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**A guide to selected traditional dances of the Bendel State of  
Nigeria**

**Atakpu, Benedict Ozengbe, D.A.**

**Middle Tennessee State University, 1988**

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of the Bendel State of Nigeria

Benedict Ozengbe Atakpu

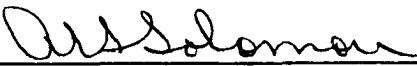
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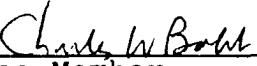
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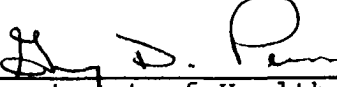
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## Abstract

### A Guide to Selected Traditional Dances

of the Bendel State of Nigeria

by Benedict Ozengbe Atakpu

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop a guide that would assist any person attempting to study and understand the history of the traditional dances of the Bendel State of Nigeria. The guide can be used to help prepare future educators at the teacher training colleges and public schools. The study is divided into seven chapters according to topical information. Photographs and figures are included to aid in the explanation of the dance costumes, instruments used, and dance formations. A list of learning objectives is included in each chapter pertaining to the information presented. In addition, each chapter includes an introduction, historical background, costumes, instruments used, preparation, formations, and steps for each dance. In chapter 1, the Eluemosi, Ugba, Ugie, and Irovimwin Life-Cycle ceremonial dances are discussed. Chapter 2 includes the Ema, Emomorhe, and Itakpo Elders' ceremonial dances. Chapter 3 includes the Igbaboneli, Okakagbe, and Okere Masquerade ceremonial dances. In chapter 4, the Agbega, Agie, and Edjewhor Maidens' dances are discussed.

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Chapter 5 includes the Egwu Dibia, Ishe, and Olokun Ritual ceremonial dances. The Agobonejie, Egwu Amalabuyo, and Ihoko Vocational ceremonial dances are discussed in chapter 6. In chapter 7, the Abisua, Idju, Ine, Ivbri, and Ovieth War ceremonial dances are discussed. It is hoped that people who read the guide will be more aware of the importance and tradition of the various ceremonial dances and their relevance in the lives of the current inhabitants of the Bendel State of Nigeria.

### Acknowledgements

In the preparation of this study, the writer gratefully acknowledges the guidance and support of his major professor, Dr. A. H. Solomon, whose encouragement and invaluable assistance in the development and organization of the guide have earned him the writer's deepest appreciation. Without him, this work could not have been completed.

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## Introduction

Throughout history dancing has existed for various reasons in the lives of all civilizations. For example, members of early tribal groups danced as part of their religious festivals, in preparing for combat, and for entertainment. Dance has come down through the ages, bringing with it an accounting of the many peoples who lived in other lands (Okporua, 1985).

In Nigeria as well as in other parts of Africa, traditional ceremonial dances are celebrated at various times during the year. The dances mark the history and lives of the people. The importance of these dances lies in the fact that they illustrate such events of the people as coming of age; harvesting of crops; hunting; wars; and appeasement to various gods for protection against enemies, evil spirits, or epidemic diseases (Ayeni, 1974). Akpabot (1986) states, "From the day an African is born up to when he attains manhood, marries and eventually dies, dance plays a very important part in his daily experiences" (p. 40).

There is a continuing need for the Nigerian people of the current and future generations to know the history and meaning of their traditional ceremonial dances.

Drewal and Thompson (1974) state that in most African societies dance is a central mode of artistic expression, yet research into dances of the African people is limited. Few sources go into any detail as to the structure, function, and/or meaning of African dances and their role in the history of black people throughout the world.

#### Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to develop a guide that will provide information which allows the educator to understand and teach seven of the most prominent traditional ceremonial dances of Bendel, a state in Nigeria. Selected dances include the Life-Cycle, Elders', Masquerade, Maidens', Ritual, Vocational, and War dances. Figure 1 is a map of Nigeria which shows the country's division into states, highlighting Bendel State.

The guide provided by this study can also be helpful in preparing future educators at the teacher training colleges of Nigeria. It is expected that the graduates of these institutions will be equipped with the knowledge of their distant and recent past concerning traditional ceremonial dances and will be able to teach them in the various schools.

#### Review of Related Literature

The writer will review seven selected traditional ceremonial dances of Bendel and other states of Nigeria. These are the Life-Cycle, Elders', Masquerade, Maidens',

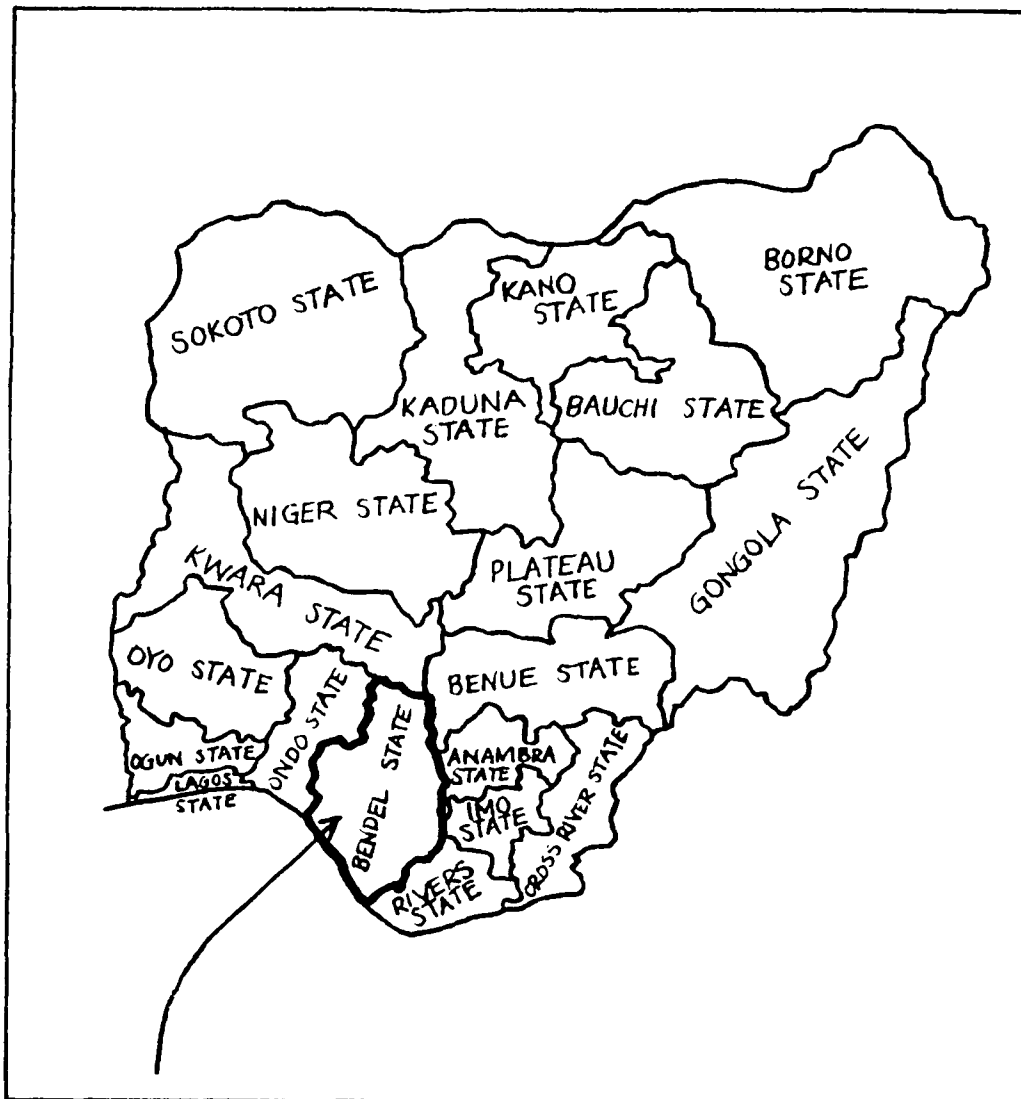


Figure 1. Map of Nigeria, highlighting Bendel State

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 2.

Ritual, Vocational, and War dances. The writer chose to focus on dances in Bendel because this is his home, birth/tribal place, and also his interest.

Concerning the dances in Nigeria, it is important to note that at no time is the individual left alone to bear the emotions which accompany the critical changes in the initiation rites, marriage, birth, death, war, vocational, or ritual ceremonies. The members of the community help carry the person through the events with appropriate ceremonies which contain the emotions of the moment in dance. The traditional audience at a dance ceremony is always a participant (Obiechina, 1975). Appreciation may take the form of unconscious body movements such as shaking the head, twitching, or limb movement, all in rhythm with the dancers.

#### Traditional Ceremonial Dances in the Study

##### Life-Cycle Ceremonial Dances

Life-Cycle dances are performed in Nigeria to mark special events such as marriage, birth, death, child naming, and circumcision. They are also performed for pleasure, good news, and entertainment (Obanilu, 1975). Following are some examples of these dances.

Takai Borgu, from the Dekina tribe of Kwara State, is a Life-Cycle dance performed in remembrance of the great warriors of the past or at the installation or funeral of a chief and during the new year festival

(Enem, 1975). Kabulu, from the Dambe tribe of Kaduna State, is a Life-Cycle ceremonial dance performed at such occasions as birth, marriage, and death. The people of Cameroon, Zaire, Niger, and Upper Volta also have Life-Cycle ceremonial dances for birth, death, circumcision, and entertainment (Murray, 1981).

Life-Cycle ceremonial dances, whether in Bendel, in other states in Nigeria, or in other parts of Africa have a unique function in the life and history of the people. Some of the major Life-Cycle ceremonial dances performed in Bendel are: Eluemosi, from the Fugar tribe, which is performed during marriage, birth, death, and the new year; Iko, a former ritual dance, was adopted for merrymaking occasions and for burials; Ugba, from the Ugboko Numagbae tribe, which is an entertainment dance performed at the palace of an Oba of Benin (the number one chief and head of the traditional rulers); Ugie, from the Edo tribe, which is a palace dance performed during the annual festival to honour the Oba of Benin; and Irorimwin, from the Benin tribe, which is a funeral dance performed to ease the passage of the deceased (Osaigbovo, 1983).

#### Elders' Ceremonial Dances

The Elders' ceremonial dance, usually indicating a cult, fraternity, or status, is performed in Nigeria only by initiated members of a particular age group of male

and female elders (Ojehomon, 1975). Following are some examples of these dances.

Ngarda, from the Yamaltu tribe of the Bauchi State of Nigeria, is a male/female elders' dance performed during the installation ceremony of Kuji, the Tere Chief. Ebere, from the Ikot Ebok tribe of the Cross Rivers State, is an all-female elders' dance. It is supposed to mirror the beautiful tradition of the society and to set for all females a standard of social behaviour. Orisa Iroko, from the Badagry tribe of Lagos State, is an essentially female elders' dance in honour of a god (Iroko) who revelled in women.

Some of the elders' dances performed in Bendel include Ema, Itakpo, and Emomorhe. Ema is a mixed male/female elders' dance of the Ughelli tribe. It is performed for chieftaincy or royalty (Okporua, 1985). Emomorhe is celebrated within the Enwan tribe by male elders (okhitoya) before they are conferred with titles (Ayeni, 1974). Itakpo is celebrated within the Oso tribe to mark the elevation of male elders from one age group to a higher one.

#### Masquerade Ceremonial Dances

Masquerade dances are performed in Nigeria to mark particular events or special occasions such as funerals, marriages, weddings, and entertainment. Following are some examples of these dances.



The Gwais, from the Vanger tribe of the Gongola State, is performed by males for entertainment. The Egungun, from the Egba tribe of Ogun State, is performed to honour ancestors as well as for entertainment. The Korogun from Ita Egbe tribe of Oyo State is celebrated during funerals, weddings, and child-naming ceremonies. The Gelede Masquerades of the Egbado Ketu tribe of Ondo State is performed to placate the women who have supernatural powers and give honour to their great earth mother.

Some of the masquerade dances performed in Bendel include Okakagbe, Okere, and Igbabonelimi. The Okakagbe masquerade dance is performed by the Fugar tribe during male initiation and for entertainment (Oshioreame, 1978). The Okere dance (from Warri tribe) is an all-male dance performed during a crisis and for entertainment. Igbabonelimi is an ancestral masquerade dance of the Ishan tribe performed annually to bless the first yams at the Ihu Len harvest. It is also performed during ritual ceremonies such as funerals in the Life-Cycle dances (Ojehomon, 1975).

#### Maidens' Ceremonial Dances

Maidens' dances are celebrated by girls confined to private quarters for a given period of time to acquire the natural skills and ideals of womanhood. Emphasized are the ideals of chastity and well-modulated social

relationships, particularly those of a wife and skillful dancer (Enem, 1975). The dance is also performed during circumcision rites and marriage ceremonies. Maidens' ceremonial dances are performed across Nigeria at important functions. Okachanma maidens' dance of Ihiala Imo State is the climax of rites for girls who have completed their transition from puberty to marriage. Wulu Kone, from the Shellam tribe of the Gongola State, is a youth dance performed to entertain elders during leisure time. Nkwa Umu maidens dance of the Agbogbo Afikpo tribe of the Anambra State is a dance which in the past was performed to thrill and honour the heroes of wrestling contests.

Oke, from the Ogori tribe of the Kwara State, is a virginity dance celebrated annually to mark the innocence of body and soul among the maidens. Otaforijega, from the Osupa tribe of the Oyo State, is a maidens moonlight entertainment dance performed purely for relaxation.

Among the maidens dances of Bendel are: Agbega, from the Obedu Uromi tribe; Agie, from the Igiode-Agenebode tribe; and Edjewhor, from the Ughelli tribe. Agbega is an evening entertainment maidens dance. Agie is also a ceremonial maidens dance performed at the wedding of girls and the Otsa festival during which all the girls are expected to dance to attract suitors.

Edjewhor is a maidens' dance celebrated to mark the circumcision of mature girls (Ojehomon, 1975).

#### Ritual Ceremonial Dances

Ritual ceremonial dances are performed in Nigeria to petition ancestral gods for protection, for health, and for peace in the society. Some are performed to maintain traditional ties with departed spirits (Okosunuga, 1980). There are a number of ritual dances performed throughout the country.

The Odu ritual dance of the Plateau State is performed annually during the dry season to maintain traditional ties with the spirits of late chiefs. It is also staged by males after a victorious war to celebrate the reign of a chief and to mark the end of one year and the beginning of another. Omabe is an all-male ritual dance performed by the elders (atama) and Omabe priests (odo) to mark the end of the pre-Omabe dry season, while the rainy season heralds the return of the Omabe spirits from heaven. Nwanaka is a ritual dance performed during the Avuja festival by the Umuavulu tribe of the Anambra State. The dance is performed by married women at the shrine of the Avuja god on the day of the festival (Aniakor, 1978). Barahaza is the oldest Hausa/Fulani tribes ritual dance and is performed in honour of Barahaza, spirit of the wind. The spirit could be invoked during drought and when a better breed of

cattle is desired. Sato, from the Ajaravedo tribe of the Lagos State, is a highly respected form of ritual dance also reserved for funerals of Obas and other dignitaries in Ajaravedo (Rotimi, 1981). Ogboni, from the Abeokuta tribe of the Ogun State, is an all-male dance performed only by elders in the Ogboni secret society in Yorubaland and is charged with the responsibility of maintaining perfect peace. For example, it is concerned with the settlement of disputes involving land and blood as well as the installation of a new Oba (Ojehomon, 1975).

Following are some of the ritual dances performed in the Bendel State. Olokun, from the Iguenla tribe, is performed by females at the Olokun Shrine or at the parlour of devotees to appease or to give a thanksgiving offering to Olokun, god of the sea (A. Ogbewi, personal communication, January 2, 1988). Egwu Dibia or Oto Odozi Elu, from the Umunede tribe, is a ritual cult dance performed by male herbalists or traditional doctors (B. Okoegwale, personal communication, January 4, 1988). The dance is performed for the purpose of appeasing the gods and spirits of their ancestors. Ishe, from the Ewulu tribe, Asaba, is a spirit dance performed by the Okpala (chief priest) and the Ikpala (celebrants) in council. The Ishe is significant in the sense that it represents a period of thanksgiving to the goddess of the River Umomi for all she has done for the town (Ayeni, 1974).

### Vocational Ceremonial Dances

Vocational dances in Nigeria are celebrated to depict working movements. In Nigeria, like other parts of Africa, farming and hunting dances are very important in the life and history of the people. The young African on the threshold of manhood has one way open to him. He often has but a single occupation opportunity, which generally is that of cultivating the land as his father has done before him. He has one group to join, that of his age group; one way to worship, that of his ancestors; and one philosophy of life, that of his elders (Macquet, 1974). In keeping with tradition, the people, whether in Nigeria or other parts of Africa, stylize their hunting and farming movements in dances in order to express their strength and virility (Crowder & Crowder, 1981).

Vocational dances that are performed in Nigeria include Rawar Mahaba, from the Rano tribe of Kano State. This is an occupational dance performed by male hunters before and after a hunting expedition. Ijo Abo Olode, from the Lagos State, is an annual dance performed by the hunters to celebrate and give thanks to the god of iron (Ogun) for their successes on hunting expeditions (Rotimi, 1981). Noma, from the Kamba tribe of the Kwara State, is a vocational dance that simulates males and females of the society involved in farm work. Ekoyo Ikot Ebok, from the Asian Ubo Ikpan tribe of the Cross Rivers State, is a

vocational dance that springs from the actual experiences of young girls on the farm. The dance shows the kinds of skills required in hoeing and weeding the farm.

Other vocational dances in the Bendel State include the Agbonojie of the Uzebba tribe, a dance that depicts movements of animals (Ojeme, 1977); and the Egwu Amalabuyo of the Obodo-Ugwa tribe, a ritual dance associated with a benevolent water spirit, mermaid, or mami-water (Nmuo Nmili). This dance is performed during ceremonial and merrymaking occasions to depict fishing skills (B. Okoegwale, personal communication, January 4, 1988).

#### War Ceremonial Dances

In parts of the country, war ceremonial dances are performed to represent a comprehensive view of traditional war tactics in various symbolic displays. The Bishi war dance, from the Kasi tribe of Kano State, is performed before and/or after victory in war. Shapi, from the Toro tribe of the Gongola State, is a dance performed before going to war, to attack the enemy or to defend themselves. Ogwo, from the Pele-Owo tribe of the Ondo State, is performed after victory in war and to celebrate those glorious occasions of days gone by.

Wars have been fought in the Bendel State for many reasons. Some involved the need to maintain land for farming and hunting; others involved the need for fishing ponds or land expansion. Forces are also maintained to

ensure that no intrusions into family or communal lands occur. Families, tribes, and communities go to war with one another when a battle seems unavoidable. War dances are therefore performed by men both before and after going to war in order to demonstrate desired actions, strategies, and victory celebrations (Jeremiah, 1973).

In Bendel State, Abisua, Iubri, Oviethe, Ine, and Idju are some of the war ceremonial dances performed to show the desired movements in a war. Abisua is an adult male war dance that was performed by the Kukuruku tribe in the olden days to prepare for intertribal wars. Iubri from the Olomoro tribe is a war dance to honour the god of war, Owholomu. The Oviethe war dance from the Isoko tribe is celebrated to pay annual homage to Oviethe, the sea god of protection, for protecting the Emevor people throughout the past year. The dance is also performed to seek annual blessings from Oviethe through his high priest, the Orhere of Emevor. The Ine war dance, from the Aniocha tribe, is performed by males to give thanks to the gods for protecting the people from evil the previous year. Idju, from the Agbassa tribe, is celebrated by males to honour the god of war, Owurhie (Ayeni, 1974).

#### Procedure and Method

Seven categories of the traditional dances of Bendel State have been selected for examination and discussion. It is hoped that the information presented in this study

will be helpful as a resource guide to prepare future teacher/educators at the teacher training colleges of Nigeria.

The guide will be organized and discussed according to the following categories:

1. Life-Cycle Ceremonial Dances
  - a. Eluemosi (marriage)
  - b. Iko (merrymaking or funeral)
  - c. Irorimwin (funeral)
  - d. Ugie (entertainment)
  - e. Ugba (funeral)
2. Elders' Ceremonial Dances
  - a. Ema (chieftaincy or royalty)
  - b. Emomorhe (chieftaincy)
  - c. Itakpo (elevation from one age group to a higher one)
3. Masquerade Ceremonial Dances
  - a. Igbaboneli (harvest)
  - b. Okakagbe (initiation and entertainment)
  - c. Okere (during crisis and for entertainment)
4. Maidens' Ceremonial Dances
  - a. Agbega (entertainment)
  - b. Agie (wedding)
  - c. Edjewhor (circumcision)
5. Ritual Ceremonial Dances
  - a. Egwu Dibia (to appease gods and spirits of ancestors)



- b. Ishe (to appease the goddess of the River Umomi for all she has done for the people)
  - c. Olokun (to appease the god of the sea, Olokun)
6. Vocational Ceremonial Dances
- a. Agbonejie (hunters' dance to depict movements of animals)
  - b. Egwu Amalabuyo (merrymaking occasions to depict fishing skills)
  - c. Ihoko (hunters' dance to demonstrate their skill in tracking down their prey)
7. War Ceremonial Dances
- a. Abisua (shows desired movements in a war)
  - b. Idju (shows desired movements in a war)
  - c. Ine (to thank the gods of war for protecting the people the previous year)
  - d. Iubri (to thank the god of war, Owholomu, for protecting the people)
  - e. Oviethie (in honour of the god of war, Owurhie)

One chapter will be devoted to each of the seven selected dance categories and will include information arranged according to the following format for each dance: (1) introduction and historical background, (2) costumes, (3) instruments, (4) preparations, (5) formations, and (6) procedures.

Figures are used in each chapter to depict the states of Nigeria, the costumes, and dance formations (photographs, Ayeni, 1974). A glossary of terms is included at the end of the study.

#### Limitation of the Study

Not all of the traditional dances of the Bendel State of Nigeria were included in this study since there were too many to describe in detail. Seven categories of the ones most predominant were selected for discussion. These dances are unique to the Bendel State, but are similar to those celebrated in other parts of Nigeria.

Cassettes and records of the music used by the dancers were not available. The writer was unable to locate any source which had the accompaniment for these dances.

## Chapter 1

### Life-Cycle Ceremonial Dances

This chapter will include selected Life-Cycle ceremonial dances of Bendel State. These dances are: Eluemosi (marriage), Iko (merrymaking), Irorimwin (funeral), Ugie (entertainment), and Ugba (funeral).

Information given as learning objectives for each dance should enable students to:

- A. Understand and identify the historical significance of the dances.
- B. List the appropriate costumes worn by the dancers of each dance.
- C. Describe the instruments used in the dances.
- D. Know the preparations for the dances.
- E. Know and demonstrate the dance formations.
- F. Know and demonstrate the steps and movements for the dances.

Life-Cycle ceremonial dances in the Bendel State of Nigeria are said to be as old as man's existence. In their simplest forms, dances prompt such human reactions as jumping for joy when a child is born or weeping when somebody dies. The dances celebrate social events with

vitality, colour, and movement. They precede marriages of young Bendelites and are a part of the traditional payment of dowry or bride-prices.

The purpose of dance during such events as marriage, birth, death, child naming, and circumcision is to add to the grandeur of the occasion (Enem, 1975). Life-Cycle ceremonial dances of Bendel State offer abundant examples of highly original and creative dance forms representing the traditions of every community.

#### Eluemosi Dance

Eluemosi is a female Life-Cycle ceremonial dance that is performed by teen-agers of the Fugar tribe during marriage, manhood initiation, and burial ceremonies. A legendary hunter is believed to have introduced the dance to his people after stumbling upon a group of female gorillas dancing in the game forest of Ipiapia where the Ekperi clan resides. He returned home and taught his people the dance (Ojehomon, 1975).

As part of their costumes, the dancers decorate their heads with valuable coral beads. Other beads are strung into many rows, and worn around their necks and hips. The dancers wear a traditional loincloth and place another piece of cloth across their necks and shoulders. Both are fastened to their waists with coral beads. They tie rattles made of dried gourds (epe)

slightly below their knees and just above their ankles. Each dancer carries a horse tail which is swung forward and backward throughout the dance (see Figure 2).

The dance instruments include two small drums (egibga and ikeghe), a big gong (ilo), a small gong (ilolo), a flute (uke), a pot (odu), and a large drum (agidigbo). The performers dance to the rhythm dictated by the medium-pitched small drums, gong, pot, and flute. The rhythm of the high-pitched large drum starts with a skip in the first beat with a rest in the third. The rhythm of the small drum and gong is accented in the second beat. The flute rhythm is tuned to different pitches from low to medium to high.

In preparation for the dance ceremony, goat and chicken sacrifices are made to ancestors in order to bring peace, good health, and prosperity to the sons and daughters of the Fugar community. The dancers engage in rehearsals prior to their performance which takes place at the residence of the person engaging in marriage, manhood initiation, or burial ceremonies. On the day of the performance, charms (native herbs) are shared by the dancers as a protection against accidents and all evil spirits.

The dance is performed at the front of the house of the celebrant during marriage, manhood initiation,



Figure 2. Eluemosi dance costume

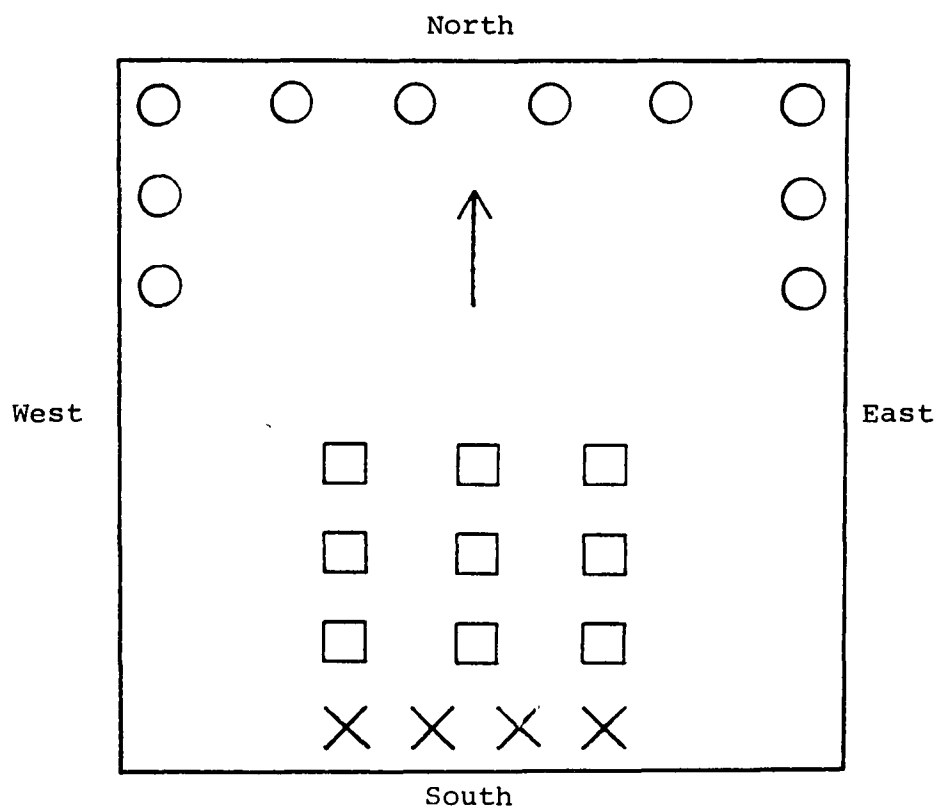
From Ayeni, 1974, p. 7.

and burial. The dance arena is about 50 by 50 meters, with the spectators sitting to the north, east, and west of the dancers. The ensemble, including the musicians and drummers, sits behind the dancers to the south. The dancers perform in the center of the arena in three rows or lines facing the spectators to the north. The dancers stay at arm's length from each other throughout (see Figure 3).

Each dancer will:

- A. Step to the right, leading with the right foot, then close with the left foot.
- B. Step to the left, leading with the left foot, then close with the right foot. Repeat A and B two times.
- C. Step forward, leading with the right foot, then close with the left.
- D. Step backward, leading with the left foot, then close with the right.
- E. Jump high, with arms extended upward.
- F. Sway to the right, then to the left.

Repeat A-F two times. Dance performance lasts for approximately 30 minutes.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummers)

Figure 3. Eluemosi dance formation



### Iko Dance

This is an adult female Life-Cycle ceremonial dance performed at merrymaking occasions. It was formerly a ritual dance performed at the shrine of a reputable herbalist, Akhonokpe, who was thought to have copied the dance from an unknown source. When the herbalist died, the people adopted it for social occasions such as a marriage, the birth of a child, or for a burial (Lawani, 1978).

The costumes for females consist of traditional cloths tied across the chest. Coral beads for the neck, hair, ankles, and wrists are worn. In addition, each dancer carries a leather fan. The men wear sleeveless shirts, cotton hats, and striped loin cloths (see Figure 4).

The dance instruments are two large drums (ugbe), a big gong (ogidigbo), and a flute (esha). The drums, gong, and flute sounds dictate the rhythm of this dance. The performers dance to the rhythm of the high-pitched big gong, large drums, and the flute. The rhythm of the large drum starts with a skip in the first beat, with a rest in the third beat, and the second beat of the gong is accented.

The only preparation involved for this dance is a rehearsal by the group some days before the performance.



Figure 4. Iko dance costume

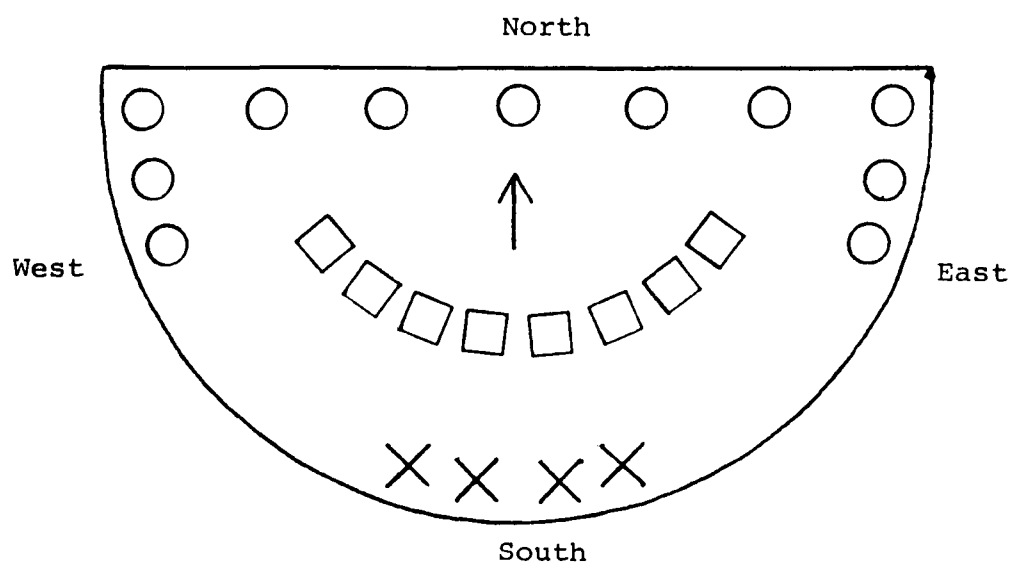
From Ayeni, 1974, p. 19.

This dance is performed at the residence of the celebrant during the occasions of merrymaking during a marriage or birth of a child or during a burial. The arena is a semicircle approximately 10 meters wide with the spectators sitting in the north, east, and west sections of the arena facing the dancers. The ensemble consisting of musicians and dancers sits behind the dancers to the south. Aligned in a semicircle, the dancers perform in the center of the arena facing the spectators who are seated to the north. They stay at arm's length from each other throughout the dance (see Figure 5).

Each dancer will:

- A. Sway to the right, then to the left.
- B. Step forward, leading with the right foot, then close with the left.
- C. Step backward, leading with the left foot, then close with the right.
- D. Shake chest while leaning forward, then repeat while leaning backward.
- E. Sway the body to the right, then to the left.
- F. Slide to the left, then to the right.
- G. Shake chest while leaning forward, then repeat while leaning backward.

Repeat A-G four times. The dance lasts for approximately 30 minutes.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummers)

Figure 5. Iko dance formation

### Irorimwin Dance

This is a funeral dance performed by female adults of the Bini tribe. It is also a gathering dance for the relatives and friends of the deceased, involving a ceremonial parade which starts at the residence of the deceased and moves around the town with selected dancers carrying the effigy of the dead person. A second part of the dance takes place at the residence of the deceased and includes a night without sleep for the chief mourner (the next of kin) who must keep the vigil and receive all sympathizers coming to pay their last respects (Ojehomon, 1975).

The female costumes, consisting of pieces of black traditional cloth with patterns of white flowers, are tied around their chests. Coral beads for the hair, neck, and wrists are worn. Each dancer holds a white handkerchief for perspiration. The men's costumes are black shirts and pants (see Figure 6).

The dance instruments are made up of two large drums (ema) and two gongs (agogo). The dancers follow the rhythm established by the high-pitched drums and gongs. The beats of the large drums start with a skip in the first beat, with a rest in the third beat, and the second beat on the gong is accented.

In preparation for the dance, the sacrifice of a goat and chicken are made by the deceased's family on the day



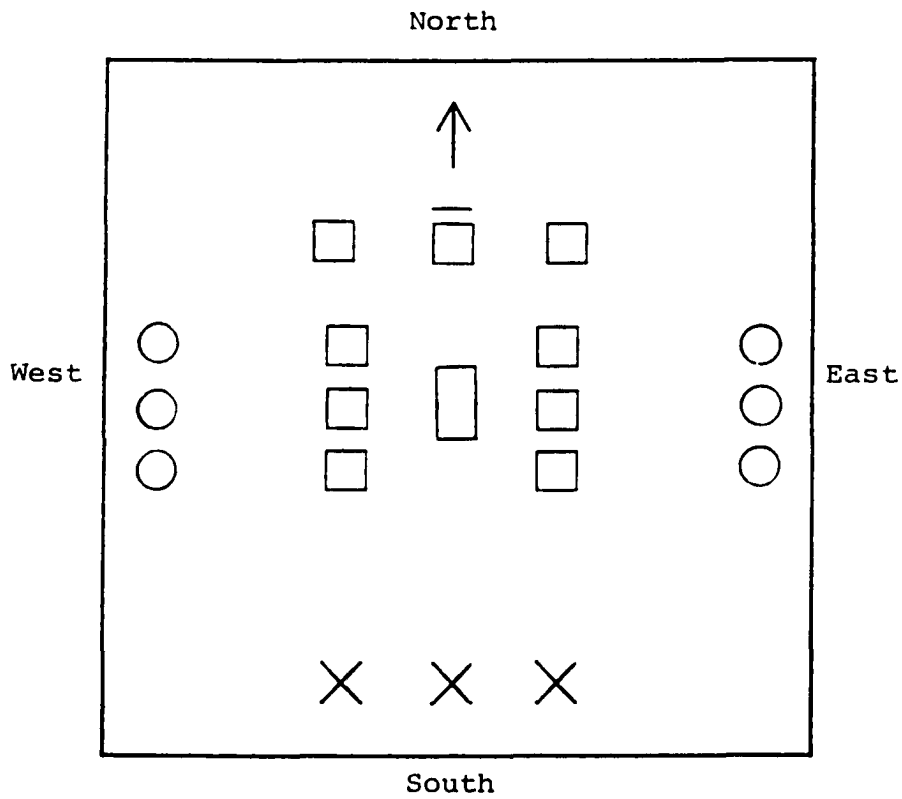
Figure 6. Irorimwin dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 39.

of the burial to help insure the passage of the deceased to join his ancestors. Before the dance, sympathizers get together for a wake. Thereafter, the dancers, who are relatives and friends of the deceased, parade around the town with the effigy bearing the features of the dead person.

The dance is performed in two parts. The first part of the dance is the parade around the town. Six male dancers, friends or relatives of the deceased, are chosen by the deceased's family to carry the effigy of the dead person during the parade. The procession moves along the streets led by the chief mourner (the next of kin) and family members of the deceased. The dancers are positioned on the left and right side of the effigy of the dead person. The ensemble, consisting of the musicians and drummers, follows to the rear of the procession (see Figure 7).

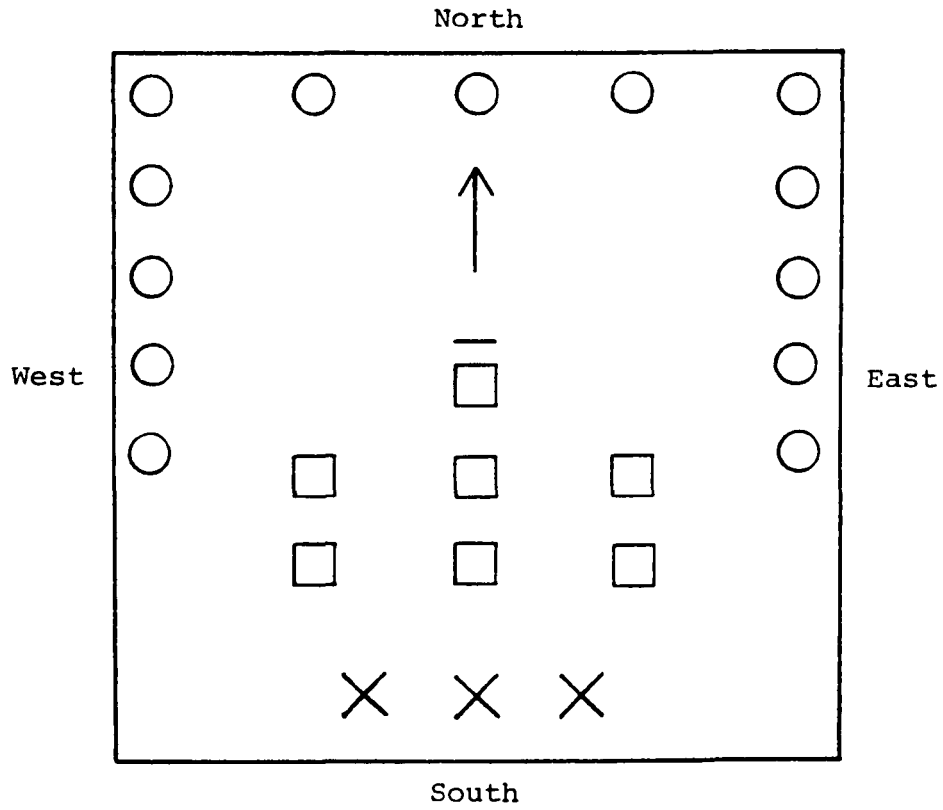
A second dance performance takes place at the residence of the deceased. The arena is an area approximately 30 by 30 meters, with the spectators sitting on the north, east, and west boundaries facing the dancers. The ensemble (musicians, drummers) sits behind the dancers to the south. The dancers perform in the center of the arena in three rows or lines with the lead dancer in front facing the spectators to the north. They keep at arm's length from each other (see Figure 8).



- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- ☐ Chief mourner
- ☐ Dancers
- ☐ Effigy bearing the features of the deceased
- Spectators
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummers)

Figure 7. Irorimwin dance formation (Part 1)





- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- ▭<sup>—</sup> Lead dancer
- ▭ Dancers
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummers)

**Figure 8.** Irorimwin dance formation (Part 2)

The first part of the dance involves the parade, beginning at the residence of the deceased and proceeding around the town and back to the residence, with the six male dancers carrying the effigy of the dead person. All dance steps are performed while following the procession back to the home of the deceased.

- A. The chief mourner (next of kin), family members, the effigy bearers, dancers, and the ensemble stamp their feet forward, then backward, then sideways.
- B. Then they begin to run, slowly at first, then faster.
- C. They slow the running pace to a walk.
- D. They form a circle and proceed by stamping their feet while maintaining the circle formation, moving to the right.
- E. They then dance back to the home of the deceased.

The second part of the dance is performed following the burial and involves relatives and friends at the home of the deceased as a part of the wake period. The dancers:

- A. Step to the side, leading with the left foot, then cross the right foot over the left.
- B. Step to the side, leading with the right foot, then cross the left foot over the right.
- C. Body sways first to the left, then to the right.

- D. With legs slightly bent, thrust the chest forward and backward in a continuous movement.
- E. Step forward, leading with the left foot, then close with the right foot.
- F. Step backward, leading with the right foot, then close with the left foot.

Repeat A-F three times. The dance lasts for approximately 40 minutes.

#### Ugie Dance

This is a palace dance performed by male adults to honour the Oba, who is the number one traditional ruler of Benin. The dance is also used for entertainment purposes. The village chiefs dance with decorative swords which represent symbols of authority. During the dance the Oba exacts tributes from his chiefs whose gifts reassure him of their loyalty (A. Ogbewi, personal communication, January 2, 1988).

Being custodian of the indigenous culture and customs of his tribe, the Oba wears his traditional attire (see Figure 9) on formal occasions. He appears in full regalia during the dance. His costume is elaborate from head to feet. He wears the iyeruan and akhuankhuan. The iyeruan is a white cloth made by the royal guild, Owinarido, and is worn around the waist. The akhuankhuan is a band made of ukponmwinaids, a local red cloth with red coral or ivory beads. His crown (ede) and



Figure 9. The Oba of Benin in his  
traditional attire

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 45.

the shirt (ikekeze) are made of tiny coral beads woven into a mesh. Additionally, he wears a wrist band (ikiro), a chest band (Ukugbo-Olila), and an ankle ring (eguan) made of coral beads. The Udahae which he ties around his forehead is made of coral beads. Added to his costume, he wears a set of beaded necklaces (Odigba), which hang some inches below his chest. He dances with a sceptre (ada). Some of his chiefs wear similar gowns without the cap. Other chiefs wear or tie a white or black loincloth around their waists and coral beads around their wrists and necks (see Figure 10).

The dance instruments are comprised of one big drum (ema-ighan), two small drums (ema-edo), two gongs (egogo), and one maracas (ishaka). The performers dance to the rhythm both of the high-pitched big drum and gongs and of the medium-pitched small drums and maracas. The rhythm of the big drum starts with a skip in the first beat and a rest in the third beat. The second beat on the small drums, gongs, and maracas is accented.

The chief's dance requires skilled sword (eben) twirling. As mentioned earlier, the sword symbolizes authority. It is a taboo for the sword to be dropped during the dance, so much practice by the chiefs is necessary in preparation for the dance. A great deal of the practice time is spent in throwing and catching the sword as well as rehearsing the dance steps. The



Figure 10. Ugie dance costume

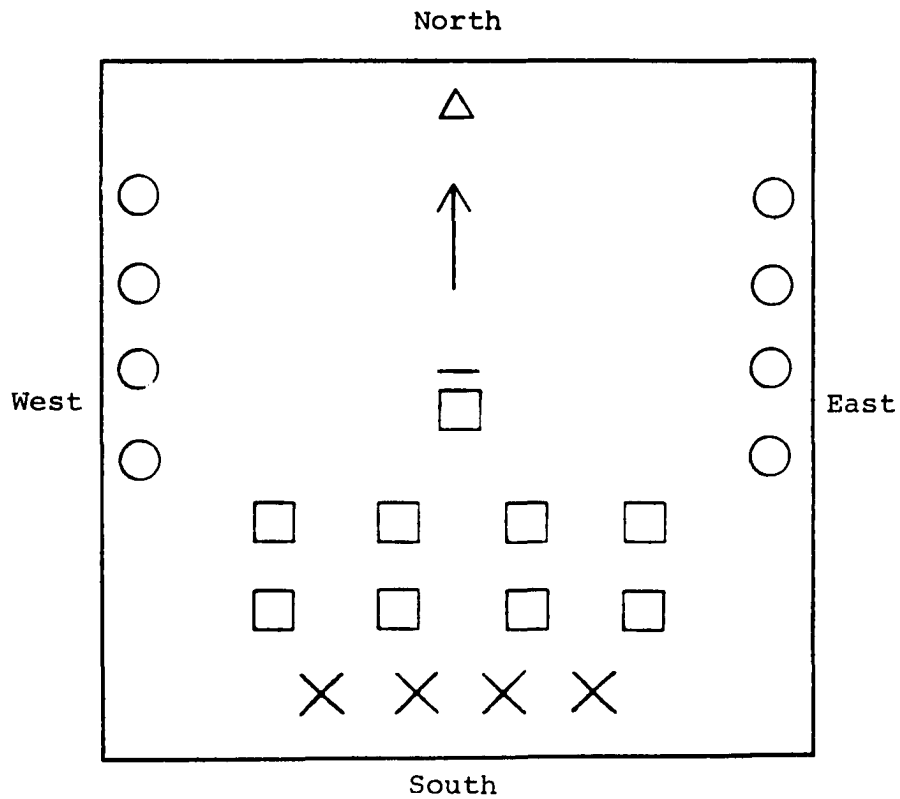
From Ayeni, 1974, p. 47.

older chiefs are usually present during training to ensure that the chiefs practice well. This dance is performed only at the palace of the Oba of Benin, who presides over the ceremonies.

The arena is a square approximately 20 by 20 meters in size, with the spectators sitting to the east and west of the arena facing the dancers. The ensemble of musicians and dancers sits behind the dancers to the south. With the dance leader in front, the dancers, arranged in four rows or lines facing the Oba, who is seated to the north, perform in the center of the arena. They stay at arm's length from one another (see Figure 11).

The chief's dance demands skilled sword (eben) twirling. This is appropriate since the sword symbolizes authority. Each dancer will:

- A. Step forward on the right foot three times, with the left foot following slightly behind the right foot with each step.
- B. The right arm holds the sword in front of the body.
- C. The sword is then twirled with the right hand, while the left hand is held behind the waist.



- △ The Oba of Benin
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Spectators
- ◻̄ Lead dancer
- ◻ Dancers
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummers)

Figure 11. Ugie dance formation



- D. While continuing to twirl the sword with the right hand, take two side steps to the right while still facing in the same direction.
- E. Take two side steps to the left while continuing to face in the same direction.
- F. Step forward three times, leading with the right foot, while continuing the spinning action with the sword.
- G. Step backward three times, leading with the left foot while continuing the spinning action of the sword.

Repeat A-G four times. The dance lasts approximately 45 minutes.

#### Ugba Dance

This is an adult male ceremonial dance evolving from a royal funeral dance (Ekasa) which historically was performed only upon the death of an Oba. Since chiefs found Ekasa too interesting to be reserved only for rare occasions, they decided to modify it and use it for festivals and social entertainment (Chief J. O. Esigie, personal communication, December 22, 1987).

The dancers tie loincloths around their waists and wear coral beads around their wrists and necks. They also tie rattles made of dried gourds around both ankles.

Rattles, which produce the rhythm, are the only instruments used during this dance. The performers accent

the second stamp of their feet on the ground during this dance to establish the rhythm.

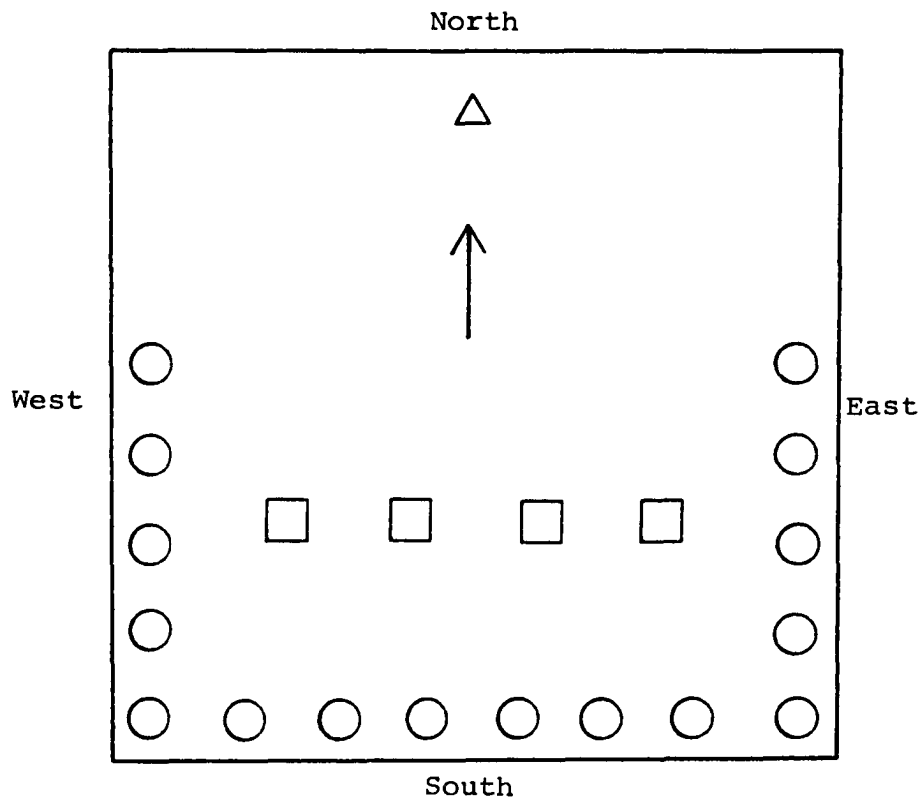
The preparation for this dance includes rehearsing the basic steps of stamping the feet, stepping forward, stepping backward, and running in place.

This dance is performed at the front of the palace of the Oba of Benin. The arena is a square approximately 20 by 20 meters in size, with the spectators sitting to the east, west, and south of the arena facing the dancers. The dancers perform in the center of the arena in a line facing the Oba, who is sitting to the north. They stay at arm's length from one another (see Figure 12).

The second Ugba dance formation is a square 20 by 20 meters in size, with the spectators sitting to the east, west, and south of the arena facing the dancers. The dancers perform in a circle facing north where the Oba is sitting. They stay at arm's length from one another.

The dance does not require an ensemble. The only accompaniment comes from the rattles tied on the ankles of each dancer. Each dancer will:

- A. Step forward, leading with the right foot, then close with the left foot.
- B. Stamp the right foot two times. Repeat A and B.
- C. Step backward twice, leading with the right foot, then close with the left foot.
- D. Stamp the right foot twice.

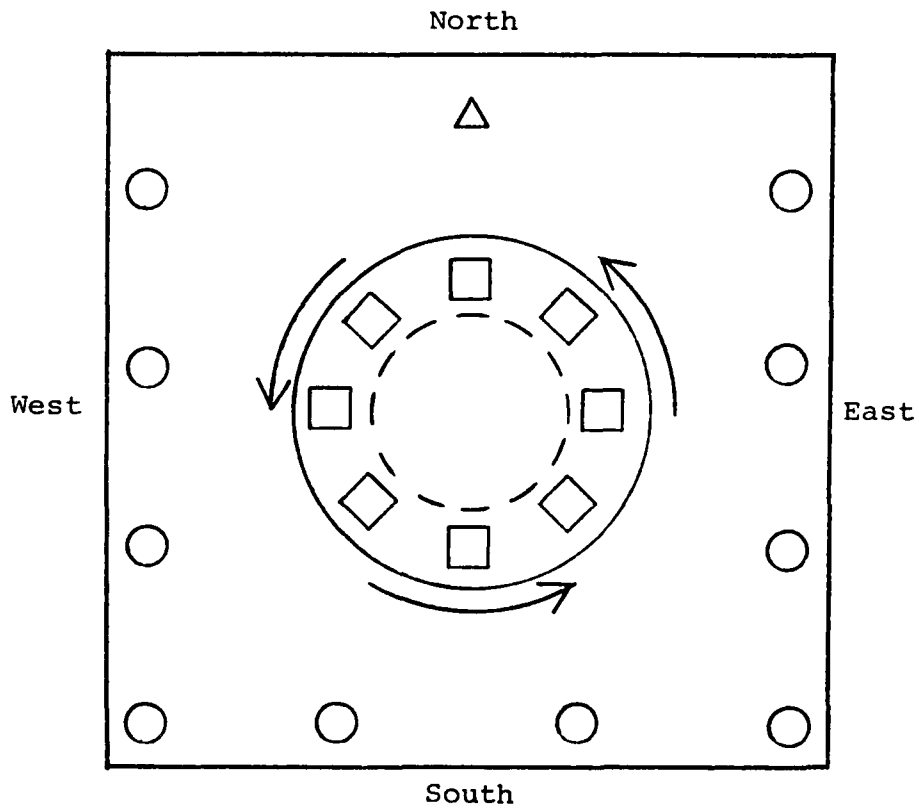


- △ The Oba  
 ↑ Direction facing (north)  
 ○ Spectators  
 □ Dancers

Figure 12. Ugba dance formation (Part 1)

- E. Spin on the left foot, turning the body around once.
- F. Stamp the right foot on the ground once.
- G. Spin on the right foot, turning the body around once.
- H. Stamp the left foot on the ground once.
- I. Run around the circle once, then stop (see Figure 13).

Repeat A-I four times. The dance lasts for approximately 50 minutes.



- △ The Oba
- Spectators
- Dancers
- Direction of movement

Figure 13. Ugba dance formation (Part 2)

## Chapter 2

### Elders' Ceremonial Dances

This chapter will include selected elders' ceremonial dances performed by the Bendelites. They are: Ema, a dance for royalty (chieftaincy), performed by the Ughelli tribe; Emomorhe, a dance to celebrate the passing from one age group to another, performed by the Enwan tribe; and Itakpo, a dance in honour of a god who protects the Ososo tribe and also in elevating citizens, performed by the Akoko-Edo tribe.

The information, or learning objectives, given about each dance should enable students to:

- A. Understand and identify the historical significance of the dances.
- B. List the appropriate costumes used by the dancers of each dance.
- C. Describe the instruments used in the dances.
- D. Know the preparations for the dances.
- E. Know and demonstrate the dance formations.
- F. Know and demonstrate the steps and movements for the dances.

In Bendel State, elders have important roles to play in their respective communities/clans. Traditionally, clans in the communities and villages have a recognized system for honouring age groups, both men and women. Authority and responsibility given Bendelites for particular activities are largely determined by one's age relative to the age of others in the community. The villagers are led by chiefs and elders. Only a member who has attained the age group of 45 to 50 can be initiated as a chief or elder. Communities, clans, and villages are basically led by two groups: (1) the holders of certain senior titles and (2) a voluntary ritual group which directs many of the society's rituals and also controls its shrine. The cooperative representation of these two groups form the leadership of the society (Ekpeno, 1978).

The elders' ceremonial dance usually represents a cult, fraternity, or a certain status. This group, consisting of both males and females, is very highly respected in the Bendel State of Nigeria (Enem, 1975). The more popular elders' ceremonial dances selected and performed by the Bendelites are the Ema, Emomorhe, and Itakpo, and descriptions of them follow.

#### Ema Dance

Ema is a status dance performed by titled men and women. It is performed for chieftaincy or royalty. The

dance was inherited from Benin, the ancestral headquarters of the Urhobos tribe (Echero, 1983). During the lyeri festival, all titled chiefs and important persons in the clan pay the customary homage to His Highness the Ovie, Ogbogh Orwe II, who is currently the head of the Urhobos tribe. Gifts of various kinds are presented to the Ovie. In return, he bestows his royal blessing on the titled chiefs. This customary homage is always accompanied by the Ema ceremonial dance. The titled chiefs dance for the Ovie at his palace (Okporua, 1985).

Men and women have slight differences in their dance costumes. The females wear white blouses. Both males and females tie on a big white loincloth (see Figure 14). The Ovie has his special costume. His attire consists of a red loincloth, strands of coral beads around his wrists and neck, with some strands resting on his chest. The coral beads are symbols of wealth and nobility. Other costumes used by both sexes include a straw hat with a plume for the men and a hair scarf for the women. Men and women carry a fly whisk which is used to symbolize authority.

The dance instruments consist of one large drum (oniema) and two medium-sized drums (egba). The performers dance to the rhythm of the high-pitched large drum and the two medium-pitched, medium-sized drums. The rhythm of the large drum starts with a skip in the first beat, and a





Figure 14. Ema dance costume

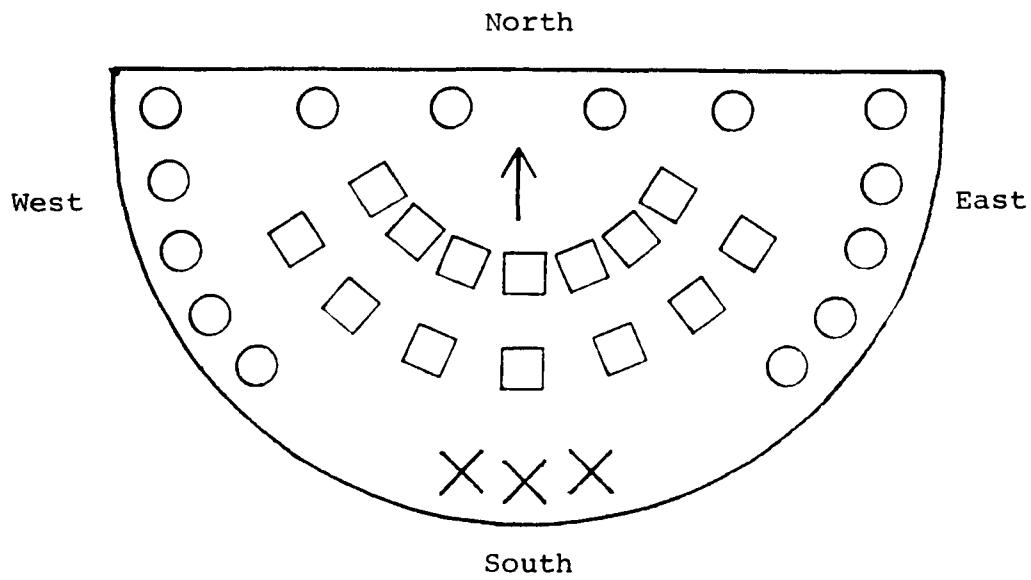
From Ayeni, 1974, p. 53.

rest in the third beat. The second beat on the two medium drums is accented.

To ensure that they excel in their performance, Osuotu, the head of the chiefs, is responsible for training the dancers at the palace of the Ovie. He teaches them the basic dance steps and the proper drum beats. The dancers are grouped into threes, each having a leader. The participants rehearse the dancing and drumming in separate areas at the same time. When the groups have practiced for a certain amount of time, the head of the chiefs rotates the groups. At the end of the allotted time, the members are assembled to present what they have learned in an actual dancing situation.

The Ema dance is performed at the residence of the Ovie of Ughelli; currently, Ogbogh Orwe II is the head of the tribe. This dance is also performed at the stadium for entertainment. The participants dance in a 20-meter, semicircle formation at the center of the arena. The spectators sit to the north, east, and west of the arena, facing the dancers, while the ensemble (drummers) is positioned to the south of the dancers. The dancers and drummers stay at approximately arm's length from each other (see Figure 15).

The success of this dance depends on the ability of the dancers to coordinate their arm and leg movements to the beat of the high and medium pitches of the drums.



○ Spectators

↑ Direction facing (north)

□ Dancers

× Ensemble (musicians, drummers)

Figure 15. Ema dance formation

- A. The dance is performed from a semicircle formation and includes the alternate front and backward swinging of the hands with rhythmic leg actions.
- B. The right hand and right foot are swung forward then backward simultaneously while dancer is standing on the left foot.

Repeat A-B four times. The dance lasts for about 10 minutes.

#### Emomorhe Dance

The Emomorhe dance is performed to elevate citizens from the Umadheghe to the Okhitoya age group, which is a group of elders. Only males who have attained the age of 55 or over are eligible for initiation into the Okhitoya, or elders' group. Since this is the last and highest ladder in age groupings of the Enwan tribe, initiates are regarded as elders and may have titles conferred on them (Ayeni, 1974). The dance is celebrated between March and April every four years.

The male initiates are dressed as masqueraders (see Figure 16). They are decorated with beads (ivie) and hold their royal scimitar (ashe) which is the sword of office. They tie rattles (urua) on their legs and are decorated with mirrors (Ughegbe). Cotton or wool is worn on their ears with a black cloth (Ukpon) covering their body.



Figure 16. Emomorhe dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 14.

The only instrument used in this dance is the drum (agba). The performers dance to the beat of a large, high-pitched drum (see Figure 17). The dance rhythm starts with a skip in the first beat, then a rest in the third.

Prior to the ceremony, the initiates undergo ritual purification for two weeks. They are sent to a shrine (Eguahi) where they remain for the two weeks. This is done in fulfillment of the ritual custom and also to cleanse them of evil spirits that may still hang around any of the Okitoyas-to-be. During the purification period, the would-be Okhitoyas are properly cared for by their relatives and the Umadheghe, who represent the next age group to be initiated into the Okhitoya age group. They ensure that the rites at the shrines of Eguahi and Ogua are properly kept, observed, and honoured.

At the end of the purification period, all those to be initiated are instructed by current representatives of the elders as to what is expected of them as would-be elders of the community. Then they get dressed as masqueraders. The masqueraders, followed by their relatives and other well-wishers, proceed to the Ezeri-Ogua shrines where they dance and complete the remaining part of the initiation.

The Emomorhe dance is performed at the town square. The dancers perform in a 20-meter, semicircle formation, facing the spectators to their north. The drummer is



Figure 17. Agba drum

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 15.

positioned to the south of the dancers. The dancers stay at approximately arm's length from each other (see Figure 18).

The dance is performed in a semicircle. As the initiated Okhitoyas take turns dancing to the beat of the drum (agba), they are given names. Women are not allowed to dance to the tune of the drum or to touch any of the Emomorhe masqueraders unless one of the Okhitoya group is the woman's father. The dancers:

- A. Take two steps to the right, two steps to the left, then some steps forward. The purpose of this movement is to reach the audience and seek its cooperation.
- B. Run forward, then backward.
- C. Stamp on the right foot four times.
- D. Stamp on the left foot four times.
- E. Skip (step and hop), changing feet on each skip.

Repeat A-E four times. The dance lasts for about 15 minutes.

#### Itakpo Dance

The Itakpo dance dates back centuries to when the present-day Ososo tribe was founded by settlers who wandered away from Benin, their ancestral birth place. The dance is celebrated in honour of a god who is regarded as the protector of the Ososo tribe. It also marks the time when elders of the clan are chosen to be elevated



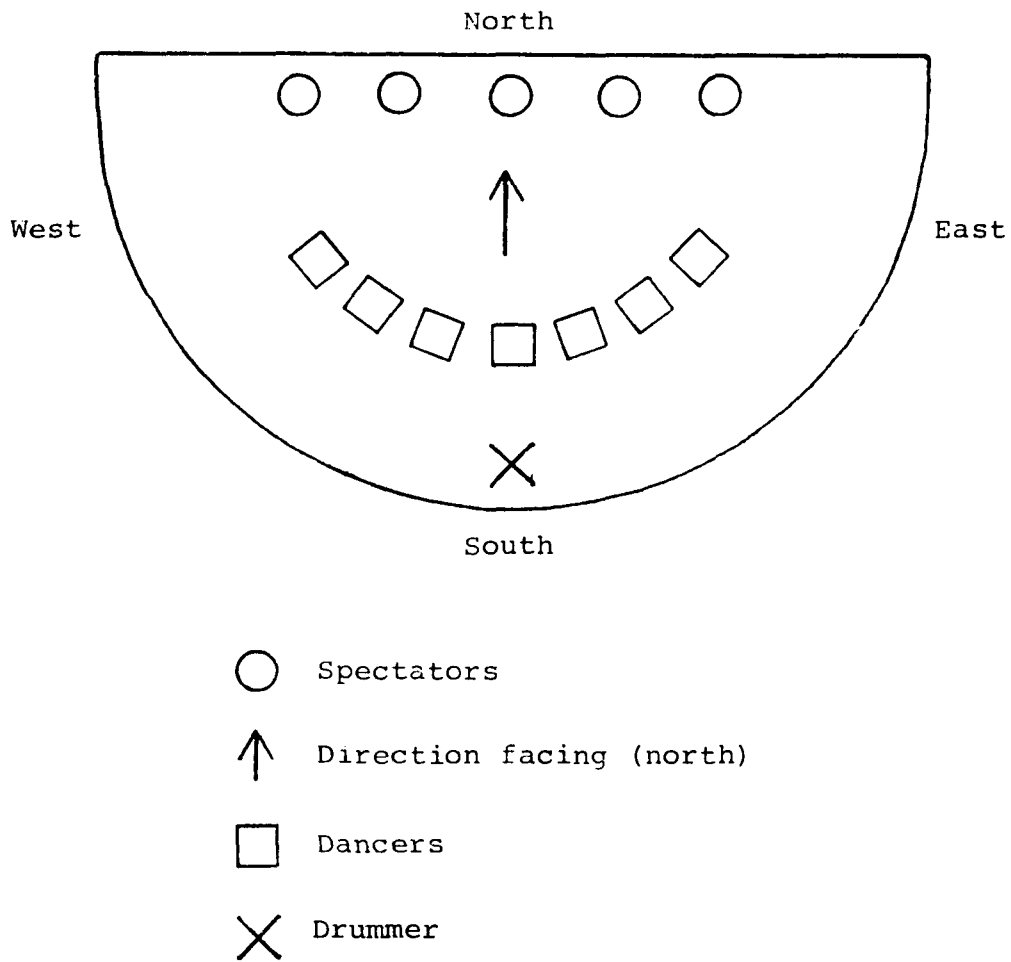


Figure 18. Emomorhe dance formation

from one age group to a higher one. In the Ososo clan, the age of 40 marks the end of youth and the beginning of manhood. The Egbalagus is the lower age group to the Okogbes. Members of this age group are not elevated to the highest age group of elders until they reach the age of 60 (D. Aiyejina, personal communication, December 27, 1987).

The costumes for this dance consist of a long-sleeve shirt (efe) worn on top of a loincloth (Ukpon). The dancers are decorated with coral beads (uvon), for the neck and wrists. They wear a hat (umola) and carry a horse tail (ukpola) and a fan (ighan) for perspiration (see Figure 19).

The only instrument used during this dance is a large drum (erigede). The performers dance to the rhythm of this high-pitched drum. The dance rhythm starts with a skip in the first beat, then a rest in the third.

Before the dance, those to be elevated are led to the Egbovie Shrine where they undergo certain purification rituals and tests for full manhood and leadership. While they are away, the next lower age group, Egbes, does everything to ensure the success of the ceremony.

After the visit to the Egbovie Shrine by the Egbalagus, they are met by the main representative of the elders who addresses and advises them on their expected roles in the clan as the next Okogbes. The



Figure 19. Itakpo dance costume

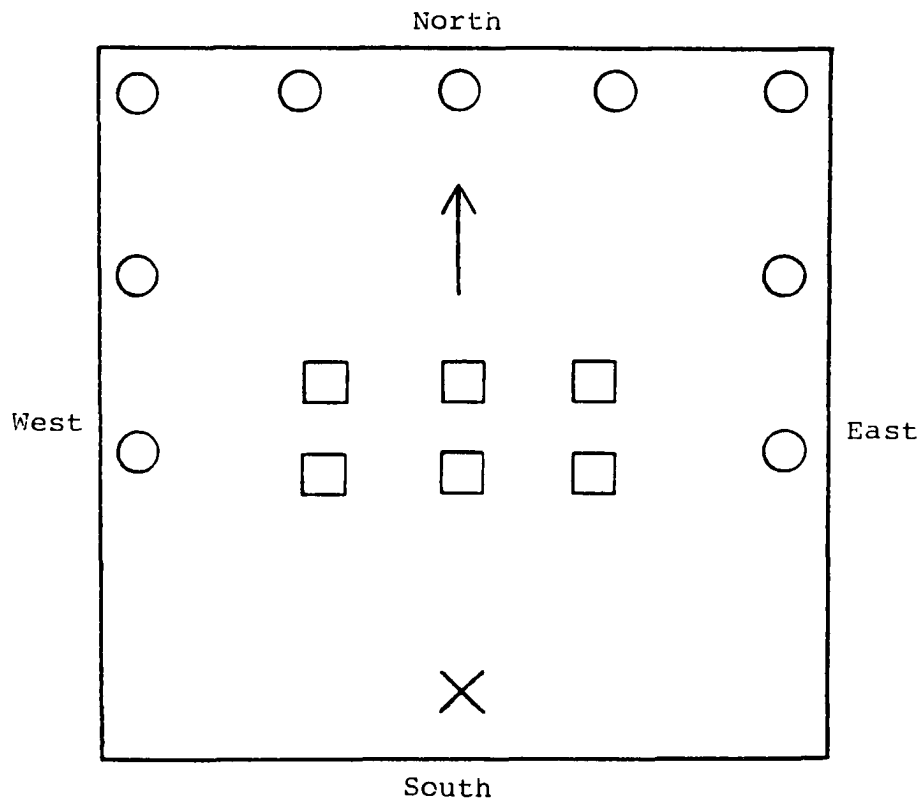
From Ayeni, 1974, p. 17.

last stage before an Egbalagus becomes an Okogbe is the payment of 4K. The 4K, equivalent to two cents in U. S. money, qualifies each Egbalagus to walk across a big barrier rock which is stained with the blood of three slaughtered goats. When they cross the blood-stained rock, they have completed all activities of youth and are now in the elders group (Okogbe). Now the initiates dance to the tune of the drum. No other types of drumming, shouting, and singing are allowed to be heard at the shrine until another seven years have passed and the next age group is eligible to be initiated (Obanilu, 1975).

The Itakpo dance is performed at the town square and covers an area approximately 20 by 20 meters. The dancers perform in two lines at the center of the arena facing the spectators to the north. Other spectators sit to the east and west and also face the dancers. The drummer is positioned to the south of the dancers. The dancers and drummer stay at arm's length from each other (see Figure 20).

The arms, upper body, and legs are all used in this dance. The dancer will:

- A. Slide to the right, leading with the right foot, then close with the left.
- B. Slide to the left, leading with the left foot, then close with the right.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers (initiated Okogbes)
- × Drummer

Figure 20. Itakpo dance formation

- C. The right hand and right foot are swung forward and backward simultaneously while the dancer stands on the left foot.
- D. Step forward on the right foot, then close with the left.
- E. Step backward on the left foot, then close with the right.

Repeat A-E four times. The dance lasts for about 15 minutes.

## Chapter 3

### Masquerade Ceremonial Dances

This chapter will include the more popular Masquerade ceremonial dances selected and performed by the Bendelites. These are the Okakagbe (entertainment) from the Fugar tribe, the Okere (thanksgiving/entertainment) from the Warri tribe, and the Igbaboneli (harvest/funeral) from the Ishan tribe.

For each of the Masquerade ceremonial dances included in this chapter, the students will be able to:

- A. Understand and identify the historical significance of the dances.
- B. List the appropriate costumes worn by the dancers of each dance.
- C. Describe the instruments used in the dances.
- D. Know the preparations for the dances.
- E. Know and demonstrate the dance formations.
- F. Know and demonstrate the dance steps and movements for the dances.

There are two types of masquerade dances in the Bendel State of Nigeria, namely, ritual and those used for entertainment. Ritual masquerades are part of the tradition of many Bendelites' cultures and appear as the dramatic climax of festivals held in honour of the

guardian spirits of communities. A ritual mask dance normally starts with divination and sacrificial rites to renew the relationship of the living with the world of the supernatural and to strengthen the traditional values which hold the society together. Other masquerades represent neither spirit nor deity but are danced purely for pleasure and entertainment (Biobaku, 1976).

#### Okakagbe Dance

Okakagbe, meaning too tough, is a male masquerade dance which can be performed only by initiated members. Before one is admitted as a member of the group, he has to undergo rigorous endurance tests such as lifting, climbing, and other strenuous physical tasks, hence the name Okakagbe.

Legend has it that a group of young boys ran into some monkeys in the forest. Out of fright, they could not chase away the monkeys from the forest. They hid helplessly and watched the monkeys run, jump, and somersault. In recounting their experience to the community, they demonstrated what they saw the monkeys do. Today, the same kinds of dance movements are used. The dance is performed by males of the Fugar tribe to mark entertainment occasions such as sports festivals (Ayeni, 1974).

Each masquerader is dressed with a mask resembling the head of an animal. The body is decorated with long



suspended strands of rope fibers (see Figure 21). Masks worn by masqueraders represent the mysterious presence of ancestral spirits in any form including the shape of animals. The aesthetic effect of the mask is aimed to please the ancestors and the crowd.

The instruments used are a drum (ema), a large gong (agogo), and a flute (agboro). The performers dance to the rhythm of the drums, gong, and flute. The drum rhythm starts with a skip in the first beat, then a rest in the third beat. There is an accented second beat of the gong. The flute rhythm is tuned to different pitches from low to medium to high.

The preparation for this dance includes the basic Okakagbe dance steps of walking, running, changing positions, stamping of the right foot, and somersaulting.

The Okakagbe dance is performed at the town square or at the stadium for entertainment. The dancers stand in scattered positions to provide them with enough room to perform the skills involved in the dance. They keep a minimum distance of about two meters from each other and perform at the center of the arena, facing the spectators to the north. Other spectators sit to the east and west of the arena, facing the dancers. The ensemble sits behind the dancers to the south and also maintains a distance of approximately two meters from



Figure 21. Okakaqbe dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 77.

them (see Figure 22). The size of the dance arena is approximately 50 by 50 meters.

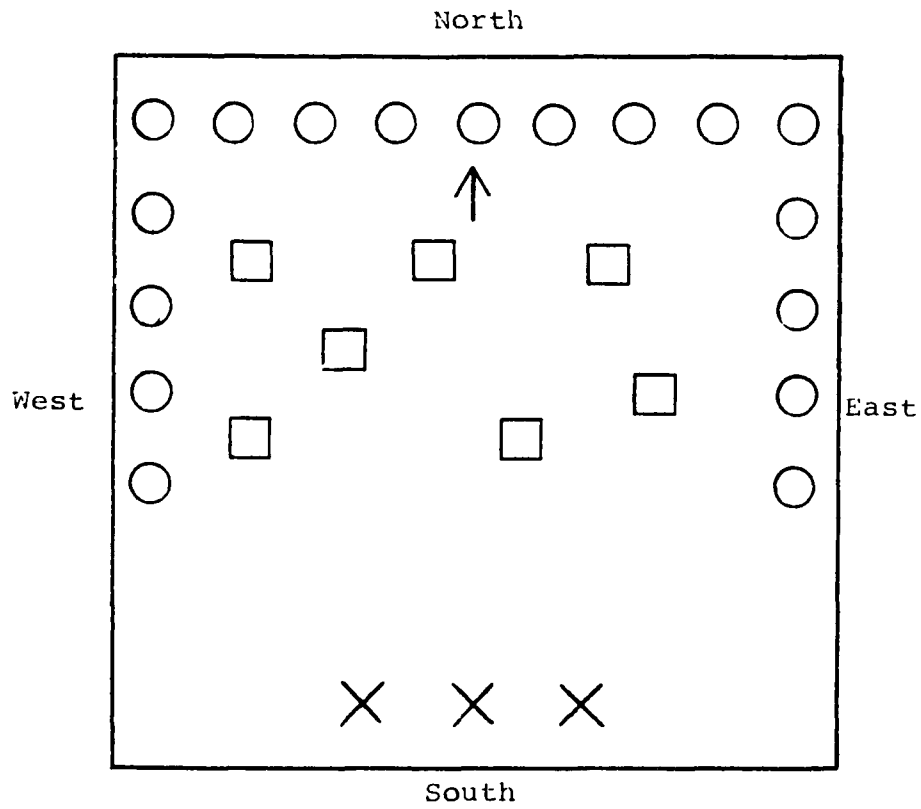
The masqueraders dance to the rhythm of the drums and gong and move about freely, changing directions according to the signals of the flute. The dancers:

- A. Walk in different directions, greeting the audience for the purpose of enlisting its support.
- B. Run and change directions according to the signal of the flute.
- C. Step forward on right foot and stamp continuously.
- D. Step forward on left foot and stamp continuously.

Repeat A-D four times. The dance lasts for approximately 15 minutes.

#### Okere Dance

According to history, the people presently living in the town of Okere in the Warri division migrated from Benin in A.D. 1480. It is believed they were sent from Benin in pursuit of Iginua, the eldest son of Oba Olna, who was the number one traditional ruler at that time. Having been reduced in number by deaths through disease and illness, the pursuers decided to move and settle in a place called Okere. The name Okere means to have been



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummer)

Figure 22. Okakagbe dance formation

reduced in number. It is in commemoration of this journey that the Okere dance is celebrated.

The dance is celebrated annually between July and August in the Warri tribe. Only males indigenous to Okere or those who are not natives but who were born and bred in Okere are allowed to perform in the ceremony as masquerade dancers (Ayeni, 1974).

Costumes of the masqueraders include a black veil to cover the face, a pleated hat with rafias that hang down the back, and specially prepared wrappers in the form of Agbada, a traditional Nigerian gown. Palm fronds are tied to their ankles and cover part of their legs as they dance.

The leader of the masquerade, referred to as Oshogua, wears white apparel which makes him distinct from the rest. The eldest of the masqueraders (okpoye) is dressed in a ragged, large, flowing sack (see Figures 23 and 24).

No instruments are used. There is no sound in this dance.

Before the dance ceremony, the Olu of the Warri tribe, the number two traditional ruler in Bendel State, ensures that certain norms are adhered to in his area of domain. Some people believe that the birth of twin babies during the dance cancels all previous ceremonies, thus requiring the festival to start over again, irrespective of the duration of the previous performance.



Figure 23. Okere dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 86.



Figure 24. Costume of Oshogua (leader of the masquerade)

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 87.

Deaths are not announced during the festival. Wailing and drumming of any kind are also prohibited. Protective medicines in the form of various herbs are given out during the dance celebration in order to prevent death, disease, and illness from occurring in the area.

The Okere dance is performed at the town square. The dancers perform in a single line formation at the center of the arena. Spectators occupy areas to the north and south of the dancers. Dancers stay approximately two meters apart during the performance (see Figure 25). The size of the dance arena is approximately 50 by 50 meters.

The highlight of the dance is when the eldest masquerader, Okpoye, pursues other masqueraders, including the leader as well as spectators. With the dancers in a single line, they execute the following movements:

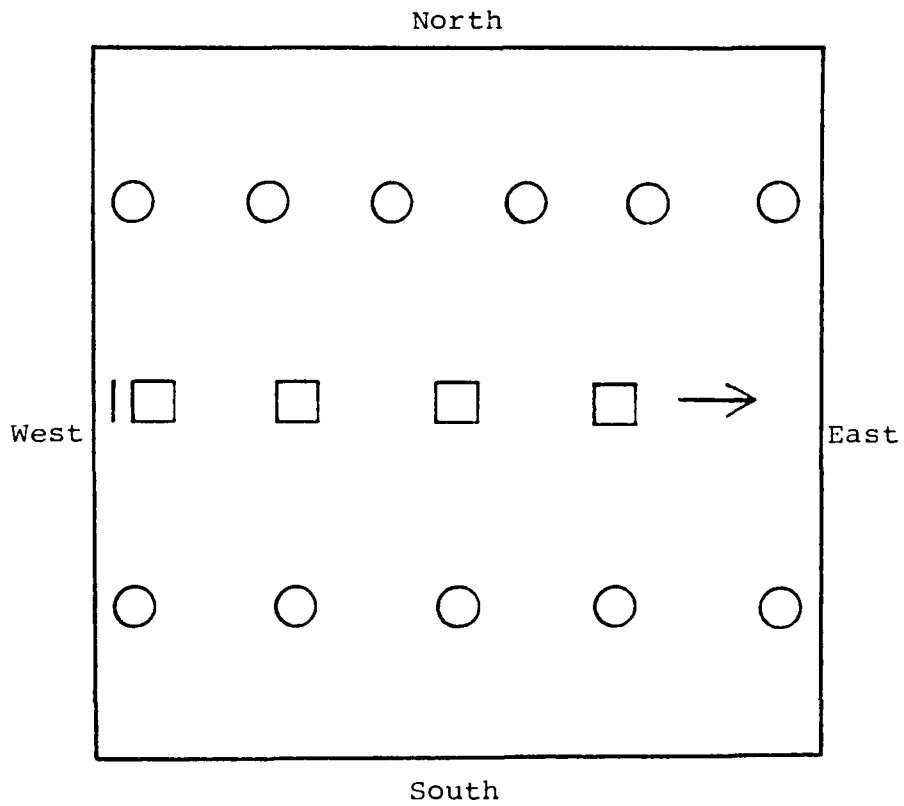
- A. Step forward on the right foot, and stamp the right foot continuously.
- B. Take turns in running from the line-up.
- C. Okpoye, the eldest masquerader, pursues others selected at random.

The dance lasts for about an hour.

#### Igbaboneli Dance

The Igbaboneli is an ancestral masquerade dance of the Ishan tribe performed annually to bless the first harvest (Biobaku, 1976). The dance is also performed by men during ritual ceremonies such as funerals.





- Spectators
- | □ Lead dancer
- Dancers
- Direction facing (east)

Figure 25. Okere dance formation

During harvest, women present loincloths (igbu) to their husbands as an expression of gratitude to them for farming and providing food throughout the year.

The masqueraders wear loose costumes of woven cloth that will enable them to perform comfortably. Their headdresses are made of woven rope decorated with the symbol of an animal. The body is distinguished with a woven rope sweater with long suspended strands of rope fibers. The dance troop wears woven short skirts and sleeveless shirts (see Figure 26).

The dance instruments are comprised of one big gong (agogo), a flute (uke), two small talking drums (okegan), two medium-sized drums (igengbe), and one big broad-faced drum (okegan). These instruments provide the rhythm for the dance. The performers dance to the rhythm of the high-pitched large drum, gong, and flute, and the medium-pitched, medium-sized drum. The rhythm of the large drum starts with a skip in the first beat with a rest in the third beat. The second beats of the medium-sized drums and the gong are accented. The flute rhythm is tuned to different pitches, from low to medium to high.

The preparation for this dance includes eating, drinking, and appeasing the ancestral shrines and gods by slaughtering chickens and goats. The dancers devote many hours of practice and rehearsal prior to the dance. It is important to note that this dance is very strenuous



Figure 26. Igbaboneli dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 66.

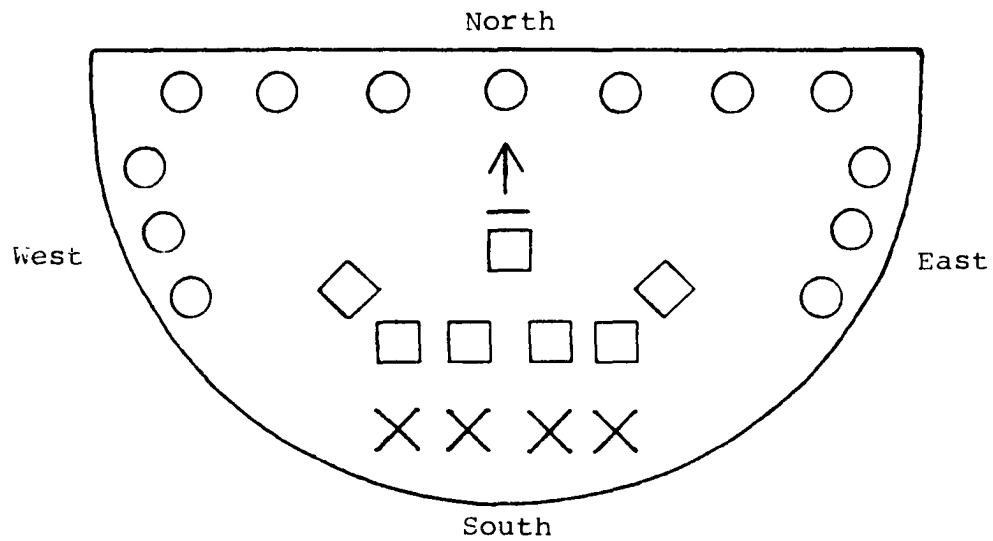
and involves complex footwork as well as running, somersaulting, and spinning actions. During rehearsal, the dancers practice combining all the skills involved in the dance.

The Igbabonelimi dance may be performed at the town square, at the residence of the deceased, or at the stadium. The dancers perform while in a semicircle formation at the center of the dance area, facing the spectators to the north; other spectators sit to the east and west. The dancers and ensemble stay a distance of at least two meters from each other (see Figure 27). The dance arena is approximately 20 meters in diameter.

The Igbabonelimi dance steps include a combination of skills, limited only by the acrobatic limits of initiated group members.

- A. Complex footwork involves right foot crossing over left, and left foot crossing over right.
- B. Running, to gather momentum for the somersault.
- C. Somersaulting is the heart of the dance and is done often.
- D. Sitting on the floor and spinning round on the buttocks.
- E. Lying on the back, arms crossed at the chest, both legs up, and spinning.

Repeat A-E four times. The dance lasts for about an hour.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- ▭<sup>—</sup> Lead dancer
- ▭ Dancers
- × Ensemble (Musicians, drummers)

Figure 27. Igbaboneli dance formation

## Chapter 4

### Maidens' Ceremonial Dances

This chapter will include the more popular of the Maidens' ceremonial dances selected and performed by the Bendelites. They are the Agbega (entertainment/marriage) from the Obedu Uromi tribe, the Agie (weddings) from the Igiode tribe, and Edjewhor (circumcision) from the East Urhobo tribe.

For the Maidens' ceremonial dances included in this chapter, the students should be able to:

- A. Understand and identify the historical significance of the dances.
- B. List the appropriate costumes worn by the dancers of each dance.
- C. Describe the instruments used in the dances.
- D. Know the preparations for the dances.
- E. Know and demonstrate the dance formations.
- F. Know and demonstrate the steps and movements for the dances.

Maidens' dances are performed at the virgin or premarital stage of a female's life. The dances represent an expression of beauty and innocence of body and are allied to the fattening rites when young women are initiated into adulthood (Ojehomon, 1975). Enem (1975)

states that "maidens'dances are generally debutante dances of girls confined to private quarters for a given period to acquire the natural skills and ideals of womanhood" (p. 70). The ideals of chastity, well-modulated social relationships, particularly as a wife, and being a skillful dancer are all very important in the Bendelite culture.

In Bendel State it is taboo for a young maiden to have sex before marriage. A girl deprived of her bridal pride (virginity) before marriage forever brings moral shame to her family. According to custom, the blood, which normally flows as a result of the first sexual encounter between the bride and bridegroom, is a great joy for the bride's parents who are honourably vindicated by the virginity of their daughter (Imam, 1987). To the parents of the girl, this event in the marriage is a great honour and bears excellent testimony to the rigid discipline they exercised in bringing up the young bride as a virgin.

#### Agbega Dance

The Agbega maidens'dance is performed by the Uromi tribe for entertainment and marriage (Enem, 1975). The dance is said to have originated from a man called Addeh Oriabiakhu, who was rich and had many children. He was hated by his less fortunate neighbours. To avoid their envy, he went into self-exile in the forest with his

family. When the community learned of his self-imposed exile, he was ostracized.

The children, as a palliative to their boredom and loneliness, sang and danced most every evening. Addeh was interested in the evening entertainments and provided them with musical instruments. Later, the Agbega maidens' dance was selected to be performed during marriage ceremonies as well as for entertainment (Enem, 1975).

The dancers are attired in white skirts (ebuluku), white pieces of cloth (ukpon) to brace the chest and hair, and coral beads (ivie) for the neck, wrists, chest, and waist. The dancers tie rattles (urua) on their ankles, and each holds a horse-tail (ukpurumu-emela) to ward off evil spirits during the dance (see Figure 28).

The dance instruments used include a large gong (agogo), three big drums (agbadi), and a flute (uke). The performers dance to the rhythm of both the high-pitched gong and the drums. The rhythm of the drums starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on the third beat. The rhythm on the gong is accented on the second beat. The rhythm of the flute is tuned to different pitches, from low to medium to high.

The performers get together a few days before the dance to rehearse the dance steps that include stepping and closing, lifting of legs, and swaying.



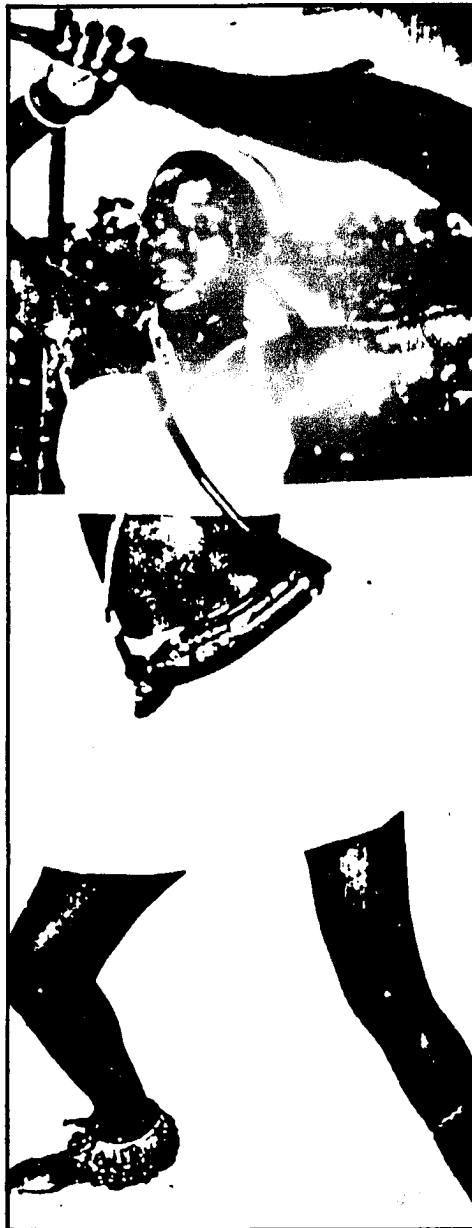


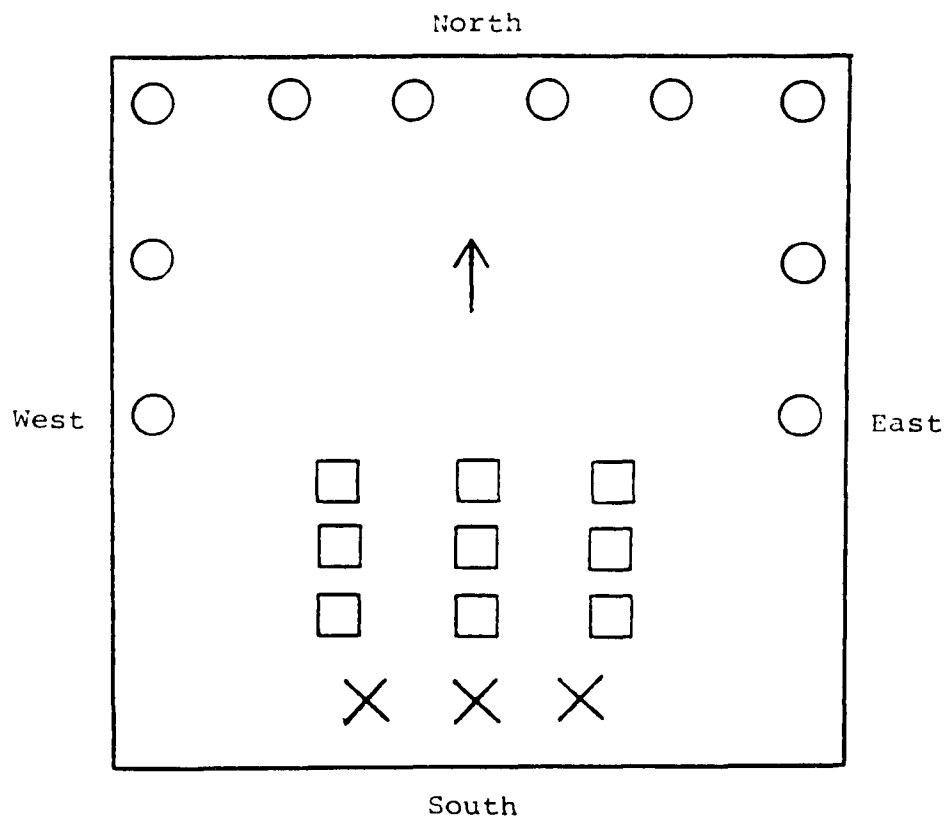
Figure 28. Agbega dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 20.

The Agbega dance is performed at the residence of the girl to be married and is also performed for entertainment at the stadium. The dancers perform in two rows or lines facing the spectators to the north. Other spectators sit to the east and west of the arena and face the dancers. The ensemble sits behind the dancers to the south and keeps a distance approximately two meters from them (see Figure 29). The size of the arena is approximately 20 by 20 meters.

The dance movements are intended to create interest and serve as invitations to prospective suitors as well as to demonstrate the innocence of the dancers. The performers dance in two single lines as follows:

- A. Step to the right with the right foot, then close with the left.
- B. Step to the left with the left foot, then close with the right. Repeat steps in A-B twice.
- C. Sway to the right, then to the left, four times.
- D. Step forward on the right foot and close with the left.
- E. Step backward on the left foot and close with the right.
- F. In a straddle position, lift the right foot about six inches, then bring it back to the ground.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummers)

Figure 29. Agbega dance formation

G. Next lift the left foot about six inches, and then bring it back to the ground.

H. Sway to the right, then to the left, with the horse-tail inviting suitors.

Repeat A-H four times. The dance lasts for about 30 minutes.

#### Agie Dance

Agie is a ceremonial maidens' dance performed at the wedding of girls and at the Otsa festival when all the girls are expected to dance to attract suitors. Girls who fail to take part in the Agie dance at the festival are usually despised and derided (Omoneukanrin, 1980).

In the past, the girls danced in complete nudity to exhibit their innocence, unblemished beauty, and physical maturity. Today, however, they are beautifully costumed in coral beads (ivie) worn around the neck, waist, and ankles. Their heads are braided with cowries (ameho). Their bodies are decorated with small pieces of woven cloth. They also tie a small piece of loincloth (ukpon) around their waists (see Figure 30).

The dance instruments consist of two big drums (agbadi), one gong (ilo), and a beaded gourd (izee). The performers dance to the rhythm of a high-pitched drum, a gong, and a beaded gourd. The rhythm of the drum starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on



Figure 30. Agie dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 51.

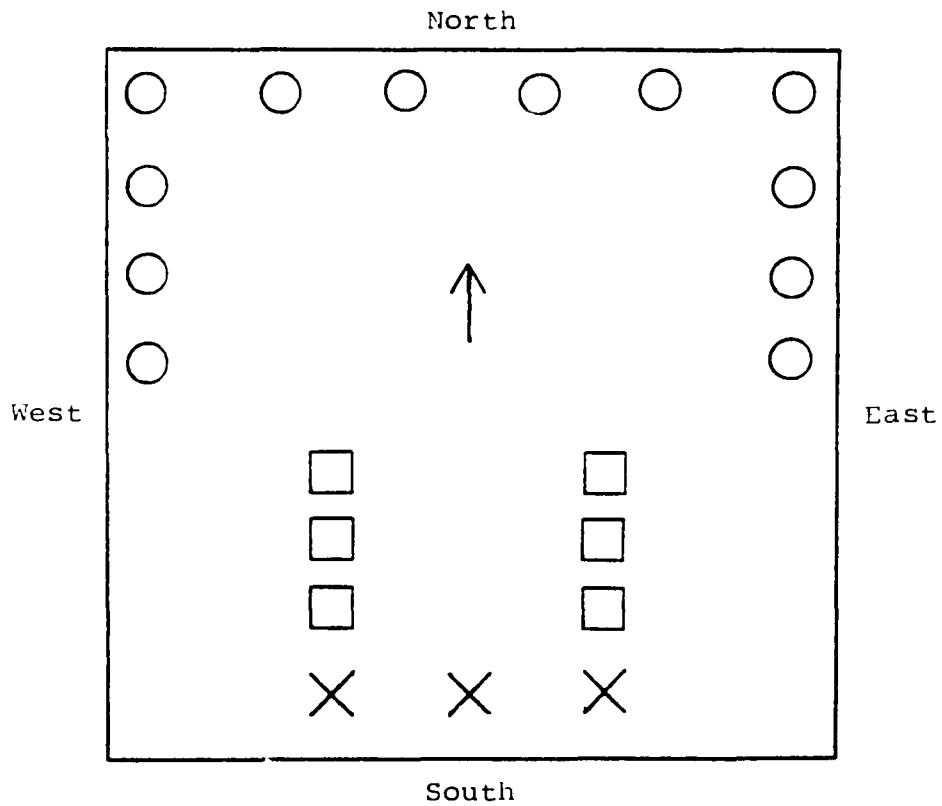
the third beat. The rhythm on the gong and the beaded gourd is accented on the second beat.

The performers get together at the residence of the dance leader a few days before the dance to rehearse the steps that include movements such as lifting of legs, turning clockwise and counter-clockwise, and stepping.

The Agie maidens' dance is performed at the residence of the girl being married, and is also performed at the town square during Otsa festival, when all mature girls dance to attract suitors. The dancers perform in three rows or single lines facing the spectators to the north. Other spectators occupy the east and west sides of the arena facing the dancers. The dancers and the ensemble stay at a distance of approximately two meters from each other (see Figure 31). The size of the dance arena is approximately 20 by 20 meters.

The dance movements demonstrate the innocence and physical fitness of the dancers. The movements are also intended to interact with the spectators and to invite suitors.

- A. Each dancer, while in a straddle position, lifts up her right foot about six inches to show her partner that she is free from any physical deformity and disease, then brings the foot down.
- B. The dancer lifts the left foot in the same manner as in A above.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummer)

Figure 31. Agie dance formation

- C. Each dancer then turns clockwise, looking for a suitor.
- D. Dancer then turns counter-clockwise, looking for a suitor.
- E. Steps forward on the right foot, then closes with the left while holding arms above head.
- F. Steps forward on the left foot, and closes with right, while holding arms above head.

Repeat A-F four times. The dance lasts for about an hour.

#### Edjewhor Dance

The Edjewhor is a ceremonial dance performed during the circumcision of girls about to be married. It is a seven-day ceremony performed annually in the month of June.

This dance was first introduced by Omotorhowa, its founder, who came from the Ewu clan. It was said that she had seen the aquatic goddess perform the ritual at a seaside. She learned the dance and introduced it to her people who started using it for girls about to be married. The founder was said to have danced herself into the bush on one of the ceremonial occasions and never returned to Ewu (Ramat, 1979). The dance was accepted into the customs of the people because of the symbolic association to marriage, fertility, and the sea.



A dancer's hair is braided and decorated with coral beads (ivie) which are formed into a conical headdress. Each dancer ties a charm on her upper arm and neck for protection against evildoers during the dance. The dancers tie a large traditional cloth (obadan) around the lower abdomen, below the breasts and above the knees. Each dancer ties rattles on her ankles and holds two horse tails on either side of her shoulders. The horse tails symbolize their innocence of body. The horse tails are also used during the dance to invite suitors (see Figure 32).

The dancers perform to instruments which consist of one large drum (igede), a gong (agogo), and four flat pieces of bamboo (ukpala). The rhythm of the high-pitched drum starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on the third. The rhythm of the gong and four flat pieces of bamboo is accented on the second beat.

Prior to the dance, an elderly woman guides the maidens through the domestic routines of personal hygiene, courtesy to elders, and the reception of the bridegroom at her residence for seven days. Sacrifices of chicken and white chalk (which signifies purity of body) are then offered to the aquatic goddess (of fertility) at a seaside. The maidens get together to rehearse the movements of the dance a day before the performance.



Figure 32. Edgewhor dance costume  
From Ayeni, 1974, p. 57.

The Edjewhor maidens' dance is performed at the residence of the girl being married. The dancers perform in a semicircle facing the spectators to the north. Other spectators occupy areas to the east and west of the arena facing the dancers. The dancers and the ensemble stay at a distance of approximately two meters from each other (see Figure 33). The dance arena is about 20 meters in diameter.

There is not much footwork in this dance. The graceful movements of the hands, eyes, and waist are geared toward attracting eligible bachelors or suitors. The dance steps include:

- A. Wriggling and shaking of the waist of each dancer, which is done to indicate how flexible she is in the waist.
- B. Dancer shakes the chest and invites the young males with the horse tails to see what is ready for the suitors.
- C. Dancer sways to the right, then to the left, to show and tell the suitor she is beautiful.

Repeat A-C four times. The dance lasts for about 30 minutes.

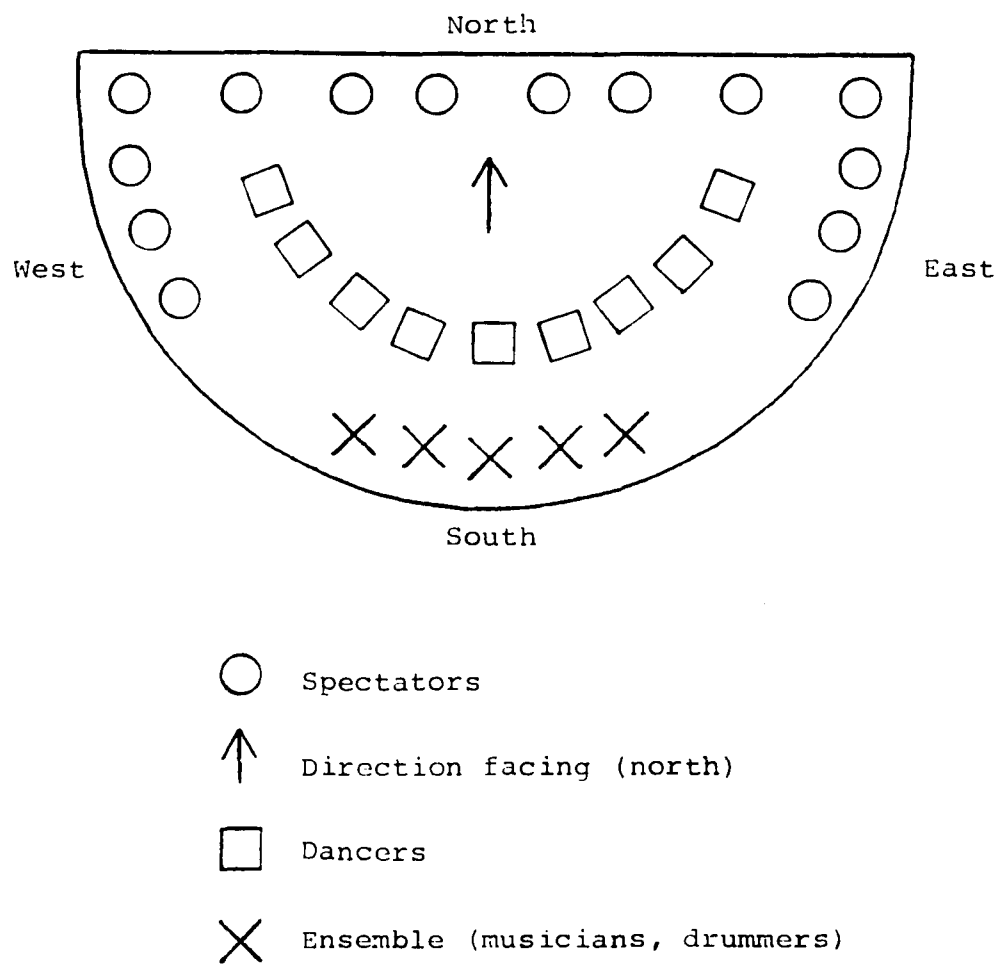


Figure 33. Edjewhor dance formation

## Chapter 5

### Ritual Ceremonial Dances

This chapter will include the more popular of the Ritual ceremonial dances performed by the Bendelites. They are the Egwu Dibia (to appease the gods) from the Umunede tribe, the Ishe (to appease gods and goddesses and to mark end of the old year and beginning of the new) from the Ewulu tribe, and the Olokun (in honour of the sea god) from the Iguehana tribe.

For the Ritual ceremonial dances included in this chapter, the students should be able to:

- A. Understand and identify the historical significance of the dances.
- B. List the appropriate costumes worn by the dancers of each dance.
- C. Describe the instruments used in the dances.
- D. Know the preparations for the dances.
- E. Know and demonstrate the dance formations.
- F. Know and demonstrate the steps and movements for the dances.

Ritual ceremonial dances are performed in the Bendel State of Nigeria to purge the towns of evils, to worship ancestors, and to pay homage to deified heroes and gods. They are also connected to sacred, religious, or cult

observances. Participation in the ritual dance is usually community-wide but may sometimes be restricted by age, sex, or cult membership (Biobaku, 1976).

Bendel State has numerous deities such as Olokun who is the god of wealth and fertility. Otujeremi from the Eastern Urhobo tribe is the god of rivers, Umale from the Warri tribe is the god of protection against evil spirits, and Oraekpen from the Sabongidda Ora tribe is the ancestral warrior shrine of protection (Omoneukanrin, 1980). Nearly every town and village has its respective set of deities. In the life of every Bendelite, the worshipping of deities is held in high esteem and is given special regard by the devotees. They consult these deities in crisis as well as offer sacrifices to appease them or for favours. Annual visual presentation in dance is usually organized collectively so the spirits of the ancestors may share physical fellowship with their relatives on earth (Alagoa, 1982).

#### Egwu Dibie

The Egwu Dibie is a ritual ceremonial cult dance performed by herbalists (native doctors). The herbalists perform the dance to appease their gods and the spirits of their ancestors. The male group claims to possess supernatural power to prevent or protect the people and their area from internal and external evil influences (B. Okoegwale, personal communication, January 4, 1988).

The costume is meant to give the herbalist a dreadful appearance. The costume consists of a white loincloth (akwa), a black short-sleeve shirt (efe), a black blouse (buluku), charms (Ogwu) for protection against evildoers during the dance, white chalk (nzu) used for disguise, coral beads for the neck and wrists (esuru), palm fronds (ofu) used to welcome the spirits of ancestors to the dance, a black pot (ite) with an image of a small child signifying the innocence of the herbalists, a black hat (Okpu), and a cutlass (nma) which signifies that the herbalist is immune to a cutlass wound (see Figure 34).

The dance instruments consist of one large drum (udu) and gong (agogo) used to invite the attention of the gods. The performers dance to the high-pitched rhythm of the large drum and gong. The rhythm of the large drum starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on the third beat. The rhythm on the gong is accented on the second beat.

Before the dance, goats or chickens are slaughtered as sacrifices to appease the gods (see Figure 35).

The Egwu Dibia (native doctors) dance is performed at the town square in an area about 20 meters in diameter. The dancers perform in a semicircle facing the spectators to the north. The ensemble (musicians, drummers) sits to the south behind the dancers. The distance between the spectators and the dancers is at least four meters. The



Figure 34. Egwu Dibia dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 53.





Figure 35. A native doctor slaughters a chicken to appease ancestral gods before the Egwu Dibia dance  
From Ayeni, 1974, p. 23.

dancers maintain arm's length distance from each other while the ensemble is another two meters away from the dancers (see Figure 36).

The dance is performed in a semicircle facing the spectators. Steps involved include:

- A. Running in place.
- B. Stamping on the right foot four times.
- C. Stamping on the left foot four times.
- D. Crossing the right foot over the left foot, and the left foot over the right foot four times.
- E. Short runs forward, backward, and sideways.

Repeat A-E four times. The dance lasts approximately 15 minutes.

#### Ishe Dance

The dance is believed to have been originated by a person named Ayo, a prominent citizen who was among the earliest settlers in the Ewulu tribe. As a mark of respect to the elders, Ayo subsequently transferred his right of being the chief priest during the dance to the Okpala, the eldest man in the town.

The dance is significant in that it affords a unique opportunity for all Ewulu citizens to recount their achievements of the past years. The dance serves as a period of thanksgiving to the goddess of the river Umomi for all she has done for the town (Ayeni, 1974). It marks a period of making general and individual sacrifices to

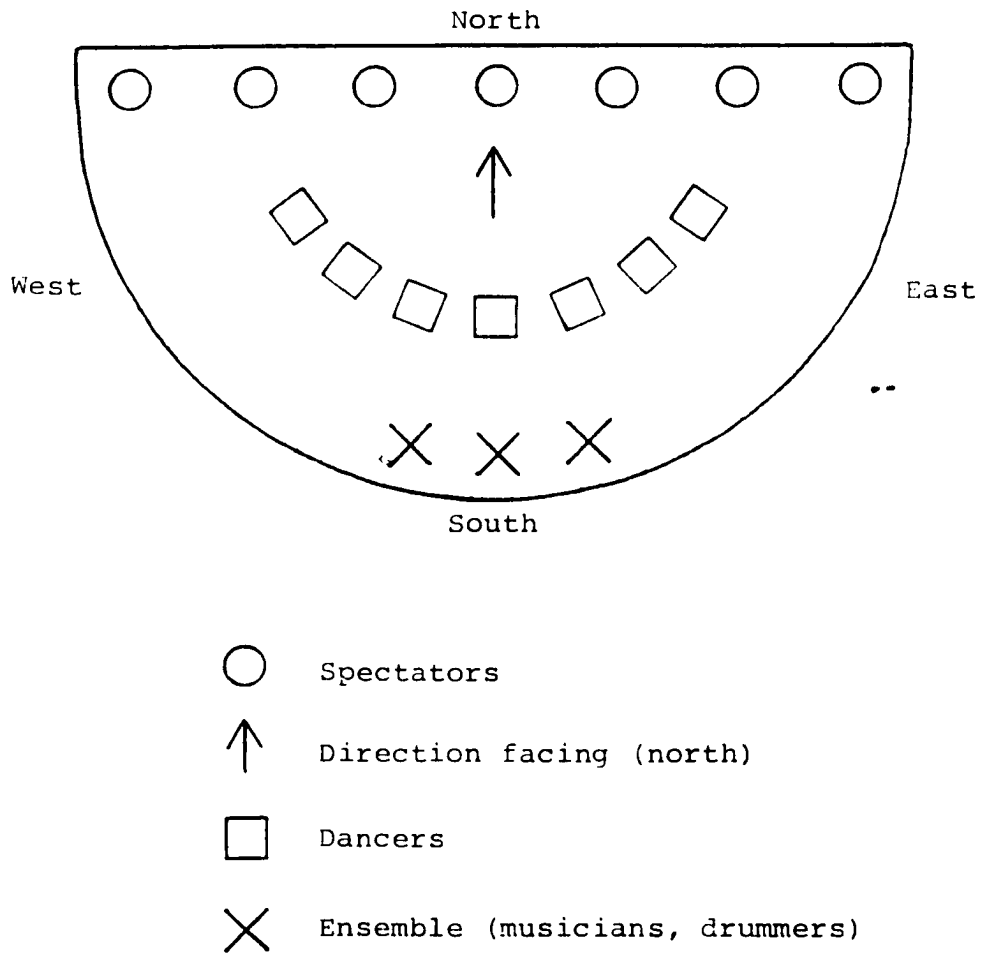


Figure 36. Egwu Dibia dance formation

appease other gods and goddesses of the area. Similarly, it marks the end of the old year and the ushering in of the new (Okechukwlu, 1984).

The costume for men consists of the traditional two-piece suit (agbada) in white, brown, and black; black shoes (akpukpuku); the sceptre (ada); the royal crown (Okpu-eze); and coral beads (esuru) for the neck, wrists, and waist. The female costume consists of a white blouse (efe-ocha), white loincloth (akwa-ocha), and coral beads (esuru) for the neck, wrists, and waist (see Figure 37).

The Ishe dance instruments are made up of two gongs (ogene), one flute (oja), and two big drums (udu). The performers dance to the high-pitched rhythm of the gongs, flute, and large drums. The rhythm on the gong is accented on the second beat. The flute is tuned to low, medium, and high pitches during the dance. The rhythm of the drums starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on the third beat.

A lot of preparation is involved for this dance. The women clean up their houses while the men clean the streets, compounds, and surroundings. Some of the men hunt for animals while others go fishing to ensure a sufficient food supply.

Oshele, the chief priest, slaughters a cow to appease the goddess of the river Umomi. Individuals prepare charms to protect themselves against evil attacks



Figure 37. Ishe dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 34.

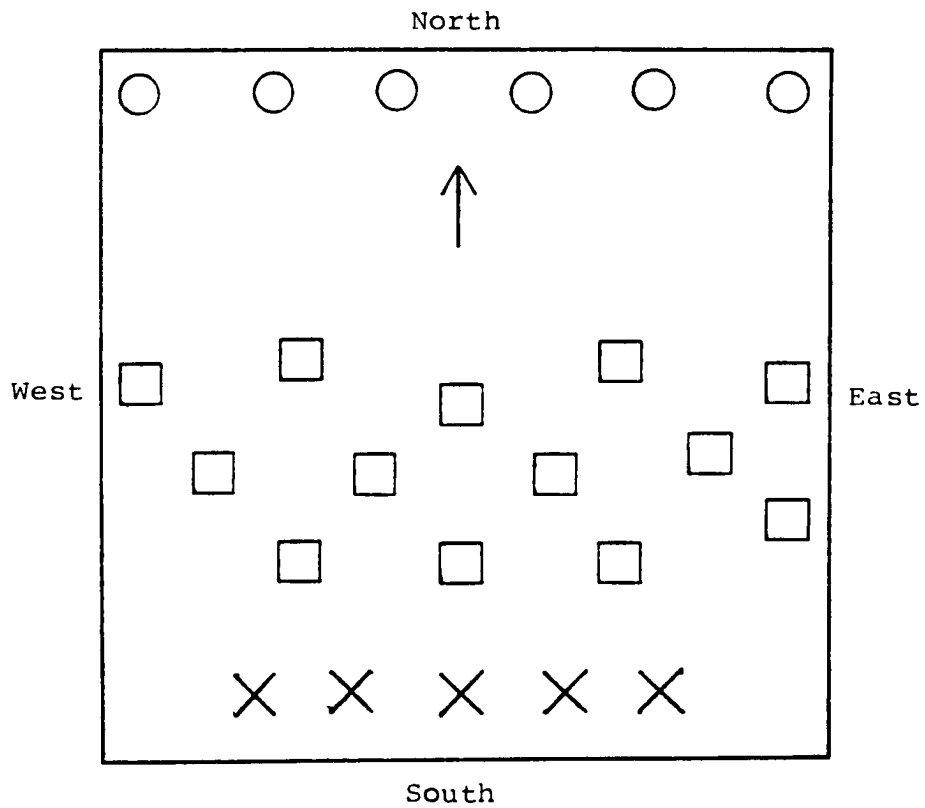
as well as take medicines to make them impervious to cutlass and gun wounds. Prayers are also offered for the safety of the citizens of the area. No burial or mourning is allowed during the ritual preparations and dance.

The Ishe dance is performed at the town square in an area approximately 50 by 50 meters. The dancers perform in scattered positions facing the spectators to the north. The ensemble (musicians, drummers) sits behind the dancers to the south. The distance between the spectators and the dancers is at least four meters. The dancers maintain arm's distance from each other while the ensemble is two meters away from the dancers (see Figure 38).

The dance is performed in scattered positions and involves:

- A. Stepping sideways on the right foot, then closing with the left.
- B. Stepping sideways on the left foot, then closing with the right.
- C. Spinning the body clockwise while throwing the sceptre in the air and catching it with the right hand.
- D. Spinning the body counter-clockwise while throwing the sceptre in the air and catching it with the right hand.

Repeat A-D four times. The dance lasts approximately 12 minutes.



○ Spectators

↑ Direction facing (north)

□ Dancers

× Ensemble (musicians, drummers)

Figure 38. Ishe dance formation

### Olokun Dance

Olokun is the female ritual ceremonial dance performed in honour of the benevolent sea god Olokun in the Iguehana tribe. Olokun is believed to have the power of granting fertility and bestowing good luck and riches on his adherents. The dance is usually performed in front of the Olokun shrine (Aruolokun) where a ritual pot (uru) is kept (A. Ogbewi, personal communication, January 2, 1988).

The effect of the dance is heightened by the Olokun costume, which is all white (see Figure 39). The costume for men consists of a white loincloth (ukpon) and coral beads (ivie) for the neck and wrists. The men are in charge of the drums during the dance.

The female costume consists of a white blouse (evbu), a white skirt or loincloth (ukpon), and coral beads (ivie) for the neck and wrists. Only the female chief priest is allowed to wear a red blouse, skirt, or loincloth in the Olokun dance.

The dance instruments are two small drums (ema-Olokun), a beaded gourd (ukuse), two rattles (urua), and two gongs (agogo). The performers dance to the rhythm of the two medium-pitched small drums, a beaded gourd, and two rattles. The second beat is accented.

Only initiated Olokun members are allowed to participate in the dance preparations. This includes



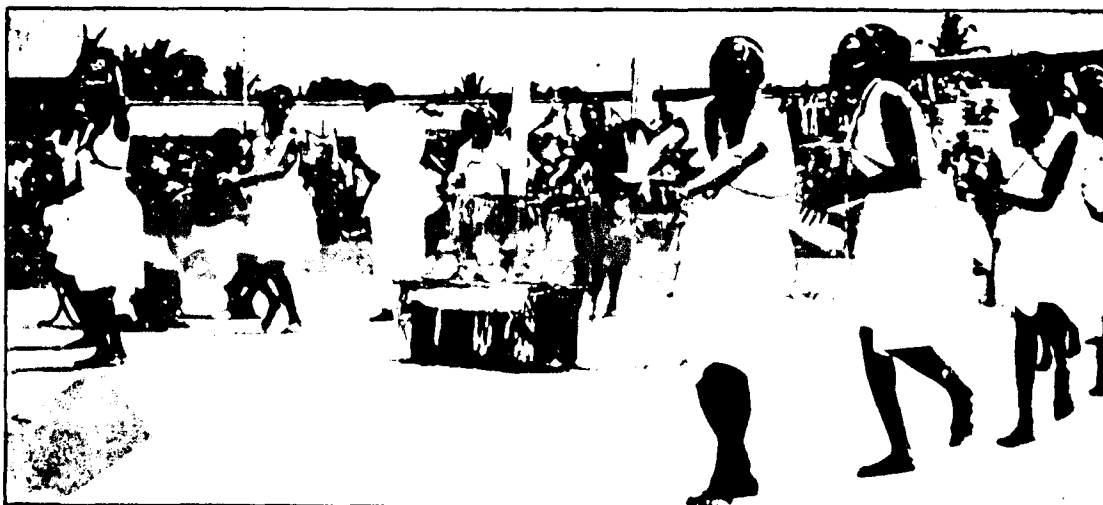


Figure 39. Olokun dance costume

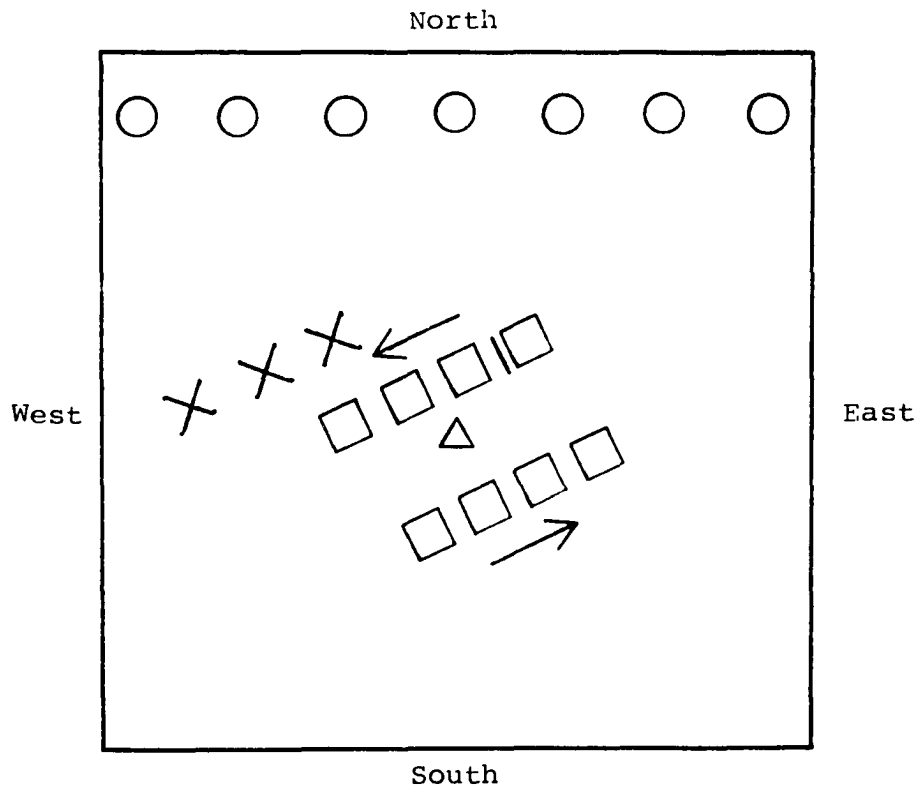
From Ayeni, 1974, p. 96.

inviting the Olokun spirit. Dancers bathe with coconut water and an herbal solution. The chief priest then offers a sacrifice of cowries (amegho), white chalk (nzu), white cloth (ukpon), herbs (kpululpulu), and coconut (ukpu) to enable the dancers to communicate with one of the Olokun gods.

It is important to note that there are many Olokun gods such as Adagbasa, the god of fertility, and Ekponwen, the god of wealth and good luck. Each dancer is expected to be identified with only one god, and that god becomes the protector of that particular dancer during the performance (A. Ogbewi, personal communication, January 2, 1988).

Olokun is a line dance performed around the shrine (Aruolokun). The ensemble sits four meters to the southwest of the spectators. The dancers perform to the south of the spectators and east of the ensemble. The distance between the dancers and spectators is between six and eight meters. The ensemble is northwest two to three meters away from the dancers. The dancers stay at arm's length from each other while dancing in the line (see Figure 40).

Olokun is a line dance for female performers who dance around the shrine (Aruolokun). The dance emphasizes the use of the arms and upper part of the body. The legs and hips move in rhythm with the dance instruments.



- Spectators
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummers)
- ↔ Direction facing (southwest, northeast)
- |□ Olokun priest
- Dancers
- △ Aruolokun Olukun shrine

Figure 40. Olokun dance formation

The dance movements are controlled by the priestess. At her direction, a dancer is taken through a circle of spiritual introspection and within a short time goes into a trance. The priestess does this by elaborating on the movements of the dancers and by spreading white chalk on the dancers (to appease the Olokun god). Once the dancer attains a spiritual state, the priestess may exercise her powers at her discretion (A. Ogbewi, personal communication, January 2, 1988). The dance steps involve:

- A. Stepping sideways on the right foot, then closing with the left.
- B. Stepping sideways on the left foot, then closing with the right. Repeat A and B four times.
- C. Stepping forward on the right foot, then closing with the left, three times.
- D. Stepping backward on the left foot, then closing with the right, three times.
- E. Spinning the body around on the left foot, then on the right foot. Do this twice.
- F. Sliding to the right, then to the left. Do this twice.

Repeat A-F four times. The dance lasts approximately 20 minutes.

## Chapter 6

### Vocational Ceremonial Dances

This chapter will include selected Vocational dances of the Bendel State of Nigeria. They are the Agbeloje-Ijeleghe (hunters' dance for entertainment) from the Udomi Irrua tribe, the Egwu Amalabuyo (merrymaking and to honour the water spirit, Nmuo nmili) from the Obodo Ugwa tribe, and the Ihoko (hunters' dance for entertainment) from the Ekpoma Ishan tribe.

For the Vocational ceremonial dances included in this chapter, the students will be able to:

- A. Understand and identify the historical significance of the dances.
- B. List the appropriate costumes used by the dancers of each dance.
- C. Describe the instruments used in the dances.
- D. Know the preparations for the dances.
- E. Know and demonstrate the dance formations.
- F. Know and demonstrate the steps and movements for the dances.

Vocational ceremonial dances of the Bendel State grew from everyday work experiences and usually are imitations of work movements that pertain to the many possibilities and complexities of a particular occupation (Enem, 1975).

Hunting and fishing are as old as the existence of man. With his coming, the need for something to eat became necessary. In order to find food, he wandered from place to place hunting for animals and other items which could be eaten. Hunting became a communal exercise, and a kill was shared among participants. Today, hunting dances are performed to enact the chase for the game as well as for entertainment (Okpara, 1974).

Fishing is a vocation for the river peoples of the Bendel State of Nigeria. Dances performed by both fishermen and women in Bendel State reflect their working movements on unstable canoes while fishing and in the villages when they are periodically flooded (B. Okoegwale, personal communication, January 4, 1988).

#### Agbeloje-Ijeleghe Dance

The Agbeloje-Ijeleghe dance is most often performed by young girls from the Udomi Irrua tribe, although it is open to both sexes. The dance is said to have been learned from gorillas. A famous hunter from Udomi of the Ukpoge tribe, while searching for game in the wild forest, came across some gorillas who were dancing. As he aimed to shoot one of them, they started jumping and somersaulting. He was fascinated (Ojeme, 1977).

When he returned home, he narrated what he had seen to his brother Oghalua, the founder of the village and its people. Those who were interested in this event

volunteered to accompany the hunter to the forest to verify the truth. On reaching the forest, they found the gorillas still at their game. They were thrilled and after returning home demonstrated what they had seen (Ojeme, 1977). From that time to the present the dance has become a part of the people of this village. The dance is performed purely for entertainment.

The dance costumes are made up of a skirt (ubulu-uku); a horse-tail (ukprumu-emela); coral beads (ivie) for the neck, waist, and wrists; and rattles (urua). The girls braid their hair and use a triangular scarf to brace their breasts (see Figure 41).

The dance instruments are two large drums (okegan) and one small drum (igengbe), two large gongs (agogo), and a flute (uke). These instruments provide the rhythm for the dance. The rhythm of the large drums starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on the third beat. The medium-pitched small drums and gongs have an accent on the second beat. The flute is tuned to pitches from low to high during the dance.

The dance preparations include rehearsal of the gorilla movements of running, walking, jumping, and somersaulting. The rehearsal takes place at the residence of the senior member of the group.

Agbeloje-Ijelegbe is a single line dance that is performed at the stadium or village square facing the

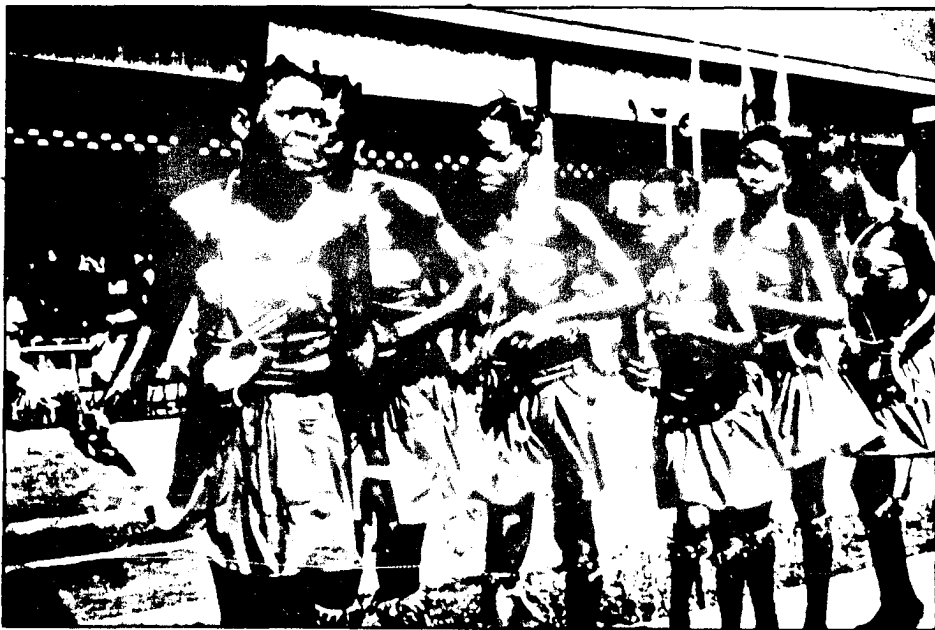


Figure 41. Agbeloje-Ijeleghe dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 78.

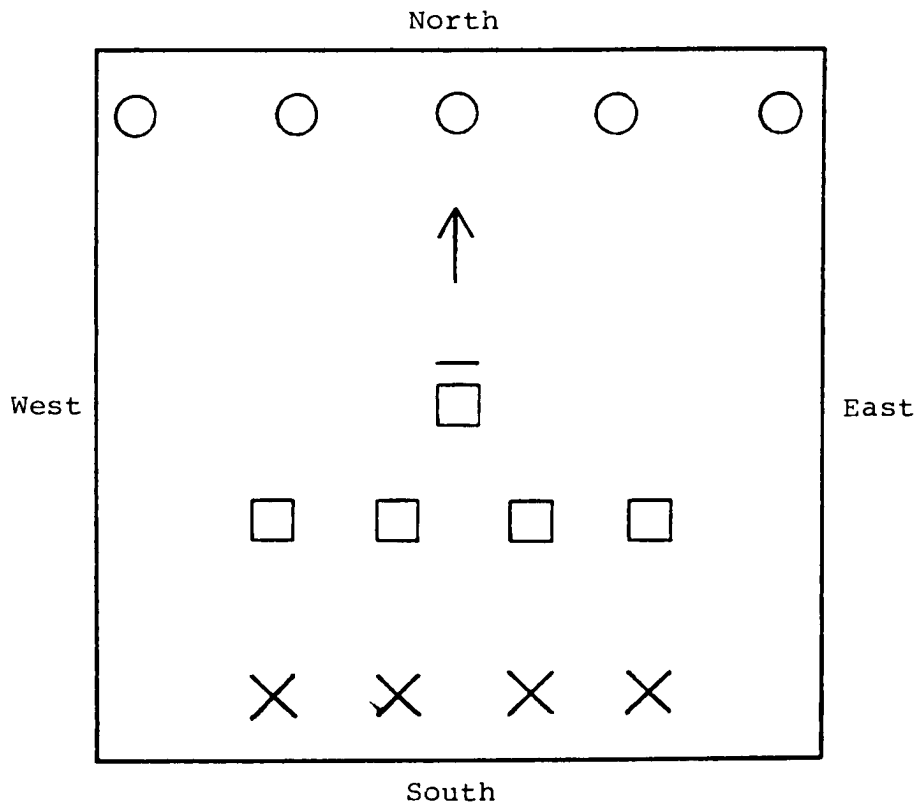


audience to the north. The ensemble is to the south of the spectators with the dancers in the middle of the arena and in front of the ensemble. The distance between the ensemble and the spectators is about eight meters. The ensemble is two meters from the dancers while the main body of dancers keeps a meter away from the lead dancer and five meters from the spectators. The dancers stay at arm's distance from each other while in the line (see Figure 42). The dance arena is approximately 20 by 20 meters.

For this dance the leader is selected in advance. She creates or initiates movements which the entire group can do with her. The movements should exemplify a strong feeling for the drum beat, the gong, and flute. The dance is performed by the group in unison. Whatever the leader does, all dancers do with her. Movements are as follows:

- A. Walk forward and backward on toes.
- B. Run in place.
- C. Leap forward, then backward, then sideways to the right, then sideways to the left.
- D. Gallop forward, then backward, then sideways to the right, then sideways to the left.
- E. Somersault forward, then backward.
- F. Sway sideways.

Repeat A-F three times. The dance lasts for about 15 minutes.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- ◻̄ Lead dancer
- ◻ Dancers
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummers)

Figure 42. Agbeloje-Ijeleghe dance formation

### Egwu Amalabuyo Dance

The Egwu Amalabuyo is an expressive vocational ceremonial dance performed by adult females and males from the Obodo Ugwa tribe to recall what happens during the fishing periods of the year. The dance is associated with a benevolent water spirit called mermaid or mami-water (Nmuo nmili). The spirit Nmuo nmili represents a legend concerning the improvement in the living conditions of the people and is supposed to have miraculous powers for keeping the fishing ponds from drying up. The image of the spirit Nmuo nmili is represented by the leader of the dancers who is in the front of the boat in order to give the audience the physical look of a spirit who is thought to show herself to only a selected few. The dance is also performed for entertainment purposes.

The men wear yellow or brown sleeveless shirts and a loincloth of a variety of such colours as golden, scarlet, or yellow. Women wear white blouses over white loincloths (ukpon). They also use a white or brown scarf (egudu) to hold their hair in place. Other items of the costumes include paddles, a canoe, and fans (ezuzu) to give the impression of a cooling breeze. The dance leader wears a piece of brown cloth as an arm band as well as rattles (ekpili) for the ankles (see Figure 43).



Figure 43. Egwu Amalabuyo dance costume

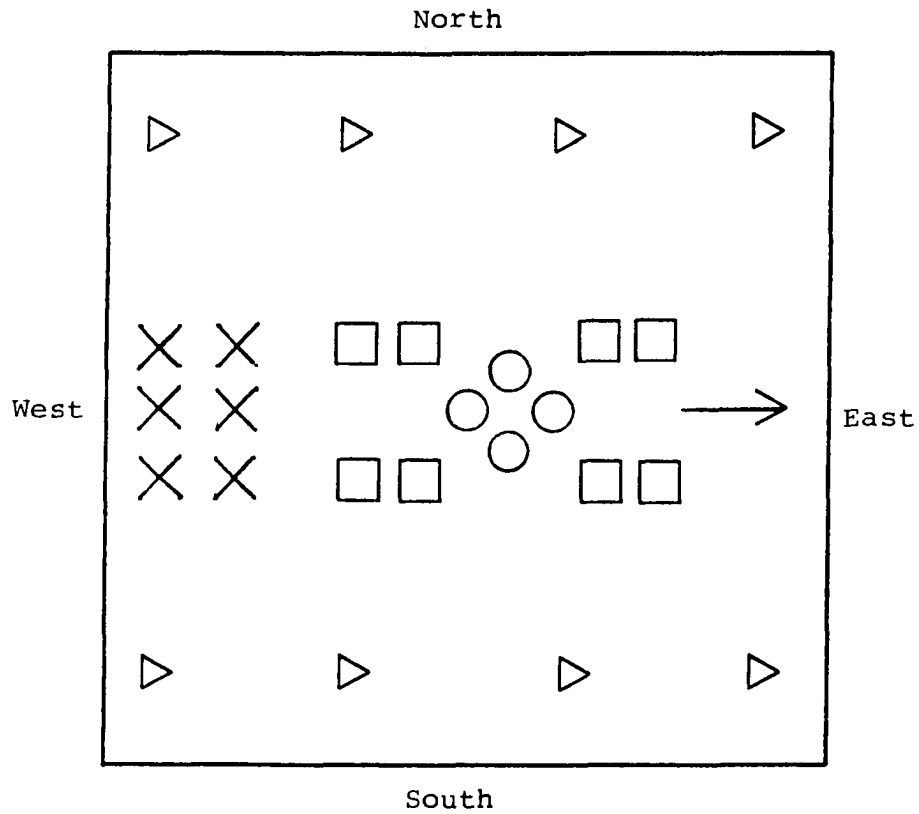
From Ayeni, 1974, p. 92.

The dance instruments include one large drum (udu), one trumpet (igbelegbele), and one pot (udu). These instruments provide the rhythm for the dance. The rhythm of the high-pitched large drum starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on the third beat. The trumpet is turned to pitches from low to high during the dance. The second beat on the drum is accented.

Prior to the dance, the sacrifice of a live chicken (okuko) is performed by the dance group to appease the river goddess (Nmuo nmili), who is believed to be responsible for the protection of the people of the Obodo Ugwa tribe. Three days before the dance, the performers get into a canoe (boat) and practice paddling and the dancing skills of swaying, twisting of the waist, and waving of the arms forward and backward.

The canoe used for this dance is segmented and the compartments are occupied by different groups of participants. The spectators occupy the middle of the canoe, with the ensemble at the back. Some dancers occupy the same space as the ensemble at the back, while the rest occupy the front section of the canoe. Flanking the canoe on each side are the paddlers (see Figure 44). The dance is performed on the river.

The dancers, positioned in two rows, perform from the canoe. During the dance the dancers brandish their paddles or fans or wave their arms. All movements are



- ▷ Paddlers
- Dancers
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummers)
- Spectators
- Direction facing (east)

Figure 44. Egwu Amalabuyo dance formation

aimed at mimicking the paddlers, the fishermen, the fish, and the movement of the canoe (B. Okoegwale, personal communication, January 4, 1988). Movements involved include:

- A. Swaying forward, backward, and sideways to the right, then to the left. This is repeated twice.
- B. Circling the arms above the head twice.
- C. Twisting the waist to the right, then to the left, two times. This symbolizes the movement of fish in the water.
- D. Nodding the head.
- E. Moving both arms backward and forward in a continuous movement. This is done four times and symbolizes the movement of the paddlers.
- F. Shaking the chest and waist forward and backward in a continuous movement.
- G. Waving both arms backward and forward.
- H. Squatting and dipping of the arms in and out of the water. This symbolizes the catching of fish.

Repeat A-H 10 times. The dance lasts for approximately 50 minutes.

#### Ihoko Dance

The Ihoko dance is a vocational ceremonial dance performed by adult male hunters of the Ekpoma Ishan tribe to demonstrate their skill in tracking down their prey.

The Ihoko dance derived its name from a great hunter, Ihoko, who introduced the dance to the Ekpoma tribe around the middle of the 18th century.

According to popular legend, Ihoko's inspiration to develop the dance came after watching a monkey's mock-hunting performance. While on a hunting expedition in the forest, Ihoko was fascinated at seeing a group of monkeys who, instead of fleeing at the sight of him, started mimicking movements he made such as concealing himself, walking on tiptoes, aiming, and shooting at the animals. After he returned home and told of his experience in the forest, the idea occurred to him that it would be a great spectacle if all the hunters in the village could gather to demonstrate their methods of operation while hunting. After he had introduced his idea, the hunters in the village soon began to perform the dance on special occasions for entertainment (Ojehomon, 1975).

The dancers are clad in hunters' outfits comprised of a cap (ubieru), a sleeveless shirt (evbu), and a short pant (isokhoru). Other pieces such as a gun (oisi), and spear (igan) are included (see Figure 45).

The instruments to accompany the dance consist of two small talking drums (okegan), two medium-size drums (igengbe), and one gong (agogo). These instruments provide the rhythm for the dance. There is an accent on the second beat of the small and medium-pitched,





Figure 45. Ihoko dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 68.

middle-size drums. There is also an accent on the second beat of the medium-pitched gong.

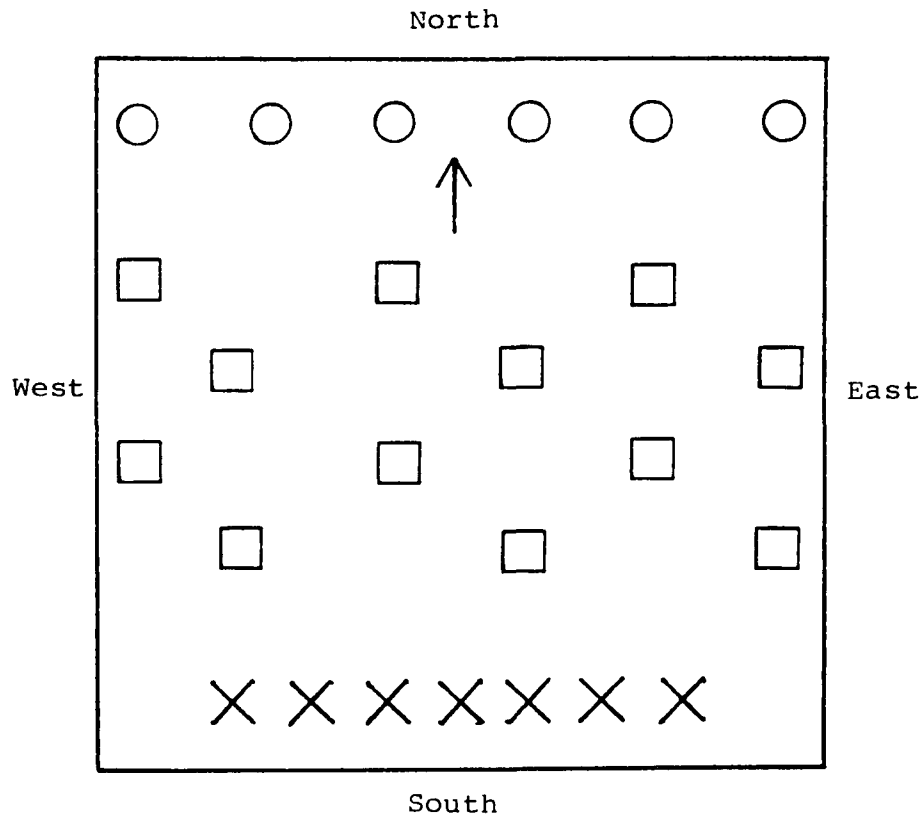
Three days before the dance performance, nobody goes into the bush in the village. No stranger or woman may see the night preparation.

The highlights of the dance preparations are the slaughtering of animals such as goats (ewe), chickens (okoko), or turkeys (oloko), and the worshipping of the ancestors as well as the demonstrations at the village square of shooting guns and throwing spears.

The Ihoko dance is performed at the village square, about 100 square meters in size. The dancers perform in scattered positions facing the spectators to the north. The distance between the dancers and the spectators is approximately 10 to 15 meters. The dancers keep a distance of two meters from each other and approximately three to five meters from the ensemble which is behind and to the south of the dancers (see Figure 46).

The dancers respond to the drum and gong beats while walking on their toes, leaping, running, bending, squatting, or lying on the ground. Dance movements include:

- A. Walking on toes while changing positions, moving forward, backward, and sideways to the right, then to the left.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Ensemble (musicians, drummers)

Figure 46. Ihoko dance formation

- B. Leaping forward, backward, sideways to the right, then to the left.
- C. Running forward.
- D. Bending forward, backward, sideways to the right, then to the left.
- E. Squatting.
- F. Lying on stomachs on the ground with both legs in a stride position.

Repeat A-F four times. The dance lasts approximately 20 minutes.

## Chapter 7

### War Ceremonial Dances

This chapter will include war ceremonial dances of the Bendel State of Nigeria. They are the Abisua (to pay tributes to war heroes and for entertainment) by the Kukuruku tribe, the Oviethe (to honour the sea god of production, Oviethe) by the Emevor tribe, the Ine dance (to thank the god of war, Chi) by the Aniocha tribe, the Ivbri dance (to honour Owholomu, the god of war) by the Olomoro tribe, and the Idju (also to honour Owurhie, the god of war) by the Agbassa tribe.

For the War ceremonial dances included in this chapter, the students will be able to:

- A. Understand and identify the historical significance of the dances.
- B. List the appropriate costumes worn by the dancers of each dance.
- C. Describe the instruments used in the dances.
- D. Know the preparations for the dances.
- E. Know and demonstrate the dance formations.
- F. Know and demonstrate the steps and movements for the dances.

War ceremonial dances in the Bendel State are performed by men either before or after going to war. Dancers employ

pantomime rituals or mock combats to show the desired actions and strategies. Such dance rituals, once complete, end in a victory celebration (Enem, 1975).

Historically, wars were fought in the Bendel State of Nigeria due to the need for expansion, fishing ponds, agriculture (farming), and hunting. Forces were maintained to ensure that there were no intrusions into the family or communal lands. When an invasion was imminent, a watch was set in place around the town, and when the enemy was sighted, the war commander sounded an alarm with the horn (igbelegbele). The horn and war drum (oji) were used to get the people together to attack and behead the enemies.

The fighting men were led by the chief warrior and the medicine men (kpulukpulu) went immediately about their job. During intertribal wars, communities seldom returned home defeated. Neither was the enemy allowed to carry the war successfully into their territory. The reason was that a defeated chief warrior or war commander had to commit suicide rather than return home in shame.

All able-bodied male adults were liable for conscription during wartime. The womenfolk also had their parts to play. They provided food, took care of the children, and cheered on the fighters. Messages and orders were communicated to the army either by word of mouth, through the trumpet (igbelegbele), through the native harp (isorogun), or through the war drums (oji and

okiriguo), as deemed advisable for each occasion. Although all war prisoners (igumu) automatically became slaves, as captives of importance they were releaseable upon payment of ransom (Omoneukanrin, 1980).

#### Abisua Dance

The Abisua is an adult male war dance that was performed during preparations for intertribal wars by the Kukuruku tribe. The dance is performed by able-bodied men who have attained the age of 21 (Ojehomon, 1975). The dance is performed to pay tribute to past heroes as well as for entertainment.

The dancers wear a hat with a plume (ubieru), a white loincloth with black stripes (ubuluku), coral beads (ivie) for the waist, and rattles (urus) tied around their ankles. A dagger (opia) and bows and arrows (ababa) are carried by each dancer (see Figure 47).

The dance has no instruments apart from the flute (uke) which is used to give signals of the war situations ahead. However, the dancers do tie rattles on their ankles, which give effective rhythm sounds to their dance movements. The flute is tuned from low to high pitches during the dance.

Before a man is eligible for the dance group, he undergoes many ordeals, including the attainment of 21 years of age in the village (uruami, ni-ke-ke). Also included is the arduous training for the Abisua (uruami mokhua), which takes three months' practice at the open village square.



Figure 47. Abisua dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 49.



During the training the man learns how to use such weapons as clubs, daggers, and bows and arrows.

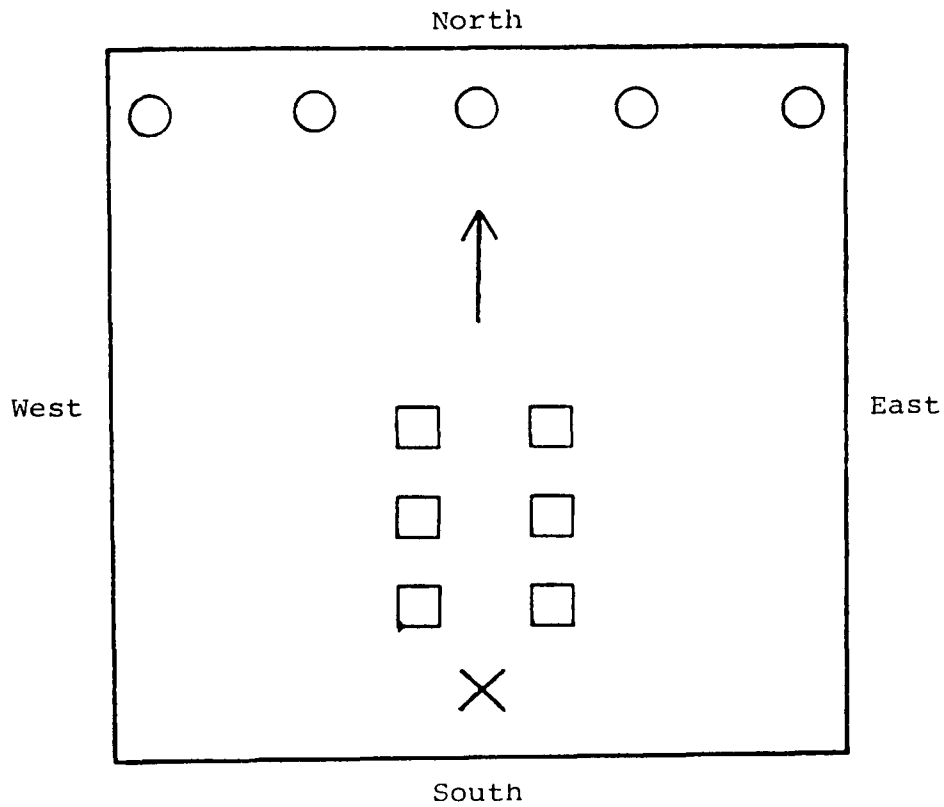
The trainee is expected to exemplify good behaviour and abstain from sexual intercourse throughout the training period. The leader carries a dagger and has the supreme power to discipline any erring member or recruit. After the training, the recruit is then initiated into manhood and is entitled to civic privileges and honours such as taking part in the Abisua ceremonial war dance.

The Abisua war dance is performed at the village square. The dancers perform facing the spectators to the north. The ensemble stands behind the dancers to the south of them. The distance between the spectators and the dancers is at least eight meters. The dancers keep at arm's length from each other and stay two meters away from the ensemble (see Figure 48). The dance arena is approximately 50 square meters.

The participants are generally arranged in two rows facing each other in this combat dance, and they perform with daggers in each hand. They depict the movements of attack and defense. The dancers cut and slash in all directions. Movements involved are:

A. Attack: Step forward on the right foot, follow with the left foot, four times.

Defense: Step backward on the left foot, follow with the right foot, four times.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Flute player

Figure 48. Abisua dance formation

B. Attack: Step sideways on the right foot, follow with the left foot, four times.

Defense: Step sideways on the left foot, follow with the right foot, four times.

C. Attack: Step sideways on the left foot, follow with the right foot, four times.

Defense: Step sideways on the right foot, follow with the left foot, four times.

Repeat A-C four times, alternating the roles of attack and defense. The dance lasts for about 20 minutes.

#### Oviethe Dance

The Oviethe dance is a pre- and postwar dance for adult males. During the time of intertribal wars between various communities in Isoko, Emehwa, founder of the Emevor tribe, was in search of spiritual help to defend the territorial integrity of the Emevor people, who were constantly raided by their foes. His prayers were answered by Oviethe, a herbalist-person who grows or sells herbs. The Oviethe war dance was introduced in gratitude to Oviethe for helping the Emevor people win their intertribal wars.

Since that time, the dance has been celebrated every year in the month of April. It is celebrated for three main reasons: (1) to pay annual homage to Oviethe, the sea god of protection; (2) to mark the end of the year in the Emevor tribe and the beginning of the new year; and (3) to receive annual blessings from Oviethe through his high priest, the Orhere of Emevor (Ayeni, 1974).

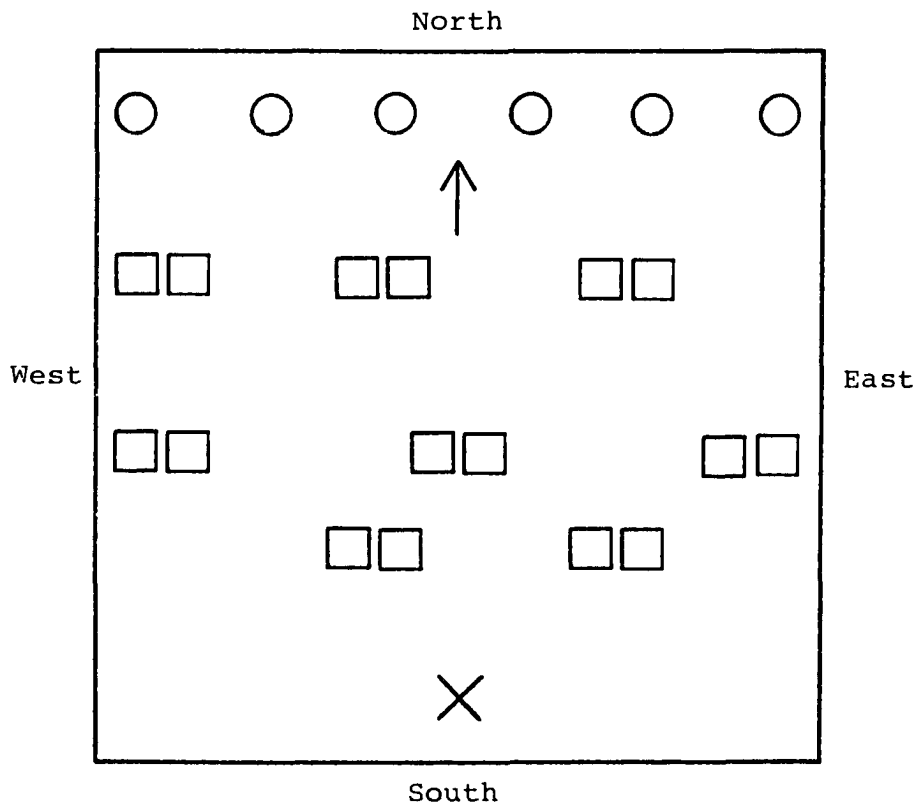
The dancers are dressed in black shirts (uvo) and shorts (evbu). They wear charms (ikhumu) on their arms and necks and camouflage their faces and bodies with black paint (eso). The dancers perform with spears (opia).

A large drum (igede) is the only instrument used in this dance. The drum provides the only rhythm for the dance. The rhythm of the high-pitched drum starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on the third beat.

Two days before the dance, male elders of the town dance through the main streets. This part represents the watch night of the dance (iluviri). On the morning of the day of the dance, families of the late war heroes pay homage to them, thanking them for the events of the past year and asking for their protection in the new year. This is followed by great merrymaking with food and drink.

The Ovieth dance is performed at the village square with spectators seated to the north. The ensemble (drummer) stands behind the dancers to the south. The distance between the spectators and the dancers is approximately seven to eight meters. The dancers keep arm's distance apart and are approximately two to four meters away from the drummer (see Figure 49). The size of the dance arena is about 50 square meters.

The dancers perform in pairs and are in scattered positions. They depict the movements of attack and defense with the spear. Movements involved are:



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Drummer

Figure 49. Oviethe dance formation

- A. Attack: Step forward on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times.  
 Defense: Step backward on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times.
- B. Attack: Step sideways on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times.  
 Defense: Step sideways on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times.
- C. Attack: Step sideways on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times.  
 Defense: Step sideways on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times.

Repeat A-C four times, alternating the roles of attack and defense. The dance lasts for about 20 minutes.

#### Ine Dance

If there is any relic which still vividly portrays the unrecorded history of the olden day, native tribal wars, it is the Ine war dance, which is widely celebrated by all the Aniocha tribe. The tribe is made up of Isselu-Uku, Onisha-Ugba, Issele-Azagba and Ezi, of the Ezechima clan.

Today, the colour of this reminiscence has more or less changed from that of the olden day tribal wars to activities which now signify thanksgiving to the gods for protecting the people from evil throughout the out-going year. The dance is celebrated annually by adult males in the month of

August and often lasts for about four days, excluding the period of preparation (Ayeni, 1974).

The dancers tie on a loincloth (akwa). Each carries a charm (ogwu) around the neck and an armor (ite) tied around the waist, which hangs in front of the loincloth. The dancers wear hats with a plume (okpu). Each carries a spear (opia). Faces of some of the dancers are painted white with white chalk (nzu) while faces of others are painted black (see Figure 50).

A large drum (udu) is the only instrument used in this dance. The drum provides the only rhythm for the dance. The rhythm of the high-pitched drum starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on the third beat.

Before the dance, certain symbolic practices and sacrifices are made, including worshipping before the ancestral shrines and the slaughtering of goats (ewu) and fowls (okuko). Adult males are seen in the streets dressed in war trappings, engaging in mock warfare. They wave their sticks and cutlasses defiantly while holding their shields over their heads for protection. The traditional war hero (Onotu) leads this procession in a rally around the town.

The Ine dancers perform at the village square to the south of the spectators. The ensemble (drummer) stands behind the dancers to the south. The distance between the spectators and the dancers is seven to eight meters. The dancers keep arm's distance apart and are between two to



Figure 50. Ine dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 22.



four meters away from the drummer (see Figure 51). The dance arena is approximately 50 square meters.

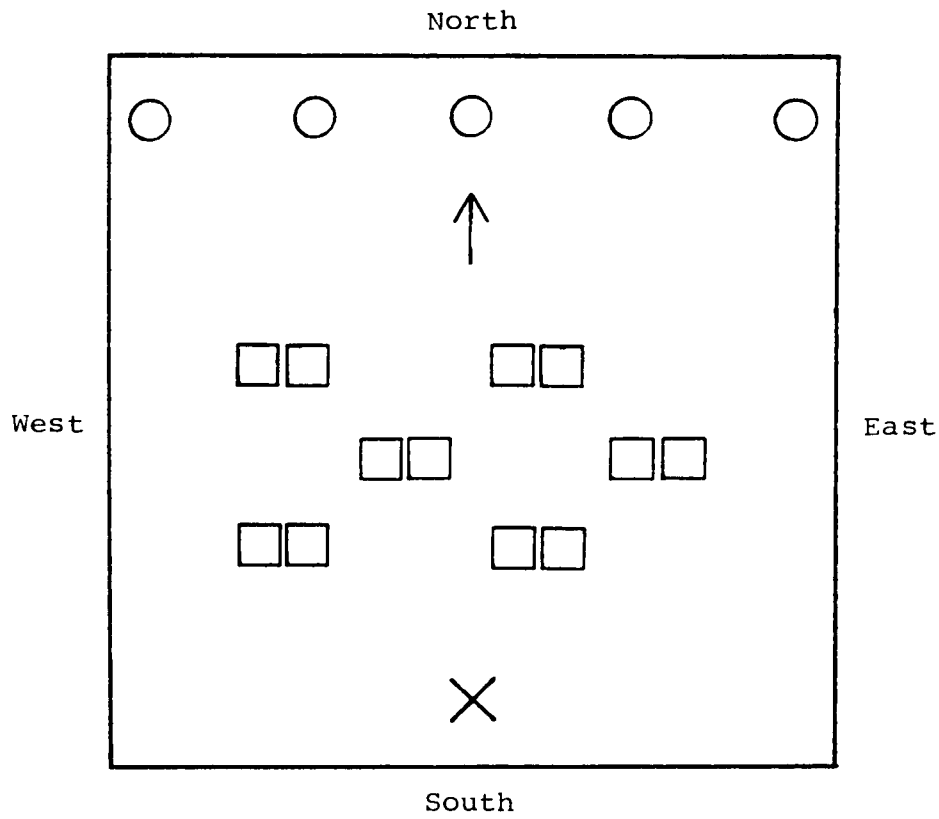
The dancers perform in pairs in a scattered formation. With a spear in each dancer's hand, they depict the movements of attack and defense. Movements involved are:

- A. Attack: Step forward on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times  
Defense: Step backward on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times
- B. Attack: Step sideways on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times  
Defense: Step sideways on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times
- C. Attack: Step sideways on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times  
Defense: Step sideways on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times

Repeat A-C four times, alternating the roles of attack and defense. The dance lasts for about 20 minutes.

#### Ivbri Dance

The Ivbri dance from the Olomoro tribe is a prewar dance to honour Owholomu, the god of war. Adult male performers enact the heroic resistance of warriors using war implements and elaborating the traditional war emotions of hunting down and fighting the enemy. The warriors content themselves with a victory celebration (Ojehomon, 1975).



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Drummer

Figure 51. Ine dance formation

The dancers wear black shirts (evbu) and short pants (isokoro). They wear charms (ikhumu) on their arms and necks and camouflage their faces with black paint (efu). The dancers perform with cutlasses.

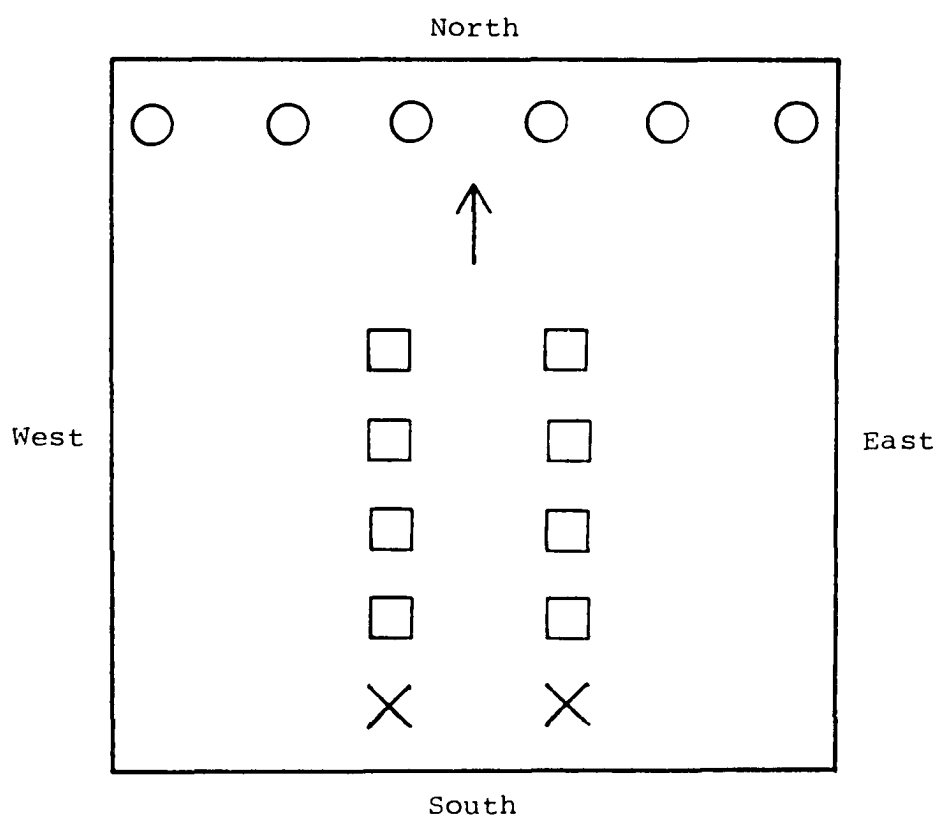
The instruments used in this dance are one large drum (igede) and one small drum (erigede). The rhythm of the high-pitched large drum starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on the third beat. The medium-pitched small drum accents the second beat. The large and small drums provide the rhythm for the dance.

Prior to the dance performance, the dancers at the village square pay homage to the ancestral god of war, Owolomu. They also practice the attack and defense skills of stepping forward and backward.

The Ivbri dance is performed at the village square. The spectators are to the north of the dancers, the dancers are in the middle, and the drummers are to the south. The distance between the spectators and the dancers is seven to eight meters. The dancers keep at arm's distance from each other and are approximately two to four meters away from the ensemble (see Figure 52).

The dancers are arranged in two rows facing each other. The dancers depict the movements of attack and defense by using cutlasses. Movements involved are:

- A. Attack: Step forward on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Drummers

Figure 52. Ivbri dance formation

Defense: Step backward on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times.

B. Attack: Step sideways on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times.

Defense: Step sideways on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times.

C. Attack: Step sideways on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times.

Defense: Step sideways on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times

Repeat A-C four times, alternating the roles of attack and defense. The dance lasts for about 20 minutes.

#### Idju Dance

The Idju war ceremonial dance is performed every three years during the months of April and May by adult males from the Agbassa tribe. The dance is performed in honour of Owurhie, the god of war.

In the olden days when intertribal wars were rampant, the Agbassa tribe generally gained victory over its aggressors on the battlefield. Such victories were attributed to Owurhie. Each time the warriors returned from the battlefield, this dance was celebrated in gratitude to the deity (Enem, 1975).

The upper part of the dancer's body is left bare, exhibiting a tattoo. The dancers wear skirts (ubuluku) and hats (uberu), and each carries a cutlass (Opia).

They wear a piece of cloth which extends around the neck and then across the chest to the waist (see Figure 53).

The only dance instrument used is a drum (ogru). The dancers perform to the rhythm of the drum. The rhythm of the high-pitched large drum starts with a skip on the first beat and a rest on the third beat.

Before the dance, the seven villages which make up the Agbassa clan come together for an important feast involving cooking, eating, and drinking. The field marshal (Igbu) rehearses the brandishing of machetes which is done to the admiration of the Agbassa people.

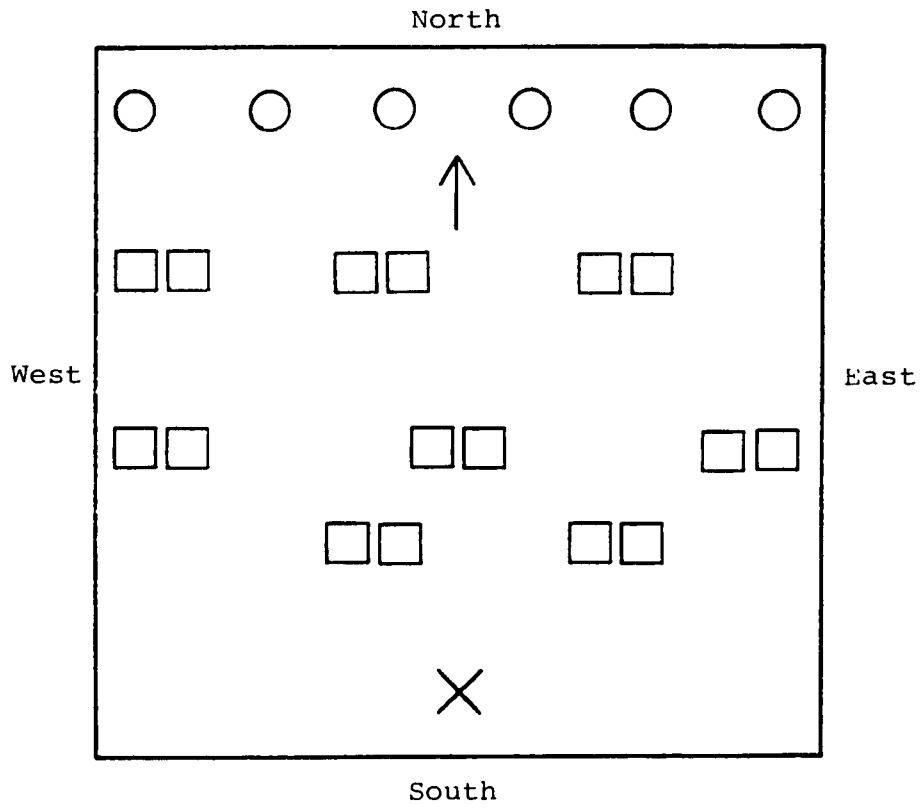
The Idju war dance is performed at the village square. The spectators occupy the north of the arena, the dancers perform in the middle, and the ensemble is to the south. The distance between the spectators and the dancers is about seven to eight meters. The dancers are spaced at arm's length and are approximately two to four meters from the ensemble (see Figure 54). The size of the arena is about 50 square meters.

The participants are generally arranged in two rows facing each other. Weapons are used in this combat dance. The dancers perform with cutlasses (Opia). They depict the movements of attack and defense. The dancers cut and slash in all directions with their cutlasses. Movements involved are:



Figure 53. Idju dance costume

From Ayeni, 1974, p. 99.



- Spectators
- ↑ Direction facing (north)
- Dancers
- × Drummer

Figure 54. Idju dance formation



A. Attack: Step forward on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times.

Defense: Step backward on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times.

B. Attack: Step sideways on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times.

Defense: Step sideways on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times.

C. Attack: Step sideways on the left foot, followed by the right foot, four times.

Defense: Step sideways on the right foot, followed by the left foot, four times.

Repeat A-C four times, alternating the roles of attack and defense. The dance lasts for about 30 minutes.

### Conclusion

The dance culture of the people of the Bendel State of Nigeria is deeply rooted in the past. The customs of their ancestors are still evident in the dance history, costumes, and dance steps performed today to mark a victory, honour the dead, welcome royalty, invoke a gods' blessing, welcome a new baby, or thank a deity for a fruitful harvest.

It is important to note that the purpose of each category of the seven selected traditional dances of the Bendel State discussed in this guide is similar to one celebrated in another part of the country. However, there are slight differences in costumes, instruments, dance steps, and rhythms. These seven dances selected for this guide are unique to the Bendel State of Nigeria.

Hopefully, this guide will serve as a resource for any person attempting to study and understand the history of the traditional dances of the Bendel State. The guide can also be used by future educators at the teacher training colleges of Nigeria. It is the hope of the writer that all who read the guide will be more aware of the importance and tradition of the various ceremonial dances and their relevance in the lives of the current inhabitants of the Bendel State of Nigeria.

## Glossary of Terms

Accent. Emphasis, stress. For example, give more force in one movement than in another.

Ancestors. Those persons from whom one is descended, especially more remote than a grandparent.

Ancestral gods. The gods worshipped by those persons from whom one is descended, especially one more remote than a grandparent.

Ancestral masquerades. These represent ancestral spirits visiting their descendents to give guidance and judgement and to receive prayers for help/protection.

Ancestral shrine. A common place in a village or town where people gather to worship their ancestors.

Appeasement to gods. Dance performed to honour the various gods for protection. These might be Olokun, god of the sea; Owholomu, god of war, in the Iubri war dance; and Owurhie, god of war, in the Oviethé war dance.

Beat. Regular repeated strike on drum or gong.

Charm. Magic power.

Chase. To run after in order to capture or kill such as as in hunting.

A chief. Leader or ruler of a tribe.

Chief priest. A person trained to serve a deity.

Chief warrior. The head fighter or leader during an intertribal war.

Clan. Large family group with a common ancestor.

Club. Heavy stick with one thick end; used as a weapon.

Combat. Fight or struggle between villages or towns.

Community. Group of persons having the same religion, same race, or common interests.

Coral beads. Hard, red, pink, or white substances built on the sea bed by small creatures. Each has a hole put through it for the purpose of threading it with others on a string. Dancers use these strings of beads for their necks and wrists.

Costumes. Styles of dress worn by the dancers.

Cult. A system of religious worship or ritual for a person (especially a single deity).

Dagger. Short, pointed, two-edged knife used as a weapon during a fight or mock battle.

Dance formation. Structure or arrangement of the dancers on the dance floor.

Deity. Godhood; state of being a god or goddess, such as Olokun, the sea god; divine quality or nature.

Depict. Show in the form of action.

Divination. Discovery of the unknown or the future by supernatural means; also a clever guess or forecast, such as by a herbalist in the Egwu Dibia dance.

- Drum. Percussion instrument made of a hollow cylinder or hemisphere with parchment stretched over the open sides. The drum is the foundation of most African music ensembles (Akpabot, 1986).
- Enact. To perform, such as simulating the movement of animals, or display of hunting skills.
- Ensemble. Group of musicians who play together regularly.
- Entertainment dance. Performed to welcome heroes and/or very important dignitaries; also performed during joyous occasions such as promotion on the job or birth of a child.
- Enthronement of a first-class chief. A promotion, whereby a chief becomes the head of other chiefs.
- Fattening rites. A waiting period before a girl (maiden) moves in with her husband.
- Fetish. An object believed to have magical power; also something that the people pay excessive respect or attention to because they believe a spirit lives in it.
- Fly whisk. A brush made of hair for flapping flies away used by chiefs in the Ema elders' dance. The fly whisk symbolizes control which the chiefs exercise over their subjects.
- Fraternity. Society joined together by common interests and faith.

Gong. Metal disc with a tuned rim giving a resonant note when struck with a stick. It is commonly used to add rhythm to a dance and for signals.

Guardian spirits. Spirits of ancestors who, after their death, are believed to be around to give guidance, judgement, help, and protection to their immediate families.

Hair scarf. A long strip of material (silk, wool, or cotton) worn over the hair by women.

Herbalist. A person who grows or sells herbs for medicinal use.

High priest. The chief or head person trained to perform special acts of religion to serve the deity. He is believed to be the protector of people during war.

Homage. Expression of respect; tribute paid to a ruler; formal and public acknowledgement of loyalty to a lord or ruler.

Horn. A hard, pointed, outgrowth on the head of cattle, deer, sheep, and other hoofed animals; also a device for making warning sounds during war.

Horse tail. An elongated appendage at the hind part of a horse. It is used by the Agbega maiden dancers and symbolizes the purity of body.

Ideals of chastity. Abstinence from sexual intercourse until after marriage.

Indigenous culture. Beliefs that are native, natural, and characteristic of a community or race.

Initiation rites. Ceremony performed to prescribe rules and customs of a society, e.g., age group ceremony.

Installation ceremony. A dance to mark a new position of authority, such as a chief, leader, or ruler of a tribe.

Instruments. Implements, apparatus, used in performing an action such as in a dance.

Intertribal war. War between people of a racial group, united by language and custom, living as a community under one or more chiefs.

Iyeri festival. An occasion when the titled chiefs in the Urhobo tribe renew their loyalty to the Ovie, who is the head of the tribe.

Medicine man. Witch doctor or person with supernatural powers of curing disease or controlling spirits.

Mock combat. To mimic a fight.

Mock hunting. To mimic the act of hunting.

Modulate. Make a change in life style from a maiden to a housewife.

Otsa festival. An occasion when mature girls dance to attract suitors.

Palliative. To alleviate the boredom and loneliness of the Agbega maidens.

Palm fronds. Leaf-like part of a fern or palm tree, tied to the ankle of the Okere masqueraders.

Pantomime rituals. Traditional war dance performed without weapons.

Pitch. Degree of highness or lowness; high, low, medium quality of sound.

Plume. A large feather used as a decoration on a hat.

Rafia. Fibre from the leaf stalks of a kind of palm tree, used for making the pleated hat worn by the Okere masqueraders.

Regalia. Emblems (crown, sceptre) of royalty, as used for coronations; for example, the regalia of the Oba of Benin shown in Figure 9.

Religious festivals. Various systems of faith and worship based on beliefs in such gods as Olokun, god of the sea, and Ogun, god of Iron.

Rest. Interval of silence.

Rhythm. Regular succession of weak and strong stresses, accents, sounds, or movements in dancing.

Rite. Act, ceremony, or procedure in accordance with prescribed rule or custom, such as burial or initiation.

Ritual. Rites connected with a ceremony, such as the sacrifice of a chicken to appease the gods and spirits of ancestors.



Ritual ceremony. Rites connected with such occasions as a dance performed to honour gods believed to be the protectors of the people; e.g., the Egwu Dibia dance performed to appease the gods and the spirits of ancestors and the Ishe dance performed to honour the goddess of the river Umomi.

Ritual dance. Dance performed to appease the gods and the spirits of ancestors.

Ritual group. Those connected with the performance of ceremonies to appease the gods and spirits of ancestors.

Ritual mask. It is used in honour of the guardian spirits of communities.

Royalty. Position, rank, dignity, or power of a royal person.

Scarf. Long or broad strip of cloth (silk, wool, cotton) worn about the head, neck, or shoulders for warmth or decoration; e.g., worn by the Maiden dancers to support their breasts.

Sea god. A person or thing regarded or worshipped as having power and protection over the sea.

Skip. Jump lightly and quickly from one part of the dance to another.

Societies. Groups of persons forming communities because of race, work, customs, common interests; systems whereby people live together in organized communities; social way of living.

Spear. Weapon with a metal point on a long shaft; used by men fighting on foot.

Status. Social position in relation to others; symbol of ownership which is thought to be evidence of social rank; e.g., a chief, an elder in a community.

Taboo. Something which religion or custom regards as forbidden; e.g., a maiden having sex before marriage.

Tattoo. To mark the skin with a picture by puncturing and inserting indelible colours to leave permanent marks or designs as camouflage against enemies in a fight.

Through the ages. Dances performed for a very long time, from generation to generation.

Tone. Sound, especially with reference to quality, pitch, and duration.

Tradition. Handing down from generation to generation, opinions, beliefs, and customs.

Traditional audience. A group of people who share common opinions, beliefs, and customs.

Traditional dance. One handed down from generation to generation.

Traditional ruler. The head of a group of people who share common opinions, beliefs, and customs.

Tribe. Racial group united by language and customs and living as a community under one or more chiefs, such as the Bini, Ibo, Urhobo tribes.

Trumpet. Musical wind instrument used for warning and alerting people to prepare for war; also a sound like that of a trumpet made by an elephant.

Twirling the sword. Spinning the sword rapidly in a circle.

Village. A place smaller than a town.

War commander. Person in command of weapons, strategy, and tactics in any kind of struggle or fight between villages, tribes, or communities.

Watch night. War preparations made the night before the actual war dance.

Yam. The edible tuber of a tropical climbing plant, similar to the American sweet potato.

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