

## **SONG AND DANCE AS AESTHETIC ELEMENTS IN IGALA ORAL NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE**

**Prof. Obaje, A.A.**

*Department of English and Literary Studies,  
Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State;*

&

**Dr. Nelson Enefolo Oyibo**

*Department of Arts Education,  
Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba,*

&

**Mr. Zeal Adegoke,**

*Dept. of English and Literary Studies, PAAU, Anyigba,  
Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba,*

&

**Mall. Malik Mohammed**

*Dept. of English and Literary Studies, PAAU, Anyigba  
Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba.*

### **Abstract**

*This paper interrogates song and dance as aspects of Igala oral narrative arts. There is no doubt that oral narrative is a universal traditional mode of transmitting cultural ethos from one generation to another. This study therefore, x-rays the aesthetic qualities of song and dance imbued in Igala oral narrative performance. It expresses that songs and dances are multifaceted expressions borne out of human creativity, and serve as vital media for communicating emotions, feelings, and socio-cultural values. The paper also asserts that aesthetic functions of song and dance in narratives go beyond entertainment as they also instruct the audience. This work employs the survey design methodology; it samples three oral narratives collected from a renowned oral narrator from Otobo-Ajaka, Igalamela/Odolu Local Government of Kogi State. A tape recorder was used by the researchers to collect the oral samples which were transcribed and translated into English. Performance theory was used as the theoretical framework to ascertain the performance dynamics of the aesthetic indexes examined in the study. The paper, among other things finds out that song and dance are inseparable elements as well as the mainstay of Igala social, religious and cultural enactments. The paper further discovers that song and dance are very crucial to the people. They create and heighten the psychological tempo of the oral narrative performance, arouse humour, kill boredom in the audience, and show the dexterity and ingenuity of the narrator. The work concludes that a study of aesthetics of song and dance in Igala oral narrative is worthwhile as it helps to appreciate the uniqueness and dynamism of the Igala oral narrative art. The work showcases the*

*Igala idiosyncrasies with regard to their socio-cultural values and historical antecedents. Consequently, this study is important because it identifies song and dance as major means of preserving the Igala cultural heritage and tradition.*

## **Introduction**

Song and dance pervade nearly all landscapes of Africa life. They vitalize the entire gamut of African oral performance. It can be espoused that the appreciation of songs and dance in Africa lies within the domain of aesthetics which appeal to the human sense of sight and hearing. In Africa generally, song and dance are significant in increasing the level of one's involvement in the different religions, and of course, they are capable of determining the depth of one's relationship with God. Their uses in Africa socio-cultural and political events also help to increase participation from the audience. On this basis, it can be asserted that they are integral aspects of transmitting and preserving the African cultural ethos.

In African society in general, dance is a holistic art form that serves as a fulcrum around which collective community life revolves. Dance has significantly become intricate in the process of self-reflection and identity construction in Africa. Dance and song in African performances delineate ethnic and cultural peculiarities. Hence, both are strong indexes of identity markers.

This paper presents a comprehensive discussion of what constitutes dance as well as song within the purview of Igala tradition and culture. The aim of the study is to create a pin-hole through which Westerners and African scholars can explore, understand and appraise the people's identity and cultural representation. Therefore, the aesthetics of song and dance in Igala oral narrative constitutes a rich culture which enshrines storytelling, music, and movements to convey the people's values and emotions. It should be noted that the artistic elements imbued in Igala oral narrative play a crucial role in preserving culture and installing change. This implies that in Africa, the oral narrative art-form can be employed to teach values, inculcate morals, document history and other cultural ideals that encourage socio-cultural continuity. Igala oral narrative therefore, x-rays manifold aesthetic features such voice modulations, mimesis, gesticulations, facial expressions and others.

The Igala people of North Central Nigeria cherish song and dance and therefore view them as nearly inseparable components of their oral performances such as their oral poetry, folktales, myths, incarnations as well as other genre that accompany nearly every aspect of the people's daily life. Even though there are various aspects of the Igala oral narrative performance that deserve aesthetic appreciation, this work concerns itself with examining the aesthetics of song and dance in Igala folktales.

## **The Igala of North Central Nigeria**

It is incumbent on this paper to examine in brief, the history and culture of the Igala people of North Central Nigeria. Fidelis Egbunu therefore comments that

“Igala is the language spoken by the ethnic group occupying the eastern territory of the confluence of river Niger and Benue in Nigeria” (38). In further description of the landmark, the author asserts that Igala land covers about “13,665 square kilometers and 120-kilometre-wide and 160-kilometre-long, located approximately between latitude 60 30 and 80 North and longitude 60 30 and 70 40 East . . .” (28). It can be said quickly that the origin of the Igala is not pinned to a single historical route since there are varied versions and interpretations. There are several accounts of migration of the Igala people. One of such accounts holds that the Igala people were originally a part of the Yoruba ethnic group. Another version holds that the Igala came from Jukun, while another source reveals that Igala, particularly the Igala ruling class, came from Benin. However, as John Boston rightly opines that “the most definite historical statement that can be made about the Igala is that, they had a common origin with Yoruba and that the separation took place long enough ago to allow their fairly considerable linguistic differences” (21).

This claim by Boston is not without ample evidence since nearly about forty-five percent (45%) of the names of things and phenomena are similar and the linguistic affinities that exist between the two languages are clear evidence that both tribes Igala and Yoruba must have mingled together at a point in time. In support of this claim, Okwoli Patrick E., quoting Boston, affirms that the origin of Igala kingship is Yoruba (2).

Another popular oral tradition claims that the Igala came from Benin. This account gained prominence and became more acceptable owing to the *Ejubeju-ailo* (the wooden mask) which is usually worn over the neck by Ata Igala (the paramount ruler) as a symbol of authority and lordship. Mott, a former District Officer in the then Kabba province, argued in a report that the origin of the Igala kingship was not Jukun but Benin (Cited Boston 23). Boston reiterates Mott’s argument thus

Beyond a certain geographical plausibility, we can point to the facts that the famous brass mask worn by the Atta is most probably of Benin workmanship, that the wearing of beads on the wrists as a symbol of chieftainship is common to Benin and Igala, and that in both places, the death of the king was kept secret for from one to three years. (23)

Historical antecedents have also shown that the Igala have a link with the Jukun. This source claims that Ebulejonu, who later became the first Igala queen, was the daughter of Abutu Eje who left the royal court of Jukun because he was denied access to the throne. It was said of Ebulejonu that she championed the journey from the point where her father died (at Amagede in Ife, Omala Local Government Area) and found herself at Idah where she was bestowed with the crown as queen. Okwoli, quoting Miles in affirmation, holds that Igala kingship is of Jukun origin. He further argues that “the Igala chieftainship was founded by the ancestress Queen Ebulejonu, daughter of Abutu Eje, a noble of the Jukun court at Wukari” (23).

These polygonal interpretations of Igala history have become a concern to many historians and scholars. Hence Boston comments:

This view that Igala traditions take a synoptic view of the past and are not concerned solely with nonlinear development of time, may explain the divergence that exists in the Igala traditions of origin. The Yoruba, Benin and Jukun, traditions manage to co-exist, because they refer to a period which is indistinct from a strictly historical point of view (7).

Sulaimon Y. Adebayo, quoting Ocholi and Ochefu claim that the tribe called Igala is an amalgam of various ethnic nationalities. According to them, “In the course of their [Igala] migration into their present location, some Idoma kindred groups sojourned and cohabited with the Igala in Igala land” and that Igala community is “. . . surrounded by Anambra and Enugu states to the south and Nasarawa State to the north, with the influence of neighboring ethnic configurations such as the Igbo, Bassa, Idoma, Nupe, Jukun, Igbira, Hausa, Yoruba, etc” (149). Hence, the multiple credence to the history of Igala, and it is therefore for this reason that Igala is positioned as to share boundaries with most of the tribes discussed.

### **Methodology**

Data analysed in this study was collected from an Igala oral narrator, Edward Idachaba, from Otobo-Ajaka, in Igalamela/Odolu Local Government Area of Kogi State. An audio tape recorder was used to collect the oral samples. Three Igala oral narratives were collected and used as data in this paper to determine the performative and aesthetics essence of song and dance. The tales collected were subjected to content analysis. Suffice to say that song and dance add beauty to the performance of tales among Igala.

Scholars like Amegago (2011), Avorgbedor (1986), Burns (2009), Fiagbedzi (2005), Guerts (2002) and Kuwor (2013) attest to the fact that these elements are holistic art forms used in transmitting values, knowledge, culture and tradition in Africa (Qtd in John Perpener 167). Above all, to understand and appreciate the uniqueness and holistic nature of song and dance in Africa oral performance and among Igala specifically, one needs to carry out a study of the aesthetic relevance of these art forms on a micro-level analysis as well as from the perspective of an insider. Hence, the paper will enhance our understanding of song and dance as very crucial elements in the aesthetic appreciation of Igala cultural performances.

### **Performance and Performance Theory**

The adoption of performance theory in this study as the theoretical framework is to interpret the role of song and dance as source of beauty in Igala oral narrative art. Since the narrator/ performer is the epicenter of the oral narrative performance, the use of song and dance is of great value in enhancing his reputation as a raconteur. Performance theory in literary studies therefore is aimed at examining the ways in which literature is not only written but also performed. It explores the way and manner texts are enacted, embodied, and interpreted in various contexts, including theatrical performances, readings, and everyday life. This approach emphasizes

the dynamic relationship between the written word and its realization in performance, considering the impact of cultural, social, and historical factors on the interpretation of literary works. Ruth Finnegan argues that “The significance of performance in oral literature goes beyond a mere matter of definition: for the nature of the performance itself can make an important contribution to the impact of particular literary form being exhibited” (2-3).

Performance theory, according to John Foley entails one of the methods of reading oral poetry and other types of verbal art (81). It makes use of methods which include Ethno-poetics and Immanent Art, and states that these three methods of reading an oral poetry have different histories of origin, and evolutions and share some fundamental principles. (Foley 81). These methods have common concerns which have “their sensitivity to the role of context, a commitment to understanding and portraying verbal art on its own terms, and awareness of expressive signals beyond the usual repertoire of textual cues” (81-82). Foley however, sums up the essence of performance theory as “word-power” (82). In further explication of the concept of performance, Don Elger comments that Performance Theory (PT) and performance improvement can best be explained through six fundamental concepts, which are: “context, level of knowledge, levels of skills, level of identity, personal factor and fixed factors” (1). He also proposes three axioms for effective performance improvements. They are “the performer’s mindset, immersion in an enriching environment and engagement in reflective practice” (1). “Performance”, therefore, is derived from the word to “perform”, and to perform, in the words of Elger “is to produce value results” (1). Consequently, he describes performance “as a journey and that the level of performance describes the location in the journey. (1). Complementing the above assertion, Foley avers that performance is “highly participatory” (82) and that the bulk of it lies in the “audience involvement” (82). To capture the very essence of performance, Foley cites Richard Bauman thus:

Performance represents a transformation of the basic referential . . . uses of language . . . In other words, in an artistic performance . . . , there is something going on in the communicative interchange which says to the auditor, “interpret what I say in some special sense, do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey”. This may lead to the further suggestion that performance sets up, or represents an interpretative frame within which the message being communicated are to be understood, and that this frame contrasts with at least one other frame, the literal (9).

The above excerpt points to Bauman’s view of performance which engages another field of reference, another frame and another context, as he calls on the audience to interpret the signal employed by the oral poet (Foley 84). It is in the light of this perceived meaning of performance by Bauman that Foley relates his experience at a live performance by a south Tršić performer, who opened his eyes and his ears to a new dynamic of presence, audience, and exchange (Foley 84).

### **Aesthetic of Song in Igala Oral Narrative Performance**

Song and dance are very integral aesthetic features of storytelling performances in many cultures around the world. They enhance the narrative experience, engage the audience, and convey emotions, themes, and messages in a dynamic and captivating manner. In this section, mention is made of the contribution of song and dance, particularly their aesthetic dimension to Igala storytelling performance. Commenting on the values which the Igala people derive from songs in their daily lives, Festus Ainoko avers that the “social and cultural lives of the people are song-bound and that is why every little activity, even to the rendition of lullaby to a crying child is accompanied with song (47). Similarly, Finnegan, quoting Dennis Osadebay, the legendary singer of Ibo extraction, avers that: “We sing when we fight, we sing when we work, we sing when we love, we sing when we hate, we sing when a child is born, we sing when death takes a toll” (242).

The aesthetics of song can be derived from diverse perspectives. The melody of the voice of the narrator who performs the tales and renders the lines in songs is an aesthetic measure of oral narrative performance. That explains his voice quality and the effectiveness of his voice, whether it is sonorous, husky, guttural or nasal. It should be quickly stated that it lies within the narrator’s ambience to adjust his voice in order to mimic, fine-tune and impress the audience. Most times, the narrator intersperse the narrative with song to appeal to the audience senses of pity, sorrow, sympathy and reasoning. For instance, in Tale one in the appendix, the narrator acts like the tortoise who uses song to appeal to the animals who came to arrest him. The essence is to see reasons with him and free him from being disgraced the king who has sent them. To make this appeal, tortoise renders the lines repeatedly, hence, the use of repetition as a literary device for psychological effect and for emphasis.

Igala songs have virile aesthetic components of African oral performance. The relevance of song in African tales generally is reiterated by Okpewho thus

Song ... in the tale has a significant role in the performance. The song is also useful in marking the stage of movement of the story. But it is even more useful, from the point of view of the audience, in bringing a melodious relief now and then to the possible monotony of the ordinary speech tones in which the bulk of the story is told. The song gives the audience the opportunity to participate actively in the narration by joining in the singing (220).

Another dimension to the aesthetic appeal of songs in oral narratives is the use of musical accompaniments. To enable the audience appreciate the song introduced in the narrative, the narrator may clap hands, beat gong or drum. When this is done, the audience joins to enhance the effects. Effiong Johnson asserts that “one of the reasons for singing [in a performance] is to tell a story or give a message that is spiced with the melody of the song (181). The author however cautions that in order to achieve the desired aesthetic appeal, the accompaniments must not drown the purpose of the song (181).

Songs, therefore, are of immense relevance to the Igala people, and of course, they constitute a vital ingredient of performance in African oral narrative art. Indeed, the use of song enlivens the whole gamut of Igala oral narrative performance. While it builds confidence in the performer, it also arouses the interest and participation of the audience. In all, the use of song and dance during Igala oral performance has rhythmic and psychological effects on the audience. In Tale One and Two, respectively titled “The Tortoise Who Imitated the Cricket and Had His Back Melted” and “Tortoise Cajoled the Rest Animals”, the narrator employs song and dance in the rendition of the narratives in order to add special flavour to them. Specifically, in Tale One, tortoise makes attempts to produce oil for cooking the communal food from his body just because his friend, cricket had previously done so. Just before the cricket jumped into the hot cooking pot, a song was introduced and the audience joined in the chorus. The song goes thus:

*Solo: Iyomiyoo*

*Chorus: Iyomikẹlẹde (xxxx)*

The above lines are repeatedly rendered by the narrator, and it is alternatively chorused by the audience. The narrator and the audience sing this line alternatively. This goes with the appropriate dance movement by both the narrator and the audience. In addition, there is a corresponding response of a clapping backup by both the narrator and the audience. The continuous chanting of “Iyomiyoo” by the narrator, and the intermittent response of “*Iyomikẹlẹde*” by the audience, provide a strong rhythmic background. This scenario gets both the narrator and the audience enthralled and enlivened. On the other hand, the cricket who invents this tune also dances and produces oil simultaneously. When tortoise has experienced the scene where the cricket produced oil from his body, he tried also to do the same thing. Similarly, the same song was performed for him accompanied with dance. Rather than produce oil, the tortoise’s shell began to melt and became grotesque. In Tale Two also, there is copious use of song and dance. It should be asserted that the use of song and dance provides entertainment; it creates humour; it induces the audience to become actively involved in the performance; it arouses laughter and also helps to reduce tension in the audience. The way and manner in which the narrator imitates the oral narrative characters bring about all the dramatic changes in the performance.

In Tale one, titled “The Tortoise and the Animals”, there is also copious use of song with dance to match. As the narrator performs the roles of the characters, he acts out the speeches and body movement at the same time. The tortoise that sings and dances in this narrative is imitated by the narrator. The narrator dramatizes tortoise’s role by singing as well as dancing. In like manner, the audience participates in the whole drama of song and dance by complementing the narrator’s performance. As soon as the tortoise sights the animals, he began to feign sickness, starts shivering, pretending to be sick. In attempt to further mesmerize the emissaries sent by the king of the animals, tortoise picked up his guitar and began to play it and sang sonorously thus:

*Who has been detailed to come to arrest me?  
Rabbit is the one sent to me?  
When you go back, tell your king!  
I am sited here because of a stomach ache,  
I am sited here because of a head  
ache,*

*You only know trouble,  
behold, you don't know what it breeds ooo,  
Ojegedejejeje-eee, Ojegedejejeje -eeee, Ojegedejejeje -o -o -o -o !*

Each time the animals visit tortoise in his house, he is seen playing his guitar, and immediately, they forget their mission to his house, as they become highly engrossed with the music. The song and rhythmic renditions by Tortoise get Mr. Rabbit and Deer overwhelmed and tongue-tied. To this effect, they all dance to the rhythm. As the two animals dance profusely, they get carried away and forget their mission to tortoise's house. Mr. Deer dance in such a manner that he gets his tiny legs fractured, then, he gallops away immediately. All the animals sent by the King to arrest the tortoise and bring him to his residence all return without success. Indeed, each of them could not resist the mesmerizing song and rhythmic force of his comic performance.

Music, or rather song performance, as it pertains to the subject of discourse here, possesses magical attributes of hypnotizing the listeners/ audience. The power of song and music as seen in the tortoise's performance in tale ten is an example of the fact that mammals have soft spot for music. No wonder, it is said that music is the medicine of the soul. From the dimension of the tortoise's display, one can say that music, irrespective of who performs it, has no enemy. The study of music in Africa is therefore, intriguing and illuminating, and it remains a living and inspiring performance in Africans daily life. Underscoring the relevance of music in Africa generally, Emmanuel James Flolu asserts that:

In Africa, music is life; that is [,] it permeates all daily activities. Music in Africa is the soul which is ultimately concerned with various customs and religious practices. The African is born, named, initiated, fortified, fed, nurtured, and buried with music. In Africa, music heals the sick, music directs and guides the blind, music comforts the widow, and music stops tribal war. Music is in the office ... Finally, music accompanies every single daily life. (8)

The power and influence of music in the whole business of the African life is enormous. This explains its utilitarian values in socio-cultural life of Africans. The aesthetics of music, therefore, is what is explored here, especially as regard tortoise's musical performance. While the narrative personae (characters) derived great values from the Tortoise's performance, the audience also does same. In all, it is valid as



Flolu says that “every music is a social fact, a social reality. It could be said that music-making is a lifelong activity of every society” (9).

### **Aesthetics of Dance in Igala Oral Narrative Performance**

The relevance of dance to human beings cannot be over stressed. Dance is a way of life; it is an expression of the feelings and emotions of man in his environment. It is also a means of communication among people. Hence, it can be stated that dance is as old as man himself. In this context, Ahmed Yerima notes that:

Dance is also a language- a form of expression. If sound, gesture and movement are part of man’s language, then dance can also be seen as a form of language. It has indeed remained a form of language to express joy, sadness, and serious ritual belief such as evocation, praise and worship (20).

Dance, therefore, for the Africans, and particularly for the Igala people, is a form of expression, a form of identity and a means of communication. Above all, it is said to have therapeutic roles on both the dancer and the audience. While dance generally is a ready source of exercise, it is also a rich avenue of entertainment. Generally speaking, dance among the Igala can be categorized into social and religious dances.

When song and dance is introduced by a narrator during story-telling session, he intends to arouse and boost the emotions of the audience either consciously or unconsciously. This is noticeable as the audience is seen to react and collaborate the singing, and are seen to accompany their feelings with dancing. The participation of the audience is an indication that they are pleased and enthralled by the narrator’s performance. At another level, the introduction of songs to a story has social effects on the children or audience who constitute the backup to the performance. As children sing along with the narrator and also dance, they are seen to mingle and interact with one another. The social milieu provided by the narrative creates opportunity for the audience (children) to interact.

In all, the role played by the introduction of dance in an oral narrative performance cannot be over emphasized. Among Igala, different types of dances exist for different occasions and purposes. Though dances that are introduced into the oral performance are not rigidly defined neither are they specified by the performer himself. However, the narrator is at liberty to introduce any style of dance in the course of narration. In most cases, therefore, the narrator of the tale may come up with a particular dance step, and the audience may corroborate it by attempting to copy his style of dance. In this regard, Olu Obafemi asserts that “for us in Africa, our social rhythm and spiritual space is dance-bound, [and that] all our gods have their distinctive temper emblemized in their dance and drums. Dance [therefore] is innate to the socio-spiritual being” (2-3).

The use of song and dance essentially enhances the aesthetics of Igala oral performance; each of them complementing the other. Consequently, both achieve their aesthetic effectiveness by invoking the emotions of the audience; enhancing

the narrative flow, representing cultural traditions, conveying symbolism, engaging the audience, and providing entertainment value. They also enrich the storytelling experience and create a multisensory and immersive environment that captivates and delights the audience. They constitute basic art forms which help the people to realize themselves, indulge in self-reflection and identity construction. Several scholars of African oral literature reiterate that song and dance are integral parts of the African oral performance tradition. One of such scholars is Ezekiel Alembi, who, quoting John Mbiti, avers that “Africans are notoriously religious” in nature, and that singing and dancing are essential parts of their culture. (1). Alembi further expatiates on the importance of singing and dancing as integral elements of the African religious life, and that these features are predominantly found in the poetry of the people as well as in their oral literature (1). Hence, he submits: “I have made a thorough examination . . . and my conclusion [is] that Africans are not only notoriously religious but also deeply musical and poetic”. (1) The use of music, song (poetry) and dance therefore defines the manifold aesthetic experience of the Igala people as they pervade the whole spectrum of Igala socio-cultural life.

### Summary and Conclusion

There are indeed no doubts that song and dance are the live wire of African oral narrative performance as they help to add more meaning to the whole gamut of performance. The Igala people particularly use them to make important aesthetic appeal as well as embodying a huge cultural significance in the oral tradition. Consequently, they are seen to play very crucial roles in preserving different aspects of the people’s culture.

In conclusion, song and dance are inseparable partners in assessing the virility of aesthetic performance in Igala story telling tradition. They define cultural boundaries and showcase the sense of value placement and socio-cultural continuity among the people. Hence, a study of Igala song and dance is a huge enterprise in assessing the rich Igala history, religion and socio-political life.

### Works Cited

- Alembi, Ezekiel. *Singing and Dancing, the Rhythms of Life: Oral Poetry in the Abanyole Community of Kenya*. University of Helsinki. October, 2002. [http://ce.joensuu.fi/lorinsti/i\\_03/ale](http://ce.joensuu.fi/lorinsti/i_03/ale)
- Ainoko, Festus. *Communication among Igala*. Mastery Printing Press, 2005.
- Bauman, Richard. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Newbury House, 1977.
- Boston, John S. *Oral Tradition and the History of Igala*. In *Elaeis: A Journal of Igala Land*. Edited by Brain Dawtrey. Vol. 1. Issue 1. World Bank Assisted Agricultural Development Project, 1978.
- Egbunu, Fidelis. *Igala Traditional Values Versus Modernity*. Afro-Orbis, 2009.
- Elger, Don. *Theory of Performance*: Faculty Development Service. Pacific Crest, 2007.

- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Clarendon Press, 1970.
- - - Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context. Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Flula, Emmanuel James. *Music in Traditional African Cultures: Beneath and Beyond the Utilitarian Factor*. Edited by The Africa Music Educator, No 8, Dec., 1996. [www.scientific.african.org/sciafr/. . . /musiceducator/no8/. . . /at download-similar](http://www.scientific.african.org/sciafr/. . . /musiceducator/no8/. . . /at download-similar)
- Foley, John Miles. *How to Read an Oral Poem*. University of Illinois Press, 2002.
- John O. Perpener. *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*. 1996. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1478736>
- Johnson Effiong. *Aesthetics: The Dialectics and Theatrics of Theatre and Communication*. Concept Publication Ltd. 2004.
- Mbiti, John. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Heinemann, 1982.
- Obafemi, Olu. "Issues and Challenges of Dance Pedagogy and Curriculum Development in Nigeria Education." *Dance Journal of Nigeria*. A Publication of the Association of Dance Scholars and Practitioners of Nigeria, 2019, pp. 1-4.
- Okpewho, Isidore. "The Oral Performer and His Audience." *The Oral Performance in Africa*. Edited by Isidore Okpewho. Spectrum Books, 1990.
- Okwoli, P.E. *A Short History of Igala*. Matami and Sons, 1973.
- Sulaimon, Y. Adebayo. *The Dialectics of Re-writing History in Emmy I.U. Idegu's Ata Igala the Great*. In *Performance, Literature, Language, and The Arts: Essays in Honour of Professor Emmy Ikanaba Unuja Idegu*. Edited by Gambo Sani and Nelson E. Oyibo. Agunbay Publishers, 2022.
- Yerima, Ahmed. "Nigerian Traditional Dancers: History and Practice." In *Critical Perspectives on Dance in Nigeria*. Edited by Ahmed Yerima et al. Kraft Books Limited., 2005, pp.17-54.

## Appendix

### Tortoise and the Rest Animals

Once upon a time, there lived Mr. Tortoise and the rest of the animals in a village called Obanidu. There was severe hunger in the land and all the animals except him were in search of food to eat. Those whose farm-produce remained for that year were very few and were counted lucky. Surprisingly, Mr. Tortoise was seen to be getting fatter every day. One day the animals gathered themselves and went to Mr. Tortoise's house. They said to him: "where do you get food from that you always look robust"? He replied and said: "I do not have anywhere to feed from, the way you go about your life is the same way go about mine". Afterwards the animals went back to their destinations.

The following year, the king of the animals convened a meeting of all the animals to his palace. All the animals were there and a decision was taken for all the animals to do and owe a collective farm. The essence was to have plenty of food for them to eat in the subsequent year. Mr. Tortoise was not present at the

meeting of the animals. Another day again, the king asked Mr. Deer to announce that there will be a general farming by all the animals to clear the field and cultivate yams. However, on the dawn of the appointed day, the Tortoise was nowhere to be found. The king sent two of the animals to inquire why Mr. Tortoise was not present. They arrived Mr. Tortoise's house only to meet him shivering on a chair where he sat, and rubbed herbs all round his head. When they inquired what was wrong with him, he said: "Tell our king that I am not feeling fine, I am seriously sick". They sympathized with him but told him to make himself available in the next communal work. They emphasized: "The next one is nine days from today". So, they left.

The ninth day had reached and it was the day agreed by the animals for a communal job on their farm. Mr. Deer, the town crier had announced it throughout the whole village. Soon after, the King's messenger visited Tortoise's house to remind him. To the surprise of the emissaries, Tortoise was seated on the same chair shivering. When they asked him what the matter was, he told them he had fever. Mr. Tortoise continued in this manner until the animals had finished working on their farm.

Now, it was time for harvest. The king had announced to all that nobody should be found taking any yams from their farm until it was time to do so. They have dug out the whole yams and have kept them under a tree close to their farm awaiting the king's order. Then, Tortoise had thought of how he will secretly steal yams from the animals' farm.

At another day, he thought quickly of how Mr. Rabbit will be of assistance in this way. He called on Rabbit and said: "Mr. Rabbit, I want you to dig a hole for me; it will begin from my house and end in the animal farm". Rabbit replied and asked: "How much will you pay me for the work"? "I will give you money that will be alright for you", he asserted. The condition was alright for Rabbit and immediately he began to dig the whole. When he was done, he asked of his wage from Tortoise. Tortoise said to Rabbit: "I do not have money at the moment, but I have two sacks of palm Kernel to give you". Rabbit consented to Tortoise assertion, after all, he loves Kernel so much.

The next day, Tortoise entered the hole and soon after, he found himself at the animals' farm where their yams were kept. He stretched out his hand from there, and began to take the yams into the whole one after another. Everyday Mr. Tortoise carried yams from the animals' farm. He continued until his hand could no longer reach where the yams were gathered.

One day, Deer came across Tortoise and said to him: "Mr. Tortoise, what is the secret, you look robust these days"? Now, it became obvious that the yams the animals kept under the tree were decreasing in number. Consequently, the king had instructed Mr. Deer to announce to them all that there will be a general meeting the next day. The meeting held and the animals unanimously agreed that everyone should keep watch over their yams. The first day, Deer went there and kept watch

throughout the night. He did not notice the presence of any body. The next day was the turn of Antelope; he too did not see anybody. Then, many others went to keep watch but none met anyone on the farm.

When every animal had tried without success, the Monkey said to all: "I will like to go to the farm to keep watch; there, I am sure I will catch the thief that has almost finished our yams". Then, he retorted the second time: "This thief is among us". When the Monkey got there, he climbed a tree and remained on top, expecting to catch the thief. While he was on the tree, he was very vigilant. He remembered how the king declared sometimes ago that whoever catches the thief will be greatly rewarded. Then, suddenly, Tortoise appeared from the hole and began to walk gently towards the yams. He looked left and right, not seeing anyone at sight, he began to pick the yams one after another. The Monkey realized it was Tortoise. He shouted: "Tortoise, I have caught you today, so you have been the thief?" Mr. Tortoise raised his head and said to the Monkey, "Are you the one there? This is my first attempt, I only tried it today". The Monkey looked at him and said: "there is no need for alarm, I will only go to our king and tell him that I have found the villain.

Monkey got to the king and informed him of the new discovery. The king was perplexed and immediately summoned all the animal for a meeting in his palace. He asked them to report on the ninth day. The ninth day came and the king directed that the Tortoise be brought to his palace, they will kill him if he is brought there. All the animals were present at the palace waiting for Tortoise to be brought there.

Nobody knew who had notified the Tortoise about the plan by the king to arrest and kill him. So, before that day, he had prepared his musical instrument, which he hopes to use to mesmerize anyone that came to arrest him.

As soon as he was done, he made a mixture of herbs and robbed it round his head as a sign that he was sick. He took a chair, set it strategically at a corner and sat on it. Then, he picked up his lyre made of local materials and began to play it.

The king instructed Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Deer: "Go to Mr. Tortoise's house, arrest him and bring him here immediately. I shall kill him today". Immediately, they left. As soon as Tortoise saw that they were close to his house, he picked up his lyre and began to play it. As he played, he sang thus:

*Who has been detailed to arrest me?*

*Who has been sent to me?*

*Whenever you go back, tell the king!*

*That I have stomach ache,*

*That I have headache,*

*You're only aware of trouble, but you are not aware of the consequences ooo!*

*Ojegadejejejege- Ojegadejejejege- jegeooo*

Rabbit stood there and began to listen to Tortoise's song. He became charmed by the lyrics. Uncontrollably, he began to dance to the tune of the music. He danced

and danced and danced and began to sweat profusely. He got tired and got back to the king's palace. Seeing that Rabbit returned without Tortoise, they inquired why he returned without carrying out the arrest. Rabbit quickly told them: "my fellow animals, you need to be there to see for yourself. Tortoise's overwhelming song and dance is irresistible". The rest animals were disappointed in Rabbit's action. They said to him: "You were sent to arrest Tortoise, what business do you have with the song and dance?" Mr. Rabbit reiterated the second time: "You need to be there, I said to witness the rendition; indeed, it was mesmerizing".

Deer became exasperated at Rabbit's reluctance to bundle Tortoise down to the palace. His urge to go there was high, so left. As soon as Tortoise sighted Deer, he picked up his guitar and began to play it. As he plays, he also sings. The song went thus:

*Who has been detailed to arrest me?*

*Who has been sent to me?*

*Deer has been sent to me!*

*Whenever you go back, tell the king!*

*That I have stomach ache!*

*You're only aware of trouble, but you are not aware of the consequences, ooo*

*Ojegedejegejege- Ojegedejegejege- jegeooo*

As soon as the song filtered into Deer's ear he began to dance. He danced, and danced and danced and eventually had his legs fractured. As soon as Deer could no longer dance, he managed to hop away. When he got back, the king asked him: "Why didn't you come with Mr. Tortoise" as commanded"? Deer replied and said "It was not an easy task at all." The king asked him again: "Do you mean to tell us that it was Mr. Tortoise who broke your legs"? Deer reiterated: "you need to be there to witness the dance and song." Simultaneously, the whole animals blamed him for negligence. Some said to him: "you have done a grievous thing ever, if I am the one that was sent, I would have bundled him to the palace".

Based on this general feeling, antelope got angry and began to walk confusingly towards Tortoise's residence. In the usual practice, as soon as Tortoise sighted him, he picked up his guitar and began to sing and dance:

*Who has been detailed to arrest me?*

*Who has been sent to me?*

*Antelope has been sent to me!*

*Whenever you go back, tell the king that I have stomach ache,*

*That I have head ache,*

*You're only aware of trouble, but you are not aware of the consequences ooo!*

*Ojegedejegejege- Ojegedejegejege- jegeooo!*

As soon as Antelope got close to Tortoise's house, he became vigilant. But he could not resist the song and the beating that came from him. He began to dance. The song and dance were scintillating and was becoming more and more mesmerizing. So, when Tortoise noticed Antelope was close, he increased the tempo of his

dance. The Antelope danced and danced and danced, got his horns broken and consequently began to bleed profusely. As soon as this happened to him, he picked up his belongings and departed angrily.

When he got back to the palace, the animals said to him: “Antelope, even you, couldn’t bring Tortoise?” He replied, “It is not a joking matter, you all need to be there.”

After the Antelope left, Tortoise’s place, many other animals attempted to go for his arrest, but each of them had the same encounter. Then, one of them, Monkey vowed he will bring Tortoise to the palace on his head. The king said to Monkey, “I will be happy if you can do that for us”.

With the mandate given to Monkey by the King, he prepared and left to bring Tortoise straight away. As soon as Tortoise sighted him far away, he adjusted himself, quickly took his guitar and began to play. As usual, he sang and danced thus:

*Who has been detailed to arrest me?*

*Who has been sent to me?*

*Monkey has been sent to me!*

*Whenever you go back, tell the king*

*That I have stomach ache,*

*That I have head ache,*

*You’re only aware of trouble, but you are not aware of the consequences ooo!*

*Ojegedejejeje- Ojegedejejeje- jegeooo!*

When Monkey got there, he did not care to observe Tortoise’s disposition neither did he listen to his rendition, so, he went straight to where he sat, lifted him up on his shoulders and packed his musical instrument; and off he went. He arrived the king’s palace and dropped him on the ground.

When Tortoise saw the king and the rest of the animals gathered, he brought his guitar close to himself and began his performance, thus:

*Who has been detailed to arrest me?*

*Who has been sent to me?*

*Monkey has been sent to me!*

*Whenever you go back, telling the king that I have stomach ache,*

*That I have head ache.*

*You’re only aware of trouble, but you are not aware of the consequences ooo!*

*Ojegedejejeje- Ojegedejejeje- jegeooo!*

The melody made by the Tortoise could not be resisted by the king and the rest animals. They too became mesmerized. They began to dance and sing along with Tortoise. Monkey who was not moved by all this show, retorted: “king, do we all give in to Mr. Tortoise’s Tricks and allow him to cheat us”? They did not mind what Monkey has said. They continued to dance and dance and danced. Suddenly, Tortoise brought the guitar close to his mouth and cut the string. Then, the whole animals stopped dancing.

They all unanimously asked: “Why have you suddenly stopped the music, Mr. Tortoise, why?” Tortoise looked at them quickly and said that the guitar strings have cut, hence, he can no longer play it. The king immediately asked: “what shall we do to restore the guitar?” Tortoise replied and said: “it is actually a big deal, anyway, but what it takes to restore the guitar is right here with us”. The king insisted and asked further: “what is exactly that thing that you talk about”? Again, Tortoise reiterated: “It is not easy-ooo, the thing is hard, though”.

At this point, all the animals were getting impatient and angry with Mr. Tortoise. Then, the king demanded of him and said: “if that thing is here among us as you claim, then, don’t hesitate to tell us, I am ready to offer it so that the music can go on”. Tortoise deepened his voice and uttered: “I am talking about that object that has a long tail extended from his waist up to his head, and that animal is right here with us”. As soon as Tortoise said this, all the animals started looking at one another. Simultaneously, all of them attempted to seize the Monkey and bring him before the king so as to be killed and his skin used to make the strings. But Monkey was smart enough to slip through their hands, and unconsciously he uttered a sound- “Kwi, kwi-kwi”. They all ran after him, each carrying different objects to use against him and kill him, but they could not catch up with him. The Squirrel, Hyena, Elephant, Dog, Goat, Lion, and all the animals pursued him, but they did not catch him. Quickly, he climbed a tree.

Conclusion: it is for this reason that the Monkey is always found on the trees, and often seen to make noise in this manner: “kwi-kwi”, ever since he was chased after by the animals.

### **Tale One**

#### **Tale Two**

#### **The Tortoise Who Imitated the Cricket and Had His Back Melted in the Fire**

**Opening Remarks** Once upon a time, Tortoise and Cricket were good friends. The two of them used to organize reciprocal, collective farming on their farms. Each time this happened, they cooked food on a large scale for everyone present to eat; the old and young and, specifically, those who had been called upon to help on their farms.

The cricket had fixed a day for the collective labour on his own farm. On that fateful day, the cricket instructed his wife to cook for those who will be helping him on his farm. He also begged some women to help his wife cook the meal. When the food was on the fire, the women called the attention of Cricket’s wife, saying: “Where is the palm oil we will use to make the soup?” As soon as the Cricket was told, he replied: “Do not worry, oil belongs to God, the great provider, we will certainly get some for use.”

While he was still speaking, the workers on the farm returned home, showing signs of tiredness and hunger on their faces. Then, the wife came again to the Cricket and said: “*I have come to remind you of the oil to use for the soup*”. He



quickly replied and said: “Do not worry, do put an earth pot on fire”. The earth pot was put on fire and had become heated and red hot. Suddenly, Cricket ran and jumped into the pot. While he was inside, he said to the people around to start chanting the following chorus as he took the lead:

*Cricket: Íyomiyọọ*

*Chorus: Íyomikẹlẹde*

*Cricket: Íyomiyọọ*

*Chorus: Íyomikẹlẹde*

*Cricket: Íyomiyọọ*

*Chorus: Íyomikẹlẹde*

*Cricket: Íyomiyọọ*

*Chorus: Íyomikẹlẹde*

As he was singing and dancing in the red-hot pot, oil was being extracted from all over his body. The more he danced and sang, the more oil was produced. He was in the pot and was not hurt. When he was done, he came out and more than enough oil was collected. The oil was used to cook the meal and everyone ate and was satisfied.

The tortoise is ever known for imitating people in whatever they do. Because the cricket succeeded in producing oil from his body the other day, he decided to arrange for collective labour on his farm. He gave nine days from that day and informed all those concerned. That day came, and the Tortoise said to himself: “The other time, the cricket did not buy oil but he was able to extract oil from his body and the wife used it to cook”. He reassured himself that he was ready to do as the cricket did.

The wife and her helpers had put the food on the fire; and while the food was still on the fire, the wife informed him of the absence of oil in the house. She said to him: “There is no oil in the house.” The husband replied: “Put the earth pot on the fire and wait for me and don’t be worried.”

As the earth pot was becoming so hot, the Tortoise ran quickly and jumped into it in the same manner the cricket did the other day. As soon as he found himself in it, he began to sing thus:

*Tortoise: Íyomiyọọ*

*Chorus: Íyomikẹlẹde*

*Tortoise: Íyomiyọọ*

*Chorus: Íyomikẹlẹde*

*Tortoise: Íyomiyọọ*

*Chorus: Íyomikẹlẹde*

*Tortoise: Íyomiyọọ*

*Chorus: Íyomikẹlẹde*

As soon as the Tortoise began to feel the unbearable hotness, he began to shout uncontrollably. He realized he was burning seriously and getting too hurt, so he called on his wife, saying: “Anibọ my wife, I beg you, kindly lift me out of here

and put me inside a pot full of water to cool my body, I am burning out.” Immediately he was removed from the fire and soon after, his back consequently became burnt and ruptured. And from that day, the Tortoise’s back had become permanently rough and undulating.

**Closing Remarks:** ‘*Udagana*’ the child of the blacksmith, it is for this reason that the Tortoise’s back became rough and grotesque till this day. The lesson learnt from this story is that God’s gift for everyone differs, therefore no one should envy the other.