ISSN 0002–0087
VOLUME XV, NUMBERS 1 & 2, 1991

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AFRICAN NOTES

Journal of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan

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Journal of the Institute of African Studies
University of Ibadan

Volume XV, Nos 1 & 2 1991

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ESTABLISHING LIMINAL CATEGORIES IN AFRICAN CEREMONIAL DANCES

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A DANCE performance may be considered as artistic expression predicated on movement; it has also been described as a dramatic phenomenon induced by a psychological state. Whatever the case, its stated objective might be merely to entertain. In whatever way it is considered, it has a function or a utility which cannot be altogether expressed in words but by the act of dancing itself.[1] In this paper, I intend to establish patterns of dance as concrete belief and action in a few representative African societies. Ceremonial dances are common to most traditional African societies and they may form one basis for analyzing those societies. I shall, therefore, select three examples of ceremonial dances and show through them how African dance events comfront realistic expression either by explaining it or rationalizing it. The three examples are from post-colonial societies with a strong dramatic tradition. The first examples are marriage and funeral dances among the Lugbara of northwestern Uganda;[2] the second are the comical Tortoise dances of the Kalabari of south-eastern Nigeria;[3] and the third is the Udje dance performance of the Urhobo of mid-western Nigeria.[4]

In seeking to understand the performing arts of the Lugbara, we need to understand something about their concept of time. The Lugbara believe that time past, time present and time future are aspects of one long linear season and that they unravel in a predictable, foreseeable manner. When this ordered sequence of time is disrupted, it reverberates as disorder in the physical world, in social relations between individuals as well as between groups of persons. Such disruptions in time or boundary concepts may be caused by drought, famine, flood, and death. When any of these occur there has to be a conscious effort, a formal ceremony, whereby normalcy is restored. Flood and drought are controlled by rainmakers, whilst funeral rites are conducted by diviners. In any of the instances, a dance performance or a festival is put up.

Funeral Dances of the Lugbara

The Lugbara, like most African groups, mark the death of a young person, as well as of an elderly one. The former is marked by wailing, and the ceremony is often brief. The point of burial or the grave mound is nearer the homestead than the forest margins. The funerary rites for the redomestication of the soul are held soon so that the clan is quickly purged of the memory of the deceased. In the case of the very old, however, there is cause for celebration, and gaiety. The more advanced in years he or she is, the larger the array of relations and therefore, the more protracted the dance event. Apart from the rather transient wailing dance known as *ongo*, an elaborate funeral dance for the aged known as *abi* is usually performed a year or so after the death. This gives time for the gathering of all the affines, friends and well-wishers of the deceased. As an elderly person is also likely to have a high status, his or her grave is likely to be farther away from the homestead, near the boundary with the bushland.

The relations, who arrive from far and near, are presented with arrows on their arrival. Though the death of the deceased has caused an affine break, the arrows are symbolic of the fact that the affinitive link is reaffirmed. The arrows are kept until the climax of the dance, when a dancer breaks out of line and shoots his or her arrow across the bushland

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to show that the deceased is avenged and his spirit is banished to the bushland. Liminal boundaries are thus readjusted in the memory.

Usually the dance takes the form of a competition. A dozen or two of the men from a single lineage would dance as a team in two lines facing each other. Their respective wives, fiancées or sisters dance in the peripheral circle around the men. Their own dances lack the vigor and agility of the men. Each dancer reaches what we may call his or her own relative climax in the dance by eliciting a call called *cere* in a deep falsetto tone. Tonal inflexions are peculiar to individuals. Each individual has his or her own distinctive cere call, and it is forbidden to call another person's cere. According to Middleton, to utter another person's *cere* is to attempt to usurp his or her personality; and this is an insult bordering on psychological violence. The height of the dance for any dancing pair is when they break out of the circumference of dance to call their *cere* across the forest or bushland. This is how Middleton describes the phenomenon:

> Now and again at a death dance, a man will run out of the arena hand in hand with a related women [sic.] (at wailing dances a lineage sister, and at *abi* a sister-in-law), and *at the edge of the bushland* facing it, he whoops his *cere* call and shoots arrows into the bush (or he may imitate doing so). The woman also gives her own *cere* call and imitates shooting an arrow. The pair then returns to the arena. This is an integral part of the dance and is done to show that the dancers both wish to avenge the deceased and also . . . that it has no future place within the settlement. (Emphasis is mine) (p.170)

The communal understanding of boundaries shows that they recognize that the bushland or wilderness is a distinct division from the household or the homestead. In addition, they recognize that the powers of the bushland are divine as well as dangerous. At times of social or cosmic disruption therefore, the supernatural powers of the dark bushland close in and threaten to smother the individuality or well-being of the human settlement and community. It is the disruptive tendency of the cosmic forces which lay waiting at some unknown corner of the bush that the Lugbara seek to rout through the dance. A psychological disruption of liminal boundaries is thus identified, tamed and conquered in the human world by a psychological re-adjustment. No matter how difficult it is to understand this phenomenon, or how irrational it is to come to grips with that reality, there will appear to be some truth in it.

Courtship and Fertility Dances among the Lugbara

Courtship dances are known as *walangaa*, and their conduct and movements are different from the *ongo*, wailing dance, or its counterpart *abi*, the death dance. The funeral dance is generally done in the daytime although it may spill over to the evening, while the courtship dance is strictly for the evening or night. The latter is also done at the market place, also of liminal significance because the market is a boundary between settlements or separate human communities. So while the walangaa is macrocosmic in import, the ongo or abi is microcosmic because its boundary is between individual households and the bushland or wilderness.

John Middleton reports that there is a wide difference in the patterns of walangaa when compared with those of death dances. For instance, in the death dances, men dance by lineage segments with women who also dance by lineage segments at the periphery of the arena. In other words, the patterns in death dances are based on affinal links while those in courtship dances are based on amorous relationships. In the walangaa, any pair of dancers may display their skills and agility outside the main ring of dancers who stand back and applaud. In such dances, direct physical contact of

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the arms or foreheads is permitted. A pair of adept dancers may rest their hands on each other's shoulders or match their foreheads whilst balancing with their hands.

Courtship dances can occur at any time of the year, which is understandable because marriage is not restricted to any particular season. This is a sharp contrast to the timing of the funeral dances, which are avoided at the height of the planting or harvesting seasons. The dry season between November and March, or the period after the harvest between May and September, are the times for ongo and abi dances. This is a pointer to the fact that the funeral dances are more leisurely in purpose. During this time there is abundant grain for making beer. Funeral dancers are allowed to drink freely and are permitted to fall into trances.

There is a way in which this affects the mode of dance movement in the different dances. Thus, whilst death dances are competitive or aggressive and drunkenness and trance are frequent, the courtship dances are expected to be far more organized. The respective movements of both kinds of dance forms are described by Middleton in the following terms:

> In the *walangaa* there is no difference in the gestures of men and women. Whereas in the death dances the closest link between individual dancers is between those dancing side by side and of the same sex, in the *walangaa* it is between individual dancers of opposite sex who dance directly opposite one another and form a single unit. The gestures of both are identical and very free: if a man decides to lift his arms above his head in order to balance his body his partner will do the same. Much emphasis is placed on the agility of foot movements . . . so that they appear to be dancing several inches off the ground altogether. (p.175)

A third example of a liminal dance among the Lugbara is a fertility dance. It is called the *Nyambi* dance. It is an all-female dance except for the lead dancer who resembles the Roman *faun*. He is a man carrying the antlers of a waterbuck or the horns of a buffalo. Usually his costume consists of male apparel with a waistband of leaves, suggestive of women's leaf apron. In other words, he is dressed as a ritual transvestite. The dance is performed when cosmic, linear time has been disrupted. It is thus meant to be a restoration from chaos to normalcy. These dances are occasioned by a delayed harvest when protracted rainfall has prevented early ripening of the crops. It is also performed after a protracted dry season or a drought. In agrarian societies, such 'slips' in the seasons may affect the lives of the ordinary people drastically. To re-order or stabilize seasonal time, the womenfolk would organize a dance. Their take-off point or 'stage entry' is from the bushland near the rainmaker's shrine. They then dance through the whole community shaking gourds and rattles, singing obscene songs and railing against any man who may be sufficiently daring to meet them. The dancers have no choreographed or 'arranged' pattern of movement except that the lead dancer, their servant,[5] is a male dancer dressed like a transvestite. Having danced through the town, they return to the rain grove where the rainmaker waits for them to perform his rites.

The confusion in the world, the disruption of liminal boundaries, is probably reflected in the overturn of the patriarchy in the character of a transvestite, and the subversion of morality in invectives. John Middleton records the phenomenon only too well:

> People say that this dance is a sign that the world has gone wrong and confused, that ordinary social hierarchies and relations are 'lost' or 'forgotten', and that the rainmaker must now 'start' the new year and the orderly passing of time again. He reorders temporal and social categories, and thereby

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> orders interlineage relations that have been threatened, weakened or even destroyed by quarrelling over resources whose scarcity and allocation have become all-important at these times. Thus they have certain resemblances to death dances, in the sense that they are performed in times of categorical confusion and uncertainty and of temporal liminality. (p.178)

These ritual performances are meant to re-establish consonance, in a world which seems to have gone berserk, fleeing, as it were, the control of men. Uncertainties in normal order are reflected in ambiguities in social relations. The dance performance thereby re-establishes new boundaries in time and space or redefines and maps out the world in a more manageable form. In the lines of Tambiah, it becomes '"a contest for something" as well as a "representation" of something . . . it "creates order, and is order", and in an imperfect world it brings temporary perfection.'[6] Or to quote Middleton once more, the rites demonstrate:

> the existence of confusion or ambiguity in social relations, and thereby show that they comprehend it and so intend to bring it under control. Then they act out this control and thereby bring about order and stability in society once again. (p.181)

The Ikaki Masquerade Dance of the Kalabari

As with many traditional folktales, the account of Ikaki origins is a mixed bag of myth, legend and history. Ikaki is believed to have been a supernatural creature who lived in the forest. Every now and again, he would come out to entertain the human community. On one occasion, however, he performed the finest dance in his repertoire; he climaxed this dance with the summary lifting of his legs. As he lifted his left leg, all the spectators in that direction died, and as he lifted his right leg, the spectators in that direction died also. He disappeared and was never seen thereafter.

In spite of the disastrous consequences of the story of Ikaki, the Kalabari found it so exciting and memorable that they decided to enact it as the theme of a masquerade display. The survivors of the tragic dance spectacle therefore consulted an oracle on how best to restage the Ikaki dance without evoking its tragic results. Apart from the people of the ancient village of Oloma, the people of Kula and New Calabar also adapted the dance for their *Ekine* dance society.

A characteristic Ikaki performance takes a few days of dance and costume rehearsal until the eve of performance when the Ekine club members gather in the club house and beat the drums around town to announce the imminent display of Ikaki. For the purpose of reference, it will be necessary to describe a few characteristics of the Ikaki display.

Ikaki first emerges into the field of play with two ancillary but crucial characters. The two, foils to one another, are his sons. The first is called Nimite Poku alias 'Know All' and the other Nimiaa Poku alias 'Know Nothing'. Both sons behave true to type. They both don hats or masks over lengthy apparel similar to those of Yoruba Egungun. Their father, Ikaki, wears similar apparel but wears a tortoise mask as well as a hunchback. Their costume and props are thus described in Horton's account:

> Ikaki himself, though fairly simply dressed, is readily recognizable by his hunchback and by the schematized tortoise body which is his headpiece. He comes out with a canny, mincing step. Nimite Poku, dressed mainly in a soiled blue-and-white sheet topped with an old felt hat, follows his step with a paddle sloped over his shoulder. Nimiaa Poku, dressed if anything more shabbily than his brother, carries a paddle and an ancient, leaky basket. He gambols and tumbles round the other two, to their considerable annoyance. (p.228)

Ikaki and his sons carry their antics to the river where they board a boat on a trip. As Ikaki and his

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more promising son, Nimite Poku paddle forward, Nimiaa Poku brings the boat to a standstill by paddling backwards. As if that is not enough mischief, he attempts to bail water out of the boat by actually bailing water into it. The worst is only averted because he bails water with a leaky, old basket rather than with a bowl.

Once they are back on the shore again, Nimiaa Poku engages in tricks to filch from his father's bag or gambols and rolls over in his foolish pranky style. Ikaki himself responds to the drums with songs, one of which may be recounting his tricks. He may recount that a recently dead king owed him great quantities of palm oil. So with one breath he mourns the dead king, with another the loss of his own capital. He may funnily request the whereabouts of the princes so that he can recover his fictitious debt. Sometimes living kings are parodied.

Two other interesting episodes from the performance of the second day are worth recounting here. The first is the palm tree climbing episode, the other is the elephant hunting episode. For the palm-tree climbing episode, the Ekine members erect a tall scaffolding and lash fresh palm leaves to the top. Ikaki climbs this makeshift palm armed with a knife, a matchet and a palmwine receptacle. Meanwhile his audience cheer him to the task and the drummer beats out his praises. Once he is on top of the tree, he sings and hums his own praises and begins cutting palm nuts and tapping wine. When he is beginning to thoroughly savor the taste of fruit and wine, his uncharitable offspring, Nimiaa Poku is making a dangerous joke by trying to cut down the tree! Meanwhile, Ikaki and his two sons have been joined by two other characters, both members of his family. The first is his most prominent, somewhat humane son, Kalagidi who constantly suffers in the hands of the witless wife who unabashedly flirts with the 'public'. In this circumstance, a man could not be more afflicted than Ikaki is. Aboita, who should have restrained Nimiaa Poku, is too busy flirting with the Ekine group. Only Kalagidi restrains, though unsuccessfully, his mindless brother, Nimiaa Poku.

The anti-climax sets in at last when Ikaki suddenly looks down and discovers the danger he is in. In exasperation, he aims his knife at Nimiaa Poku. Unfortunately, it misses the miscreant and knocks down the humane Kalagidi. Ikaki bewails his self-inflicted tragedy and threatens to remain and hang himself in the tree. On the other hand, Aboita, his faithless wife, rejoices that her Nimiaa Poku has escaped the fatal blow and joins him in a merry dance. Seeing this, Ikaki is thoroughly perplexed and intensifies his threat to hang himself in the tree. Such is the farce. Deux ex machina saves this unhappy scene, when the Ekine troupe gathers round to revive the 'dead' Kalagidi who then begins to dance again. Only then does Ikaki repress his desire to hang himself; and slowly descends the tree complaining about the plague of a faithless wife. Once down, the Ekine group cheers uproariously and Ikaki breaks into a vigorous dance in response to the call of the drum for the *egepu* pelvic dance.

The third act in this performance consists of an elephant-hunting episode in which a section of banana stem is used to represent an elephant. It is brought to the arena with a noose tied to one end of it and Ikaki at first attacks it with the boast of taking the *Peri* warriors' title by successfully hunting an elephant. Jeers from the crowd do not daunt him and he imaginatively rises above all failures. He brandishes his matchet and circles the animal with skill before he cuts off its head. The audience cheers and the drum signifies the end. Ikaki lines up with the rest of the cast, 'his family' and they make a final procession round the arena.

This elephant-hunting episode is the 'widest', least convincing imaginative leap that Ikaki has had to take the community through. The audience knows that no elephant could be hunted with a mere matchet, that the imaginary arena elephant is merely a banana stem. Yet it believes that Ikaki has killed an elephant and has won the Peri title. This is a bit different from the earlier examples where moral and

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domestic issues are examined through personality as well as sketch portraits. Though we cannot deny that such imaginative leaps tend to control boundaries of consciousness, they certainly are among the extreme examples whereby the faith of ritual is meant to overstretch the borderlines of art. In such examples of polar extremes, performances do not rely on art alone. Two such examples are amply captured by two other writers. The first is when Oyin Ogunba describes Yoruba ceremonies as being a system where 'ritual tends to accommodate everything from devotion to extreme profanity'.[7] The second is by Abiodun Azeez when he quotes Elizabeth Isichei in describing the functions of Nigerian masquerades as a phenomenon where 'the secular and the sacred, the natural and supernatural are a continuum'.[8] The elastic limits of belief are then stretched almost to breaking point. Before we go into other more fundamental issues, I will present my final example: the Udje dance performance among the Urhobo.

The Udje Dance Spectacle of the Urhobo

The Udje dance emphasizes poetic rendition as much as it does dexterity of footwork. Either way, an elaborate story told in poetry can only be successful when the dance activity also helps to emphasize the outlines of the story being rendered. The Udje worldview already assumes that the purpose of the dance is to sing the rival or challenger into a devastating rout (Clark 283, Darah, 505). Therefore, the various Urhobo groups or communities participating in the dance are already paired as rivals. The yearly festival is the instigator of a battle and the arena becomes a battleground. Any protagonist, therefore, can employ scenic and\or symbolic effects such as magical charms against stage fright or bad falls; metal rattles for rhythmic effect; parrot and cock feathers; colourful fans and white handkerchiefs as well as any other colourful costume. The stage is set for a dancer who must strive to conquer an 'imagined world or enemy' and return to the status quo without untoward incident. It is only then that he is considered victorious. Many of the new or renewed songs must describe a topical or gripping moral tale to be able to score a point with the audience. Each time the audience is enthralled they show their appreciation with loud cheers and gifts.

The Problem of a Dance-defined category

The point must be emphasized that every significant dance event tells a story, is a story, and therefore takes on significant aspects of cultural history. Mores, archetypes and traditions are discernible from definite patterns of movement, mime and masquerade. This is what Catherine Acholonu captures:

> Dance is communicative, it can tell a story sometimes better and more effectively and powerfully than words . . . Since dance can be communicative and even narrative, it follows that some inherent plot could be discernible from the festival dances of African peoples . . . The cultural dances of a people are group representations of their collective world view, borne out from their folklore, their memories, their fears and aspirations. The dancers demonstrate feelings that are buried in the collective unconscious, through ritual enactment the dancers and the audience partake in an experience which is at once mythical and real, religious and secular.[9]

It is the same with the folkloric protagonist of the Kalabari masquerade dance of the tortoise — Ikaki. This is the description Robin Horton gives of him:

> Often referred to as 'Old Man of the Forest', Ikaki is a memorable character. On the one hand, he has an insatiable appetite for food, money and women, and seeks to gratify it without any regard for the limits set by established morality. On the other hand, he operates with a vast deviousness and an elaborate cunning. Fortunately for the rest of the characters in his stories,

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> however, he often pushes his schemes too far, and so fails to achieve his outrageous aims. (p.226)

The foregoing examples raise certain fundamental issues in relation to the question of ritual and performance. Why, for example, do the Lugbara wish to deal with an existential event like death through the indirect medium of dance? It appears that like the Kalabari, the Lugbara confront the problems of life and death in mime and dance as a way of reflecting upon them. Equally, the Urhobo have created a boundary in the consciousness by assuming that a certain imaginary enemy could be 'wrestled' to a fall in song and dance. These obvious but perplexing facts are best discussed by examining ritual in a performance or game context to identify its lasting, beneficial effects which make it recur in those contexts.

S.J. Tambiah observes[10] that 'All games are defined by a set of rules which in practice allow the playing of any number of matches', while ritual is played

> like a favoured instance of a game, remembered from among the possible ones because it is the only one which results in particular types of equilibrium between the two sides . . . . Games thus appear to have a disjunctive effect: they end in the establishment of a difference between individual players or teams where originally there was no indication of inequality. And at the end of the game they are distinguished into winners and losers. Ritual, on the other hand, is the exact inverse; it conjoins, for it brings about a union . . . or in any case an organic relation between two initially separate groups, one ideally merging with the person of the officiant and the other with the collective of the faithful.[11]

The point is thereby inferred that man has often used dance performances as an occult game of communication between his own spirit and the cosmos whenever he seeks a deeper understanding of its mysteries. In this sense, he ensures that he is not a loser in the ensuing interaction, but a mutual beneficiary in the exchange of ritual potency. He thus draws a hitherto rebellious universe closer to himself, establishes a greater rapport with it, or rather contextualizes it, and manages or tames its terror. The end of any performance in dance or drama often results in man gaining a better understanding of a perplexing universe and reconciling himself to reality. In this way, he feels better, and feels at greater peace, with himself. Tambiah's definition of ritual explains that:

> Ritual is a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It is constituted of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts, often expressed in multiple media, whose content and arrangement are characterized in varying degree by formality (conventionality), stereotype (rigidity), condensation (fusion), and redundancy (repetition). Ritual action in its constitutive features is performative in these three senses: in the Austinian sense of the performative wherein saying something is also doing something as a conventional act; in the quite different sense of a staged performance that uses multiple media by which the participants experience the event intensively; and in the third sense of indexical values being attached to and inferred by actors during the performance.[12]

In seeking a greater understanding of Lugbara culture, one may ask why at the intense climax of a dance event, a fulfilled celebrant or participant will cross the borders of the bushland, shoot an arrow and utter a characteristic or peculiar cry? In so doing, the culture considers the forces of the

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wilderness a mystery, a source of danger, an enemy which has now reabsorbed the dismembered elements of a dead kin. Shooting an arrow at it and asserting his own personality in a cere call is thus a human way of reasserting an endangered order. There is no doubt that such endangerment is often personalized as some kind of phobia, a fear of the unknown or of the unfamiliar; even more precisely, a fear of liminality or boundaries of consciousness.

So much for the Lugbara. There is the working of a similar phenomenon in the Ikaki performance of the Ekine among the Kalabari. The phenomenon of the masquerade adds an extra dimension to the dance spectacle. It would appear that, generally, around the delta area of Nigeria as well as among hinterland cultures, the medium of the mask is used to arrest and domesticate the image of what men secretly 'admire', fear or despise. Those masked representations of animals and roguish archetypes are then brought to the public for display and ridicule. There is a hint in this description by E.J. Alagoa:

> All delta masks are believed to have come from the water spirits (oru or owu) and, each mask, accordingly represents its particular spirit. But the headpieces, dances and characterization of the plays do not always carry any religious or supernatural significance . . . The majority of the masquerades represent human characters, abstractions, or water spirits. Thus there are masquerades that depict the rogue; the trouble shooter, and *Ereworiowu* in Kalabari which says abusive words against women. There are also the three Igbo masquerades which depict three attributes of the aristocratic life of the delta; Peri-Igbo which shows the martial aspect, Ereto-Igbo showing a life of pleasure and good living, and Pipili-Igbo showing a chief who also stoops to lowly tasks like teaching his own slaves essential skills by demonstration.[13]

This phenomenon is no less real in the spectacle of the Ikaki. Ikaki is the sublime prototype of the human tortoise; a cunning victim of character disorder. To highlight him as the subject of artistic display often enables the audience to bring this prototype within imaginative limits and study him at a close but safe distance. It is interesting to note that Ikaki, in Kalabari lore, is said to be the purveyor of a fascinating, but deadly entertainment and that an oracle recommended a modification which turned it into a 'harmless' or benevolent spectacle. It will, therefore, appear that a performance of the Ikaki dances meant a domestication of an otherwise dangerous potential. Robin Horton has suggested that for the Kalabari, Ikaki represents the amoral trickster who accepts society in order to exploit it. He writes that the Kalabari have a tangible fear of the human tortoise such that they will refuse to contract marriages with certain families where such characters allegedly abound. To quote Horton:

> Given that the plausible psychopath provides the ultimate inspiration for the Ikaki play, in what sense can the play be said to tame him? Well, as an artistic performance, it puts him in a frame and imposes form on him. Again, by portraying him in animal guise, it 'distances' the audience from the particular human psychopaths that arouse their anxieties, and allows them to contemplate the type in tranquility. (pp.238-239)

This observation is as interesting as it is truthful in that what the society cannot encounter in real life, they transmute as artistic experience in dance; the Ikaki of the play is as actual and as venal as the real-life trickster.

By way of conclusion, we cite the interesting comparison that becomes obvious from classical literary and dramatic criticism. It has to do with the

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idea that a dramatic presentation tends to obviate or deflect the direct onslaught of harsh, otherwise unbearable realities to enable human beings accept and contemplate them as 'distanced' phenomena. This, Aristotle points out, is inherent in the power of man to learn by or enjoy *works of imitation*. He writes:

> Also inborn in all of us is the instinct to enjoy works of imitation. What happens in actual experience is evidence of this; for we enjoy looking at the most accurate representations of things which in themselves we find painful to see, such as the forms of the lowest animals and of corpses.[14]

It is in this light that the Kalabari enjoy and cheer the antics of Ikaki — an accurate representation of what in itself would be painful to experience physically in real life. In this manner, art (here dance) becomes a way of interpreting, nay short circuiting the dangerous realities of life. Ikaki, the trickster and dupe is caught in his own web of trickery; he is laughed at and temporarily conquered by his potential victims. Emotional as well as imaginative balance thus keep excesses in check, and society becomes the better by attaining stability — as the boundaries of consciousness are adjusted and redefined.

It is in the same light that the Udje dance event of the Urhobo also purifies the emotions and outbursts of the community in such indirect presentations. Through dance, poetry and game contests, art becomes the medium through which a man 'rivals a potential enemy to a fall'. The resulting balance becomes a means of stabilizing society. The battle which might have torn asunder affinal relationships is only fought in the imagination and kept well within the boundaries of order.

End Notes

1. One of the most celebrated statements of Isadora Duncan about the ethereal nature of the dance states: 'If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it'.
2. My analysis is based upon the very comprehensive account of John Middleton, The dance among the Lugbara of Uganda. In: *Society and the Dance*, Paul Spencer, ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985: 165-182.
3. See the precise and authoritative account of Robin Horton, Ikaki — The Tortoise Masquerade. *Nigeria Magazine* 94, 1967: 226-239.
4. See G.G. Darah, Dramatic presentation in Udje dance performance of the Urhobo. In: *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*, Yemi Ogunbiyi, ed.; *Nigeria Magazine*, Lagos, 1981: 504-516; J.P. Clark, Poetry of the Urhobo dance, Udje. *Nigeria Magazine* 87, 1965: 282-287.
5. This is like the Gelede dance event of the Yoruba where a male dancer is directed by a feminine cultus. There also, patriarchy serves matriarchal interests.
6. S.J. Tambiah, A performative approach to ritual. In: *Proceedings of the British Academy* 65, Oxford University Press, London, 1979: 117.
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