

Dance, identity creation and social change in Nasarawa State

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Abstract

This paper is library research on Nasarawa Dance and how it could be used to create an identity for the state while facilitating social change among its people. The paper defines social change as behavioural change that transforms the society and argues that dance, especially coupled with drama (dance-drama), could engender this desired change in the state. The article recommends inter alia that dance could be used to drive tourism in the state and should be geared towards preserving the indigenous cultures in their most valuable forms while being didactic performatively in exemplifying the virtues that Africa is known for. Also, dance should be a corrective instrument in purging the African society of cultural deformities as well as being a counter-offensive to what is equally no longer acceptable in indigenous African cultures as a people in the modern age. There is no doubt that Nasarawa State would be the better for it in terms of enhanced global visibility, positive social change and economic empowerment of its people if the above recommendations are implemented.

Key terms: Dance, identity creation, social change, cultural heritage, Nasarawa State

Danse, création identitaire et changement social dans l'État de Nasarawa

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Abstrait

Cet article est une recherche de bibliothèque sur la danse Nasarawa et comment elle pourrait être utilisée pour créer une identité pour l'État tout en facilitant le changement social parmi ses habitants. L'article définit le changement social comme un changement de comportement qui transforme la société et soutient que la danse, en particulier associée au théâtre (drame-danse), pourrait engendrer ce changement souhaité dans l'État. L'article recommande entre autres que la danse puisse être utilisée pour stimuler le tourisme dans l'État et devrait viser à préserver les cultures autochtones dans leurs formes les plus précieuses tout en étant didactique de manière performative en illustrant les vertus pour lesquelles l'Afrique est connue. En outre, la danse devrait être un instrument correctif pour purger la société africaine des difformités culturelles ainsi qu'une contre-offensive à ce qui n'est également plus acceptable dans les cultures africaines indigènes en tant que peuple à l'ère moderne. Il ne fait aucun doute que l'État de Nasarawa s'en porterait mieux en termes de visibilité mondiale accrue, de changement social positif et d'autonomisation économique de sa population si les recommandations ci-dessus étaient mises en œuvre.

Termes clés : Danse, création identitaire, changement social, patrimoine culturel, État de Nasarawa

Introduction

When people dance, it is a clear sign that there is celebration in the air. Aside of this, dance is a form of exercise which arguably explains why dancers do not grow old quickly. In this sense, dance performs a therapeutic function of slowing down aging, improving brain function and boosting patients' recovery ability (Sunde-Brown, 2022). Dance is essentially an entertainment display, but people dance for reasons that extend beyond socializing just as we have noted above. It is interesting to observe as Itsewah (2020) avers that "dance as an art has been used for many things apart from merriment; it has been used educationally, for propaganda, cultural exchange and even healing.

Dance is no more a mere hobby as perceived by many before now but now a profession and a source of livelihood to many". Dance, as a field of study, has also received academic recognition in the sense that it has been included in tertiary institutions' curriculum. At the university level, dance, as a course, is offered not only at undergraduate level but postgraduate and up to doctoral level with some scholars attaining the enviable position of 'Professors of Dance'. There is International Dance Day (April, 29) celebrated worldwide annually to further underscore the importance of dance.

Some countries of the world are noted for a specific dance that is peculiar to them and for which they have become famous internationally. For instance, *Samba Dance* is popular with the Brazilians while *Ballet* is typical of Europeans. *Gwara Gwara*

dance is associated with South Africans while *Shaku Shaku dance* is identified with Nigerians. These dances, in a way, have already stamped an identity on the countries they are originally found. In Nigeria, nearly every state has a cultural troupe just like the nation herself funds the National Troupe of Nigeria. These contingents of cultural ambassadors go all out to project the image of the states that fund them and that of the nation. It is on record that the National Troupe of Nigeria assisted in no small measure in the Rebranding Nigeria Campaign launched by the government of Olusegun Obasanjo when he was president of Nigeria (1999-2007).

Nasarawa State is blessed with diverse forms of dance identified with the different tribes and ethnic groups in the state. Equally, the numerous dances are closely associated with one cultural festival or the other. According to Dalat (2019, p.316), "There is more similarity and...heterogeneity as witnessed in most festivals in Nasarawa State. Our rich and ever dynamic culture is the main basis for reliance in the development of tourism". Dalat (2019, p.325) adds that "Festivals which highlight cultural rituals and artistic performance are often a key elements [sic] in tourist itineraries". This scholar further attests that "From one community to the other, we have all forms of celebrations. These may be seasonal or periodic as their traditional festivals...." It is indisputable that this cultural configuration has added beauty to the peaceful coexistence of the heterogeneous groups that make up Nasarawa State so much that each year, carnivals are organized in different parts of the state to entertain audience as part of end of year social activities.

This paper seeks to draw attention to the fact that Nasarawa State can reap enormous benefits from its cultural heritage particularly based on the avalanche of dances that are found among the indigenes of the state and that when these are harnessed, it would boost the development of the state in several directions. Dalat (2019, p.316) has rightly averred that "Every developing country of the world is adopting one form of development strategy or another to achieve the transformation of its economic structure or attain national development. One of such development strategies adopted to enhance national development is the development and promotion of the tourism sector". By implication, dance is a component of tourism, the latter being a heavy revenue earner for countries like Kenya, South Africa, Qatar, Dubai, etc.

It is not gainsaid that Nasarawa State is an amalgam of cultural heritage because of its multi-ethnic composition as captured in the later part of this discourse. It is equally true that most of such cultural displays involve dance, an aspect that is seen more as entertainment activity rather than a business opportunity for economic development of the state. It is, therefore, necessary to draw public attention to what may be considered as untapped vast resource available to this geo-political entity. For this reason, this paper, identifies some prominent dances in Nasarawa State, and discusses how they are performed while highlighting the prospects of using them as a cultural platform to project the *Home of Solid Minerals*, as the political slogan of the state indicates, to the world and bring the world to the state

Concept of Dance

Dance is instrumental mode of communication. In brief, dance is rhythmic response (or movement) of the body in time and space to the stimulus of music (Ibagere, 1994). Time in this context refers to regularity of body movement while space

refers to design of the movement. It is this movement in dance that leads to dancing styles and choreography. Dance is symbolic as it communicates meaning to anyone who is conversant with the cultural foundation of the performance otherwise, it becomes a mere entertainment display. The iconic nature of some dances makes them to be restricted to a select few who usually are the initiates. An example in this regard is the performance by masquerades in some Nigerian communities. By implication, not all dance is for fun. However, the focus of this paper is not on such sacred dance. Olokodana-James (2019) has asserted that:

Discussions about what constitutes dance or what does not has been further complicated by [the]nature of dance. On one divide of the discourse are scholars who perceive dance from a generic point while on the other are scholars who would rather zero down to identifying the cultural relativity of the term 'dance'.

Itsewah (2020) posits that "Dance can be seen as a theatrical performance aspect of culture which is enacting or imitating of life through festival, carnival and music as the case may be. Dance cuts across all cultures and has no age limitation and it is generic". Dance is often accompanied with music which makes both look like Siamese Twins; music induces dance and dance adds flavour to music. Fraleigh (1999) declares that:

Dance is not a precise concept or singular activity; it is richly diverse. Dance is not just any movement, but movement that has been created for some particular purpose. Although we may lose track of the creative origin of traditional dances, all dance is the product of human inventions.

Dance is usually used as an entertainment piece to project culture in which case, it takes on the garb of social significance. Social units in society like age groups and guilds express their identity and cohesion in dance. Even the royalty i.e. Obas, Obis, Igwes, etc, sometimes engage in dance publicly. For instance, the Oba of Benin and the Obi of Onitsha usually dance during Igwe and Ofala traditional festivals in their respective domains. Masquerades, which constitute institutional mode of indigenous communication, also engage in dance when performing in public.

Historically, dance as an art was accorded national recognition during the FESTAC 77 carnival in Nigeria, a landmark event that has become a point of reference in cultural studies in Africa. After the fiesta, a lot of transformation came into the art of dance, in terms of formation of dance troupes, the establishment of Art Councils in all states of the federation, the National Council for Art and Culture (NCAC) and finally the National Troupe of Nigeria. Some of these entertainment troupes have done excellently in delivering cultural products to national and global audiences. A shining example in this regard is the vibrant, indomitable and indefatigable Cultural Troupe of Nasarawa State which has won first place position back-to-back five times in the Nigerian National Festival (NAFEST) and has gone out to perform beyond the shores of this country showcasing the culture of the people. Such a rare feat deserves a special honour. On this note, it would not be out of place to metaphorically refer to Nasarawa State as *The Home of Dance*. Those athletic, able-bodied young men and women merit celebration by the state government.

In most communities in Africa, special dances are organized to mark different occasions such as marriage, funerals, and cultural festivals among others. These dances exemplify the attitudes and attributes suitable to such occasions. Dance and

culture are inseparable because dance is actually a subset of culture. When one talks of dance of Nasarawa State, one is customarily talking about the culture of the *Home of Solid Minerals*. What then is culture? According to the Nigerian Cultural Policy (1988) cited in Nosa Owen-Ibie (2002), "Culture comprises material, institutional, philosophical and creative aspects... (and)...is not merely a return to the customs of the past. It embodies the attitude of a people to the future of their traditional values faced with the demands of modern technology".

In the view of Eagleton (2000), "Culture is not vague fantasy of fulfilment, but a set of potentials bred by history and subversively at work within it". Culture resonates with history of a people. Drawn from the above postulations, this paper, therefore, defines Culture to mean how people interpret their existence in any given environment. One of the key ways of manifesting life in one's environment is through dance. Yerima (2007) has argued that "if culture is defined as a way of life of a people then dance, which is a central part of culture, is also a way of life of any given people. This is because both culture and dance are intertwined." Dance could be combined with drama as a stage performance. In this case, it becomes a dance-drama which is an effective strategy used in communicating distinct development messages to people especially in the rural areas.

It is rather unfortunate that as a result of the much touted modernity wave, so many youths nowadays in Nasarawa State could hardly take a dance step to songs and music in their own culture but can do the dance of America, Europe, Asia, etc. They can sing songs by foreign musicians of international repute but would be speechless when it comes to singing songs indigenous to their culture. Suffice it to say that the picture painted above about Nasarawa State is evidently symptomatic of other states of Nigeria. It could be arguably hypothesized here, therefore, that if one cannot dance the dance of one's people, or sing their songs, such an individual is simply not completely a part of the people. The cultural affiliation of such individual is, therefore, grossly deficient. Ineji (2012, p.197) cites Hass, Markson & Stein (1988) who say that "people become functioning members of a group as they learn and participate in the culture".

This is why Africa must do all in her powers to avoid identity crisis for the future generations of Africans (Alemoh, 2012). Ernest Beyaraza is quoted in Dugga (2017, pp. 4-5) as saying that "The simple reality is that Africa has lost a great deal of its own culture, and is now looking up to European culture which it cannot afford". A psychologist, Erik Erikson, has defined identity crisis as "a crisis of personal identity". Egwu (2001, p. 9) sheds more light on this pitiable situation in lamenting that:

...it is as if to be in Africa is to be like the West...unfortunately, Africans do not copy the best but the worst that is Western. It is fast becoming a sore point in the continent's dilemma of identity crisis. We are now undergoing a harrowing period of wretchedness whereby Africans possessed of black skins have white minds, values and attitudes.

Wilson (2015, p.76) also decries the continual manifestation of this untoward invasion of the African cultural space that, "Just as in the days of the slave trade, the physical possession of our bodies has been replaced by the critical possession of our minds". As a consequence of this nasty development, Alemoh (2020) has posited that "Obviously, this mindset conditions the self-perception of the average African who strives to imitate his counterparts in the western hemisphere based on standards set by the latter". The

struggle to bring about a cultural renaissance in Africa must be supported by all and vigorously spearheaded by media and theatre organizations in the continent. One realistic way of achieving this noble ideal is through resuscitation of indigenous dances in Africa.

Profile of Nasarawa State

According to information on the official website of the Nasarawa State Government (www.nasarawastate.gov.ng), the state is in the North Central region of Nigeria, bordered to the east by the states of Taraba and Plateau, to the north by Kaduna State, to the south by the states of Kogi and Benue, and to the west by the Federal Capital Territory. It has thirteen Local Government Areas and several Development Areas. The State was created on 1st October, 1996 along with other new states by the General Sani Abacha led military regime. The state lies on 8°32'N; 8°18'E and its capital city is Lafia. Nasarawa State has a total landmass of 27,117 km² (10,470 sq mi) with a total population of 1,869,377 (2006 Census). It is interesting to note that of the 36 states of Nigeria, Nasarawa is the fifteenth largest in area and second least populous with an estimated population of about 2.5 million as of 2016. Geographically, the state is mostly within the tropical Guinean forest–savanna mosaic eco-region. Important geographic features include the River Benue forming much of Nasarawa State's southern borders and the state's far northeast containing a small part of the Jos Plateau.

As this paper has pointed out earlier, Nasarawa State is a conglomeration of various ethnic groups and an amalgam of cultural dances. The ethnic groups include the Koro and Yeskwa in the far northwest; the Kofyar in the far northeast; the Eggon, Gwandara, Mada, Ninzo, and Nungu in the north; the Alago, Goemai, and Megili in the east; Eloyi in the south; the Tiv in the southeast; the Idoma in southwest; and the Gade and Gbagyi in the west while the Hausa and Fulani live throughout the state. Nasarawa is also religiously diverse as about 60% of the state's population is Muslim with around 30% being Christian and the remaining 10% following traditional ethnic religions.

Dances in Nasarawa State

Dance is a physical activity that requires enormous energy to accomplish especially in the African setting. African dance is a rigorous and tasking performance. Dugga (2022) has noted that "Some dances are more physical than others and Nasarawa State has a good number of physically tasking dances". A profile of selected dances in Nasarawa State is presented below to include the Gele of Rhindre in Wamba Local Government Area, Mengai Nzeh Mada in Akwanga Local Government Area, Anzalu of Eggon in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area, Owa Dance of Gwudara Kokona Local Government Area, Odu Dance of Alago in Doma Local Government Area, Ogu (Koro) Migili Dance of Koro in Obi Local Government Area to mention but a few. However, this paper expatiates on two very prominent dances in the list presented above which are the Ogu (Koro) Migili Dance of Koro in Obi Local Government Area and Anzalu of Eggon in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area respectively.

Ogu Dance

Ogu dance is a significant ceremony in Koro tradition; it is performed on the death of a prominent member of the community, or during an important cultural event or annual festivals as well as in the coronation of a new chief. Ogu dance is characterised by heavy musical rhythm which are produced from a variety of instruments discussed in this paper. The young men and maiden who are skilled dancers and singers display their dancing skills to the great admiration of children, youths and elderly members of the community. In the past, the dance was used by the Koro people to celebrate the bravery of their warriors after a successful war. However, the dance has evolved overtime to transcend a victory display since inter-tribal and internecine wars are no longer fashionable in modern times. Today Ogu Migili dance is performed at every important event with a captivating display of a warrior opening the stage with loud exclamations.

The movements are more emphasised on leg work involving the stamping of the legs on the floor to assert the strength that flows from the brain to the legs as assertiveness of strength and bravery. The aggressive moves of the dancers indicate the antics of a warrior matched with gallant gestures that come with success in war. The dance is accompanied with performative composite elements such as costumes, props and traditional instruments like four sets of drums: *Kilije* (gong), *Muda* (flute), *Kakashi* (trumpet), *kuku* (shield) which is a symbol of defence, *Okpah* (sword) a symbol of weapon for close contact combat, *Ibeh* (spear) to pierce animals for sacrifice and during hunting.

Anzalu Dance

Anzalu Dance is basically the most popular social dance in the Eggon nation, always used in almost all celebrations in Eggon land. As an agrarian society, the dance is used to celebrate harvest time and appreciate God for a good yield. The dance was named after a renowned choreographer called *Anzalu* which literally means 'dance lover'. The dance was named after him simply because he was the one that taught the dance steps and movements as a form of training and entertainment for the Eggon people when there was any ceremony like festivals, traditional marriages and coronation. Research shows that *Anzalu* dance steps and movements are the only unique and recognized movement that is strictly peculiar to the Eggon nation and its culture. It is worthy of note that the uniqueness of the movement of the dancers, their costumes, instruments and props are a sight to behold, just as the subtle but aggressive stamping of their legs guarded with iron shackles produce sounds that combine with rhythm of the wooden drums to arouse and appease their god (*Ahogbre*) and stir up their visitors' admiration at such events.

The costumes, props and instrumentation include *Eshi'ako* (the headwear), *Ebi'akpa* (the waist band, which is believed to aid stamina), *Oru'aben* (the cross belt on their shoulder that depicts bravery), *Ewa*, *Nga or Ara (Ganga Ara)* are the shackles the dancers tie on their legs used for the cultural performance. Other accompaniments in the dance are *Ewa* which is used for Eke festival, *Amanga* (Drum), *En'yre* (horsetail), *Dzogu* (Gong, normally held by the lead dancer), and *Echi'manga* (Drum sticks). It is important to note that these dances and many more are identification and social ethos of the people of Nasarawa state; they give the people a sense of belonging and induce social reforms from their historical background, essence and functionalities.

Theoretical framework

This paper is anchored in Cultural Norms theory. Cultural norms theory simply states that “people rely so much on media and their lives are patterned according to the dominant ways in which the media present issues” (Orji-Egwu, 2012, p.189). This scholar further explains that the media do emphasize certain cultures and cultural ideas and values over and above others to influence their audience to imbibe the dominant culture while downplaying indigenous cultures. The culture that is subdued would gradually fade out giving way to alien practices. It is important to state here that cultural norms theory is a complement of cultural imperialism theory which also emphasizes the domination of a local culture by a foreign culture through the instrumentality of the media. The penchant of Nigerian youths currently for western world dancing styles, music and songs over similar indigenous practices as asserted in this paper attests to the validity of this theoretical postulation and its relatedness to our study. In simple terms, the prognosis of this discourse is that if the people of Nasarawa State, like their counterparts anywhere else in Nigeria, would fail to project their cultural practices of which dance is prominent, the people’s indigenous culture faces the risk of going extinct resulting to a loss of identity (who the people are) and the social change they would have experienced thereby.

Dance and Identity Creation

Denotatively, identity is the difference or character that marks off an individual from other persons; it is an affirmation of selfhood. Identity creates differentiation, uniqueness, distinction between two or more things or people. Among humans, identity could be based on race, physique, nationality, language, culture, etc. An aggregate of such features that define a group of people could be taken as group or national identity depending on the scope. On the issue of national identity or character, Federico (2001) avers that “National character is an expression which describes a form of collective self-perception and conduct which are shared by the individuals who inhabit modern nation-state. It presupposes the existence of psychological and cultural homogeneity among the citizens of each country...”

Dance projects people’s cultures to outsiders through the costumes, adornments, dance step/movement that are associated with such cultures (Itsewah, 2019). In this way, a national character is configured. Just as the tribal marks of the Yoruba man is different from that of the Igala, Kanuri or Hausa man, the dance costumes and adornment of each tribe or ethnic group in Nigeria also differ one from another. The outfits of these different ethnic groups stand out as an identity wherever and whenever they are worn (Itsewah, 2019). Therefore, if tribal marks, dressing, food and mode of greeting could give an identity to a people for instance, we can also think of dance equally doing the same.

Every dance establishes the uniqueness of a people. These dances are taught by one generation to the next. Every group thereby nurtures and preserves its identity through dance. Dances, therefore, inevitably present the popular face of culture for every group of people. However, we need to observe that the identity that is captured in indigenous dances, like every aspect of life, is subject to change. Many indigenous dances are currently experiencing different forms of modifications, some major and

some minor as a result of the influence of other cultures which impact greatly on their current forms (Dugga, 2022). What this means is that dance is dynamic; it changes like culture. We need to also assert here that as much as cultural mutation (changes in culture) is inevitable, in the aspect of dance, such changes should not be allowed to erase the originality and essence of the dance which invariably defines its ability to make impact and create an identity. Nasarawa dance may borrow styles from dances elsewhere but it does not mean that such aesthetic additions should deface the former while making it a cultural hybrid with no defined identity.

Dance and Social Change

Dunfey (2019) has defined social change as changes in human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions with profound impact on society. Wilterdink (2022), writing in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, defines social change from a sociological perspective as follows: “social change is the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure characterised by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour, social organizations, or value systems”. From the above postulations, we could deduce that social change is all about behavioural change in people. When people change, society changes as well.

Scholars of social change agree that social, ideological, economic and political movements could lead to social change. For instance, in recent history such movements like #EndSARS protest in Nigeria, Women Rights, Gender Equality advocacy, etc, have produced drastic changes in the way modern life and even governance are organized and run. In the same vein, scholars of social change agree that the latter could come about as a result of contact with other societies (diffusion of ideas), changes in the ecosystem (which can cause loss of natural resources or widespread disease), technological change (epitomised by the Industrial Revolution and its resultant technological evolution) as well as population growth and other demographic variables.

Wilterdink (2022) adds that social change comes about by educating people. Our study on dance emphasizes educating the people through a process which ordinarily is conceived to offer entertainment. In this way, social change could occur in any society. Social change is needed in the area of deviant behaviour of errant youths who are addicted to drugs, alcohol and substance abuse. The adult segment of the population is not immune to deviant behaviour either as it is seen in a collective deviation from the ideals of a decent society in modern day Nigeria manifesting in unending farmer-herder conflict, election rigging, massive corruption, tribal and ethnic jingoism, religious bigotry, widespread armed robbery and riotous kidnapping, debilitating banditry and sectarian agitations, among the litany of woes plaguing the nation of recent. The MacBride Commission Report (1981, p.177) has rightly noted that “We live, alas, in an age stained by cruelty, torture, conflict and violence. These are not the natural human condition; they are scourges to be eradicated. We should never resign ourselves to endure passively what can be curbed”.

The sad submission above calls for a radical social change in the social structure and value system of the Nigerian society. Nasarawa, like its neighbouring states in north-central Nigeria, certainly is plagued with such anti-social menace as substance abuse, prostitution, human trafficking, ritual killing, Internet fraud, etc, which are issues

of concern to the government of the state just as they are to governments of other states and the federal government. For example, as a reaction to heightening incidence of drug abuse in the state, the Nasarawa State House of Assembly (Legislature) was about passing a bill “for a law to prohibit substance abuse and provide treatment for abusers” as at the time of writing (*The Guardian*, 25/03/2022).

The newspaper further reported that observers at the public hearing for passage of the bill “urged more awareness campaign against substance abuse to discourage people from addiction, especially the dealers and end users for the overall development of the country”. Dance could create an avenue for such social mobilization geared towards attitudinal change. Youths are often the perpetrators and unfortunate victims of the social vices. As a panacea, dance would not only engage the productive energy of the youths in the right direction, it would also set their minds thinking on positive aspects of life. A cheerful mind would not easily fall victim of depression and anti-social behaviour.

When the bubbling energy in the youths is canalized into productive ventures like dance, they would not only earn decent living for themselves but employ others who they could teach how to dance and be self-reliant. Today, musical artistes, film makers, media practitioners and other social media content creators are in search of dancers to feature in video productions, films, documentaries, etc. The youths could easily cash in on these opportunities and be self-employed. Youths could also organize themselves into dance groups which could be engaged in occasions as entertainment providers and they would be handsomely remunerated for such displays.

This paper argues that media and theatre can orchestrate the change mantra because as Yerima (2013) cited in Adebayo (2019, p.62) rightly observes, “The artist even in modern times is a creative being whose works whether orally performative, visual, or written had [sic] direct social utility and highlighted [sic] the direct relationship with the life of his immediate community”. Equally, media and theatre could champion the fight against cultural subjugation as Professor Ali Mazrui, cited in Alemoh (2012, p.15), has suggested by pursuing “those principles of cultural engineering which emphasize indigenizing what is foreign, idealizing what is indigenous, nationalizing what is sectional and emphasizing what is African”. By so doing, through dance in conjunction with other performing arts, Nasarawa State being a beehive of cultural activities could be using the proverbial one stone to kill several birds in this instance. The statement is credited to George Orwell, the famous novelist that, “The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and destroy their own understanding of their history”. Through constant engagement of the people of Nasarawa State in indigenous dance performance, their knowledge of history would be refreshed and their true identity be preserved as a people.

For Africans not to lose their bearing as a people in the global cultural landscape, Dung & Toholde (2018, p.221) suggest engineering a renaissance because “There is a strong need for cultural revival in that we need to begin to value the ‘Africanness’ in us and reposes [sic] our traditions that we have long abandoned in favour of the white man’s way of life”. On this note, Alemoh (2012, p.6) has pointed out the likely consequence of this inhibition to self-actualisation of Africans noting that “The danger in this is that African culture unequivocally faces extinction or at best, we will have a purely adulterated culture that would make nonsense of whatever values Africa stands for if no

corrective cultural surgery is done now". This is why Alemoh (2012, p.1) also argues that cultural dislocation "... is usually a gradual process of jettisoning one's cultural foundations to embrace those of others and a subtle displacement of one's cultural posture that turns its victim to a cultural refugee in one's land".

Dance can empower the people of Nasarawa State and by extension, Nigerians to be economically buoyant, socially relevant and culturally secure in terms of heritage to bequeath to the future generations. Evidence of this prognosis could be seen in the harvest of great talents through the Maltina Street Dance and GLO Unlimited Street Dance in Nigerian recent history. It is our firm belief in this discourse that dance can give Nasarawa State and Nigeria a befitting identity. Dance must be done not only to entertain but to build a strong, virile and peaceful society where everybody would have a sense of belonging under the canopy of a collective identity.

Conclusion

This paper has closely examined the place of dance in the contemporary Nigerian society with focus on Nasarawa State. We have noted that dance, especially in its dramatic form, is an intellectually stimulating social activity that has the potential of building the state and taking her to enviable heights of global visibility, economic prosperity and socio-political cum cultural development through the avenue of tourism. All this would be a reality when we observe the following key points as recommended below:

Recommendations

- i. Dance should be geared towards preserving the indigenous culture in its most valuable form because the wind of cultural imperialism is blowing strongly across the world. Some cultures are already badly adulterated in the process while some may be so bastardized beyond recognition in few years to come.
- ii. Dance should be didactic in exemplifying the virtues that Africa is known for – honesty, integrity, selflessness, purity, hard work, etc, to orient the young ones while reminding the adults of same.
- iii. Dance should be a corrective instrument in purging the African society of cultural deformities with the singular objective of restoring the lost glory of Africa orchestrated through contact with imperial powers from the western world.
- iv. Dance should be a counter-offensive to what is equally no longer acceptable in indigenous African cultures as a people in the modern age.
- v. Government and public-spirited individuals as well as corporate bodies should take up sponsorship of carnivals as a priority to boost cultural renaissance in Nasarawa State
- vi. The state government should harmonize the organization of the various annual cultural fiestas in the state into a unified carnival to be held at the end of each year for greater impact.

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