



SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF EGBELEGBELE AND SEIGBEIN DANCES OF BAYELSA STATE

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Abstract

This study explores the social functions of Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances of Bayelsa State. Both are traditional dances deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Focusing on these dances, the research investigates their roles in community life, encompassing their ceremonial, social, and economic dimensions. Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances are characterized by distinctive traditional attire crafted meticulously from local materials, symbolizing cultural heritage and identity. Their dance forms blend rhythmic movements with symbolic gestures, transmitting ancestral knowledge and communal values. Central to these dances are rituals and rites that invoke ancestral spirits and deities, fostering a spiritual connection and reinforcing social cohesion within the community. They serve as platforms for community bonding bringing together individuals across generations to celebrate shared cultural practices and in so doing strengthen social ties. Beyond their ritual significance, Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances are sources of entertainment and recreation, providing joy and respite from daily routines. They also serve educational purposes, imparting cultural history and moral teachings to younger generations, thereby preserving cultural identity. Economically, these dances contribute by stimulating local craftsmanship through the production of dance attire and supporting cultural tourism, thereby enhancing community livelihoods. This study employs qualitative methods, drawing on interviews, participant observation, and scholarly literature to provide a comprehensive analysis of how Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances fulfill crucial social functions within Bayelsa State.

Keywords: Social, Functions, Egbelegbele, Seigbein, Dances.

INTRODUCTION

Dance, a universal form of human expression, is rooted in ancient traditions and has evolved across cultures to embody social, religious, and artistic functions. According to scholars such as Judith Lynne Hanna, dance serves as a conduit for communication, cultural preservation, and community bonding. Hanna (1987), in her seminal work *"To Dance is Human: A Theory of Nonverbal Communication"*, emphasized dance's role in nonverbal communication, connecting it to rituals, celebrations, and storytelling across societies. Kaepler (1972) explores the origins of dance in her book *"Dance and the Concept of Style"*, tracing its beginnings to ritualistic and ceremonial practices in ancient civilizations. The Egbelegbele dance unlike other form or genres, is a (folk) traditional dance of the Ijaw people in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. This dance is characterized by its vigorous and rhythmic movements of the upper body, accompanied by traditional musical instruments such as drums, flutes/horns, and rattles. Egbelegbele is performed during significant community events, festivals, and ceremonies, serving as a medium to express joy, unity, and cultural identity. Alagoa (1999) stated that Egbelegbele dance embodies the Ijaw people's cultural heritage and historical experiences, making it a vital component of their social fabric. Seigbein dance, on the other hand, is another traditional dance of the Ijaw people, notable for its graceful and fluid movements. This dance often involves symbolic gestures and storytelling, reflecting the community's myths, legends, and historical narratives.

As highlighted by Isiramen (2009), Seigbein dance plays a crucial role in preserving oral traditions and educating younger generations about their cultural heritage. The dance is typically performed during rites of passage, spiritual ceremonies, and communal celebrations.

The Egbelegbele dance dates back several centuries and is believed to have originated from the early Ijaw settlements along the Niger Delta. Its roots can be traced to the pre-colonial era, where it was used as a form of social and spiritual expression. Alagoa (2005) noted that dance has evolved over time, incorporating

influences from various cultural interactions and historical events that have shaped the Ijaw people's identity. Seigbein dance also has ancient origins, with its establishment closely linked to the spiritual and cultural practices of the Ijaw people. It is believed to have emerged as a sacred dance performed during significant rituals and festivals. Isiramen (2009) noted that the Seigbein dance has been preserved through generations, maintained by traditional custodians who ensure its authenticity and continuity. The exact year of establishment for both dances is difficult to pinpoint due to their deep-rooted historical significance and oral transmission.

The primary aim of the Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances is to preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage of the Ijaw people. These dances serve as vital tools for cultural education, transmitting traditional values, beliefs, and histories to younger generations. Alagoa (2005) emphasized that the dances are instrumental in fostering a sense of community and belonging among the Ijaw people, reinforcing their collective identity and pride in their cultural heritage. Another significant objective is to use these dances as a medium for social cohesion and communal harmony. Isiramen (2014) points out that both Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances are performed during community gatherings, festivals, and important ceremonies, creating opportunities for social interaction and strengthening communal bonds. Additionally, the dances are used to celebrate important milestones and achievements, providing a platform for communal joy and collective expression.

The Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances hold immense importance for the Ijaw people, serving as living embodiments of their cultural heritage and identity. These dances are not only a form of artistic expression but also a repository of historical and cultural knowledge. Etekpe (2011) noted that dances play a crucial role in preserving the oral traditions of the Ijaw people, ensuring that their stories, myths, and historical experiences are passed down through generations. Furthermore, the dances contribute to the cultural diversity and richness of Bayelsa State and Nigeria as a whole. Ebiegberi (2012) noted that the Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances attract cultural tourism, drawing visitors interested in experiencing the unique cultural practices of the Ijaw people. This, in turn, promotes cultural exchange and understanding, fostering a greater appreciation for Nigeria's diverse cultural landscape.

The Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances serve several social functions within the Ijaw community. Firstly, they act as a medium for socialization, bringing people together during festivals, ceremonies, and communal events. As highlighted by Olorunfemi (2010), these dances provide an opportunity for community members to interact, share experiences, and strengthen social bonds. Secondly the dances are used in rites of passage and important life events, such as weddings, naming ceremonies, and funerals. Amaopusenibo (2008) explained that the Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances are integral to these ceremonies, marking significant transitions and milestones in individuals' lives. They provide a sense of continuity and connection to ancestral traditions, reinforcing the community's cultural identity.

Despite their cultural significance, the Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances face several challenges. One major challenge is the threat of cultural erosion due to modernization and globalization. As younger generations are increasingly exposed to foreign cultures and lifestyles, there is a risk of declining interest and participation in traditional dances. Perekeme (2015) pointed out that this poses a significant threat to the preservation of these cultural practices. Another challenge is the lack of institutional support and funding for the promotion and preservation of traditional dances. Azibola (2013) noted that there are limited resources available for cultural programs and initiatives that aim to sustain and promote the Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances. This lack of support hinders efforts to document, teach, and showcase these dances to a wider audience.

The dressing for Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances typically involves traditional attire made from locally sourced materials such as raffia, beads, and animal skins, reflecting the community's connection to their environment and heritage. Ekpe (2015) and Timi (2018) noted that these materials are integral to the authenticity and visual appeal of the dances. The dance modes are characterized by rhythmic movements and coordinated steps that symbolize various aspects of life and spirituality. Rituals and rites, often led by community elders, imbue the dances with spiritual significance, serving to honour deities and ancestors (Ebi, 2016). These dances foster community bonding and social cohesion by bringing together different age groups and fostering a sense of unity (Ikoli, 2017). Additionally, they serve as a means of entertainment and recreation, providing joy and relaxation to participants and spectators alike. The dances are a profound expression of identity and pride, reinforcing cultural values and traditions. They also have educational and didactic purposes, passing down historical narratives and moral lessons to younger generations. Economically, these dances contribute to local economies through tourism and the sale of traditional crafts and attire (Tom, 2019). These aspects collectively underscore the cultural richness and societal importance of the Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances in Bayelsa State.

Dance

Dance is a universal form of expression that transcends language, communicating emotions, narratives, and cultural traditions through movement, rhythm, and gesture. It serves diverse purposes, from ritualistic and ceremonial functions to social bonding, entertainment, and personal expression. Across cultures, dance

embodies identity, preserves heritage, and fosters community cohesion, reflecting and shaping societal values and norms through its dynamic and expressive physical language. Foster (1996) revealed that embodiment of cultural meanings and bodily practices, highlighting how dance communicates through movement, gesture, and rhythm, reflecting societal norms and values. Lynne (1983) stated that dance serves as a vital medium for community cohesion, ritualistic expression, and emotional release, linking individuals to their heritage and fostering collective identity. Furthermore, Marcel (1979) examined dance as a form of bodily language that transcends verbal communication, conveying narratives, emotions, and spiritual beliefs within specific cultural contexts. These perspectives collectively emphasize dance's role in shaping identity, fostering social bonds, and transmitting cultural heritage through physical performance and symbolic expression.

Traditional Dance

Traditional dance encompasses a rich tapestry of cultural expressions deeply rooted in the history and identity of communities worldwide. Kealiinohomoku (1976), Hanna (1988) and Anthony (2002) asserted that, dances often utilize specific dress and traditional materials, embodying rituals and rites that strengthen community bonds and social cohesion. They hold significant ritual and religious meanings, offering both entertainment and educational value while serving as a poignant expression of cultural identity and pride. The economic contributions of traditional dance through tourism and cultural industries, underscored its dynamic role in global heritage preservation.

History of Egbelegbele and Seigbein Dances

The Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances are traditional performances deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the Ijaw people in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. These dances have been practiced for centuries and are integral to the social and cultural fabric of the communities. Alagoa (2009) stated that a renowned historian from the University of Port Harcourt, the origins of these dances can be traced back to the pre-colonial era when they were performed during significant community events such as festivals, rites of passage, and religious ceremonies. Egbelegbele dance, specifically, is associated with the celebratory aspects of Ijaw culture. It is often performed during the New Yam Festival, which marks the beginning of the yam harvest season. The dance was originally a form of thanksgiving to the gods for a bountiful harvest. Over time, it has evolved to include elements of entertainment and social cohesion, reflecting the dynamic nature of Ijaw traditions.

Seigbein dance, on the other hand, has a more solemn origin. It is traditionally linked to the spiritual practices of the Ijaw people, particularly in the context of funerals and ancestral worship. According to Professor Martha Akpabio from Niger Delta University, Seigbein dance was performed to honor the deceased and to ensure their smooth transition to the afterlife. The dance involves intricate movements and chants that are believed to communicate with the spirits, reinforcing the Ijaw's connection to their ancestors. The materials used in both Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances are steeped in traditional symbolism. Costumes are made from locally sourced fabrics, beads, and shells, which are believed to carry spiritual significance. Alagoa (2009) noted that the use of these materials is not merely aesthetic but also serves as a link to the past, preserving the heritage of the Ijaw people.

The mode of dancing for Egbelegbele is characterized by vigorous and rhythmic movements that reflect the joy and energy of the festival season. In contrast, Seigbein dance features slower, more deliberate steps that convey reverence and solemnity. Akpabio (2015) explained that these distinct styles of dance illustrate the diverse expressions of Ijaw culture, each with its own unique purpose and significance. Rituals and rites are integral to both dances. For Egbelegbele, rituals involve offerings of yams and palm wine to the gods before the dance begins, signifying gratitude and seeking blessings for future harvests. Seigbein rituals, as described include libations and invocations to the ancestors, emphasizing the dance's spiritual dimensions. Community bonding and social cohesion are strengthened through these dances. David-West (2017) emphasizes that the communal participation in Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances fosters a sense of unity and shared identity among the Ijaw people. These performances serve as a reminder of their collective history and cultural values. The ritualistic and religious significance of these dances cannot be overstated. Egbelegbele dance is a form of worship and thanksgiving, while Seigbein dance is a medium for spiritual communication. Dr. Alagoa's studies indicate that these dances are seen as sacred activities that uphold the spiritual well-being of the community.

In terms of entertainment and recreation, Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances provide a platform for artistic expression and cultural celebration. They offer opportunities for individuals to showcase their dancing skills and for the community to come together in joyous celebration. Akpabio (2015) noted that these dances are a source of pride and enjoyment for the Ijaw people, reflecting the vibrant nature of their culture. The educational and economic contributions of these dances are significant. They serve as a means of passing down traditional knowledge and cultural values to younger generations. Additionally, festivals featuring Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances attract tourists, contributing to the local economy. David-West, (2017) highlighted that these cultural events provide income for artisans, performers, and local businesses, demonstrating the multifaceted impact of these traditional dances.

Dressing in Egbelegbele and Seigbein Dances

The Egbelegbele dance of Bayelsa State is characterized by vibrant costumes that reflect the cultural heritage of the Ijaw people. Odimugu (2018) revealed that participants in the Egbelegbele dance traditionally adorn themselves in elaborate attire. This includes brightly colored wrappers, often made from local fabrics like akwa ocha, and intricately woven headgear known as gele. The attire is complemented by coral beads and traditional jewelry, symbolizing wealth and cultural identity. In addition to attire, the Egbelegbele dance involves specific body markings and adornments. Odimugu (2018) revealed that facial and body painting using natural pigments such as clay and charcoal are common. These markings often carry symbolic meanings, representing ancestral spirits, bravery, or social status within the community. The combination of attire and body adornments not only enhances the visual spectacle of the dance but also reinforces cultural identity and heritage among participants.

The Seigbein dance, another significant cultural dance in Bayelsa State, is also noted for its distinctive attire and adornments. Darah (2002) described the Seigbein dance attire as consisting of traditional regalia that signifies the richness of Ijaw cultural heritage. Participants wear elaborately embroidered wrappers and shirts, often with intricate designs that vary according to the dancer's status and role within the community. The Seigbein dance attire is further embellished with cowries, beads, and brass ornaments. These accessories not only add aesthetic value but also serve as symbols of cultural pride and spiritual significance. The use of brass bells and ankle rattles during the dance adds a rhythmic element, enhancing the auditory and visual experience of the performance. Both the Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances play crucial roles in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the Ijaw people in Bayelsa State.

Traditional materials used for Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances

The Egbelegbele dance of Bayelsa State incorporates specific traditional materials that reflect the cultural identity of the community. Palamie (2015) asserted that traditional materials used in Egbelegbele include "colorful costumes made from woven raffia palm leaves and dyed with natural pigments". These costumes are intricately designed to enhance the dancers' movements and convey symbolic meanings tied to local folklore and historical narratives. Peterside (2017) noted that Egbelegbele dancers often wear "beaded necklaces and anklets, crafted from local shells and seeds," which are believed to invoke ancestral blessings and protect the dancers during performances. The use of these materials underscores the dance's spiritual significance within the community and its role in preserving cultural heritage.

The Seigbein dance, another prominent cultural expression in Bayelsa State, also utilizes traditional materials that are deeply rooted in local customs and beliefs. Koroye (2018) indicated that Seigbein dancers adorn themselves with "feathered headdresses made from bird plumage, symbolizing spiritual connections to the natural world". These headdresses are meticulously crafted by skilled artisans and worn as a mark of honor and respect for ancestral traditions. Moreover, Nengi-Sawyer (2016) emphasized the importance of "drum skins made from animal hides, which produce distinct rhythms essential for Seigbein performances". The drums are considered sacred instruments that communicate with the spirit world and guide dancers in their rhythmic movements, thereby enriching the cultural experience of Seigbein.

Mode of dancing Egbelegbele and Seigbein

The Egbelegbele dance is a traditional dance form from Bayelsa State, primarily performed by the Nembe people. This dance is characterized by its lively and rhythmic movements, accompanied by traditional music played on drums and other local instruments. Azibagiri (2023) stated that Egbelegbele dance is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the Nembe people, reflecting themes of communal celebration and storytelling through dance. The dance involves synchronized movements of dancers in colorful traditional attire, often depicting historical events, spiritual beliefs, and community values. Okiemi (2021) noted that the Egbelegbele dance serves as both entertainment and a means of cultural preservation among the Nembe people, reinforcing social cohesion and identity. The Seigbein dance, on the other hand, originates from the Ijaw ethnic group in Bayelsa State. It is characterized by its energetic and acrobatic movements, symbolizing themes of bravery, victory, and cultural pride. Festus (2019) revealed that Seigbein dance traditionally accompanies significant social events such as weddings, festivals, and rites of passage. Dancers in the Seigbein performance wear elaborate costumes adorned with beads, feathers, and traditional body paint, emphasizing the spiritual and ceremonial significance of the dance. Festus suggests that the Seigbein dance not only entertains but also educates younger generations about Ijaw traditions, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural continuity. Both the Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances play crucial roles in preserving and promoting cultural heritage in Bayelsa State. Scholars emphasize their role in maintaining community bonds, transmitting historical narratives, and celebrating communal achievements. Dances continue to evolve, adapting to modern contexts while retaining their cultural authenticity (Collins, 2020).

Ritual and Rite for Egbelegbele and Seigbein Dances

The Egbelegbele dance is a significant cultural ritual among the Ijaw people of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Alagoa (2005) described Egbelegbele as a communal dance that traditionally marks important events like harvest celebrations or rites of passage. The dance involves intricate movements symbolizing unity and cultural heritage, often accompanied by songs that narrate the history and values of the community. The rite associated with Egbelegbele includes ceremonial preparations that may span days or weeks before the dance itself. Okaba (2010) noted that these preparations involve spiritual purifications and offerings to ancestral spirits, aimed at invoking their blessings for a successful event. Participants, clad in traditional attire, undergo rituals led by designated elders who ensure adherence to cultural protocols. During the dance, specific rituals are performed to maintain harmony and invoke the ancestral spirits for protection and prosperity. These rituals are integral to the dance's spiritual and social significance within the Ijaw community. Diri (2013) argued that Egbelegbele serves not only as entertainment but also as a means of reinforcing cultural identity and communal solidarity among the Ijaw people.

The Seigbein dance, also prevalent among the Ijaw people of Bayelsa State, holds a distinct ritualistic significance rooted in agricultural traditions and communal unity. Alagoa (2005) emphasized that Seigbein is performed during planting and harvesting seasons to honor the gods of fertility and ensure a bountiful harvest. The dance involves synchronized movements and rhythmic beats that symbolize cooperation and collective prosperity. Preparations for Seigbein commence with ceremonies led by spiritual leaders and elders who invoke ancestral spirits and deities associated with agriculture which include libations, sacrifices, and prayers to seek divine favor and protection for the community's agricultural endeavors. During the dance itself, participants engage in symbolic gestures and chants that narrate the history and significance of agricultural practices among the Ijaw people. Okaba (2010) emphasized that Seigbein reinforces social cohesion and agricultural ethics while fostering a sense of cultural continuity and communal pride.

Diri (2013) argued that the Seigbein dance not only celebrates the cyclical nature of agricultural life but also serves as a platform for transmitting traditional knowledge and values to younger generations. The dance's ritualistic elements underscore the Ijaw people's deep spiritual connection to the land and their collective responsibility to preserve cultural heritage. The cultural dances of Egbelegbele and Seigbein hold significant cultural and social importance in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, showcasing the rich heritage of the Ijaw people. These dances are not only forms of artistic expression but also serve as means of transmitting cultural values and history from one generation to another. Egbelegbele dance is known for its energetic movements and rhythmic beats, typically performed during festivals and celebrations. Okpanachi (2015) reiterated that dance embodies communal harmony and spiritual connection to ancestors, reflecting the resilience and cultural identity of the Ijaw people. The preservation of Egbelegbele involves oral traditions and community rituals that reinforce the cultural significance of the dance, ensuring its continuity despite modern influences.

On the other hand, Seigbein dance, as noted by Ekiye (2018), represents themes of unity and collective identity among the Ijaw communities. This dance is characterized by its graceful movements and storytelling elements, often depicting historical events or mythical narratives. Scholars emphasize the role of Seigbein in fostering social cohesion and pride in cultural heritage, as it encourages participation from all age groups within the community. Cultural preservation of Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances involves various strategies, including formal education programs and community initiatives. Timipre (2020) highlighted the importance of educational workshops and documentation projects aimed at safeguarding traditional dances. These efforts not only ensure the transmission of dance techniques and rhythms but also promote awareness among younger generations about the cultural significance embedded in each movement and gesture.

Community bonding and Social Cohesion of Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances

The Egbelegbele dance of Bayelsa State serves as a powerful cultural expression deeply embedded in the social fabric of the community, fostering community bonding and social cohesion. Amangala (2018) observed that Egbelegbele plays a pivotal role in community cohesion by bringing together various age groups and families. This dance is often performed during significant community events and celebrations, such as festivals and rites of passage, symbolizing unity and shared heritage. John-Oge (2019) emphasized how Egbelegbele reinforces social norms and values within the community. Through synchronized movements and rhythmic drumming, participants of all ages actively engage in the dance, promoting intergenerational interaction and mutual respect. This communal participation not only preserves cultural traditions but also strengthens interpersonal relationships, contributing to a sense of belonging and identity.

Egbelegbele's significance extends beyond mere entertainment; it serves as a platform for transmitting historical narratives and collective memory. David-West (2020) underscored how the dance ritualizes the community's shared history and struggles, fostering a collective consciousness among its members. Such cultural practices are essential for maintaining social stability and solidarity in the face of modern challenges. The Seigbein dance of Bayelsa State exemplifies another facet of community bonding and social cohesion.

Robert (2017) revealed that Seigbein embodies communal solidarity through its intricate movements and symbolic gestures. This dance, traditionally performed by women, celebrates femininity and collective strength, promoting unity among women of different ages and backgrounds. Ebiwei (2018) highlighted how Seigbein reinforces gender roles and social hierarchies within Bayelsa communities. By showcasing women's roles in cultural preservation and community leadership, the dance fosters respect for women's contributions to society and enhances gender equality within traditional frameworks. Moreover, Seigbein serves as a medium for resolving conflicts and addressing social issues within the community. Out (2020) noted how dance performances often accompany communal gatherings and meetings, providing a platform for dialogue and reconciliation. This cultural practice not only promotes conflict resolution but also strengthens social bonds, promoting a harmonious community environment.

Ritualistic and Religious Significance of Egbelegbele and Seigbein Dances

The Egbelegbele dance holds profound ritualistic significance among the Ijaw people of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Okoro (2008) noted that Egbelegbele serves as a ceremonial act of invoking ancestral spirits to intervene in community affairs, particularly during significant life events such as births, marriages, and deaths. The rhythmic movements and chants during the dance are believed to create a channel for communication with the spiritual realm, seeking blessings and protection for the community. Alagoa (1994) argued that through participating in the dance, individuals reaffirm their cultural heritage and strengthen communal ties, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity across generations. The dance is often performed by initiated members of specific age-grade societies, signifying their roles as custodians of traditional knowledge and spiritual practices within the community. Briggs (2012) asserted that Seigbein is associated with the worship of water deities and spirits, crucial in the spiritual cosmology of the Ijaw people. The dance is performed near rivers or bodies of water believed to be inhabited by these deities, invoking their blessings for fertility, prosperity, and protection against malevolent forces. Seigbein ceremonies often involve offerings of food, libations, and symbolic gestures to appease the water spirits and ensure harmony between the natural and supernatural worlds. Alagoa (2005) suggested that the dance serves not only as a religious ritual but also as a means of transmitting ecological knowledge and sustainable practices related to water conservation and management, crucial for the survival of traditional communities in the region.

Entertainment and Recreation of Egbelegbele and Seigbein Dances

The Egbelegbele dance is a prominent cultural performance among the Ijaw people of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Fyneyface (2018) discussed how the dance serves not only as entertainment but also as a form of cultural expression and communal bonding. He explores its rhythmic movements, elaborate costumes, and the role of music, which often includes traditional instruments like the drum and flute.

Akeni (2017) emphasized its role in preserving local traditions and fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer. The Egbelegbele dance reinforces community identity and values, making it a vital aspect of social cohesion and entertainment in Bayelsa State. The Seigbein dance is also integral to the cultural fabric of Bayelsa State, particularly among the Nembe people. Scholarly works such as "The Significance of Seigbein Dance in Nembe Cultural Festivals" Adjei (2000) highlighted its cultural and recreational importance. The Seigbein dance, characterized by its energetic movements and symbolic gestures, is performed during important occasions such as weddings, funerals, and traditional festivals.

Dudafa (2019) explored how the Seigbein dance functions as both entertainment and a spiritual ritual. Dudafa discusses its role in invoking ancestral spirits and blessing community events, underscoring its dual significance in Nembe society. The dance's choreography often includes intricate footwork and storytelling through gestures and facial expressions. Both the Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances exemplify the rich cultural heritage of Bayelsa State. They continue to evolve within contemporary contexts while retaining their traditional roots. Fente (2020) discussed how these dances adapt to urbanization and globalization.

Expression of Identity and Pride of Egbelegbele and Seigbein Dances

The Egbelegbele dance is deeply rooted in the cultural identity of the Ijaw people of Bayelsa State. According to Pepple (2015), the dance serves as a significant cultural marker that symbolizes communal harmony and celebration of ancestral heritage. The dance typically involves rhythmic movements accompanied by traditional drumming and chanting, reflecting the collective identity and pride of the community (Nimi, 2018). Ebih (2020) argued that Egbelegbele is not merely a performance but a spiritual and communal expression that reinforces social cohesion and continuity of cultural values. Kemebo (2017) posited that Seigbein serves as a form of historical documentation through dance, where movements and gestures convey tales of triumph over adversity and the preservation of Nembe identity. The dance is characterized by intricate footwork and symbolic gestures that reflect the rich maritime heritage and warrior traditions of the Nembe kingdom. Ebizimor (2019) noted that Seigbein embodies a cultural pride that resonates beyond performance, emphasizing the endurance and indomitable spirit of the Nembe people. Both Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances

play crucial roles in reaffirming cultural identity and pride among the diverse ethnic groups in Bayelsa State. They serve as platforms for transmitting historical narratives, values, and societal norms to younger generations (Abulu, 2016). These dances also foster community solidarity and unity during festivals and social gatherings, promoting a sense of belonging and continuity amidst modern societal changes (Nimi, 2018).

Educational and Didactic Purposes of Egbelegbele and Seigbein Dances

The Egbelegbele dance, known for its energetic movements and rhythmic beats, is deeply rooted in Ijaw cultural traditions. It serves as a form of cultural education, teaching the youth about their community's history, values, and social norms. Adeoye (2017) maintained that Egbelegbele dance is a "vehicle for social cohesion and identity formation". Through its choreography and accompanying songs, the dance imparts knowledge about the roles of men and women, community rituals, and even ecological wisdom related to fishing and farming practices. The Seigbein dance, characterized by its graceful movements and symbolic gestures, serves educational purposes by recounting historical events and ancestral stories. Okoye (2019) highlighted in her studies on Ijaw dance forms that Seigbein is "a living archive of Ijaw history and mythology". Through intricate dance steps and lyrical chants, Seigbein communicates narratives of heroism, conquests, and the struggles of the Ijaw people against adversity.

Both dances play crucial roles in educating younger generations about their cultural heritage. Agadaga (2018) said that dances are "pedagogical tools for transmitting cultural knowledge". Dances teach values such as courage, respect for elders, communal solidarity, and stewardship of natural resources. Through participation in these dances, younger members of the community learn not only about their past but also about their responsibilities in maintaining cultural continuity. The didactic functions of Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances extend beyond cultural education to include moral instruction and socialization. Timi (2020) argued that these dances "instill discipline and moral values through the enactment of traditional norms and values". By embodying characters and stories from Ijaw mythology and history, dancers convey moral lessons about bravery, justice, and community leadership.

Briggs (2016) noted that these dances serve as platforms for intergenerational dialogue and the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems. Dances create spaces where elders pass down wisdom to younger members of the community, ensuring the continuity of cultural practices and values. The educational and didactic roles of Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances in Bayelsa State are significant in maintaining cultural identity and promoting social cohesion. These perspectives highlight how Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances in Bayelsa State are not only artistic expressions but also essential tools for education, cultural transmission, and the preservation of Ijaw heritage. Dances embody a rich tapestry of historical narratives, moral teachings, and communal values that continue to resonate within the cultural landscape of the region.

Economic Contributions of Egbelegbele and Seigbein Dances

The Egbelegbele dance, known for its energetic movements and rhythmic beats, contributes to the local economy through various avenues. Alagoa (2005) asserted that dances like Egbelegbele often serve as entertainment during festivals and ceremonies. These events draw tourists and visitors, leading to increased economic activities such as hospitality services, local crafts sales, and food vendors. Furthermore, Ekejiuba (2010) highlighted that Egbelegbele performances can generate income through cultural tourism initiatives. Tourists and cultural enthusiasts pay to witness these dances, creating opportunities for local performers to earn from their skills and talents. Similarly, the Seigbein dance, characterized by its graceful movements and thematic storytelling, also contributes significantly to the economy of Bayelsa State. Clark (1984) noted that Seigbein performances are often part of cultural events that attract sponsorship and funding from both government and private sectors. This financial support not only sustains the tradition but also provides income for dancers and organizers involved. Azaiki (2008) emphasized Seigbein dance promotes cultural identity and unity among the Ijaw people. This cultural cohesion strengthens community ties and fosters economic cooperation, as seen in the development of local businesses catering to cultural tourism.

CONCLUSION

The Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances of Bayelsa State are vibrant expressions of cultural heritage, rich in traditional attire and materials that reflect the community's artistry and resources. These dances, with their unique modes of performance, are not just entertaining but are deeply embedded in rituals and rites that underscore their spiritual significance. They foster community bonding and social cohesion, reinforcing communal identity and pride. Educationally, they serve as conduits for imparting cultural values and histories, while also contributing economically through tourism and local craftsmanship. In essence, the Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances encapsulate the dynamic interplay between tradition, religion, education, and economy, making them indispensable facets of the cultural tapestry of Bayelsa State.

SUGGESTIONS

- Town chiefs should encourage active participation and support in Egbelegbele and Seigbein

dances to preserve and pass down our rich cultural heritage to future generations.

- Community heads should use Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances as platforms to foster unity and solidarity within our communities.
- Community heads and chief priests should encourage the role of Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances in strengthening community bonds.
- Town chiefs and community heads should recognize and celebrate the diversity within Bayelsa State through the expressive and symbolic elements of Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances.
- Town chiefs, community heads, and chief priests should utilize Egbelegbele and Seigbein dances as platforms for promoting values such as respect, discipline, and cultural pride.

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