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Vision

Dance Journal of Nigerians strives to become the flagship journal of dance in Africa and an authoritative scholarly journal in dance globally.

Mission

- To be a medium for intellectual discourse relating to the Dance Art in Nigeria.
- To provide a forum for the dissemination of research findings pertaining to the Dance discipline in Nigeria and Africa.
- To be a means of promoting the Dance Art in Nigeria

BRIEF NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

Dance Journal of Nigeria publishes two issues a year: in January and in July. Papers are expected to be between 4,000 and 6,000 words using the MLA reference style. The title page should contain the title, name(s), affiliation, email and telephone number of author(s). The paper should begin in the second page with the title, abstract, keywords and followed by the entire paper. Sections of a paper should be clearly separated by headings. Enquiries about details format should be directed to the editor at: madamedun@yahoo.com

FROM THE EDITORIAL SUITE

It is with great pleasure that I present the second edition of *Dance Journal of Nigeria*, a publication of the Association of Dance Scholars and Practitioners of Nigeria. The papers contained in this issue, results from the Association's Conference held at the University of Benin, Benin City from 8th to 11th October, 2014.

The papers derived from the timeless theme of Dance and National Development from which the contributors took their trajectories. It is hoped that the content of this volume will be for our readers a harvest of ideas.

I thank members of the Editorial Collective and the Association's Executive Committee for their support and encouragement.

Thank you.
Arugha A. Ogisi
Editor.

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ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF NIGERIA'S HISTORY: DANCE AND SOCIETY IN AN ERA OF INSTABILITY.

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INTRODUCTION

This year's theme of the Association of Dance Practitioners and Scholars of Nigeria – “One Hundred Years of Nigerian Dance” presupposes two hypotheses:

- (i) The first seeks to re-establish the indissoluble connection of Nigeria's history with one of the oldest of its art forms: the Dance.
- (ii) Whilst the second reminds us of the conceptual fact that a nation-state derives her identity from the documentation of her heritage.

In addressing both hypotheses, it is necessary to establish a new framework and methodology for the perception and understanding of our art and our heritage. By so doing we re-emphasize what the humanities do for the conscientization of people and a nation. Somehow, I shall crave your indulgence to dwell a little more on the second hypothesis – the heritage of Dance, Drama, 'Play' or 'Meditation' – rather than on the history of the nation that practices it. After all we know or apprehend what dance itself is, it is the Nigerian version of it in the last century that we seek to probe and contextualize.

If we proceed from a definition which sees the dance as the rhythmic movement of the human body and mind in time and space, we instantly realize that both the physical, cultural and spiritual components of (wo)man are implied and that heuristically, history, science and philosophy are conceptualized in the art that Curt Sachs has thus portrayed:

The dance is the mother of the arts. Music and poetry exist in time; painting and architecture in space. But the dance lives at once in time and space. The creator and the thing created, the artist and the work are still one and the same thing. Rhythmical patterns of movement, the plastic sense of space, the vivid representation of a world seen and imagined – these things man creates in his own body in the dance before he uses substance and stone and word to give expression to his inner experiences. (Sachs, 1937:3)

This instantly echoes Rumi, the Persian dervish poet who intones that “whosoever knoweth the power of the dance dwelleth in God.”

In this context, we extrapolate that the dance phenomenon, from the beginning of time, had always been tied to life and the rites of passage. Specifically to our Nigerian origins we tend to examine more the art of dance on the three major rites of passages:

- >Birth, Rebirth or Festivals
- >Coming of Age and Marriage
- >Death and funerary celebrations

But you could not identify the three major rites of passage without reference to religion, art, craft, costume and masking traditions; essential aspects of culture. Here, I seek to go a step further from the poetic exclamation of Geoffrey Gorer, in his book *Africa Dances*, that:

Africans dance, they dance for joy and they dance for grief.

They dance for love and they dance for hate.

They dance to bring prosperity and they dance to avert calamity.

They dance for religion and they dance to pass time.

The observation of Gorer is matched by the description of seventeenth and eighteenth century Igbo Society by Olaudah Equiano in his narratives first published in 1789 and excerpted in a book of West African narratives edited by Philip Curtin and jointly published by the Universities of Wisconsin and Ibadan in 1967. These are the words of Equiano on the Cultural importance of the Dance in early Igbo society:

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We are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets. Thus every great event, such as a triumphant return from

battle, or other cause of public rejoicing, is celebrated in public dances, which are accompanied with songs and music suited to the occasion. The assembly is separated into four divisions (or age grades), which dance either apart or in succession, and each with a character peculiar to itself. The first division contains the married men, who, in their dances, frequently exhibit feats of arms, and the representation of a battle. To these succeed the married women, who dance in the second division. The young men occupy the third; and the maidens the fourth. Each represents some interesting scene of real life, such as a great achievement, domestic employment, a pathetic story, or some rural sport; and, as the subject is generally founded on some recent event, it is therefore ever new. This gives our dances a spirit and variety which I have scarcely seen elsewhere. We have many musical instruments, particularly drums of different kinds, a piece of music which resembles a guitar, and another much like a stickado. These last are chiefly used by betrothed virgins, who play on them on all grand festivals.

On Definitions and Nomenclature

It is clear that in Curt Sach's interesting attempt at a panoramic documentation of his world history of the dance as a long standing and established form of human behaviour; he reiterates that in most human communities, the dance, as an event, is perceived as both the affective and cognitive bridge between the physical and the supra-physical worlds. In establishing this fact, he describes the phenomenon but not the actual historical sequences of societies nor the development of the phenomenon in time and space. However, his is a valiant effort that, apart from the flashes of insight achieved, also raises profound epistemological questions. One of them which I consider most poignant poses the question of whether the dance is an exclusively human phenomena. He narrates three instances of scientific documentation which prove that birds and apes observe dance movements and some rudimentary, 'cultural', performative behaviour. On account of the importance of this observation, I shall like to quote him at length:

In the Roroima district of British Guiana, Appun saw a "group of some twenty mountain chickens of a brilliant orange-yellow color, gathered together in a kind of dance

characteristic of these beautiful birds. In the center one of the cocks executed the dance-like movements, as he hopped about the open place with wings extended and tail out-spread. On the branches of the bushes round about, the others sat and expressed their admiration of the dancer with the strangest sounds. As soon as one cock was exhausted, he joined the spectators, uttering a peculiar cry, and another took his place".

In Cape York in northeastern Australia, Maclaren witnessed a dance of the stilt birds. "The birds, of a kind known locally as Native Companions, were long-legged creatures, tall almost as storks, and white and grey of feather; and the dance took place in the center of a broad, dry swamp, from the edge of which, in a place of concealment, we watched. There were some hundreds of them, and their dance was in the manner of quadrille, but in the matter of rhythm and grace excelling any quadrille that ever was. In groups of a score or more than advanced and treated, lifting high their long legs and standing on their toes, now and then bowing gracefully one to another, now and then one pair encircling with prancing daintiness a group whose heads moved upwards and downwards and sidewise in time to the stepping of the pair. At times they formed into one great prancing mass, with their long necks thrust upward; and the wide swaying of their backs was like unto the swaying of the sea. Then, suddenly, as in response to an imperative command, they would sway apart, some of them to rise in low, encircling flight, and some to stand as in little gossiping groups; and presently they would form in pairs or sets of pairs, and the prancing and the bowing, and advancing and retreating would begin all over again."

The most valuable document, however, comes to us from the laboratory for the study of anthropoid apes in Teneriffe, where a number of chimpanzees with no previous contact with mankind were brought up under scientific observation. The psychologist Wolfgang Kohler,

for six years in charge of this laboratory, also maintained in his reports to the Prussian Academy of Science the astonishing fact that the anthropoid apes dance. He tells of a female chimpanzee, who, when he once appeared unexpectedly, began to hop first on one leg, then on the other, in a strangely excited manner. We might, indeed we must, relate this with what investigators occasionally report: that when these so called natives saw white men coming, they danced in extreme excitement "from one leg to the other." In both cases the dancing is caused by a state of tension and fear. Kohler further observed a rapid whirling with arms stretched out horizontally. Now and then the apes combined with the whirling "a forward movement with the result that as they rotated they moved across the clearing." Finally there was a genuine round dance.

"In mock fighting two of them drag each other about on the ground until they come near a post. Their frolicking and romping quiets down as they begin to circle about, using the post as a pivot. One after another the rest of the animals appear, join the circle, and finally the whole group, one behind another, is marching in orderly fashion around the post. Now their movements change quickly. They are no longer walking but trotting. Stamping with one foot and putting the other down lightly, they beat out what approaches a distinct rhythm, with each of them tending to keep step with the rest. Sometimes they bring their heads into play and bob them up and down, with jaws loose, in tie with the stamping of their feet. All the animals appear to take a keen delight in this primitive round dance. Every now and then there are variations. (1937: 9-11)

The place of etymology and theory

The implications of the scientific observations described above instructively guides our attention to a re-examination of the definition, pattern and theory of dance as a phenomenon. Lincoln Kirstein (1935:1) observes that the English and French words *dance* and *danse* derive from the ancient German word *danson*, which means to 'stretch' or 'drag'. There are other European variants like *dands*,

danca, danza and tanz. All these would seem to derive from the Sanskrit root word *tan* which means 'Stretching' or 'tension'. But if we search further in the Greek concept of the term, it would seem to refer to the concept of art and representation of forms. This latter observation is more relevant or closer in meaning to the definition and understanding of the dance when it gradually became a court and a folk art. For example a very early study of the form by Thoinot Arbeau called *L'Orchesographie* (1583, 1588) which is a treatise on 16th Century dancing, fencing, piping and drumming gives a broad insight into the form and performance of the art. He describes dance as the product of all kinds of movement including jumping, hopping, prancing, straddling, limping, squatting and curtseying. Consequently, he annexes dancing to the art of musical rhythms:

Dancing of saltation is an art both pleasing and profitable which confers and preserves health, is adapted for the youthful, agreeable to the aged and very suitable for all... depends on music because, without the virtue of rhythm, dancing would be meaningless and confused, so much so that it is necessary that the gestures of the limbs should keep time with the musical instruments...(Arbeau, 1583: 20; Kraus and Chapman, 1981:6)

Other authorities who have emphasized the concept of beauty, elegance and form rather than those of tension, stress and stretch are: John Weaver who wrote in 1721 that:

Dance is an elegant, and regular movement, harmoniously composed of beautiful attitudes and contrasted graceful posture of the body, and parts thereof. (Chapman and Kraus, 1981:6; Chujoy, 1948:125)

Jean Georges Noverre, in 1760 that:

Dancing is the art of composing steps with grace, precision and facility to the time and bars given in the music, just as music itself is simply the art of combining sounds and modulations so that they afford pleasure to the ear. (Chujoy, 1948: 125)

Diderot (c. 1772) that:

Dancing is ordered movements of the body, leaps, and measured steps made to the accompaniment of musical instruments or the voice. (Chujoy, 1948:125)

Hugh Clapperton (1829: 53) recorded in his *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa* that the people of Oyo did acrobatic dances as if there were no bones in their bodies. This is on account of a performance he witnessed in the court of the Alaafin of Oyo on Wednesday, 22nd February in 1826.

Again there are other historians of the dance, music and drama who emphasize the concept of pleasure and relaxation; the idea of entertainment after intensive labour or agricultural harvest. For example Sheldon Cheney (1929) and John Middleton (1985).

Dance Classifications

In a rather general way Paul Spencer (1985) has done an anthropological classification of the dance into about six distinct categories and functions which may help our understanding of the phenomenon in the context of human communities in and outside of Africa:

- (i) The Cathartic theory of dance
- (ii) The Educational role of the dance
- (iii) Interactional role of the dance
- (iv) The theory of self generation
- (v) Theory of competition and boundary display
- (vi) Dance as ritual drama

I crave your indulgence to add a seventh one,

- (vii) Dance as a form of artistic representation.

It had always been a moot point that African (and Nigerian) dances cannot be fully studied without due consideration given to other forms of artistic representation, especially of sculpture and other three dimensional representations (Layiwola, 1997). Take for instance the architectural consequence of the Igbo Ijele masquerade dance; the Epa, Gelede and Egungun head dresses and masks of Yoruba masquerade dancing and such other display of artistic balance in the manipulation of the Eben at Igwe festival of the Bini. It is almost always clear that beyond the Rudolf Laban and Rudolf Benesh notation methods of European ballet, the conceptual notation of African dances are key to a further understanding of their cultural life and cosmos. The Ivorian dancer and practitioner, Alphonse Tierou describes this sculptural dance form as Doople.

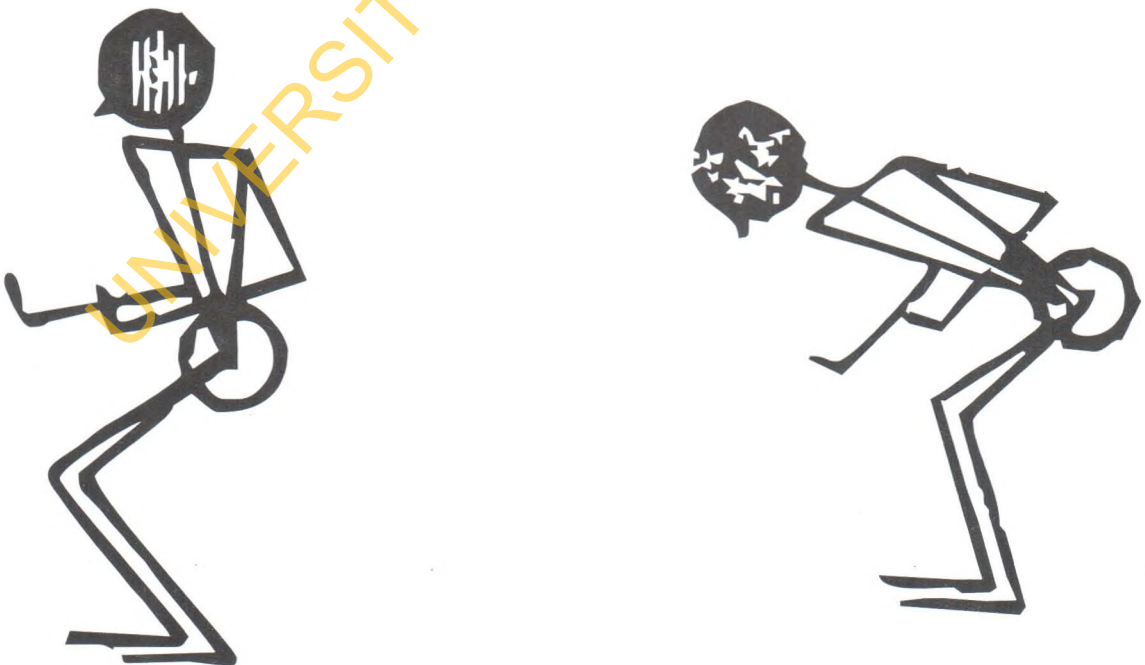
Tierou believes that the discipline that classical dance imposes on the body 'represents an asceticism whose object is to wrench man from the ground and from gravity' whereas he believes that much of African dance seeks a cosmic, anthropomorphic reconciliation with the force of gravity. This is an important point of departure which highlights the two convergent, parallel description of a basic dance posture as represented by Kwabena Nketia (1975):

The postures that are assumed in these dances are directly related to the way the body is used and moved. Certain movements are more easily executed from a position in which the back is slightly bent with the knees slightly dropped and the arms held loose, than from a rigid erect posture (1975:2010)

and Tierons himself:

Than dancer is standing, his knees are bent and the thighs are not held close together. His feet placed parallel and flat, kept close to the ground and are wide apart by between thirty to forty centimeters according to the length of the dancer's feet.

The torso bent slightly forward, forms with the pelvis an angle of about 135 degrees.... The gaze fixed on the horizon (1992:53)



In addition to the description of posture, rhythm would seem to be the one major factor that delineates African classical dances from those of European classical dances which rely on linear flow and space construction. They are usually geometric in their aspiration and rely on a different form of architecture that builds a complete Ijele or the complex Agbegijo dances of Oyo as described by Hugh Clapperton. Both Kwabena Nketia (1975) and Robert Farris Thompson (1974) made fundamental observations when they described African dancing as multimetric or polyrhythmic. These forms of dance methodology will not readily respond to the proto-linear Laban or Benesh notations. The polyrhythm of the music refer to the movement and isolation of different muscles at the same time in relation to percussion and drum rhythms which make for a complex interpretation of culture, environment and art.

In regard to the above, Nigerian dancers, choreographers and dance scholars owe the late Peggy Harper a world of gratitude in her efforts to document Nigerian dances for the understanding of European scholars and practitioners. Hers remains the furthest attempt at Dance Notation for the dances of Nigeria. She notices that the use of off-beat or syncopated rhythm is common to Nigerian dances and that the use of professionally made films is still the best option for a faithful recording of Nigerian and African dances. This rather lengthy quotation more than captures the point:

At present, professionally made film is the best available method of meeting the requirements of accuracy and accessibility. Dance notations, forms of symbolic transcription, are extensively used in Europe and America to record dance. However, these transcriptions are too reliant upon personal and cultural factors to be trusted as a recording technique in Africa where a vast amount of material of great variety needs to be recorded in field conditions. At this stage, when dance studies are being initiated in Africa, transcriptions needs to be referred back to as near an exact reproduction of the original material are possible. An exact reproduction must obviously be in the same terms as in the original material and dance as a kinetic art, inseparably bound to aural accompaniment, can only be comprehensively and adequately recorded in terms of an audio-visual medium. Film is accessible to scholars in different fields and countries, whereas a

notation, as a complex symbolic language, is accessible only to those conversant with the particular technique.

The present notation systems are further unsuitable as a basis for analytical work in Africa because the assumptions on which they are based result from the study of European dance and its derivatives and from the acceptance of the cultural concepts of time and space implicit in these forms. For example, the most common techniques of notation use staff lines and spaces which reflect the European obsession with geometric design and are unsuitable for recording or analyzing those forms of African dance in which the rhythm of the movement is common to all performers while the spatial design and dynamic remain open to personal interpretation within the limits of the particular style. Those recording and analyzing dance should be keenly aware of the cultural implications of the techniques which continuously questions the basic assumptions of the forms of analysis.

Where possible traditional African dances should be filmed in their authentic setting where they perform the function for which they came into being. An artificial separation of function and form can be deleterious to the performance particularly in ritual and ceremonial contexts. (1968:2003:52-53)

Dance as Spectacle and Theatre

In much of African culture dance has established itself as an indispensable medium of the theatre and as an aspect of the total theatre experience and of festivals. It is dialogue carried to the infinitive n^{th} degree where the process of communication is refined and etherealized. As with other indigenous forms of non-secular art, it is the documentation of non-material phenomena. It is, to borrow Soyinka and Oyin Ogunba's, phrase - 'a movement of transition'. It is movement in multi-meter and the idealization of movement to the point of the intangible. For this reason, there is no true dance event without a definitive story line. Any composer or choreographer who writes or conceptualizes a dance text without a story line can only be an amateur, or at best a dilettante.

In one or more enactments, the dance may represent the history or the story of

origin of particular aboriginal communities. At other times it may depict the representation of a communal experience in time and space. The dance is, therefore, an ageless archive for re-enacting experience through forms other than bare words. It is often a codified or a mimed elaborate gesture. This is one of the major reasons why literal documentation like those of Laban and Benesh will not suffice for an African or Nigerian choreographer. For how do you notate in lines, staves and dots the story of origin, mythology or allusions underscoring the description of metaphoric movements, autochthonous incarnations in time and space. Even words are often unable to bear the weight of those cultural and anthropomorphic or zoomorphic re-enactments. Let us illustrate this theoretical assertion with four dance performances around the geographical zones of Nigeria before and in the context of the last century.

The first would be *Ikaki*: the Tortoise dance of the Kalabari Ekine society as described by Robin Horton. The Kalabari believe that the dance steps of their masquerades are taught to the dance protagonists by water spirits who inhabit the depths of the water front in the Creeks of the Niger Delta. In the content of storytelling *Ikaki* is regarded as a fictional character symbolized as a totemic or archetypal tortoise, but in the context of masquerade dancing he is regarded as a nature spirit. This is strikingly similar to the Egungun masquerades of the Yoruba. The fictional character under the mask is made to dance and entertain the audience often to the accompaniment of drumming, music and poetry but the masquerade itself is believed to be the materialization of an ancestral or nature spirit with definitive character and characteristics. They can either be enacted or invoked. In both the Egungun and Ekine societies any new stories, dramatic or dance events that feature in the repertoire must first acquire a legendary or mythical charter or currency (See Horton, 1981:493) before a secular version of the story or the event emerges (see Layiwola 1995: 111, 118).

If all dance events are stories, what medium do they adopt? This is what Janheinz Jahn observes:

Only in the unity of the mask and dancer, only in action is the Muzimu (the departed) mask the carrier of supernatural forces which the dancer conjures up in a disguised voice. Every pagan is fully aware that here is a human being under the mask. (Jahn, 1961:171)

This shows clearly that the purpose of the masked dances is to resolve ambiguity in social relations and in epistemological categories. But sometimes the dance

drama is made elaborate when the masked dancer claims to represent Ikaki, a man with a hunchback and an elephantiasis of the scrotum. At other times, Ikaki might be an unscrupulous trader or oil merchant pretending to be a king's creditor. He is a motley figure indeed.

In one particular dance scene, the character dreams big by aiming to kill an elephant and thereby earn the *Peri* title. He circles the field and the master drummer beats the head-hunting rhythm:

A body, a body; a body with the strong arm, with the
strong arm; a body for peri.

As he dances to the strong rhythm of the drum beats, he circles the elephant, closes in on it and beheads the elephant. Meanwhile, the elephant is represented by a log of banana stem the Ekine members have put in the dance arena as a fictive representation of the elephant. He picks up the 'severed head' of the elephant and dances up to the *Amayanabo* (king) for acknowledgement and for communal solidarity. The drum frenzies up and the entire audience cheers him as he is moved by the spirit of departed titled men. This reinforces the exploits of yesteryears and the fact that dead heroes are remembered and re-enacted. This connects with the past and the community achieves an imaginative link between the past and the present. Sometimes contrasting balances in the temper of the episodes between the tragic and comical are carefully laid out. Swipes are also directed at such clever exploitative neighbours as the Igbo or the Ikwerre.

In arriving at the metaphor that the dance employs, Horton has made very brilliant deductions on the psychological import of Ikaki dance drama. Folk dances, by their very nature, are narratives which take their point of reference from the history or anthropography of its people. That is why this paper has affirmed earlier that each dance event must have a storyline; each dance concept tells its own story to assert its pedigree.

For this same reason Robin Horton was able to elicit that the modern versions of *Ikaki* dance theatre is distilled from an atavistic, destructive origin of something that originally caused death when enacted. The artistic conversation of a death-dealing force has helped its victims convert itself to a life-giving force for the ultimate survival of society. Essentially, metaphor is the method by which the dance ensures the survival potential of human communities. For instance Horton observes that Ikaki is not only an animal or a nature spirit, it is also a modern day transposition of a complex personality. In the case of the Kalabari the example of

an 'amoral, psychopathic trickster – the type who accepts society only in order to prey upon it'.

It is easy for us to deduce from this dance narrative that if we look deeply into Kalabari history and society, they had been victims of exploitative persons or conmen who had exploited and terrorized their communities. Sometimes these trickster figures have appeared as traders or entrepreneurs. This is how Horton puts the representation of Ikaki figure in folk dances:

In Kalabari metaphor, he is also a certain type of personality amply represented in present-day society. This is the amoral, psychopathic confidence trickster – the type who accepts society only in order to prey upon it. Kalabari have a very real fear of the human tortoise; so much so that they are reluctant to contract marriage alliances with certain houses in which he is believed to abound. In the intelligent plausible psychopath, that universal threat to the fabric of the community, we can surely see the sources of the idea of Ikaki as the fascinating yet deadly old man of the forest. (1981:492)

But the most profound inference which creates a meeting point between art and psychoanalysis, and which bears out the genius of Robin Horton as an anthropologist is that which states that the Kalabari uses the medium of the dance as a social and educational phenomenon to bring the deadly phenomenon of Ikaki close to themselves, study him, contemplate the type in tranquility and thereby tame him. The dance theatre of the Ikaki is therefore a therapeutic medium for the purging of a community from its own excesses and pent-up emotions. We must also note that this has always been the role of festival dances in many African communities since the period when humans have settled down for the purpose of governance and institution building. This phenomenon is the alchemy that had redeemed many societies from boredom and extinction.

There are two further illustrative examples from other parts of Nigeria in this regard. The first is the Kwagh-hir dances of the Tiv of North Central Nigeria. Iyorwhuese Hagher and Edith Enem have described the social and political impact of Kwagh-hir among the Tiv. The film strip made by Frank Speed and Tunde Adeniji had also documented this vibrant cultural event. One of the highlight of the Tiv performance is the scene which portrays the fear and

domestication of wild animals which ravaged the communities during the 19th century. Two of the animals – Bugas and Ikoko constantly preyed on members of the community as they returned from the stream or from the markets. The beasts would simply ambush their victim from the forest and devour him or her. These tragic events became a great sources of worry to the Tivs that they chose to represent these as episodes in their animal dance events. In the film by Frank Speed the animal, clothed in palm fronds was shown in spectacular relief and the victim danced in elaborate detail to narrate to the community and audience how the animal swallows or devours its victim in the grim encounter. The victim calls for help all through the tragic episode until the last bit of his/her body enters into the jaws of the rapacious animal.

Another scene reveals the hunter as he dances, almost with the accuracy of Ikaki's mincing steps towards the *Ikoko* carefully aiming his arrow at the monster. He stylistically and gracefully falters until by an admixture of skill and courage, he is able to subdue the wild animal. The danced event reveals in detail the ordeal of the victim and the victor in this 'ritual' and the subsequent need to overcome the terror of the beast that threatens the group solidarity of the human community. This is the essence of the dance event and the festival.

The Kwagh-hir of the Tiv is an example of a composite art because the medium of sculpture and puppetry are also brought to bear on the story telling performances. For this reason it had been a vibrant medium of pantomime and satire. The poignancy of this cultural event is represented by Edith Enem thus:

The puppets especially, are in different styles. Some are naturalistic, others are grotesque and ridiculous, but all reflecting the moral prejudices and sanctions of the community. Historical awareness is shown in some puppets which represent events such as when the first motorbike was ridden in Gboko or the first policewoman emerged or when modern dress styles of European design gained local acceptance (1981:250)

Topical events and brilliant social and political commentary, with precise details, are highlighted in such a way that only an Ombudsman could have done:

For example, in the vignette of the execution of an armed robber by a firing squad, an actual shot is fired and at the same time the criminal's head jerks suddenly and drops to one side. An ironic edge in that situation is pointed by the

presence of his helpless relations (presumably his parents) at his execution... The mad man who is always beating his wife without respite is armed with a club which descends at intervals on the woman's head. (1981:251)

The second example here is that of a legendary dance revue which Ulli Beier recorded in Ede, Southwestern Nigeria in 1959. The dance tells, not a mythical story, but of an archetypal historical event which serves to remind the community of the way in which a migrant hero settled and subjugated the aborigines he found on the land. The metaphorical spectacle adapted the conflict between the priests of two gods whereby the priest of the younger god captures and subjugates that of the elder deity from the palace and a ransom had to be paid for his release by the King. After his release, he is put on horseback and the whole community dances in a triumphal procession to the palace. The actual conflict is danced and one of the two deities dances his rival to submission and captivity.

The dance event described above recalls the Udje dance performance of the Urhobo. This memorable dance event keeps both the poetry and the dance skills of the youth and their communities constantly rejuvenated. It also highlights the sense and consciousness of inter-community rivalry and 'pairing'. G. G. Darah further remarks:

This pairing phenomenon is known as *Omesuo*. The yearly carnivals serves as "battle grounds" where, as the practitioners put it, each group strives "to sing its rival to a fall". This objective demands that each performance attains the level of theatrical intensity capable of keeping the audience enthralled. For the presentation of a song to achieve this effect it must be done with a creative presentation of both verbal and non-verbal elements. The non-verbal aspects include ostentatious costume (*Osevbe*), dexterity of footwork (*Owoto-ona*), and masterly management of the entire performance. (1981:505)

Dance as Ritual

There is absolutely no doubt that dance, historically and performatively, is both an art form and a mode of ritual behaviour because, as evidenced in research, it is used not only as a form of entertainment but also as a ritual element in worship and devotional activities. It is also necessary to observe that dance or ballet

presentations as art or as ritual tend towards a greater level of perfection than other performative forms such as drama and music and spectacle. The repetitive nature of rehearsals and practice has made it mandatory that what sets out as flair and talent is further honed in such a way as to gain a conscious perfection of an art which is primarily intuitive and innate. This also lends credence to the fact that primordial forms of art and science from sculpture to medicine and surgery were originally learned by the process of apprenticeship and observation. This is still true that in the art of dancing and performance in Africa the deft movements of the limbs is tied to the prosodic and syncopated coordination of the fibres of corti, that is the adjustments of the eardrum to the drum sounds and the sense of gravitational balance. The performer is therefore engaged on a higher factor and an unusual understanding of the economy of scale between that which is intuitive and extrasensory and that which is sensual and dexterously adaptive. Among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, the language of the drum is both linguistic and philosophical whilst the media of the dance and the costume are plastic and fluid. A dramatic illustration of this is attempted in Soyinka's play of transition, *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) when The Horseman and his griot demonstrate that the singer and the dancer must synchronise at two levels: auditory and aphasiac levels. Words are heard at a particular level but are unheard or translated on to an extrasensory level. Elesin Oba dances right, matching the language of the drum but could not hear the singer at the auditory level because he was entranced. This then confirms the declamation of Rumi that to dwell in dance is to dwell in a divine order. I think he was talking of this multilayered experience that is possible with dance, liturgy, music and poetry. Even though physical bodies are the building blocks for the dance experience, it is still the best instrument or tool for probing the psychological and instinctual state of our humanity.

The Future of Dance Studies

The nature and capacity of the dance art as a polysemic, multi-layered and multinational medium makes it a template and the meeting point of a diversity of interest, nationality and media. It is both an art and a science and the basis for the integration of beauty into the fourth dimension of space. Doris Humphrey, citing Isadora Duncan, acknowledged that since the dance is its own medium, the definition is in the making of it. This re-emphasises that as humanity's oldest art, it would continue to connect man to his past and to his future. It will also remain the underlying basis of performance, music and drama. It is the most developed of all stylized forms of the fine arts. It is for the same reason that by its recondite expression, it will continue to define and unite all the other arts both in concept

and in plasticity. It is the one, like sports, which signifies man as a vector quantity moving through space, and through the medium of time.

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