

Okhaifo: Dramatic essence of dance in the Ihuen-egware annual festival...

**THE DRAMATIC ESSENCE OF DANCE IN THE IHUEN –
EGUARE ANNUAL FESTIVAL PERFORMANCE OF
EGORO KINGDOM IN ESAN WEST LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE – NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Traditional African festival performance is the conglomeration of the entire life and culture of the African worldview. The major problem with traditional African festival performances is that they are mostly subsumed in dance and dancing activities. This paper aims to validate dance as the central purveyor on which a typical traditional African festival rests. The study shall further demonstrate that the Ihuen – Eguare festival performance of Egoro Kingdom in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo state; is a mirror of the way of life, an embodiment of the people's philosophical and religious thought and generic symbol and a reflection of their art form; verbal, visual and mimetic. Methodically, the paper utilized the participant and observation methods of data gathering. The literary method of research also aided the study as primary and secondary sources. The paper noted that one of the telling qualities of the Ihuen – Eguare annual festival performance is its graceful and uncluttered prose, coupled with its ruthless exclusion of convoluted, tortuous or obscure expressions from the musical expressions. The study however discovered that the festival of Eguare Egoro people is founded on dance as dance is what made up the actions that brought about the excitement and euphoria of the entire celebration. Therefore, this paper recommends that the traditional festival of African inclination could be extrapolated as an intellectual discipline with the introduction of a viable guild system; with specialists in music,

dance and drama as well as other aesthetic articulation so that our festivals can become a repertory in the search for an alternative in contemporary performance module in Theatre or Performing Arts.

Introduction

The role of dance in the festival is most dramatic and entertaining, although some of these dances are ritualistic in form and style. By dramatic, it means that the dance is responsible for the entertainment and communication experienced in the entire celebration. This is because the dance forms the core and it is captured as the confluence stage where the physical and the supernatural interact to affirm a leadership role. It must be noted from the onset that there is no specific number of dances that are exhibited in the Eguare – Egoro annual festival. There are no specific dancers as well. They dance according to the motivation of the rhythm of the music. As already established, dance in the – Eguare festival thrives on spontaneous action caused by mood resulting in improvisation created through the structural content. As long as dance has something to transmit through its medium; it certainly belongs to art in the widest sense of this word. In these dances, particular shapes (designs) are employed but their arrangements are not consciously selected. This contributes to the promotion of unified mood and action. Whereas, the imitation of ‘action’ is the essence of drama or poetry as the case may be. In reality, though, it seems more probable that the universality of human nature secures a similar response in similar conditions: producing certain social attitudes and similar forms are applied.

The functions are for amusement and solidarity. Everyday activities of life are wrapped and exhibited in the process of the dance accompaniments. Improvisation is a basic feature of the Eguare – Egoro festival performance, with dance as its focal point “... whereby individuals have the license to, within the confines of the performance; exhibit different styles of movements that may be different from the groups’ performance – but still maintains the

general rhythm (atmosphere) of the performance. It is instantaneous (spontaneous) in nature, lasting but for a few seconds or moments” (Abbe, 154). Logically, the ritual of the dance performance captures the sociological essence of the Egoro people’s cultural artefact portraying communal interaction among the people. With this unified background; the community thrives in all spheres of human interaction. To buttress this point, Emoruwa asserts that, “dance as an art, communicates, interprets and expresses ideas, thoughts and emotions of human minds through movements, gestures, symbols, colours and other non-verbal theatrical elements” (101).

Being that the problem of the traditional African festival is subsumed in the art and act of dancing, therefore this study shall specifically be relevant in scholarship in that it shall narrow down the effects and excitements of traditional African festival performances to the issue of dance. Whereas, researches about the particular relevance of dance in traditional festival settings of African inclination has not been sufficiently available since emphasis had usually been centred mostly on the shadow rather than the substance of the indigenous festival performances.

The Role of Dance in the Ihuen – Eguare Festival Performance

Dance is one of the core aspects of the festival. Without dance, we cannot have a total theatre. As dance plays a substantial role in the theatre, so does it in festivals. At the festival, the communicative spell of dance comes into play. This is heightened by the simultaneous participation of the whole community in the dance. So, the role dance plays in the festival culture can be seen in this instance. When acquiring a special function, the dance shape is accordingly adjusted by the dancer(s). In the process, the easily – found symbolic elements in dance are employed to make the action meaningful, different and unusual.



Plate 1: A comic dancer doing a solo dance as a prelude before the king's dance. Photo: The researcher

In the Ihuen – Eguare Egoro festival, irrespective of the style, the dances remain didactic; to promote obeisance. This movement is the warp (influence) of dance designed to induce mass psychosis (general participation). Thus, the art of imitation sets in and the performers articulate thoughts and ideas in the dance – mime, or gestures. Nevertheless, all these are realized in the complex interweaving of rhythms and movement patterns. In the Eguare – Egoro festival, the actions in the dance - drama the imitation of the action of the ancestors. Consequently, a high sense of observation is needed to be able to understand what you are seeing as the festival lasts. It can as well be easily determined by the style of the dancer at a given point in time.

In the Eguare – Egoro festival, the simplicity of the Esan language variety, not only aids the dancers; but also makes it easy

for the spectators to be involved in the dramatic enactments of the dance procession. As the dance procession moves, you are likely to hear phrases, words and exclamations to nativism and to contextualize the Esan language. The aesthetic of Esan language lies in the simplicity but subtle phrasing of sentence structure and style. Ordinarily, the language of Esan as used in the Egoro variety is affable. It is not bombastic diction or jargon-plated syntax but the prose vernacular of everyday life. The emphasis of the Egoro dialect of Esan is on directness and clarity. The dialogue is often vivid and evocative. So, for this reason, the Eguare festival employs the full range of linguistic resources of traditional African theatre – like proverbs, riddles, legends, jokes, metaphors, allusions, hyperboles and rhetorical devices of conversation and public oratory in the whole performance. So, dance is the soul of a people's culture and tradition.

The Dance and the Dramaturgy of the Eguare – Egoro Festival Performance

The essentials of the dance are contained within the melody of songs and the harmony of the instruments. This is because performance includes all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion, which serves to influence in a way, any other participants. In the concept of the dance, every dancer has a relationship with one another, propelled by the musical sounds that they hear. Folk songs are spontaneously formulated, within the Eguare – Egoro kingdom's progeny, to suit the context of the dance.

The urge to move is biological and significant to man in revealing his thoughts and freeing himself of a psychological strain. In this direction, one can postulate that dance evolved from three major sources; 'emotional impulse and improvisation', 'the need by man to release psychic tension using rhythmic movement' and 'the performance of ecstasy' or 'magic'. Thus, the Igbu – Eguare festival (dance) performance creates room for solidarity

and social cohesion as it embodies doctrines and integrates thoughts and actions (efforts) through exaggeration and repetition which are the same processes employed in the realization of any dramatic experience.

This dramatic content is understandable as a purely expressive entity: it cannot be explained by other media than dance. In the dance, the most important element, which is stressed first, is the flow of movements. In this perspective, Ugolo points out that, “dance that is motivated by songs tend to be mimetic and tend to make use of gestures to dramatize the text content of the songs. Movements, however, conforms to the rhythmic beat of the song” (173). Significantly, the participants are interpretative instruments in the dance performance; they bring dance to life and give it its qualities and meanings through symbolic movements.

The dances in the festival of Ihuen – Eguare performance are very spectacular in form and context. On the one hand, the rhythm of the music dictates the dance. On the other hand, in some movements, the dancers seem to dictate the rhythm of the music by way of body movement and facial expression and other related gestures that the temperament of the dancer(s) may reflect. The songs play a vital role in that it helps to carry the dancers to a realm, thereby stimulating the intellectual sensibility of every performer and spectator alike. This is because; the songs are the variables which constitute the main dialogues in the dramatic experience, providing the basis for the performance. Self-expression and physical release can be seen as the two basic motives for dance. The point here is that dance communicates and propagates culture, and it is pertinent to state that every form of dance communicates. Whereas communication is a conscious or intentional process in which feelings and ideas are expressed, and verbal and non-verbal messages are sent, received, and comprehended. Dance as a form of non-verbal communication is capable of passing across intended messages. Thus, the context of a message has an overall bearing on the message itself. It may be said that dance is the mother of all

languages, an original language of total bodily gestures we call speech and the other kinds of language are only parts of it which have undergone specialized development. Consequently, dance as drama serves as a strong tool to identify, depict, and communicate images, characters, and cultures. Obviously, dance can function as drama in that dance is ultimately related to man's basic need to communicate what he is through body movements.

Conversely, Obongko and Onwuka postulate:

Like every art, dance mirrors society. It is a reflection of what obtains in the society, in which it is created, reflecting the styles, attitudes, codes, mannerisms, and the totality of the way of life of the members of the society. It expresses the totality of lifestyles and experiences just like other forms of art. Dance interprets, reproduces and expresses the lives of the people in the society; therefore, it can be said to constitute the integral part of human existence that performs ritual functions in society (93).

Nevertheless, the Ihuen – Eguare festival dance is like what was asserted by Nettleford:

All of the writers acknowledge the mediation of dance in Africa itself by social reality, associated, as those activities relating to birth, puberty and death, war, recreation, initiation, ritual et al. this indeed, makes dance in Africa a traditional source of communication and often of history re-enacted through movements... As with the art forms emanating from their civilizations or cultural complexes, it merely means that viewers of African dance need to understand Africa's cultural heritage if they are to understand and critically appreciate in any depth the true meaning and aesthetic authority of what is being seen... The Africans in their rituals and masquerades at home usually transform thoughts and ideas into spectacles.

Abroad in the diaspora, their task may well be to transform their spectacles (sports and entertainment), into thoughts (xiv, xviii).

No wonder then that Primus observes that, “Dance in Africa is not a separate art, but a part of the whole complex of living. Dance is only a part of the whole or the complex. The ceremony [festival] is the complex... Geniuses draw music from everywhere. Dancers become filled with supernatural power” (4). The Ihuen – Eguare festival dance is mostly made up of war and victory dances – some nod their heads, rock their necks, tilt their heads and pause. They shake their shoulders; throw them back and forth, and bounce their breasts to thank God who ordained that they be alive. They rhythmically shake their buttocks, their stomach, and their legs in quick and slow marches; dribble, quiver and tremble while their feet perform. The dances are full of emotions. Hence, Primus observes:

To understand African dance adequately, one should have some knowledge of African religions, for in the ecstasy of a religious experience – the dancers become a god – form and the body frees itself of its structural limitations. Legs, bodies, arms, and heads may move in seemingly impossible counterpoint (10).

Therefore, “in the raw, traditional African dance is the integrated art of movement that is controlled by her music which is governed by her languages... African dance translates everyday experiences into movements” (Green 13, 14). Green further contends:

Dance is a way of life for African people and is associated with everyday activities... Dance in Africa is always accompanied by music which ranges from hand clapping and singing to massive orchestras of instrumentation...

Dance in Africa is a way of life, a source of communication and history enacted through movement (26).

From the above assertions, it is correct to observe that such festival dances that are motivated by songs tend to be mimetic and tend to make use of gestures to dramatize the text of the songs. Therefore movements conform to the rhythmic beats of the musical accompaniments. Through the form of dance, the performance elicits a response from the spectators and mobilizes them to participate in the performance thus breaking “the fourth – wall”. Dance does not only bring the festival closer to the ritual origin of the festival, but even more importantly enhances the aesthetic appeal to the spectators. However, there is no history and no culturally fixable limit as to what is or is not performance; what is important is that there is an “action” which is ‘framed, prescribed, highlighted or displayed’. Whereas, performance is a didactic flow that is a spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one and reflexivity in which the central meanings, values and goals of culture are seen in action as they shape and explain behaviour.

In the Ihuen – Eguare festival performance, artistic talents are utilized to the fullest in the form of dance movements. Dance is both a sign and a vehicle of communication. It can express an action or an idea and, it is at the same time the “action” and the idea it expresses. Since a sign derives its meaning from its nature, and a tool assumes its significance from what it is used for; the use of dance in the festival has both intrinsic and cultural imports. Through the movement patterns, dance kinetically conveys verbal information; the music gets visually interpreted and in particular – through dance motions.

In the Eguare – Egoro festival, the voice also maintains a great effect as it sings out rhythmical sounds such as “ugh”, “ah-ha,” and “unh”. Hence, the dance can be seen as “saying something,” or “telling a story.” The instruments are played with a percussive bias and the dance which is also percussive consists of

stamping, clapping, taps, and rattles. Vocalizing in the form of voice ululation, and calls are prevalent throughout the celebration. As the drums communicate on a verbal basis, the dancers also speak out in bodily rhythms of particular gestures and steps. For example, if the secret is beating upon the drum, that secret will be revealed in dance; in the process, a lot of comic movements are also made to tincture the instinct of the audience and thus make them feel excited. At certain points in the performance, some of the dancers would move around slowly as if in a trance; a reflection of a soothsayer or herbalist who is trying to invoke a mysterious power to diagnose or even suggest a solution to a particular ailment or riddle. Thus, in the process of performance, the art of dramaturgy and several others are utilized in a manner not dissimilar to their usage in other dramatic traditions like Europe, America or Asia.

The Dramatic Essence of Dance in the Ihuen – Eguare Festival Performance

Adesina Adegbite however defines festivals as an ‘event, usually and ordinarily staged by a local community that centres on some unique aspects of the community. A festival can also be seen as a series of performances involving music, plays, dances, etc., usually organized annually or as agreed upon, where people of a particular community come together to dine and wine; to celebrate and share common tradition’ (133).

The theme of the festival creates the mood for the actions thereafter. These in turn determine the dance contents that are improvised. The elements are basic components of any dramatic performance. In the Ihuen Eguare – Egoro festival, the dance not only marks the rhythm of life, worship, and harvest – but also expresses the continuity of their culture of farming, hunting and sometimes going as far back as the ancient times. In the real sense, the Eguare Egoro festival performance in action of reality, constitutes the theatrical implications and articulations.

Okbajfo: Dramatic essence of dance in the Ibhuen-egware annual festival...



Plate 2: The procession warriors brandishing their dane-guns in a dance style. Source: Ebhos Photos, Ikhido, Egoro



Plate 3: The warriors doing the war dance steps
Source: The Researcher

The Eguare – Egoro festival is full of dance and movements. The cast, costumes, orchestral accompaniment, solo and chorus differ little in spirit from the mystery and passion plays enacted in medieval Europe in the cathedrals. The dances are apt to become ecstatic. Once a state of such frenzy is attained, some of the main participants seem to become impervious as it were, capable of amusements, pleasure and entertainment; education and enlightenment. No wonder then that Nwabuoaku contends that:

Dance occupies a central position in Nigerian music. Indeed, in many Nigerian cultures, the fusion is such that the words for music and dance have come to be synonymous. To illustrate the point, the vast majority of the ethnic group in Nigeria, in attempting to translate the term music into its indigenous equivalent provides the word for dance... In reality, music as a concept is a signal for many things and therefore acts as a trigger for other behaviour as movements (dance or mime), songs and creative speech (43).

Following the dance movements diligently, the soul of the performance is mirrored through the beauty of the dances that run through the entire process of the festival. Hence, the dramatic essence is seen in the transformation of everyday events and behaviour into live performances through dance and related gestures. All the antecedents of the people, both origin and history, are expressed in dance, which in turn holds the spectators spellbound. Most people want to dance because it is therapeutic, educating, active and entertaining. Every kind of word is expressed in the dance.

The dances in Eguare – Egoro festival interpret and transmit epic content. The essentials of the dance in the festival are contained within the melody of the instruments. The movements are sensational because they are intertwined and interwoven with

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the rhythms and harmonic patterns of the instruments – combined. The instruments, though they are so simple and easy to construct, yet when played accordingly; are capable of producing great rhythms which can motivate anyone to make some improvisational movements in response. The essence of the dance styles is mainly for entertainment and to pass a moral message to the audience through the songs, mostly wrapped in proverbs, adages and traditional idioms of the Esan extraction. It serves as oral literature to the people, an avenue for them to sensitize and admonish spectators. The dance is propelled by the sounds that you hear.



Plate 4: Female celebrants lead the dance procession
Source: The Researcher

In Eguare – Egoro annual festival, there is no audience separated from the performers; when the drums sound, accompanied by folk singing, dancing follows. However, when the

audience feels like dancing at any time during the performance of the dance, they spontaneously start dancing. Similarly, one would ask: what is it that propels the audience to get up and dance? It is all about the excitement that has been generated by the entire ensemble. The vast majority of the movements are acquired by learning; because of this automated unconsciousness one meets great difficulties in verbally formulating the characters, and structuring the manner of exact performance of the movements that is including them in the cognitive process.

Plate 5: The dance moves on towards the palace ground with the



researcher in front. Source: Ebhos Photos, Ikhido, Egoro

In dance, the most important element, and that which is stressed first, is the flow of movement. Without respecting the continuity, without stressing the element of flow in movement, there is no dancing action: the flow of movement is the warp of dance. So, a dance exists only as long as the dancer is dancing. The relationship of music and dance is stronger and more intimate in

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the African context. Dance is born into African life and it is fully expressed or evident in the traditional festival scenario as the people venerate their ancestors and worship their gods. While discussing “Music in Nigerian Traditional Dance Performance” Ugolo postulates:

In a typical African festival theatre, the art forms of music, dance, sculpture, painting and drama exist side by side... Music and dance in traditional Nigerian societies happen as religious (ritual) and social (ceremonial) events. In effect, to some extent, dance is a reflection of the social dynamics of music ... the social conditions that motivate both (music and dance) are principally the same; the forms overlap, and the compositional and choreographic techniques are the same principles, thus giving a keen observer the impression that the two are inseparable, especially in the African and indeed the Nigerian context (171).

Another prominent motive why the African festival is interwoven with dance is due to its musical bias, codifying the norms and nuances of the people into oral literature. Because of this, Ugolofurther puts it thus:

As in most musical traditions, melody constitutes one of the chief characteristics of African music apart from rhythm. In other words, African dancers relate to the music based on both melody and rhythm. Movements that are motivated by the melody of the music are usually emotionally based and are therefore very expressive ... In most traditional festival performances, dancers play the role of musicians by singing while dancing or playing some instruments. Some dancers wear musical instruments around their bodies, like leg and hand rattles, bells or iron chains. Such instruments act as body idiophones that help to give an accent to the rhythm

of the step pattern of the dance... Dance and music cooperate: they often coexist. There is no doubt that there is music in dance and most kind of music induce dance; or if not dance, some agitation of bodily movement. Thus music and dance exist in a symbiotic relationship in Nigerian traditional performance (174 – 175).

In the Ihuen – Eguare festival performance, the dance of the king (Onojie) appears simple. Okewola emphasized that ‘‘there is something very unique about African dance. Although in general, dance uses a progression of steps and movements to resonate with the beat of a piece of music and coordinates the body in a cadenced manner, most African dances are segregated body movements that can be very hard to organize intellectually’’ (4). These are known as polyrhythm and polycentric movements. Polyrhythm is the layering of different rhythms over one another and polycentrism is the idea that movement can initiate from any part of the body. These two qualities play together because different parts of the body dance to different instruments that are playing at different rhythms. For instance, my hands and my feet were to keep time with the gongs, my hips with the first drum, and my back and shoulders with the second. Whereas, these elements of music are displayed clearly in the body and nothing is left out. Hence, dancing is a way of incorporating and valuing the entire body and bringing together the music and dancing; thus, the artist’s body is in some sense separated so that different parts of the body are moving autonomously of each other.

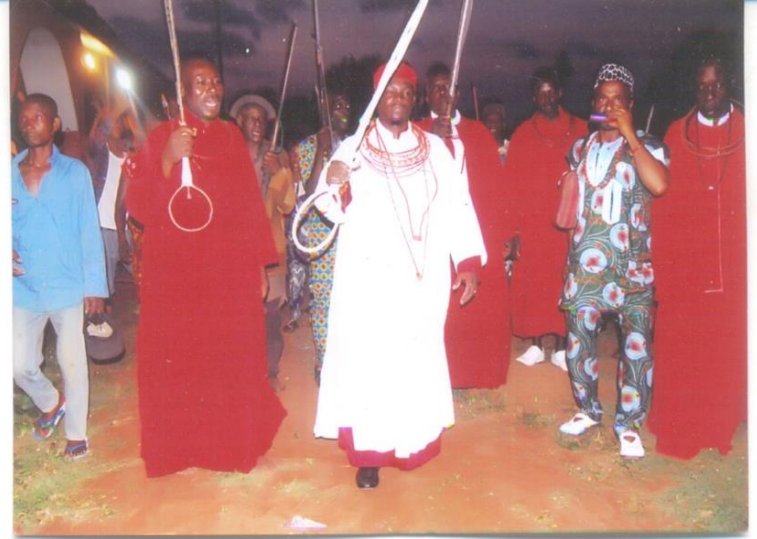


Plate 6: The king moving and dancing gracefully
Source: Ebhos Photos

Discussing the essence of music, song, dance and mime in the Eguare – Egoro festival, these elements function jointly and severally almost inseparable. Music functions as the language and it is ethnic-bound, so to speak. Although some very specific songs are peculiar to the festival, sometimes the music-making may be organized as a concurrent activity, such as incidental or background music for some incidences, like visiting the Odionwele or chiefs of certain quarters of the community to pay homage and receive gifts of kola nuts and money. In the process of the dance, the music may be related to the needs of the performers in a variety of ways. The dance is performed to attract the audience by performing work or occupational dances; both for their enjoyment and as a source of attraction and entertainment for the spectators. The dance or music in the festival is more like a social activity, one that emphasizes artistic as well as social, political and religious values. The dance is also performed for the messages that it

communicates, or for the outlet that it provides for social interaction or the sharing of community sentiments; whereas the music, some of which are war songs while others are a tribute to past kings and heroes, offerings to a deity or a general rendition of myths, legends, proverbs, parables and riddles. The approach to music links the festival moment and ensures spontaneous participation and identification with the musical life of the people. Hence, Awodiya notes “Thus, the music, song and dance of the African people are artistic expressions of their humanity and society; the people’s philosophy features prominently” (181).

It must also be emphasized that the music or songs in the Eguare – Eguare festival is participatory; everyone may participate in the chorus as the song leaders of the procession sing. The songs evoke responses from the people who either shake their heads or tap their feet or make spontaneous body movements. The music and songs are very scintillating and compelling in their rhythmic bearing. The songs are like imagery, witty and contain some proverbs and supplications. They form the basic make-up of the festival performance – whereby they become systematically interrelated parts of the entire dramaturgy.

The most incredible feature of the performance is how the dancers can follow the harmony of the instruments and the melodious songs, to produce those steps which can be likened to contemporary dance-drama. In the entire performance, audience participation is spontaneous both in songs and in basic elementary movements. In the process of the performance, a lot of comic movements are also made to tincture the instinct of the audience and thereby make them feel excited. In some instances, the dance steps of the people may not be new each time they dance, but they always have one or two new revues (improvisations) to add to their flow of movements. Hence, the aesthetics and social relevance of the festival are enhanced. Sometimes the exuberant agility with which these people (old and young) jump, turn, sing, shout, run, leap, thrust, float, glide, flick, dab, etc dazzles the spectators. This

is so as there are some steps and movements in the process that are incredibly fantastic.

In the process of the dance movements, the performers normally exhibit characters of domestic behaviours as well as occupational movements. The very typical dancer would make his or her movement to replicate some wild and domestic animals mimicking their postures in such a funny way as would be in tune with the melody of the music, particularly the lyrical accompaniments.

Conclusion

EduBirdie observes that ‘in African culture, dance is for enjoyment, celebration and honour... dance has always been a big part of African culture – long before they were even oppressed or taken from native lands. It had always been a very fundamental part of the lives of Africans. Special occasions like childbirth or marriage were a cause for celebration and we use dances to do so’ (1).

It also suffices to note that the action of the dancers at certain movements of the performance is akin to man and his relationship with the spiritual world, which seemed to be a complete mystery, beyond the expression of words. The songs in Ihuen – Eguare festival have a way of stimulating the brain and mind of the dancer and the people including spectators – to activate the reality and the significance of the show, thereby enhancing excitement. Any pattern of dance is relevant as long as it’s in tune with the melody of the songs and the harmony of the instruments in such a funny and intricate manner to re-enact life within the scope of the people.

Therefore, the dance structures in the Eguare – Egoro festival, when exposing some content, become meaningful shapes. They take on more or less abstract symbolic features. These are recognizable through their common movement expression, or they acquire secondary or conventional meaning. It must however be

understood that dance as an art, includes all those movement manifestations which take us above everyday life level. This may be achieved in different ways, varying in different times and places. Those movement structures that become meaningful shapes, acquiring the status of symbols, contribute to the outcome of forms, which constitute the dance on the art level.

In the Eguare – Egoro festival performance, every dancer has a relationship with one another about the sound that you are hearing. Hence, for you to identify the dramatic essence of dance in the festival, you need to look very closely and see so clearly as the performance moves in the procession across the whole community. The dramatic essence involves what you see and how you understand what you see. This will involve discerning differences within movements and other elements such as costumes and props. During the climax of the performance, the dance styles use some of the humanly possible actions of the body, selected gestures, bends, extensions, twists and turns. These activities may be combined with stepping, jumping, running and even falling. How the dancer uses space can also determine the pace of the performance.

Analytically, the dance movements used in Eguare – Egoro festival are simple. They glide, leap and freeze. They make their performance theatrical that it combines mimic, and pantomimic elements amongst others.

Because the festival is all about happiness, the excitement becomes inevitable. Since happiness is like pregnancy that cannot be hidden, it naturally finds expression in dance and gestures. Once a state of frenzy is attained, few of the dancers suddenly seem to be impervious as it were; to amusements and ecstasy; pleasure and entertainment, education and enlightenment.

In the end, the actual dramatic essence of the dances in the Egoro festival is propitiatory, sacrificial and laudatory using which the people acknowledge the blessings of the supreme creator, lesser deities and the ancestral spirit – manifested in good health, good

harvest, etc. So, dance functions as drama in the interpretation and transmission of epic content of the people. According to Adegbite, he points that, “for effective communication, dance has been playing various roles that are functional in all the major manifestations of human endeavours. Indeed, dance has also helped in the shaping and re-shaping the history of different cultures all over the world” (133).

The festival performance in its manifestation, maintains a link with the people’s cultural, social and political inclinations. The Eguare festival is not a complicated creation; but an art form with an acute critical perspective that enables the people to reflect on the origin and history of the community. The dance reflects the people’s cultural antecedents, beliefs, occupations and religion. Moreover, the dance thrives on the stylish steps, gestures, and dynamics – which are so heightened to achieve a certain level of aesthetics. The dance dramatizes the historical life and cultural beliefs of the Eguare people of the Egoro kingdom in Esan land. As the festival moves, it rotates and revolves around the dance in its evolution; motivated by music in the vivid manifestation of the whole process. Dance, therefore, is not merely an art form – for art’s sake, entertainment: it could serve serious issues such as the ones addressed by the festival performance; that dance is the vehicle on which the festival performance moves and takes or navigates its course.

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