Contextualising Form, Content and Creative Practice in Igbo Dance Theatre

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Declaration

This thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy entitled Contextualising Form, Content and Creative Practice in Igbo Dance Theatre is based on research conducted by the author in the School of the Arts at The University of Northampton.

All the work recorded in this thesis is original unless otherwise acknowledged in the text or by references. None of the work has been submitted for another degree in this or any other University.

Abstract

The discourse that surrounds Igbo dance theatre has not received substantial critical scrutiny. This study seeks to investigate the absence of exposition and post climatic stages in Igbo dance theatre. It argues that the absence of these stages or 'missing links' has resulted in the sequestration of structure and plot of contemporary Igbo dances thus making it difficult for audience members (especially the non-indigene or foreigners) to fully understand and appreciate the performances. Through a studio practice, this research aims to create a new dance theatre narrative to help analyse and read Igbo dances, and develop a new 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System' derived from Ann Hutchinson's motif notation.

The investigations of selective archetypal dances from Igboland form the basis of this study. These dances took place at the following places: the *Iri-Agha* dance of Ohafia in Abia State; the *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* and *Nkwa-Nwaite* dances of Afikpo in Ebonyi State; the *Agborogu* dance of Mbaise, in Imo State and *Nkwa-Agu* that originated from the *Ogbagu* masquerade dance of the Ajali and Nofija people in Anambra State. Field interviews and observations conducted in Eastern Nigeria helped generate information on dance narratives, patterns, designs, and overall aesthetic strategies and enabled me to trace the cultural activities and background of the Igbo people from which the above named dances have evolved.

This research draws its critical methodology from Brad Haseman's performative and Yvonne Hardt's repertoire theories referring to practice-based research. Through studio practice, an extensive and holistic narrative in Igbo dance theatre (*Nkwa-Ike*) was created which featured a dramatic plot development consisting of a beginning, middle and end with the view of justifying the all-embracing theatrical nature of the dance. It is expected that the practice will enable audience members to fully comprehend the performance and read the dance narrative effectively. In contrast to Hutchinson's euro-modernist model of recording core movements in dance, this new model is framed within the polyrhythmic and polymovemental aesthetics of Igbo dance theatre.

Dedication

To my sweet, loving and caring mother – **Juliet Ihuaku Nwaru**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In comparison to other performance arts, Igbo dance is still an under-researched field. This research investigates the form, content and creative processes of Igbo dance theatre in Eastern Nigeria. This study is one of the first of its kind and so will add to Nigerian and African dance scholarship. It analyses the relationship between dance form (movement and pattern) and content (meanings; story line (where relevant), music, dramatic action, spectacle, plot development, props, costume and make-up). The reason for the enquiry is that much of the archetypal material of traditional dance theatre has been lost in contemporary productions. Therefore this is a practice-based research project that:

1. Seeks to investigate the archetype[1] dances in Igbo traditional society and explore the possibilities and usefulness of generating a dance theatre piece in the studio that creates an extensive and holistic narrative in Igbo dance theatre along the lines of a dramatic plot that will help fill the sections that are missing in contemporary Igbo dance.

2. Will use field interview and observation to show how form has changed due to changing practice - this will indicate the losses of traditional materials in contemporary dance theatre.

3. Will create a new dance form by experimentation in the studio on the traditional movements, with patterns and associated theatrical elements in the forms that no longer

[1] In this study the word 'archetype' represents or constitutes the original type of dance after which other similar dances are patterned. In this thesis archetype dance is used interchangeably with traditional dance. The archetypal dances performances (in this study) relates to the time preceding the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in 1977 held in Nigeria (Festac 77).

appear in contemporary theatre. This new form is needed because the structuring of the contemporary Igbo dance theatre is based essentially on one stage (the climatic stage). The performances being presented today lack a complete structure, plot and narrative. As a result the audiences do not understand or fully comprehend the performance or how to read it effectively, since the necessary information has not been presented (K.Okpi. Interviewed on 13th February, 2013).

Studies of Igbo dance theatre (Amankulor 1981; Nwamuo 1993; Bakare 2006) reveal the existence of two main forms: old (traditional) and new (contemporary) forms of dance. According to Yerima (2006), traditional dance is classified as dance that exists in sacred religious practice such as the *Ofosi* burial dance among the Owo people of Nigeria. *Ofosi* dance is soaked in ritual and legend and preserved by folklores. Traditional dance is largely engaged in spiritual activities and social content tied to the world view of the Igbo society. Bakare (2006) opines that contemporary dance compositions are devised to express creative freedom and artistic individuality. In Nigeria, the contemporary choreographer is engaged in the business of making personal statements in accordance with the social and theatrical demands of his contemporary audience. Examples are provided by Emoruwa (2006): Arnold Udoka's *Together as One* (2003); Segun Adefila's *Osusu-Owo* (2000) and Adedayo Liadi's *Ori* (2003). The focus of my research is the Igbo-speaking people in the South-East Nigeria who follow the two different forms of traditional and contemporary choreography. My decision to investigate traditional and contemporary dances will help me to procure first-hand information on the cultural background and abstracted meaning of Igbo dance theatre. It will also help to identify how contemporary Igbo dance theatre differs in structure, form and content from its archetypal models and this will guide me in devising a 'roadmap' for creative practice in the studio.

In this study the description of the Igbo region in Nigeria will not only help to locate the research area but will give an understanding of the Igbo's choice of dance forms and more importantly justify my focus on South-East Nigeria because most of the traditional dances in this area are under-researched. Nigeria is divided into six geo-political zones and is made up of 350 ethnic groups (Ajimobi, 2012). The Igbo occupy the South-East zone in Nigeria. Igbo origin is steeped in controversy; some of the oral accounts by historians and anthropologists claim the Igbo are primordial people (Isichei, 1976) in South Eastern Nigeria. Onwuejeogwu (1978) suggests that their ancestral forebears settled in the location and culture known today as Igbo inland at the centre of Nigeria's eastern region between 2000 – 3000 BC. Some commentators link Igbo origins to Egypt, North Africa and Israel (Ezeabasili, 1982; Afigbo, 1987; Ohadike, 1994). Today Igbo-speaking people live all over Nigeria.

Presently, they constitute the entire Enugu, Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, and Imo states, the Ahoada area of Rivers state and Bonny and Obudu of Cross River state (Afigbo, 1981, Isichei, 1976 and Ukaegbu, 2007). Igbo-speaking people west of the Niger live in Asaba, Ika, and Agbo areas of the Delta state. Various estimates have been given of the Igbo population in Nigeria: 13 million according to a 1991 census (Cycle, 1995), 23 million (Serge, 1991), and 50 million (Ihejirika, 2010). Other Igbo sub-groups with distinct Igbo language dialects also inhabit the northern parts of Akwa Ibom to the south.

Ukaegbu (2007) observes that the spread of communities in Igbo heartland and beyond and their interaction with neighbouring people account for the cultural affinities as well as the aesthetic flexibility that characterises Igbo performances including dance forms.

The Igbo is one of the three (others are the Housa and Yoruba) largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and is the major people-group in Eastern Nigeria. They have one of the highest population densities in West Africa, ranging from 120 to more than 400 persons per square

kilometre (*World Directory of Minorities* 1997, 444-445). The word Igbo is used in three senses: to describe Igbo territory, domestic speakers of the language and the language spoken by them (Ogbaa, 1995). The Igbo region is rich in traditional music. Field reports from this and similar researches (Nzewi, 2002; Njoku, 2009) reveal that most Igbo traditional music is based on the combination of vocal sounds and lyrics and instrumentation which produce a tuneful melody. The Igbo use traditional musical instruments such as Ngelenge (Xylophone), Udu (Pot drum), Ogene (metal gong), Ichaka (Rattle), Oja (flute) and have historically developed different types of dances to suit various occasions, such as work, leisure, war, coronation, new yam festivals, marriage and funeral ceremonies (Agulanna, 1998). Each Igbo community, including Igbo sub-groups outside the five core states utilises different assemblages of these instruments in their dances, of which there are many, designed to celebrate or to reinforce ritual and secular activities in all spheres of life.

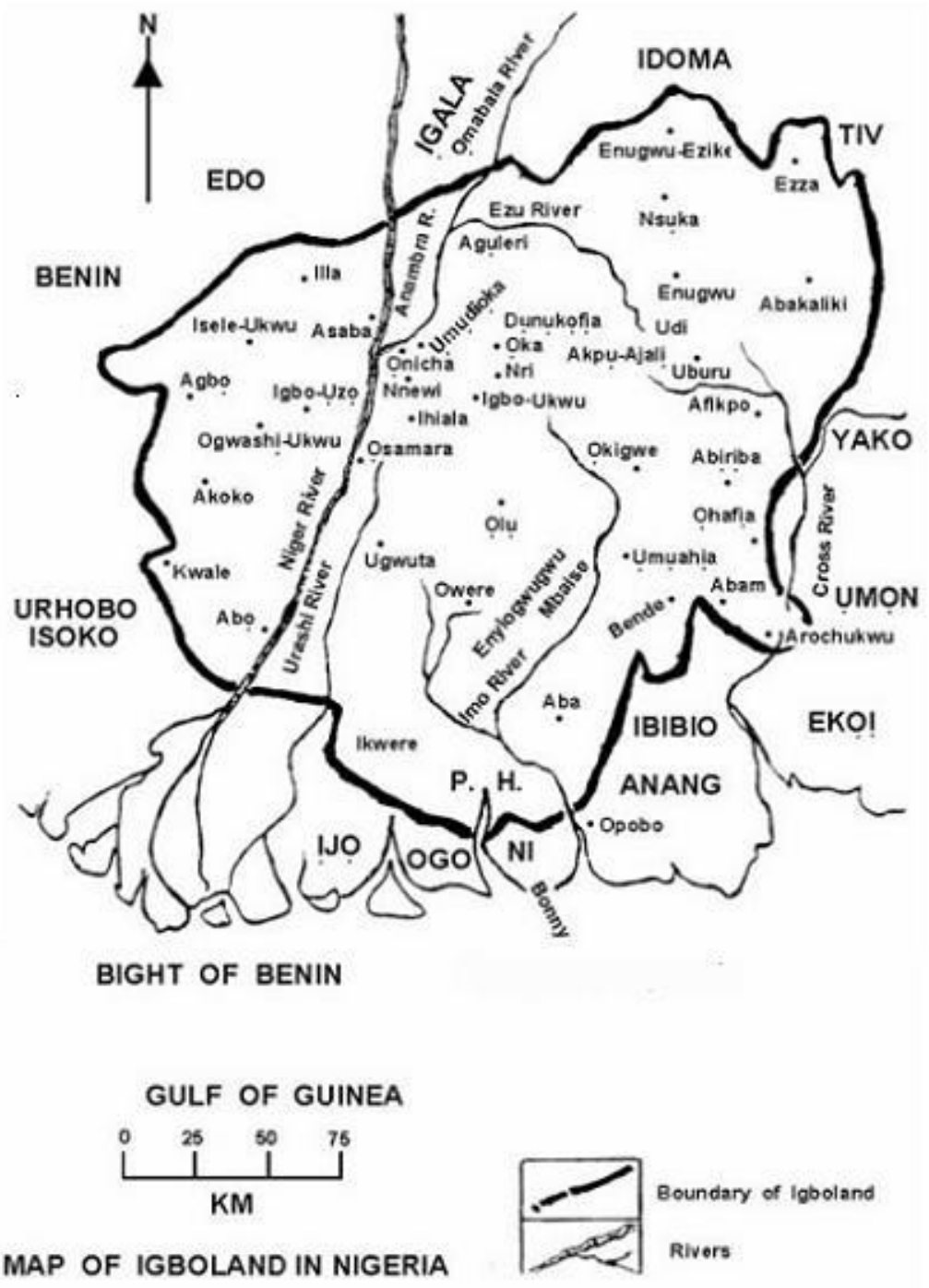


Figure 1. Map of Igboland in Nigeria

This map (Figure 1) consists of the five (Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi) core Igbo speaking states in South East Nigeria where my research was carried out. The map also

includes the Igbo speaking area of River, Delta and Akwa-Ibom states. It shows the boundaries of the neighbouring states like Edo and Benue (Eze Uche, 2010, Line 5).

Different occasions and rites in Igboland provide the opportunity to showcase different dances (Njoku, 2009), such as: *Nwaokorobo, Egwu-Amala, Abigbo, Atilogwu, Ikorodo, Nkwa-Agu, Nkwanwite* and *Agbachaa- Ekurunwa.* The dances mentioned above can be viewed as different forms of Igbo 'dance theatre' and are by no means the only dance forms. The 'dance theatre' as a form of performance is characterised by various dimensions, depending on the region or country where it is performed and the cultural context of the dance. In dance, as in most art forms there may be similarities between unrelated forms[2] because of cultural, social, and psychological correspondences or coincidences and realities. A wider reading of dance and theatre in Africa and elsewhere reveals some of the similarities between different forms and why the Igbo view them as related and almost interdependent. Margaretta Goines (1973, p.221) observes that in Africa, 'dance is so interwoven in Africa's work, play, social and religious activities that it is difficult to isolate any of these activities from their respective roles in the life of the people'. In a similar vein, Enekwe (1981) and Welsh (2004) observe that African dance and African traditional theatre share common features because they combine many of the art forms such as music, poetry, dancing, acting, miming, masking, singing, and dialogue. Yerima (2006, p.21) opines that 'in Nigeria, each dance has a context, a story within the performance'.

In this study, dance will be interpreted as the driving force in dance theatre; it is the vehicle for incorporating various other elements of theatre such as movements, gestures, narrative (based on legends, myths and folktales), instrumental music, costumes, props, and songs.

[2] E.g., musical theatre; dramatic theatre; dance theatre; dance drama; lyrical dance; pure dance, satirical dance, etc.

Dance is also viewed and interrogated as a vehicle of communication. In this respect, as Enekwe quoting Horton in his article 'Myth, Ritual and Drama in Igbo-land', argues:

> Nigeria has numerous examples of drama that are structured on dance. Robin Horton writes that the real core of the Kalabari *Ekine* masquerade drama is dance and that by and large other elements are only considered important in so far as they contribute to it (Horton, 1963 cited in Enekwe, 1981, p.152).

While Enekwe and Horton's observation highlights the functional purposes and theatrical qualities of dance in Kalabari, an ethnic group and culture that shares many cultural features with the Igbo people, they also emphasise the nature of the relationship between the form and structure of African dance theatres on the one hand and their content on the other.

Although an African dance performance may exude excellence in artistic presentation, thematically it may remain an 'enigma' to the audience. To spectators with little background knowledge of the dance's origins and functional uses the sequestering of the performance spectrum of Igbo dance theatre into open/interpretative and invisible/imagined sections is intended to reveal the most essential segments of the form even when these appear to be fragments of information. In effect, the dramatic structure characterised by slow-building exposition, development, climax, and denouement that characterises cause-and-effect plots present in some forms of Western drama functions differently in Igbo dance theatre. Some of the contemporary dance theatres in Ghana and the Niger Delta area in Nigerian have dances that consist of the preparation, climax and resolution stages similar to the contemporary Igbo theatre. Such dances are the 'Fontomfrom' war dance theatre of the Akan people and the '*Udje*' festival dance performance of the Urhobo people (Bame, 1991; Darah 1981). For example, in *Iri-Agha* dance, which will be the case study for this project, the dance focuses on the representation of war in both a general and more metaphorical sense but the preparations before the war and the return to normality are not presented. Different parts of the Igbo nation celebrate distinct stages of Igbo dance theatre in disparate forms that they

prefer and elaborate upon; for example the Igbo North (Nsukka and Afikpo) communities focus on the preparatory (beginning) aspects in such dance forms as *Atilogwu, Igba-Ike.* While *Atilogwu* and *Igba-Ike* acknowledges the beauty of life, *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* celebrates beauty and femininity and one of the more publically acknowledged roles of women in the society, that of being companions, wives, mothers and so on, as a significant part of the Igbo concept of human and community union and 'wholeness'. The Igbo South (Abririba, Ohafia, and Arochukwu) communities perform more of the climatic (middle) parts of what were traditionally very long communal presentations through dance forms such as *Iri-Agha* and *Okonko* that recognise the role of men in the society. The Igbo Central (Okigwe, Orlu, greater Owerri, and Mbaise) group performs more of the celebratory and closing sections of these presentations through such dance forms as *Nwaokorobo* and *Egwu-Ure* which celebrate both men and women. These phenomena occur across a wide range of Igbo cultures, and this study seeks to explain and interpret them by its qualitative methodology: to explain and identify the missing sections as in *Iri-Agha*, the preparations before the war and the return to normality that are not presented in contemporary productions.

Different authors (Nzekwe, 1981; Enekwe, 1987) have written on forms of Igbo dance theatre and called them 'Igbo dance theatre'. Some scholars have also shown and commented on dance forms such as *Okunmkpo* (Enekwe), *Ekpe* (Nzekwe), as Igbo dance theatre. The *Ikpiripke-ogu* dance as presented by the Imo and Abia Arts council has also been described as Igbo dance theatre[3] (C. Iheanacho, Interview. 12th February 2013 and U. Uwasomba, Interview. 20th February 2013). The concept of Igbo dance theatre as used in this study differs from those presentations and forms characterised by incomplete structures and plots

[3] Charles Iheanacho, Lead Dancer, Imo State Council for Arts and Culture Owerri, interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Owerri on the 12 February, 2013 and Ugochukwu Uwasomba Dance Captain, Abia State Council for Arts and Culture Umuahia, interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Umuahia on the, 20 February, 2013.

because these dances mentioned above do not best describe Igbo dance theatre (Nwamuo, 1993; Bakare, 1994) which archetypal version contained a more extended plot line.

Instead this study is based on the premise that the more traditional forms should be considered as crucial to the concept of Igbo dance. These forms have been preserved by story-telling and memory and the research aims to recover by field interview the outlines of plots and narratives. Although many of the dances have been described as dance theatre, field reports (from interview and observation) reveal obvious differences. The differences are in the structures and plots of archetypal forms from which many contemporary dances derive and that some commentators (Ugonna 1981; Ukaegbu, 2007) have identified in the *Mmonwu*, as a much more dramatically developed form of Igbo theatre.

1.1.1 Critical Background

The research will draw on the views and writings of renowned scholar in Igbo society, Nnabuenyi Ugonna, who points out that there are three major structural stages in *Mmonwu*-type performances: 'Opening Acts, Main Acts and closing Acts' (Ugonna 1984, quoted in Ukaegbu 2007, p.115). Ugonna's observation and identification of *Mmonwu* and its differences from the other dances mentioned by researchers (Enekwe and Nzekwe) has great significance for this study. His argument is summarised as follows;

First he points out that the archetypal *Mmonwu* shares the aesthetic features of other well-known dance forms throughout Igbo society (Ugonna: 1981). The contemporary *Mmonwu, Ekpe* and *Okonko* and the *Odo* (studied respectively in detail by James Amakulor (1981) and Ossie Enekwe (1987), and the *Okumkpo* of Afikpo (studied by Ukaegbu (2007) for its drama and theatricality, by contrast to Simeon Ottenberg's (1975) study of the same as ritual, are all segments of ancient forms described as dance theatre. The relationship between the

contemporary and archetype/ancient dances is that the contemporary versions emerge from the archetype dance theatre.

Secondly, all archetypes of the five forms reveal the three-part structure described by Ugonna (1981) unlike their contemporary versions. Thirdly, the archetypes have extensive, well-developed fictional narratives based on rituals, myths, and legends. Fourthly and most significantly, the archetypes of stated forms are characterised by their functionality in their respective communities as well as by their extensive reliance on mimesis, elaborate characters, and other performance aesthetics such as make-believe and the willing suspension of disbelief, make-up, and storylines. Although the five stated forms - *Mmonwu, Ekpe* and *Okonko* and the *Odo, Okumkpo* of Afikpo - share the common presence of masks as characters in their own rights, their links to their ancient roots bring them closer to the archetypes of Igbo dance theatre. The dances mentioned above and some examples of the contemporary derivatives as described by Onuora Nzekwe (1981) and Emeka Nwabueze (2000), they have their origins in primordial rituals, performance conventions and formats; the contemporary forms use only a few elements of these features and cannot be described as dance theatre (Nwamuo, 1993; Bakare, 1994).

These dance theatres are defined by their restoration of structured narratives and storylines and complete dramatic structures, or in the words of Nnabuenyi Ugonna, the regeneration of a dramatic dance theatre format consisting of three major structural stages– 'Opening Acts, Main Acts and Closing Acts' (1984, p.134).

Ugonna is not alone on his views on dance theatre structure. He is supported by Chris Nwamuo, a renowned theatre scholar in Igbo society. According to Nwamuo (1993, p.33), a dance theatre is 'a well organised dance with an identifiable story which has a beginning, middle and an end'. Also Bakare Ojo Rasaki, the foremost Nigerian scholar that specialises in

Dance and Choreography is of the view that 'dance theatre/dance drama [in Nigeria] is most professionally referred to as Narrative dance; the intention is to narrate a coherent story and do it through a sequence of action and movements' (Bakare, 1994, p.6). Nwamuo's definition further exposes the incomplete structure of some of the so-called Igbo dance theatre presented by some Arts Councils in the Igbo region like the *Ikperikpe-ogu* that lacks the narrative as emphasised by Bakare (1994). The problem with incomplete structures is that this loss has created a gap in 'the environmental understanding of the ethnographic details of dance, costumes, cosmogony and ideals' (Nwamuo 1993, p.28). As a result of the incomplete structures and narratives, the role of traditional Igbo dance theatre such as *Iri-Agha* that provides the description of Ohafia people, their culture and customs, habits and mutual differences has been diminished.

In this study, I will use Ugonna, Nwamuo and Bakare's works on the dramatic structures of a dance theatre as a guide to investigate and re-interpret the incomplete structures of contemporary Igbo dance theatre. The re-interpretation that will be undertaken in this study is necessary for several reasons. In the first instance scholars such as Onuora Nzekwu (1981), James Amankulor (1981), Ossi Enekwe (1987) and Emeka Nwabueze (2000) in some of their writings have described aspects of Igbo dance theatre by mainly referring to its abstract nature without highlighting any of the developments that led to such abstractions or explaining why this happened. Secondly, their definitions and comments ignore the archetypes from which these contemporary interpretations came. The fact that the examples of Igbo dances mentioned by some of these commentators are disparate, perhaps as a result of accidental shift, in that they use incomplete structures and plots and highlight only sections of long displays, is now generally mistakenly considered as a cultural fact. Such assertions are not supported by information from the rituals and communities where these dances emerged. In fact, Nzekwu (1981), and Nwabueze (2000) generally identify Igbo dance theatre only by

new forms and may not have carried out a deep investigation. This is contrary to the opinion of Bame Kwabena (1991) and Ahmed Yerima (2006) that highlights the functional purposes and therefore, the stories, folktales, rituals and cultural activities that gave birth to a good many African dances and gave them the undoubted high profile and cultural significance they have in their respective communities.

The desire to look at the origins and myths behind Igbo and some African dances has since been realised by James Amankulor (1981) and Kariamu Welsh (2004). Further research has to be undertaken with regards to elaborate packaging of Igbo dances as against bits of ancient indigenous dance for presentation before the public; the complete packaging and presentation of Igbo dance theatre has so far lacked the support of the Arts Councils in the Igbo region.

However of all the Igbo dance theatre forms, only the archetypes of *Iri-Agha*, *Okumkpo, Ekpe, Okonko, Nkwa-Umuagbogho, Mmonwu,* and *Odo* have complete narratives from beginning to end. The histories of these archetypes exist throughout their communities even though they are now performed with all stages brought together only on very rare occasions. Amongst them *Iri-Agha* is perhaps the only one encountered during my field research that, as a result of Arts Councils' packaging of the dance and use of only one segment, emphasises and celebrates only the climatic (*Ikpirikpe*) stage.

The Council for Arts and Culture in Nigeria consists of parastatals under the Ministry of Information and Culture in the states where they exist. They are saddled with the responsibility of promoting and preserving the arts and culture of the communities in each state including their dances. Arts Councils in the Igbo region such as the Imo and Abia states present and document fragments of traditional dances for preservation. As a result of this packaging of the dance, only one segment (*Ikpirikpe*, the climatic stage) of *Iri-Agha* dance theatre remains at the time of my field trip undertaken (4th January to 12th March, 2013). In

the process the other stages are excised for reasons of timing and so today they remain defunct.

The other dances have not suffered the degree of fragmentation that *Iri-Agha* and *Ekpe* have. *Iri-Agha* was chosen as the main subject of study for this research because of the extent of its fragmentation and sequestration. In contemporary settings what audiences and participants witness in general is merely one stage of a spectrum of performance-driven cultural activity whose other sections are neither visible nor necessarily articulated in and through the dance. Thus, what is on show in many Igbo dances is only a part of the whole and it requires a combination of the visible stage action and an understanding of the imagined contents of the missing sections. The latter is generally derived from legends, myths, folktales, and social commentary, and is inferred by audiences in order to appreciate the full meaning and significance of Igbo dance theatre.

Having detailed the background of this study, I now turn to my aim in re-interpreting contemporary Igbo dance theatre by researching the histories of selected dances in different Igbo regions in order to outline their development from archetypes, to explore their foregrounding of myths and origins and the connections between such archetypes as *Iri-Agha, Nkwa-Umuagbogho, Agborogu, Nkwa-Agu, Nkwa-Nwaite* and their contemporary interpretation.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research is set against a background of the Igbo dance theatre in Nigeria and aims to show how the traditional dance practice of the Igbo people differs from their contemporary versions. It seeks to generate information on why and how dances that anthropological studies and cultural histories indicate were very long displays that lasted for days, weeks and

months (depending on the form) became sequestered and separated from the narrative to the point of losing huge sections. Then through a studio practice, a new dance theatre narrative will be created and a new 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System' developed so that audiences can comprehend the performance and read the dance narrative effectively: this new model will draw upon the polyrhythmic and polymovemental aesthetics of Igbo dance theatre.

The aims of the research are;

- To identify and investigate the reasons for present day absence of expository and post-climactic stages or 'missing links' in the theatricality of earlier Igbo dance theatre as a site for new dance practices.
- To see whether they can be used as sites for the creation of new dance practices based on indigenous models.

The major objectives of my research include;

- To create the expository and post-climactic stages in Igbo dance theatre as spaces for new dance practices based on indigenous models;
- To create a notational system for reading, documenting and preserving archetypal and contemporary forms of Igbo dance theatre.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study of the form, content and creative practice in Igbo dance theatre upon which my own studio practice will built, seeks to ask the following key research questions;

- How does contemporary Igbo dance theatre differ in structure, form and content from its archetypal models that were based on rituals and sociocultural practises?

- How does the absence of exposition and post-climactic stages in contemporary Igbo dance theatre provide space for new creative energies and new dance practices?
- In the absence of a notation system, how can new generations of Igbo dancers and society understand and study the dances of previous generations?

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The study endeavours to create and interpret a different version of *Iri-Agha* as a model of what Igbo dance theatre may look like, contrary to the established practice of presenting only segments of the archetypal whole, as defined by Arts Councils in some Igbo-speaking states of Nigeria. It will use the archetype of *Iri-Agha* (and other appropriate dances such as *Ekpe, Mmonwu, Okumpko, Nkwa-Umuagbogho, Nkwa-Agu, Agborogu*, where necessary) as the basis for creating a new interpretational framework and notation for Igbo dance theatre. The research and its outcome will contribute to scholarship in Igbo dance theatre by drawing on the materials within the complex origins, history and development of contemporary dance theatre. These subjects will generate information and performance materials from my design of a process that Bakare (2006, p.66) sees as the route to producing new work from archetypal Igbo dance theatre:

> The contemporary choreographer is engaged in the business of making personal statements in accordance with the social, theatrical and aesthetic demand of his contemporary audience. He is not overtly engaged in spiritual efficacy but uses the dances that exist in his cultural background as raw materials and established 'linguistic property' to express his purely creative thought.

For some choreographers, communicating through dance is vital in dance creation. Movements are used as words to 'say' something to the viewer (Ambrosio, 2008). Creating a

contemporary Igbo dance theatre that will include such elements as storytelling, narrative and closely knitted sequences will involve a creative process in which the 'process of change, of development, of evaluation, in the organization of subjective life' (Ghiselin, 1952, p.12) is analysed and reflected upon. The outcome will be different from Nzekwu's (1981) and Enekwe's (1987) notions of Igbo dance theatre in some respects but will differ more radically from the dramatic structure and content, elaboration of narrative, enhanced mimesis, development of fictional characters, and restoration of Igbo archetypal performance format as articulated by Ugonna (1981). The research hopes to offer an expanded landscape performance in many ways.

The Igbo dance theatre frame expanded landscape performance primarily to complement the abstraction, loss or withdrawal of traditional components like information, ideas, mythology, folklore, and history with a dramatic narrative that enriches these archetypal features as well as making them more accessible and informative to both contemporary Igbo and non-Igbo audiences. Secondly, the study and outcome will destabilise the reductionism that is often associated with African arts and performance. The dramatic structure of Igbo dance theatre that is usually subsumed in signs and coded information will be elaborated upon in keeping with the reinterpretation and fleshing out of other forms of Igbo arts such as Sunny Collins's *Onye-Eze* (2001) and Victor Eze's *Nsibidi* (1998) in Nigerian home videos and creation of new dance forms (Collins, 2001; Emoruwa, 2006).

Igbo dance theatre in Eastern Nigeria has not previously been subjected to substantial critical enquiry. In Nigeria, different scholars such as Bakare, 1994; Ugolo, 2005; Nwamuo, 1993; Ojuade, 2004; Olomu, 2007; Akunna, 2006 have written on elements and principles of dance, but as stated earlier there is little writing exclusively on forms of Igbo dance theatre (Yerima, 2006).

Ahmed Yerima, the former director general of National Troupe/National Theatre of Nigeria, has observed that many factors have discouraged researchers from investigating a complex field of study like dance in Nigeria. According to Yerima:

> The major difficulty in attempting a discourse of Nigeria dances and dancers is that the dances in Nigeria are as diversified as the cultures and people of Nigeria. This has been one great obstacle to this study, because in the course of my research, I found that for every one kilometre in Nigeria, villages have different languages, dance forms, music, history and concepts of patterns and shapes for each dance (2006, p.17).

On a different but signinicant note, Chris Ugolo highlights the need for documentation of dance art, saying 'there is an urgent need therefore for the varied forms and styles of Nigerian traditional dance performances to be recorded (documented) and preserved, not only to maintain the cultural identity of the people but also for the purpose of academic study' (2006, p.45).

Preliminary investigation into this field research shows that the information and knowledge about actual live performances of archetypes from which Igbo dances emerged was held by only a few individuals, some of whom lament the continuing loss and erosion of Igbo cultural traditions and their replacement by mis-represented, non-representative contemporary derivatives.[4] This research will address some of these challenges and furthermore will contribute to the study and documentation of dance theatre in Igbo land by elaborating the narratives and creating the missing links which characterise the contemporary Igbo dance theatre such as *Ikpiripke*.

Bame (1991, p.7) notes:

> We begin our analysis with the dance in African traditional society because dance is central in the life of Africans. It permeates all their social and

[4]Kalu Okpi, a renowned Igbo scholar from Abam Ohafia interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Owerri on the 13 February, 2013.

> ceremonial activities, a fact which the reader cannot fail to acknowledge by the time he has gone through this book. In fact, it will be no exaggeration to say that the African is the 'real man of dance'. To him dance is life itself, it is a way of thinking, living and communicating. The dance forms an integral part of all important facets of his life cycle.

Bame's articulation of the significance of dance and its performance in Africa highlights the need for a multi-dimensional study and understanding of a form like Igbo dance theatre, whose history and development have been ignored in the debates about their processes and place in 21st Century Nigeria and Africa.

Given the dearth of historical and cultural records and, as in the case with many indigenous African dance forms, some of the important practical and developmental issues in Igbo dance theatre will be lost to future generations. One objective of the study is to provide an aesthetic template - a notational system - for recording and preserving performances of Igbo dance theatre.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted for this study draws from different research methods and approaches such as library search, field interviews, observation, studio practice and visual research. I have collected data from the field through interview, observation and use *Iri-Agha* dance as a case study in creating a dramatic Igbo dance theatre in the dance studio. The purpose of the field-work is to generate information on dance narratives, patterns, design and overall aesthetic strategies, to identify differences between selected contemporary dances and their archetypes, and to develop my own creative practice (in the studio) that integrates archetypal and contemporary dance features into a dramatic dance performance/ theatre that will be presented on stage as part of my findings. Finally the research explores the extent to which the exposition and post-climatic stages in archetypes (missing links in contemporary forms) provide material and context for a different kind of Igbo dance theatre. Library

research on journals and books highlighted the gaps identified in the practice of Igbo dance theatre and help to construct the theoretical definitions of key words in this study such as dance theatre, forms, contents, creative practice.

1.6 FIELD TRIP

For a thorough investigation of the sequestered stages in Igbo dance theatre, there is a need to engage in primary[5] research, in this case, field research. The emphasis on form, content, and the creative process of indigenous Igbo dances in a field of study that is still suffering from a dearth of professional expertise and resources also justifies undertaking a primary research. My outline has also been informed by Bakare's (2006) suggestion for choreographers to use the materials from a society's or individual's cultural background in order to generate and establish a 'linguistic property' to express his purely creative thoughts; both have guided me in devising a 'roadmap' for creative practice in the studio. There is a need to understand the links, if any, between contemporary Igbo dances and their archetypes, to document and preserve historical and cultural knowledge in the form of a notational system. Driscoll (2011) concludes that the ultimate goal in conducting primary research as used in *Iri-Agha* is to learn about something new that can be confirmed by others and to eliminate our own biases in the process. In undertaking primary research my aim was to gain new information or recover lost information about lost cultural practices in the field of Igbo dance theatre. The primary research paradigms used in this study are interview and observation in the field, and their methodological value will be detailed below.[6]

[5] Francis Babbie (2003) argues that primary research is particularly useful when researchers want to learn about a problem that does not have a wealth of published information.

[6] The research fieldwork was conducted in four states of Nigeria; Abia, Ebonyi, Anambra and Imo. The selected states represent all Igbo regions and will generate information and results that can be applied to all Igbo society.

1.6.1 Interview

The knowledge about archetypes, forms, content, and creative practices in Igbo dance theatre was sought through semi-structured interviews[7] with dance teachers, arts professionals, traditional rulers, village elders and title-holders, and amateur and professional dance practitioners. The decision to use interview was made because there was no other way to acquire the information needed since it belongs to living memory (and is not recorded) and this was the 'best', most informed approach. In all, 27 persons were interviewed. See appendix ii for details of the groups of people interviewed, their names, affiliations, the date of the interview and the focal point or comments, including the questions and responses.[8]

Interviewees discussed their perceptions and interpretations with regards to given situations (during questions and responses). People were interviewed specifically on the basis of origins and histories of selected dances such as *Iri-Agha, Agborogu, Nkwa-Umuagbogho,* and *Nkwa-Agu* in order to obtain information on the structure, style, form, content and creative processes of the archetypes and contemporary forms of the stated dances. My personal mediation in open-ended and semi-structured interviews with different categories of respondents, both literate and semi-literate (Gray, 2004), was to ask for and obtain

[7]In semi-structured interviews, the order of my questions changed depending on the direction of the interview. The interviewer was free to re-structure the questions (Corbetta, 2003). Dana Driscoll's (2011) one-on-one and small group, Steinar Kvale's (1996) qualitative research interview approach, and Alan Bryman's(2001), and Piergiorgio Corbetta's (2003) semi-structured interviewing techniques were used to ensure that new, important and authentic information of concurrent validity was obtained from respondents and that researcher biases were eliminated in the course of interviews and field observations. The interview questions are included in the Appendix.

[8] The selection of names is based on the importance of the information given; the comments of those interviewees who are not included often duplicate or lack relevance to the project. Their names are in the Appendix.

information on the cultural histories, ritual and social lives of the communities that own the different dances.[9]

The interviews helped trace the cultural activities and backgrounds of communities and sub-groups of the Igbo (Ohafia, Afikpo, Ajali and Mbaise) from which the dances selected for this research evolved. The selected major cultural areas are from different states in Igboland and the dances under investigation which originated from them. Conducting interviews in the above-mentioned communities is a way of capturing information about the cultural practices of these groups. The research interviews are also designed to uncover insights into what people think about the nature and usefulness of a fully developed dramatic dance form in which the cultural background and meanings of aesthetic images are more evident than they (that is, the abstracted dance theatre forms) have been in the past.

The limitation of interviews (Foddy, 1993) is that verbal reports are limited to expressions of attitudes, feelings, and opinions. This was overcome through the use of field notes, photographs and video images, recordings and discussions designed to distinguish feelings and prejudices from cultural and historical facts and authentic information. Also the interviews were combined with researcher observations and records in the forms of field photographs and video images and recordings.

Samples of my questions during my field interview and the responses of the interviewee's are as follows;

[9]During the interview, some of the interviewees were not fluent in their native language; some had difficulties with written language. As I had the objectives of the research in my mind and what issues to cover I allowed the interviewee to talk freely about the subject. Later, I checked on unclear points and rephrased the answers for accuracy and understanding (Gray, 2004).

Question: Nwaru

***Iri-Agha* is a war dance, how do Ohafia people prepare for the war?**

Answer: Kalu Okpi

We didn't just wake up one morning and went to war, just like the modern soldiers of today. People prepared very well before we headed to war. In Ohafia and Abam specific tasks are assigned to different age groups/grades. The age grades of those who go to war are between 25 and 40 years. The warriors camp for some days in a secluded place so that the chief priest can prepare them with the protective rituals after intensive training about war tactics. Then the warriors head to Achichi arena and bow before the *Ikoro* and then proceed to the battle field.

Answer: Emmanuel Imaga

In Ohafia the preparation that preceded the war on which *Iri-Agha* dance is based existed in sacred ritual forms.

Answer: Kalu Achike

It is important for you to know that during the preparation, the warriors are not allowed to have sexual relationship with the women or eat their food for it is believed that food cooked by women may weaken the warriors' charms.

Answer: Agwu Emeh

Also during the war preparation, nobody is allowed near or touches the warriors except the chief priest because they are [supposed to be] half human and half spirit.

Question: Nwaru

I observed that *Iri-Agha* is performed by men; do the women play any role at all in the dance either at the preparatory or celebratory stage?

Answer: Okorie Eme

The women do not play any role during the preparation for war. They (women) only take care of their families. During the celebration, the women and young ladies distributed food and drinks as they were not allowed to perform the war dance.

Answer: Kalu Okpi

While the young men were fighting at the battle field, the women cooked and took care of the family member at home. They also prayed and wished their husbands and sons well on the war front. When the warriors are back, the Eze (traditional ruler) in agreement with the village heads chooses a date for honouring and celebrating the returnee warriors. Traditionally the women performed the Aja (a special instrumental and ritual dance of the same name in which women celebrated the victory by warriors) and danced round the Achichi arena, while the warriors performed in the centre of the arena.

1.6.2 Observation

Nick Fox (1998) argues that observational studies allow the researcher to see for him/herself what happens, rather than depending on interview and questionnaire respondents while Davi Ngo (2010) defines observation as a method in which a researcher observes and records behaviour, events, activities, tasks and duties while something is happening. The observation of *Iri-Agha, Nkwa-Umuagbogho, Agborogu* and *Nkwa-Agu* dance performances generated first-hand information on dance archetypes and the cultural background and abstracted meaning of contemporary Igbo dance theatre. This also helped to provide a better description of dance as a cultural feature of Igbo society.

Fox (1998) points out that in observation a researcher is cognitively engaged whilst organising data for later use whilst Holly (2002) highlights the need to support observation with recording devices capable of storing large and varied amounts of information that researchers may retrieve and go over again.[10] Both approaches were used in recording some

[10] Observation is more than just recording of data from the environment. When we observe, we are active, not passive collectors of data like a tape recorder or video camera. Our brains are engaged as well as our eyes and ears, organising data so we can make sense of them. Perception is thus part of all human observation. This aspect of what is involved in observation is crucial to any efforts to use it as a method of research (Fox, 1998, p.11).

of the dance movement ‘quoted’ in my creative project (Hardt, 2012). Some interviews and performance activities were photographed and video-recorded and referred to throughout the studio practice and for analysing information from the primary research.[11]

[11] According to Holly, a qualitative observational research requires decisions about setting, access, self-presentation, and the use of recording devices (Holly, 2002).

1.7 STUDIO PRACTICE

My studio practice comprises a creative project, selected participants, the creative process of (*Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre) rehearsal and performance, and their results.[12] The specific information on archetype and contemporary Igbo dances gathered from field research was organised, collated and used in studio practice to create new movement and performance materials (in Chapter Three) to fill for the gaps in historical and cultural contents in contemporary Igbo dances.

Studio practice helped in answering the research question: how does the absence of exposition and post-climactic stages in contemporary Igbo dance theatre provide space for new creative energies and new dance practices? Though the research questions were answered in the studio, the materials (data) and ideas derived from interviews and observations helped to guide the researcher in creating[13] the missing link or sequestered stages in Igbo dance theatre. An example is the role of the chief priest during the war preparation in archetype *Iri-Agha*.

1.7.1 My Creative Project

My creative process involves adapting the old *Iri-Agha* to a new creative dance form to compensate for the loss of the exposition and post-climactic stage. The responses and combined information from my interviewees such as Okpi, Achike, Imaga, and Maduka on the ritual factor, the role of women, the-staging venue, the props and symbolic codes of communication were helpful in identifying how theatrical materials and contents were used in my creation of the missing stages leading to a more elaborate dramatic exposition and

[12] This is included in the form of a DVD of *Nkwa-Ike*: Igbo Dance theatre (in thesis)
[13] These are not reconstruction but new creations based on the information from the field trip; and adapting many dances and sequestered sections to a new form.

resolution. A key element of the field research and studio practice was the undeniable absence of an established notational system on which participants in the studio could base their dance movements. The studio experiments on movement and the selection of materials on which to base performance narrative exposed problems such as the inconsistency in dance movement that was caused by the absence of a notational system in Igbo dance theatre. This confirmed the need for such a system if Igbo dance theatre is to be documented and preserved for the present and future.

In establishing my practice and in the engagement with the research process, Brad Haseman's (2006) performative research theory was found to be particularly useful. His theories are concerned with a specific approach to practice-led research. According to Haseman, practice-led research is intrinsically experiential and comes to the fore when the researcher creates new artistic forms. Performative research holds that practice is the principal research activity – rather than only the practice of performance – and sees the material outcomes of practice as all-important representations of research findings in their own right. The principal distinction between this third category and the qualitative and quantitative categories is found in the way a researcher expresses the finding of a performative paradigm. In this case, while findings are expressed in non-numeric data, they can be presented as symbolic forms rather than in discursive text. The data obtained during my primary research was used in my studio practice and its report cited results in presentational forms and is submitted for examination in the form of a DVD.

Key approaches to improvisation and devising performance work were drawn from designing activities used in this investigation in the studio. The data that I collected through interviews and observations is first analysed and then used to design stimulations to arouse movement or action. In my studio practice experiment, imagined movements are tried, new ideas evolved.

In dance, Stone (2007) opines that improvisation is a movement that is not choreographed ahead of time. It may be structured or guided (based on the simulation of instinct and experimentation) as used in the creation of the *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre as will be outlined in Chapter Three. According to Carter 'the term improvisation invokes associations with such related notions as spontaneity, extemporisation, and absence of deliberation' (2000, p. 181). Carter also notes that the term brings to mind works like creation, invention, or origination, all of which imply action. An example of my own research and how the creative process works is found in the information gained from the legendary story of *Elibe Aja*, in my field trip to Abia state, Nigeria in January 2013. This song, sung by a chanter, revealed that the Ohafia warriors lost some of their members in war, that the victory celebration was tinged with sorrow, and that the celebration of group survival as a community does not necessarily deny or hide the tragedy of war.[14] This information had been omitted from contemporary performances of this narrative in Abia state; it was to prove significant in the improvisation of content and I decided to include it as the mother's dirge in the celebration. My creation of movements based on information and their transformation into stage action enhanced the dramatic and mimetic contents of *Nkwa-Ike* as will be discussed in Chapter Three Section B.

By working from the repertoire of Igbo dance archetypes as presented in Ohafia on my field trip I reinterpreted some old features using contemporary and new dance scores that extended the old whilst creating something new. In my creative process, I used the 'Quoting the repertoire' approach of Yvonne Hardt (2012), a theory that urges engagement with the past (history) in dance studies, in approaching the creation of new materials and movements. In Igbo society, information can be communicated literally but mostly symbolically and it can include anything from cultural practices and social conventions to folk beliefs, legends, myths, and historical events. These cultural materials may be common knowledge (as they

[14] Kalu Okpi interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Owerri on 13th February, 2013.

form part of the cultural context as background) but they are not evident in Igbo dance, as many are imagined as a given, requiring neither showing nor elaboration. Their absence in dance performances creates an imaginary space for audiences to fill in the missing information or narrative from a repertoire of communal knowledge. By using Hardt's 'repertoire' theory, I derived some historical, mythological and sociocultural information in Igbo dance from field investigations and transformed them into new stage material that 'signifies that which has made it into the canon, that which is institutionalized and has been granted the possibility to continue living on stage or to be perpetuated in dance classes' (2012, p. 221). Diana Taylor (2003, p. 20) suggests that 'quoting' the repertoire challenges conventional means of storing the past. For her, repertoire 'enacts embodied memory: performance gestures, orality, movements, dance, singing - in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral knowledge'. Taylor's analysis of 'quoting' points to both the contents and process of what happened in the studio because culturally and historically, Igbo dance theatre generates meaning by 'quoting' aspects of archetypes and traditional repertoires, structurally, contextually and *textually*. The emphasis on 'quotes' from the repertoires of archetypes of dances in new dance movements will help to explain cultural histories, abstract symbols and information, and the working structure of Igbo dance theatre.

1.7.2 Selection of Studio Practice Participants

The research participants are made up of volunteers from local troupes ranging in grade from amateur to experienced artists. The inclusion of a broad spectrum of dance troupes, individuals and experienced artistes produced a mixed pool of participants across all sections of Igbo society with diverse dance styles, and wide-ranging cultural habits. In total over 55 participants were auditioned, 48 artists, made up of drummers, dancers, actors and a crew

with some experience of theatrical dance were selected. See appendix v for the names of my cast and crew, the roles they played, their positions and affiliations, dates and venue of audition.

Detailed information on participants such as - Who had experience of studio work? Why were they chosen? What were their backgrounds? And how they were chosen? is given in Chapter Three, Section B. In the studio, the following elements of practice were employed as creative research materials: traditional and contemporary Igbo dance steps and movements; designs and floor patterns; vocal and instrumental music; traditional props and costumes. Images of improvisation work and process, run-through, dress and technical rehearsals were all recorded in video-tapes and still photographs. My creative project is also an expression of the research methodology in the sense that it was both a reflection on and an extension of practices through improvisation, of selected practices and repertoires encountered in the field. The outcome of the studio practice is the *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre and was staged for public view on 26th April, 2013, at the Theatre Complex, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria (see Bullet 3, DVD attached). Also submitted as evidence of my studio practice are electronic material (DVD) used to document my creative project and still photographs.

1.7.3 Dance Notation

Researchers use different dance notations and theories in explaining or analysing their work such as 'Quoting Repertoire Theory', 'Perfomative Research Theory', 'Labanotation' and 'Benesh Notation'. The Laban and Benesh notations are used in recording many American and European dances. However, I decided for this research to develop a specific documentation system from Ann Hutchinson Guest's Motif Notation. The diversity of movement expressions available to dancers should be allowed to surface in each

performance, based on individual and internal movement dynamics, rather than rigidly 'fixed' movement; hence it seemed inappropriate to use Labanotation. Benesh notation is mainly used for ballet and would therefore also not be suitable for the dance form I have developed.

Ann Hutchinson Guest's Motif Notation (1970), also known as Motif Description and Motif Writing, is closely related to Labanotation. Both practitioner-theorists use most of the same symbols and terminology; have a similar format, and both record fundamental components of all styles and forms of movement (Brown, 1998). The main difference between Labanotation and notif notation is the type of information they communicate. Labanotation gives a literal, all-inclusive, detailed description of movement, so it can be reproduced exactly as it is performed or conceived. In contrast, motif notation depicts just core elements. A motif score might convey the overall structure and intention of a dance improvisation, but allows the individual performing the movement to decide how that movement should be carried out and therefore allows for a creative approach in dance notation (Language of Dance Centre, 2011). Guest's motif score is, therefore especially useful in reading Igbo dance theatre in which performers are expected to display flexibility and individual virtuosity even within ostensibly 'fixed' scores or frames. The flexibility of Ann Hutchinson Guest's motif theory is helpful for this research study; however, there are some limitation in that its notational fixed scores or frames are designed to record specific movements just like Laban's. Although suitable for recoding Western dance, fixed forms are not suitable for African polyrhythmic, poly-movemental and flexible dance forms as earlier stated. African dances are not only designed with these features in mind, they are also meant to be received and read that way as dancers are expected to communicate individual artistry and variations successfully within common or established steps.

The exploration of different dance theories and the application of especially Ann Hutchinson Guest's 'Motif Notation' and Brad Haseman's 'Performative Research Theory' produce a new hypothesis or approach for analysing and reading Igbo dance. This can best be described as 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System' and it uses symbols and notes to document Igbo dance art and African dance in general. This will produce a template for reading Igbo dance theatre and also provide a creative framework for reproducing and re-interpreting Igbo dance forms and performances. (See Chapter Two for a full discussion and Chapter Four for an analysis of *Nkwa-Ike* (studio practice outcome) based on an Igbo descriptive documentation system. The aims and objectives of this research i.e. To identify and investigate the reasons for present day absence of expository and post-climactic stages or 'missing links' in the theatricality of earlier Igbo dance theatre and to see whether they can be used as sites for the creation of new dance practices based on indigenous models. This will be tackled in the analysis of the three main stages of a fully- developed, overtly interpreted Igbo dance (Ugonna, 1984; Amankulor, 1981).

The anecdotal stories, research writings, interviews and my creative project ideas explored in this chapter highlights the main differences between contemporary Igbo dances and their archetypes that were discovered on the field trip. They reveal the cultural fragmentations that have occurred in the transformation of archetypes of Igbo dances into contemporary forms, showing the possibility for the place of a new (my practice), different dramatic Igbo dance theatre that is based on the combination of conventions of archetypal and contemporary features of Igbo dance.

CHAPTER TWO

CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF NIGERIAN DANCE THEATRE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The anecdotal stories, research writings and contributions of dance scholars that are collected and reviewed in this chapter highlight the changing nature of African dance, notably the dissimilarities between contemporary Igbo dances and their archetypes. These differences reveal the cultural fragmentation that has occurred during the transformation of Igbo dance archetypes into contemporary forms, and they also demonstrate the significance and contributions of dramatic Igbo dance theatre based on the conventions of archetypal and contemporary features, to the body and knowledge of Igbo contemporary dance theatre.

This chapter will broaden the knowledge of African dance and dance theatre (See Chapter One) by explaining how it is used in other cultural contexts for a better understanding. It will also showcase how the migration, arts and culture of Igbo people and lack of documentation of their dance and production processes has informed their choice of dances and resulted in the sequestration of Igbo dance theatre such as *Iri-Agha*. A review of scholars' (such as Ann Hutchinson Guest and Doris Green) contribution in dance notation will help in the development of Igbo Descriptive Documentation System as described in section 2.4.

2.2 THE IGBO PEOPLE

The demographic background, culture and arts of the Igbo people influence their choice of dance forms and also give insight into the sequestration and celebration of different sections of Igbo dance theatre. From the colonial period until the present, the Igbo people have migrated in large number within and outside Igbo territory (Igwe, 2008). The spread of

communities within the Igbo heartland and beyond, and their interaction with neighbouring people, can be attributed to political, social, economic and technological causes. The Igbo presence in many parts of the country has become so visible that, in some cases, they dominate the arts and cultural activities in the societies in which they reside and work. Chinedu Nebo, a renowned Igbo scholar, speaking at the annual Ahiajoku lecture in Owerri comments:

> No other ethnic nationality is so massively dispersed within the geographical zones as the Igbo. From Sokoto to Nembe, from Maidugiri to Lagos, they line the market places, the transportation business, and the artisan market as hard working and peace-loving citizens of one Nigeria. There is almost no village in Nigeria where the Igbo do not live and contribute their quota to its economic output (Nebo, 2010, p.60).

The Igbo also carry along their culture in the forms of names, festivals and dances as they traverse the nations in search of greener pastures. They believe in the philosophy of 'Ahamefule', which can be translated as 'my name should not be lost' an expression that adds meaning to our explanation of culture because it borders on identity. Igbo carry their names as a mark of identity. According to interviewee, K. Okpi, the Orafia community in Anambra state migrated from Ohafia in Abia state and the Abba village in Imo state migrated from Abam in Abia state. Also, the Aro-Ndizeogu and Aro-Owerri communities in Imo state migrated from the Arochukwu of Abia state. The Ajali (Ujali), Ndi-Ikeluonwu and Ndi-Akpalaeze communities in the Anambra state migrated from Arochukwu (Okpi, K. Interview. 13th February 2013). It is remarkable that these communities have the same traditional dance forms, and that every year they assemble at Arochukwu to celebrate the Ikeji festival. While the communities gather and celebrate the complete (both in structure and plot) dance theatre annually, other communities such as Umunkwo and Umuajala in Imo state has the same cultural linage with Akabo but who migrated to different parts of Igbo land celebrate different sections of *Nwaokorobo* dance theatre. A closer look at the dances of some communities in

Igbo society shows some commonality in their movements, costumes and make-up and suggests that they once lived together and shared the same cultural practices.

As social animals, human beings live in communities that may be parts of larger social groups called societies. Crapo (2002, p.48) sees a society as 'a group of people who conceive of themselves as distinct from other groups and who are connected together through communication ties, common customs and traditions, and institutions such as politics and law'. Igbo society shares a sense of common identity, which is an outgrowth of their shared way of life, system of beliefs, and feelings about life and their environment. These constitute 'culture' as understood in terms of the definition offered by cultural policy for Nigeria:

> The totality of way of a life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges of their environment which gives its order and meaning. Their social, politics, economics, aesthetics and religious norms and modes of organization, and thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1988, p.11).

In this explanation, the phrases 'way of life' and 'distinguishing a people from their neighbours are significant, in relation to the Igbo expression 'omenala', which means 'our culture and tradition'. Culture here includes Igbo arts and artifacts, crafts, folktales, folksongs and poetry, music, dance, beliefs, ideas, occupation, and technology. Handed down from generation to generation through socialization and education (Omekwu, 2003), These constitute the Igbo cultural heritage. Such is the movement from archetypal *Iri-Agha* to the contemporary version for example the props and songs used in archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre are replicated in contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance such as *Elibe-Aja* song and *Isi-Oya* prop.

The most important and widely used artistic expression of the Igbo people is their dance. But the dances were not written down in notational form or recorded during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. In Igbo society, the traditional dances were handed down by the old men

and women to the next generation through dance practices and oral tradition. The accuracy (i.e. the accepted standard) of such dances was unable to be guaranteed since they were not recorded. Different interpretations by successive generations led to change and distortion, notably the sequestration of certain sections of the dances as seen in some of Igbo contemporary dances such as *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Umuaghogho*.

The development of Igbo descriptive documentation system will help to provide a framework for the research of Igbo dances as required for the studio practice. This aims to fill the gap identified by the field research: the lack of documentation of the dances explored in the study, with anecdotal recollections only.

2.3 THE NATURE OF AFRICAN DANCE

Dance is a performing and creative art of the theatre, and is basically the rhythmic movement of the body within a given space for different purposes, including the expression of an idea or emotion, the release of energy, or a simple delight in the structural ordering of movement for entertainment. Ahmed Yerima (2006, p.126) former Artistic Director of the National Troupe of Nigeria, wrote extensively on dance claiming that it communicates through signs and symbols and that beauty of Nigerian dances consists precisely of the contours of the movement:

> Dance involves the symbolic use of language to say things in the ritual setting. During the performance of Osun Osogbo festival worship in Nigeria, the virgin priestess is allowed to carry the message of bearing the problems of the society on her head as a carrier, by the gentle uncontrollable sway to the wild music and chant around her.

The communication through signs and symbols as in the Osun Osogbo dancers is a common feature in many Nigerian and African dances. The Ohafia war dancers also use non-verbal actions and gestures with encoded messages to communicate with their fellow warriors and audiences during re-enactments of such battle scenes. For example, when the warriors come

to a cross-road at the battle field, the lead dancer executes the signs of the cross with his legs while his hand points towards the direction of the Ohafia enemies. By this movement, the lead dancer has made a statement that indicates the position of their enemies; this will help members of his team to know the direction to move for safety (U. Uwasomba. Interview. 20th February 2013). This is in line with Bakare's (1994, p.2) definition of dance as 'the rhythmic movement of the body in space and time to make a statement'.

This leads us to the literal nature of dance. It carries a specific message and possibly narrates a story. Some artists like Mike Anyanwu see 'dance drama or dance theatre as that theatrical piece which integrates such elements as plot, characterization, composition, picturisation, structure, action, movement, rhythm and style' (Anyanwu,1993, p .4), a distinction that does not clearly differentiate dance from drama. Anyanwu's (1993) definition of dance drama like that of Nwamuo (1993), Bakare (1994) is relevant to this study of traditional Igbo dance theatre in several ways: they agree on the same features of elaborate narratives articulated and presented through dance movement, in particular plot and structure which, according to Anyanwu's definition are basic features of Igbo traditional dance theatre. Moreover Nwamuo's definition of dance drama as a well-organized (structured) dance with an identifiable story with a beginning, middle and an end, gives a scholarly context for my decision (in Chapter One) to base my studio research project on Nnabuenyi Ugonna's three part structure, consisting of an opening, middle and closing act.

Ododo and Igweonu (2001) emphasises the need to apply the term dance drama and dance theatre correctly. They asserts that in dance theatre, drama and music are mere appendages and do not play key role in the plot development. According to Ododo and Igweonu (2001), when a dance is conceived within its traditional contexts of ritual, festivals and social ambience of cultural exhibition and merry making, it can be said to be a dance drama,

whereas a dance theatre takes the likeness of drama to sustain itself in a meaningful communicative hold without inevitable dependence on vital dramatic and musical resources.

The separation of dance, music and drama in performances is alien to the Igbo society. While music and drama may function independently and be enjoyed by the audience, the independent presentation of dance (without the support of music and drama) may not be appreciable by the audience especially in Igbo society. This also account for the reason why dance need the support of other genre to communicate to the audience especially in the Igbo society and other Africa nation. Thus the dance drama and dance theatre that shares similar features and are used interchangeably in Igbo society.

I therefore argue that archetypal Igbo dance theatre or dance drama has the ability to communicate effectively a complete structured story using the body and movements as an instrument of expression, unlike the contemporary Igbo dance theatre that is characterized by sequestered structure and an incomplete plot. An extended narrative would allow the movements of the different sections to be understood in a wider context of meaning. Also in Igbo society, dance drama and dance theatre share the same basic features and should be seen as the same genre – 'dance theatre' in the context of my study. However in some other cultural contexts the term 'dance theatre' as a form of performance functions differently. In the United States, the movement or the act of dance is usually considered to be the most important aspect of dance theatre work (Manning, 1986). The dance theatre genre blends dance and theatre, so that both forms are an integral part of the performance. These performances may include spoken words, text, singing, and choreography that are informed by the theme, dramatics and theatrics of the piece (Ambrosio, 2008). In Europe, the term 'Tanztheater' (dance theatre), according to Roland Langer (1984), refers to a performance form that combines dance, speaking, singing and chanting, conventional theatre, and the use

of props, set, and costumes. It is performed by trained dancers and is usually devoid of any narrative plot. Instead of a storyline, specific situations that exhibit human fears and conflicts are presented in 'Tanztheater'.

Langer's (1984) description of 'Tanztheater' applies specifically to western performance conventions but some of these features exist in some African forms either independently, in related performances such as masking, or as part of dance forms practised on the continent. African traditional theatre is total (holistic), because it combines many of the art forms such as music, poetry, dancing, acting, miming, masking, singing, and dialogue (Enekwe, 1981; Welsh, 2004; Yerima, 2006**).** The Igbo dances analysed in my creative project (*Iri-Agha*, *Agborogu*, *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*, and *Nkwa-Agu*) all subscribe to this model in which dance is not only the primary vehicle or mode for meaning-making and communication, but also for the dramatic sequences and aesthetic contents.

2.3.1 Traditional African Dance

In Africa, dance has always been an integral part of peoples' lives, and often manifests itself within various aspects of everyday life including work, play, and general belief systems. Always a dynamic art form in Africa dance is a pivotal activity for various families, ethnic groups and nations. It is difficult to define African dance, because the subject matter of African dance according to Pearl Primus (1996, p.6),

> Is all inclusive of every activity between birth and death – the seed which trembles to be born – the first breath of life – the growth, the struggle for existence - the ecstasy and sorrow which is life, and there the path back to the earth. This is the dance.

According to Hanna (1973), Africa has about 1,000 different languages, and probably as many dance patterns. Hanna noted that in Africa, dance styles vary enormously as do definitions of dance. For example, among the Igbo, Akan, Efik, Azande, and Kamba, dance involves and is closely associated with vocal and instrumental music, including the drum,

which are theatrical elements. In contrast, among the Zulu, Matabele, Shi, Ngoni, Turkana, and Wanyaturu, drums are not used, and sometimes the users of drums are despised.

It may be difficult to define African dance given the diversity of practices and activities associated with the term on the continent, but some of the characteristics observed by Hanna (1973), are helpful in establishing how African dance is defined and how it will be used in this research. The physical behavior of dancers is one of the main kinaesthetic indicators in African dance: the human body as an instrument of dance releases energy through muscular responses to stimuli. Social behaviour in African dance is also used to reflect the proxemics relationships among individuals in groups—and among groups themselves as in the analysis of stage-audience relations in contemporary and archetypal *Iri-Agha* dances.

The evolution of dance art in Africa may not differ greatly from its evolution in Europe, because in both regions, dance was a part and parcel of rituals and ritual sacrifices, festivals, and also was used in the worship of one god or another by individuals and communities making supplications for good health, wealth, children and peace in the society. The origin of Nigerian dances according to Yerima (2006) is soaked in legends, and preserved by folklore. Begho (1996) asserts that the masquerade group of dances constitutes not only the 'focal of divergence' of different entities and planes of existence, it is also the 'locus-focus' of convergence for disparate but related life forms and forces in a people's worldview. The presence of masquerades could therefore suggest more than is overtly depicted; if anything they operate from several symbolic levels that make them able to communicate with people at several points and levels, literally and symbolically. Begho observes that the high respect accorded to masquerades in African communities, the secrecy and taboos surrounding them, and the rituals embodied in their performances more than justify this suggestion and their

undoubted theatricality. He notes that in the Yoruba society, there are myths that assert that the gods invented, perfected, and introduced the arts of dance, music and singing to the world through their representatives—the masquerades (ibid.). Begho believes that as a direct result of these god dances, other dances- such as the *Shongo* dance of Yoruba people evolved for various purposes.

Ukaegbu (2007) observes that the history of traditional Igbo dances can be traced to *Mmonwu*, the father of Igbo masquerade which shares the aesthetic features of other well-known Igbo dance. Not suprisingly the Igbo like other African societies have numerous dances that derive specifically from or for the gods. Yet by contrast some Igbo dances were created as a result of important social happenings in a particular historical period. For example, the *Alija* dance of the Owerri people in Eastern Nigeria celebrated the arrival of a new-born baby, and the *Agborogu* dance of the Mbaise people of the same region, was created as a part of a funeral ceremony for people who were deemed sufficiently old before they died. As Kwakwa (1998, p.285) claims 'traditional African dances do not occur in isolation. They often have specific roles within an event or a complex of events organized for a specific occasion'.

In Igbo society, there are dances that based on occupational activities with well-defined economic, social and political references; for example, the women's *Uri-ukwu* and *Agbachaa-ekuru-nwa* of the Mbaise people in the Owerri region which are based on the relationship between a mid-wife and pregnant woman in labour. Also, the *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance of the Afikpo people is based on masculinity and wrestling respectively. Rudolf Von Laban (1976, p.3) asserts:

> Dances at all times have had a profound connection with the working habits of the period in which they were created. Many dances depict human activities in the economic, social and political circumstances of their times.

Pearl Primus affirms that 'African dance has urgency. The dancer has direction and purpose. The purpose is to communicate' (1996, p. 5). African dance is undoubtedly a vital means of communicating the cultural values in a particular society like Ohafia. Their sacred archetypes like rituals everywhere contain the seeds, contexts, myths, and conventions that provide the basis for their contemporary variations. The history of religious and archetypal models or ritual-induced dances shows that most African dances started as ways of leaving everyday life behind and climbing into the realm of the spirit. On the religious functions of African dance, Kwabena Bame (1991, p.18) points out:

> If there is any activity, which is a prerequisite to African traditional religion, it is the broad activity of the drumming, singing, and dancing. It is an indispensable element of African religious worship, the Africans' process of communion with sports, the lesser gods as well as with God, the Supreme Being, through the pouring of libation, invocation, prayers and trances.

A Ghanaian example of African religious dance is the *Akan Akom* dance. This is a series of dances performed to enable the priests of Abosom (deity) to work themselves into or release themselves from trances or characteristic states for communicating with deities. In the past, some African dances served courtship purposes. Some social dances in the Cross River state of Nigeria are platforms for courtship between men and women. According to Oko-Offoboche:

> The 'Moni – Nkim' dance of northern Cross River, the 'Nkuho' dance of the Efik, the Mbopo dance of the Ibibios, all maiden dances of South East Nigeria are examples of courtship purposes which dance plays (1996, p. 6).

Traditionally the named dances were staged as part of rites of passage, in this case the growth and maturing from girl to woman and were the various communities' ways of announcing that the women participants were old enough to marry. In some communities men also had such dances that announced their maturity to manhood and membership of adult societies

such as *Ekpe* and *Okonko* in the Igbo-speaking states of Nigeria. An example of a courtship dance which young men and women show themselves off, thus encouraging courtship is the *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* of Afikpo in the Ebonyi state in Eastern Nigeria. This particular performance belongs to a wider social celebration whose other parts are rarely performed. It consists of young girls in Afikpo, an important town and culture in Northern Igbo society, and began as a traditional dance in honour of the hero of a wrestling contest. The courtship function is unmistakable in both the sensuality of the dancers and the actions of the potential suitors, who exhibit their wrestling prowess and physical and material endowments publically before the dancing girls. As Enekwe points out,

> The presence of girls during such contests encouraged the boys to put in their best…, on the other hand, the girls got an opportunity for interested persons to apply for marriage […] (Enekwe, 1991, p. 15).

Perhaps the single largest category of traditional African dances is the group termed ceremonial. The prologue and epilogue of harvest seasons in Africa (the season of yam in Igbo society in Nigeria, for example) are noted for dance festivities featuring various types of masquerades and non-masquerade dances, most of which entail animal sacrifices and food offerings to earth and water gods. The Orlu community in the Imo state of Nigeria customarily reserved the *Igba-ndi-Eze* dance for coronation and conferment of chieftaincy titles. The dancers are costumed like Ezes (traditional kings), court attendants, and ministers or chiefs. This is an effortless movement-based dance performed on royal occasions or providing entertainment in an Eze's palace. Apart from the ceremonial dances like *Igba-ndi-Eze*, there are varieties of traditional dances in Igbo land and other parts of Africa. Primus, in her description of the nature and versatility of African dance, states that 'the dance is strong magic, the dance is a spirit. It turns the body to liquid steel. It makes it vibrate like a guitar'

(1996, p.5). Robert Farris Thompson supports the spiritual and magical nature of African dance:

> If Spirits challenge gravity by moving on stilts twelve feet in the air to dance rhythms in the forest of Liberia, if athletes in Nigeria can carry nearly a hundred pounds of carved wood and shoulder this burden for a quarter of an hour while dancing before their king; if Dahomean initiate into a society honouring the collective ancestral dead spin and spin… until the very concept of human dizziness begins to lose its force then anything is possible (1974, p.14).

In Africa, dances portray occupations such as farming, weaving, fishing and hunting. In Nigeria, for example, Emeka Nwabuoku observes that 'work movements ultimately become the movement of dance' (1984, p. 22). According to Nwabuoku, the Birnin Kebbi people have many dances based on the movements and gestures of fishing and farming, their main occupation. One dance concerns the movement of fishermen on the river.

In Igbo society, like other parts of Africa some of the dances that this study investigates display occupational and entertainment motifs. Examples are the *Iri-Agha* (war dance) and *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* (maiden dance). Commenting on this, Kalu Okpi notes that different age groups in Ohafia and Abam are assigned specific tasks, and that their group dances reflect their primary occupations, for example, warriors, entertainers, farmers and hunters[15]. Supporting Okpi's view, Onwuliri (2011, p.121) adds that in Igbo land 'warriors are also a guild of professionals in the traditional society. Hence their dance too is occupational or vocational'. The warriors' guild has its own kind of music and dance in different parts of Igbo society of which archetypal *Iri-Agha* is the most famous example. Akunna defines two categories of African dance, the secular and religious, observing:

> The secular dance is believed to have come into beings, as an expression of subjective feelings of an ecstatic nature which afterwards was secularised and became social dance. The religious dance is believed to

[15] Kalu Okpi interviewed by Chris Nwaru in Owerri 13th February, 2013.

> have been emanated from magic ceremonies and cults with religious imperatives (2006, p. 93)

Yerima (2006) supports Akunna's view on the classification of Nigerian traditional dances claiming that in Nigeria ritual dances are deeply rooted in religious activities. Dancers were incorporated into religious worship and religious ceremonies to evoke or worship the gods—the main dancers performing as well as doubling as the guiding fathers and mothers of such cults within any given society. Some ritual dances were accompanied by ritual sacrifices and songs, as for in the procession of the *Irio-Agbara* dance of the Avu-Owerri people in eastern Nigeria that is performed for the yearly cleansing of evil and malevolent forces from the community.

Social dances, on the other hand, were less serious in content and form (Yerima, 2006). Although there were also specific occasions on which they were performed, social dances were usually purely celebratory in nature; they include dances presented as part of naming ceremonies, the celebration of someone's elevation to a high status within a community or marriage. According to Begho (1996), this subdivision contains the following categories: harvest, festival, heroic, funeral, coronation and traditional title dances. Archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre falls under the heroic dance category. This consists of war dances designed to dispel fear in potential male combatants in a community and to prepare them physically and psychologically for action and victory dances which seek to re-enact the ferocity of renowned warriors in war, either as a kind of imitative rite to ensure victory or a kind of jubilation for achievements won through prowess in war. Significantly, Nigerian traditional dances are used to teach and reinforce cultural patterns. Many groups have dances which ridicule through gesture, movement, song, and music for those guilty of offensive behaviours such as theft, political brigade, incest, rape, marital infidelity and abuse, promiscuity, etc. The

dancers may be cast in masquerade form or their bodies are temporarily possessed by a supernatural entity, and thus they can perform with freedom from 'libel' or other retribution (Hanna, 1973). Family obligations are one of the most frequently communicated themes in African dance. Among the Owerri and Mbaise people in Nigeria, the birth of a child is celebrated, and men and women who have many children are praised. In the greater Owerri area comprising the Mbaise, Ikeduru, Mbaitoli and Egbema communities, one of these dances specifically celebrates a woman who has given birth to ten sons as a great social status symbol.

Religious traditions, achievement, status and economic patterns are communicated through dance. In some areas, people dance to honour those in higher positions. In others such as Onitsha in Nigeria, the king is required to dance before his people at the annual yam feast to retain his position of honour. As stated earlier many African peoples have dances that mime traditional occupational behaviour important to the local economy. Such dances serve as media for giving work instructions and providing practice in the various movements essential to routine work activities. The traditional dances in Nigeria from which contemporary dance practices grew, have a long tradition of festivals, storytelling and masquerade performances. African dancers and choreographers are able to work from these traditions in creating a new platform for contemporary dance in their society. Therefore traditional dance plays a vital role in determining the direction of contemporary dance in Africa.

2.3.2 Contemporary African Dance

For many years, African scholars and choreographers have attempted to define contemporary African dance. Adedayo Liadi states that contemporary African dance is a 're-structuring of our indigenous African dance and bringing it into a contemporary framework through research, without being misled' (Gilbert Douglas et al 2006, p.105). Rasaki-Ojo Bakare

indicates that the term ‘contemporary choreographer’ implies the existence of traditional choreographers (Bakare, 2006) and suggests that the choreographer uses dances that exist in his cultural environment as raw materials to express his creative thoughts. But the most important argument for this research on the traditions, myths, legends and stories of Ohafia people to recuperate what has been lost, is that of Zimbabwean choreographer, Gilbert Douglas, namely that tradition as well as its dances, plays a vital role in determining the direction of contemporary dance in Africa. For an African dancer, tradition is the basis from which to start, and to move on from in exploring a new direction for contemporary dance (Gilbert Douglas *et al*, 2006). The definitions of contemporary African dance by Laidi, Bakare and Douglas point towards the source used by Emoruwa ‘dance creativities by Africans, performed most essentially by Africans, using African traditional icons in a re-interpreted, abstractive and most times, purposefully distorted order’ (2005, p.348).

Most of the contemporary practice in African dance grew out of custom and ritual. In Nigeria, contemporary dances showcase different themes and are used in various ways depending on the purpose of the production or the occasion of the performance. Some are used to tackle injustices and political situations, others are used for commercial purposes or religious worship or can be linked to traditional dances that have been re-choreographed for social functions and entertainment such as *Ori* dance (2003) by Adedayo Laidi (Okoye, 2013). In this study, the contemporary dances (*Iri-Agha*, *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*, *Agbigbo*, *Nkwa-Agu*, and *Agborogu*) under investigation are linked to their archetypal forms from where they evolved with the aim of re-interpreting them for better understanding. The contemporary dances mentioned above have incomplete structures and my aim is to create a complete narrative structure consisting of expository, climatic and post-climatic in which the storyline is made explicit for an audience to understand.

African dance continues to contribute to society; however, as dance adapts to new desires and behaviours, its forms are modified, and its essential stylistic elements continue to persist. Hanna observes that in Tanzania:

> Modifications in dance occur even in those villages which have resisted change and where substantive culture change has been slight. Sacred dances are now often held at different times than they used to be, for example, on Western or national holidays so that some of the key participants who work or attend schools in towns can attend (1973, p.171).

Bakare (2006) comments that traditional dances usually performed outside their original contexts such as the village square or shrine in Nigeria are now staged in modern theatre buildings. The fusion of old and new is a recurring phenomenon across every sphere of life in Africa and it is no surprise that contemporary dances on the continent accommodate and reflect on these. People continue to be acquainted with old and new values through African dance; movements that represent the old and new dance form have also been introduced into churches and schools. Traditional dancing in particular is used in some Christian churches in Nigeria as a part of prayer and worship. For example, the Cherubim and Seraphim church and the Celestial Church of Christ in Owerri use traditional instruments and movements during the praise and worship sections of their services. Many church leaders have come to realize that drawing upon deeply rooted traditional forms, with which the older people grew up, facilitates communication between preacher and listeners. The Catholic churches in Owerri, introduced 'Odenigbo' to celebrate and preserve Igbo traditional performances, while a new kind of rock music and dance appears in many Pentecostal churches as part of an effort to reach young people. Chukwuma Okoye comments on some of the music and dance styles in the Believers' Loveworld Inc., a Pentecostal Church in Nigerian:

> I see the charismatic pastor as a performer whose every gesture, movement, vocalisation, as well as physical appearance, are undeniably 'staged'; all

> studiously selected, elaborated and executed for effects other than those they elicit in their everyday communicative uses (Okoye, 2007, p. 82).

War dances, such as the *Iri-Agha* and *Aboada* are no longer appropriate for battle preparation since there are no more community wars to engage with; rather, while still being performed their purpose is to recount communities' histories and to proclaim sectional identities.

Bakare (2006) has identified two schools of thought in the field of Nigerian dance: the Relativist School and the Advocators of Change. Within the Relativist School, dance practitioners, scholars and social commentators exhibit a patriotic passion to protect what is African, and endorse the current state of Nigerian dance as being unadulterated by significant influences from Western styles. The practitioners here are represented by traditional choreographers who, according to Bakare, are 'largely engaged in spiritual activities, although they find time to create for reasons that are purely social but even this was still tied to a large extent, to the world view of the society' (2006, p. 66). Conversely, those who espouse the Advocators of Change line of thought are called 'moderns' and are otherwise known as 'contemporary choreographers'. Such practitioner (Chukwuma Okoye; Adedayo Laidi) is not 'overtly engaged in spiritual efficacy but uses the dances that exist in his cultural background as raw materials and establishes linguistic property to express his purely creative thoughts' (Bakare, 2006, p.66).

These two schools are important and necessary in preserving the history of dance as well as advancing the art of dance; yet they remain sources of divided (and unresolved) opinion on contemporary Nigerian dance. Those who support the Relativist School consider contemporary choreographers in Nigeria alienated Africans, ignorant and potentially destructive of the people's culture because they are threatening the preservation and survival of traditional Nigerian dance. Perhaps aiming to justify the fusion of foreign and indigenous

dance movements in his choreography, Ahmed Yerima of the Relativist school, in 'Dance Survival and Preservation in Nigerian Societies', declares:

> Another threat to the survival of traditional dance was that modern or city musicians and dancers wanted to tamper with the originality of the traditional dances. The dance steps of serious or ritual dances were diffused into suggestive sexual gesticulations…. Such attempts often distort or destroy the essence of the Africaness in traditional dances (Yerima, 2003, p.219).

Although Yerima's declaration contains some elements of truth, I argue that contemporary Nigerian choreographers cannot afford to reject changes that have been effective in transforming the ritual contexts of some of the dances which are now performed in purely social or theatrical contexts, and not in shrines or for the veneration of deities in ritual situations. Bakare (2006, p.73) also acknowledges that 'cultural practices do change and must by necessity change as this is the essence of development'. Sustainable development cannot occur without some changes, although Nigerian dancers and choreographers need not forget their roots. This is one explanation for why the new studio dance practices of this research will be based on indigenous models.

The Advocators of Change, who perform in contemporary Nigerian dances, challenge the relativist theorists. According to Okoye (2013), they are self-appointed defenders of 'culture' who find it impossible to imagine authenticity as anything but hermetic, and who also believe that contemporary thought is nothing other than cultural betrayal and the triumph of Western cultural hegemony. Supporting his position with an old Igbo proverb, Okoye asserts:

> My 'authentic' ancestors prized knowledge so highly that an Igbo proverb avers that the person who travels the most is often the most knowledgeable because he acquires knowledge from everywhere and returns home to nourish the existing fount of communal wisdom, not displace or deplete it. (2013, p. 2).

This research and studio practice is based on the view that Igbo traditional dances should not be displaced or depleted. This middle ground or balanced view or position between the two schools of thought agrees that the way of life of a people in any given time or place is organised out of past experiences adapted to present circumstances. The position taken in this research project is that Igbo contemporary choreographers should bridge the gap or create a continuum between the past and the present. They should possess the skills necessary for the inevitable adaptation, re-interpretation and hybridisation of Nigerian /African dances to contemporary circumstances/ needs for staging/performance without forcing the traditional dances to lose their identity.

This view is supported by some contemporary African choreographers such as Gilbert Douglas, from Zimbabwe, who opines that 'Traditional dances play a vital role in determining the direction of present-day dance in Africa. For an African choreographer, tradition is the starting point in the exploration of contemporary dance' (Douglas et al, 2006, p.104).

Reginald Danster from South Africa, while speaking about the role of traditional dance in his choreographic experience, asserts 'If I do contemporary dance it must be influenced by my traditional dance. If I don't comply with that people will ask, 'What are you trying to do?' (Danster, 2006, p.108). One of the most celebrated contemporary choreographers in Nigeria, Adedayo Liadi, who researches and experiments with indigenous dance forms for materials for new dances, narrates his experience:

> To be able to create a contemporary African dance means you have to think of your culture and tradition. I continued researching for a new body language generally. Lucky for me, I was able to discover something new to show the Nigerian audiences but still retaining my culture. (Laidi, 2006, p.105).

Liadi's emphasises the role of research in creating a new dance form similar to the one that will be developed in this study. Perhaps one of the problems facing some contemporary Nigerian choreographers is the lack of proper research. As Bakare puts it:

> A misunderstanding of this commitment and responsibility [to research, adaptation and development] has unduly exposed the Nigeria contemporary choreographer to scornful treatment and comments by scholars and cultural workers who are sympathetic to the relativist theory (2006, p. 66).

This lack of commitment and responsibility has led to the misrepresentation of some choreographic works as cultural facts. This study aims to correct this by contributing to knowledge of Nigerian dances through reinterpretations of the archetypal or traditional *Iri-Agha* dance theatre of the Igbo people in Nigeria as a prototype for the continuing development and interpretation of indigenous Nigerian and African dances.

2.4 AFRICAN DANCE DOCUMENTATION

Dance forms in Africa are transmitted from one generation to another in the form of oral traditions that have existed since the beginning of time. According to Doris Green, an African music and dance historian:

> Any society that is totally dependent upon oral communication for the transmission of its culture between generations is doomed to failure because of outside interpretation and the breakdown of the human memory over the course of time (Green, 2012).

Therefore any written documentation on these oral traditions is welcomed. In Nigeria, no such system has been developed and no attempt has been made in the direction of notating Nigerian dance performances (Ugolo, 2006). One aim of this research is to create a notational system for reading, documenting and preserving archetypal and contemporary forms of Igbo dance theatre.

Chris Ugolo, a renowned dance scholar in Nigeria notes the difference between dance documentation, 'the collection and classification of information related to the performance and practice of dance' and dance preservation 'to keep safe and maintain the performance and practice of a particular dance form and style in the existing state to prevent adulteration and extinction' (2006, p.48). Dance notation is another method of documentation that scores functions like musical scores (perhaps with slight differences) and provides a stable written record based on codified symbols that can be used to recreate or study the work. The notation of dance art may include recording its form and style in an accurate manner (Dance Heritage Coalition, 2006), making it accessible to dance researchers and performance groups that may want to reconstruct and perform it.

Since dance is a performing art, the survival of any dance work depends either on its being preserved through physical practice, oral retelling or by being written down in some form, recorded on film, or some combination of those formats. Traditionally, preserving dance especially in Africa came about by practising and memorizing the dance steps and movements and passing them orally from one generation to another. Alberto Paz and Valorie Hart (2009) observe that in the past, the memorizing of dance steps was common with those who approach the lesser complex Argentine ballroom tango. Memorizing the way two feet move, with relation to body alignments and sense of direction, lasts a day or two before all is forgotten. With the aid of festivals, traditional African societies were able to preserve some of their dances, although this method has its limitations. Since dance is an ephemeral art, some movements can easily be forgotten over time. Moreover, the death of the choreographer or dance leader may lead to changes in some dance movements, since members may have relied on the choreographer or dance leader to remember the dance steps.

On preserving dance art through written works, Burtner (1978, p.128) observes that 'of all the recording of art forms of the past, that of the dance, which has movement for its medium of expression, comes off least well; in fact, hardly at all'. Dance notation aims to document choreography for preservation (Ugolo, 2006) and this study aims at creating a notational system for reading, documenting and preserving Igbo dance theatre. Dance notation is to dance what musical notation is to music and what the written word is to drama. There is nevertheless, a growing body of dance records and recordings, although the majority of African dance forms and choreographic practices have remained on the peripheries of documentation or of being recorded on video without being notated in either African or European languages or forms; so they remain subject to the ravages of chance and change.

A look at some of the historical works on dance notation will help in justifying a new method of documenting dance in Nigeria. Records of dance notation go back to ancient Egypt, showing that notations have transformed over the centuries according to the development of dance techniques and the role and function of dance within a society, such as the notation of mainly floor plans and single hand and foot gestures around 1700 through Raoul-Auger Feuillet.

Recordings of dance became more complex through time. In 1928 Rudolf Laban developed the *Labanotation* which is used mainly in the United States. The Laban system is an 'alphabet' system in which symbols represent movement components through which each pattern is spelled out. Everything that occurs can be notated – the movements and direction in space, the floor pattern, the tempo, rhythm and meter, dynamism and flow. To Elizabeth Burtner, *Labanotation* is a time consuming and difficult task and there are currently far too few professional notators (1978, p.127). Hence I have decided against using it for Igbo dances where there is communal ownership of traditional dances and members of the

communities (both literates and non-literate) seek to participate in and enjoy the dance performances. *Choreology*, developed by Joan and Rudolf Benesh in 1955, using a clear and mimetic rather than symbolic form of notation, is written on a five-line stave, recording the dancer's position as viewed from behind. But since it is based on the conventions of ballet, it cannot be used in the context of the current research.

The symbols Laban chose are cumbersome; their inflexibility and bulk make a formidable picture (Nikolais, 1978, p.146). The practice of dance notation has not been easy, as Mackrell (2010) notes: the problems with all systems of dance notation are that few choreographers and even fewer dancers are literate in them. As presently practiced, dance notation is mostly used only for the recording, rather than the creating and learning of dances. Layiwola (1997, p.261) observes that:

> The multiplicity of culture in Africa does make for a precise style of identification known solely to be African; as such there is no uniform dance style which could represent the various creations of the different ethnic groups. This truly makes the attempt at documentation almost impossible as there is no common heritage of a 'universal' alphabet.

However, in this research I plan to develop a system that will produce a creative framework for, reading, notating, reproducing and re-interpreting African dance forms. My observation in the field indicates that most traditional Igbo dances are owned by the communities and the dances (dance movements) are not notated. Based on my observation, many factors accounted for the sequestered stages of the traditional Igbo dance theatre. First, the death of the dance leader or key members of the dance troupe may deter the transmission of accurate information and recall of the dance steps and movements. Second, disagreement among performers in a group or community may lead to division and separation and the dance practice and performance of the separated group may differ from the archetypal version. Third, the migration of members of an Igbo community to different places as a result of war,

trade or the search for a better job also led to the practice and presentation of few dance section based on incomplete number of performers and further gave birth to contemporary Igbo dance with its incomplete structure and plot. The next chapter (Chapter Three) will attempt the creation and interpretation of a dance theatre with a complete structure and narrative.

Other scholars have developed notational systems: Kariamu Welsh Asante, a black American, developed *Unfundalai* techniques to address the complex multiplicity of movements and rhythms in Africa and Peter Badejo has made a noteworthy attempt to reconstruct, document and notate Yoruba 'bata' dance into 'Batabade' (Igweonu, 2006).

Perhaps the only African scholar who has developed a notation that specialises in recording Africa music instrumentation rather than dance is Doris Green. Green, an ethnomusicologist, musician and dancer, is the creator of 'Greenotation', a system for notating the percussive instruments of African ensembles that enables one to notate the music, and align it with the dance movements, creating an integrated score with a conterminous relationship just as it is in Africa (Green, 2012). Despite these different options, I have found the system of 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System' (developed in the process of this study) most suitable for the research and studio practice of this project because the creation was based on indigenous Igbo movements and scores as a model for reading template for contemporary Igbo dance.

The 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System' uses symbols and notes to document dance art, and can be applied to other Nigerian and African dances in general. This dance documentation system is divided into two parts, namely; a notational drawing that houses the dance symbols and the descriptive aspect consisting of notes. Guest (2010) recommended the combination of notes and symbols for a notational system. The symbols represent the sex of the dancers and their positions; floor patterns and movement directions. The note contains the

descriptive movements, rhythms, space and dynamics used in executing a dance. It also encloses the name and origin of the dance piece, costumes, props and make-up. The combination of description (notes) and notation (symbols) in a system for dance documentation is necessary for easy comprehension of African dance that prioritises both features and for a standard notational system. The 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System' will provide a creative framework for reproducing and re-interpreting Igbo dance forms and performances. The *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre (outcome of the studio practice) as analysed in Chapter Four of this study follows the Igbo Descriptive Documentation System.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CREATIVE PROCESS OF *NKWA-IKE* DANCE THEATRE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Building on chapter two, this chapter deals with the processes involved in the creation of a contemporary Igbo dance theatre performance. The outcome of the studio practice is *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre. The process used in creating *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre involved two sections: firstly, the primary research section included a field trip, interviews with professional and amateur dancers and theatre-makers and observations of performances in village settings; the second section was the creative practice in the studio which involved the selection of participants for my creative project and the creation of *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre where information and data such as the rituals during war preparation and the community celebration of the returnee warriors were transformed into performance materials. Section one revealed the differences in the form and content of contemporary Igbo dance and their ritual and mythological archetypes. The information was used to devise a 'roadmap' for the creative practice in the studio while the creative practice helped me to develop performance materials with which to interrogate (practically) and fill the sequestered stages—or missing links—between archetypal and contemporary Igbo dances, a factor that has undoubtedly played a part in how Igbo dance practitioners and scholars interpret and adapt cultural and historical materials for contemporary Igbo dances. The two sections of the process are connected however, the studio practice is central in answering the research questions for obvious reasons.

First, the aims of this study cannot be achieved or the research questions answered without the practical component where field information is analysed and then transformed into practice. Practice is intrinsic to this study because its process is reviewing the archetype *Iri-Agha* dance and together with the products (*Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre) help in answering the research questions (Hutcheon, 2006). Second, this studio practice focuses on and draws upon the paradigms used in this study such as Brad Haseman's (2006) performative research theory and Yvonne Hardt's (2012) repertoire theory, both of which are relevant in practice-led research. Such research is intrinsically experiential and comes to the fore when the researcher creates new artistic forms such as *Nkwa-Ike* performance. Thirdly, the notational system best described as 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System', (described in Chapter Two as the most appropriate for this study) a framework for documenting and re-producing *Nkwa-Ike* and similar dances was experimented on and later developed in the studio.

Therefore, the studio practice helped to accomplish some of the objectives of this study such as; to create a documentation system for reading, documenting and preserving archetypal and contemporary forms of Igbo dance theatre and in answering questions such as: How does contemporary Igbo dance theatre differ in structure, form and content from its archetypal models that were based on rituals and sociocultural practises? How does the absence of exposition and post-climactic stages in contemporary Igbo dance theatre provide space for new creative energies and dance practices?

SECTION A

This section traces the creative process from the field investigations of five different forms of archetypal Igbo dance (*Iri-Agha, Nkwa-Umuagbogho, Agborogu, Nkwa-Agu, and Nkwa-Nwite*), from how they differ from their contemporary forms to exploring their potential in providing theatre-makers such as myself with cultural materials and ideas to work from.

3.2 MY FIELD TRIP: RESEARCH INQUIRY

One of the objectives of this study is to recover and recuperate a lost part of the heritage of *Iri-Agha* dance theatre. The need for a reinterpretation of *Iri-Agha* dance theatre arises from the fact that discoveries the researcher made at Ohafia, in Abia state of Nigeria show that a good amount of the historical information on the forms is not included in the present contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance presented by Arts Councils in Igbo-speaking states of Nigeria.

I conducted my field research from 4th January to 12th March, 2013. In the field, interviews and observations were conducted in various /towns and communities in Imo, Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi states in Nigeria. The information was gathered through unstructured interviews conducted with dance teachers, community chieftains and leaders, village heads, professionals and amateur dance practitioners on the origins and development of this dance.[16] The interviews involved groups and individuals in order to gain more comprehensive and wider information about the dances under investigation.

[16] See pictures 1(a), 1 (b), 1 (c), 1(d) and 2 (a), 2 (b), 2 (c), 2(d) Interviews held at Ohafia, Abia State and Owerri, Imo State in Nigeria. Details of the pictures, interview questions, names and responses of the interviewees are placed in the appendix.

Pictures 1 (a), 1 (b), 1 (c), 1(d). Interviews held at Ohafia in Abia State of Nigeria
Top Left: From left; Kalu Uchendu, Echeme Ugwu and Chris Nwaru (Researcher)
Top Right: From right; Emmanuuel Imaga and Chris Nwaru
Below Left: From left; Nnate Orji Kalu, Agwu Emeh and Chris Nwaru
Below Right: From right; Okorie Eme and Chris Nwaru

Pictures 2 (a), 2 (b), 2 (c), 2 (d); Interviews held at Owerri in Imo State of Nigeria
Top Left: From left; Kalu Okpi and Chris Nwaru (Researcher)
Top Right: From right; and Chris Nwaru and Ejike Ugiri
Below Left: From left; Toni Duruaku and Chris Nwaru

Below Right: From right; and Chris Nwaru and Nkem Opara

An investigation of archetypal forms which are, the basis of the dance theatre that is covered in this study occurred at the following places:

- *Iri-Agha* dance of Ohafia in Abia State.
- *Nkwa-Agu* dance of Ajali in Anambra State.
- *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* and *Nkwa-Nwaite* dances of Afikpo in Ebonyi State.
- *Agborogu* dance of Mbaise, in Imo State.

The selected dances are the most popular, most long lived and the states represent all Igbo regions and the research will generate information and results that can be applied to the majority of Igbo society. People were interviewed specifically on the origins of the above dances, in order to obtain information about their structure, style, form, content and the creative processes that went into their construction. The interviews helped in tracing the cultural activities and background of the Igbo people from which the selected dances have evolved. And the findings from the interviews are stated in sub-heading 3.4 of this chapter (Section A). The photo documents are evidence of field and interviewing activities while some samples of interview questions are attached in the appendix.

3.3 ARCHETYPAL *IRI-AGHA*

As stated earlier, the decision to focus on *Iri-Agha* is because it is the only archetypal dance theatre that was encountered during my field research which had suffered a high degree of fragmentation. This is so extreme that today only the climatic (*Ikpirikpe*) stage is celebrated. See Bullet 1 of DVD. This high degree of fragmentation mattered more to this practice because it represent a major loss of the culture of Ohafia people.

Traditional dance, like other forms of theatre (drama and music) in Africa has existed since the pre-colonial era, according to Garba Ashiwaju's (1981) observation that theatre or drama

has always had a place in African societies. Rantimi Julius-Adeoye (2013) confirms that pre-colonial theatre refers to all the theatre practices associated with indigenous pre-colonial polities in Nigeria before 1900. A reference to a vibrant theatrical tradition long before colonial rule is found in the writings of Olauda Equiano, one of the few black writers of the slave trade period who wrote in 1789, that 'We are almost a nation of dancers, musicians and poets' (1789, p. 57). In Igbo society, traditional dance was integral to commemorative worship and evocation of the gods and ancestors. While this research aims to recover some of these practices, it is not possible to reaffirm this level of integration between worship and theatre.

During my field research, I interviewed dance teachers, arts practitioners, traditional rulers, village heads, and performers on topics like the origin, form, structures, movements and costumes used in performing the dance. The interviewees' responses revealed that there is more to *Iri-Agha* than what we see today. For instance, I asked some standard questions to all those interviewed: 'Does *Iri-Agha* dance have various sections? How are they connected? Is the dance development coherent and systematic? Some of the responses are noted below – others are in the appendix iii. Ejike Ugiri, Head of the Department of Theatre Arts at the Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri responded:

> I think that *Iri-Agha* dance has a beginning because some years back before the dancers began to dance they poured libations made some incantations to the gods of the land and performed some other rituals. But today, I do not witness such rituals. The dancers just perform the dance (E. Ugiri, Interview. 13 February, 2013).

In agreement Emmanuel Imaga, traditional ruler of Ohafia Udumaezema ancient kingdom asserts that:

> In Ohafia the preparation that preceded the war on which *Iri-Agha* dance is based existed not in full dance form but in sacred ritual forms, though some parts of the ritual are performed in movements,

> regulated or timed with the traditional metal gong instrument (E. Imaga, Interview. 21 January, 2013).

In Igbo society and societies in other parts of Africa such as Ghana and the Congo, where the Asante people and the Luba tribe respectively live, some performances in festivals may begin with dance or ritual. Kariamu Welsh (2004) claims that the beginning of a dance and its end are determined by events in the community. On the form and content of archetypal *Iri-Agha*, I asked: '*Iri-Agha* is a war dance, how do Ohafia people prepare for the war?' In his response, Kalu Okpi one of Nigeria's foremost dance professionals, cultural commentators and former Director of the Abia State Council for Arts and Culture, Umuahia noted:

> We didn't just wake up one morning and went to war, just like the modern soldiers of today. People prepared very well before we headed to war. In Ohafia and Abam specific tasks are assigned to different age groups/grades. The age grades of those who go to war are between 25 and 40 years. The warriors camp for some days in a secluded place so that the chief priest can prepare them with the protective rituals after intensive training about war tactics. Then the warriors head to Achichi arena and bow before the *Ikoro* and then proceed to the battle field (K. Okpi, Interview.13th February 2013).

Okpi's comment clarifies that *Iri-Agha* dance theatre starts with the preparations for war. At this point, it is pertinent to analyse archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre in relation to the contemporary versions of the same theatre commissioned and performed by The Imo and Abia states Arts Councils in an attempt to answer questions such as: Why are the stages sequestered and why are other sections not made visible or articulated in and through dance and other forms of theatrics? The investigation and analysis of archetypal *Iri-Agha* through the interviews will help to gather materials (data) for the creation of the sequestered stages (missing links) in the studio.

3.3.1 Archetypal *Iri-Agha* of Ohafia as a Prototype of a Traditional Igbo Dance Theatre

Ohafia is a town and local government area in Abia state, Nigeria. In the past the culture of Ohafia hinged around the prowess of the men in war. Ohafia people were constantly on the lookout for wars in which to take part. The love of military glory became a consuming passion and the focus of all social values (Ohafia Udumeze Community, 2013). The men became similar to mercenaries and the people of Arochukwu Local Government Area in Abia state, who roamed all over Igboland 'hunting' for slaves, harnessed this warlike spirit in the Ohafia people to their own advantage. The ancestors of the Ohafia people were renowned as mighty warriors for whom the practise of beheading a fallen foe was a favourite pastime. A human skull was valued as a souvenir, and as a proof of the Ohafia man's courage, bestowed many different types of honour. Only those who brought home a human head could join the *Ogbu-Isi* society and wear the eagle plume of courage. Though, Kalu Okpi points out that the famed love of battle prowess associated with Ohafia and Abam is part of cultural fiction.[17]

The Ohafia warrior tradition is embodied in the performance of *Iri-Agha*. The venue of the old *Iri-Agha* dance theatre is Achichi, a space created for festivals, cultural and social ceremonies, which is central to the twenty-six villages that constitute the Ohafia community. In the Ohafia community the three sections of the old *Iri-Agha* dance theatre are also staged for public view. They consist of the preparatory rituals and performances that precede the war, the performance that re-enacts the war experience by warriors and lastly, the victory celebration. Writing on the importance of Achichi as a sacred location and the performance space of *Iri-Agha*, the current traditional ruler of Ohafia community, E.U.I Imaga, in his study, *The Udumeze Stool*, emphasises that:

[17] Kalu Okpi, a renowned Igbo scholar from Abam interviewed by Chris Nwaru on 13 February, 2013 in Owerri.

> It was in the great Achichi Ohafia Udumezema that the tribal wars waged by the Ohafia people were usually declared and there also were peace treaties normally ratified; it was in Achichi that Ohafia Udumaezema was laid to rest; Achichi Ohafia Udumaezema is the holy place where lies were never told; where defiled men and women ban themselves from entering… but if anybody who committed an offence from any part of Ohafia that managed to come to Ahichi square and then to *Obu Ndi Imaga* was eventually set free (2008, p.4).

Socio-culturally, the Achichi of Ohafia was a ritual, judicial and social space for the theatre-of-life embodying communal values that enhance [to draw on as well as underlining both] the performative and theatrical qualities of the activities that took place in it, historically and in the present. It is significant that the old village shrine and *Ikoro* were situated close to Achichi. As is the practice in many performance traditions in Africa, the activation of the Ohafia Udumaezema ritual function within the space that houses the community shrine and the Achichi, symbolize the fact that during *Iri-Agha* performances, the Ohafia people are simultaneously engaged in public religious celebration and social interaction with history and folklore with far-reaching socio-cultural significance.

3.3.2 The Preparatory Stage

Concerning the war preparations, the traditional ritual instrument the *Ikoro* announce the urgent information which leads to the gathering of the village heads and grown men of Ohafia who have performed the necessary initiation into the warrior age-grade. *Ikoro* is a cylindrical wood drum which Ohafia and some other Igbo communities use to communicate important information to their people. In Ohafia it is housed in a room at the Ahichi. Okonkwo captures the use of *Ikoro* in Ohafia as he states:

> In traditional Igbo society, the town crier uses the *Ikoro* to announce the death of important people, veterans and heroes. The *Ikoro* announces also the beginning and end of serious tribal war and peace treaties (Okonkwo, 1994, p.52).

The role of the *Ikoro* in the archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance and Ohafia community is significant not only in its use as a medium of communication but in representing the voice of the ancestors; hence the warrior takes a bow before the *Ikoro* and proceeds to war. In Ohafia and Abam specific tasks are assigned to the different age groups or grades that[18]from the time of the ancient and pre-colonial Igbo societies existed for war, entertainment and occupation. The age of the able-bodied men who went to war between 25 – 40 years. The older men stayed home to care for and safeguard families and communities against surprise attacks. At the sound of the *Ikoro* in Ohafia and Abam communities, the group designated for war would gather for briefings at Achichi, at which details of the intended war, camping dates, strategies and times of attack were discussed and decided. The preparations included staying away from women and avoiding sexual relations, praying to relevant deities and performing protective rituals, eating foods cooked by men as women are not allowed in the camp. Kalu Achike, a member of the Udumeze Ohafia dance troupe, believes that food cooked by women may weaken the warriors' charms.[19] While in the camp, the warriors also prepare their war tools, such as machetes and arrows. Most importantly, the chief priest comes to perform protective rituals, to initiate them into communal secrets as well as to reinforce the 'dos' and 'don'ts' expected of them.

According to Agwu, the chief drummer of the Udumeze dance group, the preparation takes days and it is in 'body and spirit'.[20] During the ritual performances, crucial traditional religious instructions are spelt out, and as Okechukwu Onwuliri (2001, p.131) notes, 'the warriors rely on the supernatural power and divine authority of ancestors to validate their worthwhile activities and ensure the lasting success of their mission'. While appropriate restorative rituals are performed at the end of the war to reintegrate the warrior into the

[18]Kalu Okpi interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Owerri on the 13 February, 2013.
[19]Kalu Achike interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Ohafia on 18th February, 2013.
[20] Agwu Emeh interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Ohafia on 18th February, 2013.

community, this is not depicted in contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance. The reasons are; religious and social factors including the impact of Pentecostal Christianity, fragmentation of the communal social and religious orders and the privileging of entertainment over socio-sacral functionalism (Ukaegbu, 2007). Thus, the absence of a restorative ritual segment in public presentations not only fragments the archetypal performance frame, but the entire associated narrative is lost, leaving *Iri-Agha* incomplete. The impact of the changes described here is best illustrated in other Nigerian dances such as the *Udje* dance performance of the Urhoho in the Delta state of Nigeria in which the dance arena is seen by performers as a battle ground from which they must return triumphant (Darah, 1981). For this reason the dancers re-enact restorative rituals as part of their performance and are fortified with pre-show magical charms for their own protection.

In the case of *Iri-Agha* the warriors led by the chief priest proceed to the village square to pray in front of *Ikoro* before they finally depart for their journey to the battlefield. Imaga observes that Onyentum (horn blower) blows the traditional horn made out of a ram's horn as the warriors proceed to war and when they return from war.[21] Kalu Okpi points out that Onyentum is similar to the one who blows the bugle in the modern army who informs the soldiers when and where to do their practice, so Onyentum informs the community about the movement of warriors.[22]

3.3.3 Returning from War and Re-enactment Stage

The middle stage of archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre consists of the actions of returning warriors and the re-enactment of their war experiences. After the war, Onyentum blows the horn to inform the community of the warriors' return. On hearing the sound of Onyentum, people celebrate because this informs them that the warriors are returning but nobody is

[21]Emmanuel Imaga interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Elu Ohafia on the 21 January, 2013.
[22]Kalu Okpi interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Owerri on the 13 February, 2013.

allowed close to the Achichi arena. According to Okorie Eme, leader of the Amakpu dance troupe of Ohafia, 'nobody is allowed near or touches the warriors except the chief priest because they are half human and half spirit'.[23] At the sound of Onyentum, the chief priest who had been waiting in the 'holding area' in the forest welcomes the warriors. He performs some restorative rituals. After the ritual, the war leader recounts (to the chief priest) what happened at the battle front and in a single straight line the warriors move to the *Ikoro* to greet their relatives and to present war trophies. In the mythologised past when *Iri-Agha* was created human heads were treasured as the highest physical symbol of personal and collective victory over the community which was weakened by the loss of numbers. In the traditional Ohafia dance theatre, the performance that re-enacts the war experience is subsumed in the war victory celebration.

3.3.4 The Celebration Stage

According to Nnate Orji Kalu, leader of the Ohafia Udumeze Dance Troupe, the celebration stage of archetypal *Iri-Agha* is filled with merriment as the people of Ohafia and neighbouring communities who make up the audience gather in Achichi to celebrate and see the performances. Nnate Maduka, captain of the Ohafia Udumeze dance troupe, clarifies that the seating arrangement is designed to enhance visibility whilst reinforcing the community's social hierarchy as he stressed the impact of social stratification and class in the performance by pointing to different locations and stating that 'the traditional ruler of Udemaeze, Ohafia and his cabinet sit here; there is the position of the village heads while the women of Ohafia position themselves at the other end. The villagers and visitors occupy that position'.[24] Kalu Uchendu, lead dancer of Ohafia dance troupe, Amaekpu, added that after the age grades and the chief priest have taken their seats, the Onyentum blows his horn to usher in the warrior's

[23]Okorie Emeh interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Ohafia on the 22 February, 2013.
[24] Nnate Maduka, the dance captain of the *Iri-Agha* dance group of Elu Ohafia interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Achichi Ohafia on 24 February, 2013.

for their performance.[25] The singer recalls the legend of *Elibe Aja*, the story of a brave hunter who established an alliance with the Arochukwu people by killing a leopardess that terrorized their farmers. The fast music and song creates a harmonious rhythm. The men in the audience may join in the dance, some of them mature men who appreciate the cost of victory, others mere boys.

On the role of the women during the celebration, Okorie Eme stated that 'in the past the women and young ladies distribute food and drinks as they were not allowed to perform the war dance'.[26] Eme's interpretation of this ancient practice is challenged by Kalu Okpi former director, of the Abia State Arts and Culture who states that the name *Iri-Agha* which means 'war dance' is misinterpreted by some dance practitioners as the depiction of activities in battle whilst it should depict a community's celebration of the heroism of its warriors as part of an epic journey from insecurity to security. He stated that warriors do not dance at the war front, but on the contrary, the warriors re-enact their experiences during the celebration and women usually join the men in the dance. Okpi revealed that traditionally the women performed the *Aja* (a special instrument and ritual dance of the same name in which women celebrate victory by warriors) and danced round the Achichi arena, while the warriors performed in the centre of the arena.

The observations and information provided by Eme and Okpi reveal important changes and differences in the roles of women and in the formats of the *Iri-Agha* archetype and its contemporary interpretations. The absence of women in contemporary dance theatre is the product of historical inaccuracies about their involvement (there was a misconception about the role of women under colonialism, that they were underrepresented) and the reduction of the ritual content (in which the women are seen praying for the men) because of the influence

[25]Kalu Uchendu interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Elu Ohafia on 22 February, 2013.
[26]Okorie Eme interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Achchi Ohafia on the 22 February, 2013.

of Christianity in Ohafia and Igbo society in general. The role of women in the archetypal *Iri-Agha* is not necessarily evidence of gender imbalance in traditional Igbo society. Together the two explanations point to an individual practice that has assumed the form of a cultural genre because of continuing repetition. So contrary to contemporary practices women were an important part of the old *Iri-Agha* and had more than a decorative role in the community and the dance. In fact, another example of Igbo women's dance with similar ritual origins is the *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance of Afikpo in which the content, context and structure have all been reduced as a result of the social factors described above. Unlike contemporary *Iri-Agha* that celebrates men in their role as fighters and war exploits and marginalises women by cutting out the ritual prayers and the victory celebration, contemporary *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* excises the wrestling match by men while celebrating feminine deportment and beauty. There was contradictory information from Okpi and Eme about the role of women in the archetypal *Iri-Agha* but I decided to follow Okpi (not only because he is a famous art practitioner but he participated in the archetypal *Iri-Agha* as a young man) in my reconstruction of *Iri-Agha* dance theatre.

3.3.5 Costuming, Make-up and Props

As with most Igbo traditional ceremonies, costumes used for new *Iri-Agha* are very colourful. The chief priest wears a white skirt and hangs a red towel around his neck. He carries a pot and yellow palm fronds, a common Igbo sign for the presence of spirits and deities, as prop. With the *nzu*, (chalk) he circles his eyes and those of the warriors. The warriors tie *onugwe* (traditionally woven wrapper) around their waists, a sheathed machete, the preferred ancient Ohafia weapon of war, and the *ozoebela* (fleece) on their upper arms while the women wear colourful costumes that indicate celebration. The warriors and drummers wear the *opu nwagoro* (traditional war cap), on their heads. In an interview Nnate Maduka emphasised that

the traditional woven cap is important as it is still used today to identify Ohafia men.[27] With reference to the colours of the cap, he explained that red represents danger, white represents peace and black represents mourning. The three colours mean the same thing throughout Igbo society. On the significance of war as a performance motif Okpi observed that the Ohafia community is peaceful and their warriors were often hired as mercenaries by small and weak communities to fight their enemies. Historically, war was the last option for both communities; however threatened intervention by the famed warriors on one side of a conflict was sufficient to instigate peace overtures between warring communities.

3.3.6 Factors leading to the Sequestration of Igbo Dance Theatre

My investigation in the field and my study of the existing literature (Yerima, 2006) reveals that political, religious and social factors were responsible for the 'missing' stages in Igbo dance theatre. The colonial invasion combined with the early Christian missionaries and their condemnation of ritual as paganism and barbarism affected the growth of most Igbo indigenous performances including masking. Whether the war preparation stage was performed as ritual or dance, the performances met with opposition in the colonial era with the advent of Christianity and new waves of thought that waged war against traditional modes of worship (Ajayi, 1996). As such the primacy of dance and theatre in general were threatened because there was no provision for traditional dance and performance in this new religious worship. For Yerima (2006, p. 27), 'the white man came with his Eurocentric notion of the African traditional art and dance forms'. Therefore the colonial authorities gave no room to assimilate any form of traditional African art and dance forms into emerging performance canons in the colonial period.

[27]Nnate Maduka Interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Achichi Ohafia on the 24 February, 2013.

Though it has been established by the men from Abam and Ohafia such as Kalu Okpi and Emmmanuel Imaga who performed in the traditional *Iri-Agha* dance theatre that some sections of *Iri-Agha* became extinct,[28] the question that can be asked is why did the war re-enactment survive? One of the reasons given for the reductions in the ritual tenor of *Iri-Agha* and disregarding the role of women is the presence of Christianity. As was the case in many other Igbo and African communities, early Christian converts in Ohafia condemned the pre-war preparatory rituals, but did not condemn the dance since its presence was mainly to recount incidents in battle without ascribing any ritual significance to them. Emmanuel Imaga asserts that 'the Christian converts in Ohafia embraced the Western religion and condemned the rituals in *Iri-Agha*. The converts also stopped their children from participating in the preparatory stage of *Iri-Agha'*. On a similar note, Ezeogo Ekume, the traditional ruler of the Mkporo autonomous community in Afikpo, blames Christian converts for the sequestration of the ritual preparations that precedes the wrestling context in *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance theatre.[29]

Ekuma and Imaga's views as traditional rulers and custodian of the culture and religion of communities that belong to the same cultural region (Igbo region) may not be wrong; But Henry Adjeke, a performing artist in charge of the drama unit at the Ebonyi State Council for Arts and Culture reveals that 'the rituals and sacrifices that precede the Afikpo wrestling context involve the spilling of animal blood and the rituals were performed in secret. This (Adjeke suggested) may have contributed to the reasons why the Afikpo Christian converts back out from the performances.[30] Such ritual practices performed before the shrines were believed to be idol worship and this belief persists to the present day. Recently the people of

[28]Kalu Okpi interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Owerri on the 13 February, 2013 and Emmanuel Imaga, the traditional ruler of Ohafia Udumaezema Ancient Kingdom, interviewed by Chris Nwaru on 21 January, 2013 in his palace at Elu Ohafia.
[29] Ezeogo Ekuma interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Mkporo, Afikpo on the 24 January, 2013.
[30]Henry Adjeke interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Abakaliki, 23 January, 2013

Ohafia in Abia State marked the centenary anniversary of their rejection of 'idol' practices. Okorie Uguru (2011, p.2) writes:

> The Ohafia community celebrates transformation and freedom. But it was not freedom from some oppressive neighbours or colonialists. Rather, it was emancipation from savagery, idolatry and backwardness. The liberation came with the advent of Christianity, and with it education. In a short space of time, their wild past began to give way. That transformation means a lot to the people. So they turned up in their best attire to express the joy in their hearts. The celebration took place in the community on Friday, November 11, 2011 in Ohafia.

The Ohafia people acknowledge and have preserved the dances which re-enact the war experience such as *Ikpirikpe*. Nnate Maduka, the leader of the *Iri-Agha* dance troupe of Elu Ohafia insisted that human skulls were the ultimate war trophies for individuals, rather than communities who sought peaceful co-existence with their neighbours. He stated with regards to the religious content of the form, 'we have removed the rituals and charms in *Iri-Agha*, now we perform the dance as entertainment and remembrance of our past heroes'.[31]Also, in Ohafia, the meaning of 'cutting off a head' at the battle front which marked victory and attracted honorary titles to the warriors hundreds of years ago has changed over time. Mbah (2012, p.2) confirms that:

> In the course of the Atlantic slave trade, men who captured slaves alive were said to have 'cut a head' and were conferred with *ufiem*. Upon British colonial rule, Ohafia men who returned home with a school certificate were also said to have 'cut a head', as were those who returned from civil service with insignia of modernity and success.

Another reason why the climatic stage in *Iri-Agha* and other forms of dance theatre in Igbo society still flourish instead of becoming extinct as the other stages have is captured by Enekwe:

> The first thing to note about Igbo dance is that there is no provision for 'professional' and 'amateur' dancers. The individual has right to express

[31]Nnate Maduka interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Achichi Ohafia on the 24 February, 2013.

> himself. Every one danced whether one was an accomplished dancer or not. In fact, dancing was a field in which every able bodied individual wanted to acquit himself creditably, since on certain occasions in one's life time, one just has to dance (Enekwe, 1987, p.20).

Enekwe, continues that:

> Their dancing is an aspect of their life and does not prevent them from pursuing other occupations. Nor can they depend on their dancing skills as the only means of economic support.

The colonial religious crusade against traditional dance affected the attitudes of many Christian converts to the dance theatre. Notwithstanding, there are some traditional dances that continue to exist. Ajayi (1996, p.7), notes that 'despite the apparent successes of the missionaries, people still doggedly continued with their dances and other indigenous activities which gave meaning to their existence'. The changes brought about by colonialism and Christianity led to among other things, the loss of or deliberate rejection of sections of performance narratives with obvious references to indigenous religious rituals. When the forms and practices of such performance re-emerged many of them became overtly codified and abstract (Ukaegbu, 2007) leading to an undoubted sequestered or fragmentation and subsequent reconfiguration of their archetypal structures.

The Role of Arts Councils in Igboland has also interrupted the continuity of archetypal Igbo dance theatre. The Arts Councils in Igboland are saddled with the responsibility of preserving and promoting the culture of Igbo communities including their dances. The Imo and Abia state Arts Councils have not done enough work in preserving the traditional dances of the people; instead they tend to preserve or promote the highlights or climax of some dances such as *Iri-Agha, Nkwa-Umuagbogho* and *Agborogu*. The Director of Imo State Council for Arts and Culture, Nkem Opara emphasises that:

> Lack of government support and inadequate funding has been hindering the promotion and preservation of dance art in Imo state. Finance is required for staff training; cultural exchange programs, documentation and preservation of traditional dances, because research and documentation are essential

> factors in dance preservation. And when fund is lacking, there are limited things that one can do. (N. Opara. Interviewed on 13th February 2013)

My field investigation shows that lack of funds is not the only reason for the improper documentation and preservation of archetypal Igbo dance theatre. The former Dean of the School of Arts, Alvan Ikoku Federal college of Education, Owerri and Director Abia State Council for Arts and Culture, Kalu Okpi while speaking on the archetypal *Iri-Agha* indicates another cause of the decline of the dance:

> … also the women were included in the celebration [of *Iri-Agha*], they played the aja (small clapping instrument) and danced round the men. In today's *Iri-Agha* performance the role of women is excluded which is not right. I remember when I was the Artistic Director of Abia State Council for Arts and Culture; we brought in women in the performance of *Iri-Agha*. Both men and women in the state enjoyed the dance and nobody complained. *Iri-Agha* dance is all about celebration and in Igbo society you cannot put women aside during celebrations. (K. Okpi. Interviewed on 13th February 2013)

Okpi's role in re-introducing women in the performance of *Iri-Agha* shows that the Arts Councils in the Igbo-speaking region could have preserved the complete narrative in some of their traditional dances through documentation, recording and packaged performances: but they failed to carry out these tasks. According to Okpi, he planned to document some of the archetypal Igbo dances but could not complete his tenure due to political reasons as he was removed from office by the then Governor (Orji Uzo Kalu) of Abia State. At the department of research and documentation in Imo arts council, I searched every area of the library and could not find any document that contained information about the archetypal *Iri-Agha*. It does not even exist in their repertoire.

The investigation into the archetypal Igbo dance theatre is significant to this study and Igbo society in general. For example, my field research has shown that the *Ikperikpe-ogu* which is the climatic section of archetypal *Iri-Agha* and contemporary *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* which is

the middle stage of the archetype *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance theatre are the only sections that are presented today. The elaboration of the above-mentioned dances is necessary for a better understanding of Igbo dance theatre.

3.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM MY FIELD TRIP

Findings in the field show that the following information has been omitted from the contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance as presented today.

3.4.1 The Role of the Chief Priest: Ritual lustration

In the archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance performance, the role of the chief priest begins with the preparatory ritual performance that precedes the war. The chief priest initiates the warriors into communal secrets by performing some protective rituals before they go to war. Also at the end of the war, he performs the restorative ritual for the returnee warriors so as to reintegrate them into the community. According to Okorie Eme, 'nobody is allowed near or touches the warriors except the chief priest because (up to that point) they are half-human and half-spirit'.[32] This role of the chief priest is not depicted in contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance.

3.4.2 Role of Women in Ohafia Igbo

According to Imaga (2008), the war between Ohafia and Idiakpan on which archetypal *Iri-Agha* is based, the warriors were camped at Achichi (a space created for important events like cultural and social ceremonies) as part of their ritual preparation for the war. The older men stayed at home to care for and safeguard families and communities against surprise attacks. The women were assigned the domestic duties such as staying at home to take care of the children, maintaining the semblance of normality and praying for the warriors' victory at the

[32]Okorie Eme, leader of the Amakpu dance troupe of Ohafia interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Amakpu Ohafia on 22 February, 2013.

battle field. As stated in my analysis of archetypal *Iri-Agha*, for religious (Christianity) reasons these important roles allocated to women are not depicted in contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance. Okpi argues that the absence of women in *Iri-Agha* is a mistake of the Arts Councils in the Imo and Abia state whose function is supposed to be the proper documentation and preservation of Igbo culture. Currently different societies within the African continent are re-interpreting the role and position of women. For example, in Nigeria there is an on-going debate in re-writing women (Udengwu, 2010; Ezenwanebe, 2012; Utoh-Ezeajugh, 2012; Olasope, 2012). Though this study is not about gender but the placing and re-locating of women in Igbo society is reflected in *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre in agreement with the field (interview) information on the role of women in the archetypal *Iri-Agha*.

3.4.3 The Reception of the Returnee Warriors Tinted with Sadness

In the middle stage of archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre, the returning warriors re-enact their war exploits and experiences. The women who have been caring for the children and praying gather to welcome the warriors including their husbands, sons, brothers and loved ones. While the legendary community celebrations are said to have included a dignified dirge for those lost in the war, accompanied by lamentations by women who lost loved ones to the war, this historical fact is not reflected in contemporary *Iri-Agha* dances as presented today where the emphasis is on the victory and celebration of the community's safety.

3.4.4 Celebrations of the Community: Inclusive Picture of Igbo Communal Society

In 21st century Ohafia, the war victory celebration is the epicentre *Iri-Agha*, an all-inclusive ceremony for the whole community. The community is filled with merriment as the people of Ohafia and neighbouring communities who make up the audience gather in Achichi to

celebrate and see the performances. In the field, so many people confirmed this inclusive celebration in Ohafia and affirm that different areas were mapped-out for different groups to sit, partake in the celebration and watch the performances. In contemporary *Iri-Agha*, only male dancers (warriors) participate in the celebration of the war victory.

3.4.5 The Complete and Un-sequestered Story of *Iri-Agha* Archetype. Unlike its contemporary form, the *Iri-Agha* archetype is complete in structure and plot. The first stage is the preparatory stage; here the community championed by the Chief priest prepares the warriors for war. According to Kalu Okpi a cultural commentator; 'we didn't just wake up one morning and went to war, just like the modern soldiers of today, people prepared very well before we headed to war.[33] The preparation 'Njikwa-Agha' (War Preparation) included devising formations and strategies on how to outwit or defeat the enemy, arming the warriors with the best weapons of the day including the making and application of protective charms'. The second stage 'Ihu-Agha' (War Front), the return and re-enactment stage, is the middle stage and consists of the actions of returning warriors and the re-enactment of their war exploits and experiences. In this stage the chief priest performs the restorative ritual and re-integrates the returnee warriors into the community. Traditionally the second stage was far more dangerous as selected strong young men, themselves armed and protected with charms and ritual armlets secured any warriors still under the influence of charms and so posed a danger to members of the welcoming community. The third stage 'Onu na Ure Nmeri Agha' (Celebration of War Victory) showcases the communal celebration designed to fete and honour the victorious warriors. The contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance celebrates only the climatic (Ikpirikpe) stage. Today the *Iri-Agha* dance has been sequestered and abstracted to the point of losing huge sections that when presented together is a more accurate account of the legendary war. These contemporary presentations and forms that are characterised by

[33] Kalu Okpi interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Owerri on the 13 February, 2013.

incomplete structures and plots (see figure 2 below) do not best describe Igbo dance theatre as claimed by the Arts Councils in Igbo-speaking Nigeria.

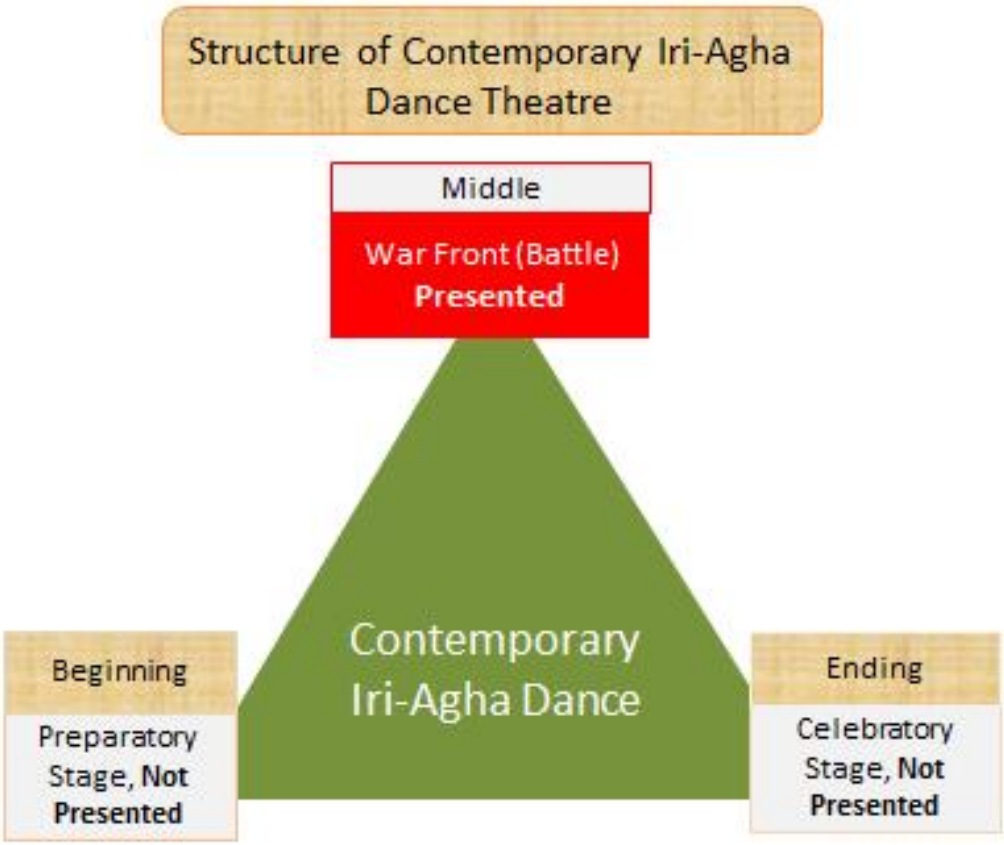


Figure 2. This shows the in-complete structure of contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance theatre as presented and performed today, the boxes with the inscription 'Not Presented' represent the missing, beginning and ending stages; the middle stage in red (war front) is the only functioning one today. The structure of the archetypal *Iri-Agha* is complete. The beginning (preparatory stage) and ending (celebrative stage) sections of the archetypal *Iri-Agha* are not presented in the diagram because the stories were narrated orally. My studio practice is the stage adaptation of *Iri-Agha* titled *Nkwa-Ike* for the contemporary audience. It is not only complete in structure and plot but all sections are shown and presented through the medium of stage performance.

The absence of the above features in the contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance theatre demonstrate the 'missing link' that the research attempted to recover, and also the gaps in the study and mispresentation of the form as a cultural product.

SECTION B

3.5 CREATIVE PROJECT IN THE STUDIO

This section will discuss the procedures undertaken in the interpretation, adaptation and appropriation of the traditional *Iri-Agha* as an example of how archetypal forms have developed and can be transformed into contemporary Igbo dance theatre. These concepts of interpretation, appropriation and adaptation are defined and analysed according to different criteria by several critics (Linda Hutcheon (2006); Darko Suvin (1988); Cartmell and Whelehan (1999). The main theories about adaptation, identified in the literature review, were consulted for developing a framework to inform the field enquiry and to discuss the relationship between the findings of this research and the processes adopted in studio practice in creating *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre.

Linda Hutcheon (2006) argues rightly that the kind of artistic adaptations and interpretations, such as those used in this study constitute both a process as well as products in their own rights. Darko Suvin (1988), by contrast, in her study of literary works, describes adaptation as variants and re-writes of originals, while Cartmell and Whelehan (1999) refer mainly to the processes involved in adaptation and interpretation of art works, describing them as one of three types: Transposition (from one time and period or medium to another with little change), Commentary (using a new work to reflect upon and to comment on an original or existing material or product) or Analogue (the creation of a new artistic product that is inspired by another work to which it may or may not make subtle hints). Julie Sanders (2006) goes further in arguing that 'adaptations and appropriations also provide their own inter-texts, so that adaptations perform in dialogue with other adaptations as well as their informing sources' (p. 24). The views of the stated literary critics provide a framework on which to base the inquiry and information about how Igbo legends, myths and history were utilised in the

creation of *Nkwa-Ike*. Taking into account the different interpretations and theories of these critics, I have decided to follow the view of Hutcheon because in my own practice I have found that the process (of engaging with the past texts and bring back the sequestered sections into the present) through my recreation of the traditional form of *Iri-Agha* is crucial to the success of the finished product.

I will focus in this section on different aspects of my practice, including those aspects that are less tangible but equally important in re-interpreting and adapting the mythological, cultural and historical contents of archetypes of indigenous Igbo dances for contemporary audiences. The outcome of the studio practice is *Nkwa-Ike* dance based on information I obtained from field interviews and observations of performances of archetypal *Iri-Agha* of the Ohafia and Abam communities of the Abia State of Nigeria. This section introduces the documentation system discussed in Chapter Two. 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System', as a framework for documenting and re-producing *Nkwa-Ike* and similar dances. The creation of *Nkwa-Ike* involves the invention and development of characters such as the Eze-nmuo (the chief priest) and Nwanyi-nwa (the woman who loses her only son in battle) and Okpoku (the town crier). Some aspects of this chapter (the field interview and studio practice) were recorded by still photograph and video camera (DVD), a method of preservation that is influence by Brad Haseman's (2006) performative research paradigm used in this study.

My adaptation and creative project required a range of creative, organisational, and skills, the most urgent challenge was the task of writing a script that would embrace all the stages of Igbo dance theatre, and that used dance in its narrative unlike the sequestered sections of archetypal *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* as performed in rituals and incantations; I then had to adapt to contemporary performance in indoor theatre in contrast to the archetypal *Iri-Agha* that is originally performed at the shrine and village square. There was a selection of

artists (cast and crew) to work with me on my creative project in the studio and finally I created the dance movements and music for my adaptation.

I wrote a performance script and created the following characters drawing on the on historical information about archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre.

3.5.1 CHARACTERS CREATED BASED ON HISTORICAL INFORMATION OF *IRI-AGHA,* ADAPTED AND RE-NAMED *NKWA-IKE* DANCE THEATRE

Okpoku…… Town crier
Nwanyi-nwa…….The woman whose son does not return from the battle field
Eze-nmuo…….Chief Priest
Onyentum…… The bugle man
Warriors …….. Ohafia young men aged 25-40
Dancers……. ……Ohafia Young men…… *Ikperikpe* and *Agborogu* dance
Ohafia Maiden ……..…….*Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance
Ohafia Women…… …..*Nkwa-Nwaite*
Villagers …….. ….From Ohafia community
Friends…….. From Abam community
Nmonyo……. ……Ohafia enemies

MY DESCRIPTION OF THE *IRI-AGHA* SCRIPT '*NKWA-IKE* NARRATIVE'

PREPARATORY STAGE

The dance theatre begins with Okpoku playing the *Ikoro* (big talking slit drum) which is used to summon the able bodied men for urgent information such as war or the death of an important/high ranking person in the Ohafia community. At the sound of the *Ikoro*, young men between 25 – 40 years old appear, ready for war as Opkoku requests/demands through the sound of the drum. Eze-nmuo prepares the young men with the protective rituals. The warriors bow before the *Ikoro,* and leave for the battle field to meet their enemies, the Nmonyo people. As they head for the battle-field, Onyentum blows his horn in order to

inform the Ohafia community. The older women of Ohafia gather at the community hall praying for the warriors.

RETURNING FROM WAR AND RE-ENACTMENT STAGE

The sound of the horn blown by Onyetum notifies the community that the Ohafia warriors are returning from the battle-field. As tradition demands, Eze-nmuo meets the warriors at the bush, performs the restorative rituals and collects the ammunition before the community is allowed to welcome them. The war leader then narrates all that has happened at the battle field to Eze-nmuo. The elderly women who have been praying at the village halls for the warrior's victory come to welcome their sons. Nwanyi-nwa cannot see her only son among the returned warriors and mourns her loss while the other women try to console her. The returned warriors re-enact their war experiences in performance.

THE CELEBRATION STAGE

The Ohafia community appears in groups at Achichi in Elu Ohafia and invite their neighbours to to formally welcome and celebrate the victory with the warriors. Seats are arranged both according to visibility and comfort of the stage and audience position and with respect to the designated status of ndi Eze (traditional rulers) and Ozo (village heads) and the elderly women. The returned warriors perform in the middle of the stage re-enacting events of the battle ground. Eze-nmuo greets the warriors and invites maidens to perform while the women share different foods among the spectators. In admiration the warriors join the maidens in their dance. All leave the stage while performing duets. ***The End.***

The presentation of the *Nkwa-Ike* through re-interpretation, creation and adaptation of the *Iri-Agha* dance, drawing on empirical observations and findings, is not designed to replicate the *Iri-Agha* dance. As Hutcheon (2006) observes the adapted script is not a reproduction, but an interpretation and a recreation, often in a new medium. The climatic stage of *Iri-Agha* is the only one of the three sections that is staged because the oral stories of the pre- and post-climactic stages could not be recovered in the field research (see Bullet 1 of DVD attached). In my adaptation of *Iri-Agha*, therefore, I chose to represent the sequestered stages in a different medium and moved from telling to showing, from oral stories to performance. I preferred to show the story because it allows audiences to actually see *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre rather than imagine it, as happened with telling. The *Nkwa-Ike* war-battle re-enactment involves role-playing, and the narrative of the war stories either orally or on paper requires a compilation of data. In each case, whether telling or showing the same story, the audience's engagement differs. According to Hutcheon (2006, p.23) 'the performance mode teaches us that language is not the only way to express meaning or relate a story. Visual and gestural representations are rich in complex associations'. (See Bullet 3 of DVD attached). The complete story of *Iri-Agha* needed to be both told and shown, in my view, so that the abstracted, sequestered and incomplete stories that characterise the contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance theatre will become known again in some form to contemporary audiences.

Nkwa-Ike dance theatre narrates the war expeditions of the Ohafia people and has a form that progresses through time from the beginning to the end with each of the part fitting with the others to form a whole. It consists of the creation of new dance practices based on the traditional indigenous model discussed above (see Section A). To achieve this aim, I auditioned performers that participated during my studio research.

3.5.2 Auditioning Performers for *Nkwa-Ike* Production

Auditioning offers two distinct opportunities; the chance to find performers, in this case performers who will contribute to telling of the complete story of *Iri-Agha* through dance; and for them to showcase their talent, their knowledge of *Iri-Agha* and culture of Ohafia people (Keen, 1998). In Igbo society the importance of dance as a communal art and project was reflected in the large numbers of volunteers. At the preparatory stage, I sent audition notices to the communities, Arts Councils, and dance groups that I had engaged with during my field investigation (see Appendix I). The auditions were held at the Theatre Complex, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria on the 15th and 16th of March, 2013. I decided to work with performers who were 25 years of age and above basing this on field information about the war expedition of the Ohafia people.[34] Other factors contributing to the selection process were the artists' skills and knowledge of diverse dance styles, and the common cultural habits and dance practices found in the entire core Igbo speaking states. Also significant were physical appearance, speed, ability to learn movements, reproduce them accurately, (see pictures 3 and Bullet 2 of DVD attached) and exhibit individual flair and creativity in improvising imaginatively within set patterns.

[34] Kalu Okpi interviewed by Chris Nwaru at Owerri on the 13th February 2013.


Pictures 3 (a), 3 (b) showing skilful dancers between the ages of 25-40 at *Nkwa-Ike* dance auditioning

I gave preference to dancers with extensive training in acting and who could communicate ideas, feelings and emotional states physically. The artists who appeared for the audition consisted of volunteers from the Department of Theatre, Imo State University Owerri, the Department of Theatre Arts, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Owerri, and local and private troupes of both amateur and experienced performers. I found artists who met the criteria by auditioning a broad spectrum of troupes and individuals. I selected the drummers according to their ability to play musical instruments and sing the traditional songs of the many communities of Igbo society. In selecting dancers, I designed movement phrases that depict different stages of *Iri-Agha* dance for a large group and asked small groups to carry this out, so that I could focus on the dynamic movement of each individual dancer. Dynamism in executing dance movement was one basis for selection. *Ikpirikpe* music was played and dancers were asked to dance to the rhythm. Some dancer-performers were

selected immediately because their movement fitted with the character role they were to play while others were chosen after a call-back. Keen (1998) suggests, seeing a dancer a second time enables more accurate assessment of talent and ability. During the second audition with several artists, the assistant choreographer and I noticed improvements in their performance from the first audition, notably increased fluidity and dramatic movements and styles. We inferred that during the first audition the dancers were not in the right company; group chemistry is important even though this is difficult to ascertain (Keen, 1998).

3.5.3 Studio Research and Production Venue

Finot and Ruzika (1998) observe that crucial factor governing the production of any dance theatre is the determination of where the dances will be performed. According to Nwamuo, 'dance encapsulates the culture of a people and so a transplant of its setting and performance from one location to another requires careful considerations' (1993, p. 23). After careful thought, I decided to use a proscenium stage, mainly because the use of stage light and scenery is harder to manage in thrust or arena stage; furthermore indoor theatres offer closer contact with the audience and encourage their interaction with the stage. This proximity heightens audience responsiveness. Molokwe (2005) advises that indoor dance performances need a space that will heighten their visual impact, a suggestion that de-stabilises open-air staging for modern theatre lighting and technology when properly installed in a standard performance space not only heighten the visual impact but also enhance the communication of the performance which is one of the objectives in reconstructing *Nkwa-Ike* dance. Secondly, using the indoor theatre space is in line with the demands of contemporary period in Igbo society where the trend for in-door performances has been growing since the early 1980s. The Rosy Arts Theatre in Owerri, the Mbari Theatre Complex in Owerri and the Aladinma Theatre Complex were all built in recent times. Finally, indoor theatre has

encouraged paid commercial dance presentations which people attend not necessarily to participate as they did in the past but to watch and be entertained by skilled dancers. The steady growth of a paying audience is a major reason why commentators like Nwamuo (1993) and Nzewi (1981) write about the split in traditional Igbo dance audiences into participants (who participate and have a stake in a dance) and spectators (who attend solely for entertainment). The indoor space is also preferable because it protects the lives and possession of theatre audiences, ensures their comfort because their proximity to the performance guarantees audibility and visibility. By contrast to the belief of some overseas (Western) writers (Bahre, 2001 and Spenceley, 2003), most contemporary African theatrical performances are now held indoors, and modern lighting technology makes possible desired scenic effect. The audience comfort was also dependent on the weather and weather changes and shows are currently staged during Igboland's rainy season by contrast to earlier theatre performances that were staged in the traditional end of farming season in the dry months from late November to early January.

The theatre is constructed in such a way as to maintain closeness between performers and the spectators. However, the dangers in embracing such a Western theatre in the adaptation of a traditional dance such as *Iri-Agha* may involve a loss of its archetypal features. For example the community shrine at Elu Ohafia is situated in an open space, but adapting the shrine on an indoor theatre will lack some sense of naturalness; but in contemporary Igbo society, the traditional shrines are no longer invoked because of the mass embrace of Christianity.

3.5.4 Instrumental Music and Song Rehearsal

Before beginning instrumental music, songs and movement on stage, I gave detailed explanations regarding my creative project to the artists to increase our coordination. I

explained that no payment would be made, but snacks, refreshments and transport expenses were to be provided.

The instrumentalists who worked in the studio consisted of experienced musicians from different communities in Igboland. Some had become professional and seasoned musicians after acquiring the skills through formal apprenticeships and from informal participation in dance instrumentation at village levels. Others had voluntarily taken up music as a hobby or a profession as in the case of Peter Badejo of Badejo Arts who although began his dance and musical expertise and repertory as a hobby to become one of Africa's best known movement choreographers and instrumentalists globally (Fajemisan, 2006). The archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre musicians consist of instrumentalists and a chanter, both roles developed from known stories about the legend of Elibe Aja (McCall, 1993), the first person to undertake the task of recounting the exploits and actions of Ohafia and Abam mercenary warriors in ancient Igbo society.

With the help of the experienced musicians in the studio, I restructured *Ikpirikpe* instrumental music and songs and borrowed and re-organised movements and songs such as *akwa-oyiri-diya* from contemporary *Nkwa-Nwaite* songs and music for the purpose of my creative re-interpretation of archetypal *Iri-Agha*. Due to dialectal differences in the Igbo language, *Nkwa-Nwaite* song was difficult for the artists to learn and some of the words had to be changed to fit the *Nkwa-Ike* scenario and for easy learning. Through lengthy rehearsals of the lyrics and rhythm, both performers and musicians learnt the song (see Bullet 2 of DVD attached). The words of the archetypal *Nkwa-Nwaite* song portray the dejection and hopelessness of a woman who was maltreated by her husband for not bearing a child, who if a male could have fought in the war and become a returning hero to be celebrated by the women. The feeling/emotion intensifies if a woman's husband dies in war and no one is left

to continue his lineage. In *Nkwa-Ike*, the *Nwaite* song is adapted to suit the performance as the study partly aims to use cultural information from the field to create a new interpretation of the *Iri-Agha* archetype. Dramatically it aimed to depict women feelings in war settings, now omitted in contemporary *Iri-Agha*. The song when one of the women lost her son in war front goes like this:

3. Solo - O bu ma mu amuyi nwa, o bu la ajuma aga eji me weh,
- O bu ma mu enwehi ego, o bu la ajuma ga egi ma akpa.
- Ihe eji mara nwa ogbeye kwara ma akwa oyiri diya.
Chorus - Uwam lee eh eh ah ee eh he eee ee e

Translation:

Solo - If I do not have a child, is this the way I should be
- treated, if I do not have money, how will I be received
Chorus O! my life, my world, my God why are you treating me this way.

My adaptation process included the alterations that I made to the cultural works of *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Nwaite* of the past dovetailed with a practice of cultural recreation (Fischlin and Fortier, 2000) that resulted in *Nkwa-Ike*.

Pictures 4. Instrumentalist in the practice of *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre in the studio

The Igbo musical instruments used in the studio can be classified into two groups: the percussive set including the gong, maracas, clappers, woodblock, slit wooden drum; and the membranophonic instruments such as conga drums and leather drums. According to Akpabot (1998), every African instrumentalist begins his apprenticeship by learning the standard rhythms played by different instruments. During the *Nkwa-Ike* practice, instruments were played in unison as an ensemble. The wood-block musical instrument plays a pattern to establish a time line, after which the other instruments are played, one after the other, at different stages of *Nkwa-Ike* movements.

Even though my instrumentalists use the same metric scheme when playing together, the beginning of the unit or measure for each instrument may not occur at the same time; therefore, entries may be staggered. Idamoyibo (2002) observes that in African music, this point of entry not only differs for the individual instruments of the ensemble, but is also pre-determined by the leading instrument. The *Nkwa-Ike* creative process involved putting together (i.e., composing) numerous diversified elements of music from *Agbarogu*, *Ikpirikpe*, *Nkwa-Nwaite* in order to elaborate and communicate where the narrative may not be assumed by the audience. Receiving the story of *Iri-Agha* by print or oral information may lead to different interpretations from the stage performance. Even though the novel or play script has its strengths, especially in explorating the consciousness of the characters, and the theatre has its own shortcomings, is clear that the stage brings to life imagined but representative stories. The stage, therefore, should be encouraged as a powerful means of telling the novel or oral stories (Anyanwu, 2010). It is also worth observing that dance drama is easily adaptable to different times and situations and that this is encouraged by theatre practitioners such as Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook. Otherwise, one would be in danger of practising what Brook

refers to as deadly theatre because a living theatre cannot afford to disregard any changes in society no matter how minute they appear (Brook, 1968). Also the musical composition and movement choreography experienced in *Nkwa-Ike* are captured by Emurobeme Idolor who describes a music composer as:

> One who emotionally conceives an idea (musical or extra musical) and is further inspired to reorganise the idea creatively through fragments of tones, dynamics, timbre, tempo, lyric and texture for listeners to understand (Idolor, 1997, p.42).

Therefore, in my opinion, the adapted music and dance used in *Nkwa-Ike* provides the medium to keep pace with change while re-presenting social concerns to people because unlike the story-telling, it can adjust to different times and places and inject new life into old stories.

3.5.5 Creating Movement

The process of creating movement and dramatic materials to fill the gap (missing link) between the old and new and between *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike* started with improvisation in the studio. According to Yanow (2001), improvisation is a conversation that begins with thinking—not thought which in his view implies a finished product. The creation of movements for the reinterpretation of *Iri-Agha* started with practice in the form of dance improvisation. In this process information gathered from field research, such as the role of Eze-nmuo (chief priest) and Nwanyi-nwa (the woman who lost her son at the battle field), was used to create movement and performance materials. I engaged in experimental movement first, by creating a scenario that depicts rituals and mourning. Then I introduced different movements based on memory recall of the chief priest role in films I have watched and theatre productions in which I participated, such *Living in Bondage* by Kenneth Nnabue, *Yemoja* by Ahmed Yerima and *A Matter of Identity* by Tony Duruaku; discussions with the

artist helped with my decision on movements that are suitable for the characters of Eze-Mmuo and Nwanyi-nwa. Also my movement experimentation was with different stages in the story of *Iri-Agha* without anticipating how the interpretation of ideas into movement would turn out or whether and how the scores would fit the narrative. Some movements such as 'the laying of ambush' and 'demonstration of fighting at the war front' simply felt appropriate as vocabulary for communicating cultural and physical images and ideas based on the information from field research. Such movements were selected as movement material for the final production.

My use of improvisation facilitated experimentation with movement ideas. Only movements with clearly discernible cultural meanings relevant to the aesthetic ideas in the dance and movements, and showing potential for further development were selected. Movements created during improvisation and those taken from archetypal and contemporary repertoires of Igbo dance movements were used to create content and performance materials. They were re-fined and 'quoted' in the studio-based dance theatre to generate meaning and communicate to the audience.

The different stages in *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre required that improvisational movements be combined with fixed movements from the repertoire of Igbo dances. For example the stagger movement, borrowed from *Agbarogu* dance of Mbaise in Imo State, is used in the preparatory stage of *Nkwa-Ike* because in *Agborogu* it is used to answer the call of the *Ikoro* for death or war information. The contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance does not have the preparatory stage but I decided to reintroduce the preparatory stage with the adapted stagger movement because it plays a similar role (in answering Ikoro's call) in *Agborogu*. Dance scholars also emphasise the importance of narrative and coherent story structured around the dance in dance theatre

(Bakare: 1994) and the inclusion of beginning, middle and end in a dance drama (Nwamuo: 1993).

One of the challenges I encountered in the creation of the preparatory stage of *Nkwa-Ike* was how to include the male dancers' costume change, from every day clothes (day dress) to war costumes. If the dancers exit the stage to put on their war costumes after Eze-nmuo's rituals, it breaks the flow of the dance theatre and gives the impression that the preparatory section consists of two stages. To handle this challenge, I designed the movement of the male dancers in such a way that while on the stage they dropped their daily dresses off the *Ikoro* to reveal their war dance costumes (see Bullet 3 of DVD). This improvisation has a double significance for this study. First, it shows that the male dancers were ready for battle even after leaving their houses in answer to the call of the *Ikoro*. Secondly, dropping their clothes before the *Ikoro* symbolises the handing-over of their lives to the gods represented by the *Ikoro* and Eze-nmuo. Hence, upon their return from the war, they had to bow before the *Ikoro* while Eze-nmuo restored the warriors to their normal state through certain rituals.

The staccato and vibratory movements used in *Nkwa-Ike* were existing movements borrowed from the *Ikperikpe-ogu* dance of the Ohafia people which I distorted and refined in the studio before using them in *Nkwa-Ike* dance. The staccato movement was chosen to mark the move of the warriors at the battle-field in *Nkwa-Ike*. As the energy from this movement is not continuous (Bakare, 1994), I re-arranged it to consist of disconnected movement phrases. The disconnection in the movements helps the *Nkwa-Ike* warriors deceive their enemies' sense of direction at the battle field so that they fail to trace their prints. This can be interpreted in light of Hutcheon's (2006, 18) comment that 'what is involved in adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interests, and talent'. My creative interpretation and adaptation of *Iri-*

Agha, by deciding to filter the movements and choice of 'fixed' existing movement is also relevant to the view of Jones:

> …improvisation is no guarantee of success. It is, however, a key to accessing the abundance of the imagination and aesthetic rewards of a dedicated life. Many companies and artists use dramatic improvisation as a means of generating text (in dance, movement) and content for later performance (Jones, 2001, p. 65).

The vibratory movement of *Ikperikpe-ogu* dance is borrowed for adaptation. This movement is also used in *Ekong* dance of the Annang in Akwa-Ibom state but with differences from the way it is used in *Ikperikpe-ogu*. In *Ikperikpe-ogu* the vibratory movement is performed with the chest and is continuous while in *Ekong* dance, the movement is concentrated on the legs and waist of the dancers (warriors). In my style, the monotonous movement of the chest is not continuous which suggests that there is a moment of rest in the battle field. In *Nkwa-Ike* I created movements where warriors retreat and re-strategise before they advance for attack designing them in such a way that when the warriors retreat the vibration stops and when they advance the vibration starts. The staccato and vibratory movements are used in the second stage (climatic stage) of *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre (see Bullet 2 of DVD) and the movements help in recreating the sequestered stages in Iri-Agha dance theatre.

In the studio, the sustained movement of *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance was also borrowed and used in the creation of *Nkwa-Ike*. Achieving this was a challenge because some the female dancers had never performed the sustained movement in their dance-profession while others were stiff and did not possess the flexibility required in executing such movements. 'The quality of sustained movement is the continuous supply and flow of energy without interruption' (Bakare, 1994, p. 17). These difficulties were surmounted through constant exercise of the waist region and continuous practice of the sustained movement steps. The sustained movement reintroduces the role of women into Igbo dance theatre, which in

contemporary *Iri-Agha*, was omitted, with only men performing this dance (see Bullet 1 of DVD). Maiden dancers carry through the energy and force of the movement in *Nkwa-Ike* without variation, and the beauty and feminine nature of women performing the maiden role helps reintegrate the returnee warriors into society through courtship and marriage. In Afikpo Ebonyi State, the sustained movement is performed by the *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dancers to entertain the spectators and celebrates the victorious wrestlers at the wresting context. Enekwe believes that the performance of *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance affords men the opportunity to select their wives (Enekwe, 1991). Francis Nwachi, a village-head and foremost leader of the *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance troupe in Afikpo also says:

> As the young ladies perform *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*, men who wish to marry use the opportunity to woo ladies of their choice and sometimes such occasions lead to marriage. It is worthy of note that the first president of our country [Nigeria], late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe chose his wife as she was dancing *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* and then got married to her. (Nwachi, V. Interview. 24th January 2013).

In *Nkwa-Ike*, the sustained movement is performed in the third section (resolution stage) to celebrate the victorious warriors. The sustained movement in reintroducing the role of women as dynamic entertainers, whose performance can lead to courtship, helps answer some questions in this study such as; how does the absence of exposition and post-climactic stages in contemporary Igbo dance theatre provide space for new creative energies and new dance practices?

The integration of familiar Igbo dance phrases into the improvisation as indicated earlier can be traced to one of the research paradigms used in this study 'Quoting the Repertoire Theory' as specified by Yvonne Hardt (2012). This performance theory does not encourage dance improvisation; rather, it deals with movement engaged in the past or existing dance phrases and patterns. The theory demonstrates how artists have discovered and used the past in order to meet the needs of contemporary dance performances. To be specific, I quoted movements

and gestures such as ‘placing the battle machete around the warrior's throat’ as a metaphor for killing as used in *Nkwa-Ike* dance. The outcome is that the quoted movements and gestures helped to explain the working structure, cultural histories, abstract symbols and information contained in archetypal *Iri-Agha.* Some chosen movements such as the move from ensemble patterns to irregular movements used in the war and celebration stages were the result of improvisation drawn from old cultural movements and the repertoire of traditional Igbo dance steps that relate to the concept of expedition, journey and war. Such movements could be traced to *Agbarogu* and *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* traditional dances.

Also, in the studio I asked the dancers with knowledge of *Iri-Agha* dance questions concerning my research. Examples are: Are movements creative or cultural? How do the movements reflect the cultural lives of Ohafia people? What is the impact of folktales, legends, myths, gestures, props on the dance? Do the dance movements and steps amplify or interpret the message in the song or musical lyrics (words or text) and its sounds? And, how far can the dance movements be identified with their cultural source in terms of style, costume and music? The responses not only reveal the cultural histories, ritual and social lives of the communities involved in performing the different dances, but they also offered insights into what people thought about the nature and usefulness of a potentially fully developed dramatic dance form which displays the cultural background and aesthetic images more prominently than in the past.

Their answers to my questions and the analysis of the field interviews and observations helped me to create my own interpretation of *Iri-Agha* dance theatre. My interpretation is not based on historical facts but on historical truisms. The difference is that ‘historical fact’ concerns definite historical issues in society for example, one could point to a particular year and battle in which an Ohafia warrior died on the war front. On the other hand, ‘historical

truism' indicates that in Ohafia many warriors died at different battle-fields in the community's real and legendary pasts. Although the 'truism' is that not just one warrior died, for the sake of this study and the resulting theatrical exercise I have used artistic licence in my creativity and interpretation of *Iri-Agha* in making one person represent all the warriors who died during the Ohafia battle. My decision to retell the same story over and again in different ways matches with the view of Marjorie Garber (2003:73-74) who notes that 'With adaptation, we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change'. The resulting effect is that the artistic composition and picture of *Nkwa-Ike* performers on stage becomes stress-free. As stated earlier, in the end only movements with clearly discernible cultural meanings were used as performance material. Thus, sustained movement of *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance has been given the opportunity to continue living on stage (Hardt, 2012), by being refined and 'quoted' in the studio-based dance theatre to generate meaning and to communicate to the audience.

Based on research and the communal attitude of the Igbo people in times of war, the movements were created in large phrases that could be ordered and re-structured in different ways. For example, a movement may begin with a large group and move to a single figure or the reverse process may happen. Other examples include the movements of warriors as they re-enact their war experiences, or of maidens during a victory celebration. All movement in *Nkwa-Ike* (i.e., the studio practice outcome) were choreographed and arranged by me except the solo movements. To some extent the dancers also created some solo movement relating to the concept and plot of archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre and I assisted them in the choreography by talking through the meaning behind each scenario. For example, during the dancers' solos, I provided some ideas (such as the admiration of war victors by the maiden) that the dancers translated into movements. Ashley (2005, p. 3) notes that 'there is room to consider dancers as collaborators, interpreting the choreographer's images and ideas at

various stages of the creative process and with varying levels of autonomy'. According to Ieremia (2000. p.29), 'there are dancers who just want to be dancers and they do it really well. And then there are people, who dance and who have the desire to make dance; they make other people move'. Ieremia's observation was reiterated in the process of choreography in the studio as I blended my ideas concerning movements for ritual and pre-war preparation with those of the dancers. The studio practice outcome of my research may not be proper historical evidence or documentation of the Ohafia story; however my interpretation which has resulted in the creation of *Nkwa-Ike* dance performance as an example of contemporary Igbo dance theatre is a valid recreation of that story.

3.6 TRANSLATING RESEARCH FINDINGS INTO PERFORMANCE MATERIAL

My field trip to Ohafia uncovered crucial information in traditional *Iri-Agha* dance that was omitted in the contemporary version. I created my own version of contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance theatre which I have described as *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre, distinguishing it from contemporary *Iri-Agha* with the injection of new cultural and historical information especially regarding the key roles played by the chief priest and women, a strong emphasis on the performance and communal celebration of pre-war and post-war rituals in old Ohafia society, and recognition through mourning of the personal and collective tragedies that result from war. Details of some of these inclusions were captured with a still camera and recorded in Bullet 3 of studio practice DVD (attached). The pictures and DVD illustrate my contribution and in keeping with my research methodology explained in Chapter One. The contributions from my field research and studio practice can be summed up as:

The prominent role of the priest (Eze-Nmuo) in the culture of Ohafia people as explained earlier in this chapter is not included in contemporary *Iri-Agha*. In my creation and interpretation of *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre, he is not only visible, but his role is one of the major dramatic moments of the performance, helping to rationalise public celebration while dramatic characters and roles are rehabilitated and contextualised culturally and historically .[35] The full analysis of the Eze-nmuo's role is given in Chapter Four.

Pictures 5 (a), 5 (b): The Eze-nmuo performs the ritual as he marks the warriors with 'nzu' (Traditional white native chalk)

The story of the woman searching for her son in the midst of the returning warriors was arguably omitted in the contemporary version of *Iri-Agha* in favour celebrating of victory and safety over personal loss (see Bullet 1of research DVD attached). Although this decision may

[35] See pictures 5 (a), 5 (b).

have served its purpose in the beginning, the desire for historical authenticity and the quest for greater knowledge regarding such aspects of Igbo culture justify the move from the abstraction that dominates contemporary *Iri-Agha* (war dance), to its re-interpretation as *Nkwa-Ike* (dance of the brave and resilient), a name that moves the focus slightly but significantly from war to community survival. In my opinion, *Nkwa-Ike* gives voice to history by exposing a more archetype and received picture of an aspect of Igbo society that has always been mis-represented. For example, the voice of the silent woman who lost her child in the war front, (a metaphor for anyone who loses someone close to them in war) is revised and revived. This story is included in *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre and the role of women is further explained in Chapter Four.[36]

Picture 6 show Nwanyi-nwa. As she cries, other women console her

In contemporary *Iri-Agha*, the celebration focuses on the place of men in old Ohafia society where a high premium is placed on men's bravery, courage and militancy. It is no surprise

[36] See pictures 6

that the dance is about how warriors organised and staged the war and celebrated the victory (see Bullet 1 of DVD attached). This is contrary to the information gathered in the field. In my version of *Iri-Agha* (*Nkwa-Ike*), all sections of the community participate at all stages, from the preparation of warriors to the war and celebration of victory (see Bullet 3 of DVD attached).[37]

Pictures 7 *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre performers in the all-inclusive community performance during the celebration of the war victory

The contemporary version of *Iri-Agha* as presented today is incomplete in structure and narrative and, according to the criteria of some theatre critics who advocate a beginning middle and end to a story (Nwamuo, 1993; Bakare, 1994) cannot be the best representation of the archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre. The outcome of my studio practice is the creation of an extensive and holistic structure and narrative in *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre along the lines of

[37] See picture 7.

dramatic plot development consisting of a beginning (background and exposition), middle (rising action and complication) and end (resolution). Theatre scholars have different reasons for engaging in adaptation and Linda Hutcheon comments 'given the large number of adaptations in all media today, many artists appear to have chosen to take on this dual responsibility: to adapt another work and to make of it an autonomous creation' (2006, p. 84). Peter Brook in his book *The Empty Space* argues that the theatre is a living thing and should be able to adapt to the changes in life. According to Brook:

> Life is moving, influences are playing on the actor and audience, and other plays, other arts, the cinema, television, current events, join in the constant rewriting of history and the amending of the daily truth…. A living theatre that thinks it can stand aloof from anything so trivial as fashion will wilt. In the theatre, every form once born is mortal; every form must be reconceived, and its new conception will bear the marks of all the influences that surround it. (2002, p.19).

As Brook says, 'life is moving'. In my adaptation of *Iri-Agha*, changes have been made with regard to structure, characters, and content. The changes allow the audience to see more incidents in Igbo dance theatre and to draw their own conclusions. However, there may be some sections that did not succeed as recreation, and my adaptation is open to further changes. In a similar situation, Chikwendu Anyanwu in his Ph.D. research, adapted Chinua Achebe's novel, *Man of the people* to stage. At one point in writing his script, Anyanwu said 'this Final Draft may not be relevant to this Nigerian political world which the Igbo inhabit in another one or two years. I call this the 'Final Draft' for the purpose of my Ph.D. and not a draft that would resist change in the future' (2010: 156). Adaptations are meant to 'keep the prior work alive' by bringing it to the stage (Hutcheon, 2006, p.176), and if the theatrical experience is the act of seeing and being seen (Barranger, 1986), then it becomes imperative that the work of an adaptor is to show more and tell less as displayed in *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre.

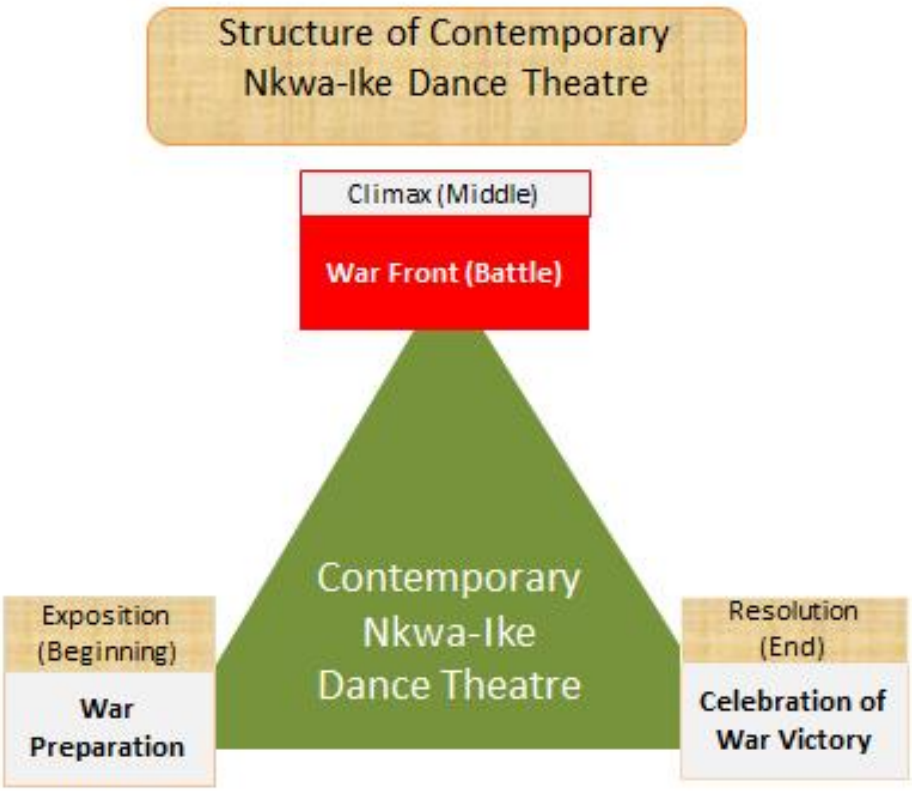


Diagram 3. The complete and un-sequestered structure of archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre as re-produced in my adaptation titled *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre. In this diagram, the plot of the dance theatre consists of the exposition (war preparation), climax (war front) and resolution (celebration of war victory) for a more complete picture and for encouraging greater understanding among audience.

3.7 COMMON FEATURES OF CONTEMPORARY IGBO DANCE THEATRE

Most contemporary Igbo dances possess common prominent attributes and they can be traced to ritual performances in Igbo communities such as the *Mmanwu* masquerade performances. Today, many such performances have developed their social content and emphasised their theatrical elements whilst playing less to the ritual contents. This change in direction and content can be linked to the influence of Christian religion and Western civilisation. Other good examples of such dances are *Iri-Agha*, *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* and *Nkwa-Agu*.

Contemporary Igbo dances share other common features such as combining abstracted metaphoric contents and incomplete storylines. For example, in the contemporary *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance theatre, the wrestling match between the men that precedes the maiden performance has been excised and is no longer shown. In the *Okumpka* dance of Afikpo as presented, the role of the virgin girl whose walk across the venue before the performance is no longer a ritual fact, is not presented or referred to but subsumed in the background, the respect for community elders, although still a part of the presentation, has been steadily eroded to the point that recent performances of *Okumkpa* (in the mid-2000s) routinely satirise and criticise the elders. Also, the ritual performance in honour of the dead has been excluded from the contemporary *Agbarogu* dance of Mbaise people and replaced with an emphasis on honour for high-achieving sons and daughters.

As stated earlier, contemporary Igbo dances are performed in modern theatre houses unlike the village squares, market arenas and community shrines at which their traditional counterparts were performed. The indoor theatre enhances audience comfort and security, while displays of modern stage lights and scenic designs suggest the advantages of indoor theatre space. Consequently the use of mo contemporary dern costumes and other contemporary theatre spectacles have become a common feature in contemporary Igbo dance theatre. Two of the most distinctive features of *Nkwa-Ike* dance that distinguish it from the archetype and which can be found in other dances of similar conditions and contexts are the enhanced narrative structure and the realisation of the dramatic possibilities that Echeruo (1981) called for in his research on the dramatic limits of Igbo ritual and masking. The result of my studio practice shows the rich possibilities in re-interpreting Igbo dances and rituals as drama with well-defined exposition, rising action, climax and denouement.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF IGBO DANCE THEATRE (RESEARCH FINDINGS)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Three I discussed the process of recreation of *Iri-Agha,* the Ohafia war dance that has been received historically as a dramatic representation of war. In this chapter, I will analyse *Nkwa-Ike,* as a contemporary interpretation of *Iri-Agha,* highlighting its modalities and impacts on Igbo society and culture. *Iri-Agha* dance has drawn from history and legend for its form and practice, and is a good example of how the symbolic use of historical and mythological narrative without elaboration led to the abstraction that defines contemporary Igbo dance theatre. In this chapter the archetype of traditional *Iri-Agha* will be examined for its dramatic structure, theatricality, form and content. The 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System' proposed for this studio research practice and developed in the course of the study will be used to document the movement directions, the positions of dancers and floor patterns. Other dramatic elements used in the studio process will also be explained, such as narrative, plot and structure, movements, rhythm, costumes, make-up, vocal and instrumental music.

4.2 FORM AND CONTENT

Form and content are made manifest in the creation and arrangement of dance performance and the relationship between them is often responsible for the effect of the performance on audiences. *Nkwa-Ike* differs from *Iri-Agha* in form, content, structure, narrative, and staging.

The analysis of form and content in Igbo dance theatre is not about the distinctions between the positions advanced by formalist and anti-formalist scholars, instead this study looks at 'Form without Formalism' (Lovender and Predock-Linnell, 2001) a brief distinction (between Form and Formalism) can be made along the lines of Bohdan Dziemidock's explanation:

> As an art movement artistic formalism may be defined as a theory according to which the value of a work of art qua artwork-its artistic value- is constituted exclusively (radical version) or primarily (moderate version) by its formal aspects. It's 'meaning' or its (conceptual, cognitive, material, etc.) 'content' has no important consequences for its value. Hence only the formal aspects should be considered as criteria of artistic excellence (Dziemidock, 1993, p. 185).

In the art movement of formalism, from 1940s until the late 1960s (Tekiner, 2006), ideas about form, design or structure are the main concerns for arts but its relationship to content is widely disputed. One influential argument is that the form of an art work is taken to be the same as its content, thereby shutting off further inquiry into its meaning. This sentiment by Roger Fry and Clive Bell (Early 20th century formalist) was echoed years later by Clement Greenberg (1961, p. 39), perhaps one of the most influential voices in formalism who argues that 'content in art must become 'strictly optical' and 'be dissolved completely into form'. In *Nkwa-Ike, form* is looked at differently from the artistic tradition of *formalism* in the form of movement designs which can be experienced by viewers as 'clear and coherent designs with meaningful content' as observed by Kalu Okpi, Tony Ebirikwu, and Chamberlin Asianya[38].

The above imperatives have nothing to do with artistic formalism, for even works seeking to situate themselves outside of, or in direct opposition to that tradition will possess some form or another (Lovender and Predock-Linnell, 2001). While the transformation of *Iri-Agha* from ritual to a social activity affected its structure and content, in *Nkwa-Ike*, some of the

[38] Kalu Okpi, Tony Ebirikwu, and Chamberlin Asianya were among the audience that commented on the *Nkwa-Ike* (my studio practice outcome) performance staged on the 26 April, 2013 at the theatre complex of Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Owerri, Nigeria.

abstracted and coded information is embedded in the dance movements or realised through costumes, gestures and make-up as is usual in dance theatres.

4.3 FORM

Basically, *form* is 'the variety of a thing, the arrangement of parts in the whole especially (in this case), in a work of art and the final shape it takes' (Hornby, 2000, p.466). In dance, form entails the placement of the parts of a dance into 'some order, some planned relationship which can be repeatable' (Nadal, 1978, p.78). This suggests that form in dance is the manner of presentation characteristic of the art form or activity. It is influenced by the practice in choreography and changes according to different historical periods, societies and individual ideologies. Julius Porney argues that an artist in such settings 'strives for immortal recognition by creating something that will live after him' (Porney, 1978, p.159). Therefore each cultural art produces new forms. For dance to be meaningful, it must have a recognizable form. According to Smith-Autard:

> A whole is made from a number of 'components and the dance composer's components include: each dancer's body as an instrument which has volume, shape and the capacity for action; movement which has physical properties of time, weight, and flow -- the interaction of which determines the form and style of the action; space, which can be shaped by movement; the relationships that the body can make with other things or people (2010, p. 41).

The choreographer's aim is to communicate an idea and not a mere arrangement of movements and patterns. The idea is enveloped in the form; it is the overall shape, system, unity, and mode of being. The viewer may not remember each and every movement, but will come away with an impression of the whole. The Igbo society for which the *Nkwa-Ike* dance was created sees form as the combination of all the elements that make up the performance, such as movement, music, props, costume, makeup, character and gesture.

Concerning 'form' the recreation of *Iri-Agha* from its archetype to contemporary versions such as *Nkwa-Ike* (my adaptation) demonstrates changes in form, medium and style of presentation. As stated in Chapter Three, in the archetype *Iri-Agha*, the preparation (Exposition) and post-climatic (Resolution) stages were not presented in dance form rather in rituals and celebrations**.** The contemporary *Iri-Agha* showcases only a fraction of the climatic stage. My adaptation differs in form because I have reconstructed the full narrative of all stages of *Iri-Agha* in dance. *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre therefore differs from what scholars (Nwamuo, 1993; Bakare, 1994) describes as 'pure dance' which, in my opinion is appropriate for defining contemporary *Iri-Agha*. According to Nwamuo and Bakare, pure dance is created mainly to exhibit movement and it emphasises the strength, flexibility and agility of the body. It may not embody any meaningful story or be designed to communicate a dramatized content and fully developed dramatis personae or characters; the absence of these theatrical features characterise the contemporary *Iri-Agha*.

Conversely, my adaptation is a new interpretation and a different form that liberates the performance from restrictive dance formulae. The players do not merely dance but they also communicate through both non-verbal skills, such as movements and gestures. The adaptation aims to meet the demands dance theatre to be an entertainment that will combine many facets of human expression to create a holistic performance expressing the distinctive modes of codification and reading known to the receiving culture.

4.3.1 *Nkwa-Ike* (Dance of the Brave): A New Theatrical Interpretation of *Iri-Agha,* Ohafia War Dance.

In Chapter Three, I provided a theatrical cum dramatic synopsis of *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre as an adaptation and interpretation of *Iri-Agha* dance. The dance script will help in the analysis of practice in this chapter. In this interpretation, I played with conventions that are associated with dance theatre notably in handling the characterization in ways that interrogate the range

of human emotions and experiences found in theatrical performance. I created characters such as Eze-nmuo, Nwanyi-nwa, Onyentum and Okpoku. I planned and worked-out the movements of the performers/actors on stage (called blocking in theatrical terms) as integral elements in an overarching theatrical interaction and communication, rather than utilising them as mere accessories or supplements for a dramatized stage picture. In blocking, I arranged the movements of characters in sections that involve and encourage group participation; this aimed to enhance visual spectacle and the composition and picturization (Anyanwu, 1993) of the underlying storyline mainly demonstrated in the movements of Eze-nmuo and the dancers during the protective rituals at the preparatory stage. Theoretically and practically, the dancers I created in *Nkwa-Ike* were designed as characters, each with a back-story. As performers/actors their movements and dancing, although containing elements of pure dance, were driven by well-defined dramatic and performance objectives that required them to be in 'character', an ability that differs from performers' spontaneity in archetypal and contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance version in which these theatrical elements are absent.

The theatrical elements in *Nkwa-Ike* do not combine naturally to create a dramatic experience but, rather, I re-contextualised and re-structured form and content in a cause-and-effect plot development that underpins action and narrative simultaneously, thus privileging and highlighting aesthetics and performativity as major factors in the total impact of the experience (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010). The enhanced theatricality in *Nkwa-Ike* dance is based on the establishment of a dramatized narrative is a significant difference and departure from what exists in *Iri Agha* where narrative and storyline are secondary and subsumed in dance. The narrative model outlined in my creative practice (of cause and effect, the elaborated plot structure) is therefore, the product of a new artistic, structural and aesthetic strategy that is designed to emphasise as well as sustain the links and connections between the three stages of the performance (the preparatory stage, returning from war and re-

enactment stage and the celebration stage) These are conceived as both theatrical and logical developments of the form from ritual to theatre as suggested in Echeruo's (1981) research on the dramatic potential of Igbo theatre and masking traditions.

Since this study questions the appropriateness and mistaken association of the incomplete narrative and structure in contemporary *Iri-Agha* as conventional in Igbo dance theatre, a few terms need explanation before venturing into the theatrical analysis of *Nkwa-Ike*. These will be made with reference to the long standing tradition of narrative analysis in literary studies and theories which make a clear distinction between *story*, *plot* and *narrative* (Prince, 1987; and Cobley, 2004). The term 'story' refers to the chronological order of events of the narrative which may be unconnected and seen as single episodes requiring arrangement. The links between such events of the story are generally referred to as 'plot' and logical-causal connections between these episodes are created in order to explain why a situation has occurred. The underlying logic is that of cause and effect: something happens, because something else has happened. For example, the war between the Ohafia and Nmonyo people took place because both communities prepared for battle to resolve a dispute, settle scores in the hope that victory would alter the balance of relations in their favour. 'Narrative', in turn, is the arrangement of these episodes and their logical connections but this does not necessarily follow the the chronological order of events in the legendary and mythical story from which it may derive. It can, therefore, be said that the re-organised, more elaborate narrative created for *Nkwa-Ike* is a revised artistic portrayal and rearrangement of events in the archetypal *Iri-Agha* and their logical-causal bonds. By arranging the sequence of events in a dance form, creating more rounded, fully developed characters and establishing new connections between them, a new narrative and storyline is created from the same story. Its structure is, logically speaking, appropriately more episodic and discontinuous. In the archetypal *Iri-Agha*, the performances span through weeks and days showing a series of

interelated events. Although the *Nkwa-Ike* performance can take place throughout a day and even within hours, the understanding of this theatrical structure and action in this (my) adaptation highlights the high level of abstract information in contemporary *Iri-Agha* as opposed to the archetypal version from which it is derived, but this is only notable to a critic who knows both versions, not the audience. Having set up this distinction, I would like to add that structurally *Nkwa-Ike* does not follow the dramatic prescriptions of the well-made plot. It is episodic and in line with traditional Igbo performance convention, where dance is usually recognized as an art in its own right, yet it sometimes shares some features with theatrical traditions (Beckerman, 2015) as often occurs in Igbo society.

Many commentators and observers such as Demas Nwoko (1981) and Nnabuenyi Ugonna (1981) have however, commented on the abstraction and lack of clarity that marks many Igbo dance performances which means that most audience members do not understand the narratives and dramatic context. That is, they have difficulty in understanding what dancers are trying to convey in performances that lack the developed theatricality and comprehensive dramatic narrative in other folk forms such as ritual, masking, singing, and folktales. These comments, similar to those made by M.J.C Echeruo (1981) in his controversial and highly-debated work; 'The Dramatic Limits of Igbo Ritual', both highlight and suggest that structural features and other elements of contemporary Igbo dance performances are missing in the theatrical context. This so-called 'under-developed' theatricality is not unique to Igbo indigenous performance, such deletions of material were for long found in many indigenous African performance forms from poetry and work-songs to storytelling and ritual (Beier, 1981; Finnegan, 1970; Okpewho, 1977). Osita Okagbue in his book *African Theatres and Performances* (2007) deconstructs the Western slant of Echeruo's thesis, mainly because the latter fail to appreciate the finer distinctions between drama, theatre and performance as

defined in detail in Richard Schechner's *Performance Theory* (1977). Okagbue (2007, p.5) notes:

> But all these efforts, in my view, were unnecessary. What the scholars failed to take note of and question is the issue of whether or not every performance, every theatre event, has to be drama. And second was their failure to make any distinctions between the terms 'drama', 'theatre' and 'performance'.

While Ottenberg (1975) differs from many of his contemporaries in emphasising the theatricality of many African forms, Nadel and Miller (1978, p. 295) assert that 'every field is beset with problems and dance is no exception'. In the case of Igbo dance theatre the problem is exacerbated by historical and cultural developments (discussed in detail in Chapter One) that led ultimately to the abstraction of the dramatic elements, structure, narrative and meaning, and to the structural and narrative brevity that has come to characterise contemporary Igbo dance. Research investigations into the absence of expository and post-climactic stages or 'missing links', and related issues concerning the theatricality of Igbo dance theatre is limited largely to the work of scholars like Nzekwu (1981) Amankulor (1981), Ugonna (1984) and Echeruo (1981). However the field studies conducted for this research generated rich cultural and historical information that could be deployed in the creation of new dance practices based on indigenous models of which *Nkwa-Ike* is one potential outcome. The complete dramatic structure that Ugonna (1984) discusses at length in *Mmonwu: A Dramatic Tradition of the Igbo*, just as Amankulor (1981) does for *Ekpe*, and the presence of a theatricality that developed from different sources and a clear narrative component which this research project aims to explore appear in *Iri-Agha* dance archetype. This is the source of contemporary version as was observed during the field research. However, while contemporary *Iri-Agha* is deficient in these essential dramatic features, some neighbours of the Igbo nation such as the Kalabari (the Ekine society masquerade; Horton (1981) and Urhobo (*Udje* festival; Darah (1981) have developed more complete forms of

dance theatre from their own archetypes parallel to that envisaged in this study. The presence of developed performances from folktales and oral forms of storytelling suggest that the Igbo are not averse to elaborate theatricality; at least this appears to be the case given their recorded history of stylised narrative and dramatic forms. What has been missing is a more developed framework to bring together features of dramatic Igbo dance forms, as a means of supplementing and complementing its abstractions. Studies of such developments taking place in other parts of Nigeria and Africa have been made but equivalent research has rarely been conducted into the theatricality of Igbo dance.

In public presentations of many Nigerian dance forms the reduction of elaborate theatricality, dramatic action, cultural information, and performance-making processes into brief movement phrases or symbolic gestures has been noted by scholars such as Darah whose work highlights the elaborate unseen preparation, stylised actions and stages that surround *Udje*. Darah (1981) observes that the *Udje* festival dance performance of Urhobo people of South-South Nigeria spans a three months period, from the arrangement of the songs to the moment of presenting them in the public arena. According to Darah (1981, p. 504), *Udje* dance-songs are presented in four stages:

> The first is the social climate in which the dance is staged; the second stage outlines individual and group preparations for the festival; the third section details the presentation of the songs and dances at the performance venue and the final section is an analysis of *Udje* songs presented in the public arena.

Similarly the 'Fontomfrom' war dance theatre of the Akan people in Ghana is divided into four segments; (1) a warrior's dance of harassment; (2) the dance of achievement as a valiant military leader; (3) the queen mother's dance of peace; and (4) the victory dance with a narration (Bame, 1991) that helps the audience's understanding. The *Udje* and similar examples show that the proposed provision of an elaborately dramatic, narrative frame

proposed for Igbo dance theatre is not unusual. Furthermore it follows a pattern of dance practice in Nigeria and Africa that consists of the adaptations and reinterpretations of archetypal forms, and while mining their materials for new dramas.

The Igbo traditional dance theatres under investigation are ceremonial in nature. They may last for weeks. This three-part archetypal structure of *Iri-Agha* (war dance) as Ugonna and Amankulor established for Igbo dance theatre with its associated narratives and cultural history, is missing from contemporary versions of *Iri-Agha* and from a majority of contemporary Igbo dances. Contemporary audiences and participants witness in *Iri-Agha* merely one episode of a story in whose other sections are neither visible nor necessarily articulated in and through dance (see Bullet 1 of DVD attached). Information from field research highlighted many differences between the selected dances and their archetypes and allowed the missing features of the archetypal *Iri-Agha* in contemporary versions to be identified: (1) The role of the priest in Ohafia culture such as the ritual lustration (2) The role of women in Ohafia Igbo, as manifested in the story of the woman searching for her son in the midst of the returning warriors (3) The reception of the returnee warriors tinted with sadness, and (4) The warriors' victory celebrations. These different elements reveal an inclusive picture of Igbo communal society that many dance forms ignore or refuse to acknowledge. Dance archetypes (*Agborogu, Igba-Agu, Nkwa-Umuagbogho*) from different regions of Igbo society were analysed for their cultural histories and used in studio practice to re-interpret *Iri-Agha* as *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre, based on *Iri-Agha's* archetypal performance format. In line with Haseman's performative research theory, still photographs and a DVD recording were used to identify similar and contrastive movement patterns, staging codes such as the level to which communities relied on narrative elaboration and performance behaviours.

4.4 CONTENT

Generally the word 'content', means the amount of a particular substance which may exist independently or contained in something else. Artistically, content has to do with the ideas that are contained in a work of art. This study is particularly concerned with the meaning of content as it relates to dance. Content is that particular thing (subject matter) that the dance is treating through its formal elements. Among the different contents of the dance is often the message which the choreographer intends to communicate to the audience (Nwaru, 2008). Content is the issue or subject-matter that is represented through particular form.

As in most indigenous dances in West Africa, certain movement phrases are used representationally in *Nkwa-Ike*. This kind of representational stage behaviour is common across Africa and manifests itself in different ways, societies and in different art forms. The *Agbekor* dances of the Ewe for example, recount the history of how the Ewe fought their way to the section of Ghana where they now live. In the dance, the drummer changes his patterns continuously because they are correlated to each element of the dance choreography, or the various actions taken by Ewe ancestors as they migrated and 'fought' their way to Ewe region. The dancers stylize their movements in keeping with the language of the drum and the meaning of the dance. According to Nicholls's description of *Agbokor* 'several dancers try to describe the situation of war: "Get down and be ready" or "Go forward slowly; stop and watch right and left, and go forward again" or "If I get you, I'll cut your neck"' (1996, p. 48). Gestures utilized in the dance are abstracted and although they end in referential statements, they are read and understood in relation to generally understood, long-established cultural actions and signs. Similar movement patterns and phrases are used in *Nkwa-Ike* to establish communication between performers and audiences and for the framing of dramatic content consisting of gestures, stylised actions, costumes and props.

In my creative practice in the studio, I used the proposed 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System' to produce readings and interpretations of dances, each one being a significant part of a dramatic content contained in and effected as dance or as a movement phrase. As in a well-developed dramatic narrative, each dance and movement phrase, performance prop and costume contributes to the shaping of the form and to its presentation with well-defined exposition, climax and denouement stages. While one objective of the research is to unearth and develop the 'missing links' in contemporary Igbo dance theatre, another is to supply a reading and interpretative framework for Igbo dance theatre led to the design of an 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System'; which was applied to practice in order to establish a creative framework for reproducing and re-interpreting contemporary Igbo dance forms. With the 'Igbo Descriptive Documentation System' the directions and meanings of movements, the dance steps, gestures and floor patterns can be read and furthermore the links between the visual and tangible and the abstracted, coded, and imagined aspects of narrative can be developed. The documentation helps to analyse how different activities coalesce into performance signs and meanings and give birth to the climax, the most visible and affective aspect of the performance in contemporary *Iri-Agha* and other Igbo dance theatre. In the creative process of *Nkwa-Ike* photographs, a DVD recording and the proposed Igbo Descriptive Documentation System are used to clarify the research findings in line with Brad Haseman's (2009, p.148) Performative Research Paradigm. Haseman argues:

> …that a continued insistence that practice-led (practice based) research be reported primarily in the traditional forms of research (words or numbers) can only result in the dilution and ultimately the impoverishment of the epistemological content embedded and embodied in practice.

For this reason some of the electronic materials and evidences from studio practice has been submitted as part of this analysis. In this study, the contents of *Iri Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike* will be fully analysed, based on the issues that are treated in the dance sequences.

'*NKWA-IKE*' ANALYSIS

4.4.1 Stage One (Beginning) 'Njikwa-Agha' (War Preparation)

With the proposed 'Igbo Descriptive Notation' as a reading framework, Stage One of *Nkwa-Ike* can be viewed as consisting of many and up to twenty-one sequences (See Sequences 1-21 in Appendix X). This stage describes the beginning of war and the preparations leading to war of which the key moments are the exposition of personal and group stakes in the war communicated by action when the priest lustrates the warriors in a ritual process. To avoid repetition, only a few key sequences of each stage will be analysed.

Stage One (Beginning) 'Njikwa-Agha' (War Preparation)

Analysis of Three Key Sequences (3, 5, & 20, see Appendix X)

Sequence 3. Setting the Scene and Community Context

In this section the performers use new information derived during the research process from interviews with rulers, historians, *Iri-Agha* dancers and instrumentalists about the traditional roles of women, chief priests and their rituals to re-invest *Nkwa-Ike* with an archetypal and historical worldview that has been lost in contemporary *Iri-Agha*. In archetypal *Iri-Agha* this section exists not in dance but in ritual. This section was created through music, dance movement and phrases, leading to a new narrative that is both more dramatic and more representative of the culture. This decision to recreate the cultural ambience and story is not simply an attempt to revive old traditions, but is a process of providing audiences with the missing narrative, dramatization and information. The lack of these contexts in contemporary Igbo dance performances confuses many audiences Okpewho (1977) and Echeruo (1981) have alluded in different ways.

In choreographic and movement terms, Sequence Three of Stage One focuses on three new important elements or topics (the roles of women and the traditional priesthood and religious rituals) that continue to define contemporary Igbo society. As dance theatre, *Nkwa-Ike* is presented in a theatrical style that combines aesthetic and social drama (Turner, 1985; Schechner, 2003), a logical development that many Igbo scholars such as Chukwuma Okoye (2002) and Alex Asigbo (2008) have also drawn attention to in both indigenous and contemporary Nigerian performances.

Nkwa- Ike starts with the sound of the *Ikoro* drum (big wooden gong) carved from a big tree trunk hollowed and slit open on one side. In Igbo society *Ikoro* is used to summon male adult citizens to the town arena or cultural centre on matters of great communal weight. It is visibly positioned up-stage centre in Figure 3. *Ikoro* is a type of talking drum, and the pattern of sound produced conveys the anticipated message across a community. Although developed in pre-colonial times as a mode of communication it is still one of the quickest means of transmitting messages in Igbo society of rural areas. According to Njoku, 'when *Ikoro* talks, everybody will know that something great, important or unusual has happened. When beaten at night, all in the community and in the neighbouring villages and towns will know that something is amiss' (2003, p. 218). As the village *Ikoro* is played, men respond promptly and gather at the village arena, well-armed for war and prepared to ward off any external threats or aggression against the community. Usually the *Ikoro* message may be about the death of an illustrious person, imminent danger, war, a public funeral and other serious emergencies. *Ikoro* announces the forthcoming war as it would do anywhere in Igbo society and as similar instruments do all over Africa. The Tutsi war dancers of the Rwanda and Burundi of the Eastern border of Zaire for example, have to wait for the sound of the war drum before going to war or engaging an external threat. Today the dance accompanying the war drum is a re-enactment that announces the impending battles on which the form is based.

Picture 8 above 'Ikoro' (big wooden gong) carved from a big trunk, an instrument used to summon villagers for important meetings and a symbol of unity.

As the [8] men enter the arena, they lead with their right foot positioning it for the side movement positions, and the follow with the left foot. This movement pattern depicts the thrusting, ducking and evasive movements the warriors make in battle in order to confuse their enemies, making them far more mobile and less exposed as easy targets. At the first two counts, the two arms are positioned, hanging by the sides of the trunk, and on the third count, they stop, only to return to the same movement phrase. Their waists vibrate continuously through the duration of the three-count phrase. While executing this movement, the eight dancers make use of the normal plane (a flat or level surface) as they travel with and in the movements to take their positions.

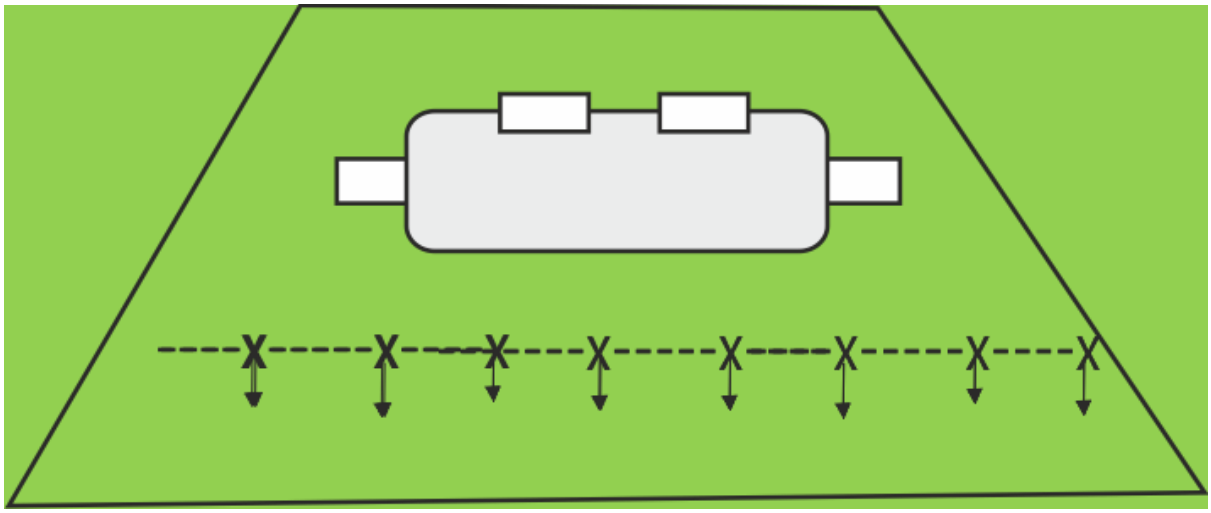
The theatricality of the movements described above lies in the roles as designed through the steps, the way the performers consciously perform their roles in dance and the content/ meaning of the movements. At the entrance to the arena the warriors adopt a straight line position as they travel with the movement phrase. The straight line position suggests confrontation. This shows the mood of the Ohafia (the community where this movement

originated) youths as they move to answer the call of the 'Ikoro'. This movement is reflected in the typical *Ikperikpe-ogu* dance, an abstracted, performative rendition of the dynamics of war which depicts emotional and physical responses to the challenge of war. *Ikperikpe-ogu* is the climax and consist of both dance and theatre abstracted actions, snippets of cultural gestures, signs that point to historical incidents and coded patterns of behaviour that communicate a more visual account of battle-field action than pure dance without the supporting details. The side-line movement phrase depicts instability and unsteadiness in the journey of life. In other words, the *Ikoro's* call may be for good or bad but it is also part of the overarching performance frame that involves entire communities (Njoku, 2009). Such theatre is not simply localised to one spot but embraces different locales such as the village shrine. Therefore, in *Nkwa-Ike* the form shapes the content so that what either the researcher or choreographer has to say or design will not be shapeless and meaningless.

Chris Nwamuo (1993) argues that traditional dance in the Igbo and Nigerian context is meaningless unless it has some dramatic and expressive content. For example, in *Iri-Agha* the pace and rhythm of the movement expresses whether the performer is brave or cowardly, ready or hesitant, alert or slow, joyful or angry. Slow and heavy movement creates a mood of tension and expectancy. On the stage dancers generate movement from the upper body and feet, of vibrating and pulsating energy that symbolically represents the ritual chants and war sounds created by ordinary men as they transform themselves into warriors. The expressive movement of *Iri-Agha* is adopted in *Nkwa-Ike* as the performers demonstrate the activity and different emotional states associated with their characters. An example is the incorporation of stamping feet movements which suggests aggression. Differentiating the two is the fact that contemporary *Iri-Agha* is limited to one type of movement category, while the dramatic intention pursued in *Nkwa-Ike* the inclusion and elaboration of elements that are merely signalled in *Iri-Agha*. Two such activities are the depiction of women as central figures in the

cultural practices and information communicated in the performance about men and war, and the elaborate staging inclusive of 'new' dances to accommodate this.

Movement provides sensible images or the qualities of 'character and emotion' that according to Cohen 'are proper provinces of dance (1978, p. 6). Action, therefore, is the element through which drama and theatre combine. Movement is 'central to the performing arts, but for the dancer and actor, the control of expressive gesture is of prime importance to the very act of theatre and communication of ideas' (Egan 1978, p. 174). In both *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike*, movement, with all its physical, emotional and mental implications, is the common denominator. In the service of Igbo dance theatre movement operates at two related levels; firstly and primarily, as a 'representation of the more external features of life and the mirroring of the hidden processes of the inner being' (Laban, 1985, p.6), and secondly as a means for threading dramatic information about the activities of dancers acting in the dual capacities of characters and narrators of action through movement. As they constitute thoughts and emotions which are danced and scored through movements, music, songs, props, and narrative in *Nkwa-Ike* to the effects of heightening the visual spectacle and the dramatic content and quality of presentations.



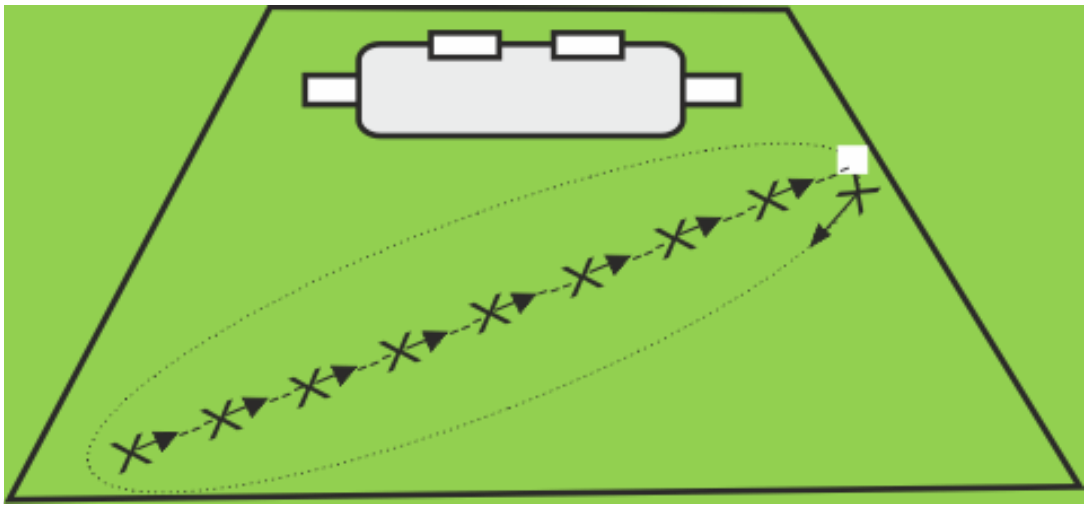
Sequence Three: Eight Warrior dancers face the audience on a horizontal line in answer to the call of the *Ikoro.*

The side-line movement (as shown in the diagram Fig. 3. Sequence Three) is reflected in a typical *Iri-Agha* dance performance. This coded movement is the source of additional dramatic elements in the *Nkwa-Ike* dance, an act that is both logical and theatrical. As Balme argues 'technically speaking, any form of dance can be made "theatrical" simply by performing it in front of an audience' (2008, p.7). However, some of the elements of theatre used in *Iri-Agha* may be theatrical without being dramatic especially as some of the storylines and characters are under-developed. *Nkwa-Ike* aims for the dramatic and is analysed here to demonstrate that archetypes of Igbo dance are both dramatic and theatrical, contrary to the image created by their contemporary versions.

Balme (2008, p. 7) observes that 'like music theatre, dance theatre shares many features with dramatic theatre. Hence dance theatre research also has many perspectives in common with theatre research'. The features both share are theatre-stage, songs, music and costumes. With regards to costuming the dancers and drummers wear the *okpu nwagoro* (traditional war cap) on their heads. They tie the *ozoebela* (white fleeze) on the upper left arm. A white handkerchief is tied round the neck. The 'george' wrapper is tied firmly around the waist. The costumes and props identify the origins of the dance as the re-enactment of an ancient mythologised war based on tales about the bravery of the Ohafia and Abam people, who were mercenaries in Igbo history. Songs and music establish the mood or narrative which the dancers interpret through movements that are dramatically charged, expressing a state of excitement and aggression.

Other important additions deriving from the interpretation of information on archetypal *Iri-Agha* are the narrative embellishment that the involvement of women introduces to the dramatic context, the subsequent increase in costumes such as the women's *Aja* costume, the introduction of new music, props, singing and chanting, all of which help dancers to establish

dramatic content and as invitations to audiences and spectators to interact with performers. This kind of elaboration situates *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike* within a different theatrical mode, moving from an over-stylised reductivism and abstraction to an enhanced dramatics and theatrics.



Sequence Five: Eze-nmuo applies ritual white chalk on the dancers' chest, eyes and back to prepare them for war

In Sequence Five the story moves to a different plane by elaborating on presence and significance of Eze-nmuo, one of the most powerful characters in archetypal *Iri-Agha*. In a repetitive manner, Eze-nmuo takes two steps forward and backwards, emoting slow but dignified movements as he circles the left eye of the eight warriors and stamps their chest with the *nzu* (white traditional chalk). Onwuliri (2011) observes that before going to war, all brave warriors perform certain rituals to the gods as instructed by the Eze-nmuo.[39] Dramatically, and as far as staging goes the chief-priest's role in archetypal *Iri-Agha* was secret and accessible only to members of the warrior brigade heading for battle. Its absence in contemporary *Iri-Agha* presents a different picture; it denies women visibility on stage as well as concealing the major role that ritual plays in the story of Ohafia and Abam mercenary

[39]Pictures 9 and 10. Eze-nmuo performing the protective ritual on the warriors.

warriors, in terms of Igbo traditional religion and history. *Nkwa-Ike* reveals and stages these features, the roles of women and the ancient ritual in this part of Igbo culture while retaining the dance's motif of celebrating men's military prowess and physical vigour. In this interpretation, the source material or old content, as in the significance of the ritual factor, the role of women, and the generally unacknowledged tragic aftermath in the loss of lives, is not necessarily dispensed. By contrast this cultural heritage is re-invigorated and re-contextualised and leads to a more balanced emphasis, presentation or interpretation of myth, legend and historical fact.

Picture 9. Eze-nmuo comes in from up stage left to prepare the warriors' for battle.

Picture 10. Eze-nmuo performs the ritual as he marks the warriors with 'nzu' (traditional white native chalk)

Such ritualistic prayers have their patterns and ordinances. The positioning of the dancers' arms by their sides shows their reliance on the powers of Eze-nmuo and the gods for protection at the war front. The emoting movement of Eze-nmuo is ritualistic and cultural and depicts the state (always in a trance) of chief priest as he performs the ritual before the gods. The drama associated with this ritual in the *Iri-Agha* archetype, is not fully appreciated or understood by those outside the performing age group. In the contemporary version, the role of the chief priest is not incorporated. According to M. J. C Echeruo (1981) although the dramatic potential of Igbo ritual is obvious, this has never been fully realised. My intention to re-interpret the ritual component in the chief priest actions in *Iri-Agha* as cultural and aesthetic and as theatrical response to Echeruo's call for Igbo ritual to yield its drama.

Although the ritual is theatrical and dramatic in quality, the drama and the dramatic are reinforced at two levels; first as an imitation and therefore able to be defined as art and secondly as a re-enactment, and so serving as a cultural sign and symbolic reference to the community's worldview. According to Rotimi (1981, p.77), 'ritual displays that reveal in their style of presentation, in their purpose, and value, evidences of imitation, enlightenment and or entertainment, can be said to be drama'. While the dancers play their parts in the ritual of *Iri-Agha* (through dance movements) and through both movement and dramatized sequence of actions that serve simultaneously as exposition and rising action in *Nkwa-Ike,* a character such as Eze-nmuo imitates the functional role of his cultural archetype in the society. The dramatic enactment of a ritual component is very significant in the theatricality of Igbo dance theatre, especially those with ritual bases that double as entertainment and communal sacral activity. According to Ajayi:

> Rituals are constantly recurring performances with prescribed forms and constitute a people's attempt to legitimize and perpetuate their dominant conceptual values […]. Thus, rituals, in addition to being significant pointers to how a people think about themselves, have built-in structures to cope with new crises and to initiate and create new concepts thereof. This 'self-generative' quality further enriches the form and content of the ritualized content (1998, p. 46).

The ritual factor is significant in my interpretation and adaptation because it enhances the theatricality of *Nkwa-Ike* and within traditional African contexts, it is difficult and generally unnecessary to distinguish drama from ritual because 'if the context of the performance is to be taken into cognizance, a ritual becomes entertainment once it is outside its original context or when the belief that sustains it has lost its potency' (Enekwe, 1981, p.155). Some dance theatre evolved from ritual and, in some cases, it is still a part of ritual enactments such as the *Ojuonu* and *Agborogu* of central and Eastern Igbo societies, respectively. However, there are situations where dramatic traditions have developed alongside rituals without any separation from their origins. *Nkwa-Ike*, is a contemporary re-interpretation of archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre in which the Eze-nmuo and performers dance and act-out the ritual, as the performance (according to Enekwe) is outside its original context. This type of re-enactment (*Nkwa-Ike*), according to Hardt (2012, p.225) is 'never a reproduction of the same thing, but a driving force for something new'. From Rotimi's point of view, while contemporary *Iri-Agha* that highlights war and victory celebration may not be called 'developed theatre', the war preparation is full of rituals and so can be defined as theatre. This dimension is missing from contemporary *Iri-Agha* but is re-established in the drama of human actions that forms the basis of *Nkwa-Ike*. Thus while *Nkwa-Ike* dramatization includes an interpretation of the ritual and acknowledges women's role in the communal celebration, it also connects the ritual and celebration. The result is a more integrated dramatic structure and plot development with a clearer link between cause and effect.

The elaboration of this ritual as a site for human and supernatural encounters or the celebration of communitas (Schechner, 2003; Okagbue, 2007; Ukaegbu, 2007) is a central factor in how and why Igbo performance and aesthetic conventions have developed through the social drama route.[40] This emphasis on the interaction of zones of existence in *Iri-Agha* and most performance archetypes (and more so in *Nkwa-Ike*), is part of the Igbo worldview that is the focus of the Igbo performance tradition, irrespective of whether the forms are dance, theatre, music, song storytelling or folktale. Thus in *Nkwa–Ike* the dance is halted temporarily to allow the dramatization to unfold, revealing the signs or foreshadows of future stage actions. For example, in the dance immediately after the ritual, one of the dancers proves inept, an action that draws attention to his weaknesses. This weakness reveals not only poor dancing, but also highlights physical weaknesses that prove fatal in war the dancer is killed and does not participate in the victory dance. Later in the drama, Nwanyi-nwa, the mother of the victim, performs a dirge in mourning for her dead son. The movements of Nwanyi-nwa as she searches for her son among the returnee warriors in Section Two was arranged to depict and evoke the power of personal relationships (particularly between Nwanyi-nwa and her son) and the conflicts of life and death. Nwanyi-nwa's action is a tiny reminder of the frequently unheralded social and sacral roles that women perform in Ohafia and Igbo society in general.

In Ohafia and other parts of Igbo society, men may dominate roles that portray physicality and strength such as war and defence but it is important to note that indigenous Igbo and African society offers ample recognition to womans' role (Igweonu, 2007). The resulting effect is 'gender dualism which leads to gender diarchy' (Igweonu, 2007, p.52) as presented in *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre. My presentation of the Igbo society in *Nkwa-Ike* as a people who

[40] Social drama is defined as a sequence of social interactions of a conflictive, competitive, or agonistic type (Schechner, 2003; Turner, 1985). In Igbo indigenous performance traditions, social drama is Turner's label for what happens when someone breaks a rule, how the community then takes sides for or against the rule breaker, and how the community works to resolve this problem.

believe in gender dualism refers to wide debate in African theatre and performance forums (Udengwu, 2010; Ezenwanebe, 2012, etc) and is also supported by Chinweizu:

> Gender dualism, with its attendant gender diarchy, means that in a well-ordered society of the African type, powers and responsibilities are shared between genders, and acknowledged as shared both in the home and in the polity (Chinweizu, 1997, p. 18, quoted in Igweonu, 2007, p. 52).

The reason for the exclusion of women in contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance and other theatrical performances in Africa is due to more than gender imbalance and the historical misrepresentation of women (Ukaegbu, 2007b), as Igweonu captures:

> Conversely, the advent of the literary theatre tradition, derived mainly from Euro-American theatrical traditions, has meant that African women no longer have prominence in the domain of performance (Igweonu, 2007, p. 52).

Thus my attempts to recognise and re-establish the role of women in *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre has resulted in the creation and interpretation of the character of Nwanyi-nwa. This is based on two related sources; ancient traditional tales about legendary women priests and communal leaders and stories and legends encountered on the field trip.

Picture 11. As in *Iri Agha, Nkwa-Ike* male dancers perform returning from war through the orchestra pit

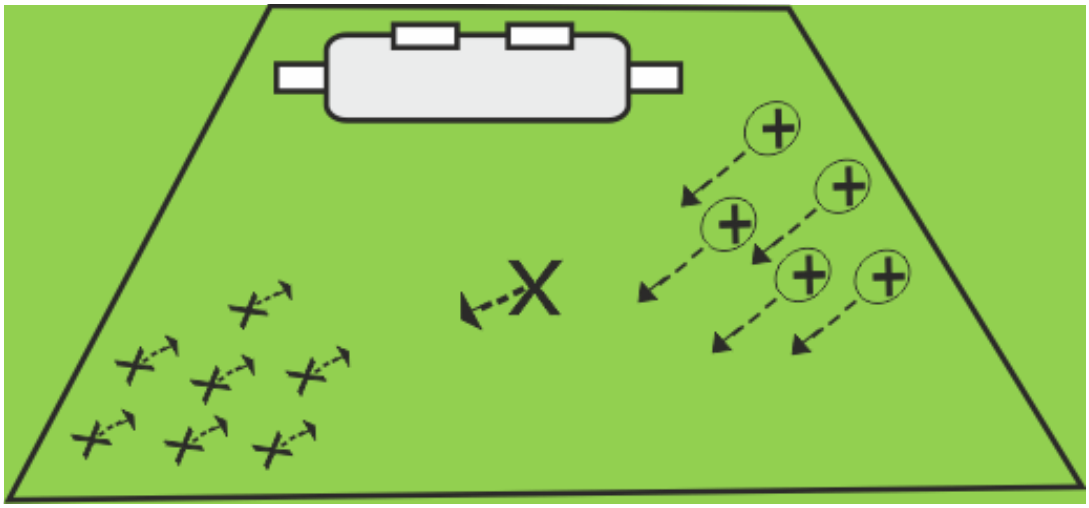
Theatrically and dramatically Nwanyi-nwa's role would be irrelevant without an appropriate cultural background against which it can be played out. Nwanyi-nwa is thus, both dramatic material and part of the narrative and a new plot that captures the communal picture contrary to the image presented in contemporary *Iri Agha*. On their return the dancers chant war songs as they climb on-to the stage, tense from fighting, wielding their machetes and demonstrating their readiness to fight again if required. In *Nkwa-Ike*, this movement is 'quoted' from the *Iri-Agha* dance theatre. By contrast performing bodily images and movement sequences as a mimetic reproduction without making apparent reference to the original or contextualising these actions is not quoting. Such performances would also need to expose the citational character through 'framing' (Hardt, 2012). The *Nkwa-Ike* dancer carrying the 'Isi oya' (carved human skull) representing the heads of the defeated enemies that ancient Ohafia warriors brought home as war trophies, and as a sign that the warriors really defeated their

enemies, is the focal point of the drama at this stage. In *Nkwa-Ike* this set of actions and props are retained as links to cultural history, as the creative representation of mythologised historical incidents. After all, the actual events on which *Iri-Agha* is based may have been less favourable to Ohafia and Abam communities than depicted but have long been transformed and mythologised through hundreds of years of re-telling and re-enactments. Today the props and highpoints of the drama mean something different; in the view of McCall (1993, p. 9):

> The war dance has changed considerably in the past century. The battles of the past have been relegated to remote history. But the dance remains at the heart of Ohafia identity. While the age of head-taking is gone, modern markers of achievement serve equally well as tokens of proven courage and affirmed manhood. New signs have become structurally equivalent to 'heads', worthy of celebration just as, in the past, the hunter who killed a leopard was celebrated as having 'taken a head.' This idiomatic transference is frequently explained in blunt terms by Ohafia people who remark: 'we used to go to war and bring back heads, now we go and bring back degrees'.

In this respect, *Nkwa-Ike* is both a performance of history and an embodiment of current events. It is a narrative of the past and a celebration of present accomplishments where the emphasis is not war but a discourse about individual achievements in a highly charged and complex social economy. Like *Iri-Agha*, *Nkwa-Ike* continues to reinforce the social perception of Ohafia as a land of noble warriors. The dramatic and theatrical foci do not just lie in the reworking or transformation of movements but are geared towards a critique and reflection on the power structures involved in the selection of content in *Iri-Agha*. Despite this criticism, the result is still dependent on the existing dance and works through repeating and quoting its repertoire (Hardt, 2012). Props are used in Igbo dance theatre to enhance theatricality. During performances the warriors present the *heads* of their enemies before the *Ikoro* and take a bow to signify that they have answered the call of the *Ikoro* to proceed to war and have returned victorious. In the past warriors who came back with human heads, a

feat probably managed only by a few, were given honorary titles in their communities. The live cock held by one of the dancers represents the presence of the community's ancestral spirit at the battle.



Sequence Twenty: Eze-nmuo welcomes the warriors while the women wait behind Eze-nmuo to embrace their sons, brothers, and husbands.

Picture 12 above shows the warriors being disarmed by Eze-nmuo before they can hug their relations.

4.4.2 New Reading: Deconstructing Dramatic Content

In *Nkwa-Ike*, some dramatic content has been adapted so that the underlying stories and contexts combine with research information on Igbo Ohafia cultural practices. The dramatisation in which women wait anxiously to welcome home their male relatives is symbolic of the drama that brings all sections of the community together, despite contemporary *Iri-Agha* giving the impression that women were not involved in the archetype. This process of recall and re-interpretation is what Goodman describes as a re-organisation of cultural material because the re-contextualised 'quotation' reflects back onto the original, which cannot be seen with the same eyes again (Goodman, 1978 quoted in Hardt, 2012). The movement and position of Eze-nmuo in the dance shows that nobody is allowed to touch or embrace the warriors until Eze-nmuo *disarms* them ritually and practically. In *Nkwa-Ike*, the Eze-nmuo collects the machetes and brings down the right hand of each warrior-dancer. This action shows that Eze-nmuo has neutralised and taken away the charms placed on the warriors before they left for war. Eze-nmuo's action also communicates to the community, embodied by the waiting women, that they are free to embrace the returning warriors. (See Sequence 20, Picture 12).

In dance terms, the diagonal movement from down stage right as the dancers travel upstage left demonstrates the movements of warriors as they enter the Achichi (arena) where their relatives wait to welcome them. This type of flowing sequences and connected narrative from one stage to another enhances the communication with audience members but more so, it links the different episodes and strands of stories about events on the battle field into a more unified narrative.

In *Nkwa-Ike* literal narrative and its combination with symbolic information is crucial to the meaning since, communication is one of the main reasons for and processes by which any art

engages its audience. To Chukueggu, 'language is a medium through which human beings communicate among themselves. It is a form of behaviour which could be verbal or non-verbal' (2000, p.139). Dance employs non-verbal means of communication using human body in a rhythmic sequence and as a cultural activity can be understood as the embodiment of ideas and feelings represented in a structured form. The dance here is a vehicle of interaction as it expresses meanings which the community understands. Dance movements in *Nkwa-Ike* are influenced by experiences of history, culture, environment, occupation and the people's aesthetic perceptions. Although the greater part of contemporary *Iri-Agha* is a 'non-verbal symbolic form of communication, a perceptual form which incorporates all the senses', (Metheny, 1978, p.49) the transformation of some non-verbal communication such as the absence or presence of women, into physical language has advantages, notably in conveying theatrical and historical content, information and material to non-local audiences.

The comments from Tony Duruaku and Kalu Okpi on the performance of *Nkwa-Ike* (see interview and performance evaluation transcripts in Appendix III) about enriching the story and bringing history and legend to life in an appropriate cultural context enhanced the meaning generation and communication modes of Igbo dance theatre. During my field trip interview, I asked 'Is it needful to re-choreograph *Iri-Agha* and make a complete story of it?' Duruaku responded:

> … since *Iri-Agha* has left the domain of a ritualistic dance in which it was used before the war to stimulate the warriors and has been brought into the domain of 'Arts', it has subjected itself to re-interpretation. So, somebody can take it up and re-engineer it in such a way that it enhances not only the original story but its aesthetic content by making it a form of 'Art'. But if it remains in its original form as part of pre-war rituals, it may not be changed because one of the features of ritual is rigidity. It is possible and good for a choreographer with vision, ideas and creativity to re-model or re-pattern it to convey new information and communicate new meaning (T. Duruaku. Interviewed on 13th February 2013)

Okpi concurs:

> … also the women were included in the celebration, who played the aja (small clapping instrument) and danced round the men. Today they have minimised the role of women which is not right. I remember when I was the Artistic Director of Abia State Council for Arts and Culture; we brought in women in the performance of *Iri-Agha*. Both men and women enjoyed the dance and no body complained … (K. Okpi. Interviewed on 13th February 2013).

The outcome of my studio practice (that is, *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre) was staged for public view on 26th April, 2013, at the Theatre Complex, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria (see Bullet 3 of DVD). *Nkwa-Ike* narrative and movement designs were experienced by viewers as 'clear and coherent designs with meaningful content' as observed by Kalu Okpi, Tony Ebirikwu, and Chamberlin Asianya commented (Comments, 28 April, 2013).

4.4.3 Stage Two (Middle) 'Ihu-Agha' (War Front)

This stage of *Nkwa-Ike* dance, focusing on the re-enactment of incidents at the war front, is made up of seven sequences (see Sequences 22-28 in Appendix X). The key sequences to be analysed in this stage are 23 and 27.

Stage Two, Sequence 23: Rising Action or Focal Action

The entrances of the dancers are staged in two segments. First, four dancers depicted as taking the lead in ambushing their enemies scatter into the four cardinal points of the stage forming a square representing the symbolic geographical locations of positions in the war front; East, West, North and South. This shows that every area of the battle-field is properly surveyed before other warriors enter. The staging is narratorial in nature and operates in 'the border between fiction and reality, which has been pivotal in the re-thinking of memory and

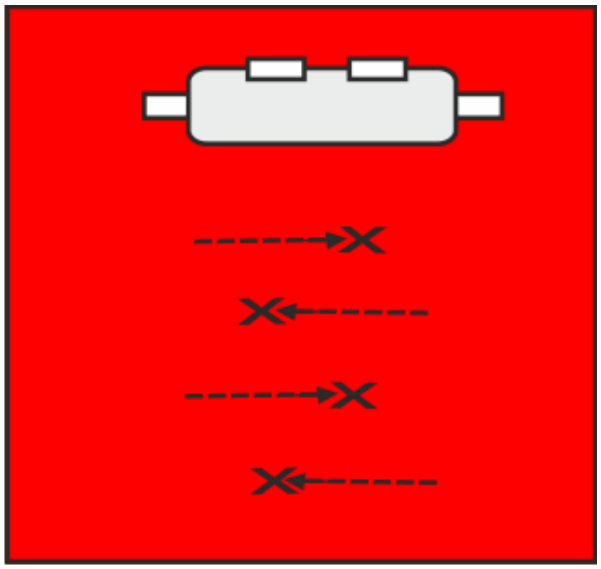
culture' (Hardt, 2012, p.223) with regards to the adaptation and re-interpretation of *Iri-Agha*. Taking a cue from the drummer, the four dancers dance to the centre stage, a move that indicates their agreement on the way forward. With the right foot, the dancers take one step to the front, the left foot following. As they travel, the vibratory movement of the chest accompanies the metric rhythm of their leg movements. Rhythm as a theatrical element plays a vital role in both dance and drama (theatre) and is 'the underlying beat that animates movement' (Bakare, 2002, p.185) in dance.

Commenting on the purpose of heroic dances like *Iri Agha* that are about war and victory in traditional African contexts, Begho observes that 'such dances seek to re-enact the ferocity of renowned warriors in the war front, either as a kind of imitative rites to ensure victory through empathy, or as a kind of jubilation for achievements won through prowess in war' (1996, p.169). In *Iri-Agha* Ohafia, the re-enactment of what happened at the war front through dance helps to dispel fear among the younger generation as well as preparing them physically and psychologically for action. It is also a way of celebrating communal values and survival, for reiterating the powers and potency of the local deities and charms that protected the warriors and their community in the face of odds. The performance was originally a sacral ritual in Turnerian terms and today can be considered part of social history; however viewed, it assures the living that in the hands of their assemblage of human and spiritual forces, the future is secure. This is one reason why the movements and patterns of every stage of this dance are formulaic and highly structured.

Although Cohen (2000, p.311) points out that 'dance theatre occupies a middle ground between plays and ballet; it is an impressionistic construction of musical, spoken and choreographic events ordinarily based on a theme but lacking formal dramatic plot and continuity', the dancers use expressive rhythmical body movements and movement phrases to

communicate dramatic mood, atmosphere, intensity of action and a spatial relationship that helps audiences visualise the actions of the battle field. Incidentally, the expressionistic interpretation and inclusion of this dramatic action based on extant historical and cultural information rather than narrative elaboration in key segments makes *Nkwa-Ike* a closer approximation of the *Iri-Agha* archetype than its contemporary version promoted as 'culturally authentic' by Arts Councils in Igbo States of Nigeria (Kalu Okpi. Interviewed on 13th February 2013).

The eventful re-enactments cover a space-time occurrence emphasising a period of time and repetition of the rhythm of life. This rhythmic dramatic action (Langer, 1953), is expressed in a way that shows the motivation for what follows, ensuring a rhythmic movement in all performances whether read, heard, enacted or viewed. As a result, the performance flows from one stage or episode to another and from beginning to end.



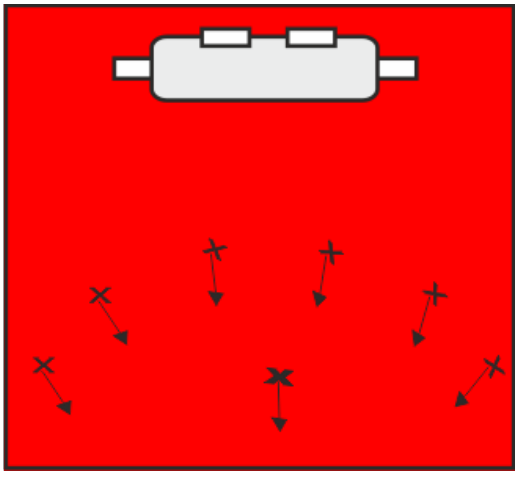
Sequence Twenty Three: Here the fourdancers dance to centre stage to analyse information gleaned from their reconnaissance before ushering in other warriors/dancers.

Picture 13. The warriors meeting at centre stage after surveying the battle field.

Picture 14. Warriors dance in symmetrical position at the battle ground

Stage Two, Sequence 27: Re-enacting Victory

In this sequence, the dancer (warriors) re-enact their defeat of their enemies and in jubilation they offer praises to their gods and ancestors for leading them to war and victory. Their re-enactment requires performing some of the movements used at the war front that contributed to their victory.



Sequence Twenty Seven: In both *Iri Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike,* dancers stand in semi-circular position as the carrier does his solo dance to execute the magical movement of the *Isi-Oya* (carved human skulls).

Picture 15. *Iri Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike* dance. The carrier performs his solo dance to execute the magical movement of the 'Isi-oya' (carved human skull).

Here, I adapted some of the movement phrases from *Ikperikpe-ogu* into *Nkwa-Ike* such as the staccato and vibratory movements that helped the Ohafia warriors to fight the battle. I re-structured the borrowed movements and created some gestures to enhance the theatricality of *Nkwa-Ike*. For example, the dis-connection in the staccato movement of *Ikperikpe-ogu* as used in *Nkwa-Ike* suggests how the warriors win their battle because the movement is performed so that their enemies cannot trace their foot-prints. The dramatic composition of this section is made manifest in the re-enactment of the Ohafia war experience because characters (dancers) are assigned roles that they act out on stage.

Picture 16. An *Nkwa-Ike* dancer exhibiting in a solo performance how he killed his enemy in battle

It is believed that as the lead dancer (carrier) performs his solo the gods begin to dance in the sky, that is, to rejoice with humans, and the *isi-oya* (carved human heads in a rectangular shaped basket) begins to rotate indicating that they are happy. The villagers wait to know the feelings of the gods. As they approve by rotating the *isi-oya*, everybody rejoices as the *isi-oya* returns to its position through the circular rotation. Each dancer performs a solo in turn, demonstrating different movements that depict the preferred fighting moves comprising the dancer's specific dancing imprints and fighting posture. Both fighting movement and accompanying dance constitute another form of dramatic narrative device and metaphor found in other dance forms in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa. Green describes this feature among the *Korokoro* dancers in northern Nigeria:

> Self-defence movements seen in the martial arts are common-place movements found in Nigeria among the Korokoro dancers. This dance is performed by men and consists of many kicks and arm thrusts which demonstrate how they meet their opponents in war. This type of martial art movements can also be seen in the Capoeira dance which is derived from the dances of Angola (1996, p.18).

The re-staging or re-creation of an earlier event as Green notes with reference to the *Korokoro* dance of northern Nigeria is also dramatically performed in *Nkwa-Ike*. In the second stage of the *Nkwa-Ike* narrative, the re-enactment of the Ohafia battle in the dance performance by the carrier or lead dancer results in the rotation of the isi-oya. In an attempt to enhance the theatricality of this climactic moment, I heightened the tension (force that engages the performers and audience in the dramatic action) and mood of the performance by complementing the traditionally danced dramatic action with physical gestures and moves that operate at literal and symbolic levels. At the point of the gods' approval signalled by the rotation of isi-oya, the performance of the warriors (dancers) is comparable to the literary device known as 'a Story in a Story' or 'Play within a Play', a device first used by Thomas Kyd in "The Spanish Tragedy" in 1587. In this re-interpretation, the magical performance of

the carrier or lead dancer and the re-enactment of the war experience by other dancers is performed as a play-within-a-play primarily and to educate and entertain the other warrior-dancers acting as a primary audience to these actions. The characters of *Nkwa-Ike* as the intended audience watch the performance being performed for them in a fiction that helps to enhance the dramatic effect of *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre.

As Stage Two concludes the dancer's position themselves all over the stage in a staccato movement as they prepare to leave the stage. The staggered exits is interpreted as the behavioural patterns of old Ohafia warriors who are believed to zig-zag across battle grounds in evasive actions designed to distort and confuse the perception of enemies or to leave the war front in order to evade capture by their enemies. In performance terms these metaphors also depict warriors as able-bodied and agile and ready for action, even when the war seems to be over.

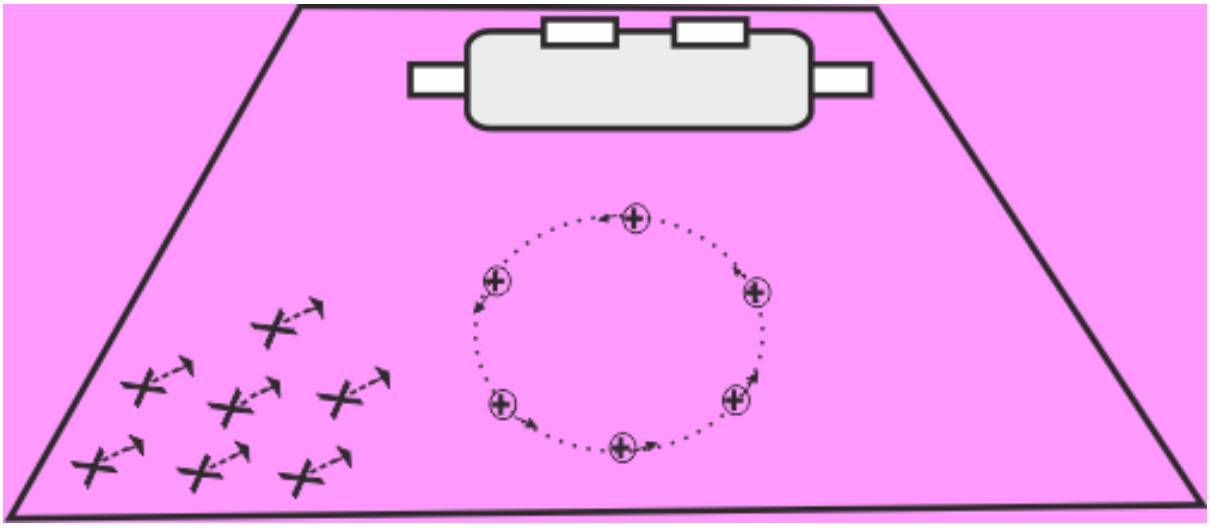
4.4.4 Stage Three (End) 'Onu na Ure Nmeri Agha' (Celebration of War Victory)

Stage Three celebrates victory in war. It is made up of six sequences (See Sequences 29-34 in Appendix X) in which performers' re-enact war exploits of legendary heroes in dance and the women and maidens perform as they welcome returning warriors. In the past in Ohafia, the celebrations were believed to lead to marriages. The key moments are sequences 30 and 34 analyzed below.

Stage Three, Sequence 30: Celebration

In *Nkwa-Ike,* as the celebration goes on, some women distribute food and drinks to audience members while maiden dancers entertain the returnee warriors, the community and their guests. This is not different from what takes place in other parts of Igbo society. For example, in Afikpo, the dance *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* came into being as a medium of entertainment in the traditional wrestling contest.

While the dancers re-enact their war exploits in dance, Eze-nmuo who has been watching from a corner, moves to the stage, greets the dancers traditionally by shouting 'ndi ibeanyi nma nma nu' ('our people, it is well with you, I greet you') and the dancer's chorus 'iya' ('you are welcome'). He signals them to sit down. The greeting style is common all over Igbo society recognisable as a performative social ritual with its own codes but transformed in the dance structure into a distinct phrase. Both greeting style and its accompanying movement are discussed by Yvonne Hardt who observes that 'numerous artists and festivals increasingly feature works that address the past, having discovered the potential for self-reflexivity on dance in conversation with its history' (2012, p.217). The dance provides members of the community with historical and mythological information on what happened at the war front and in return, the community officially welcomes the warriors and celebrates the war victory. Although missing from contemporary *Iri-Agha* the presence of women as active participants is a new interpretation of their role in Ohafia culture as going beyond entertaining victorious warriors. (See Sequence 30 & picture 12).



Sequence Thirty: At their entrance the women adopt a circular direction of movement, while the warriors watch in admiration.

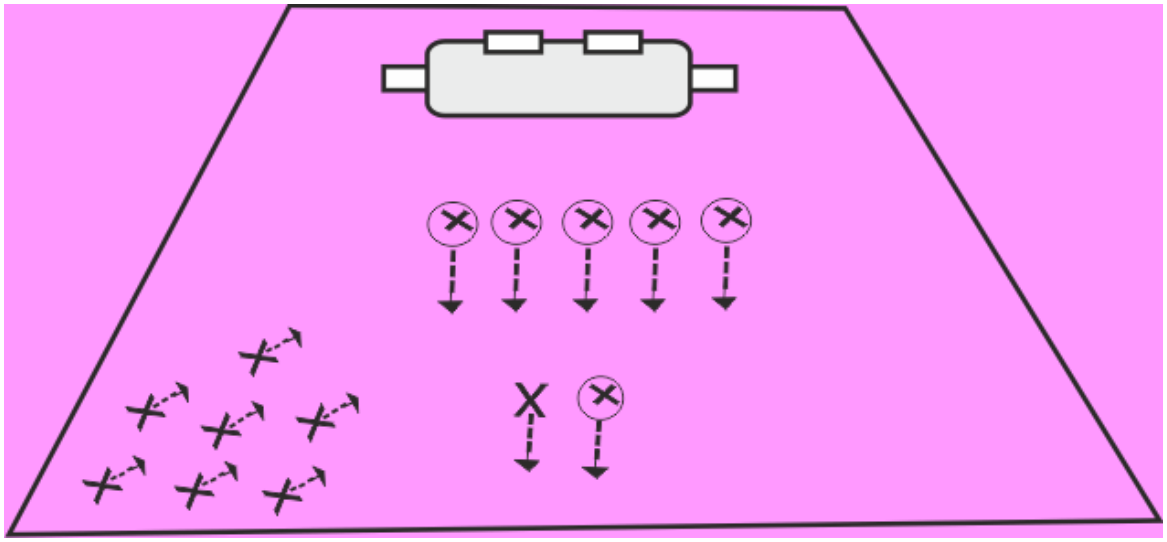
Picture 17. Maiden dancers based on *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* of Afikpo use the circular direction of movement in *Iri-Agha* to celebrate their community's victory in war in *Nkwa-Ike.*

The maiden dancers perform their solo one after the other in the centre of the stage; in such becoming prominent at that moment the solo dancer has the opportunity to present her best physical features and attributes to the public. In Ohafia, the celebration takes place at the Achichi arena where seats are arranged so that the audience's view is unhindered. It is common where occasion demands, for young boys to perch on nearby trees in order to get a better view. Performers and spectators are usually accommodated on the same level, emphasising communal cohesion and unity. The arena formation in Achichi Ohafia is not the only type of space arrangement found in indigenous Igbo performances. Other patterns are determined by the performance space and by cultural conventions controlling the performance. Amankulor comments on these saying, 'the central staging formation in which the spectators form two columns in between which the performers stay is found in the *Ese*

funerary performance, while the broken arena formation is noticeable in *Ikoro* and *Okonko* plays' (2002, p.403).

Stage Three, Sequence 34: Performing Social Action

Many dramatic actions in *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike* are performed social conventions staged essentially to underpin theatrical make-belief and to critique cultural practices. By resorting to the conventions of such practices as the Igbo formal public greeting within the dramatized action, the performers bridge the theatre-auditorium divide by engaging and interacting with the audience. In this theatrical act, the dancers function in their dual capacity as dramatic personae and as social beings; their actions are reminiscent of Erwin Goffman's (1959; 1975) theory of social action and interactions as "performed exchanges". Such exchanges, although derived from cultural conventions, are like the contents of what Schechner defines as social drama in that they are *performed* and presented for the purpose of influencing the understanding and actions of those in attendance.



Sequence Thirty Four: In this sequence the male and female dancers perform a duet while others watch and wait for their turn to mark the end of the dance.

Picture 18. A male dancer (warrior) and the maiden dancer performing a duet during the celebration of the war victory

Picture 19. Another version of the duet during the celebration of the war victory

In theory abstract constituent social actions provide huge potential resources for re-interpreting and adapting Igbo archetypal dances. On commenting on the dramatic (theatrical) credential of *Iri-Agha* and similar archetypes (discussed in Chapter 1), Rotimi (1981) believes that the reception of the term drama, within a cultural setting, at any rate, implies 'imitation of an action […] of a person or persons in action', the ultimate object of which is to edify or entertain. Sometimes, some dramas do both. Such imitation or mimesis is observed in *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre as the warriors imitate actions that took place in a mythologised war and the people who fought in it before a community audience. The performing arts entail the act of 'doing' in the theatre before an audience. This being the case, dance is perhaps one of the most effective means of imitation of all the performing arts. *Nkwa-Ike*, like *Iri-Agha* and other Igbo archetypes (*Nkwa-Umuagbogho*, *Okonko*, *Ekpe*, *Mmonwu*, *Okumkpo*, etc) whose contemporary interpretations focus on some aspects of Igbo society's life experiences and prioritise movement over narrative, have been used effectively to imitate war as presented on stage for an audience.

The elaborate narrative and dramatic interpretation and translation of a traditional dance into contemporary form is not peculiar to African societies. Many social changes within a given society can be explored through such dance performances. In Germany, Kurt Joss dances were full of strong social commentaries and he became famous for:

> Refinement in the complete telling of a complex story through movement alone. In his ballets the story flows on as uninterrupted narrative, total dance. His ballet, The *Green Table* (1932) broke new ground in presenting a topical subject —the inevitable outbreak of war and its consequences — as a work of art (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1977, p.4551).

In Igbo society, controversies over and questions about the extent of the theatricality of Igbo dancing and masking, such as Michael Echeruo's 'The Dramatic Limits of Igbo Ritual'(1981) are being answered through reexamining *Iri-Agha* and similar dances with missing segments.

Their restoration in the making of *Nkwa-Ike* can be argued to be a different kind of Igbo dance theatre characterised by more extended and extensive dramatic content, a cause-and-effect plot development, and elaborate narrative and mimetic emphasis, since the dancers are not warriors but performers playing the roles of warriors.

One important component of Igbo dance theatre and *Nkwa-Ike* in particular is the role of music and instrumentation in the extension of narrative and interaction between performers. This is elaborated in (traditional music and instrumentation as performance trope in Appendix Xi).

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 CONCLUSION

This study has examined the form, content and creative practice of Igbo dance theatre as a multifaceted organic performance shaped by history and representing many aesthetic transformations through Igbo society's development from traditional to contemporary periods. The study is about *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike,* as examples of Igbo contemporary dance theatre in Eastern Nigeria. The research has attempted to answer the following questions: How does contemporary Igbo dance theatre differ in structure, form and content from its archetypal models that were based on rituals and socio-cultural practises? How does the absence of exposition and post-climactic stages in contemporary Igbo dance theatre provide space for new creative energies and new dance practices? In the absence of a notation system, how can the new generations of Igbo dancers and society understand the dances of previous generations as well as study them?

The *Iri-Agha* dance used as a case study for this research has been presented in different ways by many dance troupes. Its performances are represented in three major forms: the traditional (archetypal) *Iri-Agha,* the contemporary *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike* (my contemporary interpretation and adaptation of archetypal *Iri-Agha*). In my view the *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre shows an improvement in the stylistic, structural and aesthetic features of the traditional form. The content of the dance is visible through the structure, composition, spectacles, and complete plots of the performance. These are shown through various dramatic and theatrical elements, movement, music, costume, make-up and so on which comprise the total dance presentation. I have explored the culture, art and Igbo dances such as *Nkwa-Umuagbogho, Ikperikpe-Ogu, Nkwa-Nwaite, Agborogu, Nkwa-Agu* and others to show that Igbo society is

replete with theatrical performances that represent and interrogate the people's histories, myths and cosmology.

My field work revealed that people in the same cultural areas share certain basic dance practices and artistic features of dance. This study has identified many of these features and their points of divergence amongst the Igbo people. Some are the ritual roots, subtle and deliberately under-developed narratives, symbolic episodic plots, and minimal staging (Ugonna, 1984; Okagbue, 2007; Ukaegbu, 2007) that characterise traditional Igbo dances and the shift in performance spaces from them to the modern stage. Divergence from the traditional dance archetypes investigated in this study and their contemporary interpretations and adaptations can be seen mainly in the abstracted contents and incomplete storylines that are associated with contemporary Igbo dances. In generic terms the *Iri-Agha* dance theatre points to the fact that cohesive group life and the concerns of a people can succinctly and successfully be explored through arts in general and dance in particular. Among the different cultural zones in Igbo society are regional cultural distinctions and some commonalities in perception on many artistic matters such as similarities in form and structure in Igbo dance, derived from mutual intergroup relations. For example; the concept of missing links in the developments of dramatic content and theatricality from indigenous archetypes to contemporary versions that is common in *Iri-Agha, Nkwa-Umuagbogho* and *Agborogu* contemporary dances indicate the possible commonality of form, in the history and cultural practices all over Igbo society. Studio experiments in dance style, movement, and interrogation of received conventional cultural histories also show that the combination of different and common values and practices provides a rich background for many more studies into Igbo dance theatre and for the form to evolve in new and innovative directions along the lines that Echeruo's (1981) call and initiated in the mid-1980s.

The significance of this research lies in its interrogation of theories about Igbo dance theatre by eminent Igbo scholars such as Michael Echeruo who argues and questions the theatricality of Igbo dancing and masking in 'The Dramatic Limits of Igbo Ritual' (1981). My counter argument is that a critical investigation of dance archetypes in Igbo traditional society reveals undoubted gaps that provide creative spaces for the exploration and generation of new dance theatre pieces in the studio. My studio research outcome in the form of *Nkwa-Ike* is an extensive and holistic narrative that employs a dramatic plot to fill the missing gaps in contemporary Igbo dance theatre. This study has made the esoteric features of mythology, folklores, history and cultural artefacts more accessible to the understanding of both contemporary Igbo and non-Igbo audiences. In addition, it destabilises the reductionist approaches often associated with African arts and performances. The elaboration on sign and coded information is important at this time when other forms of Igbo arts are being re-interpreted and fleshed out in home videos (Nollywood), (Haynes, 2007; Enahora, 1989).

This study re-interpreted and recreated Igbo dance theatre on the proscenium stage to meet 21st century Igbo requirements for new performance forms and to mine traditional models for materials with which to invigorate contemporary forms without necessarily breaking with traditions (see Bullet 3 of DVD attached). This has led to the re-interpretation of extant and existing contemporary forms, the diversification of the contents and contexts of Igbo performances, and the expansion of them to include new tropes. This was the case in *Nkwa-Ike* in which additional new musical instruments, spectacles and songs were created. In theatrical terms this expansion has created a wider and bigger base for performances such as enriching the props and costumes, scenic designs and stage lighting that are not generally associated with archetypal Igbo dance theatre. Very importantly responses to *Nkwa-Ike* have highlighted the significance of a clear narrative that elucidates and elaborates on dramatic content and overall theatricality using materials from the abstracted historical information

associated with Igbo dance theatre. The transformation of these materials into new performance highlights the possibilities of new models of practice.

In the attempt to answer the research questions, *Nkwa-Ike* contributes to the re-creation and re-interpretation of archetypal *Iri-Agha.* Specific innovations of this re-interpretation are the inclusion of the role of Eze-nmuo in the Ohafia Igbo war expedition, the reception of the returnee warriors tinted with sadness, and the role of women (embodied in the lamentations of Nwanyi-nwa) in the Ohafia war story. Others include the celebrations of victory by the community, the creation of an inclusive picture of Igbo communal society, and the development of a documentation system (Igbo descriptive documentation system) with which to read, document and preserve Igbo dance theatre. The study has highlighted the potential of an extensive and holistic narrative in dance theatre along the lines of dramatic plot development consisting of a beginning, middle and end. Now audiences may understand Igbo dance theatre performances better and may fully comprehend the performance and understand how to read it effectively since the necessary information has been presented. *Nkwa-Ike* is a new addition to the inventory of an Igbo dance theatre.

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Appendix - I

Field Trip: Letter of Introduction

15 December 2012

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

Letter of Introduction: Christian Ikechukwu Nwaru [Research Degree student]

This is to introduce Mr Christian Ikechukwu Nwaru, a research degree student in Performance (Dance Theatre) in School of The Arts, University of Northampton, England.

Mr Nwaru is in Nigeria to conduct field research on the topic, "Contextualizing Form, Content and Creative Practice in Igbo Dance Theatre". He has neither received United Kingdom public nor institutional funds for his travel and research. He is expected to visit many places of interest such as museums, libraries, the palaces of community chieftains and leaders, and art galleries to work with professional and amateur dancers. His research will include interviewing and holding discussions with dance practitioners and scholars at various levels and locations as well as with artists, curators and community dance functionaries and with individuals in public and private art sectors.

The data and information from this field trip is very important and beneficial to Christian's research. The study will contribute to scholarship in Igbo dance studies and practice and does not result in personal financial gains of any description to the researcher. Please assist Christian Nwaru in every way you can.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Victor I. Ukaegbu
(Director of Studies/ First Supervisor)
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Appendix - II

Names, Positions of Interviewees, Including Places and Dates

NAMES OF INTERVIEWEES	POSITION HELD BY INTERVIEWEES	PLACE AND DATE OF INTERVIEW	COMMENTS
Emmanuel Imaga	His Royal Highness, The Traditional Ruler of Ohafia Udumaezema Ancient Kingdom.	Elu Ohafia , 21 January, 2013	History of *Iri-Agha* and Culture of Ohafia people.
Ezeogo C.O Ekuma	His Royal Highness, Igboukwu 1 of Mkporo, The Traditional Ruler of Mkporo Autonomous Community in Afikpo	Mkporo, Afikpo 24 January, 2013	Migration of Igbo People, Origin of *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* Igbo Culture.
Kalu Okpi	Associate Professor of Theatre, Former Dean, School of the Arts, Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education and Former Director, Abia State Arts and Culture.	Owerri, 13 February, 2013.	Origin of *Iri-Agha*, Different Stages in *Iri-Agha* Role of women in *Iri-Agha*,
Toni Duruaku	Associate Professor of Theatre, Dean, School of the Arts, Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Former Director, Imo State Arts and Culture.	Owerri, 13 February, 2013.	Traditional Igbo Dance and mode of Communication
Nkem Opara	Director, Imo State Council for Arts and Culture, Owerri and Head, Olu-Imo Choral Troupe.	Owerri, 13 February, 2013.	Arts Administration; Promotion Dance in Imo Arts Council
Ray Anumba	Assistance Director and Choreographer Imo State Council for Arts and Culture, Owerri.	Owerri, 12 February, 2013.	Choreographic Process, Adaptation
Vincent Nwachi	Retired Headmaster, Title Holder, Village Head and Leader *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* Dance Group.	Afikpo , 24 January, 2013	Origin and Different Sections of *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*
Nnate Orji Kalu	Title Holder (Chief Ikeogu) and Leader Ohafia Udumeze Dance Troupe	Ohafia, 24 February, 2013	Origin and Different Stages of *Iri-Agha* Dance
Ugochukwu	Dance Captain, Abia State	Owerri, 20	Gestures and

Uwasomba	Council for Arts and Culture, Umuahia	February, 2013	Communication in *Iri-Agha*
Charles Iheanocho	Lead Dancer, Imo State Council for Arts and Culture, Owerri	Owerri,12 February, 2013	Gestures and Communication in *Iri-Agha*
Ejike Ugiri	Head, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri	Owerri, 13 February, 2013.	Dance Theatre and Communication
Casmir Onyemuchara	Dance Lecturer, University of Ekiti and Former Principle Artist, National Troupe of Nigeria	Owerri and Umuahia 21-23, February, 2013	Choreographic Process
Nnamdi Mbara	Dance Lecturer, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	Owerri 21, February, 2013	Movements in Traditional Dance
Kalu Achike	Member, Udumeze Ohafia Dance Troupe	Ohafia, 18 February, 2013	Rituals in *Iri-Agha*
Okorie Eme	Leader, Amaekpu Dance Troupe, Ohafia	Ohafia, 22 February, 2013	Role of women in *Iri-Agha*
Kalu Uchendu	Lead Dancer, Ohafia dance Troupe, Amaekpu	Ohafia, 22 February, 2013.	Use of *Ikoro*, Venue of *Iri-Agha*
Agwu Emeh	Chief Drummer of the Udumeze Dance Group	Ohafia, 18 February, 2013	Rituals and Drumming in *Iri-Agha*
Idika U Idika	Head of Performing Arts Department, Ebonyi State Council for Arts and Culture, Abakaliki	Abakaliki, 23 January, 2013	Origin and Pattern of *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*
Chinyere Elendu	Project Officer, Community Development Plan, World Bank Assisted Project, Owerri and Former Dance Leader *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* Dance Troupe	Owerri, 20 February, 2013	Dance Movement and Communication in *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*
Nadia Anwar	Research Student, University of Northampton, UK	Northampton, 11 July, 2013	Meaning of Colours
Echeme Ugwu	Renowned Chief Vocalist/Chanter, Ohafia Udumeze Dance Troupe.	Ohafia, 22 February, 2013	Choral Music and Legend Stories in *Iri-Agha*
Moses Oshibe	General Manager, Ebonyi State Council for Arts and Culture, Abakaliki	Abakaliki, 23 January, 2013	Role of Arts Council in Dance Preservation
Henry Adjeke	Head of Drama Department Ebonyi State Council for Arts and Culture	Abakaliki, 23 January, 2013	Dance Movements and Communication

			in *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*.
Nwaeke Simeon Iwa	Head Research and Documentation Department Ebonyi State Council for Arts and Culture	Abakaliki, 23 January, 2013	Traditional Dance Preservation
Ezechukwu Ohio	Public Relation Officer, Ebonyi State Council for Arts and Culture	Abakaliki, 23 January, 2013	Roles of Ebonyi Arts Council
Uzoma Eluokwa	Costume and Dance Artist, Ebonyi State Council for Arts and Culture	Abakaliki, 23 January, 2013	Costume and Dance movement in *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*
Chinyere Nnanna	Dance Artist, Ebonyi State Council for Arts and Culture	Abakaliki, 23 January, 2013	Costume in *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*

Appendix - III

Interview Questions and Responses

Below are the sample questions of research interview on some traditional Igbo dances (*Iri-Agha, Nkwa-Umuagbogho, Agborogu, Nkwa-Agu*). I made use of structured and unstructured interviews in order to acquire knowledge about the dances in their cultural contexts. Sometimes, it was difficult not only to authenticate the responses but also to check their relevance against my theoretical framework. I interviewed some people in groups and others individually based on their convenience. Some of my interviewees responded in their indigenous languages (Igbo language with some dialectical variations) and others in English and Pidgin English. I translated and transcribed the responses into English Language.

Question: Nwaru

Why is *Iri-Agha* called a war dance?

Answer: Kalu Okpi

Iri-Agha is a celebration dance. Some people erroneously call it a war dance. The basic objective/purpose of *Iri-Agha* is to celebrate the achievements of people who go to war and return successful. Nobody plays the war dance at the war front. Instead Onyentum uses his

instrument to signal the warriors and boast their moral. *Iri-Agha* is a combination of music (blowing of the traditional horn) played while the warriors leave for war and musical (vocal) signs at the war front, all incorporated with the talking drum and clappers during the celebration performance. The talking drum re-enacts the vocal signs at the war front. For example, the drummer by playing specific tunes warns the dancers of impending dangers such as 'There is danger', 'Tread softly' and 'watch your back'. The dance and the music that is performed during the community celebration is what some people now call 'war dance'

Question: Nwaru

***Iri-Agha* is a war dance, how do Ohafia people prepare for the war?**

Answer: Kalu Okpi

We didn't just wake up one morning and went to war, just like the modern soldiers of today. People prepared very well before we headed to war. In Ohafia and Abam specific tasks are assigned to different age groups/grades. The age grades of those who go to war are between 25 and 40 years. The warriors camp for some days in a secluded place so that the chief priest can prepare them with the protective rituals after intensive training about war tactics. Then the warriors head to Achichi arena and bow before the *Ikoro* and then proceed to the battle field.

Answer: Emmanuel Imaga

In Ohafia the preparation that preceded the war on which *Iri-Agha* dance is based existed not as a complete dance form but in sacred ritual forms.

Answer: Kalu Achike

It is important for you to know that during the preparation, the warriors are not allowed to have sexual relationship with the women or eat their food for it is believed that food cooked by women may weaken the warrior's charms.

Answer: Agwu Emeh

Also during the war preparation, nobody is allowed near or touches the warriors except the chief priest because they are [supposed to be] half human and half spirit.

Question: Nwaru

What is the impact of folktales, legends, and myths on *Iri-Agha* dance?

Answer: Casmir Onyemuchara

Ohafia war dance is not complete without the folktales and legend such as *Elibe Aja* which has to do with the story of the hunter and farmer. Also, the legendary story of *Elibe Aja* revealed that the Ohafia warriors lost some of their members in the war. During the dance performance, the solo singer chants the story of *Elibe Aja* and the exploits of the brave Ohafia community.

Question: Nwaru

Do other communities in Igbo society perform *Iri-Agha* or is it only performed by the Ohafia people?

Answer: Kalu Okpi

Iri-Agha is also performed in other parts of Igbo society. Some year ago, our warriors (warriors from Ohafia and Abam) went to Orafia in Anambra state and Abba in Imo state to fight as mercenaries. At the end of the battle, the warriors settled in Orafia and Abba and continued the performance of *Iri-Agha*. Our neighbours – the Arochukwu community also performs *Iri-Agha*. Igbo nation is well integrated and since *Iri-Agha* is a social dance and people love doing the dance, we cannot stop them. But the original owners of *Iri-Agha* are the Ohafia and Abam communities.

Question: Nwaru

Does *Iri-Agha* dance have various sections? How are they connected? Is the dance development coherent and systematic?

Answer: Ejike Ugiri

I think that *Iri-Agha* dance has a beginning because some years back before the dancers began to dance they poured libations, made some incantations to the gods of the land and performed some other rituals. But today, I do not witness such rituals. The dancers just perform the dance.

Answer: Nnamdi Mbara

Iri-Agha started quite some decades ago. My father was not born then. We only heard the story of *Iri-Agha* dance. I think it may have some sections depending on the choreographer because as at today I do witness different choreographies of *Iri-Agha.* Some of the performances started with solo dance, while others started with group movements or dance.

Question: Nwaru

How far does *Iri-Agha* dance identify with its cultural source in terms of style, costume and music?

Answer: Nnate Maduka

During the performance, the dancers and drummers must wear the opu nwagoro (traditional war cap), on their heads and onugwe (hard woven material) on their waist. The traditional woven cap is important as it is still used today to identify Ohafia men. Opu-nwagoro is made of red and white colour meaning that if our enemies want peace, the white is there and if they want war, the red is there, so it is for them to choose.

Answer: Kalu Okpi

In terms of music, the *Ikoro* is an instrument used in gathering the community members together. In *Iri-Agha*, the return of the warriors is marked by the sound of the *Ikoro.*

Question: Nwaru

I observed that *Iri-Agha* is performed by men; do the women play any role at all in the dance either at the preparatory or celebratory stage?

Answer: Okorie Eme

The women do not play any role during the preparation for war. They (women) only take care of their families. During the celebration, the women and young ladies distributed food and drinks as they were not allowed to perform the war dance.

Answer: Kalu Okpi

While the young men were fighting at the battle field, the women cooked and took care of the family member at home. They also prayed and wished their husbands and sons well on the war front. When the warriors are back, the Eze (traditional ruler) in agreement with the village heads choose a date for honouring and celebrating the returnee warriors. Traditionally the women performed the Aja (a special instrumental and ritual dance of the same name in

which women celebrated the victory by warriors) and danced round the Achichi arena, while the warriors performed in the centre of the arena.

Question: Nwaru

Since the war preparation is mainly in ritual, does *Iri-Agha* dance identify with the traditional religious life of Ohafia people?

Answer: Emmmanuel Imaga

Many people do not practice the ritual now. It has been replaced by Christian doctrines. Sometimes, however, during the dance, some performers use hot-drink to pray and pour libations to the gods of the land. We have removed the rituals and charms in *Iri-Agha*. We now perform the dance as entertainment and remembrance of our past heroes.

Question: Nwaru

Does the dance communicate or fail to communicate a particular message? Why and how does it communicate or fail to communicate?

Answer: Tony Duruaku

Yes, *Iri-Agha* is a dance of vibes, energy and strength. It communicates the mentioned symbols through movements. Such movement includes physical, spiritual and psychological energy. These energies are all embedded within the motions of the dance.

Answer: Casmir Onyemuchara

Yes, *Iri-Agha* communicates. First, the message of brevity shown in the dance movements and gestures explains the nature of Ohafia warriors and helps encourage the up-coming warriors. Secondly, Onyentum blows the traditional horn made out of a ram's horn when the warriors leave for war and when they come back. This is a way of communicating the movement of the warriors to the community.

Answer: Kalu Okpi

Onyentum is likened to the one who blows the bugle in the modern army to inform the community about the movement of warriors.

Question: Nwaru

You said that after the war, there is normally a performance and celebration. How was the performance organized during the celebration?

Answer: Nnate Maduka

The *Iri-Agha* dance is performed during the celebration at the Achichi arena. The seating arrangement is designed to accommodate every member of Ohafia community depending on their status. (Pointing at different locations), the traditional ruler of Udemaeze, Ohafia and his cabinet sit here; there is the position for the village heads, while the women of Ohafia position themselves at the other end. The villagers and visitors occupy that position. The *Iri-Agha* dancers perform at the centre of the arena while the women share the foods and drinks.

Answer: Kalu Uchendu

After the age grades and the chief priest have taken their seats, the Onyentum blows his horn to usher in the warrior's for their performance.

Question: Nwaru

Does the selected dance have a specific theme that it sets out to develop and achieve?

Answer: Casmir Onyemuchara

Yes, the theme of brevity shown in the dance movements and gestures explains the nature of Ohafia warriors and helps to encourage the up-coming warriors.

Question: Nwaru

Do you think that *Iri-Agha* as performed today has a complete story?

Answer: Tony Duruaku

No

Answer: Kalu Okpi

No

Question: Nwaru

Is it needful to re-choreograph *Iri-Agha* and make a complete story of it?

Answer: Tony Duruaku

One of the characteristics of 'Arts' is that it subjects itself to interpretation and re-interpretation. Since *Iri-Agha* has left the domain of a ritualistic dance in which it was used before the war to stimulate the warriors and has been brought into the domain of 'Arts', it has subjected itself to re-interpretation. So, somebody can take it up and re-engineer it in such a way that it enhances not only the original story but its aesthetic content by making it a form of 'Art'. But if it remains in its original form as part of pre-war rituals, it may not be changed because one of the features of ritual is rigidity. It is possible and good for a choreographer with vision, ideas and creativity to re-model or re-pattern it to convey new information and communicate new meaning.

Answer: Kalu Okpi

In the original *Iri-Agha* setting, the *Ikoro* was permanently fixed at the village square in Elu Ohafia. *Ikoro* is a very heavy instrument which cannot be moved around and its presence in *Iri-Agha* performance is very important. Also the women were included in the celebration, who played the aja (small clapping instrument) and danced round the men. Today they have minimised the role of women which is not right. I remember when I was the Artistic Director of Abia State Council for Arts and Culture; we brought in women in the performance of *Iri-Agha*. Both men and women enjoyed the dance and no body complained. I planned to document some of the traditional Igbo dances but could not complete my tenure in the office before Orji Uzo Kalu (Governor of Abia State) removed me. War dance is all about celebration and in Igbo society you cannot put women aside during celebrations.

Question: Nwaru

Are the variations apparent/clear in *Iri-Agha* dance in terms of gestures, dance movements and actions?

Answer: Obiajuru Edochie

No one can dance *Iri-Agha* correctly without applying the gestures and actions because the performer passes information to the audience through gestures. An example of this is the killing of the enemy at the war front. How can you pass such information to the spectators without using clear gestures and actions?

Question: Nwaru

Is the 'repetition' of movements and patterns that characterise such *Iri-Agha* dance meaningful?

Answer: Ugochukwu Uzomba: There are many repetitions of movements and dance steps in *Iri-Agha*. An example is the [staccato] movement. My understanding is that we execute this movement so as to reposition ourselves before starting another movement. Apart from this it does not make any other meaning to me.

Question: Nwaru

Where and how did *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* originate?

Answer: Vincent Nwachi

Nkwa-Umuagbogho is well known in the cultural heritage of Afikpo people. *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* originated in Afikpo for I have been the leader since 1971. It is connected to a legendary story that has to do with wrestling. The legend stated that there were two hunters from Afipko called Ina-Aja and Akpamibe. In their hunting expedition, they witnessed and got excited by the wrestling of monkeys in the forest. On getting home, they agreed to practice what the monkeys did. The first wrestling took place at Oguibe in Afikpo between the children of Ina-Aja and Akpamibe (the hunters). The winner of the wrestling was congratulated and embraced with loud ovation as his younger sisters rejoiced at his success through movements. The development of the little girls' movements for the purpose of entertaining the wrestlers marked the beginning of *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*. From that point the act of wrestling spread to other parts of Afikpo and the dance was fully developed.

Question: Nwaru

Which period of the year does the wrestling and *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* take place?

Answer: Vincent Nwachi

We have the wrestling period. Afikpo people are predominantly peasant farmers. Between the months of January and May, which is the planting season, farmers cut-down the bushes and plant their crops. And between June and July, the farmers come back home to relax. The wrestling festival that features *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* takes place at this period (June – July) as a means to provide the farmers with relaxation. But it is unfortunate that nowadays people do

not wrestle. We are hoping to revive the wrestling contest so that the idle youth in our community could engage themselves with something meaningful.

Question: Nwaru

Since the wrestling no longer takes place, does it mean that *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* that features during the wrestling festival has also stopped?

Answer: Vincent Nwachi

No way, *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* also exists on its own. We travel to so many places and perform *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*. Today we performed *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* for you without wrestling. But in every wrestling festival in Afikpo *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* is presented. We also perform *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* during some other occasions like chieftaincy installation, marriage ceremonies etc. The truth is that many people do not know how *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* originated.

Question: Nwaru

Is marriage ceremony part of the events in the wrestling festival that features *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*?

Answer: Vincent Nwachi

No, *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* is directly connected to the wrestling contest. The marriage ceremony in Afikpo is a different event. As the young ladies perform *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*, men who wish to marry use the opportunity to woo ladies of their choice and sometimes such occasions lead to marriage. It is worthy of note that the first president of our country [Nigeria], late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe chose his wife as she was dancing *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* and then got married.

Question: Nwaru

Do you see *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* as a dance that has a beginning, middle and end?

Answer: Chinyere Elendu

When I cast my mind back, I could see that to some extent *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* has a beginning, middle and end. For me the story of a dance is told in tempos. When the tempo changes, you will know that something new is coming up. In *Nkwa-Umuagbogho*, when the maidens are dancing out, the tempo changes. In that sense I believe the dance has a middle. The transitions are notified by change in tempo. A change in the tempo of the drumming affects the dance steps. For me the change in tempo and movement marks the beginning, middle and end of the dance.

Answer: Ejike Ugiri

I see *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* as a dance of celebration because there is an ululation that accompanies the dance at intervals. I always notice the dance in progress and I notice what looks like the highest point of the dance, maybe the crescendo. But I hardly notice the beginning.

Question: Nwaru

Does *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* communicate? What and how does it communicate?

Answer: Ejike Ugiri

Definitely *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* communicates. It is solely performed by women. The dance movement, the vibration of the body shows beauty. It communicates grace. It is the most graceful dance I have ever seen. It radiates beauty to the admiration of the audience. Also I learnt that the terrain of a place affects their dance method. Because of the rough and stony topography of Afikpo, the *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dancers move their legs in a certain way to avoid hurt.

Question: Nwaru

How and where did *Nkwa-Agu* start?

Answer: Ray Anumba

Nkwa-Agu is one of the traditional dances in Omenimo [Imo Arts Council] repertoire. It was introduced in 1985 in the Imo State Council for Arts and Culture, Owerri. The dance came up as a creative activity when I was challenged by the management of Imo Arts Council to

create a dance as the leader of the National Youth Service Corp Troupe in Imo State. *Nkwa-Agu* dance steps emanated from *Ogba-Agu* masquerade dance of Nnofija in Orumba-South, local government area of Anambra State. I was initiated into the *Ogba-Agu* masquerade group as a young boy. The dance is made up of beautiful steps but performed in secret. *Ogba-Agu* is performed during the burial of titled men. Only initiates are allowed to view the performance. As an individual, I do not see any reason why the *Ogba-Agu* dance is performed in the secret. Ovie Johnson, the American born choreographer and consultant working with the Imo Arts Council told us (dance artists) that 'a lot of African dance is buried in secrecy'. Johnson advised that the dance artist in African should try and demystify those cult dances. The comments of Ovie Johnson helped me to carry out a research on *Ogba-Agu* and the result of my research is the creation of *Nkwa-Agu*.

Question: Nwaru

As a choreographer, what were the processes you undergo in creating a dance like *Nkwa-Agu*?

Answer: Ray Anumba

I am a traditional choreographer in the sense that I did not study choreography in school. I understand that choreography is all about the creation and arrangement of dance movements and using them to communicate to your audience. For me, choreographing a dance goes with challenges. The challenges may be in form of a situation you want to express or issues you want to raise. This will lead you to conceive a concept. At this point you will ask yourself some questions such as: How do I execute this concept? Who are you going to use in getting your message across? Who is the message meant for? At the moment of conceptualising a dance, anything could help your creativity ranging from natural phenomenon like wind, fire, to the movement of people. For me, as I create movements, I give them names. I rehearse the movement first and when it makes meaning to me, I throw the movement to the artist. The artist's version may be better than mine. In that case, I will ask other dancers to learn from him or her. The next thing is to work on the music and arrange the movements for a better picture.

Question: Nwaru

In the process of dance creation, you said that you usually give names to each movement and you keep the names to yourself which help you to identify the movement. Don't you

think that there is need for you to develop or throw open your ideas of recording movement based on the notational problems dance art is facing in Africa?

Answer: Ray Anumba

Not as if I am hiding knowledge by keeping the name of the movements to myself. Though you are right that lack of dance notation is a problem in Nigeria and all over Africa. As a result of this, we find it difficult to re-produce our dances. The main problem here is 'universal acceptability and lack of uniformity'. For example, from *Ogba-Agu* which is performed in the village, we produce *Nkwa-Agu* as performed in Imo Arts council and now, the National troupe of Nigeria created *Egwu Odum* dance (their own version of *Nkwa-Agu* dance). Developing a dance notation has to be a scholarship exercise because we do not have records or even proper hand-over of the dances, just like the scenario I mentioned, unlike in the Western culture.

Question: Nwaru

As the Director of Imo State Council for Arts and Culture, what are the problems facing dancers and dance art in Imo State and how are you handling the problems?

Answer: Nkem Opara

This is a very vital question. Perhaps this is one of the biggest problems facing the Arts Council and the State. Most of the dancers are not educated and others have not taken dance profession serious. Indicipline among dancers is also a problem. Lack of government support and inadequate funding has been hindering the promotion and preservation of dance art in Imo state. Finance is required for staff training; cultural exchange programs, documentation and preservation of traditional dances, because research and documentation are essential factors in dance preservation. And when fund is lacking, there are limited things that one can do.

Question: Nwaru

In most cultures of the world, oral literature is gradually eroding away. I understand that you have the Department of Research and Documentation in your Council. How does it function and how are doing to developing the department?

Answer: Nkem Opara

Before I became the Director of this Council, I served as the head of Research and Documentation Department. I found that most of the materials we have in the libray when I was employed where nowhere to be found but there are few works in the library that can help you in your research. Students from higher institutions of learning do come here for their research. But we need money to equip the library.

Appendix - IV

Photographs of Field Interviews and Observations

Top Left: From left; Kalu Uchendu, Echeme Ugwu and Chris Nwaru (Researcher)
Top Right: From right; Emmanuuel Imaga and Chris Nwaru
Below Left: From left; Nnate Orji Kalu, Agwu Emeh and Chris Nwaru
Below Right: From right; Okorie Eme and Chris Nwaru

Interviews held at Owerri in Imo State of Nigeria

Top Left: From left; Kalu Okpi and Chris Nwaru (Researcher)
Top Right: From right; Chris Nwaru and Ejike Ugiri
Below Left: From left; Toni Duruaku and Chris Nwaru
Below Right: From right; Chris Nwaru and Nkem Opara

Interviews held at Afikpo in Ebonyi State of Nigeria

Top Left: From left; Management Staff, Ebonyi State Council for Arts and Culture Abakaliki and Chris Nwaru (Researcher)
Top Right: From right; Chris Nwaru and Vincent Nwachi
Below Left: From left; Chris Nwaru and Okpani Joseph
Below Right: From right; Chris Nwaru and Uzoma Eluokwa

Pictures 4.
Interviews held at Ajali in Anambra State of Nigeria

From left; Ray Anumba and Chris Nwaru

Photographs of Field Observations

Observation of Iri-Agha at Ohafia in Abia State of Nigeria

Observation of Nkwa-Umuagboho at Afikpo in Ebonyi State of Nigeria




Observation of Agborogwu at Mbaise in Imo State of Nigeria




Observation of Nkwa-Agu at Owerri in Imo State of Nigeria

Appendix - V

Creative Project (Studio Practice) Participants

NAMES OF PARTICIPANTS (CAST)	ROLE PLAYED	POSITIONS AND AFFILIATIONS	DATES OF AUDITION/ SELECTION
CHIMA UKWUIJE	**Okpoku**	**Performing Artist,** One Voice Theatre Troupe, Owerri.	15th of March, 2013
MABEL MAHA	**Nwanyi-nwa**	**Lecturer**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	16th of March, 2013
EJIKEME UGIRI	**Eze-nmuo**	**Head**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	„ „
CHRIS NWARU	**Onyentum**	**Researcher**	----------
MABEL MAHA	**Women-Dancers**	**Lecturer**, Department of	16th of

	(Nkwa-Nwaite)	Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	March, 2013
UKACHI WACHUKU	„ „	„ „	„ „
OGBONNA KELECHI S.	„ „	„ „	„ „
IFEYINWA UZONDU	„ „	„ „	„ „
CHIMA NNENKA	„ „	**Student**, Department of Theatre Imo State University, Owerri.	„ „
MARTINS JUDITH	**Maiden Dancers (*Nkwa-Umuagbogho*)**	**Student**, Department of Theatre Imo State University, Owerri .	15th of March, 2013
EZE BLESSING	„ „	„ „	„ „
EGBUCHULAM SHANTEL	„ „	„ „	„ „
OBIJURU OSINACHI	„ „	„ „	„ „
EZEMMA JOY CHISOM	„ „	„ „	„ „
CASMIR ONYEMUCHARA	**Male Dancers (Ikpirikpe & *Agborogu*)**	**Lecturer**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	5th of January, 2013
NNAMDI MBARA	„ „	„ „	15th of March, 2013
IKECHUKWU EJELONU	„ „	„ „	„ „
ERIC ANUONYE	„ „	**Performing Artist,** Imo State Council for Arts and Culture, Owerri.	„ „
ASOMUGHA WAITER	„ „	„ „	„ „
CHIZUBE OHIRI	„ „	**Performing Artist,** One Voice Theatre Troupe, Owerri.	„ „
BENJAMIN HARBOR	„ „	**Principle Artist,** Abia State Council for Arts and Culture, Umuahia.	„ „
	***Nkwa-Ike* Instrumentalists**		
OKPANI JOSEPH (KOMO)	**Ekwe Ukwu (Big Slit Wooden Drum)**	**Chief Instrumentalist,** Ebonyi State Council for Arts and Culture, Abakaliki.	15th of March, 2013
IGBOZURIKE CHIGOZIE	**Okwa (Wood-Block)**	**Drummer,** Imo State Council for Arts and Culture, Owerri.	„ „
CHIMA UKWUIJE	**Ebediala (Sets of**	**Instrumentalist,** One Voice	„ „

	Conga Drums)	Theatre Troupe, Owerri.	
ONUOHA CHIJIOKE	**Osha (Maracas)**	**Performing Artist,** One Voice Theatre Troupe, Owerri.	**„ „**
AGIM MOSES	**Ogene Nta (Small Metal Gong)**	**Student**, Department of Theatre Imo State University, Owerri .	**„ „**
ONUMAJURU VALENTINE	**Clappers (Nkwatankwa)**	**„ „**	**„ „**
OKAFOR CHRISTIAN	**Clappers (Nkwatankwa)**	**„ „**	**„ „**
NAMES OF PARTICIPANTS (CREW)			
CHRIS NWARU	**Choreographer & Director**	**Researcher**	----------
CASMIR ONYEMUCHARA	**Assistant Choreographer**	**Lecturer**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	5th of January, 2013
AKOWE ACHOR	**Stage Manager**	**Lecturer**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	13th of March, 2013
IMAM MOHAMMED	**Assistant Stage Manager**	**„ „**	13th of March, 2013
EKWEARIRI CHIDIEBERE	**Lighting Man**	**Lecturer**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	13th of March, 2013
CYRACUS IKEBUDU	**Props Master and Scenic Designer**	**Production Assistant**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	13th of March, 2013
CHRIS NWARU	**Costumier**	**Researcher**	----------
UKACHI WACHUKWU	**Costume Crew**	**Lecturer**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	13th of March, 2013
IFEYINNWA UZONDU	**„ „**	**„ „**	13th of March, 2013
TARIBIGHA IHUOMA	**„ „**	**Student**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	16th of March, 2013
ANYAMELE CYNTHIA OGECHI	**„ „**	**Student**, Department of Theatre Imo State University, Owerri .	**„ „**
OGBONNA KELECHI S.	**Make Up Crew**	**Lecturer**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	13th of March, 2013

AKANLANZE CHIOMA	„ „	**Student**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	16th of March, 2013
OHIA QUEEN IFEOMA	„ „	„ „	„ „
DIKE VIVIAN	„ „	„ „	„ „
CYRACUS IKEBUDU	**Scenic Designer**	**Production Assistant**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	13th of March, 2013
NWAYAWU CLINTON	**Set Design Crew**	**Student**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	20th of March, 2013
PETER PRECIOUS I.	„ „	„ „.	„ „
IJEOMA NNAJIUBA	„ „	„ „	„ „
OKORO ANCESTUS	„ „	„ „	„ „
OJUKWU OZIOMA	**Chief Usher**	**Student**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	20th of March, 2013
QUEEN NNADIEGBULA	**Ushers**	„ „	„ „
FELICITAS NWANEBO	„ „	„ „	„ „
IBEKWE BLESSING	„ „	„ „	„ „
IHEANACHO PROMISE	„ „	„ „	„ „
CHRIS NWARU	**Welfare Officer**	**Researcher**	----------
IBE CHINYERE	**Assistant Welfare Officer**	**Lecturer**, Department of Theatre Arts Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.	13th of March, 2013

Appendix - VI

Audition Notice

Notice! **Notice!** **Notice!**

Audition Notice

Are you good in performing traditional dances? Do you think that you are skilful and versatile in playing traditional instruments? Can you sing Igbo traditional songs? Do you have the basic acting skills? If you think that you have one or two of the talents mentioned above, then you are invited to the auditioning of a stage adaptation of '*Iri-Agha* dance'.

Date: 15 & 16 March 2013

Venue: Theatre Complex Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Owerri (A.I.F.C.E)

Time: 10 am

NOTE FOR SUCCESSFUL ARTISTS: Please be aware that this is a voluntary work so participants will **NOT** be paid. However, during rehearsals, there will be snacks, drinks and stipends for transport.

Convener,
Chris Nwaru

Appendix - VII

My Description of the '*Iri-Agha*' Script '*Nkwa-Ike* Narrative'

Okpoku…… Town crier
Nwanyi-nwa…….The woman whose son does not return from the battle field
Eze-nmuo…….Chief Priest
Onyentum…… The bugle man
Warriors …….. Ohafia young men aged 25-40
Dancers……. ……Ohafia Young men…….
Ikperikpe and *Agborogu* dance
Ohafia Maiden …….…….*Nkwa-Umuagbogho* dance
Ohafia Women…… …..*Nkwa-Nwaite*
Villagers …….. ….From Ohafia community
Friends…….. From Abam community
Nmonyo……. ……Ohafia enemies

PREPARATORY STAGE

The dance theatre begins with Okpoku playing the *Ikoro* (big talking slit drum) which is used to summon the able bodied men for urgent information such as war or the death of an important/high ranking person in the Ohafia community. At the sound of the *Ikoro*, young men between 25 – 40 years old appear, ready for war as Opkoku requests/demands through the sound of the drum. Eze-nmuo prepares the young men with the protective rituals. The warriors bow before the *Ikoro,* and leave for the battle field to meet their enemies, the Nmonyo people. As they head for the battle-field, Onyentum blows his horn in order to inform the Ohafia community. The older women of Ohafia gather at the community hall praying for the warriors.

RETURNING FROM WAR AND RE-ENACTMENT STAGE

The sound of the horn blown by Onyetum notifies the community that the Ohafia warriors are returning from the battle-field. As tradition demands, Eze-nmuo meets the warriors at the bush, performs the restorative rituals and collects the ammunition before the community is allowed to welcome them. The war leader then narrates all that has happened at the battle field to Eze-nmuo. The elderly women who have been praying at the village halls for the warrior's victory come to welcome their sons. Nwanyi-nwa cannot see her only son among the returned warriors and mourns her loss while the other women try to console her. The returned warriors re-enacts their war experiences in performance.

THE CELEBRATION STAGE

The Ohafia community appears in groups at Achichi in Elu Ohafia and invite their neighbours to to formally welcome and celebrate the victory with the warriors. Seats are arranged both according to visibility and comfort of the stage and audience position and with respect to the designated status of ndi Eze (traditional rulers) and Ozo (village heads) and the elderly women. The returned warriors perform in the middle of the stage re-enacting events of the battle ground. Eze-nmuo greets the warriors and invites maidens to perform while the women share different foods among the spectators. In admiration the warriors join the maidens in their dance. All leave the stage while performing duets. ***The End.***

Appendix -VIII

Creative Process Photographs in the Studio

Studio Practice

Studio Practice

Appendix - IX

Production Handbills

Stage Performance of '*Nkwa-Ike*' Dance Theatre

Department of Theatre Arts
A.I.F.C.E
In conjunction with

Graduate School
(performance)

University of
Northampton, U.K.

Presents

IGBO DANCE THEATRE
(*NKWA- IKE)*

Choreographer: Chris Nwaru

Venue: Theatre Complex (A.I.F.C.E)

Time: 5pm.

Date: Wednesday 26th April, 2013.

CHOREOGRAPHER'S CONCEPT

Though some traditional dance performances may exude excellence in artistic presentation, thematically it remains an enigma to non-indigenes. In such settings what audience and participants witness is merely one stage of a spectrum whose other sections are neither visible nor necessarily articulated in and through dance.

The absence of expository and post-climatic stages or missing links in the theatricality of Igbo dance theatre provided sites for the creation of new dance practices (*Nkwa- Ike*) based on indigenous models.

CHRIS NWARU.

CHARACTERS

Okpoku-------- -----CHIMA UKWUIJE

Nwanyi-nwa-------- MABEL MAHA

Eze-nmuo---------- EJIKEME UGIRI

Onyentum---------- CHRIS NWARU

WOMEN-DANCERS (Nkwa-Nwaite)

MABEL MAHA

UKACHI WACHUKU

OGBONNA KELECHI S.

IFEYINWA UZONDU

CHIMA NNENKA

MAIDEN DANCERS (*Nkwa-Umuagbogho*)

MARTINS JUDITH

EZE BLESSING

EGBUCHULAM SHANTEL

OBIJURU OSINACHI

EZEMMA JOY CHISOM

MALE DANCERS (Ikpirikpe & *Agborogu*)

CHIZUBE OHIRI

ERIC ANUONYE

ASOMUGHA WAITER

CASMIR ONYEMUCHARA

BENJAMIN HARBOR

NNAMDI MBARA

IKECHUKWU EJELONU

DRUMMERS

IGBOZURIKE CHIGOZIE

ONUMAJURU VALENTINE

CHIMA UKWUIJE

OKAFOR CHRISTIAN

OKPANI JOSEPH (KOMO)

AGIM MOSES

ONUOHA CHIJIOKE

BOX OFFICE

MABEL MAHA

AMAH OKORIE NENNA

AWUZIE ASSUMPTA

NWOKO FRANCISCA

CHUKWUEMEKA ODINAKA

MAKE UP

DIKE VIVIAN

AKANLANZE CHIOMA

OHIA QUEEN IFEOMA

OGBONNA KELECHI S.

SET DESIGN

NWAYAWU CLINTON
PETER PRECIOUS I.
IJEOMA NNAJIUBA
OKORO ANCESTUS

USHERS
OJUKWU OZIOMA
QUEEN NNADIEGBULAM
FELICITAS NWANEBO
IBEKWE BLESSING
IHEANACHO PROMISE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
CHRIS NWARU
EJIKEME UGIRI

WELFARE
CHRIS NWARU
IBE CHINYERE

SCENOGRAPHER
CYRACUS IKEBUDU
LIGHT
EKWEARIRI CHIDIEBERE
PROPS MASTERS
CYRACUS IKEBUDU
KELECHI OGBONNA S.

COSTUME
CHRIS NWARU
UKACHI WACHUKWU
IFEYINNWA UZONDU
TARIBIGHA IHUOMA
ANYAMELE CYNTHIA OGECHI

STAGE MANAGER

AKOWE ACHOR F.

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

IMAM MOHAMMED

CHOREOGRAPHER & DIRECTOR

CHRIS NWARU

ASSISTANT CHOREOGRAPHER

CASMIR ONYEMUCHARA

CONSULTANTS

ABC DURUAKU

KALU OKPI

PICTURES AND VIDEO RECORDING

STA STUDIOS, OWERRI IMO STATE, NIGERIA.

Appendix - X

Stage Performance Pictures and Sequences of '*Nkwa-Ike*' Dance Theatre in Igbo Descriptive Documentation System

Photographs of stage performance of *Nkwa-Ike* at the Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Owerri, Nigeria and Diagram of *Nkwa-Ike* stage performance recorded with the proposed 'Igbo Descriptive Notation'.

Pictures 1&2, Audience members watching *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre performance

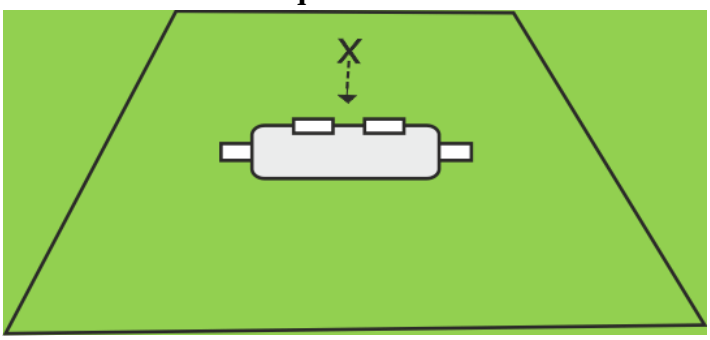
Igbo Descriptive Notation
KEY
MALE DANCER…… **X** FEMALE DANCER---------- MOVEMENT DIRECTION…… FLOOR PATTERN…… …… (INSTRUMENT) THE BIG SLIT WOODEN DRUM (‘*IKORO*’)….

‘*Nkwa-Ike*’ Dance Theatre

Stage One (Beginning) ‘Njikwa-Agha’ (War Preparation)

‘Igbo Descriptive Notation’

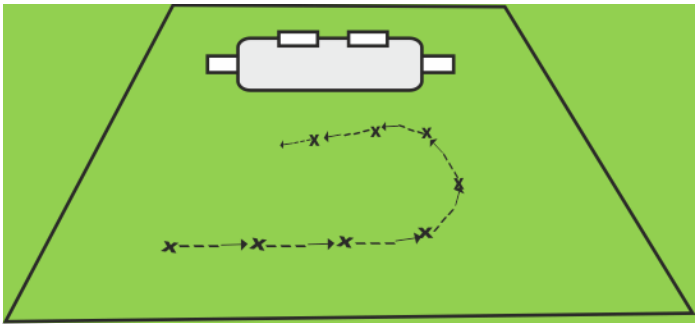
Sequence One



Sequence One: The drummer played the ‘Ikoro’ (big wooden gong) to summon villagers for importantmeetings.

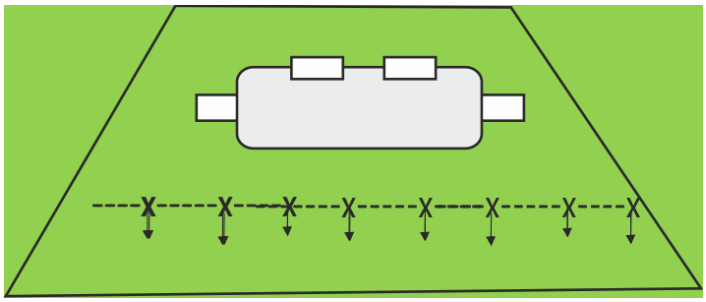
Picture 3 above ‘*Ikoro*’ (big wooden gong) carved from a big trunk, an instrument used to summon villagers for important meetings and a symbol of unity.

Sequence Two



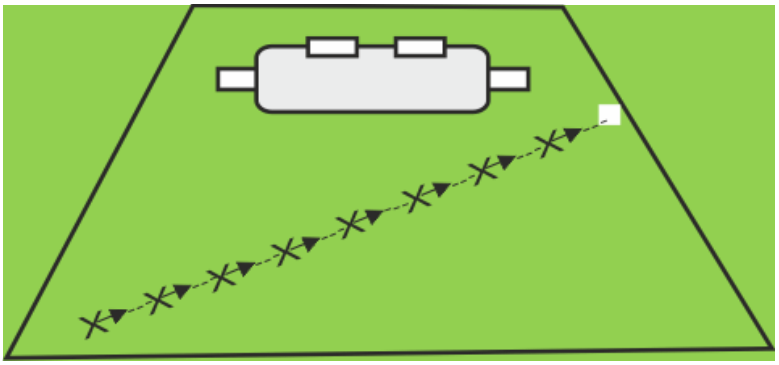
Sequence Two: Eight male dancers on stage to answer the call of 'Ikoro' through a curved movement direction.

Sequence Three



Sequence three: Eight Warrior/ dancers face the audience on a horizontal line in answer to the call of the Ikoro

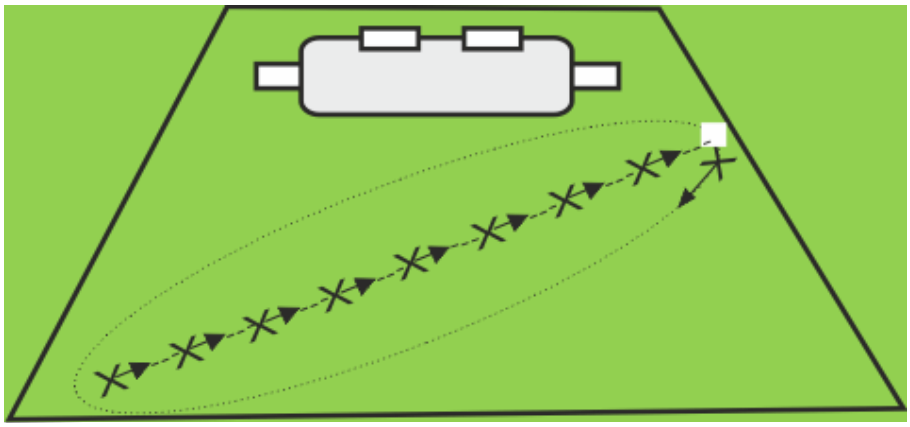
Sequence Four



Sequence Four: The male dancers on a diagonal movement position, expecting the chief priest for cleansing and initiation before they proceeds to the battle field.

Picture 4 The male dancers in a diagonal movement position waiting for the chief priest to commence the ritual that prepares them for war

Sequence Five

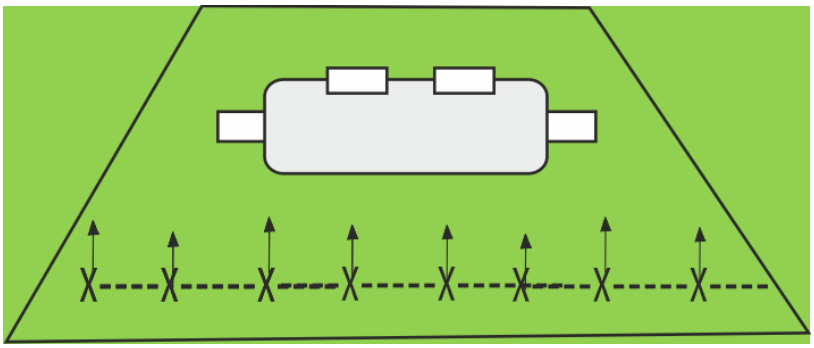


Sequence Five: The chief priest applies ritual white chalk on the dancer's chest and on their eyes and back to prepare them for war

Picture 5. The chief priest comes in on from up stage left to prepare the warriors' for battle.

Picture 6. The chief priest performs the ritual as he marks the warriors with 'nzu' (Traditional white native chalk)

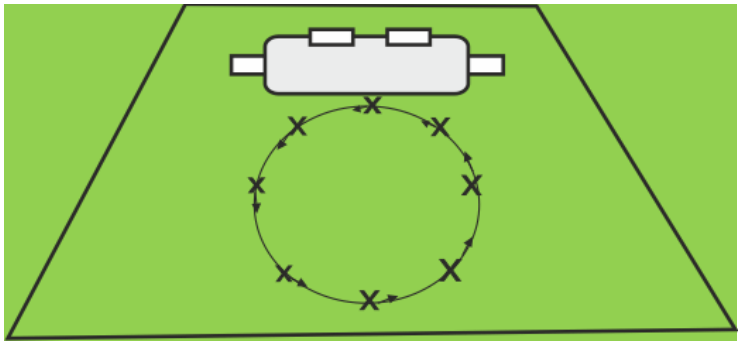
Sequence Six



Sequence Six: The male dancer's take a bow before the *Ikoro*

Picture 7. The *Nkwa-Ike* dancers preparing to change into their war dance costumes

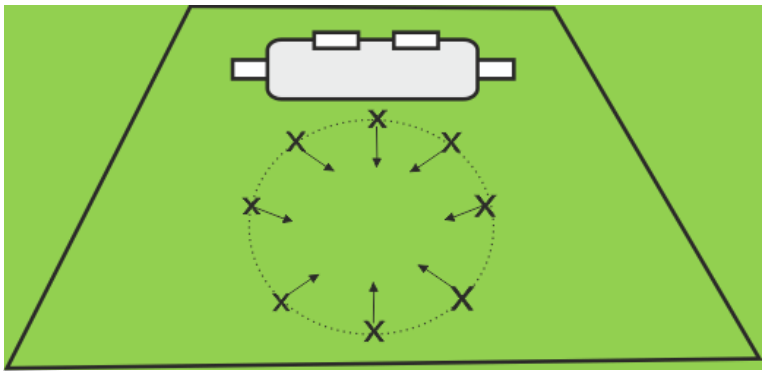
Sequence Seven



Sequence Seven: The *Nkwa-Ike* dancers in circle formation, ready to proceed for war.

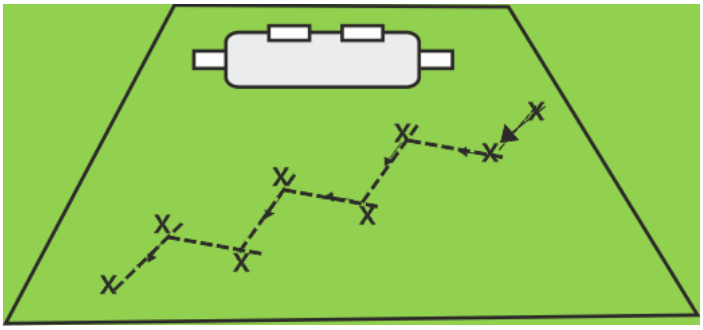
Picture 8 As in *Iri-Agha*, *Nkwa-Ike* dancers in a circular position as they were preparing for war

Sequence Eight



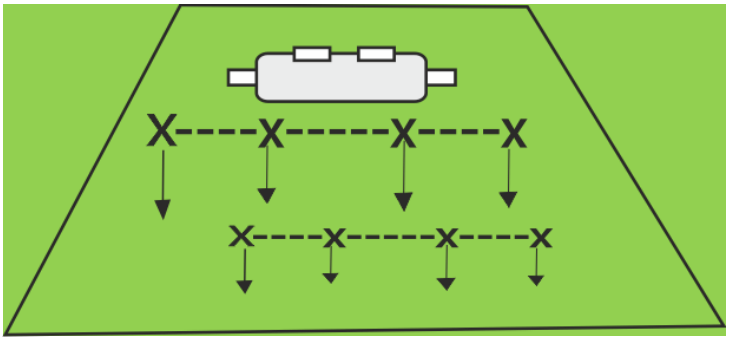
Sequence Eight: Here the male dancers practice their war signals and strategies in a circular position.

Sequence Nine



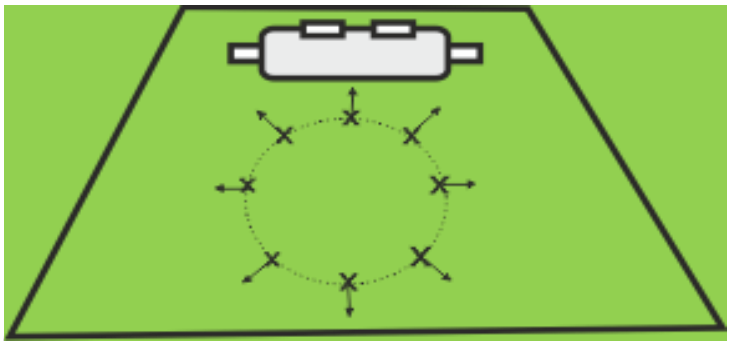
Sequence Nine: The eight *Nkwa-Ike* male dancers in their war practice. The floor pattern is in a zig-zag form.

Sequence Ten



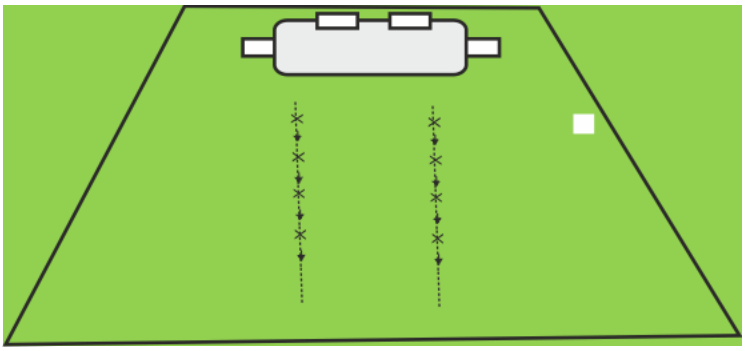
Sequence Ten: The male dancers facing the audience as they practice for war.

Sequence Eleven



Sequence Eleven: The *Nkwa-Ike* dancers take a circular position facing outward as they are ready to move to battle.

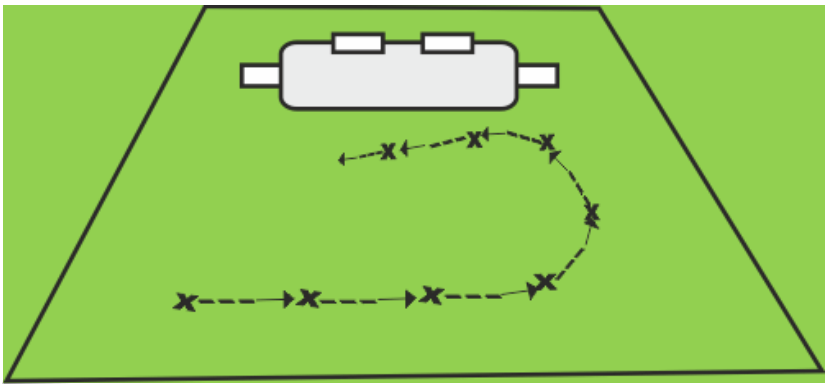
Sequence Twelve



Sequence Twelve: With the vertical position, the warriors were ready to take off to the battle ground.

Picture 9. The *Nkwa-Ike* dancers were ready to move to the battle ground

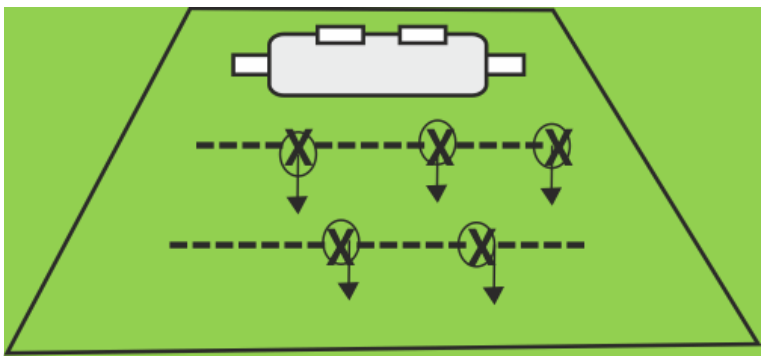
Sequence Thirteen



Sequence Thirteen: movements The *Nkwa-Ike* female dancers taking the entrance movement position to the stage

Picture 10.The *Nkwa-Ike* female dancers praying for the warriors using songs and

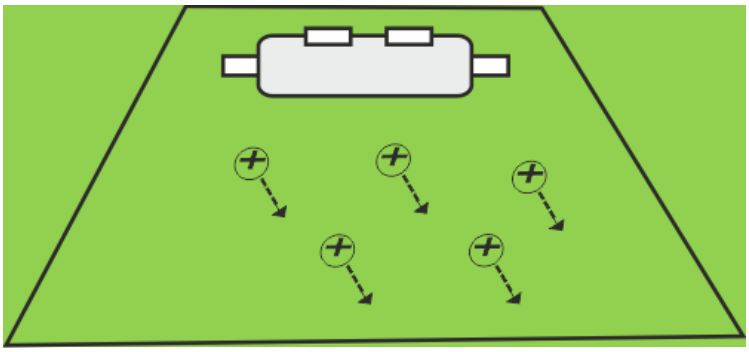
Sequence Fourteen



Sequence fourteen: The female dancers grieved the exits of the young men to the battle ground

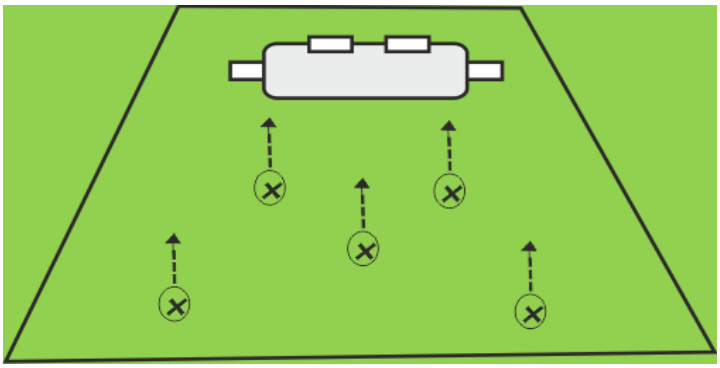
Picture 11. The female dancers singing and praying for their sons that went to war

Sequence Fifteen



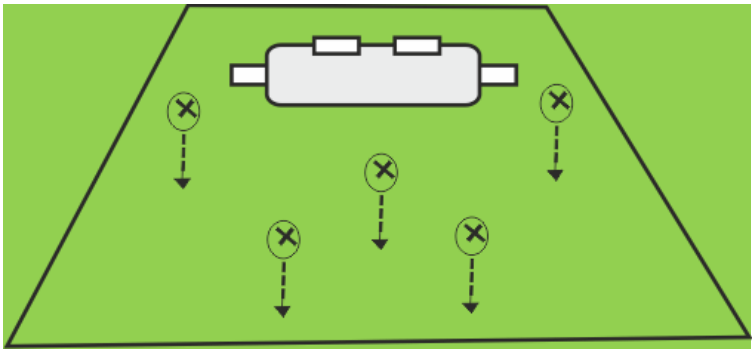
Sequence Fifteen: The female dancers in ritual performance for the success of the warriors

Sequence Sixteen



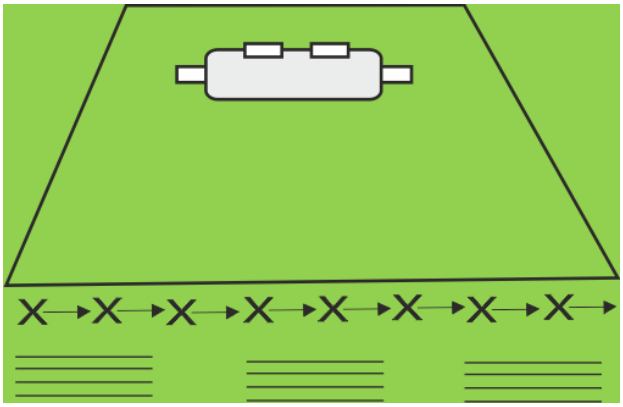
Sequence Sixteen: The female dancers in ritual performance for the success of the warriors

Sequence Seventeen



Sequence Seventeen: The female dancers in ritual performance for the success of the warriors

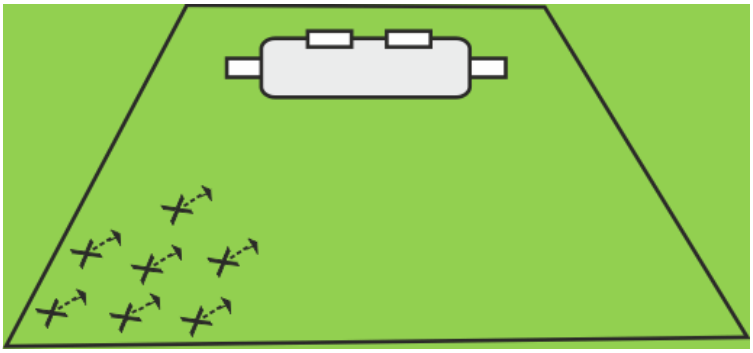
Sequence Eighteen



Sequence Eighteen: *Nkwa-Ike* male dancers returning from war through the orchestra pit

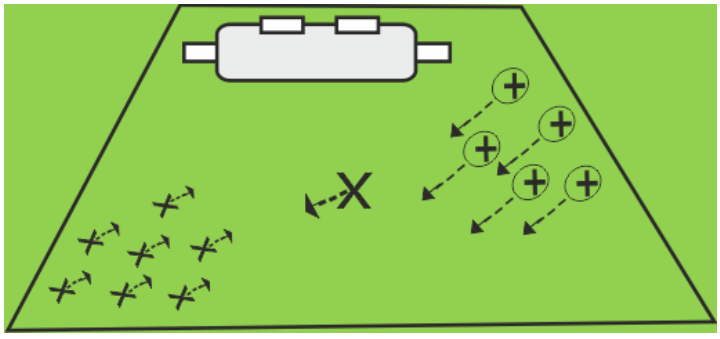
Picture 12 As in Iri Agha, *Nkwa-Ike* male dancers perform returning from war through the orchestra pit

Sequence Nineteen



Sequence Nineteen: The warrior's returning from battle.

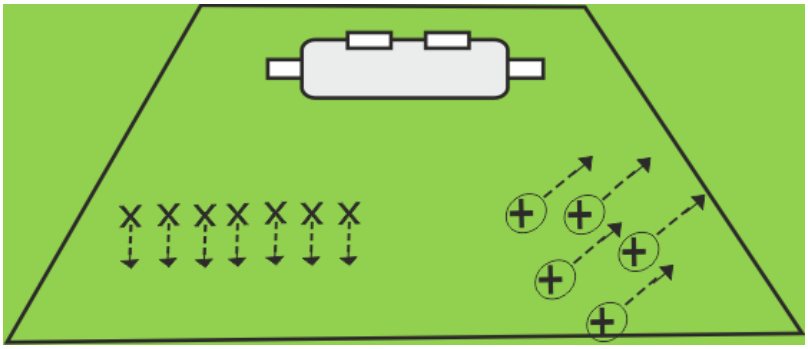
Sequence Twenty



Sequence Twenty: The chief priest welcomes the warriors while the women wait behind the chief priest to embrace their sons, brothers, and husbands.

Picture 13 above shows the warriors being disarmed by the chief priest before they can hug their relations.

Sequence Twenty One

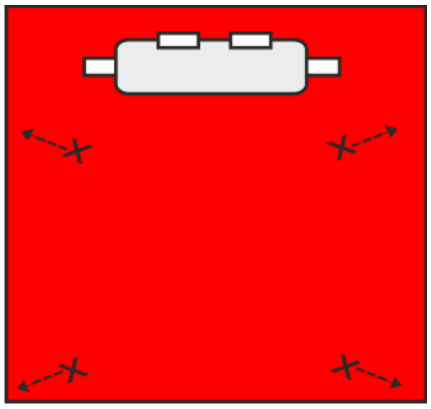


Sequence Twenty One: The return of the warriors and the female dancers ready to welcome them.

Picture 14. Shows the woman who lost her son at the battle field cries, other women try to console her.

Stage Two (Middle) 'Ihu-Agha' (War Front)

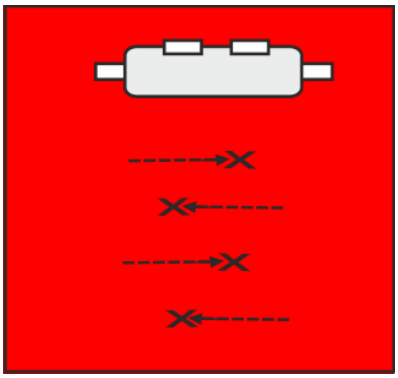
Sequence Twenty Two



Sequence Twenty Two*: Nkwa-Ike*, four dancers face the four cardinal points as the survey the war field in dance, searching for possible ambush of their enemies.

Picture 15 *Nkwa-Ike*, the four dancers face the four cardinal points as the survey the war field in dance, searching for possible ambush of their enemies.

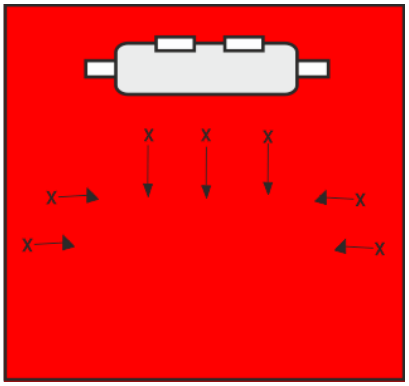
Sequence Twenty Three



Sequence Twenty Three: Here the four dancers dance to centre stage to analyse information gleaned from their reconnaissance before ushering in other warriors/dancers.

Picture 16. The warriors meeting at centre stage after surveying the battle field.

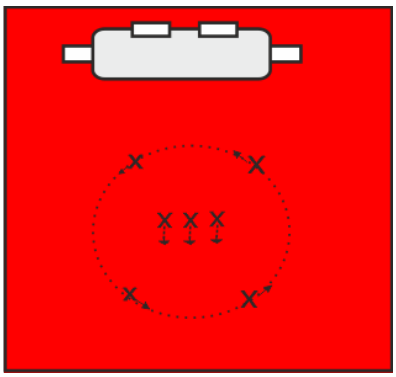
Sequence Twenty Four



Sequence Twenty Four. Seven dancers positioned in different areas of the stage. The 'carrier' and his guards take their position on the centre stage.

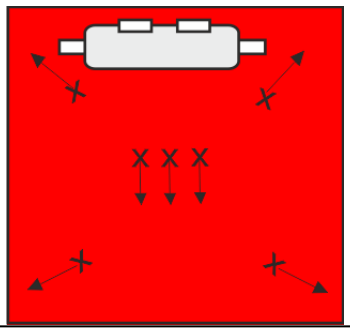
Picture 17 Warriors dance in symmetrical position at the battle ground

Sequence Twenty Five



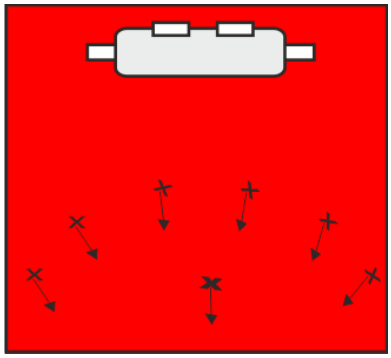
Sequence Twenty Five: The dancers encircle the carrier and his guards during the ritual at centre stage.

Sequence Twenty Six



Sequence Twenty Six: The war dancers scatter all over the stage during the fight. The carrier and his guards are positioned on centre stage communicating with the gods. The scattering movement shows the actual killing of their enemies.

Sequence Twenty Seven

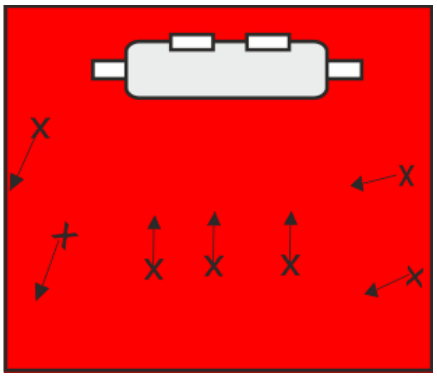


Sequence Twenty Seven: *Nkwa-Ike* dancers in curved position as the carrier does his solo dance to execute the magical movement of the *Isi-Oya* (carved human skull). It is worthy of note that for the first time the carrier is left alone in the battle field to express their victory in dance.

Picture 18.*Iri Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike* dance. The carrier performs his solo dance to execute the magical movement of the 'Isi-oya' (carved human skull).

Picture 19 The *Nkwa-Ike* dancer exhibiting in a solo performance how he killed his enemy at the battle field

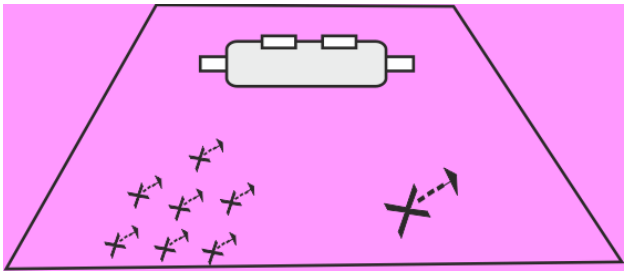
Sequence Twenty Eight



Sequence twenty eight: The *Nkwa-Ike* dancers moving out of the stage as the re-enactment of end. Even at this point when it seems the war is over, they remain agile and ready for action.

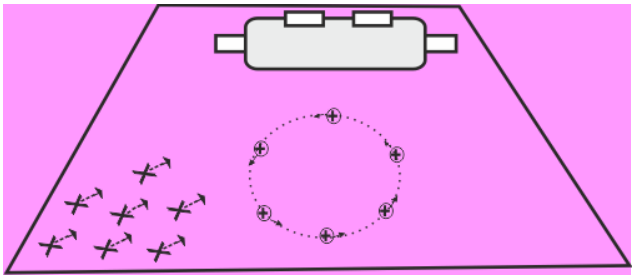
Stage Three (End) 'Onu na Ure Nmeri Agha' (Celebration of War Victory)

Sequence Twenty Nine



Sequence Twenty Nine: The warrior sits down on the down stage left after the greetings of the chief priest while the chief proceed to usher in the *Nkwa-Ike* maiden dancers for their performance.

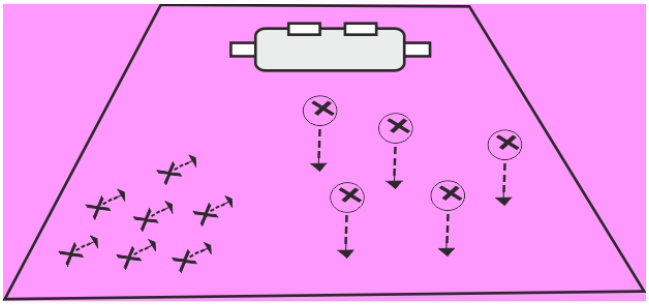
Sequence Thirty



Sequence Thirty: At their entrance the maidens adopt a circular direction of movement, while the warriors watch in admiration.

Picture 20 Maiden dancers based on *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* of Afikpo use the circular direction of movement in *Iri-Agha* to celebrate their community's victory in war in *Nkwa-Ike*.

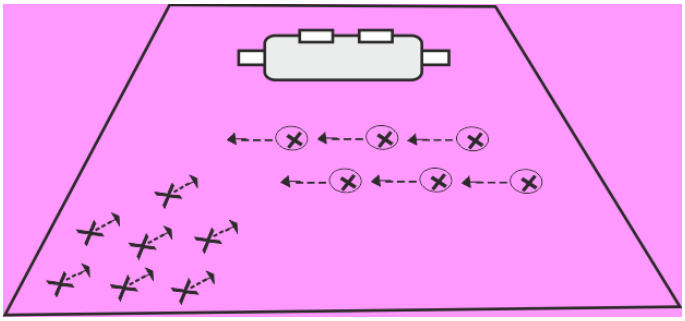
Sequence Thirty One



Sequence Thirty One: Six *Nkwa-Ike* female dancers facing the audience as they execute the side-ways movement during the war victory celebration.

Picture 21 Six *Nkwa-Ike* female dancers entertaining the audience during the war victory celebration

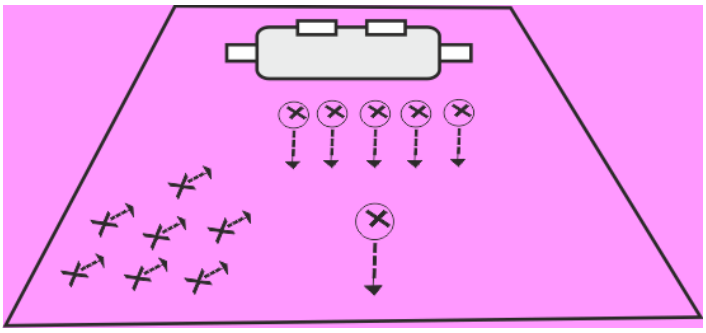
Sequence Thirty Two



Sequence Thirty Two: The six female dancers intermittently turned to the right and left while the male dancers watch in admiration.

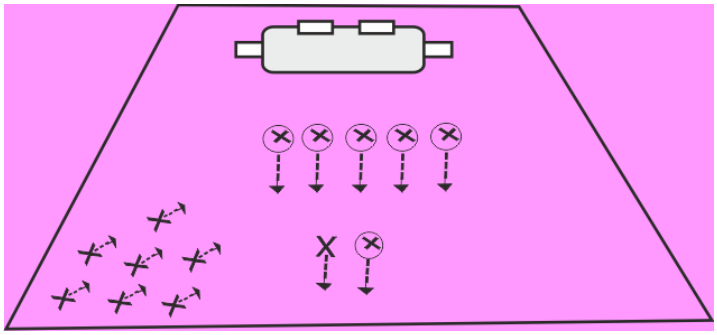
Picture 22. The *Nkwa-Ike* male dancer's watches in admiration as the maiden dancers perform

Sequence Thirty Three



Sequence Thirty Three: Here the *Nkwa-Ike* maiden dancers perform their solo which spurs the young warriors into action.

Sequence Thirty Four



Sequence Thirty Four: In this sequence the male and female dancers perform duet while others watches and wait for their turn and this marks the end of the dance

Picture 23. The *Nkwa-Ike* male dancer (warriors) and the maiden dancer performing a duet during the celebration of the war victory

Picture 24. Another version of the duet during the celebration of the war victor

Picture 25. Showing the cast and the choreographer (researcher) taking a bow during the curtain call that marks the end of *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre in a public performance

Appendix-XI

Structures of Contemporary *Iri-Agha* and *Nkwa-Ike* Dance Theatre

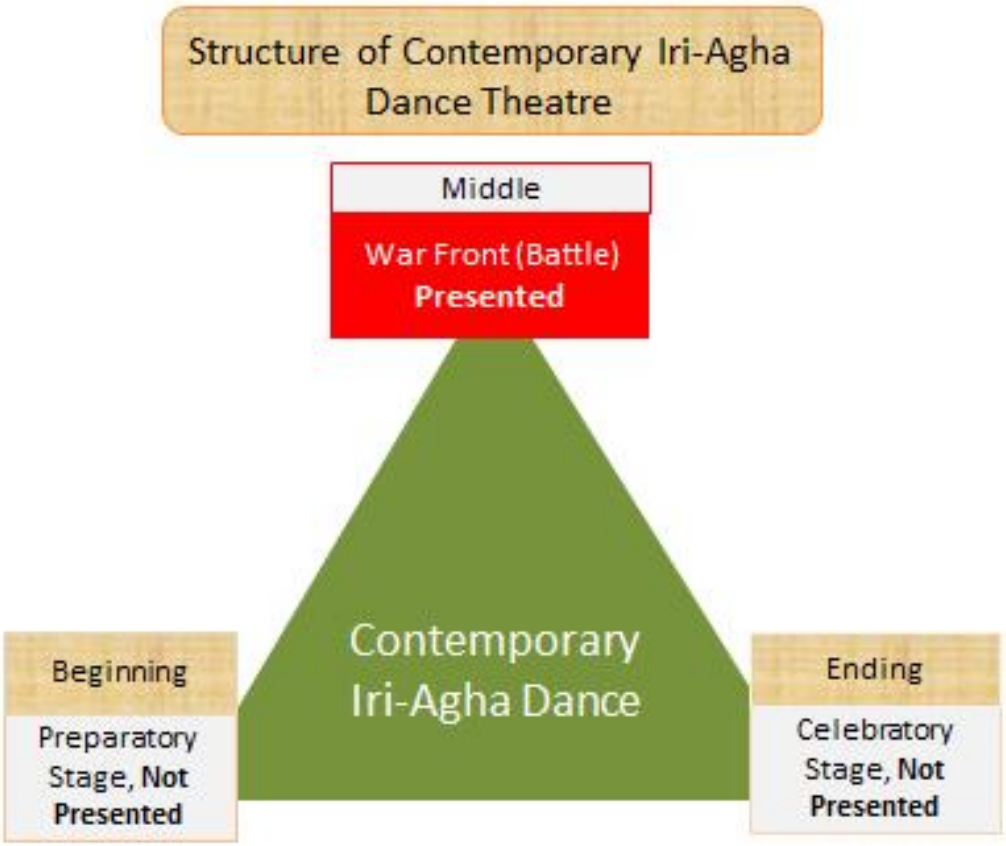


Figure 2. This shows the in-complete structure of contemporary *Iri-Agha* dance theatre as presented and performed today, the boxes inscription 'Not Presented' represent the missing, beginning and ending stages; the middle stage in red (war front) is the only functioning one today. The structure of the archetypal *Iri-Agha* is complete. The beginning (preparatory stage) and ending (celebrative stage) sections of the archetypal *Iri-Agha* are not presented in the diagram because the stories were narrated orally. My studio practice is the stage adaptation of *Iri-Agha* titled *Nkwa-Ike* for the contemporary audience. It is not only complete in structure and plot but all sections are shown and presented through the medium of stage performance.

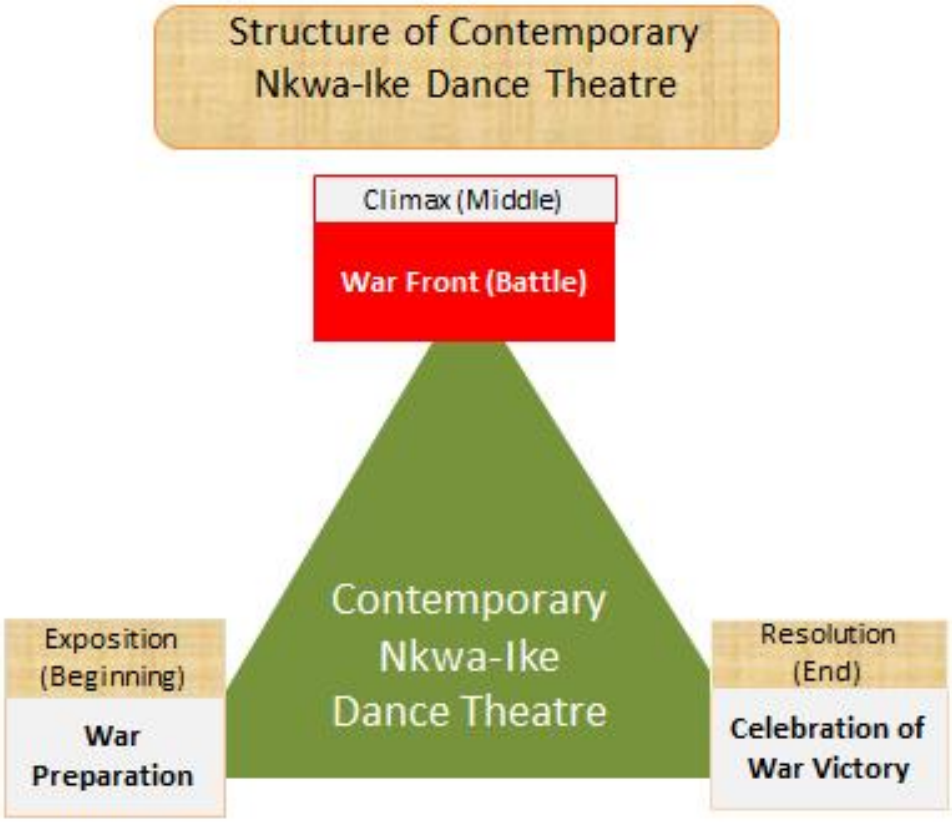


Diagram 3. The complete and un-sequestered structure of archetypal *Iri-Agha* dance theatre as re-produced in my adaptation titled *Nkwa-Ike* dance theatre. In this diagram, the plot of the dance theatre consists of the exposition (war preparation), climax (war front) and resolution (celebration of war victory) for a more complete picture and for encouraging greater understanding among audience.

Appendix-XII

Traditional Music and Instrumentation as Performance Trope in *Nkwa-Ike*

Music as rendered in *Nkwa-Ike* is both instrumental and vocal. Both are performative tropes and communication devices used to connect with the supernatural. Music is inextricably woven into the very fiber of the Igbo people and they respond kinesthetically to it. Music is very important in the presentation of *Nkwa-Ike* and cannot be separated from the dance experience. Limon supports this view about the integrated nature of music and dance in performances such as Igbo dance theatre in which 'there is a perfect mating between the two arts so that it is difficult to imagine one without the other (1978, p.191). Relatedly, H'Doulder affirms that:

> As an accompaniment, the music is a means of helping the observer to sense the dancer's thoughts and feelings, for it is one more sense perception added to the visual and kinesthetic. The association between dance and music is close and natural (H'Doubler, 1978, p.188).

In the musical ensemble, instruments such as the small wooden slit drum, and clappers, are used for the instrumental back up to the songs and dances. *Nkwa-Ike* or any other re-interpretation may use as many or as few of these instruments depending on the aims and objectives of the performances and the dance. This makes it possible for the musicians to express themselves while playing the instruments. Frances Bebey (1975) supports the expressive function of music but comments erroneously that 'African musicians do not seek to combine sounds in a manner pleasing to the ear. Their aim is simply to express life in all its aspects through the medium of sound' (Bebey, 1975, p.3). In *Nkwa-Ike, Iri-Agha* and all other Igbo dance theatre performances music is not a mere accompaniment to dance; each sound has a particular meaning that it expresses within a particular context. The adaptations of *Agborogu* and *Nkwa-Umuagbogho* instrumental music into *Nkwa-Ike* have produced a

harmonious rhythm which invariably spurs even ponderous dancers to ecstatic action. Music in Igbo dance is not simply a supplement to theatrical activity or accompaniment to dramatic action, it is an important additional means for communicating performance information and for narrative elaboration. An understanding of the functions of music and instrumentation in Igbo dance theatre is therefore, essential in the overall stage picture and theatrical communication.

Picture 19. Instrumentalists during the stage performance

Picture 16. A drummer 'directing' the movements of a male dancer in *Nkwa-Ike* solo performance

Instrumental Music

Nkwa-Ike dance theatre makes use of instrumental music. The lead drummer is a performer; he plays the *ekwe ukwu* (big slit wooden drum) and *abia* (conga drum) and cues the dancers before they change to a new movement, the two engage in a dialogic relationship that both directs and builds on stage actions. Every other instrumentalist plays a similar role, proving accompaniment and direction to the warrior dancers and other performers in various ways and capacities. The *okwa* (the wood-block) player for example, maintains the tempo of the dance, which is always fast except when women perform and pray for the warriors at the battle field. The *udu* (pot drum) provides the base sound, whereas the *osha* (maracas) provides the percussive tune and rhythm. The *ebediala* (sets of conga drums) helps to enhance the rhythm of the music. The *ogene nta* (small metal gong) is also used as a

percussive instrument. Like *Iri-Agha* archetype *Nkwa-Ike* dance is based on and controlled by the rhythm of the traditional 'male' drum. African dance and drumming traditions are two distinct expressions of the same entity: namely rhythm.

Vocal Music (Songs)

In the performance of *Nkwa-Ike* dance, instrumentalists and singers render songs that when not contributing to the dramatic narrative, provide background information for the drama. The solo singer's chants evoke ancestral spirits to go before and after the warriors as they set for battle. During the solo dance by the warriors, the solo singer sings the praises of the brave and strong men in legend and mythology that performed the exploits in battle recalled and celebrated in the performance. Using a 'call and response' pattern the leader of the song calls while the others respond. This form of stage dialogue is used to distinguish groups of performers into individual characters as well as provide important narrative information that helps plot development and audience understands. Meaning is conveyed even by the melodic force of the words. The ritual songs help to establish the settings and moods of various stage actions; they also provide important cultural information on which the piece is based. For example, one of the songs serves as a ritual cleansing agent employed by the warriors and their community to clear away obstacles in the form of unseen evil forces who may wish to obstruct the people's war strategies. The emotions, feelings and idea of the singers are passed through the songs. Some examples of the songs (war songs) are as follows:

1.	Call	-	Agu dumbe dumbe
	Response	-	Aya nma, nma nma
	Call	-	Agu nnem ooo
	Response	-	Aya nma, nma mma
	Call	-	Onwu atu egwu le e e
	Response	-	Aya nma owee e
	Call	-	Anyi agala ije a'gha
	Response	-	Aya nma nma nma

Translation:

Call	-	The lion is about to strike
Response	-	Yes, strike, strike, strike
Call	-	My lion brother, please come
Response	-	Yes, strike, strike, strike
Call	-	One who is not scared of death
Response	-	Yes, that is true
Call	-	We are about to go to war
Response	-	Yes, strike, strike, strike

At the battle field, the Ohafia warriors also sang songs to lift up their spirits, get charged and ready to face their enemies bravely. Such songs have the efficacy of re-awakening weak warriors. This song represents the killing of opponents in the dance. The song goes thus:

2.	Call	-	Ohafia Udumeze kwenu osula
	Response	-	Osula
	Call	-	Orula
	Response	-	Orula
	Call	-	Ana eche nma eche – ee
	Response	-	Onye mere ebaa anyi ebuoya isi

Translation:

Call	-	Ohafia children it is time for action
Response	-	Action
Call	-	It is time
Response	-	It is time
Call	-	Will our machetes continue to remain on guard
Response	-	Anybody that comes around we cut his head.

In general, songs in *Nkwa-Ike* serve the same purposes as they do in *Iri-Agha* and similar archetypes, as a means of spurring the dancers/warriors into action. Apart from communication, songs are rhythmic accompaniment to the dance performance. The female

dancers in *Nkwa-Ike* used song to express their feelings when the warriors were away in the battle field, the song used was based on a medley of songs and instrumentations normally performed by elderly women in some sections of Igbo society. The songs do more than support the war effort and celebrate men's history. They are a social vehicle for women to explore and interrogate their roles in Igbo society in general as they narrate the injustice some women experience in a polygamous family for not bearing children. In Igbo culture music functions as a means of expressing emotions and it is the texts of the songs that convey this message (Azubuike, 1982). For example, the *Nwaite* song 'quoted' and used in *Nkwa-Ike* is a popular Igbo folk song that expresses deeply-felt emotions explored from the perspective of a sad, childless woman. The same sentiments can be transferred to other settings when a woman feels alone and without male relatives, a condition that may come from barrenness, from loss through war as was the case in *Nkwa-Ike*. The words of the archetypal *Nkwa-Nwaite* song portray the dejection and hopelessness of a woman who was maltreated for not bearing a child for her husband who potentially could have either been in the war or would be returning a hero at a time other women celebrated the men in their lives. The emotion is worse if a woman's husband dies in war and there is nobody to continue his lineage.

In *Nkwa- Ike,* the *Nwaite* song is adapted to suit the performance as part of the purpose of the study is to use cultural information from the field to create a new interpretation of *Iri-Agha* archetype. Dramatically the aim was to depict how women felt loss in war settings, which is now no longer depicted in contemporary *Iri-Agha*. The song rendered when one of the women lost her son in the war front went thus:

3. Solo - O bu ma mu amuyi nwa, o bu la ajuma aga eji me weh,
O bu ma mu enwehi ego, o bu la ajuma ga egi ma akpa.
Ihe eji mara nwa ogbeye kwara ma akwa oyiri diya.

Chorus - Uwam lee eh eh ah ee eh he eee ee e

Translation:

Solo	-	If I do not have a child, is this the way I should be treated, if I do not have money, how will I be received.
Chorus	-	O! my life, my world, my God why are you treating me this way.

Appendix – XIII

Publications and Conferences

The ultimate outcome of any qualitative research is its dissemination through publication and conference presentations. Parts of this thesis have been disseminated at international and institutional conferences. Three articles have been published while two other articles are currently under review in main stream international journals in the arts and humanities field. These are:

1. An article titled 'Upholding the Igbo Cultural Heritage through the Theatre was published in the *Art and Design Review, 3*, 3, (April, 2015) pp. 18-24. (Scientific Research, USA). This article was based on Chapter 1, Part 1 and Chapter 2, Part 2 of this thesis.

2. An article titled 'Synergism of Dance Theory and Practice: The Requisite for Dance Development in Nigeria' was published in the *Art and Design Review, 2*, (November, 2014), pp. 85-90 (Scientific Research, USA). This article was based on Chapter 3, Part 3 of this thesis.

3. An article titled 'Experimenting with Igbo Descriptive Notation: The *Nkwa-Ike* Illustration' was published in the *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3.2 (May 2014), pp. 23-40 (University Publications.net, USA). This article was based on Chapter 4, Part 4 of this thesis

The following papers have been presented in international and institutional conferences:

1. 'Form and Content in Igbo Dance Theatre'. Paper presented at the School of the Arts, Annual Postgraduate Conference 11-14 September, 2012, Avenue Campus, University of Northampton.

2. 'Structural Gap in Igbo Dance Theatre'. Paper presented at the Annual Postgraduate Research Conference, 27 June, 2013, Park Campus, University of Northampton.

3. 'Documenting Igbo Dances using the 'Igbo Descriptive Notation: The *Nkwa-Ike* Example'. Paper presented at the African Theatre Association Annual International Conference (AfTA), 11-14 July 2013, Goldsmiths, University of London and University of Derby, UK.

4. 'Structural Gap in Igbo Dance Theatre: The *Iri-Agha* Instance'. Paper Presented at the Arts and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a Modern (ising) Africa, 25-27 September 2013, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, South Africa.

5. ‘Experimenting with Igbo Descriptive Notation: The *Nkwa-Ike* Illustration’. Paper Presented at the *International Journal of Arts & Sciences* (*IJAS*) Conference, Freiburg, Germany. 3-6 December, 2013.

6. ‘Upholding the Igbo Cultural Heritage through the Theatre’. A paper presented at the 3rd Annual Igbo Conference held at SOAS, University of London, UK May 2-3, 2014.

7. ‘Synergism of Dance Theory and Practice: The Requisite for Dance Development in Nigeria’. Paper presented at the African Theatre Association Annual International Conference (AfTA) 9th July to 12th July 2014, School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon.

8. ‘African Contemporary Dance in Nigeria: History and Practice’. Joint paper Presented at the 2nd Annual National Conference of Dance Scholars Society of Nigeria (DASSON), 8 – 11 October, 2014, Department of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication, University of Benin, Nigeria.

LINKS TO PAPER PUBLICATIONS

1. **Upholding the Igbo Cultural Heritage Through the Theatre**

file:///C:/Users/IYKE/Downloads/ADR_2015041515365260%20(1).pdf

2. **Synergism of Dance Theory and Practice: The Requisite for Dance Development in Nigeria**

file:///C:/Users/IYKE/Downloads/ADR_2014112513585087.pdf

3. **Experimenting with Igbo Descriptive Notation: The *Nkwa-Ike* Illustration**

http://www.universitypublications.net/hssr/0302/pdf/DE3C104.pdf