

## TRADITIONAL IGBO DANCES AS NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION: A STUDY OF IDUU DANCE

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### **Abstract:**

*The popularity of dance as an art form in Africa is outstanding. But little knowledge on dance communication is affecting its popularity, and this limits the body of knowledge available in the area of choreographic practice of non-verbal communication in traditional Igbo dances. The inability to explore, preserve and sustain the use of body language, symbols, signs and paralanguage, as creative metaphor in African traditional dances is a big problem. The poor level of documentation of most Igbo dance semiotics has de-emphasized its essence as mere festive performances which in real scholarship are far beyond that. Also, the dearth of literature on the Iduu dance is worrisome and it calls for more findings and documentation. Similarly, most traditional Igbo dances have received limited scholarly attention though, some researches had earlier been done in the area of traditional Igbo dance performances. This study therefore, looks at non-verbal cues in Igbo traditional dance as means of interpretative communication for cultural propagation and preservation as well as an interpretative connecting cord between thoughts, ideas and impressions of a given people. The research study adopted the Semiotic Theory. The positive interpretative potency of the use of semiotic theory in our traditional dances assumes that individuals are not entirely bound by culture, rather they can act systematically and consciously to free themselves to some extent from cultural, historical and institutional constraints while doing performance analysis on any dance. It also gives a detailed overview on the historical origins and analytical views of the Iduu dance performance thereby, bringing the meaning of the dance and its*

*central metaphor before the audience, who can now appreciate every movement in the dance performance towards understanding the communicative potency of the semiotic non-verbal communication cues used in the dance based on its socio-cultural effectiveness. It is on the foregoing, that the researcher recommends that dance as an art should be practiced, studied and equally appreciated in our various societies. Societal changes, religious practices, ignorance of the art and personal understanding should not be an impediment to dance appreciation.*

### **Introduction.**

Africans have been entertaining themselves with dance performances before the coming of the white man. These dances include ritual performances at their places of worship which are today the re-enactments of the initial efforts to relate with God through their ancestors. Dance is Life expressed in dramatic terms. In a number of societies, dance has been a core aspect of culture that once lost, affects the identity of a people. They become easily subsumed in a culture whose dance dominates their expression. Dance, music and folktales were used during ancient times, to impart morals and values to the people of African communities. They expressed feelings of joy, sorrow, sadness, happiness, hunger, depression, etc., that the practice has continued and has now been handed over to present and upcoming generations with a view of sustaining the culture. Cultural activities like dance were seen as a tool of binding members of a community together by inculcating in the minds of the community members, the need to love one another by appreciating people of less provision and giving a helping hand in any little way to make life better for those they are better than.

Though a lot have been written on non-verbal communication acts by different scholars, based on different areas, trying to interpret and understand the usefulness of non-verbal cues wherever they existed in the academic fields. Dance is an ageless art from the history of man. It was used in various activities in the

primordial era such as; in rituals, hunting, communication, mock-fight, war, festival and initiation. According to Sarrel William,

the dance of primordial societies gave them source of cultural identification both in their profession, myth and life style. At this point, communities' trade both in costume, dance, food and religion can be differentiated from one another (7).

In every work of art, especially dance, what makes it more effective is its ability to follow a particular rhythm. So the rhythmic nature of African dance or any other culture is ever-green in the minds of its people. This is due to the fact that the people have always kept to the norms and tenets of the dance ritual which was past unto them by their fathers. The communicative potency of dance in Igbo culture makes it an indispensable tool in every community where it exists because of its socio-communicative aesthetic appeal as well as its religious and sacred significance. Dance uses non-verbal forms to communicate with its audience. The non-verbal forms always come in the form of gestures, movements and otherwise. In non-verbal communication, rhythm and movements are important. The communicative symbolic movements in Igbo dances tell us the situation of events at a particular time, what gave rise to the situation(s) and proffer the possible way(s) in resolving the situation(s). Dance in traditional Igbo cosmology is not static; it changes, because its thematic potency always centres on communal mythological belief system. With the dancer's movements, the difference between ritual dance and social dance can be highlighted. In ritual dance, symbols, metaphors, music and sometimes silence may be used to highlight the essence of worship and reverence for gods. Social dances, on the other hand, are less serious in content and form. Although they also have specific occasions in which they are performed, some of these social dances are purely celebrative in nature. Dancers are free

to add or subtract from the known movements to the unknown movements, but the movements have to be creatively and aesthetically beholding. This way, the dancers are part of the religious worship to evoke and worship the gods and goddesses who are the guiding fathers or mothers of certain cults within a given society. Ritual dances are serious, for they have specific movements, rhythms and patterns. Also the occasions for performances are fixed by the chief priest of the gods or goddesses after due consultations and the reasons for the ritual dance must have been made known to the community.

In Africa, each dance has a context, a story within the performance. The context is the meaning of a particular dance. Whether it is a ritual dance or a ceremonial dance, the context of the dance is most important because it guides the dancer on the tempos, the mood and even the images and metaphors. The dance must reflect the process of performance. According to Malmberg Niklas:

The meaning of dance should be interpreted in its context and that context denotes not only historical, social or cultural context which are extrinsic, but also an intrinsic context that exists as intention on the part of a dancer. (27)

Conclusively, the study tends to make one understand that the body of a dancer is an instrument of expression based on the mood required for the dance performance. Dancers are taught to use their bodies to tell the story in African dances whether social or ritual and to be part of a bigger picture. The chief priest is the star dancer while the other dancers dance in unison to form part of the total evocation, as the body becomes the silent communicative instrument which is used to form the wider rhythm or picture of the images which the dance exposes.

## **Communication**

The need to get information, express ideas, and thoughts has been in existence and is very vital in the life and development of societies. Communication therefore plays an important role in the lives of people, since it enhances development. Dance and Music are aspects of communication. They are art forms that expose and promote the social, political and cultural lives of a people. Communication has always been important to African communities because it enhances progress and group cohesion. Communication as a term denotes both interaction and purposefulness. It is the transfer of information, feelings or messages from a sender to a receiver. Okogbe, Tola Patrick agreeing with Ade Oyedipo posits that, “communication is the exchange of meaning between individuals through a common system of symbols”(110). This definition may some how be deficient and incomplete but that offered by Richard and exemplified by Okogbe, seems to be one of the best accepted definitions of communication which posit that, “... communication is a discrete aspect of human enterprise that takes place when ones mind so acts upon its environment that another mind is influenced and in that other mind, an experience occurs which is like the experience in the first mind(110)”.

This sharing of transmission can occur directly or indirectly, verbally and non-verbally depending on the persons involved. Communication therefore, provides the necessary medium between members of a society since they receive close and continuous interaction with one another to get things done. Effective communication occurs when the sender and the receiver are involved. When information is merely transmitted from the sender to the receiver, it is seen as a linear one-way flow of information and it does not constitute communication in the real sense of the word. Communication we know should be a two-way process in which the receiver of the message responds or reacts to the message. This is to make the communication process more effective and to appreciate the effectiveness of communication.

## **Non-verbal Communication and Dance**

Non-verbal communication according to Areson, Wilson and Akert is seen as “the way in which people communicate, intentionally or unintentionally, without words. Non-verbal cues include facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, body position and movement, the use of touch, and gaze”. Dance being a form of non-verbal communication, requires the same underlying faculty in the brain for conceptualization, creativity and memory as does verbal language in speaking and writing. In the means of self-expression, both forms have vocabulary (steps and gestures) in dance, grammar (rules for putting the vocabulary together) and meaning. Dance however, assembles (choreographs) these elements in a manner that more often resembles poetry, with its ambiguity and multiple, symbolic and elusive meanings. Messages sent and received non-verbally through social dance remains unexplored while dancing. The majority of research done regarding dance has been studied in the contexts of dance classes, self-esteem of children, cultural and sexuality. Previously, little or no research has been done in the context of dance in a social setting. This involves examining the non-verbal communication cues of dance among individuals in a social setting, using the Semiotic Theory which offers a helpful way of thinking about, studying, analyzing, and theorizing human behavior, both at the individual and collective with the purpose of gaining an understanding of message-related behaviors, to explain how dance is a communicative phenomenon, and how dance is used to send and receive messages through non-verbal behavior. Dance has been a part of African culture for many years. Culturally, dance is important because we use it as a way to socialize, flirt, and to attract others. According to Brabazon, “dancing instigates affective transformations, changing mental structures and spatial meanings”(24). In other words, Oseroff-Varnell, further posits that, “dancing may change moods, serve as a force of attraction, and influence perception, all through physical

movements and nonverbal communication”(47). Yet the study of dance as a communicative phenomenon remains unexplored.

### **The Historical Background of Akpo**

Chief Fabian Dim (a cabinet chief) in an interview on 8th August 2013, stated that; “in the beginning of beginnings, a man who is still believed to come from Nri, settled in the South East district of Aguata, at ‘AKALABO’, in the heart of a town now called Amesi by circumstances of birth and history’. Chief Fabian also said that the man whose name was Umenne Dike had three sons namely; Amesi, who was the first son, Akpo, the second son and Ebele, the third son. The last child’s name according to their history, symbolically signifies (the states of consultations) that were received by his father owing to his long expected birth. By accident of birth and tradition, Amesi occupied the Obi as obtained elsewhere in Igboland, being the first son. Umennebe Dike thereafter blessed Amesi with the knowledge of herbs and their natural importance.

Akpo being the second son, who so much took after his father in strength and knowledge, became the police of his father’s empire. He supported his father in work and farming. Ichie Christopher in an interview on 17th May 2013, maintained that; “... in his fathers absence, it was said that he spear-headed the inter-tribal war with Ohafia and the Aro people”. He further said that due to his strength, his father called him, “strong Akpo, the lion of his father”. Umennebe Dike later allotted Akpo the northern part of his kingdom believed to be more volatile than all other parts, considering the hostilities emanating from that part of his domain. According to Iche Christopher (an elder / palm wine tapper) during an interview said that;

... the third child Ebele was allotted the southern part of the town now Achina. However, Akpo married two wives whose names were Eziamaka and IHITEAMA. Eziamaka had the first son Oguerina and

Ihiteama had the second son, Onyeanusu. Oguerinam married and had three sons, namely Okpala-Okworo, Okpalaradoshi and Ezedike who were respectively the Ezi group of Agbelu, Uhualla and Umueze villages.

Onyeanusu on his part had three sons, Dimegoro, Ezemegwara and Ezeonyeashi. They were the fathers of the Ihite Group of villages made up of Ogbo, Amaife and Udo respectively. The sons and daughters of these six villages made up the linages which together made up the present Akpo town. Presently Akpo is located in the heart of Anambra State, in the South East of Nigeria. Mr. Mike Obi (secretary to President General of Akpo) in an interview reveals that; “Akpo is bounded by Achina, Nkpologwo, Ogboji, Aguluezechukwu and Amesi at all the possible angles of the town’. He went further to state that, Akpo is comprised of six villages as detailed above and has an estimated population of about 45,000 people”. Akpo as a community has rich cultures and still preserve a lot of them despite the advent of western civilization and religion. However, a lot of effort has been expended in trying to preserve this culture considering the mode at which the western civilization eroded a lot of Igbo culture and principles. Amongst the remaining practices are:

### **The Ozo title**

The Ozo title is the most expensive and sacred culture of the Akpo people. From time immemorial, according to Ichie Paul Obinwa (a retired Catechist) in an interview, “before a man decides on taking this title, he should have considered his wealth, which was then measured in terms of cattle, fowls, barns, cash crops and farm lands”. Before a man takes the Ozo title proper, he is initiated into the folk by the preliminary ‘Igbo-Ichi’ which is the tattooing of the face of the man after which the man is kept indoors until the wounds heal, and which may however go for months. Ichie Paul Obinwa also explains that; “after the tattooing, follows the ‘Isupu



Oko' and then the other rites which come before the final outing ceremony, the 'Igba nkwa'. It is usually obtained that the man who performs these rites performs the same for his wife; that is, if the man is married. When the rites of the woman are completed, she takes the 'lolo' title.

### **Traditional Religion**

Before the advent of the Christian religion, the Akpo people worshipped some gods and goddesses as obtained in other Igboland. 'Nkwo and Ala' were generally worshipped by the entire Akpo people while 'Ogovo' was worshipped by Agbelu, 'Ezenyebu' by Uhualla and 'Udo-akwa' was worshipped by Ogbo. Umueze village worshipped 'Okwara', Amaife worshiped 'Udo-Nkpukpo', while Udo village worshipped 'Ogwugwu-Udo'. The celebrations of these festivals usually start from the seventh month of the Igbo calendar, that is; about September, being the period of rest after heavy planting and harvesting season. The festivals usually come one after the other, first starting with Nkwo followed by Ala, and others. Ichie Obinwa further postulates that, another important god that was worshipped was the Ezeokoro which is normally celebrated on the 9 month, before Ogwugwu which is celebrated on the eve of Ezeokoro. During these celebrations, outstanding masquerades and dances were performed. Such masquerades includes; Otiwaudumiri, Oganachi, Igbo huru Kwe, Aliaku na Olueji, Anyaghara igwe, Ohia agbara, Ajaewunata-Ede and others, while dances include Obodo-Idu, Ukondunugbo and other female dances.

In the early times, the people were mainly farmers who had to show wealth by the size of their barns. People who had large numbers of economic trees like 'Nkwu na Ukwa' were also considered wealthy. Women on their part showed their wealth by growing cocoyam and cassava.

According to Mrs. Florence Mma in an interview, " ... at times people who did not have farm land nor yam seedlings went to distance places to farm for others and generate money for their

livelihood through such exercise”. In about 1900, a lot of Akpo men started venturing into places like Onitsha (Ose) to work as casual hands, and as such became a great influence in the movement of Akpo people abroad. Amongst the early adventurers were the likes of late J.C.I Okpala, whose success encouraged the youths into learning trades. Florence Mma also revealed that;

a lot of others came out successful through his influence, people like Francis Ezeuduji who was trading on furniture, late Chief C.D. Jones Okpala Ejiaku, who was an internationally renowned teacher, banker, contractor and an astute businessman. Amongst his likes was also late Chief Felix M. Obidima who was an aggressive businessman and contractor.

Akpo did not stop in business, according to Prince Oji in an interview, he affirmed that in 1945 Akpo sent one of her sons on scholarship to overseas, in the person of late Prof. S.O. Orajaka, who later became the first indigenous Dean of the Faculty of Geological Sciences at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and thereafter Akpo produced a lot of sons in different academic disciplines.

Lending his voice to the discuss, Prince Oji in an interview, said that in business, Akpo had by history dealt on grains and palm produce, but today the sons and daughters of Akpo are everywhere controlling major items of trade. At Coker village in Lagos, Akpo Sons are in control of building materials trade, initiated by people like Mr. Stephen Umenze, Mr. Vincent Anudu and Nze Alfred Okechukwu to mention but a few. At Agarawa still in Lagos, the tools business initiated by Mr. C.Y. Igwe is still going on. In Enugu, the influence of Chief A.A. Dim in the tools business is still on firm grips; likewise one will not forget the influence of the sons of Akpo in motor parts initiated by the Willow brothers and recently the astute acts of Chief Rommy Ezeonwuka and Nze Chima Obi at Nnewi. These early mentors greatly influenced the drift from civil service to commercial ventures in Akpo.

## **The History of Iduu Akpo Dance Performance**

This dance, according to the history of Aguata people in Anambra-State, started in the year 1918. The dance, according Chief S.O. Agu (a traditionalist) in an interview, was believed to have been performed by the strongest man in Akpo village in Aguata who was declared the strongest because he was a strong wrestler, a good farmer and a fearless man. On several occasions, it was said that he fought with the spirits unconsciously and defeated them. In order to sustain the masculinity and bravery in the dance, the present young men of Akpo still perform the dance both in its style, form and ideology to conform to its original movement. According to Chief S. C. Ama (a retired school principal) in an interview,

Iduu Akpo dance performance is an annual performance from primordial era till the present day Akpo community. It is performed by strong men during festive periods like the new yam festival, chieftaincy title of acclaimed brave men and during the burial of a notable man in Akpo community.

Once the dance is performed during planting season and after harvest period, it simply shows that their ‘chi’ will bless them with good harvest. Also the appearance of Iduu dance performance during the burial of a notable man, according to their history, simply shows he did not die a shameful death, rather he died as a brave man. Accordingly, to Chief Ama also posits that, “this dance is not performed during rainy season, because rainy season is a period of farming and serious labour, while the dry season which is the period when the dance is being performed serves as a period of enjoyment and relaxation after harvesting the farm produce. During festivals, both natives and foreigners who might want to carry out research on the dance or see it as a means of tourism are given the opportunity to do so. The styles in this dance are not just aesthetically combined steps, rather the communicative potency of

the Iduu Akpo dance movements portrays what gave rise to the emergence of those dance movements.

### **Ritual Performance in Iduu Dance**

This dance is ritualistic and very symbolic in nature as it serves as a connecting link between the world of the living and that of the dead. This ritual dance is performed by the chief priest who is the lead dancer, fully costumed in red regalia, carrying a red pot, holding a fowl, palm fronds and a mini-load behind him. According to Chief Ama in an interview;

before the priest embarks on the journey into the forest for the ritual dance, he will be purified by another oldest chief priest who encourages him to move on. The reason why the chief priest who is the lead dancer in the ritual dance needs fortification from another chief priest is to enhance his charms, get moral support and also be guided by the rules and regulations surrounding the sacred forest.

The second chief priest is believed to be the oldest and understands the language of the spirits more. For this fortification to be strong, valued and respected, it must be done in the shrine of the oldest chief priest. It is in this shrine (Chief Ama opines) that the chief priest is costumed by the oldest priest, who hands over a staff to him. The essence of the staff in the dance is to serve as a symbol of authority and also to serve as a supporting tool to the chief priest especially when he is tired. It is also believed that the road that leads to the sacred forest is not a smooth one based on this fact, the chief priest needs the staff. All these items used by the chief priest during the performance are very communicative in nature.

### **Initiation into Iduu Dance**

The initiation ceremony is very symbolic and done in front of a shrine called “Eze Iduu”. According to Mike Igwe(a retired civil servant) in an interview, it is believed that this is the shrine

where their great grand ancestral fathers in 1918 were initiated into the dance performance. During the initiation into the dance, the shrine is allowed to be bare for some minutes before the initiates start coming in. The reason for allowing the shrine bare is that their great ancestral fathers are fully welcomed first for the initiation before the initiates are allowed to come in. Once they are fully welcomed, the eldest in Iduu dance performance, presents kolanut to them to show appreciation. After the presentation of kolanut, the eldest man in the dance performance kneels to tell the gods the reason for summoning them, after which the initiates are presented to them for the full initiation. At the shrine of the initiation, the drummers are not expected to drum until the initiation rites are concluded. After the initiation, the initiates can now costume themselves and dance out of the Eze Iduu shrine. At this point, the drummers can then start drumming in jubilation because they are fully initiated.

### **Non-Verbal Communication in Iduu dance**

**The Red Costume:** The red costume worn by the chief priest as a garment for purification before the dance starts portrays the pains, problems and worries of Akpo community. It is also believed that once their ancestral fathers see him coming in red garments, they are notified immediately that the native people are not happy and therefore need serious help from their ancestral fathers. In order to portray how disturbed and hopeless the natives are in their present conditions, the chief priest wears a cloth padded at the back. This heavily padded cloth and the red costume show the gods that the people are seriously depending on them for divine intervention. In order to awake their conscious mind in accepting to assist them, some little sacrifices will be made to them with the blood of a fowl, while water from a pot is used for purification. According to Chief Agu in an interview;

... during the sacrifices, the chief priest does a symbolic dance movement. This dance is always in a slow movement while he carries the red pot on his head. The dance movement is very slow while the chief priest staggers during the dance movement as if he is in a serious trance.

The trance-like staggering dance movement of the chief priest portrays him as interceding on behalf of his people before their ancestral fathers, pleading for them to assist in reducing the heavy burden of the natives of Akpo community. The staggering trance movement is sustained for hours until he sits on the ground and shakes his head in the same slow movement. The slow dance movement at this point by the chief priest portrays the gods wanting to communicate to him whether they are intervening or not. Their acceptance to assist the natives is portrayed with seven gun shots and a loud shout from the chief priest. Immediately the good news is made known to the drummers who drum for the chief priest while he was in the bush, the drum beat increases high and the chief priest's dance style becomes faster and full of jubilation. The dance movement at this point is free-styled, simply geared towards jubilation. At certain point, the chief priest goes into a fast freelance movement and stops; once he stops, the drummers stop too. About five minutes later, they continue the fast beats again. No human is expected to be on the dance arena, because it is believed that the ancestral fathers will perform their own dance movement on a very high pitch and the drummers at this point goes into a trance while beating the drums. After the performance of the gods, which is always on a very sharp movement with heavy wind to portray their departure, it is believed that the land is blessed again and that the performance of Iduu has been declared open by the gods.

### **Masquerades in Iduu Dance Performance**

Masquerades are also part of the performance. Mike Igwe also in an interview stated that, "there are two types of masquerades

in this performance *Iduu anya ike* and *Iduu police*. The *Iduu anya ike* is believed to appear during the initiation ceremony. This masquerade, is believed to be the one word of the gods during initiation. It is through the masquerade that the gods communicate their intentions to the initiates, while the iconic red cap on the masquerade's head symbolizes supreme authority to the gods in upholding their culture, maintaining peace and being ambassadors of truth till death. This masquerade appears only in the harmattan season just to portray its sacredness.

The *Iduu police*, serves as peace maker during the performance. They dance with the dancers to make sure that the dancers are well organized while performing. They as well make sure that none of the non-initiates come close to the arena during the performance and also reassure the dancers that they are safe and well protected throughout the performance.

### **Flutist in Iduu dance**

The flutist in the dance gives the cues and motivates the dancers. It is the flutist that accompanies the chief priest into the forest for the ritual dance. The flutist leads the dancers into the arena for the performance and also reminds them of cues from one movement to another. The flutist's body is designed with white nzu (native chalk) to present him as the chief priest servant, well-fortified for the great task ahead before, during and after the *Iduu* dance performance.

### **Drummers in Iduu dance**

The drummers in this festival are young men who are well trained in the act of drumming for the performance. The reason for the training according to Igwe M. is that, "the natives of Akpo community believe that once the drummers can drum well, their ancestral fathers are motivated to bless them more than they expected". The creativity cum perfection amongst the drummers motivates their ancestral fathers to bless the natives, dancers and the

drummers themselves. The perfect modulations in the drumming during Iduu dance performance make the drumming very interesting.

### **Audience in Iduu dance**

Discussing the issue of audience participation in Iduu dance, every male born is allowed to partake in this dance whether natives or foreigners, but women are not allowed to partake in the dance or even watch the performance. This is due to the belief that once they watch the dance, they will no longer see their menstrual cycle and any pregnant woman that watches the dance will give birth to a monkey. Also if a woman mistakenly meets them on the road, she must pass through their left hand side in order to avoid disarming their charms.

### **Costume in Iduu dance**

Accordingly, the costumes of the Iduu masquerade dancers portray them as warriors who are always ready for battle. The costume of the dance is gotten from asha nkwo, ede leaves and palm fronds. All these are gotten in their original bright colour, but are later re-designed as costumes. They are placed beside fire just to darken the colour. The reason for darkening the colour of the costume is to present the dancers as real warriors, not to be easily identified and also for the non-initiates to fear them whenever they behold the sight of the costume. The sacredness of this costume is always sealed with the blood of a goat during sacrifices, right from the days of their forefathers till date. The sealing of the costume with the blood of a goat transforms the costume automatically into a high ritualistic costume for Iduu dance performance. At this point, it takes only a well-fortified dancer to wear the costume.



## **Props in Iduu dance performance**

Some props are highly indispensable in the dance. These props are;

- i) Hand Fan
- ii) Palm leaves
- iii) Igba Ndu Iduu
- iv) Gun

The **hand fan** is believed to be used by the dancers during the dance to wave away bad-luck and welcome good-luck. The use of **palm leaves** prevents them from talking unnecessarily, in order to protect and sustain the potency of their charm. The **Igba ndu Iduu** is always in the form of a pot. Once it is placed at the middle of the performance arena, it automatically fortifies the arena against any evil attack. The sound of the **gun** shot seven times alerts the dancers to be ready for performance and also reminds them of always giving in their best. All these props sustains the Iduu dance performance till date.

## **Dance style in Iduu**

The type of dance style here is always fast in circular form as well as in a straight line. All these forms in the dance style are symbolic and communicative in nature. The dance style is meant for young men of Akpo community between the ages of 25-35 years old. Igwe Mike in an interview postulates that;

it is believed that at this age, the young are still energetic and can use their strength to defend their community in case of any unforeseen circumstances. They always dance to portray themselves as warriors, great farmers and hunters, who are always ready to provide and defend their family and the entire community at large.

During the dance itself, the dancers exhibit different skills to portray themselves to be demi-gods who have fortified themselves

through their ancestral fathers before the real performance. The fast movement during the dance performance simply portrays that the young men of Akpo community are smart and ready to withstand any obstacle. As great warriors and hunters, the dancers show their strength by climbing trees without ropes.

The circular dance movements exemplifies the saying that “united we stand, divided we fall”. One standing ageless rule which this circular dance style portrays among the Iduu dancers is that, for one to be a member, he must have a clean mind towards his fellow brother and he must be ready to be his brother’s keeper as well as be ready to share whatever he has no matter how little, especially when he discovers that his brother needs help. Whosoever that is not ready to obey this rule and decides to dance the great Iduu dance will die while performing the dance. So whenever this circular dance movement or style is being performed during the performance, it reminds the dancers what they believed in, right from the days of their forefathers till date. The straight line movement in the dance presents the dancers as warriors who are ready to defend their community. The bravery of each dancer is fully portrayed in their individualized style of dancing. Here, the Iduu dancers are expected to display their various individual dance skills that qualify them as warriors and always ready to defend their community. It is believed that from the various individualized dance movements, the strength and skill of the dancers as warriors are determined. Though the dancers in **Iduu dance** still retain some of the ancient costumes, their instrumentalists however puts on casual cloths of either T-Shirts or long/short sleeve shirt material, torn jeans or short/long plain trouser material and war barrettes(leopard card).

## **Conclusion**

This research work has tried to express the fact that non-verbal communication is synonymous to dance from the beginning of creation. They are so inseparable from each other without which

no meaning could be achieved if half-hazardly used, and could also make a dance piece look useless and stupid if separated from each other. It is pertinent therefore to say that communication in dance could only be achieved with the correct usage of the relevant non-verbal cues which enhances the effective and efficient understanding of a dance piece since the 'art of dancing is a source of communication' through which it is possible to demonstrate emotions, sentiments and other reactions through movements. From the analysis of this research work, it has been observed that dance is life expressed in dramatic terms and it is culture bound. Dance has been a core aspect of culture that once lost, affects the identity of a people because they become easily subsumed in a culture whose dance dominates their expression. Dance, like music and folktales before now, were used to impart morals and values to the people of a community. They are sources of expression of joy that the practice has continued and is now being handed over to present and upcoming generations with a view of sustaining one's culture. Cultural activities like dance as was stated earlier on, were seen as a tool for binding members of a community together by inculcating in the minds of the community members, the need to love one another by appreciating people of less provision and giving a helping hand in any little way to make life better for those they are better than.

Also it was observed that non-verbal communication is important, because it helps in the understanding and appreciation of reality and its connection with works of art. Non-verbal communication cues in traditional Igbo dances belong to natural consciousness, where dance movements do not just emerge out of nothing; rather situations, experiences and events contribute towards existence, choreographing and content of any contemporary dance. It is a common aspect of culture, because every culture is deeply rooted in its non-verbal cues as a source of cultural identification, motivation and transformation towards a positive change or for cultural sustainability. The study of the Iduu dance in this research work is an attempt to further understand the

essence and importance of non-verbal communicative cues in Igbo dances when placed side by side the cultural norms of the people or community that owns it. It is also through the dancers that traditional Igbo dances attain or sustain any form of communicative potency in dance as an art. It is clear from this study that semiotics expresses our cultural norms and didactic values. Semiotics in dance, is not merely for pleasure or entertainment, but an exposition of the functions of our contemporary dances. This enhances the preservation and survival of cultural heritage of a community. The use of non-verbal cues of signs and symbols in traditional Igbo dance can be said to be the outward rhythmic expression of emotion done in time and space with the purpose of achieving self-pleasure, communication and audience satisfaction.

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