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Adedapo

Abstract
Since independence, Nigeria’s economic development has been abortive; this can be attributed to the fact that the economy is heavily pervaded with agricultural and oil revenues. This is contrary to other nations where compared to other nations, oil revenues are not the main source of economic advantages, which paves the way for diversified economic activities. Nigeria’s huge revenue from oil has contributed to the industrial development of the 1970s. This led to the neglect of other sectors such as agricultural and small scale industries such as traditional handicrafts. Low absorption capacity coupled with rapid industrial development have contributed to the nation’s unemployment. Consequently, Nigeria has had to develop alternative livelihoods strategies in order to reduce unemployment. Over the years, the informal sector has been noted to be the largest sector in any economy. This sector is crucial to the Nigerian economy and its contribution to economic development cannot be overemphasized.
Abstract:
Ogodi dance is a funeral dance drama performed among the Ogbaru Igbo people of Nigeria to celebrate the lifetime of a deceased, indigenously born woman, (Maduagwu, 2012). This work analyses the inter-play of dance on the one hand, and song lyrics on the other, as plot projectors in the performance of this ritual drama. The work aims to establish the importance of dance dynamics in African religious theatre. It decodes the heavy symbolism which characterizes ritual forms and which poses problems of analysis for researchers in the field. With relatively little documentation on the life of the woman in African society, the non-verbal information encoded in dance is an important source of data on the woman in oral societies such. Ogodi dance of Ogbaru Igbo people as a performance exclusively set aside for women provides an ideal model and also fills the gap in this area of gender study.

Methodology
Ogodi dance is a dance drama exclusively set aside for women and is performed by kinsmen. This belief is dramatized in a ceremony which is divided into sections symbolizing the stages in the spirit's journey, beginning from her return to her kinsmen and from thence to the land of the community's dead. Ritual drama is seldom verbalized in African theatre and the plots of sacred ceremonies are communicated in non-verbalised media. Ogodi dance thus depends on costume, ritual props, music, songs and dance; with dance being the dominant medium.

The objective of this project was to establish the importance of dance dynamics in African religious theatre. It decodes heavy symbolism which characterizes ritual forms and which poses problems of analysis for researchers in the field. With relatively little documentation on the life of the woman in African society, the non-verbal information encoded in dance is an important source of data on the woman in oral societies such as Ogodi dance of Ogbaru Igbo people as a performance exclusively set aside for women provides an ideal model and also fills the gap in this area of gender study.


Introduction
Ogodin’omuhunwa dance is a dance drama which celebrates the lifetime of a woman who had married from within her community or exogamously. The dance is a dramatic enactment of the return of the spirit of the deceased woman to her kinsmen. This belief is dramatized in a ceremony which is divided into sections symbolizing the stages in the spirit's journey, beginning from her return to her kinsmen and from thence to the land of the community's dead. Ritual drama is seldom verbalized in African theatre and the plots of sacred ceremonies are communicated in non-verbalised media. Ogodi dance thus depends on costume, ritual props, music, songs and dance; with dance being the dominant medium.

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separated, all enjoy equal rights within the group. Today the *Umuada* is a power socio-political setup in Igbo culture and acts as a functional forum for women. The *Umuada* also take titles within the patrilineal community. Two of such are Nri and Aguleri towns in which women take social titles. One of such titles is the Iyom title, which costs a substantial amount of money and an office to which only the rich can aspire. The title is a mark of industry and wealth and encourages hard work and resourcefulness in the women folk. The group of women known as *Amu Na Uno* contributes to the maintenance of law and order by keeping surveillance in the town against thieves. These women belong to a thirty-strong association known as *Ili Madu Nato*. The group is made up of members who have been chosen and delegated by clans within villages. They also settle domestic disputes involving, for instance, cases of the destruction of crops by domestic animals. In this case, the animal may be seized until the stipulated fine for the offence has been paid. In traditional society

According to Njaka, “the *Umuada* intrude in the affairs of state and can impose sanctions which may include heavy fines, and other measures. Certainly, the elders will go to great lengths to avoid confrontations with the *Umuada* and in this way the women indirectly exert a strong influence on affairs of state”. However, even at Nri and Aguleri, where women play important roles in the community, the condition for title taking and a role in the running of the community is that the subject *Umuada* should be both of Nri origin and also married within the community. Women married from outside the community, exogamously, (*Ndiomu*) also enjoy powers which outweigh that of the *Umuada* who are married outside the community in Aguleri. This will suggest that the Nri people operate the general system of giving up the patrilineal claim to the *Umuada* upon the incidence of marriage and this represents a significant divergence from the practice of the Ogbaru towns, here being examined.

Ogodi dance is an enactment of the return of the spirit of the deceased *nwada* (singular) to her kinsmen. This belief is dramatized in a ceremony which is divided into sections, each symbolizing the stages in the spirits journey, beginning from her return to her kinsmen, and from thence to the land of the community’s dead. Ritual drama is heavily coded in African theatre, and the plots of sacred ceremonies are shrouded in symbolism. *Ogodi* dance thus depends on costume, ritual props, music, songs and dance, all bearing symbolic messages, with dance being the dominant medium.
Objective

The objectives of this study are:

- To demonstrate the importance of gesturised language, especially dance as a source of data on the role of the woman in Igbo society, using Ogodi dance as a model.
- To fill the undocumented gap of information on the African woman through research of non-verbal symbolisms in ritual theatre.

Methodology

The dance performance is divided into segments, each unit of which signifies in gestural symbolism, the plot of the ceremony. The analysis will employ the technique of the description of kinesics, especially dance; transcription and translation of songs; followed by content analysis of the units.

This work adopts the theory of Symbolic Interactionism which postulates the interdependence of symbolic multimedia in the projection of meaning or content in a given ritual performance. Thus the study employs a parallel analysis of the verbal and non-verbal modes; specifically songs on the one hand; and dance on the other, in the direction of the dramatic plot.

Synthesis of Dance and Song in Ogodi Performance

The performance begins with the march of the mourners from the deceased’s consanguine family or community. This section is omitted because it is not part of the dramatic enactment. Our analysis, therefore begins with the announcement dance, this being the opening segment of the funeral performance. Each unit is characterized by distinct songs and dances, designed to project the stage in the transitional process.
Section One (1)

The Announcement Dance

This is the first dance performed by the relatives of the deceased. The membership is made up of males within the teenage spectrum to adults below the ages of the deceased. Non-members of the community cannot participate in the dance.

The Setting: The setting is the open road beginning from the deceased’s home and encompassing the nearby environs.

Dance Description: Stamping run-dance with short rhythmic trot along the road. Music is provided by the drummers, (fig.1). There is also body percussion in the form of foot stamping and handclapping.

Song text 1: Transcription

The solo: Unu Anugo? Anyi anuho o! N’adanyi nwulanwu o? Nanyi anuho o!

The chorus: (Repeats the solo’s lyrics)

Translation:

Solo: Have you (plural) heard? We have not heard! That our ada died? We have not heard!

Song text 2: Ewo! Agana po!

Solo: Ewo!

Chorus: Agana po

Solo: Ewo!

Chorus: Agana po
Solo: Ewo!
Chorus: Agana po

Fig. 1 A picture of the special funeral drums used for the announcement dance Note the relatively small size of the drums which makes them light and easy to carry whilst dancing on the move.

Solo: Uzo teka ntite, ete gbue naka po!
Chorus: Agana po
Solo: Ewo!
Chorus: Agana po
Solo: Ewo
Chorus: Agana po
Solo: Ewo!
Chorus: Agana po
Solo: Uzo teka ntite ete gbuem naka o!
Chorus: Agana po o- o- o!

Translation
Solo: Am exhausted
Chorus: Agana po (meaning not clear but suggests a far destination)
Solo: At this point the dancers fall back with backward foot movements

(Uzo teka ntite etegbue naka o!)
This long road is exhausting me to death
(This is more or less repeated several times)

Dance Description: Same as the one in song one.

Analysis of Section (1)

Announcement Dance

Song and Dance (a)

The lyrics of song text 1 immediately indicate the mood of sorrow and mourning of the subjects. The words ‘have u heard that our ada (daughter/sister) is dead?’ is at once information dissemination and at the same time, an invitation to share in the grief over the death of a loved one. The tone which cannot be transcribed here also strongly projects the mood of grief.
The **dance** is a rhythmic, shuffling movement which suggests tiredness and a weighing down of the subjects’ spirits.

**Song and Dance (b)**

The lyrics, ‘am exhausted with running’, and ‘this long road is exhausting me to death’ in this second song, further emphasize the message of sorrow in the previous analysis. The dance gestures which accompany the previous song are replicated here. In this section of the performance, the community is welcoming the deceased home to the kindred. This song leads to the next section.

**Section Two (2)**

**The Women’s Dance**

The women’s dance consists of the dance of the *ndiomu* (wives of the community) on the one hand; and the dance of the *ada* (eldest daughter of deceased) and other *umuada* on the other hand.

**Ndiomu Dance**

**Dance Description:** The knees are bent in a half squat. Simultaneously, the middle and upper torso is moved in a rhythmic forward and backward flexing gesture. The arms are flung up and down within the same time in motion,(fig.2)

**Setting:** The village square or the open ground in front of deceased’s home (where such a space is available).

**Formation:** The formation is semicircular. The sitting women audience forms the outer diameter of the semi-circle, while the standing and clapping ones form the arch of the semicircle. The semi circular arrangement of the dance arena symbolises the deceased life cycle which is split in two: one half in her marital home and the other as a daughter of her community of origin.
Fig. 2. The Ndiomu dance.

Song Text (1)

Transcription:
Aziza abu Ife

Aziza abu ife

Ututu wa ‘palaya o

M’aziza abu ife o!

Translation:

The broom is an insignificant thing
But in the morning, it gets pride of place
They say the broom is insignificant thing
But in the morning, they search for it
Yet the broom is an insignificant thing.

Analysis of Section (2)

Ndiomu dance

As fellow married women, the Ndiomu owe a duty to the deceased to give a befitting farewell to their sister-in-marriage so that the same may be done for them. It is an act of solidarity that demonstrates the cooperation within the caucus of women married from outside the community.

Song Lyrics: The lines, ‘the broom is an insignificant thing, and yet it takes pride of place in the morning’ is a reference to the place of the woman in a patrilineal society. The broom lies dormant and unnoticed all day until day break, when it is used to clean the entire homestead and the environment. It is a symbol of the woman, plays the important role of caring for both the consanguine home and the paternal one, but is hardly acknowledged until her death.

The Ada Dance
The performance of the ada is the nucleic segment of the ceremony. The props of the dance are items of domestic chores used by the deceased during her lifetime. These include the broom, the paddle, an earthenware sauce pan, an enamel basin used for fetching water from the river, etc. These items are tagged with strips of cloth torn out of the deceased’s clothing. The use of these strips symbolizes the presence of the deceased on the dance arena. The ada performs the dance to honour the spirit of her mother and is subsequently possessed by that spirit as the dance progresses. She is surrounded by the Umuada and Ndiomu who clap in rhythm to her dance. During the dance, she picks up the broom and mimes a sweeping motion to the rhythm of the clapping. She does the same with the paddle, and the cooking spoon and pot. The women periodically enter the arena to complement the ada’s dance and thus, give her a rest. They also perform the motions of dancing with the props. Having completed the miming dance using the items in the bowl, the ewu-nzu uzo (ceremonial nanny goat) is presented by the deceased husband or his relatives (where the husband is also deceased). Some grass is given to the goat. As it stretches out the neck towards the meal, the cutlass descends and decapitates it at one stroke. This signals the release of the deceased spirit. The eldest daughter seems suddenly possessed by her mother’s spirit as she bolts forward in a run dance towards the maternal family compound. This signals the end of the Ada’s dance and the commencement of the third segment of the Homebound dance performance.

**Setting:** The village square or any open field, wide enough to accommodate spectators and performers.

**Dance Description:** The knees are bent in a half squat. Simultaneously, the middle and upper torso is moved in a rhythmic forward and backward flexing gesture. The arms are flung up and down within the same time in motion, (fig.3)
Fig. 3. The eldest daughter (ada) performing the central dance of the funeral dance.

**Song text (1)**

*Ugolo ‘mulu Nneyi*

*Osoyi bulu onye obodo ozo*

*Ugolo mulu nneyi lye-ye, iyewo!*

*Ada hulu egwu o!*

*Osoyi bulu onye obodo ozo*

*Ugolo mulu nneyi o!*

*Ada we dalì uku ani!*
Translation

Whatever land you belong to, Ugolo is your mother’s origin

Whoever your people may be, Ugolo is your mother’s origin

Daughter, scoop the dance!

Whoever your people may be

Ugolo is your source.

Daughter, lower your waist.

Analysis of section (2)

Part (b)

The Dance: There are condensed levels of kinetic and verbal symbolisms in the eldest daughter’s dance. The wearing of a piece of her deceased mother’s wrapper immediately signals the presence of the deceased in the dance arena. Her mother’s identity is automatically superimposed on her personality. This means that she is mounted by the spirit of her mother. By dancing with the domestic items, the ‘deceased’ is celebrating her chores as a wife and mother and the attendant responsibilities.

The Song Lyrics: The lines, ‘wherever you may belong, your mother comes from Ugolo’ is a reference to the maternal antecedence of the ‘ada’. She is being made aware of the importance of her maternal ties to the community of mourners. In this way, the inter-action with her mother’s people would be ensured, regardless of the demise of the deceased and the subsequent absence from the children’s life. This concept of maternal identity is known as Nwadiani (maternal kin). The nwadiani enjoys all the rights of the paternally related members of the community except that of inheritance. This song demonstrates the special place of the Umuada among the Ogbaru people.
Fig. 4. A nwada complements the dance of the eldest daughter, thus giving her an opportunity to take the needed rest.
Section Three

Part 1

The Homebound Dance

This dance sequence begins when the ada picks up the bowl containing the dance props and the head of the slaughtered goat. She bolts forward running off at a brisk pace led by the coffin bearers and accompanied by the town’s people. Bearing the pan on her head, she makes a brief stop at the residence of her mother’s relatives. At each stop, the relatives present themselves at the threshold of the house and sing praises of the deceased, bid her farewell and reminds her to protect her loved ones. Some send their greetings to the departed relatives through her. She finally arrives at the home of the mother where she places the pan on the ground in front of the building. She then picks up the soup bowl containing the Ogbono soup and flings the contents unto the rooftop. The coffin bearers quickly present the coffin below the roof and collect the dripping remnant by soup on top of the coffin lid. The crowd cheers jubilantly and this brings the homebound dance to an end.

Setting: The distance between the performance arena and the thresh old of the deceased’s paternal home. The distance is designed to allow enough running to generate heat an excitement of other sections of the community.

Dance Description: The dance is a running movement, performed by the ada. The spectators sing and clap to the rhythm of the ada’s movement as they pursue her along the community road. Her movements are uncoordinated as she runs and makes sudden stops, indicative of spiritual possession.

Song text:

Chorus: Ewo ada o!

Chorus: Iye-iye-iye wo, iyeh! (repeated severally)

Translation: O, Sister! O dear, o dear!
Analysis:

This dance is symbolic of the deceased severance from the community of the living. The dance to the threshold of the deceased’s family house is symbolic of its readiness to join the ancestral community as this dance represents the first stage on that journey. It also signals her contentment with the rites performed for her spirit. In addition, it provides psychological relief for the community of mourners who are now assured of the goodwill of the departed spirit.

Section Three

Part Two (2)

Oge-Ato: This section of the ceremony is reserved for women who have attained extreme old age, from about eighty years upwards.

The pall bearers enter the parlor where a mat or bed has been prepared for the final segment of the celebration and places place the casket on the bed. The body is subsequently taken out for internment. Scarves and small clothing items belonging to the dead are placed at random all over the bed as symbols of the presence of the deceased. This signals the commencement of the final segment, that is, Oge-Ato (three seasons). This section is the last stage of the performance. It features the praise-singing of the deceased and the symbolic ceremony known as itu-Ini. The in-laws to the deceased’s family and members of the community, who had benefited from the goodness of the deceased, donate specified cloth lengths to the mourners. These are placed on the bed. Well wishers begin to sing praises of the deceased, recounting her family lineage, her virtues and the favors she had rendered to them during her lifetime.

Setting: The reception area of the deceased family home.

Dance Description: The ‘dance’ is individually improvised swaying movements that provide a rhythm and stylistic effects for the praise singing of each person.
Song text:

The praise-singers narrate good deeds of deceased, sung in individually improvised styles. Sometimes, these are loud shouts of the praise names of the deceased.

Analysis of Section Three (3)

The Oge-Ato (three Seasons) is the period following the internment of the deceased. Culturally, this is the time span in which the spirit of the dead is expected to ascend the ancestral realm. However, women do not feature in the rank of ancestors in Igbo culture. It is therefore, not clear why this section is included in this funeral ceremony, which is performed exclusively for women. The three seasons is made up of nine days, each season comprising three days. According to an informant, the first three days symbolize the detachment from the world of the living; the next three, the period spent on the journey between the chasm separating the world of the living from that of the ancestors; and the last three symbolize the arrival at the ancestral realm and acquisition of the ancestral identity.

CONCLUSION

As a medium of plot direction, songs and dances make up the core structure of Ogodin’omulunwa dance drama. Consequently, while the performance is punctuated with rests in between various sections, the songs and dances in these sections follow a pattern which cohere with the message of the ceremony and eventually constitute what may be perceived as a plot. An analysis of the non-verbal symbols projected in the gestural, musical, costume and spatial codes reveal the hidden dimensions of meaning in this ritual drama.

More importantly, as a funeral designed exclusively for the woman, it provides an invaluable access to information on the role of the female gender in indigenous Igbo society.
References


