# CHOREOGRAPHY IN WEST AFRICA:

# KINESIS, PROXEM1CS AND ADORNMENT IN NIGERIAN AND GAMBIAN DANCE PRACTICE.

A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND DRAMA FOR THE AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(PHD) IN DRAMA (DANCE STUDIES)

AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA.

BY

BAKARE, OJO RASAK1 (B.A., MA., UN1CAL)

(PH.D./FASS/9668/92-93)

FEBRUARY, 2000

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and all sources of information are suitably acknowledged by means of reference.



Bakare, Ojo Rasaki

Date 3/10/2000

## CERTIFICATION

This thesis entitled "Choreography in West Africa: Kinesis, Proxemics and Adornment in Nigerian and Gambian Dance practice" by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki meets the regulations governing the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Drama, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and academic quality.

Chairman Supervisory Committee — Date 14/10/2000

Member, Supervisory Committee — Date 4 October 2000

Head of Department — Date 10-1-2000

Dean Post graduate School — Date 29/06/01

# DEDICATION

To the Glory of The Father,

The Son and The Holy Spirit...

...the Source of my everything.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I owe a debt of gratitude to the following persons and institutions. Without their support and understanding, this work may not have been a reality.

I am grateful to my supervisors, Dr. Jenkeri Okwori and Dr. Steve Oga Abah whose contributions, erudity and thoroughness gave the work the required standard. I am indeed opportuned, to have been refined in your fire. I will forever remain grateful to you.

I also appreciate the level of understanding and support displayed by my wife and sister, Lilian, who endured untold neglect when I got temporarily married to this work. May your labour of love not be in vain.

I must also express my gratitude to Modou Joof and all the staff of Gambian National Troupe and Gambian National Council for Arts and culture for being good hosts and wonderful research Assistants to me while in Gambia. Modou, I will surely work with you again.

To professors Joseph Jemkur, Yakubu Nasidi and Zikky Kofoworola, Doctors Tanimu Abubakar, Sanni Aba Aliyu, Messrs Sam Kafewo, Emmy Idegu, Steve Daniel, Martins Ayegba and Dodo Kadarko, Mallams, Salihu Bappa, Umar Buratai and Rabiu Isah, Ladies Oyindasola (mama Ebun) and Rahab Kayit, I say thank you. You were wonderful people to me and my family both on personal and

official levels while in Zaria. Resourceful teachers and nice colleagues of mine, may you remain blessed.

This acknowledgment will not be complete without mentioning the contributions of Dr. Olu Akomolafe and all the staff of Dramatic Arts Department, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, to my development. I am also grateful to Pastor Randy Sakpere, brother Doxie Okafor and all members of Rhema Chapel international Churches, Ile - Ife for their brotherly love, support, care and prayer for me and my family. May the good Lord reward you a thousand fold.

Finally, I say thank you to Mrs. Akanji and Mrs Unaka who typed the first draft of this work. I also thank Yetunde, the computer 'Wizard' who finished up on the computer. To this trio, I sincerely apologize for my horrible handwriting.

Bakare Ojo Rasaki

February 2000.

# ABSTRACT

The propelling goal of this research is to investigate the reasons for material duplication and artistic complacency which have become obvious characteristics of contemporary practice of choreography in West Africa. With the conviction that creativity and personal statements arc central to the art of choreography, we insist, the contemporary West African Choreographer must rise beyond a perpetual regurgitation of old dances by creating his own dances which are relevant to his time and society. This research however acknowledges and insists that the "linguistic" properties of the old dances should be used as vocabulary since a vocabulary of dance systems which produce new meanings is only possible through an examination of the very basis for the production of dances already in existence.

The methodology used in collecting data for this study is based on library research and field experience in the two selected countries - Nigeria and The Gambia. The researcher had worked extensively with dance practitioners in most parts of Nigeria. Also, he was the choreographer in charge of The Gambian National Troupe between 1994 and 1996. This enabled him to get relevant information from books, journals and other bibliothecal materials as well as helped him to secure first hand information from practitioners in some other west African

countries. After a careful study of selected dances, a body of vocabulary is suggested to the contemporary West African Choreographer to improve upon.

This work is presented in five chapters. The first chapter introduces us to the problem and our argument which is that the contemporary choreographer in Nigeria should stop a whole sale pirating of the existing traditional dances and instead use the movement vocabulary of this existing dances as a language to communicate new and relevant meanings. Chapter two is a review of the existing literature in the area of study. The review enables us to discover that there is an abundance of anthropological information on the subject of choreography while little attention has been given by scholars to creative technical discourse on the subject. Chapter three explains the nature and essence of choreographic tools, while chapter four is devoted to the analysis of selected dances in Nigeria and Gambia. The analysis which is comparative in nature, enables us to unearth a body of vocabulary used in the indigenous dances. Our deductions and generalisations are discussed in chapter five where we also round off with a conclusion.

# TABLE OF CONTENT

Title Page: . . . . . i

Certificate: . . . . . ii

Dedication: . . . . . iii

Acknowledgment: . . . . . iv

Abstract: . . . . . vi

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: . . . . . 1

West Africa: The people and the Land . . . . . 15

Religious Beliefs and World view . . . . . 18

Methodology . . . . . 21

Limitations of Study . . . . . 24

Definition of key Concepts . . . . . 24

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review . . . . . 29

CHAPTER THREE

Kinesis, Proxemics and Adornments:

The Technical Basis of Choreographic communications in

West African Danceturgy... . . . . 66

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of selected Dances from Nigeria and the Gambia: . . . . . 97

Bata Dance . . . . . 98

Bugarabu Dance . . . . . 110

Bori Dance . . . . . 117

Jembe Dance . . . . . 126

Ekong Dance . . . . . 132

Kusamarie Dance ..... 137
Aja Dance ..... 141
Karoninka Dance ..... 145
Ekombi Dance ..... 148
Musubajulo Dance ..... 152

CHAPTER FIVE
Movement vocabularies derivable from the study: ..... 146
Bibliography: ..... 190

# CHAPTER ONE
# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

Though other societies of the world utilize the communicative values of dance, this utilization seems to be more profound and in fact fundamental in Africa. This, perhaps, is why warren lee has described African dance as "a text in motion".[1]

Dance is an art form of human communication. This folk media of communication, in the words of kiruja kaka 2 transmutes along the paths of social dynamics, consistently adjusting itself to stay abreast with the ever changing ways of living and thinking . Therefore, west African dance is an externalization of the people's belief system, political experience, biological temperament, occupational activities and natural environment. Traditional west African dance creators through the ages have sought to capture these phenomena in their creations. This implies they were communicating their societies and how they saw it through the art of dance. They were practicing choreography.

However, a study of the west African danceturgy - the principles of dance composition in west Africa and the technical devices proper to it which govern its choreography - reveals that the art of communication through choreography has suffered arrested development in West Africa. It is noticeable that the post-colonial West African Choreographers are doing more of repeating the dances

created by their forebears than creating their own dances which would have been more relevant to their own time and societies. As a result, there has been limited development in the area of choreography in West African Danceturgy.

Of course, the coming of Europe into Africa brought about cultural erosion which the colonized African nation suffered and still suffers from. As this culture to which dance was central collapsed, dance itself, as a formidable dynamic art form collapsed in Africa. The nationalist consciousness and struggles of the forties and fifties saw theatre and dance practitioners responding to the fashionable urge to re-establish African identity by re-capturing the African past through an excavation of the relics of the old dances. Though their effort is commendable because it brought about cultural renaissance in the area of dance and it made dance to once again, become a respectable and vibrant art form in Africa. However, sticking perpetually to the relics of the rustic past without striving to be relevant by communicating contemporary ways of living and thinking is contradictory to the idea of choreography.

In the current dispensation, it is observable that most West African Choreographers simply dig into their cultural background's romantic and nostalgic past and excavate nearly rustic dance items. They then teach their dancers these items the best way they can, making sure they avoid dislocations, expansions and

moderations, while relocating the dances to the contemporary stage instead of the village arena. These dances are then subjected to repetitive performances until another one is 'excavated'.

These choreographers are not doing this only to dances which for efficacious and ritualistic reasons must not be performed out of context. The crisis is that these choreographers have adopted a faithful retrieval of the relics of the cultural past as a creative technique. This technique we repeat for emphasis, negate the meaning of choreography and contradicts the very nature of dance as a living art which, unlike artifacts in the museum, keeps responding to societal pulse and temperament from time to time.

The choreographer should be a creator not an imitator, a producer not a re-producer, an originator instead of a pirate and an innovator instead of a regurgitator. There is more to choreography than arrangement of steps and preservation of culturally accepted patterns of movements and formations.

The choreographer is a conscious commentator, analyst, critic and documentarist of the happenings around him. He lives and works in the present, even though for reasons of historical significance and to make his work connectible and identifiable by his immediate audience, he may borrow materials from the past which he now modifies to communicate the present. Thus, there is

a parallel between the work of a choreographer and that of a playwright. It is also similar to that of a painter. They are all creative artists who, according to Alma Hawkins,

> Surrender to their world of experience, take possession
> and control of that which they see and bring about a reduction that
> results in an entity which is a unified and unique personal statement.[3]
> (emphasis mine)

But while the playwright communicates his intents using medium of drama, and the painter the medium of painting, the choreographer communicates his own intents using as his medium, a form of body language known as dance. The personal statements made through choreography are meant for the larger society - the audience of the choreographer - to receive and understand. This then demands that the choreographer communicates what the people can relate to and connect with. Therefore there is the need for the contemporary West African choreographer to be able to re-create and adapt the stereotypes. His job is to make new meanings out of the old dances, not relying on a perpetual piracy of these stereotypes in their original form as the case is presently.

Moreover, the times have changed significantly in terms of composition,

configuration and mien from the period where these old dances were formulated. Their relevance beyond entertainment and history may be vague in contemporary society. Hence the need to re-invest them with a new relevance to fit the dictates of the present is important. And to do so, the choreographer should be engaged in a process of creation and recreation. To do otherwise is to be artistically irrelevant and intently un-original. This is because despite the fact that there are no written documents to tell us who created which indigenous dance, these indigenous dances must have been created by some people and the creators of these dances were choreographers in their own rights. The statements made in these dances were statements that were relevant to their own time and societies. Therefore, a 20th century choreographer who still relies on a perpetual reproduction of these dances, apart from committing piracy, may be making obsolete statements. This is what Chris Ugolo means when he says:

> The Dance of today I believe must represent our time.
>
> It must speak the language of the twenty - first century... it
>
> is not a language rooted in rituals. This is not to say however that
>
> we must throw away our traditional forms...the
>
> present to reflect the future.[4]

Ugolo's comment adequately locates the central argument of this study

which is that dance is a language. Its vocabulary is already established in the existing traditional dances of the society. These existing vocabulary should be used to discuss current issues just as language, though inherited from the past is used to live the present. The existing vocabularies are already understood by the society. They should then be used in the contemporary time to discuss contemporary themes. The bulk of the existing dances should be deconstructed and reconstructed, that is diffused from their their original forms and recreated in a way that their "linguistic" properties will yield new and relevant meanings.

This requires that the old forms be effectively blended with new contents. For example, the copulation movement vocabulary in the Aja dance of the Idoma people in Nigeria, which has pelvic gyrations as its items could be picked out and used by a contemporary choreographer who is discussing the different ways AIDS could be contacted. When such a Choreographer wishes to express the fact that one of these ways is sex, the choreographer could use the copulation movement vocabulary in Aja to sign post this information. The effective blending of old forms with new contents should be the hallmark of choreographic practice in West Africa.

However, my field experienced as a choreographer who has worked extensively with most other Nigerian and Gambian choreographers leads me to the

discovery that most of these choreographers are actually aware of their creative responsibilities. They are not ignorant of what choreography is all about and what the choreographer is supposed to do. Let us cite some instances; Arnold udoka holds a masters degree in Dance and movement, University of London New Cross. He definitely knows what the duties of the choreographer especially in Africa should be. Yet most of his creations so far, are regurgitations of residual dances from his native Annang and Ibibio culture. When he discovered that he was being criticized he made an attempt to be original in his creation for the Akwa Ibom state Troupe at the National festival of Arts and culture (NAFEST) Abuja in 1997. In that attempt, he forced Euro-American motifs on his African audience and the result was disastrous. Akwa Ibom state failed woefully and Arnold Udoka left the festival venue humiliated.

Peter Badejo, also holds a master's degree in Dance and Choreography from the University of California Los Angeles USA. He has enough academic background and experience to know the responsibility of a choreographer, yet his works most of which are in the repertoire of the defunct Center for Nigerian Cultural Studies, ABU, Zaria are in repetition of the existing traditional dances from the different parts of Nigeria. Apart from his "Fadakarwa" and "New earth" where he attempted some level of creativity (at least in the area of story creation)

his order works in the CNCS repetoire are "Bata", "Mardo Koroso", "Swange", "Atilogwu", an Atsia Agbekor" in their traditional original forms.

Taking a cue from these pioneers, new generation of Nigerian choreographers like Okwu Ita (Cross River State Cultural Centre Board), Ade Samuel (Abuja Arts Council), Adamu Gada (Kaduna Arts Council), Kokoirin Ayinde (Ekiti State Arts Council), Ubong Nsa (Akwa Ibom State Arts Council) to mention a few have loaded and are still loading the repertoires of their troupes with these old dances without new creative experiments.

If these choreographers are aware of their creative responsibilities and are not ignorant of what the choreographer is expected to do, then there is the need to investigate the reasons for the poverty of creativity and the artistic complacency on their part.

We can immediately identify two reasons why these poverty and complacency exist. First is the extreme racial patriotism with which many of these choreographers have responded are still responding to the cultural erosion which the Colonial experience engineered. What we could refer to as a damn -Europe - mentality, the belief that everything from Europe is bad and the erroneous opinion that re-creating African traditional dances is being European in thinking, has generated in these choreographers, a passion to always repeat and over flog what

they consider as authentic African traditional performances in their original forms. These choreographers avoid making efforts to re-create and adapt such performances and as such do not generate new meanings from them. Second is the fact that many of these choreographers are cultural - amputees, (they don't know much about their culture) courtesy of the Euro-American cultural domination which the contemporary African society suffers from. They are cut from their cultural roots and as such, their knowledge of the vocabularies of these indigenous dances is highly limited. Therefore, since a blend of old forms with new contents requires a deep understanding of the vocabularies of the traditional dances for easy facilitation of deconstruction, manipulation and re-construction, these choreographers are incapacitated in the techniques of abstracting from the existing forms to express new contents. This incapacitation yields two problems. First, these choreographers then resort to forcing Euro-American steps, movements and motifs which have not been domesticated on their audience whenever they wish to express contemporary contents in their works. This way, they end up not communicating since their audience cannot decode the vocabularies of these foreign steps, movements and motifs. This is so because dance is a language and as such it is culturally bound. This for instance was responsible for Udoka's dilemma which we already referred to. In that performance he used a movement

motif, sign posting football competition as a metaphor for political contest. The ball-chasing and ball -kicking movements he used appeared too strange and foreign for his audience and he was "reprimanded". In the same vein, for example, a ballet performance in an African village might attract encomiums, but it may not be accessible or identifiable to the people. This is because the expressions, symbols and images are bound to the cultures which produced them. Therefore, they would be abstractive and perhaps meaningless to the people who are unexposed to the idioms unless these expressions, symbols and images are domesticated. In like manner, the Euro-Americans who cheer African dance performance by visiting African troupes in their theatre halls do so probably because they enjoy the spectacle and also because of the quest for the exotic, not because they particularly understand the meanings.

The second problem is that when the West African choreographer forces Euro-American dance vocabularies on his audience because he finds it impossible to discuss contemporary issues using his indigenous forms, his communication is hampered. The discovery that he has not communicated makes him jettison contemporary themes the next time he is choreographing. He then goes back to the existing dances and continues a wholesale reproduction of them. While one appreciate his incidental effort at preserving our indigenous culture, his technique,

we must point out, only leads to material duplication apart from the danger of rendering dance as an art irrelevant and insensitive to societal development.

For example, having worked both as a trainer and creator with most Art council troupes both in Nigeria and The Gambia, I have discovered that dances in the repertoire of most troupes are relics of the old traditional dances. For example, Lagos, Oyo, Ogun Osun States, Arts Councils are dominated by the same dance item which is Bata; Cross River and Akwa Ibom states are heavily loaded with Ekombi dance, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau and Niger constantly recycle Koroso motifs; the Benue state troupe rarely perform any other dance apart from Swange. Even in the repertoire of the National troupe of Nigeria, it is hard to find any other dance than the residual dances lifted from the different ethnic groups in the country.

This attitude may be relevant to a point. To completely wish away our traditional forms will amount to' cultural suicide' and communication from the choreographer to the larger society will be lost, But also creativity and relevance to contemporary living must thrive.

The position of this study, therefore, is that the African choreographer can be relevant to his time and age, to his contemporary society and at the same time be relevant to the preservation of his culture through the use of his indigenous

movement vocabularies as language of communication to express contemporary themes and ideas. This is possible through the study of the kinesis, proxemics and body adornments of existing dances. This is because a vocabulary of dance systems which produce new meanings is only possible through an examination of the very basis for the production of dances already in existence; and kinesis, proxemics and body adornment form the linguistic basis of West African dances.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to suggest, from our own perspective, how the contemporary West African choreographer can create dances which he can lay claim to as his own original creation as a creative artiste, which are African both in aesthetics, content, form and movements, which discuss relevant and contemporary issues and ideas, and whose language the African audience can understand. It is the intention of this study to create awareness about how the dance movements and steps indigenous to West Africa can be made to generate new meanings which reflect contemporary ideas and sensibilities.

This will be done through detailed study and analysis of the kinesic, proxemic and body adorning elements which are the very basis for the production of the existing dances. In studying, analysing and understanding these elements, our objective is to locate the motifs and vocabularies in the existing dances of an area which can be adapted and moderated to yield contemporary meanings. These

meanings can then be utilized by the contemporary choreographer in his works.

Thus, the idea is that if choreographers know which design or movement in a particular indigenous dance expresses what message, such choreographers can then use that particular design or movement configuration while expressing a similar or related message in their contemporary works.

In this study, selected dances from two West African countries - Nigeria and the Gambia, are used. The choice of Nigeria and the Gambia is determined by a number of reasons. First is the obvious fact that the entire west African region os too wide a terrain to be studied as a whole in a study of this nature. We must focus on select states. Secondly, this is necessary because in terms of cultural characteristics, West Africa can be divided into two blocs. Countries like Nigeria, Cote de'voire, Sierra Leone, Togo and Ghana share some cultural affinities. These affinities were engendered by migrations made possible by slave trades episode which made, for instance, some ethnic groups and even local dialects found in Nigeria to be found in these other countries today. The second bloc, the Gambia, Senegal, Mali and Guinea Bissau also share cultural homogeneity because each of these countries is populated by the same ethnic groups like the Mandingo, Mandika, Wollof, Serraahule, Fula and Jola. They were scattered all over the region into different countries. before the advent of the

colonial rule which carved them into different countries. Today, almost each of these ethnic groups is represented in each of the countries. The choice of Nigeria and the Gambia therefore provides a reasonable representation of the two blocs in terms of cultural characteristics.

The method of analysis will be to break the choreographic structure of these dances into components and fragments thereby picking and analysing the movement phrases one after another to show how kinesis, proxemics and body adornments (as appropriate) have been used as the basis for dance conception and execution. This will crystalise, how kinesis, proxemics and body adornments, in cumulative terms have been used for the production of these dances and therefore for the purpose of communication. Suggestions will therefore be made on how this basis could be used by the contemporary choreographer in composing contemporary works.

This study is not in anyway fronted as the panacea to the problems of artistic complacency and material duplication which have been raised. It also does not pretend to be the final voice or solution to the problems as it is only intended as a piece of work upon which further research can be done. It is, however, hoped that the findings and the suggestions that will follow, if put into use can enhance the development of dance education and dance practice in West Africa. The study

could also contribute to the improvement in the quality of creativity in the West Africa dance industry through an expansion of movement vocabularies.

However, the performance traditions of West African peoples cannot be fully appreciated without a background knowledge of he people, their environment, and their world view. A brief information on these factors is therefore provided below.

WEST AFRICA: THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND

As the nest, so is the bird

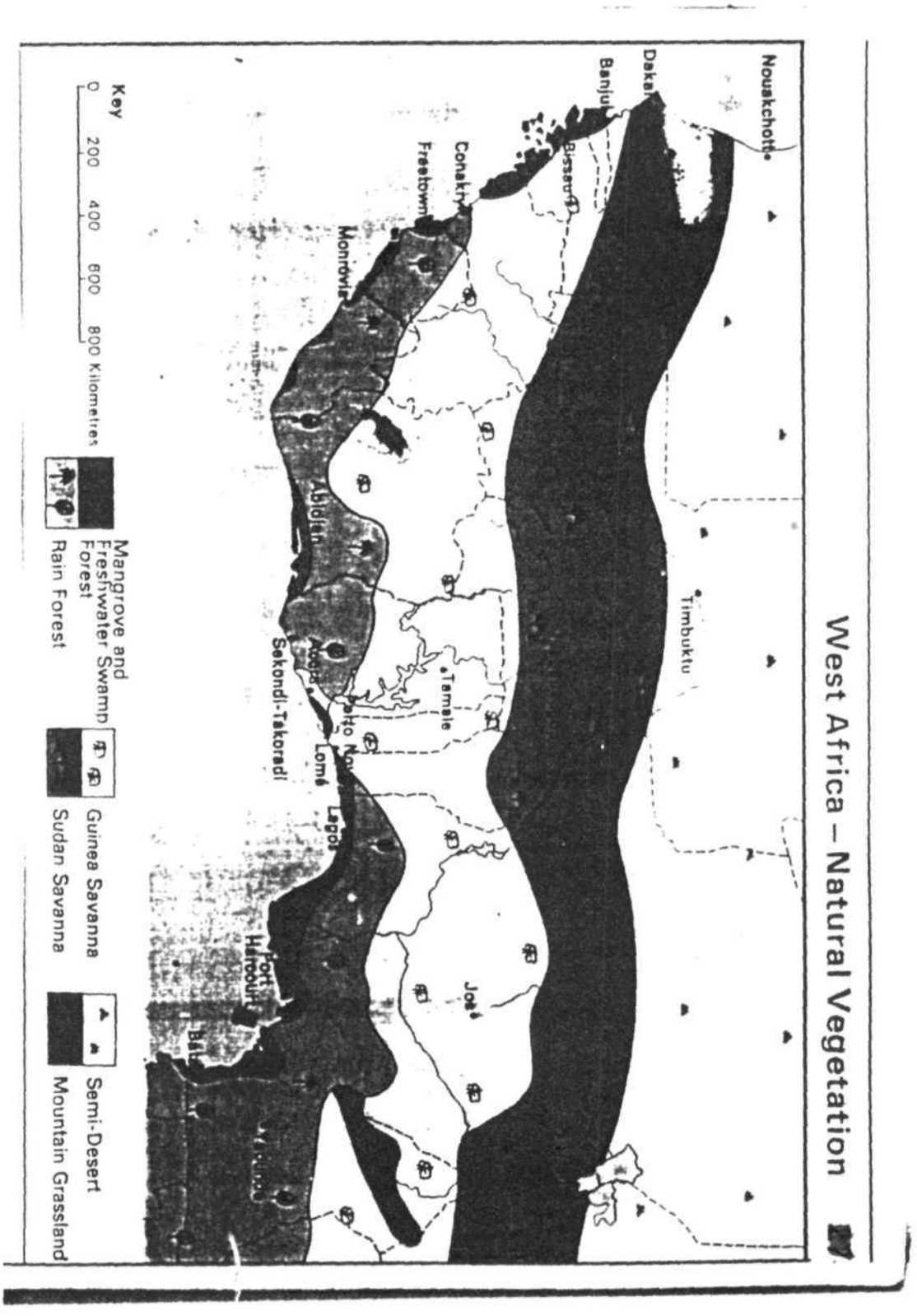
as the country, so are the men

As the men so are their dances[6]

Kinesis and proxemics are culture bound because they are determined by the peculiar way a people were their bodies and the physical space available to them. These use of body and physical space are themselves influenced by the kind of activities these people perform with their bodies daily. These activities are also determined by the people's environment, vegetation occupation, belief system and social - political experiences.

For the purpose of this study the area referred to as West Africa is the area between the Guinea cost and a stretch of land from port Etiene, to Lake Chad. It consists of the basins of the Senegal, Niger and Yobe. The area is bounded in the

West and South by the Atlantic Ocean, in the north by the Sahara desert and on the east by the Mandara and Cameroon highlands. (See map).



It extends from 5° to 2° north latitude and from 17° west to 15° east Longitude while covering about 2.4 million square miles. From the eastern end to the western is some 1,750 miles distance while its north - south distance is over 1,350 miles. Latitudinally, Western Africa is positioned between the equator and the tropic of cancer. This makes it an area of perpetually high temperature for the most part of the year, compared with other regions of the world.

These climatic conditions are responsible for the three major varieties of vegetation in West Africa. The south and the southern part of the middle belt are forest regions while the northen areas of the middle belt and the southern part of the northen region are predominantly extensive grass land while the northern part of the northern zone which is the northern most part of West Africa is a desert region. Each vegetation belt extends from east to west, "growing in a longitudinal spaciousness which has been of great significance in the history of the area"[7].

The southern forest region varies from mangrove through fresh water swamps to lowland rain forest. The mangrove and swamp forests aid very dense vegetation while the grassland region of the north is characterized by loose vegetation.

Generally speaking, apart from the forest south, more than three quarters of the area of the West Africa is covered by grass, but they differ in character,

richness and height. The further north one goes, the shorter the grasses. The vegetation has conditioned their day - to - day activities, the people's manner of walking, their mode of dressing, the way they use their bodies and the way they dance.

For instance, because of the dense vegetation in the south, southerners have been conditioned to shorter strides and consequently most of their dances are trunk based. The foot works in most of these dances are mere shuffles done in controlled strides. Also, their dances are more of gravity locomotors[8] and place movements[9]. This is different from the aerial movements and long strides and swings that characterise the dances of the northern regions whose loose vegetation can accommodate wider use of space. The implications of the climatic conditions and vegetational zones on the dance will be further discussed in chapters four and five.

## RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND WORLD VIEW

West Africa is a theistic society and this has implications for their dances, especially the existing traditional dances which for theistic reasons are heavily ritualistic.

West Africans have evolved many ideas about the world based on their observation of the world around them. In the sky, they behold the rain, sun and

rainbows. They also marvel at the movement of the sun, moon the winds and so on. On earth they wonder at the creation of man, animals, insects, plants, rivers, rocks and mountain. These make then to believe that the universe was created by an all powerful god who, in the words of Jenkeri Okwori, "is physically separated from the earth and who can be reached through plenipotentiaries"[10]. One of these plenipotentiaries is the visible part of the universe which is the earth. Man inhabits the earth, and the people "depend on it for their survival in terms of shelter, food and the place to return to when they die"[11]. That is to say that when the people die, though their physical bodies are buried in the earth their souls return to another level of existence, "the ancestral home where they become ancestral gods"[12]. The earth therefore is one of the greatest manifestations of God's existence and must have been seen as such because of its life-giving force. Okwori's work leads us to conclude therefore, that God, his plenipotentiaries and the ancestors, combine to form the religious base of the West African society. These ancestors run the people's affairs and partake in their activities to ensure their existence and the continuation of the people. Okwori's work is a corroboration of Mbiti's earlier statement that:

> the spirits in general belong to the ontological mode of existence between God and man...Divinities on the whole are thought to have been created by

God in the ontological category of spirits. They are associated within and often stand for his activities or manifestations either as personifications or as the spiritual beings in charge of these major objects or phenomena of nature.[13]

Sacrifices are made to the Almighty God through the lesser gods. This is because of the African belief that the supreme God is too far off (though omnipresent)and too holy to be approached directly by man.

There are different gods for different phenomena whether natural, environmental or occupational. So, each society is controlled by the supreme God through a pantheon of gods. In Yoruba society for instance, farmers worship Orisa Oko, riverine Ilaje people worship Ayelala, a river god, while some people worship Obatala who they consider to be god of creativity.

Ancestors who were great men when alive are also deified and worshiped. Africans believe in the spiritual guidance of these ancestors and so sacrifices are often offered to these ancestors to ensure their continuing support.

The invisible universe in African world view is the heavenly part which is God's domain (though they believe in his omnipotent nature). This heavenly part is also the abode of sun, stars, moon, rain and the galaxy.

To West Africans therefore, the universe is a religious one and it is treated

as such. This belief forms the basis of their views which they express in myths, legends, proverbs, rituals, symbols and dance. The implication of this world view is a performance tradition which eulogises these unseen powers in ritual and worship. These ritual and worship form the central idea of most of the performances, especially dance.

The subsequent chapters shall do a further discussion on the relationship between the African environment, world view and the way Africans use their bodies and consequently how they dance.

## METHODOLOGY

In carrying out this study, several approaches and techniques were combined for data collection.

First, we made use of bibliothecal tools. These are relevant books, journals, magazines and other written materials which were extensively consulted. This is necessary in order to find out the opinions and ideas of other scholars and researchers who are relevant to the area under study. Also a deep understanding of concepts, theories and tools of analysis was made possible by these materials.

However, since previous studies in African dance have been more of anthropological findings, there is the scarcity of the bibliothecal tools needed for a study of this nature, which is creative - technical. We then had to rely on the

participant observation method since we had to rely on field information to enrich the limited information obtained from the few written materials available.

The researcher was also involved in field research in Nigeria and in Gambia, while on the field in both countries, the researcher worked with both governmental and non-governmental dance troupes both as a trainer, a dance creator, a dance packager, and even in some instance as a performer. Apart from this the researcher also interviewed dance and theatre practitioners in the two countries. This way, an acquisition of first - hand information and knowledge concerning these dances was made possible. This information has facilitated the analysis of these dances as well as made an appreciation of their choreographic nature possible.

We must note, however, that the information acquisition did not go without some problems, especially from our informant groups. There was reluctance in the area of releasing some core information which they felt could jeopardise the monopoly or peculiarities of their own kind of performances in their own particular area.

This information hoarding mentality was also an impediment when traditional ceremonies and ritual festivals were attended for the purpose of observing and studying the indigenous dance in context. Though a great

percentage of the information gathered on the select dances discussed in chapter four was made possible by our attendance at those events, many of our contacts were reluctant to give us information that could demystify the god or ancestral spirit being worshiped during such events. For this reason, the information gathered was in no way exhaustive.

Interviews were also conducted. Relevant personalities and authorities in the area under study were interviewed. These include village priests, elders and chiefs. Also practitioners and choreographers, Arts administrators and managers, Arts scholars and theatre practitioners both within and outside Nigeria were interviewed. Although the data collected through these series of interviews were found useful, more importantly, the interviews confirmed our assumption that there is limited knowledge in the area of choreography in West Africa. Most of the respondents were more comfortable reeling out anthropological, historical and generic facts while little information was provided when questions (like what are the messages in their dances) that required choreographic and creative - technical analysis were asked.

KASHIM IBRAHIM LIBRARY

So, while these approaches facilitated a deep insight into the African dance both in context and in terms of modern dance practice, they also engendered our understanding of the crisis in modern choreography practice in contemporary

Africa.

## LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Much of the discussions in this study are focused on the creative-technical aspect of dance choreography in West Africa. This restriction, though intentional is a limitation in itself as the anthropological and sociological details of African dance would not be judiciously discussed.

A major weakness of this study is the scarcity of literature and other scholarly materials to benefit from. Analysing danceturgy visa- vis its kinesis and proxemics basis is relatively a new endeavour and perhaps its application to African danceturgy is not common yet.

We therefore had to rely heavily on field information with very few written materials.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Score of dance and choreography terminology are used in this study. Although most of these terminologies shall be appropriately defined and explained in chapter three, a few of them which are core to the topic of discussion are defined as follows:

## DANCE VOCABULARY

This is used here to mean a body of dance elements with rules for communing them which make up language through which the dance communicates its intentions. These elements include kinesis, proxemics, costume, make up and even music.

KINESIS:

Kinesis is the study of body movements which make meaning without speech. Here, it is used to cover the various ways in which body movements are used in dance to communicate ideas. Kinesis has to do with how the body communicates while in motion.

PROXEMICS:

Proxemics means the use of space, spatial relationships, and other non-verbal cues like facial expressions, items, body positions and gestures to communicate. In this study, it connotes the use of these elements to heighten communication in dance.

BODY ADORNMENT:

These include costume, make up, tatoo, hair-do, ornaments and other accessories either worn, inserted or painted on the human body but which have communicative values.

DANCETURGY:

Danceturgy a term first used by Dapo Adedugba, is used here to mean the principles of dance composition and the technical devices proper to it. Danceturgy deals with composition and production of dances. Dapo Adelugba, a Nigerian professor of theatre first used this term in a paper he presented at the National Symposium on dance in Minna, Nigeria in the month of August 1985.

The paper is titled "Dance: Relationship with other cultural components". We agree with Dapo Adelugba in his coinage of this terminology which is to choreography what dramaturgy is to playwriting.

PLACE MOVEMENT

A place movement is a dance movement done on a particular sport without moving from one place to another.

GRAVITY LOCOMOTOR

This refers to dance a movements which transits a dancer from one area of the performance space to another area on the same performance space.

These terms shall be further discussed in chapter three when we focus our discussions on kinesis, proxemics and adornment in West African dance composition. But, before then, a review of existing literature on the area under study is necessary.

## END NOTES

1. Warren Lee
2. Kiruja Kak is a foremost Kenyan dance critic
3. Alma M. Hawkins, Creating Through Dance New Jersey: Princeton Book Company, 1988, P. 18.
4. Chris Ugolo "Forging a new direction in Nigerian dance theatre" conference paper presented at the society of Nigerian Theatre Artists convention, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1991 p.3.
5. At the abolishment of slave trade, thousands of already captured Africans who are in slips on their freedom and wandered into the nearest settlements to begin life again having lost hope of being able to return to their original base.
6. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (ed) History of West Africa. (Vol. 1) London: Longman Group Limited, 1965, p.1
7. Ajayi and Crowder, p.3.
8. A gravity locomotor is a dance movement that is floor based but which takes a dancer from one point to another.
9. A place movement is a dance movement done without shifting from one location on the floor to another.
10. Jenkeri okwori: Ije, Performance Traditions of the Idoma Zaria, Instances

Communications resource centre, 1998, P. 10.

11. Okwori, p. 10

12. Okwori, p. 10.1

13. J. S. Mbiti: African Religions and philosophy London, Heinmann Educational Books limited. 1969 p. 75 - 76

# CHAPTER TWO
# LITERATURE REVIEW

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The popularity of dance as an art form in Africa not withstanding, African dance has received limited scholarly attention. Even where such attention exists, much of it is anthropological and generic. This limited scholarly attention has resulted from the attitude of the people who believe that the ability and skills for dance composition are instinctual and as such require no thought and analysis. This is not only incorrect but also has continually limited the body of knowledge available in the area of choreographic practice in Africa.

The limitation has even assumed more dangerous proportions as it has led many researchers and commentators into analysing and describing African choreographic principles and properties as well as African dance aesthetics in misleading terms.

A good example is Walter Sorrell, an exponent of the evolutionist theory and theory of dance who used the word "primitive" to refer to the so-called indigenes of Oceanic, Africa and America while the adjective "civilized" is reserved for the Caucasian race. According to Walter Sorrell, "the dance of the primitive is always serious because it is religious in a self-expressive and

communicative sense and it is social because it is an integrated part of life"[1]. Sorrell apparently believes that the African does not dance for pleasure. His dances are all ritually efficacious and instinctual because "rhythm is primordial with him controlled and yet wild"[2]. He even goes ahead to claim that the "primitive" man has no techniques, no artistry" and describes his dance as a "disorganized range of movements, asserting that his dance is "limited in scope unconscious in approach and repetitious in movements"[3].

The above statements are characterized by ignorance. Sorrell is definitely ignorant of several facts about the nature of African dance. He forgets, for instance, that what determines the rhythm, texture, techniques, artistry, range and scope of movements in the danceturgy of a particular African society is the kinesis and proxemic requirement of the dance as informed and necessitated by the role the dance is meant to perform within the context of that society. He also needs to know that kinesis and proxemic elements in West Africa are not acquired through instinct. Instinct is a biological urge. Dance to the African is not just a biological urge. It is a long process of exposure and training which begins at birth.

While the African woman fastens her child to her back, she goes about her daily routine of sweeping, picking firewood, tilling the soil, she cooks and fetches water from the stream. As she executes these and other activities, the kinesthetic

sense of the child on her back is gradually being tuned.

The child is also, at birth, introduced to a world of colour, costume, rhythm, patterned awareness, shaped human bodies and spatial relationships which permeate through all the stages of his life. Thus he develops the ability to communicate with the world around him through these same elements, which when ignited by powerful rhythm become dance. The rhythm that is involved in this context must have overwhelmed Sorrell's untrained ears as evident in his statement.

Again, Sorrell seems to be oblivious of the fact that the nature of the West African kinesis and proxemics as determined by the West African society gives the African dance a bold texture. Since rhythm is generated from the timely occurrence of this texture, the result is that the kinesic and proxemic rhythm is also bold, and when powered by music, it becomes overwhelming.

However, if Sorrell's Dance through Ages misrepresents African Dance because of his limited knowledge, Hunter's work on West African dance seems coloured by racial prejudice. Hunter, a European anthropologist who researched extensively in Nigeria, was preoccupied with the religious implications of West African dances. Having seen dance as an integral part of religious worship in Africa and an important manifestation of the deity in Africa religious belief, he

suspected that dance had the potentials to perpetuate African religion and so a prejudiced European Christian researcher like Hunter subjected the African dance to the most sustained insidious attacks and merciless ridicule.

For instance, in a short description that accompanies the photograph of a masked dancer from Calabar area in Nigeria, Hunter writes:

> with fantastic dances he parades the streets making extraordinary gestures and contortions, high kicking and the like without rhyme or reason. The whole object of this dance is to conciliate the jujus or devils ... the niger bush native does not pray to his gods to help him but to devil so that he may not be harmed. The dancers primary objective is one of collecting alms (sic)[4]

Conclusions like this which characterise Hunter's works most of which are published in Dancing times, are obvious attempts at denigrating African dance. To Hunter and some other Europeans like him anything not Christian must be of the devil. It is even arguable that the dance described by Hunter above is not a religious dance. The performer in question could have been a professional performer earning his living within the cultural dictates of his society. But without detailed enquiry Hunter presumptiously concluded it must be a religious dance

since he had pre-concluded that every African dance must be a religious dance.

Reactions to the cultural arrogance, blissful ethnocentricism and complexities of ignorance displayed by the early Europeans who first wrote on African dance, as exemplified by Sorrell and Hunter, dominate the works of the pioneer African and African-American dance scholars. This itself is not without a background. Many Africans and African in the diaspora view the works of early European researchers which Sorrell and Hunter typify as manifesting the lasting consequences of racism and that with it, the assumed natural cultural inferiority of the "lesser races" is expressed. But more importantly, in spite of the cessation of slave trade, these racist expressions continue to plague relationships, even in the ever changing contemporary world.

Cultural resistance has therefore become one of the vital forms of struggle Africans and Africans in the diaspora have employed against this perceived racism which is believed to still be actively denigrating people of African ancestry in some parts of Africa, in all the Americas and more recently in Western Europe. Polemical self-assertion and cultural action through energetic activity in the different genres of the performing arts are among the strategies of survival employed by the Africans both at home and abroad. Dance is one of the beneficiaries of this resistance. It has enabled African dance to have more

defenders and advocates in the diaspora Africa.

To this end, Africans in the diaspora such as Kariamu Welsh Asante, Pearl Primus, Rex Nettleford, Doris Green, Esilokun Kinni Olusanyin, Robert W. Nicholls, Tracy Snipe and Felix Begho, to mention a few, have through systematic study, analysis and interpretation of dances in Africa, continually worked for a demarginalised African dance form. Very recently, the major findings, assertions and contributions of these exponents have been published in a compedium titled African Dance, a material which has been described as their ultimate voice and "artistic, historical and philosophical inquiry to African Dance"[4].

In her own contributions, Pearl Primus contended that the prejudice exhibited by the white anthropologists against African dance is because of their ignorance about the nature and functions of African dance. She noted that African dance cannot be separated from other art form of African origin and that neither can it also be separated from the African life. She maintains that African dance is "a part of the whole complex of living. It is a part of the whole or the complex"[5]. Primus underscores the integration of the dynamics of living in the African society and the African dance. She sees African dance as reflective of the communal mode of living, historical experience, ritual worship and even political and occupational activities in African societies.

Describing the techniques of African dance, Primus opined:

> African dance is complete. It ranges from the subtless and most lyric of movements to the most dynamic, from the most sophisticated to the simplest.[6]

This statement counters the notion of poverty of artistry, variety and technique previously expressed by the likes of Sorrell and Hunter.

Commenting on the functions of African dance, Pearl Primus observes that the theme of African dance is all inclusive of every activity between birth and death. She also observes:

> There are... dances which are the exclusive property of certain occupation. ... dances which accompanying story telling, secret socicties have special dances herbalists, healers who are trained to excel in dance. There are dance to Celebrate manhood and those to honour women. There are dances to welcome visitors or to mark the coronation or stepping into office of a new chief.[7]

This statement asserts the facts that African dance permeates the entire phases of the African life and that dance in Africa expresses the totality of the African environment and activity.

Primus also comments on dance training in Africa. She observed that there is a distinction between the trained dancer and somebody who just dances. She asserts that the professional dancer must have been trained from childhood to be a dancer. Having shown special talents and skills for rhythm and dance language, he is apprenticed to a master dancer who employs whatever methodology he feels is appropriate to take this apprentice through a rigorous dance training programme. The dancer-to-be then learns the traditional dances of his people.

While concluding rather correctly that African dance is not complete without costume and music, Primus describes costume in African dance to vary from the most elaborate and exotic to the smooth bare body. She also asserts that apart from some special dances which are performed in silence because of their magico-ritual implications, most dances in Africa are usually accompanied by music. This statement seems more plausible and acceptable than Doris Green's inference that African dance only exists because of its musical accompaniment. Hear her: "If African music would not exist, then African dance would not exist"[8]. There are dances which have taken exception to this rule as Primus earlier noted, and even beyond magico-ritual implications which Pearl offered as a reason for this exception, environmental factors are responsible for the existence of non-music accompanied dances in Africa. An example is the Batoto people of the

Kenyan Valley who perform their dances without musical accompaniment because of their geographical location which is unfavourable to animal habitation. Since animals, whose skins are used to prepare drums, do not live in their neighbourhood, making drums becomes impossible and as such they do their dances unaccompanied.

Doris Green's overstatement notwithstanding however, her contributions which focus on the styles and characteristics of African dance are valid. Like Primus, Green argues that African dance translates the everyday experiences of Africans into movement and therefore concludes that African dance cannot be separated from the African life. She informs us that some of the daily activities in Africa whose movements have been fashioned into dance movements are "eating, occupation, self defence, puberty rites, war etc"[9]. But, perhaps the core of Doris Green's contribution is her going a step beyond Primus by describing the kinetic characteristics of African dance. In her description, Green notes that kinetic activities in African dance can be grouped into two classifications namely "Jumps" and "Body Segmentation"[10].

Under "Jumps", Green observes that African dances explore the entire range of the five types of jumps available. She describes these as:

Jump from both feet to Both feet (jump), from one foot

to the other foot (leap), from one foot to the sane foot (hop), from one foot to both feet (assemble), and from both feet to the foot (sisonne).[11]

All of these jumps, Green asserts are present in African dance movements. Under body segmentation she also notes that African dances utilise a combination or arm, hand and foot placements, body positioning and posture, head, facial and eye expressions. Here, Doris is stating the obvious. African dances are apparently consequential in terms of body physiology. Nevertheless, there are obvious limitations in Green's concerns for the kinetic dimension of the African dance. She seems contented with highlighting the kinetic implications without explaining and decoding the movement vocabularies which she has highlighted. In spite of this limitation however, Green's effort and contribution remain the most kinetically sensitive as most of her peers dispensed their energy discussing the functions and the ritual aspects of African dance without much concern for the kinetic characteristics of its choreography.

For instance, Robert W. Nicholls contributions, apart from re-echoing the earlier statements of Primus and Green concerning the fact the African dance encapsulates the totality of African lifestyle and experience, celebrate the ritualistic nature of most African dances. Writing under the caption "African

dance: Transition and continuity" Robert, Informs us that the kind of rituals found in African dance have been said by sociologists, who examined the problems of alienation and other social ills that accompany industrialization, to be needed in the lives of individuals. Robert also states that:

> As life in modern society becomes increasingly technical, the need for increased participation in effective and aesthetic areas becomes apparent. Dance, as a functional socio-cultural root on the African model could play a part in a cross cultural "effective renaissance"[12].

He laments the effect of modernity on traditional dances, insisting that critical social changes are leading to the demise of many traditional customs which are central to dance:

> Oral traditions are fragile and experience, insight and methodology that have sustained African Communities for generations could well be lost to future generation.[13]

He then counsels:

> It is advisable therefore that relative to traditional African dance an agenda for cultural conservation (And not preservation) should be planned.[14]

He suggests cinematography as the most adequate technique to fixate these dances so that they eternally remain the way they are and not entertain any changes. Robert's good intention notwithstanding, his conservation agenda could be inimical to the growth and development of the African dance. Suffice to say that our traditional values and art form should not be allowed to be eroded by the so-called western civilization. However, suggesting a total conservation of dances instead of preservation could be self destructive as it will fossilize African dance and consequently lead to its extinction. Dance is a dynamic art form that must keep adapting itself to the changing needs and temperament of the society if it must survive. This is the point of departure between the contributions of Robert Nicholas and those of Tracy D. Snipe.

Tracy, whose major concern has been to investigate the various roles dance plays in the African societies, also re-echoes the fact that dance transverses the different phases and facets of life in the African societies thereby forming a link between these phases and facets. He noted that African dance plays socio-cultural aesthetic, political and religious roles. But most importantly, Tracy celebrates the 'development' that has come to African dance as a result of cross-cultural influences coming from modernization and change. He particularly cited the high life music and dance on West African coasts as examples and therefore argues that

dance has the power to enhance inter-cultural relations. He explains further:

> Two components of inter-cultural relations are
>
> inter-human awareness and cross cultural communication. Dance
>
> should be used to enhance this symbolic relationship.
>
> This is when the assertion that dance is a universal language can be
>
> authentic.[15]

In using dance to enhance the symbolic relationship, however, Tracy warns that it can only thrive when ethnocentricism and puritanic postures, especially against African dances by the West, are stopped.

We agree with Tracy that African dance should be allowed to respond to modern changes and also be inter-culturally relevant, especially with the world becoming "a village". A well packaged African dance in accordance with Tracy's suggestions could even become a tool for cultural diplomacy. But this emancipitation should be done with some level of selectivism and discrimination.

Felix Begho has done an extensive work on the classification of African dances. Inspired by what he termed ' questionable and 'mis informed' categories suggested by the Nigerian civil servants who were assigned with the task of classifying African dances in readiness for Festac 77, Felix Begho went into study of African dances and came up with his own classifications.

Published under the title Traditional African Dance in Context. His classification bring African dances under eight categories namely:

i. Sacred dances: Dances done under ritual situations either in worship of ancestral spirits or deities or in making request from this spirits or deities.

ii. Ceremonial dances: This classification refers to those dances done to celebrate events like naming ceremony, marriage ceremony, house warming and so on.

iii. Entertainment dances: This are dances created for the purpose of entertaining a given audience. This connotes the idea of dance for dance sake.

iv. Recreational and party dances: By this, Begho implies dances done o facilitate social interaction and recreation among people.

v. Contemporary dances: These are dances created by individual persons who can lay claim to such dances as their own creation as opposed to the traditional dances that are owned by the entire community.

vi. Religious dances: Begho is referring here, to dances, done in churches, and mosques in worship of the Almighty God.

vii. Cultural revival dance shows: By this, Begho means dances performed during national and state cultural festivals and competitions.

viii. Night club dances: these are dances in the night clubs for social relaxation.

He further divides sacred dances into sub-categories such as traditional religious dances, cult dances and ritual dances, while ceremonial dances are further sub-categorized as ceremonial sectarian (Age and Sex group, Aristocratic nuptial procreative and occupational dances, ceremonial - communal (Harvet Festival, Heroic, Funeral, Coronation and title taking dances). He also sub-divides entertainment dances into selected masquerades dances, acrobatic displays and medicinally protected (sic) dances, metropolitan neo-traditional creative dances and contemporary creative dances.

Begho's classification obviously need some streamlining and modifications. For example, implying that sacred dances is a classification different from religious dances is not true. Dances that are sacred are also religious. They are referred to as sacred because of the spiritual personalities being communed with during the performances and because of the spiritual functions the dances perform in the societies in terms of supplication, ritual worship, protection and provision. Likewise, the category he refers to as the night club dances may not be necessary since he has already mentioned another classification which he calls recreational and party dances. The night club dances should naturally fall under the recreational and party classification because attendants at night clubs either go there to recreate or to participate at a party which is still part of recreation.

Generally, however, Begho's pronouncements show that his survey is obviously not limited to the indigenous dance forms. He apparently has surveyed the entire gamut of dance practice in Africa and concluded that whether in the indigenous or in the contemporary forms, whatever is seen on the African dance scene is an African dance. This, perhaps, is why he has the religious dance classification different from sacred dance classification as he might have classified the dances done in the Christian churches, and of late, mosques, under the religious dance classification. But this does not call for a separate classification. Begho's seeming conclusion that church and mosque dances done in Africa still qualify to be called African dance leads more credence to the fact that all should have been under the sacred dances classification since even in the churches and mosque, the dances are used for sacred purposes. The concept of the divine may be different between the traditional and Christian / Islamic religions, but they are both religions whose activities are sacred.

Beyond Begho, Omofolabo Ajayi has further studied the religious dances elaborately. In her "In contest: The dynamics of African Religious Dances", Omofolabi Ajayi views African dance as one of the means the African uses in reaching the divine. According to her:

> Dance is undoubtedly a vital means of communicating with the

sacred in African religious practices. It is an expensive form fully integrated within the worship system.[16]

She emphasises the importance of dance to religious worship in Africa and maintains that this is made possible by three factors. First is the "cultural concept of the sacred in Africa which makes us to visualize a multiplicity of sacred forces functioning as assistants to the supreme creator"[17]. This she says leads to a holistic concept of the universe in Africa which makes the cosmos, to us, a single unifying entity which embraces the human society and the transcendental powers in a continuous cycle of interaction and regeneration. In her words:

> the earth connects with the sky through the rains, the sun, the rivers all of which are generative forces nourishing the human society enveloped within the circle.[18]

She then believes that the basis for the African concept of the sacred is formed by this embracing totality. Implicit in this understanding is the belief that everything created by the supreme being must have some of his sacred nature and creative force imprinted on it. This makes possible a situation where the sacred permeates both the religious world of the intangible, the spiritually infinite and the more concrete and easily perceptible cultural space where dance exists.

The second factor Omofolabo mentioned is the nature of dance being both a sign and a vehicle of communication which is able to express an action and an idea and at the same time it is the action and the idea it expresses. Therefore in a religious worship where devotees variously seek link with the divine, Omofolabo believes "dance becomes the medium for an economic and composite communication sign"[19].

Thirdly, Omofolabo argues that since human beings as one of God's creatures have associative sacred attributes in African cultures, it is not incongrous to use the body in the glorification of God and other divine manifestations. She then groups African religious dances as worship dance, invocation dance, transcendental (possession) dance and celebrative dance. She decries the negative effects of the new religions, especially Islam and Christianity, on African dance, though she expresses some hope in the fact that churches and even Islamic groups in Africa are now allowing dances as part of worship in order to be able to keep their converts.

Apart from African - Americans and Africans abroad whose major contributions have been highlighted, some major exponents on African dance on the African soil have also made immense contributions to African dance scholarship. These exponents include Ossie Enekwe, Kiruja Kaka, Sam Opoku,

Peter Badejo, Lantana Odekunle, Jenkeri Okwori and Iortange Igoil. Let us consider their contributions.

In his book, Theories of Dance in Nigeria, Ossie Enekwe analysis the rich traditions of dance in Nigeria and Africa from an Afrocentric point of view. His work focuses on the nature and function of African traditional dance. In response to what Enekwe considers "the racial factor in European theory of African dance",[20] his work quarrels with the fact that African dance has been subjected to judgement according to western aesthetic criteria which pronounce it lacking in certain areas. Not only that, he also condemns the utterances and activities of those he refers to as "European - oriented choreographers.. who see art as mere entertainment"[21]

In defense of African dance, Ossie Enekwe convincingly argues that the values favoured by

> western - oriented scholars including a clear separation between performers and audience a fixed duration of the performance emphasis on individual talent, the commercialization of dance, and a strictly entertainment raison d'etre - are antithetical to the values placed on dance by African communities.[22]

He then asserts that African dance "has magical and mystical values. It is used to secure an increase in fertility and good luck and to chase away evil influences and powers"[23]. Despite its efficacious nature, Ossie still argues that efficacy does not undermine creativity and that "Dance permeates the social life of Nigerian (Africans)"[24] (parenthesis mine).

According to him, "not only does it offer young men and women opportunity to show off themselves, thus encouraging courtship, it provides training for work and combat"25. Concerning fixation of duration of a performance, Ossie maintains that Aristotle's pronouncement on the "right order" and "definite size" is relative as in every society theatre has unique nature and functions that are peculiar to it. He says that since the African community doses not mind how long a dance performance lasts provided it satisfies their own aesthetic taste, fixation of duration is irrelevant. Ossie's work is relevant to a point. At least, it attempts to correct some anthropological misconceptions concerning the nature and function of African dance. But he also errs when he attempts to fossilize African dance by suggesting that it should not develop beyond what the orthodox tradition prescribes and that no interference should be tolerated. By celebrating the "Freedom with which our traditional people have enjoyed the practice of their dances"[26] which according to him is as a result of "non -

interference from the so-called dance experts"[27], and by condemning in totality the commercialization of dance art by it practitioners, Ossie Enekwe is erroneously suggesting that culture is static. He even pushes this argument further by stating that "Dance in Africa has remained a vital and dynamic art form because it has been allowed to thrive in a predominantly rural area"[28] and then quarrels with Peggy Harper's[29] professional classification of dance into Ethnic and Theatrical - an obvious hangover from the energy wasting relativist and evolutionist argument on African performance traditions.

In the contemporary times, dance has become a vital area of interest in theatre and Creative Arts programmes and so can not escape the interference of the trained expert who partly practices for commercial reasons. Furthermore, it is legitimate if what such experts practice is not overtly traditional since they are creative personalities whose creations should be a unique product that result from a blend of old forms with new contents hence the legitimacy of Harper's classification. In the current dispensation, Enekwe's position is untenable because dances are created in response to changing times, attitudes and levels of human existence within an environment.

Ossie Enekwe's thought and position re-echo in Sam Akpabot's several newspaper articles on African music and dance. Akpabot, a Nigerian professor of

music consistently maintains that the sanctity and originality of African dances must be maintained. To this end he concluded that "choreographers have no place in the new African theatre because African dance need not be choreographed"[30]. Akpabot's impression is that choreographers by orientation and European in thinking and practice and choreography is therefore a foreign concept which is potentially dangerous to the preservation of African dances.

Akpabot's statement reflects some limitations on his part regarding knowledge in the area of choreography and even shows his level of understanding of African dances. The dances of a particular society are different from those of other societies because of the manner in which their kinesis and proxemics are applied, infused and manipulated, African dances inclusive.

This manner of application, infusion and manipulation is in turn determined by the values, beliefs, temperament, geography, political experience, occupational activities and the world view of the society which practices the dance. The process of manipulation, infusion and application of kinesis and proxemics as dictated by values, beliefs, temperament, geography and world wide, is located within the concept of choreography and this activity predates what Akpabot describes as the new African theatre.

Akpabot sees the "New African Theatre" as a place where everything Euro-American should be an aberration, a place where African performance arts should be performed with original precision. This is not correct. Choreography as an art does not belong to the Euro-American race, and African dance even in its most original state is still a work of choreography.

In fact, it has been established that some of the indigenous African dances that have survived till today did so due to the activities of the same choreographers Akpabot despises. One of those dances is the Tiv (Nigeria) dance called *Swange* whose development has been accounted for by Iyortange Igoil.

Iyortange, who has worked extensively in the area of continuity and change in Tiv music and dance, informs us that dance had thrived in Tiv society because of the dynamic nature of their dances. According to Igoil, *Swange*, arguably the most popular and enjoyable Tiv dance, is a by bridization of the two folk dances that existed in the past. These dances were called *Ange* and *Agbaga*. *Ange* and Agbaga were satirical performances used by youths to abuse and lament the misdeeds of the older men because the Tiv society is strongly structured on the age grade system. In the past, the youths used the two dances to protest against their oppression by the elders. But in modern times, when the kind of relationship that existed between the youths and the older men seems to have changed, the Agbaga

music and dance style seem to have declined in popularity because the youths do not need it any longer as an avenue to air their grievances against the elders".[31]

Iyortange informs us that when this form became irrelevant to the youths who have diverted their attention from 'biting remarks" and "violent abuses" to mutual social co-existence with the elders as a result of societal changes, other dances like Gbagi, which are more or less to facilitate social interaction emerged. It was from Gbagi that Jerry Ugba, a Choreographer and social welfare officer, created the swange dance in 1957. With the attention of the youths shifting to social interaction among members of the opposite sexes, Iyortange says Jerry Ugba - a social welfare officer with Gboko Local Authority at that time - thought of creating a music and dance style that would be relevant to the new aesthetic taste, desire, temperament and the new disposition of the members of the society, especially the youth.

Swange, as performed today, therefore combines the movements and texture of the two old dances - old dances that would have gone into extinction but for the choreographic activities of Jerry Ugba, who perpetuated their existence through adaptation into contemporary contexts. This development is not too dissimilar to what Peter Badejo, the Nigerian choreographer whose major contribution to dance scholarship is an in-depth study of the Bori dance in Nigeria,

asserts that the Bori religion has existed till today because of its dance and music which continually allows for adaptation. Badejo's study exposits on the historical development of Bori dance including its origination from the Hausa ethnic group know as the Maguzawas, its function being to heal the sick and deliver the possessed from the torment of evil spirits.

Badejo informs us that Bori has survived till today because its "dance and music have guaranteed its (bori) survival through the changes"[1] they tolerate and get adapted into the contemporary world. According to Badejo, dance in Bori religion serves as a means of communication between man and spirits. It also serves as a means of preservation of some non-Islamic practices and as a means of traditional therapeutic healing and medicine. It also serves as a means of exhibiting the traditional Hausa societies relationship with the forces that govern their daily life.

Badejo further explains:

> Despite all political, religious and social pressure imposed on Bori, it has survived as a means of understanding both indigenous and non-Hausa elements of culture in the contemporary Hausa

society . This has been achieved through its most dynamic elements of dance and music.[33]

He then concludes by recommending that:

> "Dance being a vital and loving art that responds to socio-economic, and political events should ideally be properly explored through historical research and presentation to enable it perform its functions in the contemporary setting".[34]

Badejo's recommendation also appears not too distant from Jenkeri Okwori's conclusions in his Ije; The performing traditions of the Idoma which has been his major contribution to Dance scholarship in Nigeria and which also covers the entire performative horizon in Africa. This book is an exposition on the origin, nature, function and techniques of ritual performance in Idoma societies in the present Benue State, Nigeria. It also discusses the Idoma belief system and articulates the oneness of music and dance forms in Idoma and, by extension, the whole of Africa. The inseparable nature of these art forms and the cohesive nature of dance form in Idoma form the basis of Okwori's argument in this study.

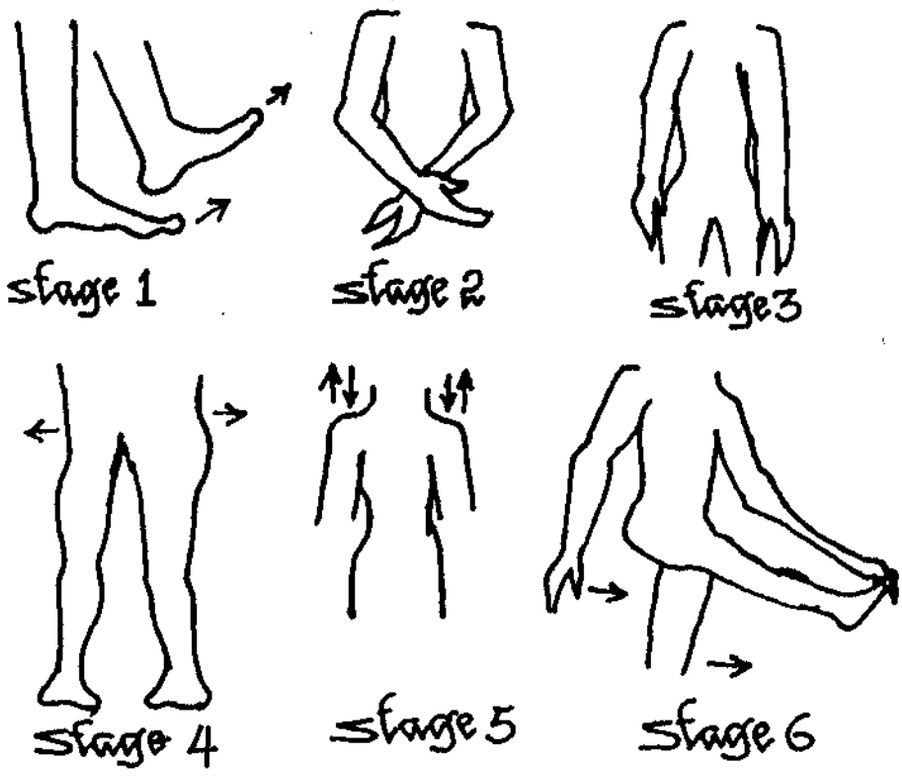
Ije, Okwori says, embraces music, song, poetry and dance, though each item could be described with an adjective qualifying the Ije, like Ije Ogwo (song) Ije Ojo (dance) Ije Ogowo (music). The therefore quarrels with the idea of seeing African Oral literature as literature since it manifests mostly in performance. He then argues that instead of African scholars engaging in the evolutionist relativists' arguments they should go beyond theater and drama to their indigenous performances to see what function these art forms perform for their communities and the socio-political and historical experiments which made these indigenous people evolve their kinds of arts and the values and the ideology they preach.

Okwori's work is probably more relevant to the future of dance scholarship and contemporary choreographic practice in African than the works of most other Nigerian scholars who wrote before him. Two reasons are responsible for this conclusion. First is the vigorous attempt made at vividly and professionally describing the kinetic activities of the select dances. See an example: 'the dance movement on the road is graceful, involving two taps with each foot which at the same time sway the body forwards".[35] Okwori here, has gone into the realism of movement description using choreographic language. Most of the literatures which existed on dance in Nigeria before Okwori's pay less attention to movement descriptions.

Okwori's style of presentation, which gives a vivid description of dance movements and a fair attempt at suggesting their meanings, makes his work choreographically relevant even to the contemporary practitioner. See another example in his discussion on the second and third dances in Ode dance performance:

> The steps for this dance involve the two legs doing two quick steps forwards in quick succession as the hands cross in front of the body and relax by the side alternatively. The waist gyrates and is the centre of focus in this dance. The third dance entails a shoulder to shoulder movement by the dancers sideways. The legs are thrown forwards alternatively like one kicking a football while the fingers of the opposite hand touch the toes of the leg that is shot forward.
>
> ... This dance satirises those who conduct errands for others and fail to do things for themselves.[36]

Attempts to give detailed descriptions of the kinetic dimensions of African dances are something uncommon in the works of most of the scholars we have studied. But this is very important if the frontiers of scholarship and creativity as regard dance in Africa must be pushed forward. For example, Okwori's power of description makes it possible for a contemporary choreographer to notate the dance in question thus:



Secondly, although Okwori's study laments the cultural erosion which the performance traditions of Idoma are seemingly facing as a result of change through historical and social pressure, it is positive that the contemporary producer or performance practitioner can still harness the traditions to develop the Idoma people making the traditions relevant to contemporary living through the adaption of indigenous performances to communicate contemporary living. But he also cautions that to create an acceptable work of art for the Idoma people, their artistic forms of expression should be used. He cites the successful experiments of Ngugi in Kenya, where the use of the people's artistic forms was highly successful and accepted by the people.

Having categorised the Idoma performances in to two the ritual and the non-ritual/entertainment, the study shows that people evolved such forms as they grapple with the contradictions of their environment. In this conclusion, Okwori reiterates that changes have occurred in Idoma performances through the process of colonization and the hegemonic tendency of the elite in Nigeria (Africa) today. He then recommends that changes which occur in the people's performing arts should be deployed to the services of the people and their societies.

This recommendation corroborates the argument put forward by Kiruja Kaka, the Kenyan dance scholar whose years of research have produced a book title Lyrical Choreography: The cultural lyric dance.

Kiruja's work is a stylistic approach to the intrigues of dance and dancing as an art form of human communication, and how this "folk media of communication" travels along the path of social dynamics, consistently adjusting itself to stay abreast with the ever changing ways of living and thinking. Kiruja in his work sees dance as a phenomenon which tells us a great deal about the ways of living and thinking of those that own it. According to him, "through dance we gain a deeper insight and underway of a community's psychologies and philosophies. Dance constitute sincere indicators into a people's culture"[37] (sic)

It is therefore argued by Kiruja that since dance indicates the culture of a people, it is correct to say that as this culture changes the dance also adjusts itself to reflect the new culture. The broad issue which a concerted effort was made to address in Kaka's book is how dance, being a folk media of communication, transcends its own cultural barriers to embrace the larger universal world as an acceptable art form, but without losing its own cultural identity, forms and constants.

Dance is therefore seen by Kiruja as a potential world language, but which can only be meaningfully deployed when and if its practitioners research into the authentic orthodox movements and dance codes of world societies with the aim of using these orthodox movements to generate new and universal meanings but within the people's accepted forms and norms. This thinking is also echoed by William Ofotsu Adinku, a Ghanaian choreographer and dance educationist, in his book African Dance Education in Ghana.

In this book, Adinku chronicles the development of dance education in Ghana from 1962 when the Ghanaian National Troupe by the name, "The Ghana Dance Ensemble" was formed as a section in the university of Ghana, Legon. He argues that for a dance to be developed to acquire a Ghanaian and an African character, dance developer will need to draw on models of our total cultural inheritance. He argues further:

> Until the well springs of the dance cultures are made
> to nourish our new dance forms, we can not describe
> our development as healthy[38].

It is in the light of the above that Adinku counsels that dance educators, planners, performers and choreographers who wish to develop new dances for the emergent theatre and education system must reshape the old model into new

forms. But to do this, Adinku says that "the dance developers need education in the essences of the traditional dances as well as in creative issues to enable them to meet the challenges of our new cultural and educational evolution"[19]. Adinku therefore advocates a new methodology of enhancing the old teaching system of dance in the university of Ghana and a proposed curriculum is drawn to meet the training an educational needs of African dance developers.

While the efforts of the scholars and practitioners whose works have been reviewed here are commendable and highly fundamental to the study and practice of African dance, a general limitation is observed in the various works. Except for the last three scholars, Okwori, Kiruja and Adinku, most of the studies have been largely tilted towards historical anthropology of African dance, including roles and functions of dance in the African societies. While this is relevant to a point, the studies are highly limited because they do not address the question of how African dance can be relevant in the emerging new African theatre and also be made to practically serve its owners in the ever-changing dynamics of contemporary living.

However, Okwori, Kaka and Adinku attempt to fill this gap, but they do not quite unearth the elements which engineer the body of vocabularies that form the ingredients for communication in African dance. These vocabularies, whose meanings need to be understood by both the users of the dances (the

choreographic communicators) and those who are the recipient of the communication (the audience), form the focus of this study.

It is the concern of this study that for dance to be relevant to the dynamics of contemporary living, there is the need for dance to become a vital tool of communication; and for this to be achieved, there is the need for the choreographers and their audience to dig into the dance cultures of Africa with the aim of acquiring the codes and vocabularies used for communication in African dances. The generic meanings of these codes and vocabularies could then be used in communicating contemporary issues and ideas. This way, African dance forms will survive better since their elements of communication will be relevant in the contemporary dispensation.

Elements of choreographic communication which manifest in dance codes and vocabularies; are kinesis, proxemics, body adornments, properties and even music. These elements are what make the dances of a particular society different from those of other societies. They are what make a West African dance to be West African and acceptable to the West African people, and they are also the basis for dance composition in West Africa.

The essence and nature of these elements in West African dance composition and production shall be analysed and justified in the next chapter.

# ENDNOTES

1. Walter Sorrell, The Dance Through the Ages. New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1967, p.10.
2. Walter Sorrel, P.10.
3. Walter Sorrel, p.11.
4. Omofolabo Soyinka Ajayi, "In contest: The Dynamics of Africa Religious Dances" in Kariamu Welsh Asante (ed.), African Dance. Trenton: Africa World Press, INC., 1996. p.173.
5. Rider to Welsh Asante's (ed) African Dance title.
6. Pearl Primus "African Dance" post humously published in Welsh Asante, p.4.
7. Pearl Primus. p.5.
8. Pearl Primus. P.6.
9. Doris Green, "Traditional Dance in Africa" published in Welsh Asante, p.13.
10. Doris Green. p.14.
11. Doris Green. p.15.
12. Robert W. Nicholls, "African Dance: Transition and Continuity" in Welsh Asante. p.41.

13. Robert W. Nicholls P.41

14. Robert W. Nicholls, P.41.

15. Tracy D. Snipe, "African Dance: Bridges to Humanity" in Welsh Asante, p.71.

16. Omofolabo Soyinka Ajayi in Welsh Asante, p.184.

17. Omofolabo Soyinka Ajayi, p.184.

18. Omofolabo Soyinka Ajayi, P.185.

19. Omofolabo Soyinka Ajayi, P.186.

20. Ossie Enekwe, Theories of Dance in Nigeria., Nsukka: Afa Press, 1991, p.7.

21. Ossie Enekwe, p.28.

22. Ossie Enekwe, P.5.

23. Ossie Enekwe, P.13.

24. Ossie Enekwe, P.14.

25. Ossie Enekwe, P.14.

26. Ossie Enekwe, P.15

27. Ossie Enekwe, P.15

28. Ossie Enekwe, P.12.

29. Peggy Harper, a white South African, taught, practiced and researched Dance in Nigeria in the 70s.

30. Sam Akpabot, "African Music", a weekly column in the Daily Guardian Newspaper, 1993.

31. Iyortange Igoil, "Continuity and change in Tiv music and dance". Unpublished Seminar paper presented at the seminar on African Arts in Historical Perspective, organised by the centre for cultural studies, University of Lagos, December 1984, p.8.

32. Peter Badejo, "Dance and Music: Essential Element of Bori Survival paper presented at The National Symposium on Dance: Ibadan, 1986, p.2.

33. Peter Badejo, P.23.

34. Peter Badejo, P.23.

35. Jenkeri Okwori, Ije: Performance Traditions of the Idoma, Zaria. Communications Resource Centre, 1998. p.28.

36. Jenkeri Okwori, P.52.

37. Kiruja Kaka.

38. Ofotsu Adinku, African Dance Education in Ghana, Accra; Ghana Universities.

39. Ofotsu Adinku, p.10.

# CHAPTER THREE

## KINESIS, PROXEMICS AND ADORNMENTS: THE TECHNICAL BASIS OF CHOREOGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION IN WEST AFRICAN DANCETURGY

# CHAPTER THREE

## KINESIS, PROXEMICS AND ADORNMENTS: THE TECHNICAL BASIS OF CHOREOGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION IN WEST AFRICAN DANCETURGY

It is important to explain at this point that choreography, though a creative art, strictly has a highly technical procedure. This implies that it must have its own language and terminologies - words exclusive to it whose meanings may not conform with anthropological or dramaturgical expressions. This has an implication for this study, especially this chapter, the nature of the study being creative - technical and not anthropological on one hand, and being danceturgical and not dramaturgical on the other hand. In this chapter the discussions will be strictly technical, deploying choreographic tools and instruments of analysis.

In the West African Orthodox dance, meanings and ideas are communicated through the use of kinesis, proxemics and adornments. This means that kinesis, proxemics and adornments are the technical elements of choreographic communication used by the West African orthodox choreographers in their dances. These elements serve as the carriers of the vocabularies and codes which the various dances and their choreographers speak in. By implication, therefore, these elements form the basis of dance composition in West Africa. It

is the summation of these elements which approximate or coalesce into a body of practice - danceturgy.

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of the nature of these elements, and the principles with which they are manipulated to generate meanings in West African dances. It is also pertinent to note that some of these elements have been defined in chapter one.

A detailed study of West African danceturgy indicates an availability of varieties of themes. The motivation for the creation of dance seems to have been derived from the themes which the composers have made to be their emphasis or target aim. But these themes themselves are realised through the use of:

a. Kinetic activities which involve body movement, bodily gestures and facial expressions (Kinesis),

b. placement of dancers in space, spatial relationships between dancers (proxemics),

c. Costume and make-up design and properties and colour interpretations (adornments). Throughout the process of creating, the composer constantly checks his manipulation and use of these elements in relation to the focus of the dance.

From observations, some of the themes derivable through the use of these elements are religion, war, fertility, creation, occupation, philosophy, aesthetics, physiology, marriage and death, to mention a few.

From the way these elements are manipulated in the dances, it is obvious that composers seem to have benefitted from the three kinds of motivation or stimuli in existence. These are "Kinesthetic, tactile and ideational stimuli".[1] When the manner of manipulation of these elements has physiological considerations, the stimulus is kinesthetic. Sometimes too, the choice could be propelled by feelings and the stimulus is tactile. Also, the choice is motivated by the urge to teach or inculcate ideas and values and the stimulus in such a case is ideational.

In such dances where the choice of technical elements and their manipulation have physiological consideration, the tendency for the exhibition of kinesthetic sense and awareness appears to be the major characteristics. This results in a type of dance called Pure dance.[2] A pure dance is a dance that seeks to explore and show the limitless movement potentials and possibilities of the human body. A good example is the vigorous Mponkiti dance of the Igbo which is an exhibition of movement.

However, it is observed that while some of the dances in this category explore a wide range of movement and general use of body parts, some of them only utilize some specific parts of the body whose movement potentials they are out to explore. Such dances fall under the classification referred to as "study dance".[3] A study dance is a "study" of the potentials of the body parts that are involved in the movement. It is an investigation into the diverse ways that particular parts of the body can be utilized in dance.

The dancer in study dance has a limited range of movements because he is exhibiting the movement potentials and possibilities of a particular part of the body which he has singled out, studied and is now exhibiting its movement potentials. An example, is the Samba dance of the Kagoro people in Kaduna State of Nigeria where the movement potentials of the waist is the focus.

When the choice of elements and their manipulations in a dance are propelled by feelings, idea and textures of shapes of objects, the movement idea as well as postures are abstracted from those objects or things. This qualifies to be referred to as abstract dance because the motivating idea for movement composition is abstracted from object or nature.

Some of these shapes and ideas are comic in manifestation thereby invoking laughter. In this case the elemental arrangement is slightly different from abstract

dances. Body parts are deliberately manipulated in ways that appear unusual or out of normal. Sometimes minute areas of the body like eyelids, lips, nose, fingers, necks, etc. are contorted into abnormal shapes or they are shaken excessively thereby generating laughter. Such elemental arrangement is noticed in the Kaulak dance of the Senegalese where the postures of monkeys and baboons are sometimes assumed by the dancer as he gesticulates profusely with his lips, eyelids and nose. Dances which are characterised by the features described above could be classified as comic dances. The stimulus for their elemental manipulation and arrangement is tactile.

The elemental manipulation of some other dances in West Africa is clearly seen to be channeled towards narratives. Such dances concern themselves with ideas that could only by communicated in narrative form. These are dances that use narrative technique and as such could be called narrative dances. Their elemental manipulation and arrangement are done to enact a series of actions and events that are complete. The stimulus for them is ideational. An example is the bridal dance of the Okun people in the present Kogi State of Nigeria. In the dance, the elements are used to tell the story of how the couple met each other, wooed each other and finally got married.

However, there are some elemental arrangements that express concrete actions without being narrative. These are referred to as dramatic dance. This is a point of departure between West African dances and the dances of other world cultures which make some dance scholars like Agnes de Mille conclude that dances that are not narrative but dramatic in nature have no story to tell. Perhaps this is not exactly true of Africa. For instance, the Nnabo dance of the Efik in Nigeria is a dramatic dance became it expresses the mood of the spirit whose character the dancer has assumed. But in spite of it not being narrative in technique, it tells a story. Perhaps the story lies outside the dance yet decides its form and meaning. The trance dances of West Africa as exemplified by the Gambian N'dep is another example. In the trance dances, a higher state of consciousness is exhibited. These could be classified as dramatic dances but the ideational stimulus which propels them implies that they are composed to communicate particular ideas. In this case the people's ideas about the relationships between the dancer and the spirits involved in the trance are inherent in the dance. Such relationships, in Africa, always have stories behind them.

It is important to mention that these elements - kinesis, proxemics and adornments - weigh heavier than each other depending on the type of dance that is being composed at a given time. For instance the composition of pure and study

dances is anchored on kinesis. Though other elements are also involved, their involvements are minimal. Since pure and study dances are exploration of movement potentials of the parts of the body, kinetic activities, which are inherently encapsulated in kinesis, are emphasised. This is different from narrative dances which utilise the whole of the elements almost on equal proportion depending on what is being communicated in each situation and which elements best communicates it as the story unfolds.

Also in the composition of dramatic dances, since most of the dances under this classification in West Africa have magico-ritual dimensions, the use of adornment and kinesis as elements of choreographic communication sometimes weighs heavier than proxemics.

Whatever type a particular dance is classified to be, its elements of choreographic communication have a set of principles through which the content materials of the dances are unfolded and revealed. These principles such as posture, balance-compensation, gravity, breathing and rhythm aid kinesthetic awareness and perception which is a sensory data and therefore essential to the entire process of movement execution.

It is not the Balance-Compensation only that provides coherence for the West African dance movement. The constant shift of the body and its kinesic manipulations make the dancer always to be in and out of the gravitational force while in motion.

The gravitational force is that pulling force which draws all material objects including the human body downwards towards the surface of the earth. This force holds them in contact with the surface of the earth or with some other solid which in turn is in contact with the earth's surface. This force acts on all parts of every object but it concentrates its pull on the weight centre of the object which is the centre of gravity.

From the kinesic mechanisms inherent in West African danceturgy the centre of gravity is constantly the area of the body referred to as the solar plexus. It is about two inches below the navel and it includes the base of the spine. The legs form the supporting structure for the centre of gravity and the feet are the supporting base.

When the body segments are properly alined, the line of gravity as seen from the side view passes behind the ear and runs through the shoulder to the middle of the hip and terminates at the ankle.

The active human body is constantly moving in and out of gravity. This means for dance to occur, the body continuously shifts in space. For a dancer to give into gravity his body releases energy through exhalation. The body relaxes when it succumbs to the gravitational pull but builds up tension when it moves out of the gravitational pull and inhalation most often results. The tension generated in this way supplies energy to the muscles.

In kinesis, moving into gravity may, for example, suggest depression, while moving away from it by leaping into the air may mean excitement.

The principle of gravity works in conjunction with another principle which is breathing. Breathing suggest "aliveness". It intensifies the giving into and rebounding from gravity. The simple rise and fall of the lungs while breathing, when transferred to other parts of the body with its natural rhythm of inhalation, suspense and exhalation makes breathing part of movement.

Apart from breathing combining with other principles to make expressive movement occur, these movements have to occur to specific timing in order to be rhythmic, and it is rhythm that transforms ordinary movements to dance movements.

Rhythm is a fundamental principle without which dance cannot occur. For any kinetic activity to result in dance, it must be rhythmic. This explains in part

the heavy influence music has on West African dances. Dance and music both share the principle of rhythm. In music, it is sound that must occur to timing while in dance, it is movement. The principle of rhythm operates both at the level of the body and at the level of sound.

However, the principles discussed above manifest physically when energy is released into the part of the body that is involved in the desired movement. The manner in which the energy is released coupled with the manner of flow throughout the course of executing that movement gives the movement a particular quality. Agnes de Mille[4], and Cheney[5] have observed that there are seven of those qualities in western dances depending on the manner of release and flow of energy. The same exists in African dances.

KAD... LIBRARY

In some West African dances, it is observed that when the release of energy moves a part of the body to one direction another release of energy acts upon it and moves that part of the body back to the original position. When this process is continuous, a swinging quality is generated.

This could be likened to the to and fro movement of the giant wall clock. It gives a feeling of carefreeness, freedom, being playful or an atmosphere of relaxation. One of such dances where this has been noticed is the Koroso of the Kano people of Nigeria with the excessive swing of the arms and legs.

There are some other situations when the energy supplied to part of the body in motion is intermittent and does not flow smoothly. An example is the locomotor footwork in the Senegalese Kaulak. The quality of movement generated is staccato. The energy is supplied at intervals with short pauses. This gives a feeling of hesitation, a state of being tensed or working towards making a decision.

The staccato quality also reflects to a certain level in dances where war, anger and violence are intended but the dominating quality in these kind of dances is the vibratory quality. The supply of energy in vibratory quality is recurrent and as such the body is set in motion. The energy supplied is regular and the amount is constant while the speed is always very fast. When the energy flow stops, the movement also stops. The nature of energy flow makes the body vibrate thereby generating a vibrating quality which suggest anger, acute tensions, fright and combat. An example, of this is the Ohafia war dance in Ohafia, Abia State, Nigeria where the body vibrates as the dancers enact their activities in the battle field. The Ekong dance of the Annang in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria and the Kusamarie dance of The Gambian Jolas are also examples.

Sometimes, a forceful and deep supply of energy is notice in some western African dances. This supply occurs once without any follow-up. It is short and

very forceful just like hitting the table with a hammer once or an explosion that comes only once without an echo. The quality of movement generated in this instance is percussive in nature and it expresses shock or sudden seizure. This is mostly observed in possession dances such as the Hausa Bori in Nigeria and the Ndep dance of the Madinika people in Gambia and Senegal.

While energy supply in percussive quality occurs once without a follow-up, there are some kinesic activities that are propelled by uninterrupted and continuous flow of the energy without any break, however minute. The energy seems to flow smoothly and endlessly with the amount of energy and force applied at the beginning being carried through. It compares with a straight line that is prolonged cyclically. When this occurs in West African danceturgy, the quality generated is known as sustained quality. It suggests endlessness, progress and longevity. An example is the Ovia Osese fertility ritual performance of the Ogori people in Kogi State, Nigeria where the perpetual nature of existence is sign poste by a sustained circular movement done by near-nude maidens.

In some West African kinesic operations, the part of the body in motion defies the gravitation law for a period. For that period, that part of the body is suspended. An example is when two hands are thrown up in supplication and ritualistic movements as seen in the Jola Bugarabu dance in Senegal and Gambia.

The existence of this quality in West African danceturgy contradicts the wide claim among Western dance analysts that West African dances are perpetually earth bound because of the belief of Africans in a god who resides in the bowel of the earth.

A direct opposite of suspended quality in West African danceturgy is the collapsed quality. This happens in form of a fall. Most times, it is suspended quality that ends in a collapsed state. When the body is in the collapsed state, it has fully surrendered to the law of gravity. During a collapsed movement, there is total loss of energy, then the body sinks to the floor. It suggests tiredness, weariness or death. A classical example of this is the leap and fall movement in the Hausa Bori performance where a dispossessed faithful leaps and "collapses" on his buttocks to suggest exhaustion.

However, it is observable in the analysis made that these qualities can possible overlap. There are quite interrelated. The collapsed quality for instance has an element of percussion, while the suspended hands in Koroso dance for instance also swing.

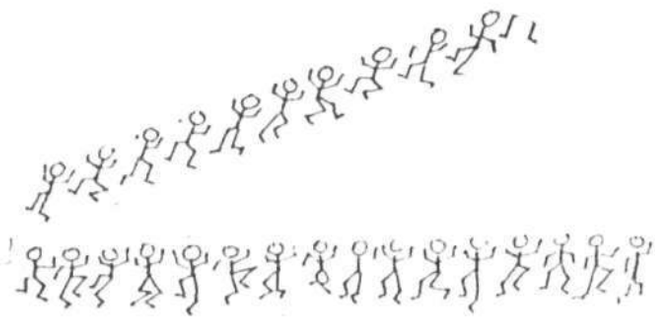
These qualities are statements. They communicate intentions, but they do this by working with other components of danceturgy for effective communication. One of these components is MOVEMENT DIRECTIONS

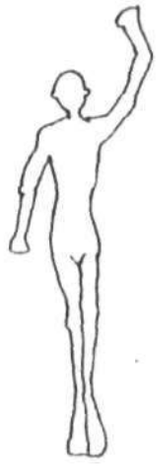
Movement directions as observed in West African danceturgy are applied to both the body and space designs. But it weights more heavily on space designs and that is why movement directions as a component in danceturgy has to do with proxemics much more than kinesis as already implied earlier in this chapter.

West African proxemics could be designed in straight line, serpentine, Zigzag, curve, circle, up and down, angle and arc. The square direction which is observed in Western forms is uncommon in West African dance composition. This would seem to be because the square direction is a late inclusion and done strictly for visual effects by Western choreographers.

## STRAIGHT LINE

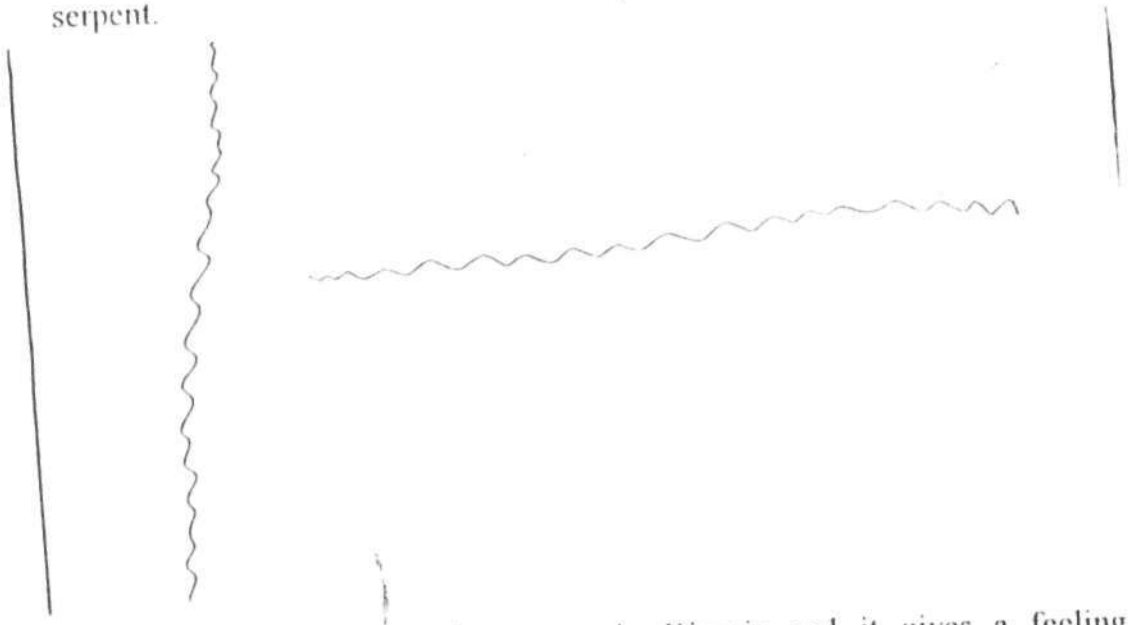
The straight line design/direction which manifests in form of straight, upright spine - rect movements or in form of proxemic designs which make a mass of dancers line up in a straight row, suggests confrontation, seriousness, boldness, strength and determination. A serious bold, strong and combat-ready body stands erect. Most war dances observed in West Africa have this characteristics.





## SERPENTINE

In West African danceturgy, the concept of fertility is often discussed. The African world view is in favour of life, hence the celebration of fertility and its attendant act of copulation - 'ritual' which perpetuates life. When fertility is the focus of a particular dance in West Africa, it is communicated through the use of serpentine direction. A body in serpentine motion is similar to the shape of a serpent.



Serpentine direction mostly occurs in Kinesis and it gives a feeling of sensuousness. It communicates erotic feelings. To picture this image just imagine the reaction or movement to the sensation of tickling by the sides. It is evident in the Aja dance of the Idoma and the Karoninka dance of the Karoninka people in The Gambia where the act of copulation is simulated.

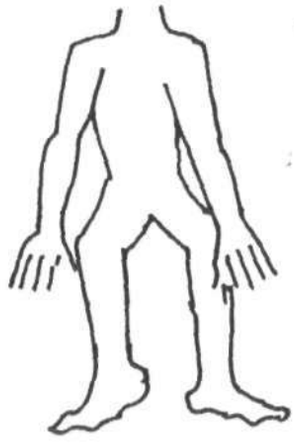
Elemental manipulations, as a matter of principle, use the particular way objects stand in space to communicate. The principle maintains that every object has a particular shape, a particular way it stands in space.

Therefore, in the dances that communicate farming for instance, we observed that the farmers in the dance adopt the standing, and squatting positions of the farmers in real life situation and through this they communicate to the audience the focus of the dance which is farming. This is the principle of POSTURE. Posture is one of the strong principles West African dances use for effective communication. This principle celebrates the accomplishment of the appropriate posture of each object or human action represented in dance. The West African creators use posture for communication by maintaining the communicative elements that represent and transmit the images and stance of what the dance composer has in mind. The use of posture requires a good understanding of body alignment if a particular posture must be meaningful and appropriate.

It is observed in most West African dances, that for the body to maintain the desired posture, stance or shape, kinesic manipulation must distribute appropriate weight to all the necessary parts of the dancer's body. Without this weight distribution the dancer's ability to execute coherent movements becomes hampered. This is because dance movements are not only done in the vertical

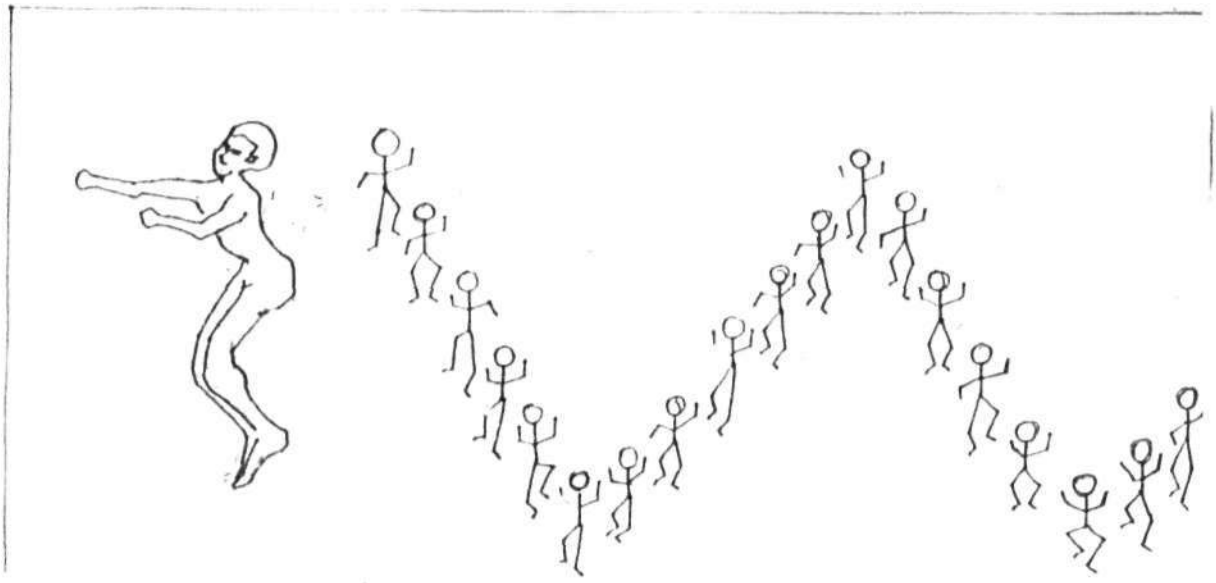
plane. There is a constant alteration in the body equilibrium as the body shifts in motion. To ensure the coherence of the dancer's movement therefore the inherent kinesic structure distributes weight as appropriate. It also moves the necessary parts of the body in directions opposite to the parts of the body that have gone out of equilibrium. this is balance - compensation principle in choreography,.

In fact, the second standing position in African dance, more than anything else, confirms this principle. In the second standing position when the knees and chest are tilted forward,, the hips and buttocks shoot backward to balance up.



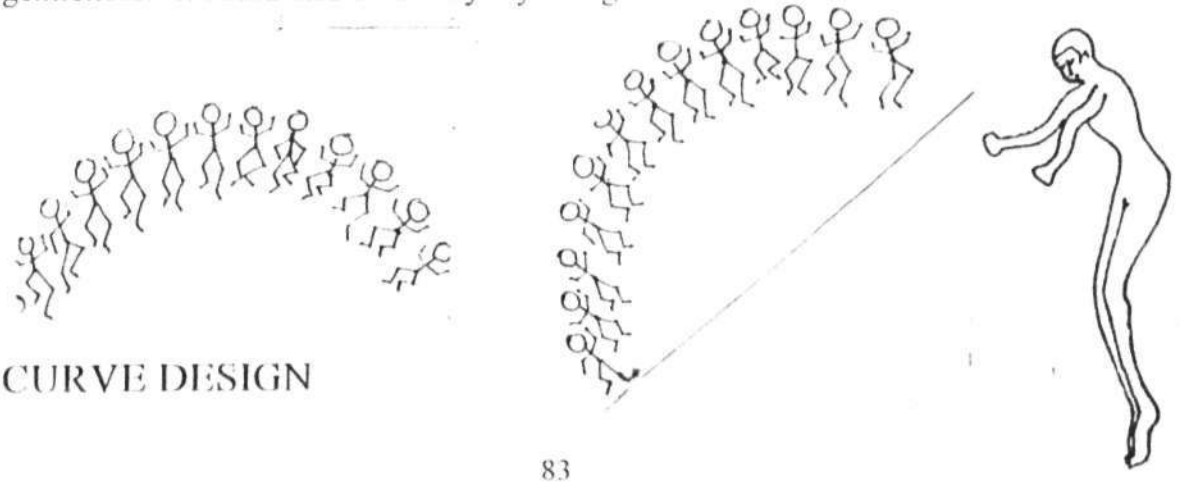


Sometimes the edges of the serpentine direction are sharper kinesically and even proxemically. Therefore instead of the kinesic and proxemic effect to appear serpentine it appears ZIGZAG. This has been observed in West African trance dances and in dances which communicate instability, hesitation and uncertainty. An example is the Ndep trance dance of The Gambian Madinka.



ZIGZAG DESIGN

Kinesis and proxemics in Western African danceturgy also occur in curve direction. A kinesic and proxemic curve denotes beauty, suppleness and gentleness. It could also mean royalty and grace.

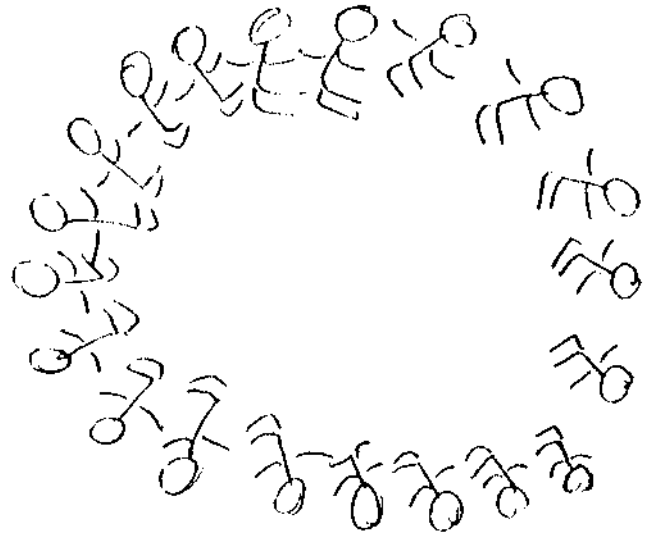


CURVE DESIGN

It should however be mentioned that when the curve is done with the spine, it communicates weakness or meekness.

Perhaps the most ubiquitous proxemic direction in West African danceturgy is the circle. Most West African dances, especially the communal ones, have circle as their direction. Cycle mostly occurs in proxemics and rarely occurs in kinesis. It is used when the thematic focus of the dance is to establish homogeneity, unity and communality. On the few occasions when this occurs in kinesis, it is always to show a state of being.

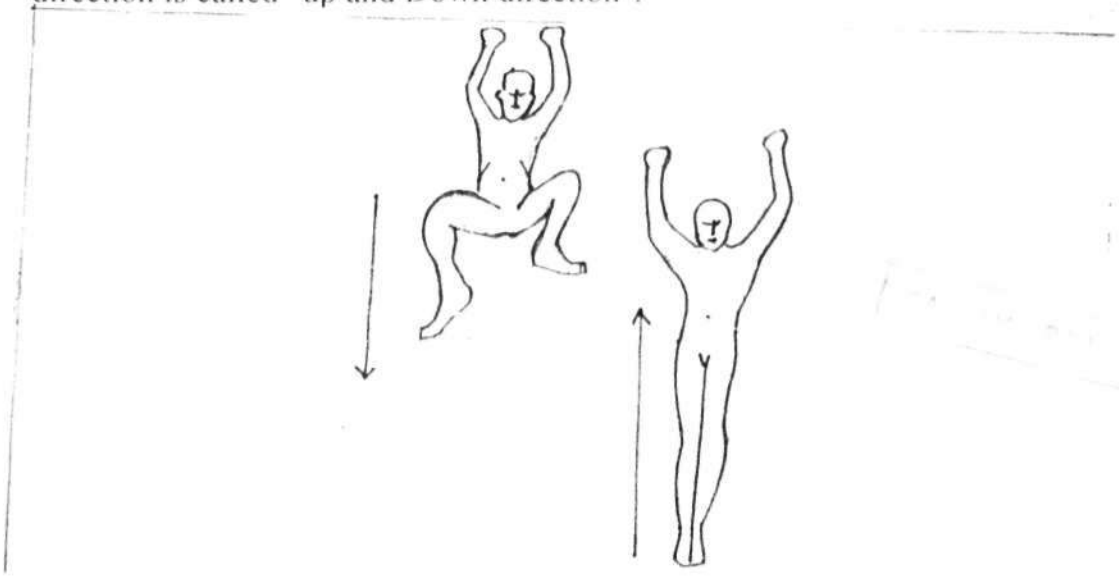
Again, the circle direction is another great point of divergence between African dances and the Western forms which rarely employ the circle. This is because of the western danceturgical love for aerial configurations. Aerial movements however occur in West African danceturgy through the rising and falling gravitational principle. This gives rise to a direction which suggest instability.



CIRCLE DESIGN

## UP AND DOWN DESIGN

Depending on other motifs that are combined with it, it could mean any form of instability. For example, the rising and falling in the possession dance called Bori in Northern Nigeria conveys emotional and spiritual instability. This direction is called "up and Down direction".

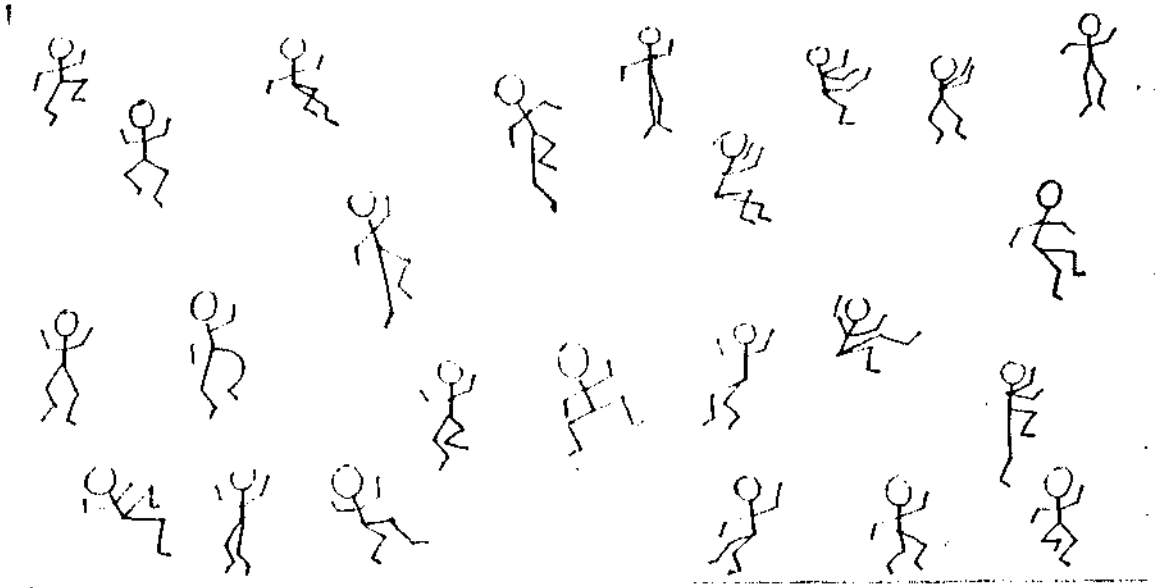


Like the ubiquitous circle, the West African kinesis and proxemics often explore angle as a direction. the angle direction is mostly observed in movement motifs that depict viciousness, temper or illusion of depth. This perhaps is why in Yoruba pantheon, the dance kinesis used for the characterisation of temperamental gods like Sango and Ogun are heavily angular in design.



ANGULAR DESIGN

In terms of proxemic direction, another great point of divergence between West African dance and the Western forms is in the use of the arc. The two forms use it, the point of divergence is the interpretation assigned to it in the different cultures. In the Western danceturgy, when it is employed it suggests disintegration and disjointedness. But in West African danceturgy and dances that have been observed to use it are those which desire to evoke the feeling of excitement. The stage is filled up with several arcs which when viewed wholistically give the illusion of several activities happening at the same time. This generates a feeling of activities, excitement or rowdiness.



ARC DESIGN

However, movement directions just like movement principles and qualities do not work in isolation in the realisation of the dance. There are other components involved. These components are gesture, dynamics, transition, repetition and levels. These are present in the kinesis and proxemic activities of all societies, the West African society not being an exception. They are better discussed one after the other for the sake of clarity.

## GESTURES

Gestures are used in dance to make movements less abstract, thereby enhancing understanding. There are five classification of gestures. these are "illustrators, affect display, regulators adaptors and emblems"[6]. Though the use of gestures is not exclusive to African dance, it is observable that the use of

gestures seems to be more dominant in African dance than in other societies. Gestures shall be discussed here under their five classifications.

a. Illustrators

These are gestures that are tied directly to sketching a path, pointing to an object or showing spatial relationships.

b. Affect Displays

These are facial configurations that show emotions and feeling such as sadnes and joy. They include winking, smiling, raising or lowering of eyebrows and eyelids.

d. Regulators

These are used to regulate and define relationships. They are used to encourage or discourage communication. They are also used as a technique of giving cues during dance performance.

d Adaptors

Adaptors are restless movement of hands, feet and other minute parts of the body like tongue, fingers, breasts, nose and so on. They are used to manage emotions. They show restlessness.

e. Emblems

The are used as signs in place of words that have verbal translation. For example, stretching the arm forward and opening the palm flat to mean "stop" or raising the hand from elbow while the palm is folded to mean (in Hausa) Raika dede (your honour).

## DYNAMICS

This refers to the amount of effort necessary or required to execute a particular movement. Dynamics in kinesis is used for communication. This is possible because of the principle of movement dynamics which stipulates that there is a specific amount of energy needed for every human action. For example, the amount of energy needed to kill a rat is not the same amount of energy required to slaughter a cow and the amount of energy needed to wrestle with an opponent is not equal to the amount of energy needed to hug a lover.

This applied to dance movements. Dance creators use dynamics to communicate the advance the idea of the dance. In a particular movement where the dancer uses the inappropriate dynamic the audience will misinterpret the movement.

For example, in a dance where a hunter has just killed an antelope, if he uses wrong dynamics while carrying it, the audience might think that the hunter

has just killed a rat. Dynamics range from languidity to vibrancy depending on what the dance is expressing.

## TRANSITION

A dance piece is made of different parts, phrases, segments and movements. Transition movements are used to link the different parts, segments phrases and movements together. It is used to create a sense of relationship between the pieces and the whole composition.

For example, a particular dance might have five different movements. Each of these movements is a piece while the entire dance, after using transitions to knit the five movements together, becomes a whole. Transition is used so that an unnecessary vacuum is not created between the movements. It is employed as a bridge. Transition can come in the form of spins, hesitation, jumps, still movements, turns, walks and so on. What determines the type of transition used is the nature of composition. It must be relevant to and compatible with the idea of the dance.

## REPETITION

This occurs in form of development and variation of the movement materials which is established within each motif. Without repetition, the central motif of the dance would be easily forgotten. Repetition keeps reminding us of

the point of emphasis of the dance. However, for repetition to be successful, contrast and variation are often used as prominently featured elements while giving interesting logical developments to the whole idea or motif.

## DRAMA AND THEATRE: CRUCIAL FACTORS IN AFRICAN DANCE INTERPRETATION

Drama and Theatre, a medium of imaginative story telling through imitation, series of actions and reactions and a creative use of different means of communication, are crucial factors in the interpretation of dance especially in Africa.

In the Western experience, dance has been traditionally separated from the theatre and this has implications on the Western dance vocabularies. Certain drama and theatre concepts which are also naturally present in dance and are core to dance interpretation are seemingly suppressed in Western dances because such concepts are seen as mimetic and as such more appropriate in drama and theatre but could be 'cheapening' if used in dance. the situation is different in African dancing.

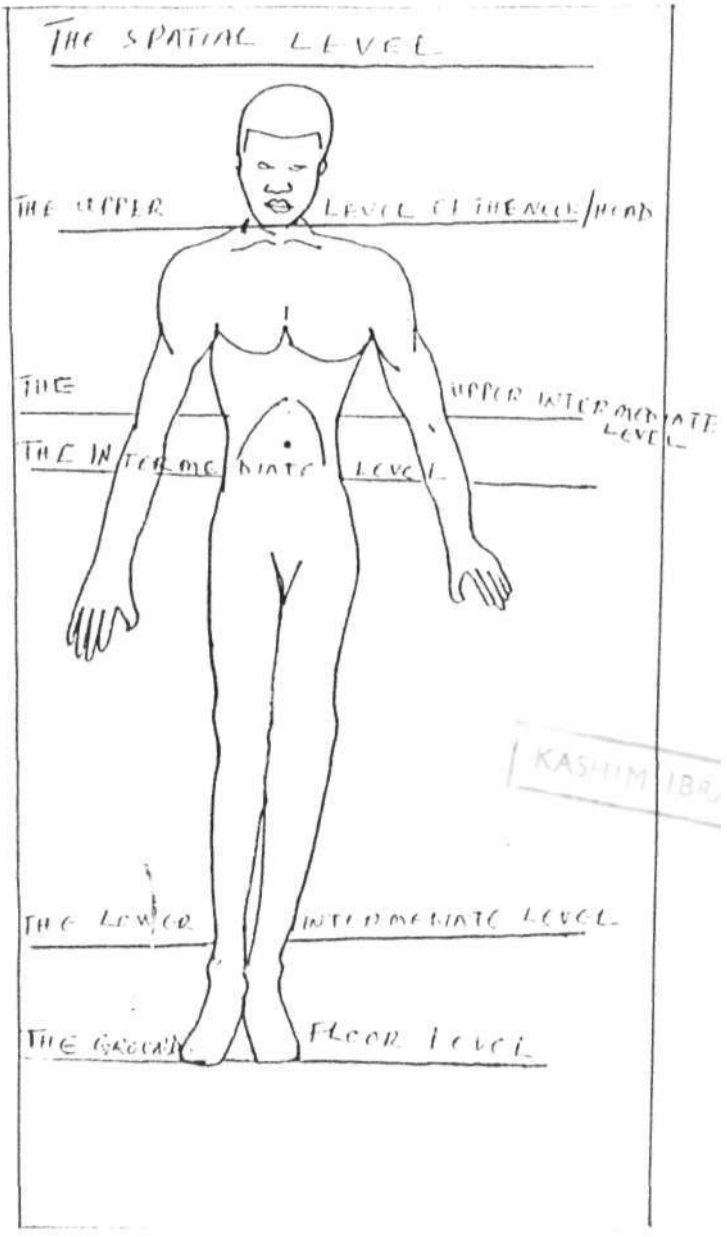
In Africa, dance is the repository of the arts materia. African dance encapsulates and frequently brings together other fine and performing arts

elements like music, mime, acting, songs, gestures, masks and painting. Therefore, in Africa, dance cannot be clearly demarcated from drama and theatre because, inherently, they share some elements and concepts which are fundamental to both the aesthetic and communication values of dance.

This symbiotic relationship has therefore made drama and theatre crucial factors in the interpretation of dance in Africa and as it reflects in some chapters of this work, dance analysis and interpretation will almost be impossible in Africa without drawing from these dramatic and theatrical concepts.

## LEVELS

Levels occur both in the body (Kinesis) and space, (Proxemics) designs. Level in body design occurs at the area of the body in motion at a time. It could be higher parts of the body, the middle part of the body, or the lower parts. We here represent this diagramatically (see next page)




BODY LEVELS

The diagram shows us about six of such levels that can be identified in dance.

They are:

i. The ground/floor level (G/Flo)

ii. The lower intermediate level (LIL).

iii. The intermediate level (IL).

iv. The upper intermediate level (UIL).

v. The upper level of the need and Head (ULNH)

vi. The spatial level (SL).

Each level is a statement. Each of the levels has a semiotic significance within the body of practice that form the basis of West African danceturgy.

The kinesic and proxemic elements and properties analysed herein give the West African dance its own unique form. It is these elements that give the West African dance a sense of wholeness, an order, the organisation of forces and the means through which the intents of the dances are known because form follows function.

The foregoing analysis has clearly demonstrated that the organisation of kinesis and proxemic elements in the West African danceturgy is related and appropriate to the purpose of the dances. Therefore these elements are the basis for dance composition in West African danceturgy. Understanding them as they exist in the existing West African dances will enable the modern West African

choreographer to transfer them and use them to make new meanings and new vocabularies in his contemporary works.

# ENDNOTES

1. Jacqueline M. Smith, Dance Composition: A practical guide for teachers, London: A and C Black, 1989, p.30.
2. Jacqueline M. Smith, p.31.
3. Jacqueline M. Smith, P.32.
4. Agnes de 'Mille, a French Dance scholar was quoted in Arnold Udoka's "The dancer and his roles" (an unpublished Handout Unical), 1989, p.8.
5. Gay Cheney is professor of dance, University of North Caroline - Greensboro.

# CHAPTER FOUR
# ANALYSIS OF SELECTED DANCES FROM NIGERIA AND THE GAMBIA

# CHAPTER FOUR

## ANALYSIS OF SELECTED DANCES FROM NIGERIA AND THE GAMBIA

The focus of this chapter is to produce a detailed descriptive, stylistic and structural analysis of the elements of kinesics, proxemics, adornments and music in Nigerian and Gambian danceturgy. This will be done using the componential features enumerated in chapter three. The purpose is not to highlight the similarities that exist vocabulary that will form our deduction in chapter five. However, where similarities naturally exist. Attention shall be drawn to them.

In West African choreography, kinesic, proxemics, adornment and musical manipulation are used to communicate varied ideas, issues and concepts. A particular style of combination and manipulation of some particular kinesic, proxemic, adornment and musical elements and features always communicates an intended message.

Some of the concepts and ideas that have been discussed by West African indigenous choreographers in their works using kinesic, proxemic, adornment and musical elements as means of communication include ancestral

worship, ritual cleansing, geography / environment issues, social interaction, royalty / fertility / grace.

Attempts shall be made in this study to demonstrate, through the analysis of these elements, how these and more ideas have been communicated in the selected dances from Nigeria and The Gambia.

## ANCESTRAL WORSHIP

In many West African societies men and women who died leaving behind offspring's and dependants are usually worshiped after death. Also in some society men and women who lived exceptionally great lives and whose lives touched the lives of their kinsmen are worshiped when they have died and become ancestors.

Their worship hinges on the people's belief that these men though dead, have gone to the spirit world where they are more powerful and are constantly watching over and protecting their kinsmen. This is ancestral worship and several dances have it as their theme in West African danceturgy. One of them is Bata dance.

## THE BATA DANCE

Bata dance originated from the deity or ancestral worship traditions of the Yorubas in the present Oyo and Osun states of Nigeria. Sango, the deity of thunder and lightning in Yoruba mythology, was a reigning king in Oyo (Alaatin)

in the 15th Century. He was a highly temperamental ruler who emitted fire from his mouth whenever he was angry. According To legend, he had five acolytes who followed him, chanting his praise-names anywhere he went.

These acolytes were named as Iya, *Omole Ako, Omele Abo, Kudi* and Gu*dugudu.* One day, Sango reportedly got angry. He emitted his usual fire from the mouth but this time around, the fire gutted his palace and killed his wards and his five acolytes. He consequently hanged himself.

After his death, his admirers started worshiping him saying he created thunder and lightning since he could emit fire from his mouth. They then transferred the personalities of his late acolytes - kudi, omeleako, Omeleabo Iya and Gudugudu to a set of five Drums with the kudi and Gudugudu tied together, the two *Omele* tied together, the *Iya* now becoming *Iye Ilya* and stays single. A single drummer controls the *kudi,* another drummer controls the Omele while the third drummer plays the Iya Ilu. Their duty is to use the drums to play the role the five acolytes were playing while alive - chanting Sango's praise names.

As these drums play the role of the acolytes, Sango's worshipers respond to the chants and praises coming from the drums by executing movements and other non—verbal cues which convey their own reverence and worship of Sango.

From these, five major distinct bata steps have emerged. These are *Afasegbejo, Ewo, Gbamun, Ijo* oge and *Lanku* steps.

## AFASEGBEJO

This is the opening step in Bata performance. Afasegbejo means "he who collects rain water with a sieve" The rhythm from the drums depict the sound of rainfall. This in a sense is establishing the mood and the aura under which thunder and lightning occur. It is an establishing step linking Sango with rainfall.

When the rhythm echoes out of the drums, the dancer's body vibrates to the drumming connoting the anxiety rain brings. In this context, Sango's thunder is believed to have the capacity to destroy the evildoers. Therefore, the sight of rain sends Jitters through the spines of evil doers who are scared of Sango's wrath (thunder) which usually descends during rainfall, here, the *chest*, torso and leg muscles vibrate in anxiety. After this, the dancers enter the performance arena in Zigzag floor pattern. They move with three counts to the right and three counts to the left. This "three-counts - make - a - segment" locomotor step continues for another brief moment and the tempo of the music is heightened while the dancer's footwork now changes to jerky runs to and fro the performing area. Dancers at this stage move at random on stage in preparation for the impending rainfall whose

actual significance is the performance which is about to begin. Space usage is distorted. Here, symmetrical design is abhorred. The space is used the same manner people do at the approach of rainfall - that is running helter skelter to avoid being beaten by the rain. What is responsible for this transition to apparent disorganisation is the statement the step is making which is "evil-doers lose their peace when rain (thunder) approaches". Iya-ilu - the lead drum, will at this stage begin to say:

| | English |
|---|---|
| *A wi wi wi.* | We warned them |
| *won la won* ko ni gbo | But they listened not, |
| | He who collects |
| *Afaseghejo un tan* | rain water with |
| *ra* e je | a sieve deceives himself |

There is a metaphorical significance here. The impending rain is a metaphor for the impending performance. Therefore just as the evil doer becomes jittery at the approach of rain (thunder) , the Bata dancer believes his enemies (rivals) become jittery as he (the dancer) prepares for an impending performance and as such, he uses the aforementioned chant to warn his enemies (rivals) that they shall be dealt with and they shall not succeed if they try to stop the performance that is

about to start just like he who tries to trap rain water with a sieve would be deceiving himself. The drum language is being used here to boost the ego of the performer and psyche him up for the performance

As these words roll out of the drums the shoulder blades of the dancer jerk to each phase from the drums. This means the body and the drums are accentuating each other. The sound of the drum and the movements of the dancers are syncopated.

The posture of the dancer in this step is a bend as he holds the two edges of his dress while his eyes are fixed on the ground as he communes with mother earth. His shoulder blades are responding to the drums while fixing his gaze on the ground.

With this gaze, he is actually in communication with the "owner" of the earth upon which he dances. He believes that as long as he has the favour of its owner, "the one who traps rain water with a sieve" will be deceiving himself meaning nobody can strop or mar his performance.

Despite the initial vibration of the body, Afasegbejo is languid in texture. At a point the rythm becomes slow and heavy and so is the dance step when the communication between the dancer and the earth begins. Its steps fall under the

pure dance classification because though it is the shoulder blades that interpret the message from the drums, the whole body is dancing to the overall rhythm.

The feet, for instance, are shuffled in succession, slowly and sometimes a particular dancer may occasionally deviate from the jerky shoulder blade movement and bring in an improvisation. For example, he might use hips to respond to the music interpretation for a moment and later join other dancers in using the shoulder blade.

The theme of Afasegbejo is *"ijuba"* which means paying homage to the relevant spirits whose support the dancer needs for a successful performance. From this step, the dancers may move to any of the other steps. There is no particular order apart from ensuring that he start with *Afasegbejo* for ritual reasons. One of the remaining four steps is *GBAMU.*

*Gbamun* is the fastest, most energetic and most vigorous step in Bata. This step is fashioned after the temperamental disposition of Sango. It communicates the fact that Sango' s priests are possessed. The dances respond to the fast tempo music by a fast stamping which is followed by a leap that lifts them up as if going to fly while responding to the accents from the drums with jerky movements done with chest, shoulder blades, arms, torso, joints, waist and legs. However, it is just one part of the body that accentuates the drumming at a time. The word Gbamun

is actually an onomatopoeic expression of percussive jerks. So while the drums say:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Abula meta meta* | Three Three phrases |
| *Gbanun Gbanun Gbanun* | Gbanun Gbanun Gbanun |
| *Abula meji meji* | Two Two phrases |
| *Gbanun Gbanun* | Gbanun Gbanun Gbanun |

The dancer responds by executing the 'shuffling footwork to syncopate with the occurrence of Abula meta meta while either the shoulder blades or the torso, or the chest or the arms (depending on the preference of a dancer at a particular time) is percussively jerked to syncopate "Gbanun" either thrice or twice depending on what was dictated by the drummer. This jerky, percussive and vibratory responses of the shoulder blade, chest, torso and the arms which are simulated with the three counts accents from the drums, portray the anger and the fierceness of Sango. The dancer then moves in a wild fashion with staccato and sometimes vibratory movements while the space equilibrium is heavily distorted at the beginning before settling down to a movement direction which is often a straight line while the body also stands erect. This straight line design is a motif conveying boldness, toughness and war which are all attributes of Sango.

Another of the movements in Bata is the "Ijo Oge movement which is purely for social interaction. It is done by men and women to show off. According to Sango' a legend, in spite of his aggressive nature, he still found time to show off in a social dance arena to the extent that his dexterity attracted Oya (wife of Ogun, Yoruba deity of war and iron) who consequently deserted her husband Ogun and eloped with Sango. This myth is responsible for the inclusion of 'Ijooge' in the Bata's repertory of movements.

Ijo Oge normally comes in the middle of Bata performance, often between *Ewo* and *Gbamun*. It is a kind of interlude to diffuse tension or to water down the seriousness of *Afasegbejo*, Ewo and *Gbamun*. The swing movements that are predominant in Ijo Oge connote its carefreeness, openness and less serious nature.

'Lanko' movement is the fourth in Bata dance. This movement is the most ritualistic movement in Bata because it is believed to be the most utilized step by Sango worshippers when they desire to evoke Sango's spirit. It is very slow and has dense and celestial aura which makes it an exclusive preserve of Sango priests. It is believed among Sango worshippers that the dance represents the mood, step and rhythm Sango used when he became sober after the calamity that befell him and which led to his suicide.

In Lanku, the omele abo stops and leaves the 'Iya Ilu alone with the dancer as the omele ako and 'Iya Ilu' begin to communicate with each other.

The dancer here mostly uses his arms, which he raises up in a suspended quality (see chap 3). He begins to communicate with heaven' – where he believes Sango lives, and from where he believes Sango sends his anger upon evil doers in form of thunder strikes and lighting – trying to conjure Sango's favour and mercy. The suspended arms and the Iya Ilu communicate the same thing here. The suspended quality of the arms connotes lack of weight which means ability to defy the law of gravity and operate in the sky – having a link with the heavens.

The last of the Bata steps is Ewo. This literally means "dragging". This is a very slow step meant for elders. The dancer takes the same posture like the dancer in Afesegbejo but instead of shuffling the steps, he drags them following each other either forward or sideways. While this is going on, singers and griots narrate, in chants, some important historical events associated with the village or lineage of the dancer.

There are two varieties of movements within Ewo. These are "Ijo Agba" and Elekoto". Ijo agba" is slower and more graceful than elekoto. Apart from this, it requires a more economic use of the body, while in "Elekoto" there

is more elaborate use of the body because the song that accompanies it dictates to the dancer what to do at each time.

| | English |
|---|---|
| *Mo ma gbelekoto de o* | *I have brought Elekoto* |
| *El ekoto* | *This is Elekoto* |
| *Ajo ra wo ra wo* | *A dance that involves* |
| *Elekoto* | |
| | *Swirling of your arms* |
| | *a daance that* |
| | *Makes tap your feet dont skip any* |
| *A~o ra wo ra wo* | *of the sigments for it has serious Elekoto* |
| | *repercussions.* |
| *Ajo ro* se re *se* | |
| *El eko to* | |
| *Ffl ha wodo laarin* | |
| *Elekoto* | |
| *Odo agboluwa* re *lo* | |
| *Elekoto* | |

Elekoto indeed could be described as Yoruba people~s own version of tap dance, except for its slow and graceful aura. The movement demands that the dancer taps

and stretches the right leg forward while the left leg stays some distance backwards. He then does a locomotor taping of the floor with the balls of the right foot twice and this follows with a locomotor taping of the left foot once. A locomotor tapping of the right heels follows and this is succeeded by one locomotor tapping of the floor by the left heel as the dancer swirls his axis for balance.

While *"Ijo agloW"* is for social relaxation among the elders, *Elekoto* has a ritualistic function. It is performed in honour of the most important of the deities Sango

himself recognised and worshipped when he was king; ORISA OKO - the god of farming. Orisa oko is believed to be the determiner of how bumper harvests would be. For this, farmers and people generally celebrate and appease him. Despite his arrogance, Sango respected and worshipped Orisa Oko with the *elekoto* dance. This is why Elekoto became part of Bata's repertoire.

Orisa Oko is believed to have a relationship with the earth upon which he makes farm crops to germinate. This is responsible for the gentle taping of the floor by elekoto dancers. They believe the earth, through which Orisa Oko makes crop to germinate, must be tread with respect, caution and gentleness.

## GESTURES AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

These are used for character definition in Bata. For instance, in *Afasegbejo*, the facial expressions of the dancer is bright. This is an expression of the assurance he has that his performance cannot be marred by anybody. But as he moves to *Gbamun* and Lanku, he looks blank because of the trance-like state which he is in.

During *Ijo* ogè however, the dancer is full of smiles as he or she shows off to members of the opposite sex.

Also, in *Euro*, the elders celebrate their age with cheering facial expressions while in 'Elekoto" dancers alternate between focused gazes that communicate oneness of communication between Orisa oko and the dancing medium and smiling facial expressions that express the dancer's assurance of Orisa oko' s favour for him/her.

## COLOUR COSTUME AND MAKE-UP

Bata dancers are generally costumed in red colour. The dancers both men and women wear red jumpers on red skirts. The jumpers and skirts are lined with cowries as accessories. The red colour symbolizes the vibrancy of Sango. Also because of his association with fire and lightning the red colour is often used to

characterize him

The major make-up worn by Bata dancers is hair plaiting. Bata dancers, male and female plait their hair in the Oya's design. This has significance in the people's mythology. It is believed that Sango's mother was a Nupe (Tapa) woman, and that he grew up in his mother's land from where he migrated to Oyo empire; his fathers place, to become a king. In memory of his mother, which he left in faraway Nupe therefore, he started plaiting his hair like a woman, after the hair design he saw the mother doing while with her in Nupe land. This even explains why male Sango worshipers and Bata dancers dress like women in jumper and skirts. It is to emulate Sango, who took time of his kingly carriage, to dress like his mother any time he celebrated her memory.

## BUGARABU DANCE

Like *Bata* dance, *Bugarabu* dance has ancestral worship as its focus. It is performed in the Jola towns of penyer and Buyam. Ancestral worship is common among the Jola people than any other society in The Gambia. This is because the Jola world view lays much emphasis on the role of dead ancestors in the lives of their wards and siblings who are still living. Dead ancestors are believed in Jola cosmology to wield so much protective and supplicating powers so much that Jola

depend more on their ancestors for protection and provision than any other source. As a result of this, death is celebrated and not mourned in Jola communities. The belief being that the more departed souls a person has in the spirit world, the more secured he is in terms of protection and provision. This also makes the Jola people have enormous respect for their dead ancestors if their source of protection and provision must be sustained. Bugarabu dance is therefore performed in honour and appeasement of a dead member of the community.

The opening step in Bugarabu begins with a languid textured movement as the dancers emerge In two lines singing:

Nya 000 (4ce)

Furimona Fadibona

sun nisee nde ye yo maa malamini Yen me

sanfamijejo mamburee

Jenebajej'i auchile

Meaning: My good and generous

ancestor (name of the dead)

The more you care for me

The more I sing for you.

This praise of the dead verbally signposts the theme of the dance. This song continues as the performers enter the arena arms stretched forward from the shoulder. Just like *Afisegbejo*, the rhythm in Bugarabu is slow as the right leg moves to the position of the left and returns to base while left also moves to the right position and returns to base as they move forward in a zigzag floor pattern just like entrance in *Afasegbejo*. The zigzag flow pattern is indicative of the hesitation and tension with which the impending performance is anticipated. The handling of the ritual content of Bugarabu - being the achievement of communication between the living and the dead-calls for caution hence the initial hesitation, uncertainty and cautiousness with which the performance opens.

After a while, the dancers raise their hands in space and bring them down as they move. They believe the spirits of the ancestors inhabit somewhere in the space. They are thus inviting these spirits with the movement of the hands. This motif, which is also ubiquitous in *Bata* requires a highly ritual and celestial mood hence the slow ritual music.

This opening movement falls under the pure dance classification just like the opening movement in *Bata Afasegbejo* - because the entire body responds to the slow but highly physical steps. Also the level being maintained by the dancers in this segment in Bugarabu is the upper level, a deviation from Afasegbejo where

the dancer maintains an upper Intermediate level (UIL). In *Bugarabu*, this opening slow movement continues for a considerable length of time without variation until the dancers fully enter the arena.

When the dancers get to the performance area in the arena still maintaining the two line formation, one in front and the other behind, the lead drummer then begins to pace to and fro with leg stamping as he leads the song as well.

Suddenly the drumming becomes highly pitched. At this point the muscles of the Dancers legs become stiff as the knees become bent and the trunk positioned at angle $90^0$ while a vigorous stamping of the feet begins in succession. The right leg is stamped twice then the left leg takes over and is stamped twice while the hands remain stretched forwards. The dancers continue like that for as long as the lead drummer, who signals them with a whistle, wants. Each time they raise their feet to stamp the knees touch their chests. The stamping of their feet is symbolic of the way a grave that has just been sand filled is made solid by undertakers. The significance of this is to remind the dead person that his living kinsmen gave him a befitting burial and so he must now shower his favour on them.

The physicality of this pure dance is similar to what we see in the *Chamun* step in *Bata*. These characteristics, stamps and jerks, in *bugarabu* is a device to

use appropriate dynamics in depicting the level of energy needed in burying the dead. The straight-line design is also a motif used to communicate the seriousness with which the issue of death is taken. Both the movement and the floor design then communicate the fact that they are strong and bold enough to bury their dead.

After a session of this jerky stamping movement however, the dancers then begin to pair up and the pairs perform in turns. Here, two dancers come into the circle to dance in competitive manner. They do the stamping movements facing each other and with their hands bent centrifugally. When the drummer whistles, it signals the exit of the two dancers while others come out to do their own bit. They still repeat the stampings even in the pair performance. But the stampings this time are more graceful and subtle; signifying social relaxation after the dead has been buried.

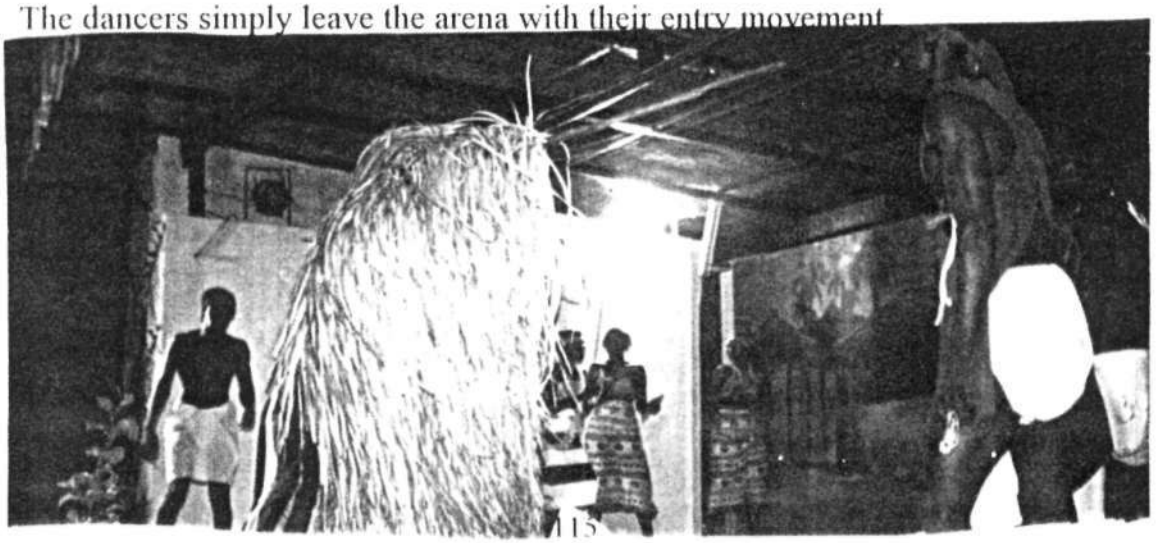
Immediately after this duet performance, the lead dancer becomes the centre of attraction as he goes into a session of solo display.

He runs, leaps and jumps after which he rushes backstage and emerges with a mortar and pestle. On getting back to the stage, he lays on his back. The mortar is then balanced on his chest and two women will put millet inside and start pounding as the lead dancer smiles. After some minutes of pounding on his chest, he jumps up and *lifts* the mortar with his teeth as he spins profusely.

Immediately he drops the mortar, the dancers begin to shuffle their feet sideways right-left-right-left while their hands go up and down with palms opened. This signifies the invitation of the spirit.

After a period of time and in response to this invitation, Kumpo, a huge masquerade built with straws enters the arena. He begins to spin and to swirl round and round like a cyclone. The wind - like movement of the Kumpo suggests the "sweeping" away of the land's ill luck and misfortunes. The Kumpo represents the spirits of the dead ancestor who is now being summoned from the ancestral world where he sojourns. The solo performance of the lead dancer is a magical display which fore heralds the spiritual potency of the anticipated Kumpo. The dead person then accepts the invitation by coming inform of the masquerade and carrying away their ill luck and diseases. The appearance of ancestral spirits in form of masquerade is another similarity noticed between *Bata* and Bugarabu.

The swirling movements of the Kumpo signals the end of the performance. The dancers simply leave the arena with their entry movement.



## GESTURES AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Like in Bata, these are used for characterisation purposes in *Bugarabu.* Generally, gestures and facial expressions in *Bugarabu* are limited to smiles which symbolise the joy they have in communing with the dead and in welcoming the spirits of their ancestors.

The Jola people do not mourn the dead because they believe the dead has only been transformed into a higher place of existence. This, in the people's view, calls for joy which manifests in the smiling facial expression.

## COLOUR, COSTUME AND MAKE UP

Bugarabu dancers are costumed in red and white materials. In *Bugarabu* women tie wrappers which cover half of their chest down to their thighs. A belt is used to tie it around the navel for easy manifestation. The male dancers wear trousers and leave the body bare.

The red colour in Bugarabu symbolises the agony of death while the white colour depicts the satisfaction that the dead after all has taken away their ill luck. This interpretation is dissimilar to that of the red used in Bata costuming which is to signpost the fiery temper of Sango. This difference in colour interpretation between Bata and *Bugarabu* is a pointer to the fact that colour interpretation differs from one society to another even within West Africa.

Close to the theme of ancestral worship in West African danceturgy is the theme of ritual cleansing. We shall discuss this the Nigerian Bori and The Gambian *Jembe* dances but first a preamble.

## RITUAL CLEANSING

This occurs in two contexts in West *Africa.*. First is in a situation when the moral order of a particular society has been ruptured by a sacriledgeous act. This attracts the wrath of the gods and the society is visited by pestilence. For things to return to normalcy the land must be cleansed and the gods appeased.

The second context is when members of a given society are possessed by evil spirits and as a result of that they are diseased either mentally or physically. As a curative measure, ritual cleanseness is often prescribed for the evil spirits to disposes such patients. In most cases dances are involved in both contexts in the process of dispensing cleanseness. However, the dances we shall discuss as examples are used for personal cleanseness.

According to the works of Peter Badejo, Bori is a religion which mandates its believers to give respect to and communicate with the supreme being, ancestral spirits and spirits of the natural forces which are believed to influence every aspect of their lives. It is therefore necessary for them to maintain good relationship with them so that they (spirits) in turn would fulfill their needs.

*Bori* religion was originally practised by a group of Hausa known as the *Maguzawa*. The Maguzawa are today scattered all over northern Nigeria and they still practice *Bori* anywhere they are.

*Bori*, an ancient Hausa word is generally used in relation with *Iskoki*(Wind / Iska) It is also used for somebody in trance or possession.

This is confirmed by H.R. Palmer when he describes Bori as a "Hausa common noun meaning a sacred and occult force which resides in matter"[1] (see Badejo Pg. 3).

In societies where Bori is practised, it is believed that Bori spirits have the power to cause and control diseases and can punish evildoers in the society by making them ill. For example, Badejo confirms that Inna, also known as Uwar Dawa, the spirit that protects farmland and other material properties of the community has the power to make the stomach of somebody who has stolen from a farm or compound swell up. The maguzawa fear swearing by the name of this spirit. Thus Bori spirits are believed by the maguzawa to be both benevolent and malevolent in nature.

These spirits are believed to be dwelling in an invisible city called Jangari located somewhere in the space but which Greenberg postulates is located near an old Hausa town called Argungu. It is from this city of Jangari that Bori spirits are

invited through the use of music and dance when their presence is needed by Bori faithfuls.

According to Joseph Greenberg and as corroborated by Peter Padejo, there are two ways in which a person can become a member of the Bori cult. One method is by inheritance. This is when the spirit of the parent can be transferred to the child from its youth. This permits the child to become a member of Bori once he matures without going through any process of initiation. The child, it is believed, will naturally manifest the particular Bori spirit he belongs to. A person can also become a Bori cult member when a serious illness has afflicted him or her and all other methods of healing has proved abortive.

In this case, a *Dan Bori* (child of *Bori)* is asked to consult with the spirits through possession. If the *Dan Bori* confirms that Bori spirits are responsible for the person's illness an initiation is recommended in order to heal the sick person. The prescribed initiation ceremony is called girka (boiling) and the most essential component of it is a Son dance performance. it is through the Bori dance performance that the particular Bori spirit which has caused the person's illness is identified.

This ceremony lasts for fourteen days. For the first three days, the patient remains in seclusion with the father or mother of the boiling (Uwar girka or uban

girka) who supervises the administration of medicines made from roots and herbs on the sick person. This medicine is administered in order to prepare and protect the person against harm from the violent characteristics of some Bori spirits' dances. During this period, the sick person is also instructed by the Bori leader, in the secrets of possession. As a fundamental part of the instruction, the initiate-to-be learns the dances, music tunes, and characteristics of not only the spirit that has caused the illness but also the traits of all other Bori spirits.

After these initial three days, the children of Bori (Yan Bori) assemble to perform along with the member, and he or she also performs along with other members, becomes possessed and remains it the feat for eleven days. After this the Initiate becomes healed. He then becomes a full member of Bori cult and is able to induce possession any time he desires by organising a Bori performance. The purpose of the eleven day performance is to ensure that the new initiate is stabilized and is able to go in and out of possession without harm.

Bori Dance

A typical Bori performance begins with the musical tune called *kidan wasa* (play tune). This continues while the initiates arrive one after the other taking their places in front of the *Magajiya.* When the initiates and participants have all arrived and taken their seat on the mat round the *magajiya* the *magajiya* then stops

the musicians and through the announcer (maroka) announces the purpose of the performance and gives order for the performance to commence.

The musicians then begin to play the tune called *Sarkin makada* which means king of musicians. This tune is believed to be dedicated to the Bori spirit who is believed to be the custodian of music.

As *Sarkin Makada* continues, the performers enter the arena with the basic movement, which comprises of hands swinging freely backward and forward while the feet are shuffled at the heels forward and backward. As they do this, their bodies are relaxed. The movement is actually a relaxed warm-up movement which mentally and physically prepares the mediums for the coming of the spirits. This basic introductory movement continues for about twenty minutes. The swinging movements is needed to relax the body because the body needs to be put in a state of complete carefreeness before it can be receptive to spirits who may want to inhabit (possess) it. This is a law even in Christian demonology and also in hypnotism. During these movements the mood and countenance of the Bori performer gradually changes and these changes register more on the faces of the performers. An air of seriousness suddenly overcomes them. Badejo wrote that this is the first stage in the processes of the transformation, not just for the medium but also for the audience.

At this point, the musicians then stop briefly and start playing again but this time, another tune is being played. The tune that is being played is called *Kidan Zuwar Aljanu* which according to Besmer, is the musical tune that calls the spirits from the city of *Jangari* to come and mount the mediums. As this tune continues, the gradual changes in their facial expression becomes more intense. This signals the arrival of the spirit called sarkin *aljanu* who is the king of the spirits. When their faces are sufficiently altered, the tempo of the music increases and the dancers face each other, gaze at each other eyeball to eyeball, heads stretched forwards towards each other, chests pushed forward towards each other, hands stretched backwards with the right legs stretched forward and left legs stretched backwards. They then begin a sideways locomotor movement which causes the dancer to spring on first the right ball bounces back on the left ball in rapid fashion as they move sideways this gives a circular floor pattern.

As this movement continues, the music gathers more tempo and the dancers begin a session of upward stretches and jerks of hands and suddenly they break into fast runs profuse spins, back flips, non locomotor stretches into the air and landing on their buttocks. These stunts show the fact that the mediums have been mounted by the spirit. This is followed by a moment of absolute stillness during which the mediums sit on the ground gazing at each other. They then sit shoulder

to shoulder while they begin to hoot, shake and jerk. The feeling and touching of one another in shoulder-to-shoulder arrangement expresses the collective support they need and get from one another during this process of transformation to an altered state of consciousness.

Proxemically speaking, the position the mediums take on the ground also communicates. They sit in a circle, which first of all communicates the oneness of thought and purpose a serious cult like Bori represents. It also conveys the fact that the mediums are united in spirit at this particular crucial period.

As they sit in the position gazing at each other, the coming of the assorted Bori spirits is heralded with a change of music, breaking the stillness of the mediums who begin to growl, cough and spin around in their sitting positions. This is the second stage in the process of transformation.

The mediums would then jump up and start jerking very rigorously, they would then begin to stamp their feet, break into a run after which they would clap their hands, leap into the air, throw their feet forward in the air and come down on their buttocks. This normally happens three times. These wild stamping of feet, rigorous jerking, leaping and falling express a state of absolute loss of consciousness and a state of being possessed.

After this, a moment of multiple vision then begins. All the medium are now mounted by the different spirits and therefore are doing different movements. We have observed in the performance (and Badejo's work corroborates this), that the movement a particular medium executes is determined by the spirit that mounted him or her. If it is "mai ganggadi" (nodding spirit) the medium begins a rapid nodding of the head. A medium possessed by "Cajimare' (Spirit of rain, storm and wind) , jumps, uses his fingers to mime rainfall and spins endlessly. If a medium is possessed by *Sarkin Ratin*, (Chief of river and lake) he begins to do undulating movements, rushing and falling like riverwaves. Also, if it is the spirit of *ina-ja chiki* (spirit of crawler - snake) the medium would begin to crawl and roll on the ground; moving like a snake. If it is Kuturma (leper spirit) the medium begins to cring towards the ground.

The symbolic movements and mime used by the mediums are decoded by the Magajiya and used in identifying the difference spirits that have mounted them. The *magajiya* then gets up and dances round the mediums by stamping her feet in succession. She would then carry the purification water already prepared with a charm. This water is in a calabash held by the *Magajiya*. As she dances round the medium, she pours the content of that calabash on the face of the sick and immediately that happens, the sick medium will yell, leap into her air and

again just like first, time, stretch his legs forward and come down flat on his buttocks. He would then remain still, the spirit has dismounted him and he is healed. This shows that the spirit goes out in the same violent way he came into him. The leaping and falling express this violence.

After the healing, the music changes to a slow rhythm which they then dance to by swinging their hands as they leave the stage. This final movement suggests that they are back to a relaxed mood and a state of being sane.

## BORI MUSIC

A separate discussion of the music used in Bori performance is necessary here because of the significant role it plays both at the level of communication in the trance process.

The Bori music orhaestra is made up of Kwarya a calabash drum which is played with two sticks., goge, one string fiddle. serawa, a corn stalk flute or "garaya" a plucked flute accompanied by a calabash gourd. It is believed that it is the sound of the chordophone instrument *goje* and *garaya* that invites the spirits from *Jangari.* When played, the aerie sound the instruments produce cause a spiritual communication between the spirit and its priest and this makes the transformation process of Bori possession possible These two instruments also

establish the tempo and speed of each segment depending on what the movement involved is meant to communicate. *Kwarya* the calabash drum is meant to give the music a definite background percussion while serewa - the flute - is to compliment the *garaya* and *goje* in establishing the desired mood at each time.

## COLOUR, COSTUME AND MAKE UP

In *Bori*, performers dress in black and white hand woven material called godo. The initiates wear the white material while the patient to be healed wears the black material. The initiates also tied a charm belt called *damaru* around the abdomen.

The combination of white and black colours is also noted in the prescription of a cock with black and white feathers as the sacrificial object. Black and white colours are used to indicate the fact that the spirits . In Bori pantheon are of both good and evil characters. Both are treated with respect and are pacified during worship. The white colour depicts good while the black depicts evil in *Bori* colour interpretation.

## JEMBE (Kotoba) DANCE

The serahule people of the Wuli district in The Gambia use jem*be kotoba* dance to cast away evil spirits from those who are possessed. Actually the

Serahule people *have* two types of *Jembe*. The first one is *Jembe Dundungba* which is a dance performance performed during moonlight when men would demonstrate their skill in dancing in order to attract women for courtship. But our concern in this study is *Jembe Kotoba* which is for the cleansing and deliverance of those possessed by demons.

The Serahule society is heavily built on social and political structures. The social groups consist of the *Tunka* (Nobility-kings) , the *Tunics Maremu* (other nobles), the komeh (Freemen) , (the Tagay (Smith) the *Garankay*, leather works) , the jaray (praise singers) the *.Kornch and tunka Komeh* who are the slaves used as warriors. The political class is headed by the *Tunka* (king) who is assisted by the *Kamnalinkon*, the Heir Apparent who is understudying the reigning king in the art of governance. After the Kamalinkon are the various clans namely the *Diatonidon*, the *Guidimaka* and the *kingi* who form the followership.

All these have implications on the jembe kotoba dance in the sense that the Serahule cosmology believes in the existence of evil spirits who are being constantly sent on errands by witches, wizards and other evil doers who are against the smooth running of the society. It is therefore believed that these enemies of the society are in the habit of sending such evil spirits to possess and destroy those who occupy certain sensitive positions on both the social and the

political ladder. It was thought wise that since the positions occupied by these people naturally expose them to dangerous envy and attack by evil doers, a defensive machinery should be put in place for them if their contributions to the smooth running of the society must be ensured. Therefore, the "jembe Kotoba a trance cult was established as a defence machinery to cast away magic spells and evil spirits from the *kamalinkon*, the *tunka muareemas* the *jarays* and the *I-lorchs*. Whenever it is perceived that somebody who belongs to any of these groups is sick, a Jembe *kotoba* performance is organised for his deliverance.

A Jembe kotoba performance begins with a slow musical rythm to which the possessed person takes a bent posture as he swings from the waist to the head, right and left continuously while he also steps right and left in a forward locomotor as he approaches the arena. After a while, the music stops abruptly as the priests begin to sing and the possessed sway sideways while they sing to invite the *Jember* spirit:

lead: Anubara Jembe musulu Anabara

chorus: Anubara

lead: Anuhara Jembe kotoba Anubara

chorus: Anuabara.

Me an in g:

Listen to us Jembe the powerful

Listen to us

Listen to us Jembe the heater

Listen to us.

The tempo of the music picks up once again, now faster than before and the dancers break into fast tempo movement which transits into aerial movements that manifest in flights and jumps as the performers scream and hoot. Some walk on their hands with their legs in the air, others roll on the floor. They do different kinds of stunts to portray the fact that they are possessed and as such are not natural human beings. These stunts are laced with body distortions whose grotesque picturization heighten communication. These movement motifs are quite similar to Bori where dancers begin with slow movements and then break into stunts in form of profuse spins, aerial leaps, back flips and non- locomotor strectches among others to show that the medium has been mounted by the spirit. After this initial stunts in *Jembe*, the dancers begin to jump and jerk their necks profusely. Their necks begin to stretch in the up and down direction with the swinging forward and backward in the process. This continues as the hands move

like the wings of flying bird. Right leg is shifted forward and springs on the floor while left leg moves backward and springs on the floor and vice versa.

Shoulder blades and arms open and close with torso expanding and contrasting. This is done for sometime, then individual dancers begin exhibition of solo movements which express their different mental and spiritual states. During this period some hop like toads, some jump like frogs some simply keep rolling on the floor. Again, this bears similarities with the multiple vision segment in Bori where dancers break into different movement motifs to sign post the different spirit that have mounted them. At this stage the priest leaves the stage in a catwalk and returns with some sticks. The number of the sticks are determined by the number of dancers. A stick is then given to each of the dancers after which the Jembe priest enters the stage with a short bamboo stick. After some acrobatic displays, the priest, right in the presence of the audience chants some incantations to the bamboo stick and commands the bamboo stick to start burning. Immediately, a terrifying fire begins to burn on the tip of the stick without the stick being consumed. He then dances to stage centre, squats on one knee and raises the burning stick up. The dancers then form a circle round him as they shake and jerk. They then light their sticks from the burning bamboo in turns. Immediately a possessed person light his stick and dips the fire in his mouth, the

shaky and jerky staccato movements gradually transform into languid, rocking of the torso. This signifies that healing has taken place. The evil spirits automatically come out of the dancer and he dances out of stage gently. The gentle and languid movement suggests that the dancer is now healed.

Fire is used for healing in serahule culture. When the possessed "eat" the fire, he is purified. The opposite is the case in Bori where we are told water is used *for* purification.

## COLOUR, COSTUME AND MAKE-UP

No special colours are emphasised in *Jembe.* The most important thing is a combination of colours in weird and riotous way to externalize the state of mind of the dancers. The costuming also aids the acrobatic nature of the predominant movements.

The priest is the only character who wears make-up. He uses an elaborate make-up design that covers the whole of his face. We observe in the performances that it is always done with a white powder mixed with water. It is to make him appear supernatural.

## WAR

The theme of war is prominent in West African danceturgy. The *Ekong* dance of the *Annangs* in the present Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria and the *Kusamiare* dance of the Gambian Jolas shall be used as examples in our discussion.

## EKONG DANCE

*Ekong* dance is done by the Annangs mostly found in Ikot Ekpene, Abak, Etim Ukpo, Ukanafun and Essien Udom towns of Akwa Ibom state Nigeria.

We are informed, that the *Annangs* were not originally an ethnic group separate from the more popular Ibiobio who are also in the majority in that State. The old Ibiobio communities were said to be prone to frequent attacks by their Igbo neighbours who were on mission for territorial expansion. The Ibiobios, who naturally would want to defend their border towns against enemy soldiers normally mandated each family in the community to donate their aggressive, hot-headed and war - like young men to a common pool of soldiers put in place by the community to defend its territorial integrity. Such soldiers are sent to the border towns of Ibiobio land to defend them against the incursion of neighboring villages. Members of this army are referred to as "Annanga" which means stubborn or

troublesome fellow. It is from this word *Annanga* that the word *Annang* was formed.

The Annangs having been sent to the borders of the community on defence mission became expert, brave an skillful and they settled at the borders refusing to go back to the hinter land and this way declared themselves autonomy ethnic group different from the Ibiobio They established the border towns of Ikot Eperen, Unkanafun, Essien Udom, Oko etc who today are *Annang land*. *Annang* are widely believed to be aggressive and warring. In fact up till present times, the Annangs are always involved in perpetual wars against their neighbouring Igbo communities. For instance, since 1967, the Annangs and the Isiala Ngwas, an Igbo community of Abia state Nigeria have been involved in clashes over land and up till now the war has not ended in spite of a detachment of Nigeria mobile police force permanently deployed by government to build a barracks and inhabit the disputed land. The Annangs see war as a continuous life process. They see war as a way of life and combat as inevitable in one s life if one must survive. It could be theorised that their place of habitation, being the type that is prone to external aggression which sets them always battle ready has conditioned their psyche to a life of war and aggression.

They celebrate war and *aggression in* their *Ekong* dance, and this has made ekong dance probably one of the fastest and most vigorous African dances this researcher has seen.

As *intakron* - the small wooden gong sets the pace for other musical instruments, the *ekong* dancer stands on the balls of his feet. His knees are tilted towards each other. From the thigh socket to the feet, an "X" shape is formed. The dancer than begins to twist and swirl his waist as he moves on the balls. The twist and swirl are so fast and profuse that they cause the whole body to vibrate violently from head to toe. This movement is repeated for as long as the performance lasts.

Ekong, though a war dance, is now performed on daily basis in *annang* land. it is performed at every occasion that calls for dancing. This is because of the *Annang* philosophy that life itself is war. They see men as fighting different kinds of wars daily.

In movement direction, the straight line is used both in body design and in space design. The Ekong dancer stands erect with his chest out depicting seriousness and combat readiness. The use of straight-line symbolises confrontation while the body vibration depicts the anger and aggression with which somebody goes to war. It is an externalization of inner aggression.

The locomotor leg work in *Ekong* is very fast- This movement is achieved through the stamping of the base of the ball at the rate of about 20 times per second. This produces a vibratory quality in other parts of the body. Each stamping surges the dancer forward and he stops when his energy begins to fail him; only to relax for a while and start again as he repeatedly invites *Awassi Ekong* – the god of war in Annang mythology:

*Iso Awasi Ekong di*

*Di se sirums en am*

Translation: Alter of the god

Of war come

God of war come

Come and see the doing of the clan.

Chorus: Eee iyo iyo

Eee iyo iyo

Ag wod agwo ifang?

Iyo Iyo

Afo Agwo Ifang

Iyo Iyo

Afo Agwo Ifang

Anu ngwo agwo otion

Iyo iyo

Translation: Eeee iyo iyo

Eeee iyo iyo

How many have you killed?

Iyo iyo

You, how many have you killed?.

Iyo iyo

I have killed five

Iyo iyo

I have killed five

Iyo iyo

## COLOUR COSTUME AND MAKE-UP

Dark colours depict masculinity, life, strength and bravery in *Annang* land. As such *Ekong* dancers always wear dark - coloured costumes comprising of a wrapper and cap called Uyat. The wrapper covers from the waist to about two inches below the knee. After tying the wrapper, a belt, always of a brighter colour

than the wrapper with accessories attached is then tied over the wrapper and the waists.

Superficially one would think this belt is to add colour to the costumes but the belt is to hold the dancer's waist very tight and firm so that it will be more easily manipulated by the dancer.

The dancer's body from waist to the neck is bare except for white chalks which are used for decoration.

## KUSAMARIE DANCE

*Kusamarie* war dance is named after a Jola town which owns the dance. Just like the *Ammangs* in Nigeria, the Kusamarie people are war-like people who have through the ages refused to be dominated by any other tribe.

They use the dance to express their warring nature and to demonstrate their courage, strength and supernatural powers on the battle field.

The *Kusamari* music is produced by a single drum played by a solo drummer. The drum - 'wimpaw' — supplies the mid-tempo rhythm which ushers the dancers unto the stage. The dancers move in a line, though they are not strict about this. The line is intermittently disrupted as dancers step out to display magical prowess.

The bulk of the dancers move to rhythm as they execute 'weighty' steps. One can not say they are stamping their feet. They simply raise one leg; step forward, rest a bit on that leg as they raise up their hands, shake their trunks which in turn vibrate to rhythm then they raise the second leg. However; the stepping is heavy. It is like an elephant moving.

Kusamarie dancers are often armed with fighting materials like dane guns, bullets, swords, matchets, knives and assorted charms.

As drumming, singing and dancing progress, one performer could just come to the front and raise up his hands, facing the rest of the dancers. This signifies a challenge. If it is the matchet he is challenging, it means he has antidote for matchet cuts. He could bring it out display it and put it on.

The matchet carriers then feel challenged. They would struggle among themselves before allowing one of them to reply the challenge by 'testing' his matches on the challenger. He then surges forward and delivers his matchet on any part of the challenger's body, but the matchet blade would not penetrate the body. The challenger is then cheered as he does the marching step back to the line. After him another challenger may come out to challenge the dane guns, or the bow and arrows and so on.

Sometimes the dancers stand on one leg and spin round many times with their hands raised up. They may be on one leg for up to three minutes before bringing the other leg down. It is to show that as warriors, they can do what others consider difficult. It is also a physical depiction of their strength and supernatural abilities.

The heavy steps (elephant-like) is in line with the Jola's belief in the elephant as a symbol of power. The elephant in their tradition depicts power, strength and vigour. Hence the use of the elephant motif in the Kusamari war dance.

The elephant symbol is even officially recognised as it is a dominant image in The Gambia's coat of arms. The proxemic design is often in a state of disequilibrium as it is often asymmetrical though they normally start on a straight line, the straight line depicts confrontation while the disequilibrium in floor pattern depicts the riotous situation in a battle field.

Another feature of the dance is that it is done by elderly men. In the course of this research, the researcher watched up to five performances of *Kusamari*. These five performances were done by five different groups and the

researcher never saw any dancer who is less than forty years of age in any of the groups.

## COLOUR COSTUME AND MAKE-UP

No specific colour is required in *Kusamarie* dance. Performers wear trousers and jumpers with charms and amulets tied and hung all over their bodies. Some of these charms have skin covers some are inside animal horns, some in snail shells while some have cowries shells as outer cover.

The emphasis on charms reflects the Jola belief in the potency of traditional charms especially in terms of protecting the wearer from any harm.

## FERTILITY

Fertility is an issue of primary concern in the traditional African society. The traditional African society relishes in one's ability to reproduce himself or herself in multitude of children hence the expression "children are my clothing" (wealth) in diverse West African dialects. The importance the traditional West African society lays on fertility is attested to by the numerous fertility rituals that abound all over West Africa and which have been observed to be the central theme in many West African dances.

Such dances are often laced with motifs like sex, eroticness, and beauty. However what they discuss about these motifs may be different from one dance

to another as we shall discover in the Nigerian *Aja* and the Gambian *Karoninka* dances.

*Aja* dance is performed in Idoma land in the present Benuee state of Nigeria.

Aja is a bird. It has a myth that it deceives people and tricks them to get lost because it flies and lands very close appearing as if it can be caught with the hands. Believing that this is possible, the gullible follows it on and on until he is lost. Aja then flies away. It is also a nocturnal bird. The bird, Aja, in this dance is thus metaphorical of sex. The lesson of the dance is simple- Sex is attractive, it you go after its allure you get lost, head for destruction.

In terms of kinesics and proxemics, *Aja* is narrative in nature. It tells the story of what happens from the first time a girl enters a bedroom with a man, the initial pretences and hesitations, the activities preparatory to the mating, the mating, climax, ejaculation and departure. A typical Aja performance is done by as many as ten girls and ten men, but it is only a girl and a man that perform together at a time.

The performance takes place in an arena. The drummers occupy one side of the arena while the dancers sit with the drummers, each waiting for his or her turn to enter the arena and perform. When the fast tempo music begins, the male dancer

enters the arena in company of the female dancer. While the male dancer executes some warm-up movements which is usually in form of a gentle vibrant stamping of the feet and wriggling of the torso, the female dancer, who actually is the one in focus in Aja dance moves, her facial expression shows hesitation and reluctance as she merely shift the hips sideways.

Here, she uses gestures and facial expressions to communicate the reluctance and hesitation (most often hypocritical) with which a strange or new female sex partner enters the bedroom with her new male sex partner. But she would gaze into the space to show that she is entrapped already. This segment is actually showing the hypocritical nature of the girls because suddenly, this girl would open her legs, bend her knees and her waist as she moves shifting the two legs forward at the same time facing the man.

As she moves forward, she wriggles her waist in sexual fashion, shakes her buttocks forward and backward rapidly and jerks the waist and the buttocks at the same time to the accent from the music. The man does not stay aloof. As the girl approaches him with legs wide open, he too does the same movement, but when they meet and stay in place gyrating around the waist, his own waist and buttocks movement is slightly different from that of the girl. In his own case, an animal motif is borrowed from the movement the cock does immediately after mating

with a female partner. The man leans on one of the legs with the whole of his body tilting to that side as he raises up the other leg while he jerks his waist and buttocks profusely until he drops them with a jerk at the same time with the girls. This movement is a prearranged signal to signify the end of the dance beat. It cues the drummers to bring the beat to a close.

The entire Kinesic structure depicts the entire process of lovemaking. Sometimes they even go into more details. After some minutes of wriggling and jerking of the waists and the buttocks, the lead drummer signals the 'couple' to sustain the next movement which is a gradual and slow paced rotation of the waist, the man wearing a smiling face while the girl looks up to the skies with dreaming eyes. Their movements and facial expression reflect their effort in delaying ejaculation. Suddenly the pace becomes faster and then the eventual ejaculation depicted in a jerky forward and backward dropping of the buttocks.

After the ejaculation, the couple vacates the stage for another couple. *Aja* is actually teaching a lesson about sex. In castigating those lured by sex, the dance warns that the joy is brief. A field informant, an *Aja* performer in Igbanomaje quarters at Otukpo, Benue state Nigeria, informed that Aja argues that sex should only be a fertility ritual.

There is an intricate communication between the drummer and the dancer in Aja dance just like we noticed in Bata dance. The lead drummer dictates what the dancer should do at every stage. Sometimes, he even warns the dancer to stay off certain areas of the performance floor which he feels are not to safe.

For example, if there is a stone or a hole or a nail on the left hand side of the dancer if the lead drummer has sighted this danger midway into the performance of a particular couple, he would use the drum to tell them to stay away from that particular direction. He may say for instance, *"don't* go towards your wright". Songs are also used In Aja dance. The lyrics of the songs compliment the action that is being watched, sometimes moral lessons are hidden in the songs.

## COLOUR COSTUME AND MARE-UP

Aja dance female performers are costumed in sleeveless yellow top on any type of wrapper while male performers are dressed in the same yellow top over a pair of trousers which maybe of any colour. This is not a standard however, the costume is just a form of identification as a group member, and it is the costume worn by the two Aja groups we watched in the field. It does not really contribute to characterisation except for the colour.

The yellow jumper is often lined with a blue material. The moral message in this satirical dance is actually embedded in the colour combination of the dancers costumes.

The yellow colour suggests maturity. The idea is that you must have come-of-age before you start engaging in sexual activities. Yellow depicts ageing. Sex, this dance insists is not for kids. It is for those who are mature.

The blue colour, which depicts love, conveys the fact that sex is for two people who are sincerely in love with each other. It is not what should be done casually

## KARONINKA DANCE

*Karoninika is* the most popular dance in Brufut town of Gambia. *Karoninka* and *Aja* are similar, perhaps because fertility is central to the two dances. But there is a difference. They are different in philosophy. While Aja teaches against indiscriminate sex, *Karoninka* celebrates sex. It is a tradition in the town of Brufut for young ladies who are ripe for marriage to be specially fed and massaged by traditional body builders who ensure that certain regions of the lady's body are well developed. Such regions like the breasts and the buttocks are well developed in other to make the lady attractive to men.

After this, the ladies are then made to participate in the annual Karoninka dance, where they proudly show off their bodies in an alluring fashion for the male onlooker who have come to 'shop' for wives.

The music is mid-tempo, with striking resemblances with the Nigerian high life (kokoma) but traditional in origin.

The dance plays on isolation of body parts. Immediately the music begins, the dancers either take a semicircle formation or pair up facing each other. The legs are then isolated as each of the legs opens sideways right from the waist socket to the feet. These legs then begin swing movements which occur inform of serpentine flungs. This is sustained for a moment of time and through out this movement the posture of the dancer emphasises her body curves while the buttocks also move in smooth serpentine fashion. Suddenly the dancers clap, spin on one leg; gently shuffle the legs as if pedaling bicycle and then throw the buttocks backward jerkily.

The buttocks are strategically packaged in wrapper that is often used as costume. The wrapper is also tied in a loose way so that as the buttocks are thrown backwards, they shake and shoot out.

The first segment, which comprises of legs flung in different ways, suggests the ladies are at the preparatory level of lovemaking.

After opening the laps, they move into the second stage which is shuffling of legs and throwing of buttocks. This is connotative of cycling movement done by the legs of a couple involve in copulation while the throwing of buttocks backward after the 'cycling' depicts disentanglement after ejaculation. These motifs are similar to the ones already mentioned in Aja.

Unlike *Aja* dance, *Karominka* is not a satire, it is an expression of the peoples psyche and social temperament. The Brufuts, research confirms, are believed to be the most erotic people in The Gambia. In fact, it is common knowledge in Gambia that tourists visit Brufut to make acquaintances with their ladies. In 1994, the Tourism ministry commented that it is good for the country's tourism industry.

*Karominka* is about the most criticised performance in Gambia but the Brufuts see it as an expression of their social attitude and as such justifiable

## COSTUME, COLOUR AND MAKE-UP

Bright colours are used in costuming. No specific colours are preferred as long as what a dancer wears is attractive since the dancers are supposed to attract members of the opposite sex.

Dancers only tie wrappers that are light and flimsy. The wrapper starts from the chest and stops few inches above the knees. The costume is to aid the effectiveness of the movements. The movements become effective when the movement of the body parts of the dancer sexually appeals to the male onlooker.

## GEOGRAPHICAL/ENVIRONMENTAL/OCCUPATIONAL REFLECTION

In West African dance, one of the prominent themes discussed is the people's occupation. Dances that focus on occupation are also observed to always reflect the geography and the nature of the environment of the people. Perhaps, this is because most times, the geography of a place influences the kinds of occupation that predominate the place.

We shall discuss this using Nigerian *Ekombi* and Gambian M*usuhajulo* dances as examples.

### EKOMBI

*Ekombi* motifs are located within the geographical and environmental context of the People that own it. The differences in the vegetation/geographical background of the different communities that own *Ekombi* and the other dance manifest in the dissimilarities in the movement vocabularies of these dances, yet they all communicate environmental issues.

*Ekombi* dance is done by the Efik people in the present cross rivers state of Nigeria.

The Efik towns of Calabar, Akpabuyo and Henshaw town are located along the coastal line. This is a riverine area where people live, work, eat and do everything by the river. Apart from this, the riverine environment naturally influence the peoples traditional religion as they variously worship marine deities whose pantheon is believed to be headed by Anansa.

Anansa, the river goddess, head of the Efik water deities is believed to be the supplier of the people's needs since the mainstay of their economy is the resources that accrue from whatever they pick from the river. Anansa is also believed to be a keeper of a multitude of children from where she gives to her faithfuls who desire procreation. Apart from these she is also seen as the one who protects the land from being overrun by water. For these reasons the worship of Anansa, is held in high esteem among efiks.

The *Ekombi* dance is done for the worship of Anansa, but the body usage is conditioned by the physical environment in which the people live. Being a dance done in honour of a female deity who is also believed to be extremely beautiful, *Ekombi* is mostly danced by women. However in contemporary times, men also take part in the performance.

The kinetic activities in *Ekombi* are predominantly characterized by a movement motif which causes a rippling effect from the torso to the chest and basically the shoulder blades are involved. This rippling, which illustrates the undulating manner in which river flows, is constant in Ekombi dance. The only variations occur in the footwork.

As the mid-tempo music rolls out of the three membranes and two idiophones consisting of the three wooden slit and the small metal gong, the *Ekombi* dancer begins to glide forward. He assumes a mid-level-squat posture with his right foot slightly behind the left. As he glides moving right foot forward, the left foot also glides and takes position in front of the right foot. The body continuously ripples from waist to the shoulder blade. He takes this round the arena as he bows intermittently. This signifies salutation to the audience. After this, the dancer swings the whole of the body first to the left with gentle four counts stamps of the feet which terminates each time at the direction of the body swing.

The dance is also characterised by a graceful and elegant shuffling of the feet which depicts "walking on the river while the graceful and elegant body curves are the attributes of the beautiful river goddess - Anansa.

Sometimes, the performers squat to the lower middle -level (L.M.L) while they spin as the rippling continues. This is still illustrating the undulating manner in which river flows. The climax of the dance, is a squatting movement during which dancers get down beyond the lower -middle - level, put their hands together in a supplication cum prayer posture and move forward still in this squatting position and with the hands together, they ripple the trunk as they gradually stand up. This movement is for the worship and reverence of Anansa the river goddess. The supplication made to her is depicted by each dancer's palms which are brought together in a prayer mode.

Songs are used in E*kombi* dance to recount historical events, praise the virtues in some individuals in the society or as a social commentary. In whatever way they come, songs add beauty to the overall performance.

In terms of proxemic usage of movement directions, *Ekombi* uses curves. The performers move in curved patterns. This again depicts the elegant, supple and beautiful nature and physique of Anansa.

As the performance progresses, the audience intermittently ululate as a mark of solidarity with the performer and as a way of expressing their approval of what the performer is doing.

This is very relevant to the dance because lack of ululation after some

period of performing signals lack of approval which shows that her performance is faulty, she will change techniques immediately as she battles to redeem her image.

## COLOUR COSTUME AND MAKE-UP

The *Ekombi* performer is costumed in a short wrapper always tied about five centimetres above the knee with a short blouse to match. The colours of the costumes are usually blue and white. The blue colour is always dominant while the white colour is used as linings or inform of decoration to accentuate the dominant blue. However, in Efik world view; blue represent the river while white colour signifies purity. The two motifs in the movements are also entrenched in the use of colour-the riverine environment and the purity of *Anansa* Ndem the river goddess.

The dancer's face is made-up with white dots while ornaments are also worn to accentuate the gorgeously plaited hair. This is done purely to represent the physical appearance of a beautiful mermaid in the dancer.

## MUSUBAJULO DANCE

This is a dance done by the Mandinka people in the Gambian while working in the groundnut farm.

The *Mandinkas* are arguably the most agrarian group of people in The Gambia. They are the food Basket of the nation. This is why most of their dances are occupational. They depict agriculture

*Musubajulo* is performed during communal work in the farms. The men use their *Dong* ko *Tong* (hoe) to perform stunts. They swing it in the air, use it to pass under their legs, throw it up, spin and catch it and bend down to symbolise tilling of soil for a number of times and start the stunts again.

When the men complete a segment of tilling they stay at the background while the women come on stage with their small baskets. They symbolise picking of seeds from the basket and planting the seeds in the soil.

The spectacle in this dance is the stunts performed with the *dong* ko *tong*. The way the mass of the dancers know the next way to move the hoe and how they move it in unison with mathematical precision is a spectacle to behold. The secret however is in the drum communication done by the *Jali ba* (lead drummer) - He tells the dancers through his drum the next thing to do with the *dong ko tong*.

They are always in straight line formation which depicts being serious with what is been done. After planting and hoeing for a period of time, the dancers pair

up in two - a man and a woman - and wave to the audience as they go back home with stylised locomotor.

The reason why the major aesthetic of this dance is hinged on the stunts performed with *dong-ko-gong* is that the mandinka people believe that a good farmer should have made a covenant with his hoes and this reflects in the way he manipulates it and which eventually results in good and big ridges which consequently produces good harvest. The farmers therefore display their intimacy with their farm tool (which suggests they are good farmers) through this dance.

## COLOUR, COSTUME *AND* MAKE-UP

In musubajulo female dancers use wrapper which cover their chests down to their knees while male dancers use knickers and jumpers with caps to match. The colour is always green or grey. This is to capture the forest mood and a farming atmosphere.

The costume design is reflective of what farmers would normally wear to their farms in West Africa; smart wrapper, knickers and jumper which would accommodate the rigours of farming. The green colour symbolises richness of farm soil which manifests in growth of farm plants and consequently bumper

harvest while the grey is an indication that bright and. colourful dresses are not worn for farming..

What we have done in this chapter is a discussion of the componential features of kinesics, proxemics and adornment being the elements used for communication within West African danceturgy.

More insights shall be provided in the deductions and generalisations that form the first part of the concluding chapter.

## REFERENCES


Pascal, James Imperato, "Sogoni Koun" Published in African Arts (Volume XIV, Number 2) ed. John P. Povey University of California Los Angeles, 1981, p.[38].

Pascal James Imperato, p.38.

Eliot Leib and Renee Romano, "Reign of the Leopard: "Ngbe Ritual" Published in African Arts (Vol. XVIII, Number) ed. John F. Povey, University of California Los Angeles, 1984, p.[48].

Swange Songs Collected from the repertoire of the Performing Arts Company, Centre for Nigerian Cultural Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Arnold Udoka, "Ekon Songs of the Annang" in African Arts Vol. XVIII Number 1 (ed.) John P. Povey. UCLA. 1984.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# MOVEMENT VOCABULARIES DERIVABLE FROM THE STUDY

# CHAPTER FIVE

## MOVEMENT VOCABULARIES DERIVABLE FROM THE STUDY

Dance, being a language, expresses the geographical location, biological temperament, religious beliefs, political arid historical experiences, social practices and economic peculiarities of the people that own it. A considerable level of parallels is then possible between different communities who share these determining factors. This is true of Nigeria and The Gambia. Although Nigeria and The Gambia are two different nations with their own peculiarities, the different ethnic societies that populate these nations share some cultural, environmental and behavioural factors which have made possible the existence of some parallels in their dances.

So, in this chapter attempts shall be made to decode and highlight the vocabularies derivable from this study. A particular movement will be decoded and admitted into our body of vocabularies based on if what the movement expresses in Nigeria tallies with what the movement or a similar movement expresses in The Gambia. Additional confirmation shall also be sought from other West African countries as appropriate.

Considering geographical motifs and implication, the dances that are performed in the coastal towns of Banjul, Esau and Brufut in The Gambia are

dances whose foot works are shuffles. This is also true of Nigeria. Calabar, Port Harcourt and the Ijaw town of Arogbo are costal towns and the footwork of the dances that originated from these places are mostly shuffles. This is exemplified in the *Gambian* Yaba and *Karoninka* and the Nigerian *Ekombi* which we have a. ready discussed. But apart from these examples there exist the *Asiko* dance by the riverine people of the present Ondo State and the Ijaw dance in the riverine areas of Delta State whose steps are shuffles.

The environment in which these people exist is responsible for this footwork. Walking in the river entails shuffles not stamps or jumps. The riverine people do not have the free land space to jump or execute long strided steps on. They move in controlled strides. The way they do most of their daily activities in the river has conditioned the way they use their feet. It has therefore become a language of expression, a movement vocabulary conveying their mode of living.

This is in contrast with the inhabitants of the hinterlands whose leg works are mainly stamps, jumps and leaps The vegetation of the hinter land is shorter than the vegetation of the costal areas and this means having a wider space to operate in. This has conditioned their feet to long strides and off—ground leg works.

As observed in our geographical analysis of West Africa in Chapter One, the more you move towards the north, the dryer the land and shorter the vegetation. This has implications for dance.

The dances of the communities in the Northern regions use longer strides and are characterised by aerial movements such as swirls, flips, leaps and jumps while shuffles are less. For instance, the Nigerian towns of Ikom and Ikot Ekpene belong to the same vegetational belt with the Gambian *Mandinka* towns of Brikama, Pakalindin and Macarthy Island, and their dances have the same characteristics in terms of leg work.

Some examples we have already discussed are the Nigerian Ekong and The Gambian *Jembe.* Also in Nigeria the Achi dance of the Ikom people in the cross river State and the satty dance of the *mandinkas* in The Gambia have these characteristics. They feature more of skips, leaps and jumps prominently as against the shuffles of the mangrove swamp of Banjul, Esau, Port Harcourt and Calabar.

Further still, when one moves to Kaduna and Kano in Nigeria and Fatoto and Basse in the Gambia, one encounters the same vegetation which is grassland and therefore the same use of footwork in dance. The movement qualities of foot works become more of swing and suspended, while the leaps and jumps now

occur at mid high and high levels. This is true of koroso, Bori and *Jembe* dances already discussed.

Vegetation does not only condition footwork levels, it also conditions levels in terms of aerial configurations. This occurs because the type of economic activities that are predominant in a particular West African society are determined by the types of vegetation. Since the people's occupation is determined by their vegetation, there is the likelihood of people within a particular vegetational belt being engaged in similar occupational activities. These occupational activities affect their body shifts in space This is likely to be responsible for the torso ripples that characterise *Ekombi* dance of Nigeria and *Chebu jeng* of The Gambian Wollofs. The fishermen's long stay in canoes in the sea conditions their bodies to the rockings of canoes by the sea waves. As the waves rock the canoes they unconsciously shift their torsos continuously to maintain balance in the canoe. This torso rippling is evident in their dances. Calabar Efiks who dance *Ekombi* are mostly engaged in fishing- The same obtains for the Banjul and bakau Wollofs of The Gambia who dance *Chebu jeng*. In fact, *Chebu jeng* means "Fish dance". It is heavily characterised by torso rippling.

This differs from what is encountered in areas where farming - tilling, planting and weeding-are predominantly practised. Here, most of their dances

employ the "getting down" design. The people's agricultural activities have conditioned their body movements towards the earth. They are always giving in to the law of gravity in their dances. They always dance with bent knees and sunk waists. This is centering lowering to the lower level. This is what has happened to *Musubajulo* and Satty dances in Gambia and *Aja* and Bata dances in Nigeria for example. Though only *Musubajulo* is an occupational dance, the body configuration in these dances employ the "getting down' design because the societies in which these dances are performed are agrarian. It then implies that no matter the theme of a dance, the environmental and occupational factors which have fundamentally conditioned the use of body in that society determine , to a large extent, the body and aerial configuration in that dance. Another example, is the Northern societies of Kano, Katsina and *Sokoto* in Nigeria and Basse and Gunjur in The Gambia where most people are cattle rearers. Most dances performed in these areas employ arm swings in aerial space and erect spines and waist.

Religious beliefs also affect the way a people design their dances. This mostly occurs at two levels type classification and contents. Most West African dances with religious themes are either pure or dramatic dances (see chapter 3) or combine the elements of the two dance genres. The dramatic nature is brought

about by the ritual content and the worship essence whose physical actions are dramatic. This manifests itself in the *Lanku* movement of the bata dance in Nigeria and in *Bugarabu* dance of The Gambian Jolas.

In these two dances we see the dancers' physical effort to communicate with their deities. In *Lanku*, we see the dancers' suspended arm movement to provide a link between him and the heavens while in *Bugarabu* the dancers invite ancestral spirits by raising the hands up and bringing them down several times.

At another level, most ritual dances which are not trance inclined are slow in tempo. What is likely responsible for this is the fact that most of the priests who normally lead such dances are elderly people who naturally do not possess enough stamina and strength to execute fast tempo movements. This probably is why *Lanku* and *Bugarabu* are not fast tempoed, though *Lanku* is a bit slower than B*ugarabu*. There are more examples other than the ones we already discussed. The Gelede dance in Yoruba communities of Ogun State, Nigeria and the Ekine dance of the Kalabari people in Rivers State also of Nigeria, and the Cheddo performance of the Mandinka people of The Gambia, have these characteristics.

The ritual essence and the worship content of these dances are also responsible for the use of mimetic gestures in the dances specific to such observances. The act of worship and supplication demands a high level of

involvement and as such, the votaries cannot just suggest or imply it in movement. They find ways of concretely expressing it and this often results in mimetic gestures. Facial expressions are also used because the deities must be made to know how a worshiper feels inwardly. But ritual dances that have trance, possession and cleansing as target objectives employ more facial expressions than those for worship and supplication. The spiritually riotous psyche of the possessed person is expressed with his face, while his abnormality is expressed with the irregular use of the body which comes in heavily staccato and jerky movements and sometimes unusual emphasis of the minute parts of the body, e.g. the nose, lips, fingertips and eyelids.

The Gambian Jembe and the Nigerian Bori are in this category. The two are trance dances and their movements are largely staccato. Also, the unusual use of the face, neck and fingers are emphasised in the two.

Dances with spiritual implications in West Africa have also been observed to use spins, swirls and other types of propelling movements. The swirls and turns could either be centripetally done or centrifugally executed. This is evident in the *Kankurang* movements of the Gambian Satty and even *Jembe* dances and it is also there in the Nigerian Bata (Gbamun movement) and *Bori* dances. It has also been observed in other African dances like the *egungun* masquerade performance in

Yoruba land and the Ekiti (Nigerian) masquerade dances where the masquerades turn and spin endlessly as the acolytes sing:

Poyibiri poyibiri

Omo umolẹ poyibiri

Meaning: Spin spin

Child of our god

spin.

The spins, swirls and turns are wind - like movements. They depict spirituality, immateriality, allocationality and omnipresence.

Another characteristic of trance dances as exemplified in Bori and Jembe is their narrative nature. They could be classified among narrative dances because of their tendency to show us how the characters come under spell, how the priest prepares to heal them, how he succeeds in healing them and their situation after they have been healed. That is prognosis, diagnosis and cure. This narrative technique is also used in *Ndep* - another trance dance in The Gambia and Oloba dance in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. They could also be classified among pure dances since they normally explore a wide range of movement vocabularies involving the whole body. Though its aims is not kinaesthetic exhibition.

In space usage, trance and possession dances often use asymmetrical design, and disequilibrium in floor pattern is emphasised. This is explainable. It is still an expression of the chaotic state of mind of the possessed person. The psychotic nuances therefore come in spatial arrangements.

Songs and chants also complement the Kinesis and proxemics manipulations for the dances to achieve not just aesthetic unity but also functional unity. Invocations, conjurations and a considerable amount of praise worship are done verbally, though not in every circumstance. For Nigerian religious dances that are not trance inclined., these verbalizations occur as we have seen in Gelede, but is in contrast with The Gambia where most trance dances use songs and chants. We have discovered this in *Jembe* and *Ndep* of the Serahule and Mandinka people respectively. This is not to say that Nigerian trance dances are completely devoid of verbal expressions. The frequency of occurrence might be low but it occurs. For instance, the *Iya Osun* performance in honour of Osun Osogbo uses 'esa' which is a chant rendered when Iya Osun is in trance to effect her return back to her human form.

Occupational guilds form one of the basis for dancing in West Africa. People of the same profession usually come together to dance either as a social forum for interaction or to appease the spirit-guardian of that profession.

This produced dances like *Achi* of *Ikom*, Nigeria and the *Ijo* ode of The Gambian *Aku* both being hunters' dances. Most dances of this nature are dramatic as performers use abstract movements suggestive of their profession. These movements are abstracted from the physical actions used while engaging in the activities of the profession in real life. *Achi* and *Aku* performances are examples. *Achi* employs a narrative technique while *Aku* does not. This abstraction to express the points of emphasis is also in other occupational dances. In Nigeria, the Badagry fisherman's dance which is the most ubiquitous dance in the performances of the National Troupe of Nigeria, abstracts the life actions of using agree to catch fish in the ocean and pouring the trapped fish in the customer's basket as the main, and perhaps the only dance movement. We have also noticed this in the *Musabajulo* farming dance of The Gambian people and the Hausa of Nigeria. The mende of Liberia also have a similar dance being a predominantly fishing society.

Such parallels also exist in the "Ball Taiga' -Blacksmith's dance - common among the *Mandinka* people of The Gambia and the *Ijo Agbede* also Blacksmith's dance -common among the Yoruba in Nigeria.

Apart from giving the occupational dances the unity of purpose and objective through a realistic expression by their manifestation in the abstracted visual dance

steps, occupational dances employ the use of props that are identifiable with the different professions. Occupational dances employ the use of props more than other dances. Again, this is demonstrated in the use of *dong Ko tong* in The Gambian *Musubajulo* and the guns and matchets in the Nigerian *Achi*, being farmers' and hunters' dances respectively. Also in the blacksmith's dances referred to, performers usually hold metal and iron objects of different sizes and shapes, designs and forms. These items are used to strike each other and the music for the dances are thus produced. It is like using a stone to kill two birds. The objects are thus used as a mark of identification and as musical instruments as well. The use of *agere* - a woven tool for trapping fish - by the badagry fisherman dancers in Nigeria, and the use of the hook and net in the Fishermen's dance among the Mende's in Liberia, are other examples.

One intriguing feature in these occupational dances is the proxemics use of the straight line floor pattern by most of them. This seems a point of divergence from the established proxemic principle of circles depicting people who have something in common, including professional esprit de corp' . There is certainly an exception to this rule as observed in West Africa. West African artisans emphasise the physiological and kinaesthetic demands of their profession in their dances rather than flaunting their already known homogeneity.

This explains the preference for the straight line pattern over the circle. The straight line signifies the readiness to work or the act of doing something.

Occupational dances and War dances in the various West African nations have several things in common.

War dances as exemplified in The Gambian *Kusamarie* and Nigerian *Ekong* dances employ vibratory movements and the straight line floor pattern. Some of them also abstract real war situation movements and mimetic gestures. This is more pronounced in the Gambian War dances though *Kusamarie*, as we have discussed, uses more of real war situation movements and mimetic gestures than the Nigerian *Ekong* movements which are highly coded and stylised. But the vibratory movements and the straight-line pattern are always constant. This is even noticed also in the Ghanian War dance called *Agbekor*. Although there is a particular phrase in *Agbeko* which is done in circle, this is highly minimal, just a phrase in over about fifteen phrases.

Apart from these, a good number of occupation and war dances employ pantomime. This is because of their desire to get their message through to the audience. They most often seem to base their performances on re-enactment of either real-war situation or real-working situation as the case may be. This is

already depicted in our discussion on The Gambian *Kusamarie*, *musubajulo* and *Aku* and the Nigerian *Achi* dances.

However, it seems the social dances are the most dependent on pantomime in West African dance practice. This is obvious in *Atilogwu, which* is for entertainment after farm work. We have also seen it in *Aja* which is social satire of promiscuity and karoninka which is a celebration of fertility. This element is also prominent in two other dances: the *Sogoni Koun'* where dancers use pantomime to depict the actions of animals in the forest and The Gambian *Kaulak* which we have already discussed. It is even similar also to the Nigerian Atilogwu, *though* Atilogwu's movements are more stylised.

Interestingly, pantomimic movements are not exclusive to occupations, war and social dances in West African danceturgy. Some ritual or institutional dances also employ pantomime One of such is the Ngbe ritual dance in Ejagham, Cross river State, Nigeria.

*Ngbe* is a secret, gerontocratic brotherhood responsible for the well-being of the community. All the traditional affairs of the village, whether judicial, social, economic, political or religious, fall under the jurisdiction of *Ngbe*. The *Ngbe* cult uses the Leopard as its symbol. During the dance performance, the association invokes the spirit of the leopard to release its power and its propitiation which are

considered essential for the welfare of the community. The alleged source of the association's social and economic authority is the tutelary leopard spirit after which it is named - Ngbe.

In order to invoke the Leopard's spirit the dancers use pantomimic movements. These movements are symbolic imagery of the leopard's natural prowess. The dancer starts with heel-to-toe steps used to simulate creeping through the bush like a leopard in search of preys.

Social dances in West Africa which have sex as their target objective– whether satirical or celebrative, most often have their movements centered around the waist and the hips. Just like we have seen in the Nigerian *Aja* and in The Gambian Yaba and Karoninka, the sexual gesticulations used to simulate sex are done with the waist and the hips This in our own understanding is also fertility. In some of the dances where the dancers intend to be detailed, buttocks and the solar plexus are used in staccato manner to complement the serpentine movements of the waist, the hips and sometimes the torso.

Another common feature of such dances is the use of songs and sometimes verbalised onomatopoeic sounds synonymous with copulation. In many cases, it is these songs and renditions that aid the spectator in understanding whether the dance is a satire or a celebration of sex. Apart from *Aja, Yaba* and *karoninka*

which have already been discussed, we have other examples in *Swange* of the Tiv in Nigeria and the Cameroonian *Makossa*. In swange, while dancers stand flat feet, knees bent with legs opened, they dip their hands in between their laps and bring them out with the palms opened as if exhibiting what has just been brought out of the pelvic region as they sing;

Aya Kaaham Cinkaf a

Yam ngi shina anam,

Aya lo a cinkafa yam

Ngi shina anam.

Aya on cinkafa yam

Ka shina Anaman.

Meaning: My mother has planted

"ricer" in between my

laps for people to eat and for me to

survive on.

The female sexual organ is referred to as rice in this song and the songs explain the connotation of the in and out movement of the hand.

This song has been used to add more meaning to the movement. There is something similar to this in *Aja* dance.

When the female dancer bends her knees and opens her legs as she dances towards her male companion, the orchestra sings:

Odo lo nye no yagada

kuo-a-ahf le no...

Ja ebe ke-na ayinu kuo

le-jo-je

Meaning: In between the laps

is something sweet but you should not taste it until

your teeth are strong.

In terms of functions, the two songs are adding meaning to the dance movements, thereby enabling an observer to understand the content and theme of the dances better. The only difference between the two songs is that while the swange song is a celebration of sex that of *Aja* is a warning against adolescent or teenage sex, *Aja* being a satirical dance. Also in *Obitun* dance among the Ondo people, while the female dancer gently wriggles her waist, the lead singer verbalises onomatopoeically:

Omi 'sere sere'

Meaning Water 'sere sere'

'Sere sere' here is an onomatopoeia of how sperm drops during ejaculation. These have also been observed in the Gambian *Ndaga* and *Averisash* songs and are also used for communicative purposes in institutional dances. We have already shown the examples of *Afasegbejo* step in Bata, the opening song in *Bugarabu* and the praise singing in Odudu. In actual fact, it seems the full message; theme or function of most West African dances would never be fully comprehended without the accompanying songs. It is pertinent to add that sometimes, in the highly ritualistic dances, some of the songs and chants are believed to be magically or spiritually efficacious.

Instrumentation also plays some of the roles played by songs and chants. The directorial communication between the dancer and the drummer apart, the type of musical instruments in the ensemble communicate meaning. Each instrument is symbolic. For instance, among the Ekiti people of Nigeria, the moment Agere, a long drum, is seen among the drums assembled for a particular performance, it means the performance is about royalty because only royal personalities dance Agere music in Ekiti Land. Also in The Gambia, the presence of metal idiophones such as metal gongs in an ensemble gives the performance a spiritual connotation.. This is why in *Bugarabu* and Taiga it is only metal instruments that are used. In *Bugurabu*, wimpaw, a long beaten drum is the only

non-metal instrument whose shrilling sounds are meant to conjure the presence of the dead for whom the performance is organised. In Targia - the blacksmith's dance - metal idiophones are the only instruments used as the occupational guild plays in honour of the god of metal who helps them in the performance of their work. Parallels of these exist in Nigeria. The agogo metal gongs - of different shapes, sizes and tunes is the only instrument in the ensemble of Alagbede - blacksmith -dances in the Yoruba area. The blacksmith do their dance in worship of Ogun - the god of iron and metal in Yoruba mythology. In fact in most Yoruba villages, any dance done in worship of Ogun is done to metal instruments.

Also, in Hausa societies, the presence of *Kwarya ruwa* (water calabash) (a calabash immersed in water which produces percussive sound) in any ensemble shows that the performance is spiritual. It then suggests that musical instruments are statements themselves.

The use of posture in West African danceturgy is always symbolic of either the psychological state of the character or the physiological demands of the activity in focus. In *Ngbe* dance for example, the temperament of the leopard is shown in posture when the dancer begins to defy the gravity in sustained suspended movements. He surges forward with his shoulders shifting his body beneath his raffia costume. Verging on imbalance, he recoils, two feet firmly

positioned, chest forward, he assumes a posture of deliberate scrutiny. Later, he begins a prowling motion by rapidly lowering his center of gravity and stomps on the ground, first with left foot in front, then the right, all the while in an extremely extended lunge position. The postures assumed in each of these movements is reflective of the posture taken while doing the activity that is being communicated in dance in real life situation.

This for example explains why in most West African societies, war dance movements are done either in erect or tip toeing positions with chest out depicting boldness and cautiousness while in hunter's dances, most actions are executed in squatting postures. These features are in *Abriba, Ekong, Achi* and *Aku.*

Even in *Koroso,* posture is used by the dancing ladies who show off their beauty to attract men's attention as already analysed. They walk in calculated steps, stand with arms *akimbo* with chest pushed out as they rock the torso gently for the breasts to vibrate. The *akimbo* - standing with propped chest connotes confidence, pride and beauty which are qualities ladies aspire to acquire so as to be 'marketable' . Even their men step out with raised shoulder blades to connote confidence and manliness.

One other interesting feature of social dances is the proxemic use of intra-personal space. Arrangement of dancers on stage seems to be tighter in social

dances. The two dancers (male and female) in *Aja* for instance perform almost chest to chest while the female and hold each other's hands in some tango -. like movements. This is different from *Achi* and *Aku* where dancers are scattered on stage as each man does his own hunting. It is also different from *Jembe* and *Bori* where enough space is given to each dancer to exhibit his own 'madness" in large and riotous movements. Even in Ngbe and satty the sacred personalities of the masquerades require that they be treated with reverence. So they are given enough distance. But in social dances, the level of interpersonal interaction intended is externalised in intra personal use of space where dancers intrude into each other's intra personal or core spaces. This is even extended to the physical space between the performers and the audience. In many countries social dances permit the audience getting close to the performer in terms of physical proximity. Sometimes, as the dance progresses, spectators leave their seats and join the dancers on the floor. After executing some brief steps they dash back to their seats. This is a prominent feature in The Gambian where the leader of the performing group would sometimes have to beg the spectators to give the performers enough room to perform. It has also been observed in Nigeria. *Aja* dance for instance is a Nigerian dance, which normally records a high level of audience participation.

In other instances, the audience participation may not occur only at the level of dancing. Spectators could go close to the performers and offer them gifts of money or other items as an appreciation of their performance. The contrary is the case in ritual or institutional dances where a non-initiate's intrusion is considered an affront to the spirit being invoked or worshiped. For example, non initiates are kept at a distance in Bori and Ngbe performances in Nigeria while in The Gambia no spectator dare to move near a *Kusamarie* performer as that would mean a challenge and he may in response shoot at you or try his dagger on you to confirm your immunity. The audience involvement is a powerful vocabulary in West African danceturgy. It is the easiest way of distinguishing between a social dance and a ritualistic or even hegemonic dance. Generally the level of interaction or familiarity intended is indicated by the proximity between dancers.

Levels are also statements in West African danceturgy. Dances which are of spiritual consequences seemingly use the spatial level (S.L) more than other dances. The spatial level is above the head and is normally used by acrobats. In The Gambia as we have discussed, Satty uses the spatial level during the acrobatic movements of the *kankurang* to simulate the movement of the wind. We also see this in the Nigerian Bori when the possessed dancer, at the height of his possession lifts himself up in a suspended quality and lands on his buttocks. The

brief period of suspension is an exploration into the spatial level. At times, non-religious dances also use the spatial level though not as often as the religious ones. We have seen this in *Atilogwu* and also in *Kaulak* where dancers assume animal characters. On thing that is common to all dances using the spatial level however is the fact that the dancer who is involved in the S.L movement is assuming either a non-human character or a super human character. A dancer who used this level is representing spirit personality or an animal. This is evident in *Jembe* and even in the *Gbamu* step of Bata dance. It is also noticeable in some of the Leopard's movements of *Ngbe* dance as discussed.

The upper level of the neck and head (U.L.N.H) is also discovered to be in use mostly in War dances and in some occupational dances where some level of combat is necessary. We see the first example in the discussed *Kusamarie* and Ekong dances. It is also there in the Ghanian *Agbekor* war dance.

We have examples of occupational dances that employ U.L.N.H in Koroso where male dancers assume the role of tough and combative "shepherds" looking after cattle. It is also used in dances that connote happiness, joy, royalty, confidence and showing off. This reflects in *Ndaga*, the female movement in Koroso, *Gbamu* movement in Bata, *Odudu*, the Ghanian *Atsia* and some of the phrases in *Bkombi*.

The intermediate level, (I.L.) characterises most occupational dances as dancers bend their backs to execute occupational activities. As such we find this feature in the Liberian *Mende* fishermen dance, the *Egun* fishermen dance in Nigeria, The *Mandinka* blacksmiths dance in Gambia and in at least half of the phrases in *Atiiogwu* where some farming gestures are pantomimed.

Farming or agricultural dances generally alternate between the intermediate level and the lower intermediate level (L.L.). It depends on the vegetation belt of the society in question, the type of crop that is being planted, the particular farming activity whether weeding, sowing, cutting or harvesting. When the activity is weeding or hoeing for instance, the L.I.L is used. Also the areas employ I.I.L in farming related occupational dances than the hinterland and the Northern areas. This is probably because the closer one moves to the rivers, the thicker the vegetation and the more the effort required in hoeing hence the use of lower Intermediate level in the coastal areas which gets higher the more one moves towards the North.

In The Gambian for instance, Mb*eya* - a farming dance done in the Coastal areas like Banjul and Bakau employs L.L.L. while the Mandinkans in their *Musubajulo* and the *Jola* in their farming dance use the I.L. because of their vegetation belt. This trend has also been observed in Nigeria.

Even within *Musubajulo*, there is level alteration. For instance the women maintain L.L. when picking seeds from their calabashes while men use L.H.L in the hoeing movement. This is the case in all the farming dances as we have observed.

The use of dynamic as observed in the dances vary from Languid, float, flow to Vibrance. It is determined by the intended temperament. For instance, in royal dances, as observed in the Nigerian Odudu and the Ghanian Atsia, the dynamics is a constant float because the royal personalities represented by the dancers are supposed to be graceful, regal and of controlled temper. This effect is achieved through a spring and gliding leg shuffle with a gently rocking movement of the spine and the suspended floating of arms and shoulders.

Languid movements have been observed mostly in the 'after-healing' segment of trance or possession dances. This has been pointed out in *Bori* and *Jembe*. The dynamics in most occupational and war dances is vibrance. This depicts the high use of energy as observed in the Nigerian Ekong and The Gambian *Musubajiulo* and *Kusamarie*. It also characterise the Ghanian *Agbekor*.

However, the Liberian *Mende* and the Nigerian Egun fishing dances, despite being occupational use flow dynamics. This is also echoed in the *Ekombi* dance of the Nigerian Efik which is religious. This is because fishing is done in the river and the texture of river flow conditions the level of energy needed in the

movements. Most dances done in the riverine environment therefore automatically acquire this dynamics. This appears to be a recurring feature in most dances that originated from the riverine societies no matter the theme.

The dances of movement phrases that are either float or flows in dynamics are most often of suspended and sustained qualities while the languid dynamics gives swinging effects. The dances whose dynamics are vibrant attract vibratory, staccato and percussive qualities depending on the movement function. Examples have already been made in previous discussions.

The proxemic use of props is a general feature of the African dances as demonstrated in the dances discussed. We must add however, that war and occupational dances convey messages with emphatic use of props than other forms of dances. This for instance is exemplified in the use of war weapons like matchets, dagger, guns, charms and amulets in *Kusamarce, Agere* (fish trap) paddles and baskets a used in Egun, while guns and matchets are used in Achi Musubajulo dancers hold *Dong* to *tong*, matchets, charms and amulets are used in Abriba, while sticks are held in Fulani Koroso to mention a few.

Some royal dances also use props depicting Kingship. For instance, long horsetails are used in the Ghanian Atsia while in the Nigerian *Odudu, agada* - a

ceremonial matchet, made of bronze is used in the royal dances of the Benin kingdom.

Dances that involve magical displays also use props. We have observed this in the Aje dance of Ondo people of Nigeria in which wealth is celebrated so that more wealth would come. In this dance, the lead dancer places breakable items especially plates, on her palms, head, feet and the back of the neck spins profusely without any of the items falling off. This also is one of the features of The Gambian Bugarabu as we have discussed. Mortals, pestles and seeds are used in the magical display segment performed by the lead dancer.

As props are used and moved in space, they make statements that advance the plot and reveal the function and target objective of the dance in question. This also applies to the use of colour, costume and make-up in West African danceturgy.

As explained in the *Ekong* war dance, black colour is used in costume and make-up to connote life, masculinity and strength. Again in The Gambian *Musubajulo*, the green colour is used to depict forest, the dance being agricultural in function just as yellow colour is used in Aja to depict maturity. This is to mention a few dances whose colour usage we have highlighted. However, it should be added that in West African danceturgy peculiarities exist mostly in the

area of colour interpretation. The interpretation given to a colour in a West African village may be totally different from the interpretation given to that same colour in another village less than seventy miles away. So while black, for instance, suggests life in Ikot-ekpene in Nigeria, the same black means death in Calabar. Calabar and Ikot-Ekpene are less than seventy miles apart and they have linguistic similarities, yet they differ in colour interpretation. However the proxemic use of colour is an established phenomenon in West African danceturgy.

Costumes and make-up are used to express characterisation. They form part of the vocabularies for expression in West African danceturgy.

In few instances when costumes are not being used to further characterisation, they are functional either at the revel of aesthetics or in highlighting and emphasising particular movements and particular areas of the body that are special to some movements. This has been noticed in Bata dance for instance where male dancers in the ewo step wear Gbariye which spreads round for movement emphasis when the dancers spin. The same thing occurs in Ekong war dance as already explained but are actually meant to hold the dancer's waist firmer and aid mobility.

We have also cited this phenomenon in the costumes of the Yaba and Ndaga dancers of The Gambia. Apart from defining the characters in the dances,

Yaba and *Ndaga* costumes are designed to emphasize and accommodate their movements.

From the foregoing discussions, on the kinesis, proxemics and adornment basis of West African danceturgy, a body of vocabularies have emerged. These vocabularies are schematized as follows:

# DANCE VOCABULARIES DEDUCED FROM THE STUDY

## FOCUS 1: VIBRATIONS

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| VIBRATORY MOVEMENTS OF THE CHEST AND THE SHOULDER BLADES | WAR. COMBAT. BRAVERY. | COULD BE USED FOR WAR COMBAT AND BRAVERY | Communication could be heightened by fast tempoed music or scanty costumes decorated with amulets. |
| VIBRATORY MOVEMENTS OF THE TORSO, STOMACH, HIPS AND LEGS | ANGER. WAR. STRENGTH. | FOR ANGER WAR AND STRENGTH | This goes with appropriate facial expressions. |
| VIBRATORY MOVEMENTS OF THE BUTTOCKS | SEXUALLY ATTRACTIVE INVITATION TO SEXUAL ACT. EJACULATION | FERTILITY. LIFE. COPULATION. | SONGS are needed here to be able to differentiate between satire and celebration. |

FOCUS 2: STACCATOS

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| STACCATO MOVEMENT OF THE HEAD AND THE NECK | CHAOTIC STATE OF MIND. TRANCE. POSSESSION. SPIRITUAL DISEQUILIBRIUM. HYPERACTIVITY | To communicate MADNESS AND ALTERED STATE OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS | |
| STACCATO MOVEMENT OF THE HEAD AND LEGS. | TRANSFORMED. TRANSISTING. EXHAUSTED. | TO COMMUNICATE TRANSITION INTO A NEW PERSONALITY. | |
| STACCATO MOVEMENT OF THE TRUNK | CONFUSED . UNEASY. | TO COMMUNICATE DISCOMFORT AND CONFUSION. | |
| STACCATO MOVEMENT OF THE WHOLE BODY IN A SWEEP | TRANCE. POSSESSED. HYPERACTIVITY. | TO COMMUNICATE POSSESSION OR RESTLESSNESS | Facial expression is needed for clarity. |

FOCUS 3: JERKS

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| PERCUSSIVE MOVEMENT OF THE BACK | SHOWING-OFF STRENGTH | TO COMMUNICATE A VIRTUE OF BEING POWERFUL EITHER PHYSICALLY, POLITICALLY OR EVEN SPIRITUALLY. | Costumes and gestures are needed for clarity |
| PERCUSSIVE MOVEMENT OF THE ENTIRE BODY IN ONE SWEEP. | CLIMAX OF POSSESSION. UNCONCIOUS. END OF SHOW. | CAN BE USED TO COMMUNICATE DEATH, LOSS OF ENERGY AND POSSESSION | Percussives rarely isolate body parts. |

**FOCUS 4: SWINGS**

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| SUSPENDED SWING OF THE HANDS | CONJURING SPIRIT BEINGS. CONJURING RAIN OR WIND. | COMMUNICATION WITH THE SPIRITUAL WORLD. | When this is used for rain, the fingers are shaken rapidly. |
| SIDEWAYS SWINGS OF THE WAIST AND BUTTOCKS. | ATTRACTING THE OPPOSITES SEX. SHOWING OFF THE PAID OF WOMAN (IF WOMAN) PREPARING FOR SEX. | TO COMMUNICATE ACT OF WOOING.FERTILITY RELATED ISSUES | Appropriate eye shifts, smiles and facial expressions should be combined with the movement. |
| FRONT AND BACK SWING OF THE WAIST, HIPS AND BUTTOCKS. | FERTILITY | TO COMMUNICATE ISSUES RELATED TO SEX, LIFE AND FERTILITY. | |
| MIS-LEVEL SWINGS OF THE HANDS | USED TO MAINTAIN BALANCE. TO PROPEL | BALANCING TECHNIQUE | More of a Technique |
| LOW-LEVEL SWINGS OF THE HANDS | APPEAL. SURRENDER. WORSHIP. PROITIATION, HOMAGE. | TO BE USED WHEN COURTESY OR RITUAL INTENTIONS ARE EXPRESSED. TO MAKE APPEALS OR BEG. | Mostly done in kneeling position. |
| SWINGING MOVEMENT OF THE LEG | SHOW OF STRENGTH. POWER AND ENERGY | TO BE USED IN EXPRESSING STRENGTH OR FOR WAR AND HUNTING | If done with head and neck, staccato could mean Trance. It is one leg at a time. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| SWINGING OF THE WHOLE BODY IN ONE SWEEP. | BEING LIGHT. JOYFUL. HAPPY. | IT COULD BE USED TO SHOW THAT THE CHARACTER IS OF LESS IMPORTANCE. IT COULD BE USED ALSO FOR EXCITEMENT. | |
| KINETIC ZIGZAG | USED TO DEPICT DEMONS. MONSTERS. EVIL PERSONALITIES. | TO COMMUNICATE VICIOUSNESS | Fearful facial expressions should be combined with it. |

FOCUS 5: ERECTNESS

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| SUSPENDED MOVEMENT OF THE HANDS WITHOUT SINGS. | SURRENDER | TO COMMUNICATE A STATE OF DESPAIR | If two hands are involved and palms are opened. |
| Suspended movements of the hands without swings but with palms closed. | RESPONSE TO A CALL. CHEERS. VICTORY. | COULD BE USED FOR RALLYING CALLS OR TO SHOW SOLIDARITY. | |
| ERECT SUSPENSION OF THE ENTIRE BODY. | STRENGTH | TO COMMUNICATE ENORMOUS STRENGTH. | |
| LIFTING OF CENTERING BEYOND INTERMEDIATE LEVEL. | NON-HUMAN PERSONALITY | NON-HUMAN CHARACTERISATION | Posture is erect. |
| ERECT POSTURE OF SPINE/ TORSO | SERIOUS PERSONALITY COMBAT READY | TO BE USED FOR WAR AND OPPOSITION OR PRIDE. | |
| | | | |

FOCUS 6: FOLDS

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| SUSPENDED MOVEMENT OF THE ENTIRE BODY IN FOLD OR UPSIDE DOWN FORM. | SUPER-HUMAN CHARACTER. WIND. TRANSFORMED. | TO DEPICT SPIRIT/SPIRITUAL CHARACTERS | |
| CENTERING LOWERING TO THE LOWER LEVEL | A GRARIAN. ACROBATIC | TO COMMUNICATE FARMING, CLEARING, LIFTING OR OTHER MANUAL DUTIES | Use of props is necessary here for clarity |
| CENTERING AT THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL. | COMBAT | TO BE USED FOR WAR, HUNTING, WRESTING. | |
| KINESIC CURVE | BEAUTY. SUPPLENESS | TO COMMUNICATE BEAUTY. | |
| KINESIC CIRCLE | ENJOYMENT. MERRY | TO COMMUNICATE CELEBRATION | |
| LONGITUDINAL KINESIC SERPENTINE | RIVER FLOW. RIVER PATH. | TO COMMUNICATE AQUATIC RELATED ISSUES/PERSONALITIES | Done front and backward. |
| LATITUDINAL KINESIC SERPENTINE | SENSUOUSNESS, SEXY | TO COMMUNICATE EROTICNESS | Always done sideways. |

FOCUS 7: SINKS

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | RELEVANCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WEST AFRICAN CHOREOGRAPHY | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| POSTURE - SUNKEN TORSO | SADNESS. DEPRESSION ILL HEALTH | to express emotional and physical stress. | |
| CENTERING LOWERING AS MUCH TO THE GROUND LEVEL | NON-HUMAN PERSONALITY | To characterise a dancer as being a spirit personality or an animal personality. | Facial expression, gestures and in some cases, costumes are required here for clarity. |
| GIVING INTO GRAVITY | TYPIFIES AFRICAN DANCE | COULD BE USED FOR SAME | MANY AFRICAN DANCES USE THIS INSPITE OF THEIR FOCUS. |

FOCUS 8: RHYTHMICS

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | RELEVANCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WEST AFRICAN CHOREOGRAPHY | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| MID-TEMPO RYTHM | USED FOR BOTH SACRED, SECULAR AND OCCUPATIONAL DANCES. | | |
| SLOW-DENSE RYTHM | MOSTLY USED FOR SPIRITUAL DANCES. USED TO INDUCE POSSESSION. | COULD BE RETAINED. | |
| POLY RYTHM | TYPIFIES AFRICAN DANCE | | DISTINGUISHES AFRICAN DANCES FROM OTHER FORMS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. |
| MONO RYTHM | DANCES DEDICATED TO DEITIES | COULD BE RETAINED | THEY MOSTLY EMPLOY SINGLE INSTRUMENTATION. |
| FAST RYTHM | MOST AFRICAN DANCES WITH FAST RYTHM ARE SOCIAL AND DONE BY YOUNG OR MID-AGED MEN. FEW OF THEM ARE SACRED OR INSTITUTIONAL. | COULD BE USED FOR SAME | WHAT DETERMINES THE REAL CONTEXT IS THE MOVEMENT QUALITIES COMBINED WITH IT. |

FOCUS 9: IMBALANCE/JUMPS

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| PULLING OUT TO A STATE OF IMBALANCE | TRANSFORMED | TO SHOW THAT THE CHARACTER A DANCER IS DEPICTING HAS CHANGED | Other features would compliment. This shows what transformation has taken place. |
| PROXEMIC IMBALANCE RESULTING FROM SPACE ASSYMETRICS | A STATE OF DISEQUILIBRIUM | TO COMMUNICATE EXCITEMENT, ALIVENESS AND ACTIVENESS. | |
| MOVING AWAY FROM GRAVITY | JOY | TO COMMUNICATE JOY/HAPPINESS | If it challenges gravity the character is super-human. |
| PROXEMIC ZIGZAG | HESITATION. CONFUSION | To communicate the search for something or a state of indecision. | Rarely used in West African danceturgy. Only used in solos. |

FOCUS 10: SPACE DIRECTION

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| SPACE-SOCIO PETAL SPACE | HOMOGENEITY FAMILIARITY. CARE. ACCEPTED. | To depict homogeneity and unity. | Mostly used in secular and occupational dances. |
| FIXED FEATURE | USED TO ESTABLISH PLACES. E.G SHRINE, FARM ETC. | To establish Locales in dance | Mostly used in ritual and occupational dances. |
| SOCIO FUGAL SPACE | (KEEP PEOPLE APART) FEAR. HATRED. SUSPICION. | To depict heterogeneity and hostility. | Some ritual and war dances use this. |
| PROXEMIC CIRCLE | | | |
| PROXEMIC SERPENTING | HOMOGENEITY RIVER FLOW. | To depict homogeneity<br><br>TO DEPICT AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT/PERSONALITIES. | Better done in Squatting position. |
| ARC. | RARELY USED | COULD BE USED IN THE MODERN DISPENSATION BUT FOR ENLIGHTENED AUDIENCE. | |
| ANGLES | VICIOUSNESS | COULD BE USED FOR AESTHETIC EFFECT IN THE MODERN DISPENSATION | CAN ALSO BE USED TO COMMUNICATE VICIOUSNESS AND BEING SECURED. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| PROXEMIC CURVE | JUST SPACE DEFINITION FOR ARENA. | COULD BE USED TO COMMUNICATE IN COMPLETENESS. | NEEDS TO BE FURTHER RESEARCHED. |
| UP AND DOWN | IF SUSTAINED MEANS ABNORMALITY. IF NOT SUSTAINED COULD MEAN - STRENGTH | | IF NOT SUSTAINED IT COULD ALSO BE USED AT TRANSITION. |

NOTE: ALL FORMS OF AERIAL BODY SHIFTS WHICH CHARACTERISE THE EURO-AMERICAN DANCE MOVEMENT DIRECTIONS ARE MEANINGLESS IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT SHOULD NO LONGER BE USED.

FOCUS 11: DYNAMICS, REPETITION, VARIATION

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| DYNAMICS, THEY ARE PANTOMIMIC. | THEY ARE TRUE TO LIFE IN WEST AFRICAN DANCETURGY. | RELEVANT | CHOREOGRAPHERS SHOULD NOT BE STYLISTIC CONSCIOUS IN USING DYNAMICS IN WEST AFRICAN DANCETURGY. |
| REPETITION | MONOTONOUSLY USED IN WEST AFRICAN DANCETURGY. | Should only be used when emphasis are intended. | SHOULD BE USED WITH VARIATION IF NEEDED FOR EMPHASIS. |
| VARIATION | PROMINENT AND USED WHEN APPROPRIATE | Should be used for aesthetics. | SHOULD BE USED NOT IN CONTRAST FORM. OTHERWISE OBSCURANTISM MAY SET IN TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE AUDIENCE. |

FOCUS 12: FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, GESTURES AND SONGS

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| FACIAL EXPRESSIONS | THEY ARE TRUE TO LIFE. JUST WHAT THEY DEPICT IN REAL LIFE. | SHOULD BE RETAINED. | THE EXPRESSIVE NATURE OF AFRICAN DANCE MAKES IT LARGELY DEPENDENT ON FACIAL EXPRESSIONS |
| GESTURES | ABSTRACTED FROM REAL LIFE SITUATION. WHEN USED IN AFRICAN DANCE, THEY DEPICT WHAT THEY DEPICT IN REAL LIFE. | SHOULD BE RETAINED. | SAME AS ABOVE |
| .SONGS, CHANTS AND ULULATIONS. | ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN AFRICAN DANCE CHANTS ARE USE D TO EITHER PRAISE PEOPLE OR INVITE SPIRITS. ULULATIONS ARE TO SIGNAL APPROVAL. WHILE SONGS ARE USED TO FURTHER EXPRESS THE TARGET OBJECTIVE. | SHOULD BE RETAINED | VERY IMPORTANT TOOLS. NOT ENCOURAGED IN EURO-AMERICAN DANCE. AFRICA CAN NOT DO WITHOUT IT. |

FOCUS 13: COSTUME, COLOUR AND MAKE-UP

| VOCABULARY | CONTEXT | USES | OTHER COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| COSTUME | USED TO AID CHARACTERISATION NOT JUST FOR AESTHETICS | COSTUMES ARE NECESSARY IN WEST AFRICAN CHOREOGRAPHY TO ACHIEVE HEIGHTENED COMMUNICATION | They should also be made to accommodate movements |
| COLOUR | THE SEMIOTIC USE OF COLOURS SHOULD PERSIST. | | This requires serious research to know peculiarities of interpretation. |
| MAKE-UP | USED FOR CHARACTERIZATION | THE SEMIOTIC USE OF MAKE-UP SHOULD ALSO PERSIST. | This requires research since colour is involved. |

# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Material duplication, which is a noticeable characteristic of contemporary choreography in West Africa is a disturbing product of the faithful retrieval from the traditional past, which West African choreographers have adopted as a creative device.

This, apart from being the harbinger of the poverty of creativity and arrested development currently observable in West African danceturgy, is capable of erroneously presenting dance as an art irrelevant and inconsequential to the dynamics of contemporary living, and an activity insensitive to societal pulse.

Since making personal statement through original creativity is core to the art of choreography and dance, apart from being a language for communication, is also a living art which must keep adapting and reintegrating itself if it *must* survive in the face of inevitable changes and transformations in the cultural process, West African choreographers should begin to yield new meanings from the existing dances through the procedure of research - analysis, deconstruction, hybridization, reconstruction. This way, motifs and vocabularies which can serve the purpose of contemporary danceturgical communication will be arrived at without obliterating our traditional dance art.

This Study is a foundational demonstration and suggestion upon which further research could be made.

## SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing vocabularies, being reflections of the elements of communication in West African choreography are hereby suggested to the contemporary choreographer. A proper and appropriate usage of them will enable choreographers to be relevant to the West African society without alienating the people culturally. What the choreographer needs to do is to communicate new themes, ideas and relevant topics using these vocabularies which the people already know, identify with and understand. Since these vocabularies and aesthetic devices are a body of language themselves, a choreographer who neglects them may not be able to communicate with the owners of the language.

The vocabularies suggested in this study are not in any way exhaustive. One of the aims is to provoke more researches in this area. This study therefore is not by any means conclusive.

We therefore recommend that West ,African choreographers do not start making dances without preliminary researches into the kinesis, proxemics and adornment basis of the danceturgy of the society they are creating for. That way, detailed peculiarities which this study may have overlooked might be unearthed.

We repeat, for the sake of emphasis, that appropriate and necessary facial expressions, gestures arid pantomimes which are de-emphasised in Western choreograpy should be freely engaged in choreography of the West Africa. They are thoroughly entrenched in our indigenous danceturgy and serve as the catalysts for the expressive nature of African dance. If de-emphasised, emotions would be

subdued and West African dances would become mere shifts in space - a replica of what obtains in the West - which can not qualify to be called dance in Africa.

Costumes, colour and make-up should also be used to communicate ideas and characterization. This should be done based on previous research on the relevant cultural aspects of the people. This is because if traditional peculiarities are generalised, the creator might be sending wrong signals, and these peculiarities exist especially in that area of colour interpretation. Also costumes must be made to be relevant to the target objective and function of the dance and should portray individual characters. They also must accommodate movements.

In Western danceturgy, dance can occur without music. But in Africa this rarely occurs. Most Africa West African dances cannot be separated from their music and this should be the case in the contemporary West African choreography. Any attempt by a West African choreographer to compose a dance without music, apart from being seen as an aberration, may also be a resounding failure as the audience may disapprove of it. The choreographer in the contemporary West Africa should also employ songs, chants and ululations where appropriate. Though these elements are de-emphasized in Western choreography where non-verbalization is seen as a mark of excellence, they are core to true dancing in West Africa as shown in this research. They provide insights, signposts and signals which are vital to the functions of African dances.

The themes of the dances should reflect today. The function should be to serve the present but the language should be indigenous - the one the intended

audience already understands. The African dance aesthetic, the 'aura' and 'flavour' which make a dance authentically African are embedded in these indigenous vocabulary. When they are engaged, the African aesthetic is automatically on display7 but most importantly they enable communication to take place between the choreographer and his immediate audience.

Where parallels naturally exist, West African choreographers should adapt symbols and motifs from West African nations other than theirs. This will enrich their performances and could be a device to achieve variation which is a necessary ingredient in the contemporary West African choreography. The similarities also indicate the potential vocabularies that exist, which are acceptable to a wide range of cultures that can be employed to communicate with them.

If the foregoing are embraced and experimented upon, West African choreographers, we hope, will be more active and dynamic. Also, dance will become a more relevant, important and dynamic art in West Africa.

It is hoped that this research will provoke dance and theatre scholars into going into more researches in the area of dance; especially in the communication value of dance.

# SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

## BOOKS


Adinku, Ofotsu African Dance Education in Ghana: Ghana Ghana universities Press 1994.

Ajayi, Ade and Crowder, Michael,(Ed) . History of West Africa. Vol. 1 London, 1955.

Bakare Ojo Rasaki, Rudiments of Choreography. Space Publishers, Kaduna. 1994.

Enekwe, Ossie Theories of Dance in Nigeria . Afa Press, Nsukka, 1991.

Humphrey Doris, The Art of making dances. New jersey, Princeton Book company, 1987.

Gay Cheney, Basic Concepts in Modern dance. New Jersey,princeton Book Company publishers, 1989.

Hawkins, Alma, Creating Through Dances New Jersey, Princeton Book Company Publishers. 1988

Karianu, Asante Welsh, Molefikete Asante, African Culture: The Rythms of Unity.,(Ed) . African World Press Inc. Trenton, New Jersey, 1985.

Mbiti, John S. African views of The Universe. Published in African History and Culture, (Ed) . Richard Olaniyan Lagos, Longman group, 1982.

Nwamuo, Chris,Fundamentals of Dance

Oko-Offoboche,Edisua, ABC of Dance Arts Calabar,Uptriko press. 1995.

Ogunbiyi, Yemi, Drama and Theatre in Nigeria. Lagos, Niqeria Magazine, 1981. Accra: 192

Rust, France: Dance in Society, London, Routledge and Keqan Paul 1969

Sorrell, Walter, The dance through the Ages, New York, Grosset and Dunlop, 1967.

ARTICLES IN JOURNALS

Arias, Jimene invannia, 'proxemics in the ESL Classroom" in Forum, Thomas J. Kral (ed) . U.A.A, English teaching forum.

Balogun, Odun: "The Contemporary Stage in the Development of African aesthetic" in Okike - An African journal of New writing, (ed. Chinua Achebe No 19, September, 1931.

Imperato, Pascal James, "Sogoni Koun" in African Arts. Vol. XIV Number 2 (ed.) John F. Povey. UCLA. 1981.

Leib Elliot and Rence romans, Reign of the Leopard: Ngbe rituai in African Arts John F. Povey. (ed) UCLA. 1984.

Udoka, Arnold, "Ekon Songs of the Annang" in African Arts Vol. XVIII Number 1 (ed.) John F. Povey. UCLA. 1984.

## SEMINAR PAPERS

Igotl, Iyortange "Continuity and Change" in Tiv music and dance" Unpublished Semi nar paper presented at the Seminar of

African Arts in Historical perspective, organised by the Centre for Cultural studies, University of Lagos. December 11th - 15th, 1984.

Ojomo, Abimbola, "Patriotism, Imperialism and intellectualism. The Plague of African Art" paper presented at the Congress titled Folklore and the Challenge of National Integration, Being the fifth society help in annual Congress of the Nigerian Folklore ABU., Zaria. December, 1985.

Ugolo, Chris, "Forging a new direction in Nigerian Dance Theatre. The example of "A Festival Power" presented at the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists Convention, held in Ahmadu Belle University, Zaria. 1991.

## OTHER MATERIALS

Akpabot, Sam, "African Music" a weekly Column in the Daily Guardian Newspaper 1992-93.

Badejo, Peter, Adegboyega, "Bori Spirit Possession" Islamic Hausa Phenomenon". Unpublished M.A. Thesis submitted to the University of California, 1980.

Fenning, Connie, "Teaching Creative Dance From an Afrocentric Perspective" As at the time we read this paper in Banjul in 1994, it was awaiting Publication in the second edition of international journal of African Dance.

## INTERVIEWS IN GAMBIA

1. Interview with Ahmadu Jallow, a leading Gambian dance and Theatre practitioner, Coordinator, Yetteh Theatre Troupe, Banjul, The Gambia. 40 years old, interview date was 3rd May, 1994.
2. Interview with Alhaji Boubaccar Minsiter for Culture, The Gambia. 14th July 1994. '18 years old.
3. Interview with Isatou Ndow Teacher, Serrekunda Middle School, Serrekunda, The Gambia. 1995. 35 years old.
4. Interview with Dr. Lennie Peters, Gambian Post and Theatre practitioner. Serrekunda The Gambia.
5. Interview with Koto Ngum a leading dance practitioner in Gambia and the lead Drummer, Gambian National Troupe. 1994-1995. 55 years old.
6. Interviews with Modou Joof, Head of Performing Arts, Gambian National Council for arts arid Culture and Dance practitioner. 1994-95. 48 years old.
7. Interview with Sally Colley Gambian foremost female dance practitioner. 19th December, 1994.36 years old.
8. Interview with Teejan Kamara Artistic Director, National Troupe of Gambia. 1994-1995. 45 years old.

## INTERVIEWS IN NIGERIA

1. Interview with Edet Essien, Artiste and Lecturer, Department of Theatre Arts University of Calabar. March 1996.

2. Interview with Ojeyemi Tunji Olota, AwoVarsity Theatre, a foremost Bata dancer, O.A.U., Ile-Ife, January, 1997.

3. Interview with Bisi Olaiya, dance practitioner, Deputy Director, Ekiti State Council for Arts and Culture, Ado Ekiti December, 1995.

4. Interview with Chris Ugolo, Dance practitioner and teacher, Dept. of Theatre Arts, University of Benin, Nigeria. December, 1996.

5. Interview with Awalu Adamu, dance practitioner fluitist. Agoro, Zaria. 61 years old.

6. Interview with Instrumentalist Abonjo Bonniface, Sabongari, Dance Practitiner,

   Zaria 1995-1997.

7. Interview with Ishaku Ibrahim, Instrumentalist, 1995- 1997.

8. Interview with Kokoirin Ayinde Poet, dancer, Musician. Erinmope Ekiti. June *30th*, 1996.

9. Interview with Chris Ifeanyinchukwu. Dance arid Theatre and Zaria. practitioner, Ohafia, Iine State and member of National Troupe of Nigeria. August 13th, 1995.

10. Interview with Raymond Obaji. Dance practitioner. Ikom. March 1996.

11. Interview with Chief Orojo. Head of Alamoye family Aramoko-Ekiti, May, 1996.

12. Interview with Eme Ekpenyong, Nigerian Star Dancer. Jos. January, 1997.

13. Interview with Romanus Ochapa. Dance practitioner, Igbanomaje quarters Oturkpo. December, 1996.

14. Interview with Ismaila Hamed Dancer and Musician. Idah. 18th February, 1997.

15. Interview with Jenkeri Okwori (Ph.D) Dance Scholar. Dept. of English and Drama, A.B.U Zaria.

All the dance troupes mentioned one way or the other in this study were observed by the researcher between 1993 and 1997 and information were 'squeezed' out of their members and audiences using different means.

Mbiti, John S. African views of The Universe. Published in African History and Culture, (Ed) . Richard Olaniyan Lagos. Longman group, 1982.

Nwamuo, Chris,Fundamentals of Dance

Oko-Offoboche,Edisua, ABC of Dance Arts Calabar,Uptriko press. 1995.

Ogunbiyi, Yemi, Drama and Theatre in Nigeria. Lagos, Niqeria Magazine, 1981. Accra: 192

Rust, France: Dance in Society, London, Routledge and Keqan Paul 1969

Sorrell, Walter, The dance through the Ages, New York, Grosset and Dunlop, 1967.

ARTICLES IN JOURNALS

Arias, Jimene invannia, 'proxemics in the ESL Classroom" in Forum, Thomas J. Kral (ed) . U.A.A, English teaching forum.

Balogun, Odun: "The Contemporary Stage in the Development of African aesthetic" in Qkike - An African journal of New writing, (ed. Chinua Achebe No 19, September, 1931.

Imperato, Pascal James, "Sogoni Koun" in African Arts. Vol. XIV Number 2 (ed.) John F. Povey. UCLA. 1981.

Leib Elliot and Renee romans, Reign of the Leopard: Ngbe rituai in African Arts John F. Povey. (ed) UCLA. 1984.

Udoka, Arnold, "Ekon Songs of the Annang" in African Arts Vol. XVIII Number 1 (ed.) John F. *Povey.* UCLA. 1984.

## SEMINAR PAPERS

Igotl, Iyortange "Continuity and Change" in Tiv music and dance" Unpublished Semi nar paper presented at the Seminar of

African Arts in Historical perspective, organised by the Centre for Cultural studies, University of Lagos. December 11th - 15th, 1984.

Ojomo, Abimbola, "Patriotism, Imperialism and intellectualism. The Plague of African Art" paper presented at the Congress titled Folklore and the Challenge of National Integration, Being the fifth society help in annual Congress of the Nigerian Folklore ABU., Zaria. December, 1985.

Ugolo, Chris, "Forging a new direction in Nigerian Dance Theatre. The example of "A Festival Power" presented at the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists Convention, held in Ahmadu Belle University, Zaria. 1991.

## OTHER MATERIALS

Akpabot, Sam, "African Music" a weekly Column in the Daily Guardian Newspaper 1992-93.

Badejo, Peter, Adegboyega, "Bori Spirit Possession" Islamic Hausa Phenomenon". Unpublished M.A. Thesis submitted to the University of California, 1980.

Fenning, Connie, "Teaching Creative Dance From an Afrocentric Perspective" As at the time we read this paper in Banjul in 1994, it was awaiting Publication in the second edition of international journal of African Dance.

## INTERVIEWS IN GAMBIA

1. Interview with Ahmadu Jallow, a leading Gambian dance and Theatre practitioner, Coordinator, Yettch Theatre Troupe, Banjul, The Gambia. 40 years old, interview date was 3rd May, 1994.

2. Interview with Alhaji Boubaccar Minsiter for Culture, The Gambia. 14th July 1994. '18 years old.

3. Interview with Isatou Ndow Teacher, Serrekunda Middle School, Serrekunda, The Gambia. 1995. 35 years old.

4. Interview with Dr. Lennie Peters, Gambian Post and Theatre practitioner. Serrekunda The Gambia.

5. Interview with Koto Ngum a leading dance practitioner in Gambia and the lead Drummer, Gambian National Troupe. 1994-1995 55 years old.

C. Interviews with Modou Joof, Head of Performing Arts, Gambian National Council for arts arid Culture and Dance practitioner. 1994-95. 48 years old.

7. Interview with Sally Colley Gambian foremost female dance practitioner. 19th December, 1994.36 years old.

8. Interview with Teejan Kamara Artistic Director, National Troupe of Gambia. 1994-1995. 45 years old.

## INTERVIEWS IN NIGERIA

1. Interview with Edet Essien, Artiste and Lecturer, Department of Theatre Arts University of Calabar. March 1996.

2. Interview with Ojeyemi Tunji Olota, AwoVarsity Theatre, a foremost Bata dancer, O.A.U., Ile-Ife, January, 1997.

3. Interview with Bisi Olaiya, dance practitioner, Deputy Director, Ekiti State Council for Arts and Culture, Ado Ekiti December, 1995.

4. Interview with Chris Ugolo, Dance practitioner and teacher, Dept. of Theatre Arts, University of Benin, Nigeria. December, 1996.

5. Interview with Awalu Adamu, dance practitioner fluitist. Agoro, Zaria. 61 years old.

6. Interview with Instrumentalist Abonjo Bonniface, Sabongari, Dance Practitiner,
Zaria 1995-1997.

7. Interview with Ishaku Ibrahim. Instrumentalist, 1995- 1997.

8. Interview with Kokoirin Ayinde Poet, dancer, Musician. Erinmope Ekiti. June *30th*, 1996.

9. Interview with Chris Ifeanyinchukwu. Dance arid Theatre and Zaria. practitioner, Ohafia, line State and member of National Troupe of Nigeria. August 13th, 1995.

10. Interview with Raymond Obaji. Dance practitioner. Ikom. March 1996.

11. Interview with Chief Orojo. Head of Alamoye family Aramoko-Ekiti, May, 1996.

12. Interview with Eme Ekpenyong, Nigerian Star Dancer. Jos. January, 1997.

13. Interview with Romanus Ochapa. Dance practitioner, Igbanomaje quarters Oturkpo. December, 1996.

14. Interview with Ismaila Hamed Dancer and Musician. Idah. 18th February, 1997.

15. Interview with Jenkeri Okwori (Ph.D) Dance Scholar. Dept. of English and Drama, A.B.U Zaria.

All the dance troupes mentioned one way or the other in this study were observed by the researcher between 1993 and 1997 and information were 'squeezed' out of their members and audiences using different means.