretched, albeit interchangeably cupped and recouped in each other, they enact the 'greeting' step, calling on the spectators to attend to their performance whilst forming a circle. Until the greeting song is changed, the lead dancers take their place at the centre, once the song is changed, the dancers arc their elbows like a bird in position to fly, allowing their wrists to drop freely to their front, turn their bodies partially to the left- this is the first count, then to the right; which is the second count, then to the left again, being the third. But at the fourth count, they turn fully to the right in a rapid motion that is different from the half-slow turns of the previous counts. With their wrist still dangling freely in front of them, the dancers incline their backs forward with knees slightly bent, do a swift jump to the left and then to the right till they can break into two parallel lines. Then at the cue of the talking drum- they go down, moving their trunks in a serpent-like motion, in and out, all the way back up. When the beat changes again, they break into semi-circular formation, and gradually lift a foot, shaking it vigorously before stamping it and engaging in a mock run and their elbows still arced in front of them. There are other dance sequences involved in *the Abang* dance until the last sequence which is the farewell step which signifies the end of the performance. The dancers fling their palms forward as if to ward off something, but this signifies goodbye and as they sing their goodbye song, they strut their feet against the surface and in a single file, they exit the arena.

Performance Context

Abang dance is a dance the people of Efik used for ritual worship and also to communicate with their deity (Ndem) and with time it became a dance performed to also entertain but with the intervention of the Scottish missionaries and many Ndem worshippers converted to the Christendom, the growth of Christian values propagated and *Abang's* ritualistic hold declining. *Abang* became a dance form targeted at the public for entertainment; it had no doubt lost its religious purpose of veneration to the marine deities. Its shift from ritual to secular corroborates Ossie Eneke's argument that "ritual becomes entertainment once it is outside its original context

or when the belief that sustains it has lost its potency” (155). This is not to say that, *Abang's* performance does not retain vestiges of its ritualistic base- it still does as demonstrated in its songs and its movements. Therefore, *Abang* is recreational and is characteristically performed during the customary Nkugho/Ndo rites (fattening room and marriage ceremonies), Emma Jesus (Christmas holidays), burial ceremonies and conferment of Chieftaincy titles in parts of Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

4 Ikorodo Orba Dance: A General Overview (History)

Ikorodo dance is a cultural dance of the Orba community in the Enugu State of Southeast Nigeria. The dance has embraced both the social and political life of the people. The *Ikorodo* Orba dance has been in existence for a long time now in the Orba community. According to folktales, legends etc., the dance came from the people of Igala in Idah of Benue State.

Costume of Ikorodo

In the *Ikorodo* dance, the men appear in white lace upon black trousers with purple coloured and designed judge materials wrapped around their waist, with a red traditional cap and beads on their necks showing titled men of the town. The young maidens who are the dancers appear in special skirts and blouses (top) with waist beads (Jigida) around their waists, attacking their legs is rattles and beads hanging on their necks.

Instrumentation

The *Ikorodo* dance uses traditional musical instruments which idiophone is predominant. These instruments include a pair of basket rattles, a wooden drum (*ekwe*), a large metal gong (*alo/oro*), four wooden horns (*opi*) with different names and pitches and drums (*igba*), the dance employs two drums (*oke and ada igba*). The drum introduces the dance.

Performance Context

Ikorodo Orba dance is a recreational dance, the people of the Orba community perform this dance during moonlight games, wedding ceremonies, ofalla festivals, burials, childbirth naming, and chieftaincy title taking, and also performed for relaxation after farm work.

5 Gese Dance

Gese dance is an ethnic dance that has its source in the religious-ritual and social activities of the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria. *Gese* has a complex and multiplying feature as played on the drums and realized aesthetically in its dance movement. *Gese* is a dance which is believed to have evolved from *Oge*, *Oge* being an energetic and agile variant of the *alujo* (recreational dance) category. The *Gese* has evolved from some primordial form to what it currently is. This concurs with Umezina's (2009) submission that most African music forms are entities that have lived,

mutate and when starved of life die.

After featuring at the festival and culture (FESTAC '77)', *Gese* received international attention and patronage, and it became a tool for national and international cultural exchange.

Dancing Techniques and Costume

Gese dance is a youthful dance whose dancing techniques would be energy-sapping since it is fast-paced and involves serious body movements. Young men and maidens who dance *Gese* showcase their strengths and maturity. Maidens of marriageable age are believed to attract marriage suitors with their dexterity in *Gese* dancing since the dancing techniques reveal their curves, luscious assortments and plump frame. In other words, every skilled *Gese* dancer is expected to be a master and be able to seamlessly switch from and among the basic seven dance techniques of *Gese*. As Ojuade (2013), opines:

....for the recognition of an expert dancer in the area of *Gese*, such a person must be able to display his expertise and decode the seven typologies of steps which are Dandan rape, Gangand'abura, Egungun Agba Atijo, Elekoto, Alantoto, Ilu Omoge Egungun and Ara bi ti n ko. (P.9).

The Aso-Oke is most time the usual traditional costume for most Yoruba dance and *the Gese* dance is not left out. *Gese* dancer appears in Aso-Oke, while holding a horsetail, they also have beads on their necks and their wrists dancing barefooted because of the nature of the dance. The lead drummer directs the movement of the dancer whether it is a uniform performance or a solo performance.

Instrumentation

Gese dance comprises Iya-ilu, which in Yoruba anthropology is the mother of all the drums. It has *sawaro* (metal objects) that surrounds the surface of the round face for aesthetic purposes, with a leather strap. Which is used to hang the drum to the shoulder of the drummer. Another drum in use is the *Gudugudu* which is the smallest of the entire instrument in the ensemble. But basically, the drum leads the performance as it provides the ostinato rhythm that gives and maintains the timeline. Also is the *Kerikeri* which supports the mother drum in performance, followed by *Isaju*, and *Kanango*, which is the smallest drum in the ensemble.

Performance Context

Gese is a recreational dance and as such can be performed on different occasions like the coronation of kings, in concert theatres, funeral ceremonies of the high social class in the society, housewarming ceremonies and other social gatherings.

6 Maliki Dance: An Overview

The Maliki dance is a social dance of the Kanuri-speaking people of Borno State, in the

Northeastern part of Nigeria. The dance is slow-moving, fluid and majestic, which seeks to capture the Kanuri core values of peace, elegance and pride in a history that dates back more than a thousand years.

Instrumentation and Costume

The dance is introduced with music which is led by a flautist, the music by five traditional musicians sings the praises of the Kanuri traditional holders to the accompanying rhythm of pulsating music created from three large drums and small rhythmic ones (*algeta and gang-kura*). The dancers are a group of five men and five maidens gorgeously attired in traditional Kanuri costumes called 'dawungasho'.

Performance Context

The Maliki dance is a recreational dance meant for entertainment, the dance is performed at some social occasions and some important State events such as marriage ceremonies, installation of traditional rulers, and Sallah festivals. In addition to the numerous contexts of performance, Maliki dance performs other roles which include welcoming visiting dignitaries to the State.

7 Koroso Dance: A General Overview

Koroso dance is a traditional athletic dance found in the Northern part of Nigeria that has survived many generations and centuries. *Koroso* dance is one the most popular dances in Nigeria. The name '*Koroso*' was taken from special decorations of rattles attached to the dancer's leg. An indigenous dance belonging to the Fulani/Hausa, of Kano State, of Nigeria. The dance has received both national and international recognition and patronage after its performance at a global festival held in Lagos in 1977.

Origin of Koroso Dance

The Hausa and Fulani tribes are known for celebrating big festivities even before the caliphate. As a rule, these festivals took place during harmattan. And this season it's the closure of the annual cycle. People come together to celebrate during this season to mark the beginning of another year. After close contact with other countries and cultures during these festivals, a member of the Kano college community came up with the idea of mixing the traditional Fulani musical instruments with other musical instruments taken from the Hausa culture, creating something unusual and outstanding.

This happened in 1972 and his idea was supported by a talented dancer, together they picked the most interesting movements out of traditional Fulani and Hausa dances.

Costume and Instrumentation

Dancers of *Koroso* dance are adorned with multicoloured costumes such as beads, bracelets, and

anklets made of rattling beads. The dance is accompanied by a flute called “*Sarewa*” which produces several traditional musical notes that lead the dancers on as they dance, showing their agility and strength.

Dance Styles and Techniques

Koroso dance is performed both in uniform and individually but quite often it is performed in pairs, while both performers help each other and overcome the competitors within the same dance. The dancers wear special leg items, which create a specific noise and additional sound to the music.

Koroso dance is not the most complicated one among the existing traditional dances in Nigeria. But still, it requires a lot of attention and skills. It is a dance that is performed in such a way that every change in the music means a transition from one dancing style to another. The dance can be performed only by skilled and trained dancers because the movements involve every part of the body with a lot of attention to the synchronization of every step.

Performance Context

Koroso dance is a recreational dance in Kano State, as recreational dance, the Kano people also made it official that it features in every formal occasion and also in social events.

8 Ohogho Dance: A General Overview

Ohogho is a traditional folk dance of Benin culture of the South-south of Nigeria. It is a religious dance whose troupe belong to a certain physicians-*ebo* group of Benin culture. The group are usually strong and healthy senior Eroghae and Ighele age groups. *Ohogho* dance is considered an art that forms a part of religious ceremonies and has survived many hundreds of years. *Ohogho* dance in participation is a cultural get-together whose exclusive team spirit includes the life of the individuals concerned. It is a protective dance that wards off evils as the smoke dispersed into the atmosphere. *Ohogho* dance has been devastated by the getting in touch with other cultures did not lose its originality. It is still a natural folk song of ancient Benin Culture. *Ohogho* religious dance assisted the forebears to eliminate despair and created confidence and hope that enable them to conduct their daily affairs with a renewed sense of value in and in all activities that promote life in culture.

Dance Styles and Techniques

Ohogho dancers wear waist gown-*ebuluku* and dance in circles with gongs or bells in their hands, and around a bowl alight with burning medicinal and splinters of wood. It is a dance in a revolving circle and the dancers play clapper-less bells- *egogo* or gongs with gong sticks. *Ohogho* music is usually very rhythmic as the dancers move swiftly in circles. The dance is solely for men.

Instrumentation

In *the Ohogho* dance, the *egogo* produces the main melody for the songs, sometimes *egogo-erhan* accompanied the clapper-bells; to give variation to the sounds.

Performance Context

Ohogho dance is performed mainly during *the Eho* festival and certain ceremonies and sometimes funeral ceremonies. And these cycles of rites such as feasts and ceremonies celebrate in effect the passages of all nature; from one stage to another- age, religion, or seasons, because rites celebrate religious aspects of human existence.

9 Ukwata Dance: A General Overview

The *Ukwata* dance is one of the major traditional dances of the Abbi people of Delta State. *Ukwata* dance is a dance associated with the *Ukwata* festival which is celebrated as a rite of passage from one age group to another and to honour the forefathers of the land. An annual festival is held in February to celebrate the long-preserved peace and unity amongst the Abbi people which marks the end of the farming season. *Ukwata* dance closely celebrates the beauty of water and its offerings. The *Ukwata* dance day is the most anticipated part of the *Ukwata* festival. The day usually follows *'Nkwo Ndi Ebieyi* (stranger's day), a day when strangers and distant members of the community are welcomed back home.

Costume/ Dance Styles and Techniques

The dancers are usually dressed in beautiful blue and green costumes, imitating all sorts of marine animals such as crocodiles, iguanas, fish and alligators. The dance patterns they form represent the origin of these aquatic creatures, while also suggesting the dance patterns of mermaids.

Instruments Used

Ukwata Abbi dance instrument consists of two membrane drums (mother drum and small drum), a large metal gong, *an ogene* (metal gong) and a musical pot.

Performance Context

Ukwata dance is performed during the *Ukwata* Festival. *Ukwata* traditional dance often sees the return of the *Ukwata* dancers from the shrine with *Úkwata'*(a white eagle seat on some local craft) to entertain the *Inotu* (Chief) in the three-quarters of Abbi. Also performed in the carnival as it develops into an interesting dance.

10. Igbaakwune-Echeenyi Dance: A General Overview (History and Nature of the dance).

Igbaakwu ne-echeenyi is a cultural dance of Umuebo Ichicha in Anocha North local government of Anambra State. It is a prestigious stylized dance performed by the male folk. *Igba akwuna-echeenyi* is a dignified, mobile cultural dance. The dance was borrowed from *Ajan* Ichida in 1984. A committee constituted in one of their village meetings was assigned to search for a befitting dance music type which the village will be identified with. The demands of the owners were met and training commenced and lasted for six months.

The group began with about thirty members. After training, some members were elected into the group to run the leadership positions in the group to enhance the smooth running of the affairs of the group. This is in agreement with Onwuka (2012: 12) who posits that a typical Nigerian traditional or contemporary dance group consists of selected members who are functionaries, expressive artists or attendants.

New members are admitted into *Igbaakwu ne-echeenyi* cultural dance based on a personal interview of potential new members. The dance group accepts all age brackets, there is no age limit in recruiting new members; this has been of vital help for the group as it is still functional to date because of the youths who have kept the musical activities alive despite the influence of western culture.

Instruments Used

The selection of musical instruments in an African ensemble is done based on the orientation of the group. Agu, (2000: 80) stated that the function and utility of music performed by the group determine the size and composition of the instruments to be used by any group. *Igbaakwu ne-echeenyi* cultural dance is a mobile group and because of that, they employ less bulky musical instruments that they could carry around while performing. Their instruments comprise, three membrane drums (*okeIgba, nneIgba, and nkere*) which is the master drum. The membrane used in making the drums are that of impala (*aepycerosmelampus*). Other instruments include; twin metal bell, single metal bell, musical pot, wooden block and local flute, the only melodic instruments in the ensemble.

Costume

The type of dance determines the type of costume to be used. Agu (2000) posits that costumes are carefully selected to portray the mood of the music and also transmit the message of the group to the audience. Costume adds glamour to dance performances. In *Igbaakwu ne-echeenyi*, local materials are used for their costumes except for the foot ware. The group has three sets of costumes. The choice of costumes to use in any performance depends on the weather condition, the type of event, and also on the choice of their host. The most prestigious of their costumes is the green chieftaincy wear with a long skirt, black cap, and a pair of the canvas.

Dance Styles and Techniques

Igbaakwu ne-echeenyi cultural dance steps are not complicated like some other Igbo dances; a dignified forward and backward movement is maintained all through the dance. The movement is controlled by the lead dancer. They dance in rows of two or three depending on the number of performers available at the time. The lead dancer takes the lead, followed by the instrumentalist, and then the dancers. The flautist has no specific position, he moves around the group. The first introduction is by the flautist and then the master drummer, followed by two other drummers and then other instruments in a slow tempo.

Performance Context

Igbaakwu ne-echeenyi cultural dance group perform on the invitation to both sacred and secular functions. Their performances are not restricted to the Ichida community; they perform in any other place within and outside the State. The performances of *Igbakwu ne-echeenyi* vary depending on the context of the performance.

Conclusion

Dance is integral to our culture and rooted deeply in our true existence. It serves a complex diversity of social, religious and cultural purposes in Nigerian societies. Our indigenous dance traditions may express or outrightly reflect the communal values, beliefs and social relationships of an independent tribe.

Nigerian cultural dances unify the people of a community and sometimes tell impactful stories of their heritage. These stories usually differ from tribe to tribe, mostly exploring themes of love, war, victory, beauty, honesty and lifestyle. It is in this view that this paper, studied ten traditional dances from regions across Nigeria, the instruments used in each dance, their dance style, their costume and performance context all in one way or another other reflecting the culture of the owners.

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