

**DANCE AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY : ABUJA  
CARNIVAL IN RETROSPECT**

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**MAY, 2014.**

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CARNIVAL IN RETROSPECT**

**BY**

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**DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY.**

**MAY, 2014**

## **CERTIFICATION**

**I certify that this work was carried out by ODUNZE Josephine Awele in the Department of Theatre Arts, under my supervision.**

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**Prof. Austin.E Anigala**  
**(Supervisor/H.O.D)**

## **DECLARATION**

**I hereby declare that this thesis is the original work of ODUNZE , Josephine Awele, (Mat No. PG/09/10/177668), carried out in the Department of Theatre Arts, Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka.**

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**J.A ODUNZE**

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

**To you whom i want to come through your womb again and the other whom i will be grateful if i come again as your sister.**

**MRS BENEDETTE NKOYEM ODUNZE AND ALLEN .N. ODUNZE,**

**You asked me to go for this, now u are no more to welcome me back.  
You will always live in my heart.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This work presents the relevance of dance beyond its banal acceptance as a mere tool for entertainment but indeed as an agent in the global environment where Diplomacy defines the acceptability and sometimes fortunes of nations. Carnivals are considerably important items in the diplomatic lexicon and can better be appreciated through the Dances of a nation, packaged within the contextuality of a national fiesta, designed specifically to reflect the diverse and divergent genealogical, geographic and traditional essence of the people which comprise the country and presented to a global audience as a definitive statement on the collective existentialism of the country to the world. The Abuja national Carnival in Nigeria, represents that nationalistic intent to further explore the frontiers of cultural diplomacy and this work thus critically examines the dance performances in the Abuja national carnival to role which dance has played as an instrument of Cultural Diplomacy, in projecting the image of Nigeria to the outside world. This work defines and updates the concept of Cultural Diplomacy and explores the possible roles Abuja National Carnival has played, in promoting the cultural diplomacy objectives of the country and this will inspire renewed efforts and greater commitment amongst the concerned institutions saddled with the implementation of Cultural Diplomacy in Nigeria. The work employed historical, sociological (personal observation) and literary methodologies, reviewed relevant literatures and videos and had an exclusive Interview with the Director-General of the Abuja National Carnival. Cultural diplomacy is seen as one of the greatest tools of achieving national objectives and if well practiced, cultural diplomacy can go a long way to change the wrong perception of Nigeria to the outside world and also that dance in its entirety shows the actual life of a community, and thus projects Nigeria's rich cultural heritage to the world.

## Chapter One

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background to the Study

Dance as an art form generally refers to movement of the body, usually rhythmic and to music, used as a form of expression, social interaction or presented in a spiritual or performance setting. Definitions of what constitutes dance are dependent on social, cultural, aesthetic, artistic and moral constraints, and range from functional movement (such as folk dance) to virtuoso techniques such as ballet. Dance can be participatory, social or performed for an audience. It can also be competitive, erotic or ceremonial and it is on this ceremonial aspect that this research is located.

Every dance, no matter what style, has something in common with. It does not only involve flexibility and body movement, but also physics. If the proper kinesics is not taken into consideration, injuries may occur and this is where choreography comes in. Choreography is the art of creating dances and the person, who creates (that is, choreographs) a dance, is known as the choreographer. Choreography is the art of designing sequences of movements in which motion, form, or both, are specified. It may also refer to the design itself, which is sometimes expressed by means of dance notation. The word, choreography, literally means, “dance-writing,” from the Greek words choreo- “circular dance” and graphy- “writing.”

In dance, choreography is also known as, dance composition. Dance compositions are created by applying fundamental choreographic techniques and there is nowhere that this stylized and highly masterful artistry is better expressed than in carnival.

Today, both the Dance and the Choreographies, which accompany it, have achieved an even greater and more global significance, especially, in the desire for nations to promote and present the lores and essences of their existential communality and heritage in a tapestry that is both attractive and instructive to the rest of the world. This is prominently manifest in the monumental efforts, which countries put in, either as hosts of international events or, indeed, as participants in global cultural engagements. In other words, dance and its choreographies have transcended the original realms of festive and ritual or ceremonial performances, to become a key component and tool in the desire of nations to expand the frontiers of cultural diplomacy in global relationships and interactions.

Nigeria's cultural diversity is phenomenal. An exploration of this diversity will certainly entail a rigorous journey into hundreds of cultures with individual uniqueness and peculiarities. Being an ethnically diverse entity and the largest Black nation on earth, with over 250 ethnic groups, the need for a unification of cultures in Nigeria through a yearly event, such as the Abuja Carnival, has become quite imperative. Without doubt, the Abuja Carnival is gradually assuming the status of Africa's most prestigious, colourful and prominent cultural extravaganza, on the continent's cultural calendar. Events, ranging from Boat Regatta, Durbar, Masquerade Displays, Music Concerts, Exhibitions, and Fairs, have been specially packaged to situate the Carnival in the light of other international Carnivals.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Since literatures on the Abuja Carnival and Cultural Diplomacy are few and scanty, much of this essay is drawn from oral accounts, interviews and personal experiences or participatory observation. Again, Abuja National Carnival has attracted some criticism and has even been

boycotted by some states on several grounds, including the position that it promotes sexual immorality and the argument that the huge financial resources approved for the execution of the carnival have been poorly managed. All these have sent wrong signals about Nigeria to the outside world. This has given rise to the need to embark on damage control and corrective agenda through a thorough examination and x-ray of some prominent and world recognized but Nigerian indigenous dance performances in the Abuja carnival. And since Carnivals show the total aspect of a particular entity, both personal and borrowed aspects, dance itself shows the unadulterated aspect of that same culture, making it very apt for an ambassadorial role. And the Abuja Carnival is therefore apt to be continuously used as a medium to facilitate our national unity and to fulfill its objective of facilitating interactions, fostering prosperity and sustainable development within and outside the country.

### **1.3. Rationale for the Study**

The Abuja National Carnival, like every other carnival, aims at presenting, promoting and preserving the cultures of the local government areas, states or country it is representing and establish a code of behaviour compatible with our tradition of humanism and a disciplined moral society. Therefore, whatever element the Carnival churns out to the outside world, in the process of laundering its image, must be able to affect the desired audience positively. Researches on Abuja Carnival and Cultural Diplomacy have been few and, therefore, have very little scholarly documentation. With the problem of funding and sponsorship plaguing the celebration, the researcher has observed that other areas like tourism enhancement and emphasis on positive national image are other strong researchable areas. Hence, this study contributes in this regards.

#### **1.4. Objectives of the Study**

Culture has the ability to reach substantial number of people since they can easily identify with a known aspect of it, it therefore makes it an ideal medium for public diplomacy. The objective of this study is to define and update the concept of Cultural Diplomacy. It explores the possible roles Abuja National Carnival could play, in promoting the cultural diplomacy objective of the country, domestically and internationally, through developing mutual understanding, combating ethno centrism, preventing conflict, and maintaining bilateral relationships in times of tension.

#### **1.5. Delimitation of the Study**

The study concentrates on the Abuja National Carnival and the concept of Cultural Diplomacy by examining how the Carnival can sell the image of Nigeria in diplomatic circles. This is achieved through the cultural presentations of six notable ethno-cultural performances, which have been accommodated and adopted into the national repertoire, as instruments for the promotion of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy, namely, the Ekombi and Abang Dances from Cross River State (South Eastern Nigeria), the Swange Dance from Benue State, (the Middle Belt area of Nigeria), the Bata Dance (the Western axis of Nigeria), the Koroso Dance, (the Northern region of Nigeria) and the Atilogu Dance from Anambra State (the Eastern region of Nigeria). These performances have been selected as representative of the major cultural performances, synonymous with the major geo-ethnic groups in Nigeria and have also achieved national and international recognition and acclaim, over time, as symbolic cultural reference points of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and it is only in Abuja Carnival that all these cultures are witnessed and expressed exhaustively unlike the other state carnivals that promotes only the cultural ideals of their states.

### **1.6. Methodology for the Study**

The historical, sociological and literary methodologies are employed for this research. Since sociological method involves a thorough observation of the case study, it fits perfectly into this research. The work also reviews relevant literature and videos associated with the Abuja Carnival, from inception till date and the key dance performances from the major ethnic nationalities of Nigeria, which are analysed in the study. Also, the work involves extensive research and study findings on the history and development of Cultural Diplomacy, since its recognition as a key component of International Diplomacy and Foreign Policy Initiative. The work also features an exclusive Interview with the Director-General of the Abuja National Carnival, Professor Bakare Ojo-Rasaki.

### **1.7. Limitations of the Study**

The major challenge, which the work encountered, is in the area of inadequate and extensive literature on the subject. The Concept of Dance in Abuja Carnival as Tool for Cultural Diplomacy is a relatively new area of academic engagement. Consequently there is limited textual documentation of the existing studies and literature on the subject.

### **1.8. Significance of the Study**

This work examines the Abuja Carnival performances, the role it has played and the role it has failed to play in diplomatic circles, investigates the perceived flaws and explores possible ways of addressing them. This is done by gathering materials on the performances at the Carnival in an academic format and presenting such researches, which would eventually be accommodated in the growing body of existing literature on the subject. This work equally provides new and

definitive insights on the Abuja National Carnival to serve as reference materials for future studies on carnivals and cultural diplomacy. Local students, international students and dance scholars researching on the way of life of the people of Nigeria, will find this piece very useful individually and collectively,

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This work is located in theories of diplomacy. Whilst the term, “cultural diplomacy,” has only recently been established, evidence of its practice can be seen throughout history; it has existed as a practice for centuries. For instance, explorers, travellers, teachers and artists can be all considered as examples of informal ambassadors or early cultural diplomats. The establishment of regular trade routes in the colonial days enabled frequent exchange of information and cultural gifts between traders and government representatives.

Two broad approaches to conduct and assess international relations can be distinguished, these are hard power and soft power. The political scientist, Joseph S. Nye, has made the distinction between the two, describing soft power as, “the ability to persuade through culture, values and ideas, as opposed to hard power, which conquers or coerces through military might” (*The International Herald Tribune*, 10 Jan. 2003.)

While hard power approach has historically been a favoured policy of governments in conducting international and regional relations, the increasingly interconnected world stage highlights the need for co-operation on a new level. This is where soft power, as a form of cultural diplomacy, becomes significant; and it is on this theory of soft power that this research is based, since it has the ability to persuade through culture, values and ideas. On this basis, cultural diplomacy is not secondary to political diplomacy, but rather functions as an intrinsic aspect of it. Cultural diplomacy can therefore be seen as a vital foundation of all political activity.

### **2.1.1 Concept of Dance**

Dance, according to Bakare (1994:2), is “the rhythmic movement of the human body in time and space to make a statement” Dance thrives on living experiences. Thus, it paves ways for its transmission from generation to generation which reflects the changes in social conditions. Dance therefore is regarded as a major art and an essential element in the celebration of events connected with every aspect of human life, and it plays a prominent role in entertainment ( Ojuade, 2004 :16).

Historically, and according to Ojuade .J in his article (Yerima, Bakare and Udoka 2005:57)

Dance is one of the first human activities which did not directly serve the mere survival of man. The experience of dance came as man’s effort of expressing individual and collective feelings. Such existence of dance in the early periods of man may be witnessed only by pictorial representations, carved images of primitive people on the walls of the caves. The pictures were created in phases, showing the developmental stages of man within his developmental environment. The developmental processes of human societies have shown that their survival is predicated on a functional association in which men became a part of the broad communities and their activities were regulated by their social needs.

Dance and movement are done for a particular need. Man does not just move for the sake of moving, the motivation comes from an identifiable source. This source could be external or just an internal need. Rudolf Laban (1971:38) states that “ man moves in order to satisfy a need. He aims at something of value by his movement. It is easy to perceive the aim of a person’s movement if it is directed at some tangible object. Yet there also exists some intangible value that inspires movements”. The important point here is that movement is something of value to man. Thus we have two aims of movement – Intangible and Tangible value of dance. As Laban

puts it, “ movement has always been used for two distinct aims, the attainment of tangible values in all kinds of work and the approach to intangible value in prayer and worship” ( 1975: 104).

Curt Sachs, however takes a narrow view when he defines dance as “ rhythmic motion”(1937:7). What is lacking in his definition is that it does not exclude other rhythmic movements like running, rowing and turning a handle. He later formulated a better definition when he considered dance as all “ rhythmic motion not related to the work motif” (1940:21). Thus, dance is motion that arises from emotions. This view has also been expressed by exponents of expressionism. American philosopher and critic John Martin ( 1983:30 ) states that “ Every emotional state tend to express itself in movement”

Emeka Nwabuoku asserts that ‘the term movement is intended to include all intentional activities undertaken for aesthetic purposes in which the desired expressive efforts are communicated by the movement of human being’s body’. Early man danced to express his feeling about the most important event in his life. He believed that through dance, he could communicate with the spirit world to seek the help of the gods in taking control of the mysteries that surround him.

So many definitions have been adduced to dance. These definitions are based principally on three factors, which are – Dance as an expression of feelings, Dance as imitation and Dance as pure movement of the human body in space and time. In which ever way one looks at the definitions, the key words which use imitation, expression and pure movement connote some idea of an attempt to communicate.

Ossie Enekwe (1991 :2 ) states that dance can be used to “communicate, entertain, inform, educate and mobilize a society towards achieving social cohesion or togetherness”. The purpose is to use dance as a medium of communication as characters were portrayed using human events to entertain the audience.

The art of dance may be considered as artistic expression predicated on movement. This means that such expression involves the rhythmic movements of the body to music especially with a view of expressing an emotion or an idea or to narrate a story. In whatever way it is considered, it has a function or a utility, which cannot be altogether expressed, in words but through the act of dancing itself (Ojuade, 2002:60).

Cultural exchange has been intertwined with the pursuit of foreign relations through out history and it has become more important for us to pay attention to cultural diplomacy. We are moving from a world where the term was primarily concerned with relations between elites – where static and traditional cultural settings provided the opportunity and backdrop for relaxed ambassadorial and political contacts. But has moved to a time where cultural exchange is fast moving and capable of profound effect, both laterally and upwardly to the extent that cultural diplomacy now directly affects and may even direct the more traditional forms of public diplomacy. It is so since everyone has got the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. Dance and other cultural activities, therefore, have proved a better mode to express and concretize such national and international relations and ties.

## **2.2 Dance Forms and Patterns.**

Dance is a very important activity in the lives of both man and animals. As a universal phenomenon, dance has a biological basic: the possibility it gives to man for both physical relaxation and emotional release. This has engaged the attention of scientists who have demonstrated that movement is essential to both human beings and animals for the release of emotional tension caused by both joyful and painful events (Enekwe, 1991: 11). However, in man, dance acquires a new function of expressing abstract ideals. This is because man is superior to animals in his capacity for conceptual thought, his movement conveys sophisticated meanings in a more compact and rapid manner than speech.

Early philosophers who wrote on dance saw it from the point of view of Aristotle who propounded the theory of “art as a form of imitation.” According to Levinson, *Aristotle in Poetics* argued that, “the purpose of dance is to imitate character, emotion and action by rhythmical movement” (1973:32) Other philosophers like Noverre and Maclarira have followed this line of thought. The view of dance as “imitation” took a further step into “expressionism.” This view was canvassed by scholars, who have contributed immensely to the dance discourse in modern times. For instance, John Martin and Susanne Langer are said to be the exponents of this particular school of thought.

Dance contains symbols, which have language value, in the minds of the audience and can thus be deciphered. Supporting this fact, Chris Ugolo (1998: 37) asserts that since the human factor is very crucial to dance the moment you place it, that is, the dancer in space on a stage, meanings

will begin to emerge, meanings about the sex, socio-cultural background and psychological state of the dancer, will begin to filter into the minds of the member of the audience.

Demas Nwoko (1981: 468) further reiterates this fact when he said that dance is an aesthetic language with which the people speak. Dance, as a non-verbal language, can thus communicate a variety of information and emotions through a mirror or by reflecting socio-political structure. It has to be noted, however, that this object is not intrinsic in dance content, as it is only subjected to the meanings that are associated with it in different societies. Its power to achieve the expected communicative intents is embedded in its sensory motor and aesthetic capability to create mood and a sense of situation for performers and spectators alike.

In Africa, dance does not just happen, it must exist within a given context, that is to say, there must be an occasion for dance to exist. Dances in Africa, therefore, mainly express the beliefs of a community as a whole. Peggy Harper (1967: 219), a dance critic and instructor, states the convincing fact thus:

Ethnic dance expresses the belief, attitudes and habits of the people living within a homogenous community. In addition, familiar to both performers and audience. And spectators sometimes participate formally or spontaneously (1967: 219)

According to her, for such dance to achieve its intents, appropriate movements (gesture symbols) are carefully selected and arranged along with music, that best expresses the mood for the occasion. In this way, all present both participant and observers can identify with the spirit of the occasion. Dance, so far, is a medium through which man communes and co-exists with life. It is known that dance achieved a high recognition in Egypt. The Egyptians believed in life, based on

the universe and spiritual redress. Consequently, their dances were patterned after their gods and ancestors (Harper 1967:22).

A collage of dances owe their origins to, and were created, performed and handed down without any written records by cultures of the nation state that now constitute what is geographically and politically known as Nigeria. The milieu from which they are derived clearly indicate that ideological differences and, perhaps, similarities exist. Thus, dance can be easily identified as the aesthetic correlate of the verbal counterpart of human and indigenous mode of communication within these cultures. They have, in the circumstance of our socio-political development, transformed into symbols of ethnic identification within the polity so much that we can easily identify and associate Ekpo dance with the Annang, Bata dance with the Yoruba, Maliki dance with the Kanuri, Ekombi dance with the Efik, as a few examples (*The Mask* vol. 5).

Art and dance are reflections and representations of the complexities of humanity, which is designed to captivate us, visually and audibly, invoking a deep emotional connection that transcends through time and boundaries, proving their importance as the essential tools of cultural diplomacy. There are other prominent diplomatic tools amongst which trade is very prominent.

**Trade:** Promotion of trade and investments has been one of the basic tools of economic diplomacy, yet it should be used in a creative way to contribute global security. In Friedman's "flat world", trade and the interdependence it creates have become very effective in conflict prevention. For example, "new generation trade agreements" have proved to be very influential

with their clauses on labor standards, environmental protection, human rights etc. And, a number of studies show the positive impact of regional trade integrations to the security in those regions.(Thomas Friedman, 2008:15).

### **2:3 Dance as Entertainment**

Dance in culture, is a living experience which every member of a cultural group regards as a birthright. According to Peggy Harper (1967:219),

What Sociologists refer to as ethnic dance expresses a way of life: the beliefs attitude and habits of people living within a homogeneous community..... In this context, the dance is as familiar to the audience as it is to the performers; in some instance, the spectators participate formally or spontaneously in the performance, and in all cases, they are there to ensure that the dance is performed as traditionally required.

The symbolisms of dance must not only aim at evoking emotions, but must be culturally relevant to be understood. Dance movements and expressions tell specific stories. If these stories are based on the life and beliefs of the community from which the dance emanates, members of the community will be watching to see how effectively the dance has interpreted their feelings and expectation. The consideration may not be on the finer aspect of dance, but on the effectiveness of the mode of interpretation.

The criteria for evaluating and analysing creative dance is different from culture to culture. It is therefore important that a dance must be seen and assessed within the cultural context. (Lo-Bamijoko, 2007:176).

### **2:4 Dance as Communication**

Communication is the transfer of information, feelings or messages from a source to a receiver (Peretomode :226). According to Jane Olomu, “Communication therefore provides the necessary medium between members of a society since they receive close and continuous interaction with

one another through communication to get things done and people understood.” (Ugolo, 2007: 33).

Effective communication occurs when the sender and receiver are involved. In all societies, dance is an expression of social organization in that it differentiates and defines the roles of individuals, the sexes and groups within the society, social units, such as age groups, express their identity and cohesions of social significance and celebration. Dance expresses the economic and social life of a community. These dance are used to celebrate seasonal festivals related to the occupational cycle of that community. Communication has always been important to African communities because it enhances progress and group cohesion.

### **2.5.Dance as Political Communication.**

Dance today have been an important tools in the electoral process in Nigeria. Dance cannot be performed without some form of accompanying music or rhythmic beats. Enekwe states that ‘the ineluctable power of music’<sup>14</sup> engenders a natural response of the human soul and body which is dance. Rhythm is, therefore, the heartbeat of music and dance, while music is the universal language of the soul.

Consequently, since the attainment of independence in 1960, creative artistes have continually made their own contribution to the electoral process in varying ways. The electoral procedures consist of primaries, conventions, campaigns, elections and inauguration. Dance and music have played leading roles in Nigeria in all the facets of electoral process. For instance, music and dance through media coverage/ support have been used to:

- (i) Educate voters on voting procedures
- (ii) Warn against election malpractices
- (iii) Support the manifestoes of parties or individuals
- (iv) Enlighten the people on the conduct of elections

The political aspirants and their supporters have made use of music and dance to achieve tremendous support and various aims during campaigns. For instance, the dexterity of speeches that led into songs occasionally and transformed into complete music fused with dancing as witnessed and relayed on the television as campaign gimmicks,

## **2.6 Cultural Diplomacy: Concept and Implementation**

Culture is a major determinant of how people perceive each other and negotiate their differences. Opportunities for global contact and exchange are proliferating, as never before; and because of those contacts, culture itself is changing. No longer can we think of relatively static cultures presenting themselves to each other for understanding and appraisal. Instead, cultures are meeting, mingling and morphing. Furthermore, culture and heritage are primary drivers of international tourism (Bound, Rachel, Holden, Jones 2007:19).

Diplomacy refers to practices and institutions by which nations conduct their relations with one another. Originally, the English term diplomatics refers to the care and evaluation of official papers or archives, many of which were treaties. In the 18th century diplomatic documents increasingly meant those pertaining to international relations, and the term diplomatic corps was used to signify the body of ambassadors, envoys and officials attached to foreign missions. In 1796 the British philosopher Edmund Burke castigated the French for their “double diplomacy” during the Napoleonic Wars, since then the term diplomacy has been associated with international politics and foreign policy.(Iorngurum and Tsevende 2013:56).

Cultural diplomacy is the art of winning the hearts and minds of other people by attracting them through cultural activities and exchange. According to ( Hagher. 1981: D), cultural diplomacy is

the principal tool with which the world can instill and embrace the culture of peace and diminish the culture of war.

An American scholar, Milton Cummings, defines “cultural diplomacy” as the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture, among nations and their peoples, in order to foster mutual understanding, which can also be more of a one-way street than a two-way exchange, as when one nation concentrates its efforts on promoting the national language, explaining its policies and point of view, or “telling its story” to the rest of the world (Melissen, 2003:14).

Cultural diplomacy is generally regarded as one of the components of public diplomacy. When better understood, however, it has the potential to become a much more powerful tool for improving a country’s image and its relations with other countries. It also contributes to domestic nation-building.

Just as image has become an important aspect of public diplomacy, it has also gained importance in cultural diplomacy. In recent years, there has been greater emphases on using cultural diplomacy to present a national image of the state, not simply showing aspects of a state’s cultural face to the world or, unfurling a nation’s cultural achievements, but a more managed, considered and strategic presentation of national image .The new emphasis on national image within cultural diplomacy not only focuses on a state’s cultural distinctiveness and vitality, but often also on its economic and technological achievements. Invariably, states use the presentation of a modern image of themselves to help advance their economic interests and to make themselves more attractive to foreign publics.

Cultural diplomacy's increased emphasis on national image, particularly, showing a country's modern economic face, reflects the impact of globalisation on the manner in which countries are engaged internationally. Countries must compete – or at least feel as though they must – for foreign investment and for attracting skilled migrants, high-worth individuals, tourists, students and others. Countries have come to believe that their chances of competing successfully are enhanced by showing their national image to those investing, or moving, or studying, and this presentation abroad of a national image is now frequently managed by governments within a framework of a nation brand (Melissen, Sharp 2008:23).

Despite increased attention on using nation branding to raise a country's profile and present its reputation internationally, the relationship between cultural diplomacy and branding remains weak. In the opinion of Melissen, et al, This is partly because nation branding is a very new concept, and lacks cultural diplomacy's antecedence. In addition to the deliberate pursuit of domestic objectives, cultural diplomacy, sometimes, has an unplanned and hence unexpected impact. This is what has been referred to as, the *feel good* effect (2008:31). Here the domestic impact of positive international recognition for a state's culture and its cultural success can contribute to a state's sense of itself, its sense of being a distinctive national community.

According to Melissen et al ( 2007:11), Cultural diplomacy argues that:

Today more than ever before, culture has a vital role to play in international relations. This stems from the wider , connective and human values that culture has: culture is both the means by which we come to understand others, and an aspect of life with innate word – that we enjoy and seek out. Cultural exchange gives us the chance to appreciate points of commonality and, where there are differences, to understand the motivations and humanity that underlie them. As identity politics exert an increasing influence on domestic and international exchanges,, these attributes make culture critical forum for negotiation and a

medium of exchange in finding shared solutions. Cultural contact provides a forum for unofficial political relationship-building: it keeps open negotiating channels with countries where political connections are in jeopardy, and helps to recalibrate relationships for changing times with emerging powers such as India and China. In the future, alliances are just as likely to be forged along lines of cultural understanding as they are on economic or geographic ones. (Obafemi, Ayakoroma. 2011:106).

## **2.7. Cultural Diplomacy: A Worldwide Score**

Cultural diplomacy is the art of winning hearts and minds of others by attracting them through cultural activities and exchanges that include (arts, beliefs, ways of life, and customs). Cultural Diplomacy provides the meeting point between culture and policy. It seeks to propagate a positive image towards a better mutual understanding. Cultural Diplomacy is the preferred alternative to the conventional Diplomacy with emphasis on military might, political leverage, and economic power. This is so because it encourages dialogue and value sharing. It is multi-dimensional, comprising public diplomacy, information management, and relationship building. (Hagher 1981:172).

Cultural diplomacy respects the traditional communication requirement of listeners vs. Speakers. This entails that while the other person is speaking, others should listen. In dance terms, this means while the other party is presenting her performance, the other party watches and thinks about the intricacies. After the presentations, dialogue is opened where comparisons and analysis are made. This brings out possible areas of cooperation between nations. Sometimes this dialogue is held with the aid of an interpreter. This logically leads to cultural exchanges. Cultural

Exchanges thus plays a critical role on the cultural diplomacy of a government. It seeks to develop cultural understanding between citizens of different countries.

Any actor, from a government official to a common citizen, becomes a facilitator of cultural exchange, when he/she comes into contact with a person from a different cultural background. The exchange does not have to be large to be profound, as mutual understanding often requires time to develop. It also does not need to be through a specific medium in a specific place, for cultural exchange can take place via a variety of vehicles including arts, sports, literature as well as formal academic discussions and educational exchange programmes.

Cultural diplomacy can seemingly provide a powerful range of benefits to a government and a country. According to Mitchell, it can raise a state's profile, contribute to nation branding, advance core interests, connect with elite, mass and Diaspora audiences, provide powerful opportunities for racial minorities, religious groups, and linguistic groups to show their culture, and can benefit students and others studying overseas(1986:110).

For cultural diplomacy to reach its full potential, however, a change in how the practice is conceived and implemented is required. Political control over cultural content should be removed, cultural diplomacy's role in nation branding should be expanded, and cultural diplomacy should be regarded as a tool for achieving national domestic objectives, especially those associated with national social cohesion (Melissen, Sharp 2008:33).

Cultural diplomacy of the type practiced by official entities usually reflects official policy and presents an image of a state which meets government policy objectives. Certainly, cultural diplomacy as constructed by an official entity tends to emphasize the positive. Politicians

invariably regard cultural diplomacy to be at its best when showing the positive aspects of a state. They and the population at large, like to see a state's finest cultural achievements, shown abroad – its best orchestras, ballets, and bullfights. Politicians in particular are less likely to view the practice as an opportunity to show the state 'warts and all', and in particular to show cultural manifestations which run counter to, or are critical of, official government policy. As always, it is not completely clear-cut: countries frequently undertake cultural diplomacy activities (with the support of politicians), which provide insights into a country's politics or society which may not necessarily be welcomed or applauded by either audiences or politicians. Many countries, for example, stage film festivals abroad, and it is usual for these government-sponsored festivals to incorporate films dealing with problematic aspects of society.

Given this inherent impetus to show through cultural diplomacy positive aspects of a state and eschew content critical of official government policy, should responsibility for cultural diplomacy be transferred to independent entities in order to allow full and honest cultural expression? For cultural diplomacy to reach its full potential, it would benefit from a better understanding of its place within nation branding. A national brand must involve a plan setting out how a country can position itself in the world, and those policies, innovations and investments the country needs to undertake to earn the image it feels it wants and desires. This is the hard part of nation branding, in which cultural diplomacy brings about domestic national compliance with a country's image abroad: a country becomes what it claims to be, because it wants to ensure that its image is based on facts rather than illusion. It wants to deserve its reputation, and "walk the talk" (Melissen, Sharp 2008:36).

Rather than resist the use of indigenous culture, because such culture may look old-fashioned and lacking in sophistication, the culture of indigenous people should be celebrated and form an important element of a balanced cultural diplomacy programme. Cultural diplomacy can work towards achieving national domestic goals, and the practice should be used more effectively for this purpose. It can contribute to improving the esteem of minority groups and enhance national confidence and national social cohesion.

## **2.8. History of Cultural Diplomacy in Nigeria**

Nigeria has witnessed in recent years, the relegation of its cultural heritage including its noble traditions, values, ideas and concepts, especially by her youths in favour of hastily and ill-ingested foreign cultures. The subservient role to which culture has been relegated in the past in the considered priorities of national plans, has largely undermined the national potential for unification and social stabilization. Within the modern context of international relations, the projection and affirmation of a nation's cultural image beyond its boundaries is a key element of its image abroad and its effectiveness in international relations. Nigeria's negative and distorted image can benefit especially from the use its arts and culture in international relations. Nigeria is one of the largest countries in Africa, in terms of geography and population, being divided into thirty six federal states, with an estimate of about 174,507,539 ([ArticlesNG](#) June 21, 2013). Nigeria is known for its cultural diversity, owing to the fact that it has identified over 250 different ethnic groups. The country gained independence from the British Empire in 1960, and there have been numerous subsequent drives to ensure that the people work to develop their culture, with the support of both civilian and military governments. (Cultural Policy 2012,sec1 subsect2).

The 2012 Cultural Policy of Nigeria is formulated as an instrument for promoting national identity, as well as communication and cooperation, through inspiring, empowering and

propelling the nation to greater heights of achievement. The Cultural Policy of Nigeria is clear and strategically directed towards strengthening understanding, creating a national consciousness, advancing the appreciation of arts and culture and enhancing Nigeria's image and identity worldwide (sect.1subsect.1). The cultural policy encourages the promotion of religious harmony through educational programmes that stimulate tolerance of the nation's diverse religious communities (sect.2). And also create enabling environment for introducing modern technology at the grassroots level and in the rural communities.(sect.2:5) Nigeria's culture (in particular, dance, film and music) plays a crucial role in international relations, now more than ever. Cultural exchange has fostered a greater understanding of this nation state, and has caused global interest in its culture to increase dramatically. Nigeria's cultural diplomacy projects, include, National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST), National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation.(sect 3,sub-sect.6).

National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST), was initiated in the 1970s, and is organised annually by the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation. The event is also called, the Unity Forum, on a local level, and was developed as a post-civil war strategy to promote national unity using a cultural festival. NAFEST is hosted by a different state each year, and spans the course of one week, featuring competitive and non-competitive events. Examples include, musical concerts, dance, traditional wrestling, children's moonlight games, colloquium, dramatic performances, art and crafts exhibition, herbal fair, book fair, food fair, indigenous circus and choral music performances, all carried out under topical themes. To a greater extent, the festival and her organizers have worked tirelessly to achieve the aim of its birth, which we can say

today, that the NAFEST has been successful in the area of preaching peace and creating the atmosphere for peaceful co-existence among the numerous ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

The National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) was established by Decree No. 3 of 1975 and amended by Decree No. 5 of 1987. It is a Federal Governmental organization, charged with the responsibility of national and international coordination, development and promotion of the 'Living Arts and Culture of Nigeria' (sect. 3 sub-sect.3 ).

According to its implementation framework, the cultural policy envisages that states, represented by various tiers of government, will play a pivotal role in the establishment of the necessary legal, empowerment and institutional framework for the preservation and promotion of culture and heritage. Government ministries, departments, parastatals and agencies are expected to play various roles in ensuring an enabling cultural environment, comprising appropriate legislation, policies, regulatory mechanisms, infrastructure and facilities required for viable cultural sector. Another body prominent charged with the responsibility of promoting and propagating the rich culture of Nigeria and Africa in general is The Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC).

#### **The Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC).**

The Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) was established by Decree 69 of 1979 following the successful and epoch-making hosting of the 2nd World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77). The Centre houses all the materials which constitute the core collections, artifacts, and rare cultural items that were used during FESTAC '77. The decision to handover these materials to Nigeria Was to reinforce and build upon the gains of the

historic festival. It was in fact in fulfilment of Nigeria 's pledge to keep the materials in trust for the 59 Black and African countries and communities which participated in the Festival that gave impetus for the establishment of the Centre.

To achieve its set goals, the Centre holds seminars, workshops, public lectures, exhibitions and symposia. The Centre engages in other activities which project the overall image of Black and African Peoples and enable their cultures to be appreciated globally. Through its numerous programmes, the Centre has continued to contribute to the pool of universal knowledge on Black and African Peoples.

Statutorily, the Centre is charged with the responsibility of promoting and propagating Black and African Cultural Heritage in its totality. The strategic mandate of the Centre, and the key role it has been playing in making Nigeria the arrowhead in the presentation, promotion and propagation of African cultural heritage informed the decision (vide government white paper on the report of the Presidential Panel on the Review, Harmonization and Rationalization of Federal Parastatals, Institutions, and Agencies in 2000) to upgrade CBAAC to an African. Heritage Center . (1979 No. 69.).

These organizations are cultural diplomacy projects because they do not only promote and propagate the rich cultures of Africa and Nigeria in particular but they tend to project it to the outside world in a positive light thereby laundering the image of our dear country Nigeria.

And apart from other states organs and civil society organizations, the private sector have their own contributions to make in enhancing cultural development. It is also the responsibility of civil

society organizations to generate new ideas and promote a greater understanding of the needs and aspirations of local communities. They can do this by translating public policies into concrete programmes and projects at the local community level. The responsibility of the private sector therefore include the mobilization of resources needed to support cultural programmes, employment generation and income creation. By promoting entrepreneurial skills, the private sector assists cultural workers, artists, craftsmen and artisans broadening the outlets for cultural goods and services. The artists, culture practitioners and custodians of traditional knowledge , are the key actors and operators of the cultural sector. Consequently, the implementation of this policy shall involve the collaboration and participation of different levels and categories of stakeholders whose partnership is critical to achieving these goals (sect3,subsect 01).

Since Nigeria became autonomous through its independence in 1960 and the promulgation of the Nigerian cultural policy laws in Nigeria, machineries have been put in motion to see to a better propagation, preservation, promotion and presentation of our culture to the outside world to create an enabling environment for investors, trade exchange and economic advancement, creates mutual understanding, develops trust and conversation about how our country and people can live together in the world are striked. Nigeria has the importance of cultural policy in recent times, and has therefore been creating strategic policies to project its image in an increasingly globalized world through arts, music, dance and film. It can be said that culture is playing an increasingly vital role in international relations, and the Nigerian government is investing in the creative industry not only by itself, but also in collaboration with outside partnerships, examples are: the hosting of African Movie Academy Awards (AMAA) which attract artists from across the world, Music and Film festivals, Sports festivals, Calabar and

River state carnivals, Argungu fishing festival etc. All these are done in collaboration with foreign experts who are consultants and managers as the case may be.

It is therefore difficult to convey complex ideas in a second language but with dance it is possible.

## Chapter Three

### 3.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 Historical Background to Carnivals in Nigeria

Carnival is a festival marked by merrymaking and procession, it is also known as a travelling show, having slideshows, rides and games of skill (wordweb@wordweb.info).

Carnivals are annual celebrations of life and different cultural activities in many countries of the world. Hundreds of years ago, the followers of the Catholic religion in Italy started the tradition of holding a World Costume Festival Night, before the first day of Lent. Because Catholics are not supposed to eat meat during the period of Lent, they called their festival, *Carnevale*, meaning, “to put away the meat.” As time passed, Carnivals in Italy became quite famous and the practice spread to France, Spain and all the Catholic countries in Europe. Then as the French, Spanish and Portuguese began to take control of the Americas and other parts of the World, they brought with them their tradition of celebrating. ( Giampaolo di Cocco 2007).

Three major Carnivals are prominently celebrated in Nigeria presently, namely, the Abuja National Carnival, the Calabar Carnival, and the Rivers State Carnival.

***Abuja Carnival:*** The Abuja Carnival was initiated by the former President Olusegun Obasanjo, as a platform to showcase our rich cultural heritage and tourism potentials to the world. It was endorsed in 2004 as an International Carnival by the Presidential Council on Tourism (PCT), made up of the Governors then, with the former President as the Chairman. The first edition was held in October, 2005. (Abuja carnival brochure 2011:7).

The Carnival was specifically designed to be an intra and inter-cultural link, which would serve as a foundation of knowledge and a reference point for the historical and cultural experiences of the Black people worldwide. This is the dream that gave birth and has continued to power the realization of Abuja Carnival, as it is anchored on the recognition that there exists an intrinsic link between culture and the foundation for the economic and technological growth of a nation, if the country is to achieve significant development.

Abuja National Carnival reflects the following ideals:

1. A brand that celebrates Nigeria as a safe, warm, hospitable tourism destination;
2. An authentic Nigerian experience and tourism product of acceptable international patronage; and
3. The continuing demonstration of our unity in diversity as states of the federation display their unique heritage through a carnival platform, thus building bridges and enhancing friendship.

Nigeria has many local festivals that date back to the times before the arrival of the colonialists and which occasions still feature masquerade and dance predominantly. There are several national festivals and cultural shows that reveal and promote the rich traditions and cultural heritage of Nigeria.

### **National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST)**

The National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST), began in 1970 as a post civil-war strategy on the concept of using the cultural festival to promote national unity. NAFEST was initiated as

a way of promoting cultural integration and providing the platform for the development of indigenous technology and creativity in the fields of Arts and Science.

The week-long NAFEST attracts participants from all the 36 states of the federation in the competitive and non-competitive events. The festivities include performances in dance, drama and music. In addition, an intellectual forum, colloquium, is held for scholars and cultural administrators, for academic discourse on issues of cultural development, youth empowerment and nation building. NAFEST also showcases book, food, and herbal medicine fairs; and cultural hosting rights rotate among the states of the nation. The fiesta has grown to be a veritable flagship of the celebration of Nigeria's unity in cultural diversity. In other words, it is a weeklong celebration of our cultural heritage reflected through various state contingents or entries.

**Rivers State Carnival (CARNIRIV):** The annual Rivers State Carnival (CARNIRIV) is aimed at showcasing the rich cultural and colourful heritage of the state. It is the convergence and display of Rivers State's cultural originality from the 23 Local Government Areas amidst fun, colour and grandeur. This River State Carnival already has a history in the State. The first-ever carnival parade took place in 1988 and it was performed along the broad and major Aggrey Road in Portharcourt township.( Cf. Nair, 1972: 183).

The major traditional instruments used were flutes, drums, xylophones, trumpets, and so on. The cultural troupes came from various ethnic groups; they were of different age groups: from the old men and women to the youngest children took part in this event. The Carnival Parade was initiated by the state to embrace the cultural heritage and also to promote tourist attraction.

**Calabar Carnival:**

The Calabar Carnival, also tagged, “Africa’s Biggest Street Party,” was created as part of the vision of making the Cross River State of Nigeria, the number one tourist destination for Nigerians and tourists all over the world. The Carnival started in 2004 when the then Executive Governor of the State, Mr. Donald Duke, had a vision of making his state the hub for tourism and hospitality in Nigeria and, indeed, Africa.

The Carnival begins on the 1st of December and lasts till the 31st of December. It features music performances from both local and international artists, boat regatta, fashion shows, traditional dances, and other such activities lined up by the Carnival Committee. It has hosted top Nigerian musicians, Nollywood star actors, politicians and international artists. Foreign artists like the late Lucky Dube, Akon, Fat Joe, Joe, Young Jeezy, Nelly, Kirk Franklin, and others have thrilled the large crowd of Nigerians and tourists from outside the country at calabar carnival.

**Lagos Carnival:**

Lagos State has a long history of holding Carnivals, particularly on Lagos Island, as a result of historical links with the returnees and their descendants from Brazil, West Indies and Sierra Leone in the late 19th century. Traditionally, these have been in the form of street parades within various locales.

## Plate 1



An Eyo Iga Olowe Salaye masquerade jumping

The Eyo Festival is held in Lagos, Nigeria. It is usually performed in Lagos Island. Eyo also refers to the masquerades that come out during the festival. It is widely believed that Eyo is the forerunner of the modern day carnival in Brazil. No one is to wear hats during the festival

## Osun festival

The Osun Festival is held at the end of the rainy season, usually in August, at the Oshogbo Sacred Forest. The week-long festival is held in honor of the river goddess Oshun, an important Yoruba deity, and is attended by thousands of people. It includes ceremonies where priests seek protection for their local communities through gifts and sacrifices to the goddess.

### 3.2. Abuja National Carnival: The Birthing and Implications

Having celebrated the first edition of the Abuja carnival in 2005, the carnival was specially set up to be an intra and inter-cultural link, which would serve as foundation of knowledge and reference point for the promotion of the historical and cultural experience of the black people

worldwide ( Carnival brochure 2011:7) It was this dream that gave birth to the Carnival and has continued to power its celebration as it is anchored on the recognition that there exists an intrinsic link between culture and significant development, as the fundamentals for the economic and technological growth of a nation.

Over the years, the Abuja National Carnival has come to reflect the continuing demonstration of our unity in diversity as states of the federation display their unique heritage through a festival platform, consequently, building bridges and enhancing inter-cultural and cross-ethnic friendships. The celebration portrays an authentic Nigerian experience and the tourism product of people with acceptable international patronage. Thus, it showcases a brand that celebrates Nigeria as safe, warm and hospitable tourism destination.

Accordingly, this annual event has become a gateway into tapping the United Nations World Tourism Organization's projected 9% increase in touristic visit to Africa. So, a four day approved street trading is inclined to boosting the economy of the Informal Sector of the Federal Capital Territory. Also, there is an increased patronage of the hospitality Industry especially in the Federal Capital Territory and its environs.

This is also an avenue for partnership, sponsorship and investment. Indeed, the carnival is a celebration of Nigeria's unity in diversity and a very authentic tourism product. The varieties of activities – Street Carnival, Durbar, Children Fiesta, Cultural Night, Traditional Food Fair and Bush Bar, Masquerade Displays, Boat Regatta, Command Performance and Contemporary Music Fiesta, are so different but intertwined and capable of holding the interest of spectators to the end of the four-day event without boredom.

### **3:3. Carnavalesque Elements of Abuja Carnival**

The Abuja Carnival is always a conglomeration of various cultures and a gathering of colours, different in tongues but united in purpose. The Carnival is a way of communicating to the world that news emanating from Abuja is not only about crises, bomb blasts, or fisticuffs at the National Assembly, but that Abuja still has the time and space to host the nation and, indeed, the world through the annual Abuja National Carnival. The 2011 edition, which was the sixth edition of the Abuja National Carnival, did not only showcase various scintillating cultural displays, but was also spiced up with characters from folktales, notably the big bird and the proverbial mermaid which sailed with the troupe. Another prominent feature was the fusion of Western and indigenous Nigerian cultures, which was noticed in the choice of costumes. The mermaid was adorned in chiffon regalia, which is not African just as the satin draping for the boats and canoes, are equally foreign.

Carnivals are built on music and dances, and fantasy in make-up, costuming and floats designs. It is a way of giving physical expression to the whimsy images that human beings alone can imagine. It is therefore a celebration bordering on a stretch of our creative imagination and an open exhibition of the freedom of the human spirit.

Carnivals cannot happen in an atmosphere of hostility and anarchy. It brings people together as a public show of harmony, comradeship and mutual respect. The Abuja Carnival, therefore, is one good way of bringing at home and in the diaspora, friends of Nigeria and tourists together to celebrate the one thing which every human being aspires: freedom.

The Abuja National Carnival has eight (8) prominent elements, namely, Street Carnival, Durbar, Children Fiesta, Cultural Night/Traditional Cuisine and Bush Bar, Masquerade, Boat Regatta, Command Performance and Contemporary Music Fiesta.

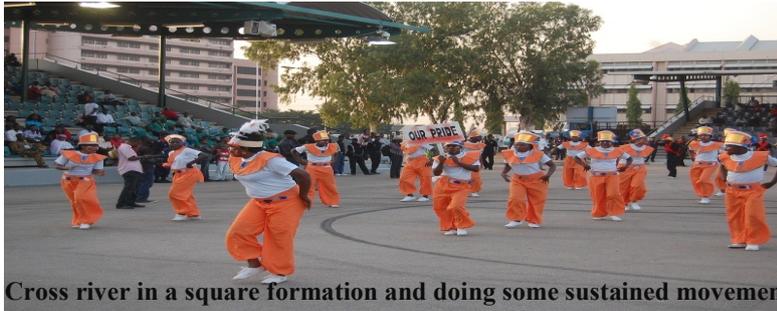
The events at the carnival range from Cultural Parade which includes all cultural expressions of the people of Nigeria, Indigenous Circus show is made up of itinerant players who are mostly acrobats, comedians, fire-swallowers, jugglers, magicians, live animal handlers and jesters. Nigerian Cuisine which includes Eran Igbe (Venison), Isi-ewu, Cow foot, Salted Meats, Fish, Pepper Soup, Ogi, Garri, Obe-Onigba, Obe Eja Dindin, Chin Chin, Puff Puff, Spicy Scrambled Egg, Waina, Akara, Fried Plantain, Kuli Kuli, Dodo Oni and many more delightful dishes to make your mouth and eyes water. Crafts exposition of Textiles; Leather craft; Carvings; Bronzes; Beads; Paintings; Plaited Baskets.

***Street Carnival:*** The Street Carnival is a street party, which portrays extreme creativity in costumes, floats designs, and dance steps, complimented by contemporary music. It is a great party that features more than forty (40) bands, representing the 36 states of the Federation, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), as well as corporate organizations. It is indeed a sight to behold and admire, as spectators are given the opportunity to savour the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria at a glance in contemporary form. The Street Carnival takes place in designated Carnival routes, stretching about eighteen (18) kilometres.

The carnival train moves from Area 3, through Areas 1, 2, 10 under the direction of Arnold Udoka, carnival's assistant artistic director for 2013, before it stops at the Eagle Square for a

thorough states parade, showing off beautifully decorated floats and costumes and staging a five (5) minutes performance after which they are asked to move on.

**Plate 2**



**Cross river in a square formation and doing some sustained movements.**

**Plate 3**



**Ondo using the circle formation to depict oneness.**

**Plate 4**



**Akwa Bom doing staccato movements in a zigzag formation, communicating uncertainty.**

**Plate 5**



Lagos state straight line communicating strength and boldness

### Plate 6



Lagos state doing some legwork movement on a straight line formation.

### Plate 7



An all-female Lagos state waist rippling sturdy dance display.

With the theme: 'Carnival of Peace and Harmony,' participating states ensure this is reflected in their display. Akwa Ibom depicts that it's an oil producing state with its well-designed float that

looks like a refinery, while Kogi and Anambra opts for the bird motif. Bayelsa's is a fishing boat; Katsina's a Kakaki (traditional Northern Nigeria royal trumpet) and Imo's a dog and cat sharing one body. Ondo and Nasarawa have extremely poor floats but ended up making statement.

**Plate 8**



Kogi's bird motif float.

**Plate 9**



Rivers state in straight lines formation.

**Plate 10**



**Rivers State in her usual waist dance depicting aquatic movements**

**Plate 11**



**A float depicting unity in diversity.**

***Durbar:*** The Durbar is a royal event, which is now synonymous to the people of Northern Nigeria, after its introduction by the colonialists. It is one of the most respected gatherings among these people, and is performed with well decorated mounted horses, each representing a royal throne or kingdom. The event is a symbol of authority and material prowess, and it has become an integrated part of the Abuja National Carnival.

***Children Fiesta:*** This platform is created for the promotion and development of the creative ability of children, between the ages of five (5) and twelve (12) years, from the different states

and the FCT. It is designed to celebrate children's positive attributes through fun-filled and enlightening activities, such as traditional and modern dances, storytelling, fashion parade, poetry recitation, and so on. It also promotes cultural integration amongst children especially as they are from diverse socio-cultural, religious and economic background (Abuja carnival brochure, 2011:10)

***Cultural Night/Traditional Cuisine and Bush Bar:*** This is a night of cultural displays. It is a night to showcase the culture heritage of the best twelve (12) troupes from the six (6) zonal coordinators from the zones. It is a competitive event that culminates into the selection of the best four (4) troupes that automatically join the visiting foreign troupes to feature at the Command Performance.

The traditional food fair, on its own part, is a forum for exhibiting the best of Nigerian cuisine from different states, where people have the opportunity to taste the different cuisines in the country. A Bush Bar that promotes the sale of only traditional drinks is also showcased.

**Masquerade Display:** A rich and unique masking tradition has been associated with Nigeria and her festivals, since her evolution. Masks are found in virtually all communities in Nigeria and are seen as spirits, which represent communication links between the ancestors and the living. These range from the Egungun of the Yoruba, the Ekpe/Ekpo of the Efik/Ibibio, the Egwugwu of the Igbo, the Alagba and Igbelegbe of the Niger Delta region, to mention but a few. The masquerades, which are repositories of all that are held secret, mysterious, magical and supernatural, are used by community members for ancestral veneration, agricultural rites, social control, kingship ceremonies, and for communal entertainment. Membership of masquerade

groups is exclusively reserved for the male folk in our society. In the Abuja National Carnival, an array of beautifully adorned masquerades parades with different dance steps from all participating states, to the admiration of tourists.

**Plate 12**



**Even the spirits understands the language of dance**

**Boat Regatta:** In Nigeria, Boat Regattas are indispensable part of the annual traditional festivals in the riverine communities. This involves the use of mounted decorated canoes and paddlers, with participation open to both sex. The riverine communities reflect lives associated with their physical locations, in their dances and rituals. Lobsters, fishes, crocodiles and other creatures (some mythical), are usually represented in their dance and costume performances. Boat regattas have continued to adapt designs and formats to suit new usages and their contents are gradually broadening in scope to serve more than the purpose of celebrations and worships.

The Boat Regatta of the Abuja National Carnival is a sight to behold. It is a combination of beautifully adorned canoes, floating on Jabi Dam, laden with drum beats and songs, coming from different participating states.

**Plate 13**



A synchronized boat paddling by Kwara State

**Plate 14**



Bayelsa boat depicting a crocodile looking for its prey.

**Command Performance:** This is the night set aside for special performances by National Troupes from the participating countries alongside selected Nigerian troupes. It is strictly for very important personalities (VIPs), stake executives, sponsors and the members of the diplomatic community. It showcases the best of Nigerian dance troupes and it is always at a venue that can only be accessed through invitation cards.

**Contemporary Music Fiesta:** The contemporary music fiesta is an all night event, which runs throughout the duration of the Carnival, featuring our young talented musicians, artists and comedians. It is a forum created for our young people and the young at heart, to have fun during the carnival, especially, at the end of other events of each day.

### 3.4. Presentation, Content and Style of Dance performances

#### **Durbar Festival .**

The Durbar festival dates back hundreds of years to the time when the Emirate (state) in the north used horses in warfare. During this period, each town, district, and nobility household was expected to contribute a regiment to the defence of the Emirate. Once or twice a year, the Emirate military chiefs invited the various regiments for a Durbar (military parade) for the Emir and his chiefs.

**Plate 15**



**The durbar in a straight line formation depicting strength and determination.**

During the parade, regiments would showcase their horsemanship, their preparedness for war, and their loyalty to the Emirate. Today, Durbar has become a festival celebrated in honour of visiting Heads of State and at the culmination of the two great Muslim festivals, Id-el Fitri (commemorating the end of the holy month of Ramadan) and Ide-el Kabir (commemorating Prophet Ibrahim sacrificing a ram instead of his son).

Some states are notable for the durbar displays amongst which are- Kano, Katsina, Yobe , Niger and some other states have joined and have given the known states a run for their money. In the last category, we have Ogun leading the group with some other western states.

**Plate 16**



**Durbar vibratory body movements in a zigzag formation showing hesitation.**

Among all the modern day Durbar festivals, Katsina Durbar is the most magnificent and spectacular. Id-el-Kabir, or Sallah Day in Katsina begins with prayers outside town, followed by processions of horsemen to the public square in front of the Emir's palace, where each village group, district, and noble house take their assigned place. Last to arrive is the Emir and his splendid retinue; they take up their place in front of the palace to receive the jahi, or homage, of their subject ("Historical tour through Katsina's Sallah Durbar festival" by James Danjuma Nov 2, 2012).

The festival begins with each group racing across the square at full gallop, swords glinting in the sun. They pass just few feet away from the Emir, then stop abruptly to salute him with raised swords.

The last and most fierce riders are the Emir's household and regimental guards, the Dogari. After the celebrations, the Emir and his chiefs retire to the palace, and enjoyment of the occasion reigns. This fanfare is intensified by drumming, dancing and singing, with small bands of Fulanis performing shadi, a fascinating sideshow to behold.

The spectacular traditional parade of horsemen from the various sections of the Katsina emirate assembled to exhibit horsemanship and pay homage to the Emir during Sallah (Islamic celebration) and on special occasions. It is sometimes held as a mark of honor for important visiting dignitaries. This colorful procession full of pomp and pageantry is led by the Emir and features contest among the royal cavalry, drummers, trumpeters, praise singers and wrestlers. It depicts the past glories of the emirate before the influence of western culture.

### **The Atilogwu performances**

Atilogwu is a vigorous dance which literally means “Is this magic?” and combines elements of gymnastics with foot-stomping rhythms and brilliant colours.

It is a traditionally spirited youth dance from the Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria that focuses on vigorous body movement and often includes acrobatics. In the Igbo language, the word “Atilogwu” translates into “has magic—as in sorcery/ witchcraft being put into it?”

The name stems from rumours that bewitchment or magic potions had to be involved if the children of the village could perform so exuberantly and energetically, while making it look so effortless. The tempo of the dance matches the tempo of the music, which is dependent on the beat of the drum and “ogene,” a metal gong instrument.

The dance is a beautiful mix of agility, flexibility, grace and dexterity. The pace of the dance is dictated by the ‘Ogene’ (big gong) and the acrobatic display caps the performance.

Atilogwu is an amalgamation or montage of five dances – Anam, Ogwulogwu, Anaku, Ochanja and Adunjanja. For some others, it is that of Mgbaga, Ogwulogwu, Otiokpokpo, Ochufulu and

Egwu-Igba. It dominates every other dance in Igbo cultural performances because of its magnificent rhythms and physical acrobatic movements formed from elaborations and modifications of the afore-mentioned dances.

**Plate 17**



**A feeling of weightlessness and endlessness being portrayed here by the dancers**

The Atilogwu dance has been elevated to a dazzling art form, particularly by the Igbos in Anambra State. It is performed by young men and women who undergo rigorous training before presenting the dance in public. Once approved, the dance is performed during important festivals and great social occasions. The festivals and festivity will also include exotic dishes created from authentic Nigerian recipes, served buffet style. In fact, Atilogwu has become a celebrated signature of Nigerian culture, performed around the world.

**Plate 18**



**Atilogwu dancers in a suspended and sustained acrobatic display**

Atilogwu has over the years become a pride of Ndigbo as well as an identity, and also gained the support of many prominent Nigerians. It has also grown in stature to become one of the most talked about traditional dances in Nigeria. The style, sequence and eloquent movements of the dancers have thrilled spectators who had wondered whether there was magic in the dance. Newspapers, Reporters, and Commentators have seen and reported the dance in different ways.

Atilogwu dancers' pictures have become icons and symbols often used for both postcards and seasonal greeting cards. Any occasion that was not ended with the Atilogwu in Igboland is regarded as unsuccessful.

**ABANG DANCE:** The Efik people from the Cross River State in Nigeria are unique because of the Ekombi or Abang dance texture. The word "Abang" means, "pot" symbolizing fertility. It originated from the worshiping of the water goddess Ndem. This dance is also a tribute and celebration of respect and gratitude to the earth goddess, Abasi Isong, who is credited for the abundant resources, fertile land for growing crops and clay for pottery.

Interwoven in Abang dances are three modalities: space, rhythm, and unity. Each of these modalities conveys its own distinct message (s), but interacts with each other to produce a specific form of dance as an expressive and communicative art. Here, we examine the multidimensionality of Abang dance, the artistry of the costumes, femininity, and sexuality that Abang dancers covertly demonstrate in their performances .

These subtle gestures are intricately woven into the fibre of Efik social lives, and the complex choreography of the Abang dance called ekombi. This is the premise of the Abang dance of the Efik people, since the Abang dance is a layer of complex cultural order wrapped in one.

Abang dance displays beauty and femininity emphasizing flexibility and grace. It is a dance of space, rhythm and unity that attracts and holds the attention of the audience, giving them the appearance of lightness and balance.

Lead dancers always wear a headgear decorated with vibrant colours of red, green and yellow raffia called Ibuot Abang. Sometimes these are decorated with bird feathers that are placed in five formations attached to the flexible stems made out of cane called Basinko, giving flexibility.

Several silk scarves and handkerchiefs are hung from the basinko for the lead dancer to hold on to for support.

While the Abang dancer bears the Ibuot Abang she undergoes some degree of transformation, taking on the spiritual and physical responsibility of representing the Ancestors or Spirits. During this time she remains silent for the duration as she carries the Ibuot Abang.

**Plate 19**



**A solo Abang Dancer.**

As part of her costume, her neck is adorned with elaborate colourful beads called Nkwaesit Itong. Across the shoulder she wears bright coral beads called Anana Ubok as her arms are covered with coloured raffia called Ekpaku Ubok. Her legs are also covered with raffia and bells called Mkpat Etim.

The dancer wears around the waistline an Akasi made out of cane. This symbolizes the ideal beauty of an Efik woman full figured with a healthy waistline. The Akasi is covered with a large piece of fabric to show beauty, femininity and grace as the dancers move their body.

Both the Ekombi and Abang Dances from the South Eastern part of Nigeria have become major features in all cultural festivals in Nigeria and recognized cultural performances in the internal cultural exchange circuit.

## **4:0 Chapter Four: DANCE ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Dance as a tool for cultural diplomacy**

Abuja Carnival is the carnival of all carnivals in Nigeria as it integrates peoples of diverse culture and traditions for the betterment of the nation and for the promotion of harmony and peaceful co-existence in the lives of people as diverse as Nigeria. Art and dance therefore are reflections and representations of the complexities of humanity, which is designed to captivate us visually and audibly, invoking a deep emotional connection that transcends through time and boundaries, proving their importance as the essential tools of cultural diplomacy -Sophiline Shapiro.

According to Cynthia Schneider, Cultural diplomacy relies upon thorough dialogue between disparate nations and cultures as a tool to promote a global peace and stability; however, there remains a tendency within the field to let the development of theory overshadow the practical elements necessary for implementation . In the same light, the former under secretary of the United States, James Glassman in his speech titled *The Limits of Cultural Diplomacy, and a Way Forward*, states that a successful initiative for cultural diplomacy “promotes, enhances, and enriches the culture of critical nations.” An alternative view to the way forward is to rather promote the understanding of foreigners to their own culture, which was either “denied them by their rulers or is difficult, because of limitations imposed by poverty or geography, to access.”

Nigeria's cultural diplomacy focus encompassed, not just Africa as the centre-piece of her foreign policy, it includes the Black World. Nigeria considered it in her national interest, the "protection of the dignity of black peoples." This doctrine was formulated to buttress the invaluable link between Nigeria and the destiny of all black people.

According to Joy Ogwu, "Nigeria shares a destiny with blacks all over the world and any quest for the preservation of its own values and aspiration was bound to encompass the values and aspirations of other members of the black world." ( Carnival brochure 2011: 7).

The carnival has to do with both the procession and the presentations. The procession comes in the form of a march past and it is the introductory part of the carnival, that ushers in the dance performances and other competitive and non competitive activities of the carnival. Most of the dances performed during the different segments of the carnival are unique and exciting and can be easily located within the confines of its origin. Their diplomatic thrust lies in the fact that they appeal to anybody from any part of the world with the way they are done. So, the dances could lure a tourist who is not a Nigerian into the fold of the dancers or tempted to meet them on the way and dance with them and as such making friends and breaking the enmity, barriers and restrictions which may have been existing between the non indigenes and the performers by this singular act. Therefore, in doing a thorough analysis of the segmental dances, a step by step description is inevitable.

**ATILOGWU DANCE: A SOURCE OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN NIGERIA, TURKEY -**  
By NWAGBO NNENYELIKE (The National Mirror Newspaper, 2012, 4 May).

The performance of Atilogwu dance at the Nigerian-Turkish Friendship Cultural Festival on Wednesday, April 18, 2012, was a demonstration of how dance has continued and will incessantly serve as an instrument for bilateral relationship. Before the display of fast, rhythmic and vigorous Atilogwu dance which looks as if the dancers applied magic in the performance, there were two other dances, the children Atilogwu dance and Fulani dance which featured Turkish children. Both lasted for only five minutes before the main Atilogwu dancers took over

the arena. Meanwhile, Turkish children in the Fulani dance performed well as this confirms what the chairman of the event, Hikmet Gobau stated earlier in his speech that: “this festival helps us to bring our children together in a display of culture. I express my happiness to all Nigerians”. Similarly, the Minister for Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, Chief Edem Duke, represented at the festival by the Executive Secretary, National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), Dr. Barclays Ayakoroma remarked, “look at the way children of the Turkish appear in their cultural attire, and the way they danced Nigerian dance, that was fantastic”.

The sound of Alo (big metal gong), wooden gong, drums and musical instrument of Atilogwu dance came on and rent the air while the dancers gyrated and displayed gymnastic dexterity as they came in to the performance arena, the field of Nigerian Turkish International College, Wuse II, Abuja.

The musical accompaniment was commensurate with the tempo of the dance. After this, four members of the Atilogwu troupe danced in with liveliness while smiles adorned their faces. They held two horsetails each and the manner in which they waved the horsetails added to the beauty of the dance.

With six dance steps, they ended this phrase and danced out. Leaving no moment for boredom, they danced in again penetrating the audience and dropping their horsetails on the body of dignitaries.

As they dropped, they went back to the arena to continue dancing. The next time they came back to those they dropped the horsetails on, one would have thought it was all about money. But they dragged these distinguished guests into the arena to dance with them; Nigerian and Turkish

personalities danced with happiness. Dr. Ayakoroma demonstrated that a theatre practitioner, versed in total theatre practice, would display and deliver at any moment.

He bent down with the Atilogwu dancer and did justice to the Atilogwu dance step. With this, the dancers captured the motives behind audience participation and at the same time, in tandem with the aims of the Nigerian-Turkish Friendship and Cultural Festival. This was obvious in the words of Hikmet Gobau: “We are happy that Nigerians have continuously joined us in this friendship and cultural festival. The aim is to have a good relationship with Nigerians. We will continue to promote peace in Nigeria.

We will organise more events to promote friendship, brotherhood and neighborliness”. The Ambassador of Turkey to Nigeria, His Excellency, Ali Ri-fak Koksal added: “The long standing relationship between Nigeria and Turkey will continue to be strong.

Nigeria is very rich in human resources, capital and culture”. This is in line with what J.N. Amankulor noted in view of audience participation in festivals that it is in itself a festive phenomenon because it discourages discrimination and brings people even closer. The form of interaction in Forum Theatre, an interactive form of theatre invented by Augusto Boal in the early 1970s was obvious in the Atilogwu-Festival audience interaction.

Forum Theatre also encourages audience interaction with the performers. After the friendly dance with the audience, the dancers went into more captivating aspect of why the dance is christened Atilogwu, which means “is magic or medicine added”? This question is because of the way shapes are made with acrobatic displays. The way the dancers form figures of different

heights, sizes and shapes, sometimes taller than a tree or larger than an elephant –feats some believe can only be achieved using magical power.

It is not so; rather the dance is a product of long hours of rehearsal and learning. The Atilogwu dance from the Igbo speaking part of Nigeria, particularly Anambra State, has fetched itself popularity like Ipi tombi, a performance from South Africa. Both have fascinated audiences worldwide through the strength exhibited by the dancers.

However, Ipi tombi has a large cast of about 50 people and performs songs that make it appear as an opera. But in dance, Ipi tombi has gymnastics qualities just like that of Atilogwu. Like Ipi tombi, Atilogwu's costumes are spectacular and both attract similar standing ovation wherever and whenever the dance performance is held. Nwagbo Nnenyelike is of National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), Abuja.

Coming back home to the Abuja carnival, the Atilogwu dancers were over twenty unlike the usual performance of between four and ten in a group . During the States cultural display at the Eagle Square, Anambra State entered the scene with an arousing but coordinated noise that startled even a sleeping child. They ran into the scene with their sides swinging their hands to both right and left and doing some very fast leg works. They take their position on a dotted or spotted personal spaces. After which there were a lot of changes of jumps, legworks, shuffles and a lot of staccato movements. The choreography was achieved with a lot of centripetal and centrifugal moves, each leading to an unusual formation which normally is unachievable but because of the rigorous and time commitment to the learning process. In another swift move, they were hanging on each others shoulder and forming a cross/like or palm tree shape. They

took to summersaults and some magical displays which the Atilogwu dance is known for. In their five minutes performance, they left people transfixed until they left the way they came with some skipping, jumping and running out of the stage. The diplomatic content lies in the fact that everyone can easily identify with it and because of its stage presence, whatever message it tends to preach, sinks into the minds of its spectators. It is also a pure dance, trying to exhibit the energy exerted in the dance and the fluidity of the dance movements in a breathless sequence. Atilogwu dance has been accepted internationally as a dance that shows the strength and vigour in the Nigerian dances.

The importance of the Atilogwu as a veritable tool for cultural diplomacy is illustrated in the following points below:

- The dancers performed for Queen Elizabeth II in Lagos in January, 1956.
- The Atilogwu earned its first ever dancing contract in 1960 from the playwright and Nobel laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, for the stage production of his play – A Dance of the Forests. It became so popular in Lagos that it gained the patronage of the Nigerian public, government, and foreign embassies.
- They held public performances for the World American Society of African Culture (AMSAC) in Lagos in 1961.
- The group represented Nigeria at the 8th World Youths and Students Festival of Arts and Culture in Helsinki, Finland, on 4th August, 1962. As a winner of the dancing competition in which 123 countries participated, they earned a ticket to tour 21 countries in Asia, including Holland and Czechoslovakia.

- On their return to Nigeria, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh took them to Cotonou, Dahomey (Benin Republic), to perform at the signing of the Tariff Agreement between Nigeria and Dahomey (Benin Republic) in the same year, 1961.

- The climax of their performance was in 1964 when they performed in the USA – New York Lincoln University and Howard University – during a co-operation agreement between the Nigerian Airways Boeing 707 and the American World Airways to mark the inaugural flight to New York.

There were 16 Atilogwu Dancers among the 53 Nigerians on the flight which was termed “Operation Fantastic” by the leader of the delegation, Dr K.O. Mbadiwe.

- Atilogwu was one of the Igbo cultural dances that featured during the FESTAC '77 in Lagos

### **The Ekombi Dance performance.**

Ekombi Dance is from the coastal region of South-South Nigeria. It is a beautiful and colourful dance which is reflective of the proximity of the people to the Atlantic Ocean. The people are believed to, sometimes, play host to the water spirits and mermaids, which they depict in their dance movements and costumes.

**Plate 20**



**Ekombi dancers doing a mixture of study and pure dance in a straight line formation**

A popular dance among the Efiks of Calabar and indeed people of the Cross River state in Nigeria whose main source of livelihood is fishing and farming. The dance is done to simulate the waves of the sea, the animals that inhabit the sea, as well as their occupation of fishing and farming. (Onyile 2000: 28). Today Ekombi dance is performed in very important and unique occasions.

During the five minutes performance at Eagle Square, the Ekombi dancers entered on a straight line, depicting strength and confidence, got to the point of performance and changed into a face to face waist rippling movement which they did in a sea wave imitation movement, an act of oneness, with a lot of turns and leaps which helps them to strike a balance. They later entered a circle formation, with a paddling movement and a lot of meandering which led to their exit. All these were done with the help of the drummers who queues them at intervals for changes and special displays. The different formations which were done in a smooth transition, shows the dancers complete mastery of the act of dancing and the graceful way in which they were executed spoke volume. Ekombi is a delight to watch as the costume (the onyonyo) also depicts the Victorian style of dressing which our guests are very familiar with.

**Plate 21**



**A display of beauty, femininity and emphasis on flexibility and grace on a straight line formation before the VIP stand at the Eagle Square.**

During the durbar display at the 2012 Abuja Carnival, Koroso dance was performed. Koroso dance originates from the fulanis of northern Nigeria. This ceremonial dance is performed on important occasions like wedding or coronations. The Koroso dance is about the beauty of the women and the way in which they attract the men. It is an acrobatic musical dance with the melody of sweet drum and cool blows. The costume stimulates pre-Islamic Hausa mode of dressing. Koroso dance is prominently recognized in the north as a colourful and energetic dance. It is a dance that depicts the life and culture of the Hausas, at the beginning, the women are graceful with their movement just to attract the attention of their male counterparts. Then as the dance progresses, a lot of energy is exhibited by both the male and female in their respective movements. The koroso dance is usually performed by a group of ten (10) to fifteen (15) dancers of male and female but during the carnival, more dancers of about thirty to fifty are seen performing this wonderful dance steps.

**Plate 22**



**A leap and jumping Koroso dance in a straight line formation**

**Plate 23**



**Koroso dancers in a circle formation, suggesting the existence of some sort of affinity.**

They make their entrance on to the performance arena with a jerky movement that has a lot of legworks, jumps, leaps and swings, all done with the body shifting in space, the dance mainly exists in heavy body gyrations, no clear cut choreographies and they are always done in clusters with backward and forward running at intervals. The ladies do some torso rippling and arm swings. The koroso dance postures usually is done with erect spine waist but the female torso dance gives it that feminine touch believed to arouse the libido of the men. The arrive the stage and do a lot of arm swings and leg shuffling. Swift turns and a lot of staccato movements. All these are done on two straight lines with men and women on their separate lines to allow for a perfect view of the audience. The women at some point face the men in seductive chest dance then break into a circle and later come back to the usual straight line. All these are done with the cooperation of the drummers , most especially the chief drummer who gives the queues for movement change.

The costume is not left out as it speaks in its own light. The men are usually costumed with short knickers and a singlet or sometimes bare chested with a crossing belt beaded with cowries. In their palm is a small horse tail. The women have a white wrapper tied up to the shoulder level

with the same cowry beaded crossing belt and coral beads on their neck for adornment. The ladies have a uniformed hairdo neatly matted to hold the calabash or little basket on their heads, which is also part of their costume. The women alongside the men have some cowries round their fore-heads and rattles on their feet. These complete costume give the Koroso dance the array of beautiful colours it portrays.

After the performance which starts slowly and later very energetic and with a fast tempo, they dance out with a light movement of leaping slightly, with each male holding a maiden to show that they arrived at an agreement of their love. The dance has tried to preach peace but has not completely done the work of a cultural diplomat. The dance should have been more lucid using some symbols of peace and unity, having a little interjection of our lingua franca for a better understanding of the dance. There also should be more performer-spectator relationship through gesticulations and the use of sign language. If all these are implemented, the dance will be perfect for cultural exchange and image laundering of Nigeria.

In stressing the symbolic values of the various displays at the carnival, Mr Debo Shotuyo, a member of the Ogun State contingent to the Durbar event of the Abuja Carnival, recalls that Ogun State's participation in the durbar "shows that durbar is not strictly a northern show.

"In fact, in Ogun State, almost all the Muslim communities organise durbar and use it as an instrument of paying homage to their traditional rulers during Muslim festivals," he says.

Supporting Shotuyo's viewpoint, observers stress that more states from the southern part of the country should be encouraged to participate in the carnival's durbar event.

## **The Swange Dance Performances**

Swange is a very popular dance among the Tiv people of the Middle belt area, its fluid and wriggly movements makes some refer to it as the ‘boneless dance’. The dance is accompanied by sonorous songs led by the ‘gido’ (the trumpet).

**Plate 24**



**Benue state in a straight line formation doing a graceful pure dance.**

Swange is a Tiv urban recreational dance where men and women dance together in a circular motion. It involves a lot of rhythmic and undulating gyrations, especially around the waist region.

**Plate 25**



**Benue showing that they are the food basket of the nation**

This dance which employs the circle formation familiar in village dances and adapts traditional musical themes, to highlife rhythms played on a combination of Tiv and Hausa instruments. The climax of the Dance is often provided by a solo dancer who improvises freely, using movements from many styles of Tiv dance which include: Kwagh-hir dance, Ijov-mbakugh dance, Ingyough dance, Kpingi dance, Takeru dance, Dasenda dance, Hinga dance, Tsue-tsela dance, Ibyumev dance and Ange dance amongst others, in a rhythmic dialogue with the lead drummer.

Swange has remained enduring through the years and has not only transformed into several exciting variations and interpretations in pop culture but has now entered the Nigerian cultural repertoire and secured its place as a very important cultural performance from the middle belt region of the country .

**Plate 26**



**Swange in a serpentine formation, waist rippling and a feeling of sensuousness.**

In the performance of Benue State in the last Abuja carnival, they made their entrance into the performance arena in a three line formation with a fast but flowing hand swing movement, coming from the head through the trunk and back to the shoulder level with a lot of jerks at intervals. They arrive at the scene and form a circle where they interact with the gido flutist who

gives them the queue for changes and also plays alongside the sonorous soloist who sings and allows for the instrumentalists to take the dance to another level. With bent knee and sunk waist, they changed into a provoking waist jerks, they later took a mid-high level movement depicting old age or a tired waist. They then enter a single file with the same slow movement as they take their exit leaving the last two dancers to do the very fast waist jerks and can do some other improvisations as the gido dictates. The soloist at some point translates the song in English language to make provision for better understanding of the spectators.

The relevance of the dance is first to promote the Benue culture and preach that sex is enjoyed and necessary when one is physically and mentally ready to face the consequences of the act. This aspect of the culture, preaches against child abuse, rape and therefore tells our strangers how morally conscious we are in Nigeria.

### **Masquerade Performance**

**Plate 27**



**Ekpe masquerade in a slow but sustained leg movements with some swift turns.**

Masquerades are found in many communities in Nigeria and are seen as spirits, representing communication links between the ancestors and the living.

Among the notable masquerades are the Egungun of the Yorubas; Dodo in some North Central states; the Ekpe/Ekpo of the Efiks/Ibibio; the Egwugwu of the Igbo stock; and the Alagba and Igbelegbe of the Niger Delta area.

Abuja carnival parades an array of beautifully adorned masquerades with different dance steps from most of the participating states.

Mr Onaolapo Dauda, a participant, said the display of the masquerades from different parts of the country represented the rich cultural background of Nigeria, and urged the people to preserve it. Oyo, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, and Rivers states are delightful to watch, Of particular interest was the Ajikwu groups of masquerades from Anambra state. They sang, beat their drums and danced to folk music. They were indeed energetic and agile in their movement during the 2012 carnival displays at the eagle square.

**Plate 28**



**Oyo State in a circle formation, doing a suspended acrobatic movements.**

**Plate 29**



**Anambra State masquerade in a collapsed state of masquerade displays**

**Plate 30**



**A straight line formation of Eyo Masquerade Of Lagos in a stick swinging movement .**

Eyo festival is unique to Lagos State area. It is widely believed that is the forerunner of mother day carnival in Brazil. Pelu Awofeso. ( Retrieved 2011-04-26). On Eyo day, the main highway in the heart of the city (from the end of Carter bridge to Tinubu Square) is closed to traffic, allowing for procession from Idumota to Iga Idunganran. Eyo festival takes place whenever occasion and tradition demand, but it is usually held as the final burial rites for a highly regarded chief.

The states always in focus in masquerade performances are Lagos; Oyo and Anambra. This states usually come to the Abuja Carnival, with their masquerades.

**Lagos State** : Lagos state come with Eyo. Eyo dance is very graceful and at some point energetic. The costume is always white depicting royalty and purity, covering the entire body of the wearer, a raffia hat and a long stick is wielded at intervals. The performance is always in a straight line and at some point a circle like direction is formed and the lead dancer systematically breaks the circle with some forward and backward movements. The choreography is well executed.

**Anambra State:** The dance aspect of this display is done by the masquerade initiates round the masquerade. They lead the masquerade to different directions through out the performance. There is so much strength in the dance as the body vibrates through the monotonous movement of the chest and body and at some point, there is a frenzy, making the dancers behave like one in trance. This particular dance most times rejects the entrance of women into their fold but because it has de-emphasized the sacred aspect and has become rather secular, it accepts spectators(non-indigenes ) and allows them to dance along with them.

The diplomatic relevance of these two dances is that of peace and fertile ground for strangers. The dance do not only present itself to other states and Nigeria at large but this projection cuts across the shores of the country since tourists from other countries are part of the spectators and will take back what they have witnessed in video clips, pictures and one on one interviews of the performers to their home country. The performers are also faced with the challenge of giving a positive and impressive display so as to be acclaimed nationally and internationally. This encourages the cross cultural fertilization between local art, culture and the international dance scene.

### **Bata Dance Performance**

During the command performance displays and the free for all dance of 2012 carnival, the Bata dance stole the show. On account of its athletic and overtly acrobatic characteristics, the general assumption is that Bâtá dance is complicated, difficult, tedious and enervating for the average performer. Despite its varried applications in present times, the notion that Bâtá is a religious dance meant for the devotees of Sàngó – the Yorùbá god of thunder has persisted, thus further mystifying the dance.( Ojuade Jeleel,1997, unpublished M.A thesis).

In Bata usually a group of dancers between four to five perform but because it is a carnival situation we see over thirty (30) performers on stage, mostly male and female. The women come on stage using the leg shuffling movement while the men take the leap and jumping movements and jerking their shoulders at intervals. When they arrive on stage, they take the position that keeps women in front and men behind with some leg shuffles and arm swinging movements. A lot of movement changes are seen here as they are prompted by the Bata drums. The Bata drum is a talking drum telling the dancers what to do, how to dance and when to take a swift turns and solo performances. The dancers in turn reciprocate by working with the drummers, they physically express what the drummer is saying. Through out the duration of the dance, there is the centering of the lower level, from the waist to the knee and then legs. The Bata dance is known for its numerous staccato movements.

**Plate 31**



**Bata drummers and a solo performer in a waiste wripping and viberation dance.**

According to Nigeria online tourism magazine , Bisi Onasanya ,29/06/09 Bata is one of the Yoruba artistic expressions practiced in this country today. Naturally, the dance has undergone a number of changes in the course of migration. Dance, as with any other cultural form, is

influenced by the environment in which it is situated. The Music and Dance of Bata is a ritual form of dance for Sango, a deity in Yoruba land in those days. It's a communicative dance between the worshipers and the deity.

Nowadays, the dancers of Bata are found in both religious and social functions. Gbamu, kutelu and alujo, cut across religious functions. These dances are now performed at weddings, birthdays, naming and coronation ceremonies; unlike then, when traditionally they were strictly sacred dances. 'Eja' (break) is played on the master drum 'Iya ilu' and the dancer reacts to it with sharp, angular, jerky movement of the shoulders; symbolised in the Ose Sango emblem which is like a double headed axe. The feet and head are also used to compliment the beat. This drum beat is present in all the music of Bata and it tests the dancers understanding of the commands. Three sizes of Bata exist and are seen to be collective single instrument, known as Ilú Aña. The largest drum, iyá, is always played by the master drummer and sets the rhythmic activity for the ensemble. The middle drum, itótele, "converses" with iyá and with it departs from the steady rhythm kept by the smallest drum, okónkolo. The iya ilu depicts the role of a mother which instructs the children. There is always a dance-drum relationship, language development, and movement vocabulary between the dancers and the drummers.

**Plate 32**



**A display of Bata drums and drummers in a straight line formation.**

It was the sound of the bata drums that resonated with everyone seated at the venue of the command performance at the Abuja Carnival 2012 .The sound of the drums rhymes perfectly with the dance steps of the Bata Maidens known as Obirin Bata Dance Group from Cuba. The sound of the sekere, horn flute and agogo, shows they are dancers, though based in foreign land, who are deeply connected to their roots. They have been able to create their own brand of music, dance and unique cultural heritage from a combination of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa cultures. Spectators could not help but agree that the performance of the ‘Obirin Bata’ from Cuba is unique.

Cuba is one of the countries that participated at the street party and performances that heralded last year (2012) carnival. All the participating foreign countries also added colour to the parade. Egypt, the small group from Namibia and Chinese contingents also thrilled the audience. Their performance was a mixture of music, dance and martial arts.

The high point of the performance is the unification of the performers and their on-lookers ( audience) who break the barriers and join in the dance. Among these audience-performers are non-Nigerians who are thrilled by the energy and vigour expelled by these performers.

Having allowed non indigenes to partake in the dance performance speaks volume to the outside world as the peaceful co-existence is portrayed . In doing this, the performers bag the awards of cultural diplomats because they project the positive cultural image of the country and their states to the outside world.

Expert Bata dancers and drummers are not known until they are in the dance arena, where they put their skills on display. The relationship between the two is a cordial one, that creates a

scenario for the spectators. A dancer keeps creating movements out of what seemingly sounds erratic, noisy, confusing and discordant . The dancer all the time demonstrates that he is in charge of the seeming ordeal, decoding, interpreting and weaving the staccato rhythms of the Bàtá drums into beautiful patterns. Both the drummers and the dancers challenge one another. The lead drummer especially tests the skills of the dancer by drummer texts (can be instruction/or praise) which the dancer is required to interpret into dance action. The dancer in return excels in interpreting the drum texts and in addition, through his skills and mastery, counter-challenges the master drummer-as if to say “what more have you got, I am up to the task”. The dance’s patterns bring out the aesthetic beauty of the dance clearly to the lead drummer, thus creating an avenue for a “dialogue” between the drummer and the dancer.

This dialogue is not audible to a spectator who is a novice. Only an expert who knows the language of the Bàtá drums can decode the symbolic language of the drums and the simultaneous interpretation of this language by the dancer. The novice merely looks, on hearing the rat-tat-tat of the drums and seeing of the jerks, kicks and stamps of the dancer without understanding. Nothing annoys a master drummer like a dancer who is not able to interpret simple instructions, and therefore fumbles in the arena. Since the master drummer’s skill is a double-edged sword that can be used to praise and also to abuse, the master drummer will do the latter since master drummers usually have no patience with such dancers. A good Bàtá drummer who knows his salt can induce a spectator to pull off his shoes and join in the dance. This action asserts the saying that:

A kii fi bàtá jó Bàtá  
[One does not dance Bàtá with shoes]

This symbiotic relationship between the dancer and drummer in performance, and the ensuing drama provides an avenue of natural enjoyment and satisfaction for the dancer, the drummer and the spectator as well.

The Trinidad and Tobago group gave the crowd a taste of their famous carnival back home, and though they were scantily dressed yet not offensive. The short performance by their accompanying steel band was super.

Two cultural troupes, Mma Effion and Adaeze whose participation were facilitated by Edem Duke, Minister for Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, and deputy president of the Senate, Ike Ekweremadu, respectively, were also part of the mix. In fact, Duke led the group from his state and showed that his size is no barrier to dancing.

While welcoming guests, Duke says that with the carnival, “we have unravelled before the state and citizens of the world that we are indeed a proud and heroic people. The diversity of our culture and the sheer creativity that has been expressed today cannot be found in any other part of the African continent.”

He says tourism and culture have become the new frontiers of growth for the development of the economy, reiterating that it is time to mainstream culture and tourism in the economic agenda and “ultimately to convert the potential of culture and tourism to an enabling pillar for the actualisation of our millennium development goals.”

## 4.2. Tourists Presence and Impressions

Tourism is important not just for its economic impact, but for the significance that it has in creating impressions about a country. The experience of a visit- how visitors are treated, what they see, hear and learn will remain with them for years and be communicated to family and friends. In aggregate, these visitors impressions represent a powerful force in global political relations, colouring how a country's actions are perceived and giving it greater or lesser standing on the world stage. (Bound, Rachel, Holden Jones 2007: 35).

### Plate 33



Egyptians playing their hypnotic drumming at the eagle square.

### Plate 34



Chinese cultural diplomats speaking peace with their wonderful piece.

Nigerians and foreigners always besiege the Eagle Square, venue of the Abuja carnival, to watch Durbar and other activities lined up for the Abuja Carnival. Among the foreigners who watched

the colourful event were tourism enthusiasts from the Republic of Cuba, Egypt, Namibia, Trinidad and Tobago. The Durbar festival is an annual event celebrated in the Northern part of Nigeria particularly during festivals like Eid el-Fitr and Sallah.

It is usually a parade of the Emirs and their entourage on horses accompanied by musicians to their palaces. The event showcases the rich cultural heritage of Nigerians from different parts of the country.

Corlinus Engelbrecht, from Namibia says Nigeria is rich in cultural heritage, adding that since he came to Nigeria to watch the carnival, it had been one excitement or another.

Abd Gihamid Muhamed, an Egyptian, who spoke through an interpreter, said that he came to watch the 2012 Abuja carnival because of the interesting stories he heard about it.

Bryon Serrette, Trinada and the Vice President, PAN TRINBAGO said that he came based on his country's diplomatic relations with Nigeria, stressing that it was necessary to interact with his African brothers.

Speaker Aminu Tambuwal, who was represented by the Chairman, House Committee on Culture and Tourism, Ben Nwagu, said that Durbar would be the hallmark of the carnival.

Kano, Adamawa, Niger and Yobe states were represented in the Durbar.

#### **4:3 The need for Commercial Parkaging of the Abuja Carnival**

Nigeria has made admirable progress in polity and governance bringing along steady economic growth. Looking beyond the traditional sales of petroleum and other natural resources, tourism in

Nigeria has found itself into the coffers of decision makers. Despite the fact that a large percentage of the country is still rural, urban areas can be packaged as tourism destinations to serve both domestic and inbound tourists. Although the idea of Abuja date back to over twenty years, the search and construction of the new capital portrayed a symbol of recovery and reconciliation leading to a sense of national cohesiveness. With the new political dispensation, Abuja has become the hub of serious national activities. The Minister of State for Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Oloye Olajumoke Akinjide, has disclosed that the FCT Administration (FCTA) had put in place measures to make Abuja the preferred tourism destination in the country. She stated this in London while declaring open the international photography exhibition of the Abuja Carnival organized by the Administration at the famous Tiwani Contemporary .on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Aug.2013. The carnival is being taken beyond the shores of Nigeria to stimulate much needed national and international popularity and also to optimize the commercial opportunities such an event could offer. (Thisday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

## Chapter Five

### SUMMARY, CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

Abuja carnival as a tool for cultural diplomacy has not met the desired branding goals..

Since Abuja carnival is poorly sponsored, private organisations and state governments should be more involved: having made Abuja carnival execution the sole responsibility of the federal government to finance has reduced the proper representation of states and local governments, making some cultures to go into extinction.

Many diplomats support cultural diplomacy in principle, but in practice, they tend to place it at the lower end of their work priorities: it has been noticed that our diplomats are just political figures, who really do not practice and showcase the culture of Nigeria to other countries where they have their secretariats.

Less publicity is carried out about the Abuja carnival and it is not supposed to be so: the poor and inadequate publicity before the carnival proper, has created a wall between the people and the festival.

Cultural diplomacy is one of the greatest tools of achieving national domestic objectives: since cultural diplomacy speaks about the complete positive practice of a culture, it therefore becomes appropriate to be used as a yardstick to measure that community.

If well practiced, Abuja Carnival can go a long way to change the wrong perception of a Nigeria to the outside world.

That dance shows the actual life of a community, and thus projects Nigeria's rich cultural heritage to the world.

It reveals that Abuja carnival as a national festival should speak more of Nigerian culture than the foreign cultures depicted in most of the segments.

That Responsibility for cultural diplomacy should be transferred to independent entities in order to allow full and honest cultural expression.

If cultural diplomacy's potential to contribute to a government's foreign policy and its diplomacy is to be fully realized, however, governments need to better understand the practice's possibilities, provide more funding for it and think about how best to deliver it.

## **5.2. Contribution to knowledge**

1. This work has defined and updated the concept of Cultural Diplomacy.
2. It explored the possible roles the dances in the Abuja National Carnival has played, can play and has failed to play in laundering the image of Nigeria to the outside world and the ways the little flaws can be remedied.
3. It has also opened more vistas to critics and students of dance who want to go further in researching into dance and Abuja carnival. It also has added to the already existing literatures on danceturgy.

## **5.3 Conclusion**

Conclusively, this research has been able to elucidate on Cultural diplomacy having the potential to become a more valuable tool for states in future, and a more valued and significant component

of the practice of public diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy potential power rests on its intersection with national culture, national values, national identity and national pride.(Bound, Rachel, Holden Jones 2007: 37).

Culture can therefore show a states's personality in a way that connects with people and benefits both the practitioner and the receiver, it can show the true nature of a country and her people. The power of a cultural performance to connect should not be underestimated. In the modern world, in which the messages of states disseminated through public diplomacy are sometimes viewed with suspicion, and the declared values and ideas of state frequently bear little resemblance to state's foreign policy actions, cultural diplomacy can help overcome the gap. Therefore the missing link must be addressed and corrected.

#### **5.4. Recommendations**

Cultural diplomacy needs more advocates, more funding and it needs to be delivered in such a way as to minimise the sometimes negative impact that officialdom has on the practice. Greater advocacy for the practice by politicians, bureaucrats, artists and others will be made easier if these groups better recognize the practice's potential. Cultural diplomacy can give substance to public diplomacy at a time when that practise has a large task ahead of it. When recognized as one of a number of branding strands and used in this way, cultural diplomacy can enhance national reputation abroad by adding an extra dimension to parallel business, tourism and public diplomacy branding strand . There should also be more involvement of the private sector.

Furthermore, cultural diplomacy can give substance to efforts by politicians and others to improve national social cohesion. This is an important undertaking, and is likely to become more so in years to come.

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