

## **Demystification and Popularization of Ebirá-Echeorí Dance Performance as a work of Art in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The paper unveils the choreographic and economic values of Echeorí dance and festival performance. It highlights the residual choreography inherent with Echeorí dance performance that could be enhanced, in relevance with the principles of emergent choreography. Significantly, the stand of this paper is hinged against the backdrop that popularizing an indigenous dance performance like Echeorí dance will enhance its relevance in our inevitable changing world. In other words, rejuvenating the tangible aesthetic of Echeorí dance performance will strengthen the preservation, sustenance and appeal of its intangible aesthetic even in the face of modernity. The study adopts descriptive research method with the application of participant and non participant observation as tools to draw firsthand information through interviews with the custodians of Echeorí performance tradition across Ebirá land. Consultation of relevant journals, books, literatures, theses and audio-visual documents serves as secondary source of information to authenticate our findings. Based on the theory of cultural transformation, the paper justifies the need and advantages of allowing some degree of acculturation and modification in the tradition of Ebirá-Echeorí dance performance.

### **Introduction**

Dance culture and performance among the Ebirás of the middle belt of Nigeria is rarely detached from contextual festivals and ceremonial theatre performance. The existence and performance of the dance forms are usually bound within the confines or dictates of the tradition and taboos guiding the practice of the background festivals. While strict observance of taboos in indigenous dance is geared towards the preservation of the tradition from adulteration, some aspect of such taboos to some extent hinders the process of enhancing the choreographic value of the dances for contemporary relevance. This is the case of Echeorí dance performance as efforts towards the popularization of the art form has been at a slow pace due to the limiting effects of; (i) some aspect of the protective custom and taboos which prohibits external participation and influence as well as visual documentation of the ritual enactments. Though in recent times, a few videos of Echeorí musical performance outside the festival context have been produced with the collaborative efforts between some Indigenous Ebirá film makers and Echeorí musicians. However, typical of Ebirá performances, the videos showcase performers who concentrate so much time on singing while little or no attention is directed at enhancing and standardizing the dance movement patterns. The limitation of such effort is that they fail to realize that dance is a universal language that could help sell their performance to the outer world if the dance movements are distinctly choreographed. (ii) the people's lack of proper understanding and awareness on the artistic and economic viability of traditional performance arts beyond communal recreation and festivals and beyond religious belief and practices. Echeorí festival and dance performance

may remain confined within the homeland of Ebira people if the concerned aspects of the protective measures against innovative external influence are not modified or leverage to expose the festival and dance performance to the outside world. Therefore, Ebira traditional institution, devotees of Ori spirit and custodians of Echeori festival performance will have to be educated on the benefits of giving room for external participation and emergent choreography for the enhancement, transformation and popularization of the dance performance.

### Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts Riane Eisler's cultural transformation theory (CTT) as its theoretical framework. Cultural transformation theory otherwise known as transformation of cultures refers to the interaction and acculturation of cultures. As defined in *Wikipedia.org/wiki/transformation\_of\_culture*, transformation of culture is the "dynamic process whereby the living cultures of the world are changing and adapting to external or internal forces". In this light, it is believed that colonization and globalization are the responsible factors that influence cultural change with advances in diverse modes of expression. Eisler (1987) posits, "cultures change constantly".

In the process of sustaining the relevance of the existing cultures in the face of the inevitable changing world, Eisler justifies her CTT postulation, explaining that "We have a highly evolved brain, allowing greater memory, information processing, flexibility, and versatility. This means that we humans can change our behavior based on feedback. And the feedback coming at us today from all sides – environmentally, economically, socially... In essence, developmental change that modifies or transforms cultures is inevitable with the passing phases of time. Thus, every group of

people, communities, societies and cultures must embrace the transformational phenomena for advancement. It is in the same vein that Thomas R. Rochon (1998, p. 55-56) proposed three major modes of cultural transformation or changes as follows; (a) value conversion which refers to the replacement of existing cultural values with new ones. (b) value creation; this mode applies to the development of new ideas to apply to new situations. (c) value connection; this is the development of conceptual link between phenomena previously thought unconnected or connected in a different way. In line with Rochon's transformation of culture and modes of transformation principles, we justify the demystification of Echeori festival and enhancement of the choreographic dance patterns as effective means towards the popularization of Echeori performance culture. In other words, our propositions seek to unveil and stretch out the artistic worth of Ebira-Echeori performance culture to attract global attention. This will ignite its economic viability as a source of tourism and cultural export. Therefore, it is pertinent to rejuvenate and standardize Echeori dance movement patterns as a central part of Echeori festival performance for global appeal in changing times.

Cultural transformation can be achieved when the ideas and perception of individual and leaders of a particular community starts to experience flexibility that will allow a wave of change to modify or enhance the existing culture. Since culture is simply the way things are done among a group of people or community, the behavior or attitude of the current leaders will have to change in order to advance the relevance of the institutionalized legacies of the past custodians of the culture. In the same light, William A. Guillory act of inclusion concept proves that allowing some sort of innovation does not affect an existing culture irreversibly but enhances the

relevance of the practices. Hence, we believe that the popularization process of Ebirá-Echeorí dance performance will experience a fast track boom if the limiting aspects of the taboos guiding the festival are modified to allow modern modes of documentation, innovations and modification where necessary.

### **Indigenous Dance Tradition and Transformation**

Dance as an integral part of the indigenous African culture thrives within the context of communal recreation, religious festivals and ritual ceremonies of diverse kind that are rooted in mythical beliefs. Festival and dance performances are important aspect of the indigenous African socio-cultural and religious practices. Ojuade (1997, p. 30) affirms that “Traditional dance formed a major part of society’s religion, social and existential reality.

In African societies, dance serves as a major aspect of their modes of expression”. He explained that “Dance was used to highlight the kinetic logic as well as to portray the cultural interpretations of the history and reality of the people from which it came”. In essence, the existence of most indigenous African dance forms relies on the socio-cultural value, function and context of their performances. In other words, the indigenous African dance performances, especially the ritual dance forms are usually guided by age long traditions and taboos. Thus, this obvious cultural phenomenal is a major factor that is slowing the process of professionalizing and popularizing a good number of indigenous African dances especially in Nigeria. However, some Nigerian folk dances such as Bata dance from South-West, Ekombi dance from South-South, Atilogwu dance from South-East, Swange dance from North-Central and Korotso dance from the core North have experienced some level of modification and enhancement at one point or the other

despite the preservative measures of the background traditions. Therefore, the degree of innovative enhancement, rejuvenation or transformation of a particular indigenous dance form depends on the measure of the permissiveness of the custodians of the background tradition and context of performance.

The importance of protecting the originality of traditional African dances is incontestable because of the significance of the dances to the socio-cultural and religious worldview of the people. However, the constant interactions of cultures in a changing world has also brought about the inevitable transformation of some folk dances and contextual festivals in conformation to the contemporary quest of tourism, artistic, social and economic life of every society. Such transformation witnessed in the outlook of dance forms and contextual festivals are not meant to destroy the background traditions and taboos but to enhance the contemporary relevance of the performance. In other words, it aids the projection and popularization of such dance performance culture for universal appeal. Hence, while it is very important to preserve the originality of indigenous dances, it is equally recommendable that the custodians of the background traditions of the dances should allow some degree of elasticity for possible innovation that could enhance the choreographic outlook, professional and economic viability of the dances in the face of global modernity.

In African society every folk dance and festival performances especially in Nigeria is peculiarly rich and viable in their residual nature that can be enhanced. Thus, some of the indigenous festivals and dance forms in Nigeria, such as Osun festival in Osogbo, Eyo festival in Lagos and a few others across the country have gained fame and international repute in terms of tourism, yielding profit to the performers and host communities as well as boosting the economy of the country. On the other hand, so many spectacular

dance forms and festivals are yet to gain prominence despite their theatrical viability due to certain limiting cultural factors. That is, a good number of indigenous African dance pattern and performances are bound to remain relevant only within their immediate cultures due to the rigidity of the root traditions and taboos put in place to protect the performance structure. Consequently, such rigid taboos may retard the enhancement of some of these yet to be popularized dance patterns in the face of modernity. Hence, numerous African and non African scholars alike have continued to carry out research on African oral traditions, folklores, festivals and performing arts of which dance is central. This effort, beyond adding to knowledge is also geared towards sustaining the values and relevance of the indigenous dances in a changing world and emerging trends of innovative transformation.

The contemporary performing artistes are not left out in this bid as a good number of them explore the resource provided by the numerous indigenous dance forms and movement patterns which they either rejuvenate or modified to suit their purpose and time.

### **Origin and Significance of Ebira-Echeori Dance Performance**

Dance performance among the Ebiras does not exist outside a contextual festival or ritual ceremony. Echeori dance is a ritual dance associated to the annual celebration of Echeori festival in honour of “Ori” spirit of purity, fertility and bountiful harvest. The festival and dance performance is peculiar to two communities which include Ihima and Eganyi though Ori is revered throughout Ebira land. Among the Ebiras, Ori is considered as guarding spirit that mediate between the people and Ohomorihi the creator of heaven, earth, man, creatures and everything that exist. According to Ododo (2004, p 96) Ori in

Ebira cosmology are “benevolent and malevolent spirits which are also God’s creation and answerable to Him”. Ibrahim (1976, p 57) affirm that the benevolent essence of Ori symbolizes and brings about peace, protection, good luck, fertility, rain and bountiful harvest.

According to Ebira oral history, Echeori festival among Ihima community is traceable to the encounter of *Akuta*, the teenage grandson of one of the founding fathers of the six clans that make up Ihima community with Ori spirit beings. The story has it that on a fateful day, Akuta strayed into the abode of Ori (spirit beings) on the hill of *Okeyihi* while on hunting expedition in company of his grandfather the progenitor of *Emani* clan and two of his grand uncles, the progenitors of *Ohueta* and *Oha*clans. The aftermath of the discovery of Ori on the hill is a covenant between the spirit beings and the people.

The Ori promised that as long as the people will continually spare and preserve the animals within the confine of the hill, live a life of purity, love one another and hate evil, the Ori spirit will always bridge the gap between the people and Ohomorihi the almighty God in order to always favour and blesses them with bountiful rain, good yield, fertility and protect them in battles against enemies. Thus, the head Ori gave his sacred stool to Akuta, the teenage grandson of Emani as a gift. He urged them that henceforth, they must always come to the hill every harvest year with the sacred stool and newly harvested tuber of yam with other recommended items in thanksgiving and renewal of the covenant. This is the reason why Ebira people does not eat new yam until the Echeori thanksgiving ritual ceremony is held. Thus, the festival is also referred to as the new yam festival among Ebira people. In the case of the Eganyi community version, Ebira oral history accounts that the progenitors of Esugu, Eziogu and Eziede clans of Eganyi community encountered a male Ori known as *Obancha* and a female Ori known as

*Onyamihoto*. They discovered the spirit beings during a hunting expedition on the sacred hill of *Adogo* surrounding *Opete* the ancestral abode of *Itaazi* the progenitor of Ebira people located in the present day central part of Kogi state. The aftermath result of the peoples encounter with the spiritual beings is a pact that the Ori will always stand by the people in battle against enemies and favour them with bountiful harvest on the basis that they will not indulge in evil acts. The people were then instructed by the Ori that they must henceforth always bring new tuber of yam and other recommended items in thanksgiving before they can start harvesting and consuming new yam every harvest season.

### **Echeori Festival Performance Structure**

Echeori festival performance is usually a colourful celebration composed of solemn and vibrant pageantry and carnival processions with massive dance and musical display. The performance is notably characterized with the application of paraphernalia of theatrical elements composed of symbolic white costume and props which include Ebira traditional fabric weaving beater, spatula, whisks and whips. The performance structure is composed of;

(1) The preliminary or preparatory phase; the preliminary is composed of series of preceding preparations which include appointment of the chief Ori messenger and other officiating priests through the oracle, cleansing and announcement of the festival date by the priest and acolytes round town, presentation of a gourd of palm wine to Akuta clan by Ori priest to access Ori sacred stool which must be carried by an undefiled teenage boy from the clan ahead of the procession to the hill of Ori on the first day of the festival. In the case of Eganyi version, a virgin maiden is chosen through oracle to carry a bowl of some specific items for ritual sacrifice at

the hill of the female Ori before proceeding to the section of the male Ori.

(2) The invocation worship and thanks giving ceremony; this is an advancement of the procession to the hill. This stage is composed of an opening ceremony procession led by Ori messenger in company of other officiating priests, acolytes, and devotees on the hill of Ori where required sacrifices and declarations are made amidst solemn invocation worship session. Here, a tuber of new yam and other specific required items are presented on the altar of Ori where necessary sacrifices, prayers and declarations are made to appease, invoke and reverence Ori in thanksgiving to God for a prosperous year. The priest, acolytes and devotees after the ritual worship ceremony, descend from the hill in a celebrative procession singing and dancing round town. Women devotees take the lead with their choreographic wielding of the traditional fabric beater with singing and dexterous dance steps to the beat pattern of Echeori.

(3) The grand finale celebration; this is composed of an all inclusive festivities and feasting characterized by exclusively roasted, boiled and pounded yam meal at every household while series of dance performance concerts at various family compounds and designated arenas and squares holds for three successive days.

(4) Final thanksgiving and recessional prayers; The three days celebration recede while the final thanksgiving, fortification and recessional prayers commences and last for fourteen days. At this time a procession of Ori chief priest with acolytes carry out ritual cleansing and prayers from one household to another amidst communal ceremonies and pockets of performances at every visited family compound that finally marks the end of the festival. In the course of Ori priest and retinue's visitation to households, devotees pay their vows and pledges to give more

next season if their supplication and requests are met before the next festival.



**All photos by Author**

Picture 1: *Echeori graceful glide movement pattern. Photographs illustrating the hand swaying and swinging movement pattern.*



*Weaving shuffler prop known as Okaha*

*Echeori foot stamping stride movement pattern. The earth stroking movement using the fabric*



*Echeori processional dance formation. A group of Echeoridancers in clustered formation doing the improvisational upward hand thrusting movement pattern.*

## **Choreographic Composition of Echeori Dance Movement Pattern**

The dance movement pattern is characterized with fast pace tempo composed of primarily foot stamping, hand swinging and swaying, forward and zigzag thrust of the torso with intervals of swift circumductive turning, galloping and dabbling movement transitions. The dancers' formation and movement transition usually follows a processional pattern that transit into a clustered and circular formation. The movement patterns are characterized with sustained and vibratory movement qualities. The composition of Echeori dance movement patterns are creative representation of the people's mythical tale of Ori (guardian spirits), belief and experiences gathered over time. Below, are photographs illustrating some basics in Echeori dance movement patterns and formations, courtesy of Calabash Film Productions and MBO Entertainments Okene, Nigeria.



*Picture showing some elderly women doing the upward hand prop thrusting pattern in a circular movement formation.*



*Illustration of oppositional formation of group of Echeori dancers doing the upward hand prop thrusting movement pattern.*

Echeori movement patterns basically rely on the creative intuition of the dancer in line with the sequence of the drum beat which controls the tempo, pace, mood and transition. Echeori dance movement pattern and performance structure reflects evidence of thoughtful creativity developed over time. Though indigenous in style, the movement transitions fulfill the basic elements of dance and principles of choreography. Bakare (1994, p. 1) defines choreography as the “composition of dances, structuring of movements in time and space to make statements”. Therefore, Choreography is the art of composing, creating and designing dance movements. It is the process of communicating intentions through a carefully structured dance movement sequence and formations. In other words, it is the transformation of imagination, experiences, ideas and feelings into images and pictures via movement variation and patterning that is displayed by a group of dancers within a given space.

Ugolo (2006, p. 71) assert that “The art of choreography is not new to Africa. This view is validated by the abundance of dance forms and styles in Africa. At least somebody must have choreographed these dances”. On the other hand, he added

that the traditional African Choreographer has a faceless identity because dance in African setting is communal and contextual. Ugolo (2000, p. xi) affirm that the “art of dance in most traditional African societies is a communal property. It is assumed that the whole community contributed to its creation and composition and no one takes the credit for the design and arrangement of the dance steps”. However, it must be noted that the facelessness of choreographers in indigenous African setting does not mean total absence of choreography in the performances. Therefore, the inherent choreographic appeals in Echeori dance performance in its natural form are better appreciated when analyzed within the scope of residual choreography. For instance, our choreographic yardstick must consider both the tangible and intangible values of the dance, cutting across the total context of the performance right from the rituals to procession, arena staging and recession involving a group of dancers/performers. According to Obafemi (2008, p. 176) “The first point of establishing the aesthetics of dance is to perhaps ascertain the social and metaphysical realities, which dance incorporates and encapsulates”. Hence, in indigenous African setting, the context and function of a dance as well as observing the significant rituals in accordance to the governing tradition during performance all constitute the aesthetic appeal.

The movement pattern of Echeori dance performance is composed of the basic effort actions such as wriggling, dabbling, thrusting, flicking, stamping, jumping, turning, swaying and varying degrees of gesturing characterized by percussive, vibratory and sustained movement qualities. Beside the effort actions, the steps can also be analyzed within the frame of the major body actions which include gesturing, stepping and locomotion comprising of (walking, running, leaping, hopping, galloping and gliding), turning

and even intervals of stillness. The dancer's movement transitions usually reflect a fusion of creative and emotional expressions. Usually, the symbolic inflections of the dance steps are portrayals of Ebira worldview/ belief, socio-cultural attributes; moral virtue, resourcefulness, bravery, determination and the basic traditional occupation; hunting, farming and fabric weaving. The gliding pattern of the dancers footsteps is also influenced by the hilly and rocky topography of the land which Ododo (2001: p. 164) described as "a rocky guinea savannah land south-west of the confluence of rivers Niger and Benue, a rough, poor and difficult terrain, in which the people struggle for survival. This rough, harsh and rocky terrain is very significant in the existence of the people".

The dance sequence transition usually follows the pattern of a single line or two parallel lines of dancers in procession. The procession transits into a circular form that climaxes into individual emotion drive improvisation in a showing off manner of expressions amidst the men folk cane whipping contest and the women folk creative maneuvering of fabric weaving occupational props. The successive movement transition and formation of Echeori dance sequence cuts across symmetrical and asymmetrical design in spatial and floor pattern. The transient design pattern is usually unraveled in order of straight line and clustered procession portraying (order, harvest of opinions and unity of purpose), zig-zag and arch like motion which reflect uncertainty, path trailing and gallantry, circular chain which is a symbolic representation of communality and unity. The underlying motive of the energetic and dexterous steps are usually conveyed and expressed through every part of the body zones composed of the physical, spiritual/emotional and mental zones. The footwork is characterized by intermittent fast and drowsy paced stamping, shuffling, hopping and selective lifting of the feet,

thrusting and gliding. The torso is gallantly propelled in a halfway bend posture that successively transits in intermittent swift turning and zigzag dabbling with the complementing forward swinging, upward thrusting and sideways swaying and shuffling of the hands.

Echeori festival and dance performance outlook is usually a colourful sight to behold with its rich paraphernalia of theatrical performance. These include symbolic white costume with bead accessories, make-up and props comprising Ebira traditional fabric weaving shuffler, cassava and corn morsel meal turning spatula also known as Okaha held by the women folk. The men also wield cane as prop with which they engage themselves in whipping contest. While the fabric weaving shufflers (Okaha) are usually maneuvered in intervals of upward thrust towards the sky and spatial swing, the corn morsel meal processing spatulas are usually held downward, striking them against the earth. The music ensemble is composed of membranophone class of instrument comprising a master/ bass drum known as *OkangaObanyi*, snare drum known as *Obene*, talking drum known as *Ugogonyi*, gong known as *Use* and beaded gourd shaker known as *Aiha*. The singing pattern is characterized by call and response during procession and recession with intermittent solo rendition by the lead singer at designated performance arenas. Thus, the total package of Echeori dance performance is a typical representation of indigenous African choreography. However, the composite movement pattern and transitions can be harvested and enhanced in line with the principle of emergent choreography for contemporaneous relevance.

### **Echeori Festival Performance Taboos**

Taboos are sets of customs, guide or measures put in place to be strictly adhered to in order to protect the secrecy and significant values of a traditional beliefs



and practices. Taboos in indigenous African society are meant to keep the sanctity or sacredness of a tradition intact in order to sustain the sanity of a people or community. Generally, the primary taboo guiding Echeori tradition is that the Ebiras are not to eat new yam until Echeori festival rituals are observed. This is significantly to encourage the spirit and attitude of gratitude to God for the rainfall, good yield and bountiful harvest. Secondly, Ori tradition forbids the people from engaging in any evil appearance or activities. Ododo (2004, p. 96) confirms that "If you commit yourself to an Ori spirit, you are insured against human evil, and also forbidden from doing evil against anybody". It is believed that Ori will turn against the people or the land, should devotees engages in evil activity. Thirdly, materials manufactured from iron ore/metal are strictly prohibited throughout the season of Echeori celebration. Beyond machetes and guns, all other materials with any iota of metal material are inclusive. This implies that audio visual materials such as cameras and even phones are not allowed within the vicinity of the celebration. We gathered that even clothing worn by people must not contain any form of steel material. In the case of Ihima community, the sacred Ori stool without which the priest cannot access the presence of Ori must only be carried by a young boy from the Akuta clan who has not experience sexual intercourse. On the other hand, the sacrifice carrier in the case of the Eganyi version must be a virgin girl.

The taboos guiding the celebration of Echeori are created in accordance to the instructions of the Ori spirit to significantly guide the modes of ritual observances and symbolic application of theatrical complements such as costumes, props and make-up. Thus, the priest, acolytes and worshipers during any form of Echeori performance must symbolically dress in white costumes with specific beaded adornment void of metal material. It is also a taboo for anyone to put on

shoes, charms or any form of metal to Ori's hill. Visitors or strangers are not allowed in the premises of performance. Also, anyone with snail tattoo or decorated black dye on any part of the body must not be seen within the premises of the ritual performance. In line with this, Ibrahim (1976, p. 58) expatiate on the taboos that must be kept where these feasts are celebrated thus;

1. The dress of the officiating priest should consist of white cloth decorated with red ochre (Uru), a red fez and a leopard skin veil.
2. The wife of the officiating priest must untie her hair (if plaited) and must not use any head tie or head cover. The same applies to any woman pilgrim who may go to the Ori hill.
3. Non Ebira speaking people are prohibited from the scene of performance.
4. The presence of anyone with alien tribal marks is prohibited.
5. Those with wearing body decoration made with certain black dye known as Ukokori are also prohibited from the area of performance.
6. Firing of guns throughout the period of celebration is prohibited. It is considered a serious taboo against the almighty creator as its seen as an imitation of thunder symbolizing the voice of God (Ohomorihi) the almighty rainmaker.
7. Prohibition of any form of metal product particularly harmful objects within the premises of performance.

#### **Aspects of Echeori Performance Taboos that Limits its Popularization Process**

Though, strict adherence to the taboos is an integral part of the total performance in view to forestore peaceful performances, preserving the belief, originality and continuity of the ritual

practices. However, some aspect of the very taboos that are meant to preserve the peculiarity of Echeori dance performance on the other hand crystallizes into a stagnating factor preventing the enhancement and advancement of the dance pattern beyond its root culture and environment.

- A. Prohibition of metal products; the inclusion of audio visual equipments as part of the prohibited metal products during Echeori festival performance limits the exportation of the festival theatre. Consequently, once there are no Echeori festival videos for mass viewing and there are no still pictures that can be packaged into cultural magazine for international consumption, the economic viability of the festival as a means or source of tourism will remain dormant for ages. Consequently, there will be no available visual documentation of all the important aspects of Echeori performance for posterity and cultural export purpose. The festival and dance performance may gradually fade away in years to come if there are no visible documentations that generations yet unborn would refer to as regards the culture.
- B. Prohibition of non Ebira at the premises of Echeori performance; the effect of this taboo is that Echeori dance may never gain global repute since external influences that may aid the promotion and popularization of the art are not opportuned to witness the performance. For instance, the Osun-Osogbo festival gained international repute as a result of the Austrian born Suzan Wenger's interest in Osun belief. Her interest in Osun belief which motivated her effort to preserve, enhance and promote the site with

her artistic work to represent the history and practices associated to Osun-Osogbo. Her participation in Osun-Osogbo traditional practices brought about some measure of innovative modification which helped to boost the artistic and economic viability of Osun festival as a source of tourism. The question is how will people of the outside world know about Echeori festival and possibly help to unveil the contemporary viability of the practice beyond religious enactment? Also, how will Echeori dance pattern experience some degree of transformation from improvisation to a distinct choreographic display that could be taught and learned by contemporary choreographers? In other word, not exposing the art form to a heterogeneous audience or populace for artistic exploration will cause more damage than preservation.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Aside its religious value, Echeori festival and dance performance is a viable socio-economic boosting gold mine if explored and developed for the purpose of tourism. That is, the festival season could enhance the socio-economic life of Ebira communities and even the nation at large. Therefore, it has become necessary to experiment with demystification and multi-diversifying approach towards the popularization of Echeori dance beyond Ebira communities. Therefore, it is high time the custodians of Ebira-Echeori culture soften some of the protective taboos and let the aesthetic beauty of the practices and performance be let out to the world at large. It is then, that the inherent choreographic qualities of the dance can be explored and enhanced to witness positive transformation in line with the changing trends of dance theatre performances. It is no doubt that Echeori performance in its

original pageantry and carnival outlook is theatrically rich and it is second to none in its own right. The dance movement patterns and transitional formations is equally a captivating and dexterous motion to behold. However, neither the contextual festival nor the dance movement pattern has gain international repute because some aspect of the taboos guiding the practice limits its easy accessibility to the outer world. The recommendations of this paper therefore include the following:

1. The owners of this culture especially the custodians of Ori belief should be educated on the artistic viability and economic benefit of Echeori performance to the host communities through periodic symposium, seminars and workshops. This can be achieved with the collaborative effort of the State government, local government, relevant cultural institutions, scholars, performing arts practitioners' e.t.c. that could aid preservation and sustenance of indigenous arts and culture in the advancing world.
2. The taboo which prohibit strangers or non Ebira audience participation should be modified to attract tourists, cultural institutions and communication outfits that could publicize the festival and give it international image.
3. Cameras and other necessary gadgets aiding audiovisual documentation should be exempted from the prohibited metal items during the festival. This will further help the spread and export of the dance movement pattern across the globe. Our proposition therefore is that, it has become inevitable in modern times to sustain the relevance of indigenous dance forms by allowing some degree of transformation in order to keep them from extinction as the

world advances with emerging artistic trends.

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