

THE DRAMATIC AND THEATRICAL AESTHETICS OF *IZARA* TRADITIONAL
INITIATION FESTIVAL OF AMO PEOPLE OF NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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DECLARATION

This research is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree or any other academic credit in any other university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Almighty God, the maker of my being, and who has led me thus far. To my darling wife, Alice Solomon Obidah, for standing by me always, kudos! To my late daughter, Chritabel; you died in a cruel way when I was away, I will live to remember you. And to my other children: Timang, Ulime, Asisla and my niece, Ayirumum, I love you. To my parents, you laid a solid foundation in me of discipline and hardwork, I thank you.

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Aesthetic - a philosophy of science of beauty and taste, which has the capacity to be an ideology in the process of creative imagination.

Drama - the elegant imitation of some action significant to a people by a way of physical representation or the evocation of one poetic image or a complex of such images with vital elements which include but not limited to music, character, dance, speech, ritual, and mime.

Dramatic and Theatrical Aesthetics - elements or aspects of *Izara* performance that are dramatic and theatrical, which include but are not limited to: song/music, plot, character, imagery, audience response, properties, costumes, make-up, setting, and suspense.

Izara Festival - an initiation festival of the Amo people of North Central Nigeria that takes place every seven years in order to produce an age-grade in the land.

Theatre - the complex whole which comprises a place of spectacular performance, the performance itself (drama, music, mime, concerts, festival, etc), which takes place before an audience.

Traditional festival - a periodic traditional practice of a people that is mostly communal; and is a traditional cultural institution, a form of art nurtured on the African soil over the centuries, with distinctive features developed over time, and whose techniques are sometimes totally different from the borrowed forms now practiced by many of our contemporary artists.

ABSTRACT

African traditional theatre is caught up within the vortex of Western inferiorization, the need for documentation, and a conflict of opinions between African dramatic scholars (the evolutionists and the relativists). The indigenous festival traditions in Africa have been described by Finnegan (1970) as 'quasi-dramatic' and they lack the dramatic structure of the West. This view by evolutionists is against that of the relativists who claim that traditional festivals in Africa are fully dramatic and theatrical and should not be judged strictly by Western canons. The problem is further complicated by the lack of documentation of these festivals resulting in the disappearance of vital aspects of them. African traditional performance modes, as earlier practised by Africans, were affected by imperialistic activities of the West during colonialism and by today's globalized mediation. These traditional dramatic forms still retain their value and relevance as pointers to the identity of Africa and are a source of artistic production. This study attempts to establish and analyze the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics (elements) in the *Izara* festival of Amo people of North Central Nigeria. The study employs the analytical binoculars of performance theory, myth/archetypal, as well as the structuralist/semiotic frameworks to describe and analyze the festival. The study has adopted a qualitative research approach for data collection and analysis in communities of Amo in North Central Nigeria. This involved the researcher using interview schedule, focus group discussion (FGD) and observation schedule. Findings of this research confirm the existence of drama which is indigenous to African people, and that is not necessarily the same as that of the West. This is due to Africa's peculiarity in worldview and the history of evolution of the African people. The study is an addition to the corpus of critical texts on African traditional drama and theatre, and is significant to film makers, ethnographers, anthropologists, sociologists, and historians. It also serves as a reference for further academic research.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

There are abundant manifestations of theatrical and dramatic aesthetics or elements that are embedded in traditional performances of the people in all societies of the world. These elements of drama abound in traditional festivals, rituals, dances, songs, ceremonies, recitals, music, drumming, praise songs, incantations, and other traditional creative displays. These aesthetics of drama and theatre are drawn from ever robust traditional and autochthonous heritages and are important in the cultural development of a people. However, Ogunbiyi (1981) points to the speculative origins of African traditional theatre and drama. Apart from the origin, which is largely linked to the struggle between the early African man and nature, the facts today have become profoundly enormous on the existence of African drama and theatre.

From a broad spectrum of analysis, Africa as a continent over the years has endured the epistemological and empirical restraints of the West. This has ranged from philosophy through other fields of study in humanities, and into theatre. In theatre, the imperialists ensured that standards set through their 'systematic' processes became universal (Etherton, 1982), thereby denying the existence of rich and robust traditionally indigenous theatrical and dramatic aesthetics in Africa. This generated reaction to the years of Western hegemony in Africa and which led to the marginalization, domination and suppression of the cultural and traditional consciousness of Africans. The denigration of Africa's traditional heritage also paralleled the

unholy exploitation of both human and natural resources of the continent, thereby distorting and dislocating the already established oral traditional institutions therein.

African traditional theatre over the years has received varying views from both Western and African literary and anthropological thinkers and critics. For example, Ruth Finnegan (1970), M. J. C. Echeruo (1981), Ossie Enekwe (1981), Oyin Ogunba (1978), Wole Soyinka (1976), among others, have viewed African traditional theatre differently. Much of what is embedded in the view by Western-based scholars on this subject has been dismissive of the fact of the existence of dramatic content in African traditional performances. Afrocentric writers started responding literarily in order to salvage the continent from collapse. This is in line with the submission by Mazrui (1996) that though the interplay of Africa's indigenous cultures with Western civilization which had political and economic ramifications is fact, the final analysis shows that the central process of the triple heritage has been cultural and civilizational. Hence, there is need to give more attention to African traditional theatre in the face of this civilizational challenge.

This particular ambivalent, if not contemptuous view is not short of the negative side of civilization that concurs with Williams (1977) who argues that this type of civilisation has brought poverty, disorder and degradation to some societies and wealth, order and refinement to others. Africa remains a continent to be deconstructed in order to salvage it from more degradation of its traditional institutions, which once gave it life (Dugga, 2008). This requires a deep understanding of its traditional festival theatre which captures the indisruptible worldview of Africa; which is to a large extent different from those of other continents of the world.

Kafewo (2005) posits that festivals and rituals, as the greatest artistic institutions of Africa, have a strong religious base and that most are attached to a super-natural being or deified ancestors.

This shows how autochthonous and transcendental traditional African theatre is in its form and content. And, obviously, one cannot subject it to the strict canons or parameters of Western theatre. This becomes clear that there is therefore need for an African canon that should capture the essence of traditional African theatre.

Asante (1996) contends that a discussion of an African canon ought to involve four issues: cosmological, axiological, epistemological and aesthetic in nature. 'Cosmological' involves the drama of life and death which engages metaphysical dimensions. 'Epistemological' issue looks at what constitute knowledge in Africa; 'axiological' is the value of truth, while 'aesthetic' question explores seven aspects which include polyrhythm, polycentrism, dimensional, repetition, curvilinear, epic- memory and wholism. This goes in line with what has been postulated by Wainaina (2002) on the need to avoid atomism in discussing African mythology; it should be looked at as a whole. These are the bases for a proposed African canon of traditional theatre.

At a time when humanity drifts towards the compression of the frontiers of the world and the intensification of its consciousness as a whole (Robertson, 1992), which is synonymous with a scenario in which there is contestation of ideas, ideologies and philosophies, African festival theatre cannot be left to suffer against the backdrop of established theatre norms in the world. However, Ogunba (1978) observes that there has developed in the continent in the last few years a conscious interest in the past, in dance festival, and in ritual of ethnic groups. This has been directed towards understanding the nature, function and aesthetic values of indigenous, dramatic practice, an appraisal which transcends turning such knowledge into an instrument for narcissistic or racial pride. This is not enough as the real substances are disappearing, thereby putting the traditions on a declining trend.

It also follows that because it has not been properly documented and there are other very corrosive forces competing with its aesthetic value, it may not be holding any sway or attention. This may have also affected the deployment of these aesthetics in theatre, film, and other artistic ventures.

To build the case properly, it is pertinent to capture the opinion of the West about traditional African indigenous festival theatre. Olaniyan (2007) reminds us that African performance traditions entered the orbit of European discourse and through language supplied operational terms “festival”, “ritual”, and “drama” – primarily as negative examples. He continued by positing that this entrance was marked by condemnation, inferiorization, and general disregard. It was asserted by western scholars and their African cohorts that blacks had no traditions of drama indigenous to them or had traditions which when compared with European and Asian versions are mere “proto-dramatic” or quasi-dramatic,” cretinous forms in a state of developmental arrest in terms of style, aesthetic canons, formalization of technique and mode of historical transmission.

The view above has been well echoed in Ruth Finnegan’s work *Oral Literature in Africa*, published in 1970, in which she argues that how far one can speak of indigenous drama in Africa is not an easy question (Finnegan 1970). This view received the support of African-European trained scholars like M.J.C. Echeruo (1981), Kalu Uka (2000), Abiola Irele (1990), among others, who now belong to the evolutionary school of African theatre.

The above view has been countered by Afrocentric scholars like Wole Soyinka (1976), Ossie Enekwe (1981), J.P. Clark (1981), Oyin Ogunba (1978), to mention a few, who asserted that

African drama is fully dramatic and should not be judged strictly by using Western literary and aesthetic canons which were actually Aristotelian in nature.

In the words of Soyinka (1976):

The persistent search for the meaning of tragedy, for a redefinition in terms of cultural or private experience is, at the least, man's recognition of certain areas of depth-experience which are not satisfactorily explained by general aesthetic theories; and, of all the subjective unease that is aroused by man's creative insights, that you reach within the human psyche which we vaguely define as 'tragedy' is the most insistent voice that bids us return to our own sources (p.140).

This aptly captures the degree of response to the inferiorization of African indigenous drama that cannot fit the analysis using Western canons. The Western canons are what he refers to above as "...general aesthetic theories..."

Soyinka (1976) also makes it clear that:

The difference which we are seeking to define between European and African Drama as one of man's formal representations of experience is not simply a difference of style or form, nor is it confined to drama alone. It is representative of the essential differences between two world views, a difference between one culture whose very artefacts are evidence of cohesive understanding of irreducible truths and another, whose creative impulses are diverted by periodic dialectics (p.38).

By this postulation, Soyinka underscores the fact that black African theatre should be evaluated on its own merits as an independent art that has evolved under different circumstances in Africa compared to elsewhere.

However, Africa has continued to face daunting challenges of the decline in the attention given to indigenous oral performances that should be the comparative advantage in today's globalized world. Right from the period of colonialism, Africans have become increasingly attached to the education and values of European culture, thereby simultaneously alienating themselves from

traditional values in traditional African performances and customs. These Western influences have resulted in the decline of some oral performances, which were before now, regarded as channels for moral value acquisition, instruction, stability and cultural development of the people in Africa. For example, in Amo land, performances such as *Abin* (story-telling), *Idagwai* (trance-dance festival), *Ipanga* (trumpet music dance) *Kusana* (harvest festival), among others, are gradually threatened out of existence.

Now, it has become evident that what we are witnessing in Africa is not the evolution or rise of traditional performance modes but rather a wholesale supplanting of these indigenous forms with the metropolitan performance poetics of the West, and the Middle East (Nwaozuzu, 2009). This has been signposted by changes championed by the advancement of technology, religion and modernity which are the attendant features of imperial symbols in Africa. Today, the significance and structure of African traditional performances are markedly changed. The indigenous aesthetic features have been eroded to a large extent as a consequence of infiltration, imposition, distortion, disconnection and also as a result of its lack of documentation. Waziri (2009) observes that Amo people for example, have refused to learn and propagate the philosophy of the art of *Izara*, which is an initiation festival, and to carry on with what their fathers and fore-fathers started. For instance, the emergence and advancement of the movie industry in Nigeria and Africa at large, which would have served to advance and propagate Africa's indigenous aesthetics, is not doing so. Again, the lacklustre attitudes of parents and their children today, on theatrical issues of traditional extraction, are gradually and systematically forcing dependence on traditional performances to diminish. In a country where television and video technology have led to the production of television soap operas and home video collection whose contents are replete with paradoxes and mutations that are antithetical to the evolution and

development of Africa's indigenous aesthetics, efforts need to be geared towards combating such an unpalatable happening.

In a world where every continent and its people are competing for space to project their indigenous aesthetics, ideology, and ideas, Africa seems to be a dump site with the entire stench oozing out of it that is alarming. Lechner (2000) makes the case clearer when he argues that global consciousness does not imply global consensus. In the same vein, Powell (2010), asserts that the world is globalized; implying it is integrated but not harmonized, a single place but diverse, a construct of consciousness but prone to multiplicity and fragmentation.

In an interview, the foremost Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o painted the picture clearly as thus:

Whereas you see today people identify themselves with that which is removed from them. That which is them, they don't want to identify with.
(Cited in Eyoh, 1986, p.112).

This is a contradiction which depicts the same discounting character of a modern Amo youth towards traditional oral performances. There is therefore need to analyze the festival from a theatrical point of view in order to draw more attention to its vitality and potentials for other artistic productions.

The study has paid attention to dramatic and theatrical aesthetics which comprise dance, music/song, setting/arena, properties, costumes, character, spectacle, rhythm, etc. The researcher has identified and analyzed these aesthetics in order to give relevance to them.

Nengel (1989) points out that in most societies, the transition from one age- grade to another is an important occasion celebrated with rituals, dancing with great celebration. He argues that, with the single exception of the *Kono*, the tradition of all societies on Pengana plains relate. The

transition from boys to adults or men is the most important event marked by the circumcision rite generally known as *Kumusu*. *Kumusu* is another name for *Izara*. Nengel (1989) states that, for some of the polities like *Sanga*, *Sheni* and *Gusu*, their *Kumusu* takes place after four years. Yet for many of them like the *Amo*, *Bujel*, *Buji*, *Binawa*, *Piti*, *Rukuba* and *Tariya*, their *Kumusu* is regularly performed at an interval of seven years, and among the *Jere* people, it is after eight years.

According to Waziri (2009), *Izara* is a festival that is celebrated to mark the end of circumcision rites in Amo land. It is the grand celebration of the survival of the circumcised children after *Kagi* feast. The feast is usually the moment of seclusion where the initiates are separated from the parents and other people. It happens in the sixth year before *Izara* in the seventh year. This clearly shows that *Izara* takes place once in seven years. The celebration is marked by singing, dancing, drumming and glamour (Waziri, 2009).

1.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMO PEOPLE

Geographically, the Amo people, also known as *Amap*, are found between latitude 10 N and longitude 8 E. Amo are currently concentrated in the North Central region of Nigeria, (Middle Belt Region). Amo people who speak the *Timap* language are predominantly farmers surrounded by high, fertile plains/hills/peaks for farming. These hills contain caves formerly used as hide-outs and abodes during tribal wars. Some of these caves have been used as shrines where worshippers of the *Nchill* (cult) go for propitiation, divination and worship. From the foot of the mountain/ peak of the ancestral home of the Amo ethnic group at Kamari, one can see fertile bushes and lands at Baban Fadama, Rafin-Gora, to Dan- Lahaji in Kaduna State, as well as undulating landscape marked by rocks, greenish farm lands and settlements of the Amo people.

The Amo people have tribal/ facial marks, which were used for identification during wars. The way this scarification was done was not the same among the ethnic groups in Plateau and Kaduna States in Nigeria. According to Capro (2004), the tribal marks of the Amo were similar to those of the Jere, Buji, Lemoro and Gusu, but not cut as deeply into the skin. The similarity was probably because the ethnic nationalities saw themselves as brothers and sisters who would protect one another at such moments of wars.

In his, *The Amap People of North Central Nigeria: A Historical Perspective*, Waziri (2009) uses oral accounts and written sources to trace the origin of the Amo (Amap) people, which reveal that they originated from the Middle East and passed through Niger Republic to Sokoto and on to Kano. It was from Kano that they migrated to Karreh and straight to Pingel, finally reaching the present cradle- the Amo peak, Ulura or Kupara. Kini, according to these sources, was coined from Kinan (Canaan) in the Middle East.

However, these accounts have been discredited by historians. One of the reasons is lack of strong linguistic and cultural affinity between the people living in Central Nigeria and the Middle East; so this version is not substantially reliable. According to Ibrahim (1994), this myth of eastern origins is a post-Jihad phenomenon. It was a social distinction of the district, village and ward heads to legitimize their rule by tracing their origins to the East.

The second reason for the myth of eastern origins is to establish a link with the East, the Biblical cradle of civilizations and the origin of Christianity and Islam, both of which are dominant religions in the area. This version has been popularized by most religious leaders.

The more acceptable historical account of the origins of the Amo people has come from historians which this study subscribes to. Gunn (1953) traces the origins of the Amo to Gba,

ancient archeological site on the Bauchi plain, known as Kondon Kaya. Kondon Kaya was occupied by Amo and other neighbouring ethnic groups that included Jere, Buji, Rukubu and Lemoro.

Also, according to Nengel (1989), the Amo people came from an ancient settlement known as Aturu. Ancient Aturu was a settlement situated near a spring among huge granite rocks, some twenty kilometres to the north of present Jos town along Zaria Motor Park. The settlement found on the hill from a panoramic view of the country side possibly offered natural fortification to the Pengana highlands. The Amo were descendants of an indigenous population of great antiquity in the Pengana highlands, whose origin was from Aturu. The area once flourished as a big town called Apeh, where farming and hunting were the livelihood of its inhabitants. After the Ukara Gonchake war destroyed Aturu, its leader named Aturu escaped with his horse into a nearby cave which its inhabitants, the Amo, Buji and others dispersed and founded new settlements in the adjacent hills.

With the dispersal of ancient Aturu, the Amo, on leaving Aturu with their leader Kimap, went further west; this time around as a result of the war with the Hausas of Zaria or Zazzau and the ones in Kano. The Amo fought victoriously and even rescued their friends, the Rukuba among many others. It is a fact that during the war, the Hausas could not penetrate Plateau through the northern part where the Amo people were on guard. The renowned warriors of the Amo who spearheaded the attacks against the Hausas were Adanah and Katura. This fact has been buttressed by Nengel (1989) when he says that the major campaign of Yero Zazzau into the Pentana Highlands was met with defeat. The Amo and Janji defeated Yero's forces that even Muhammed of Lere narrowly escaped being killed by Jere and Amo in 1987. This was one of the reasons why the Amo people came down from the hilltops and are now in Lere and parts of

Kaduna and Kano states; while the majority of the people are in Kides and Kitara Districts. This has now become the abode of the Paramount Ruler and the domain of the District Heads. Also important is the fact that as the Amo people went through these experiences, they still maintained their traditional practices. They came down with those practices from the hill tops to continue with them till today, and *Izara* initiation festival was among them.

The map below shows the location of study. It shows Nigeria, Plateau State, Bassa L. G. C., and Amo District.

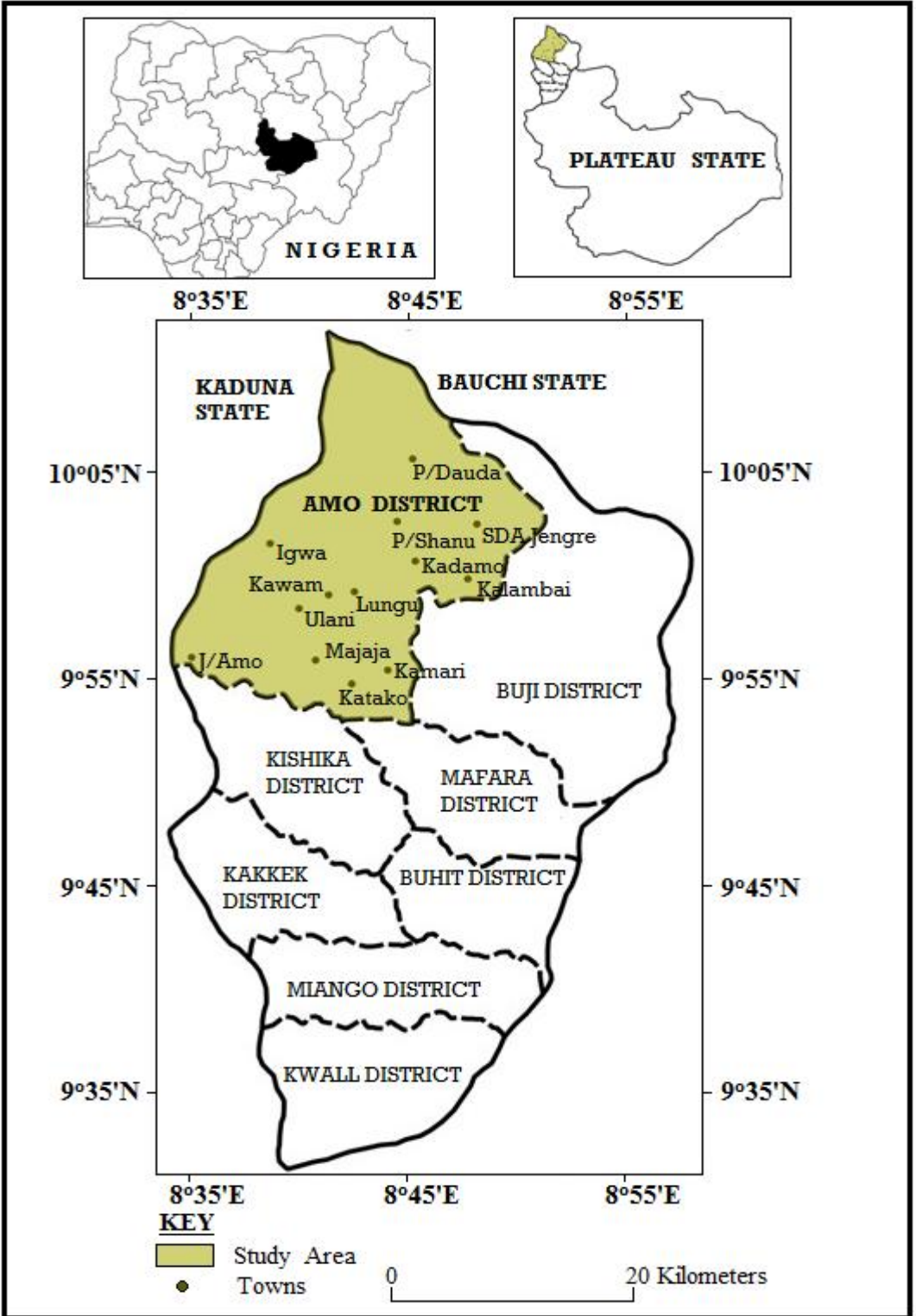


FIGURE 2.1 The Map of Bassa Local Government Area, Showing Amo District, the location of study (Map sketched by a cartographer from Geography Department, Kenyatta University)

1.2 Statement of Problem

African traditional festival theatre which is supposed to be one of the fulcrums of unique and robust artistic production in Africa has not been well appreciated and understood. Its dramatic status has been challenged by Western cultural and anthropological scholars with their African sympathizers. Despite the rich dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of traditional African festivals, they have suffered from total or partial denial because they have been subjected to strict assessment using Western dramatic canons. There is therefore need for African canons that should look at issues of cosmology, epistemology, axiology and aesthetics, in order to give primacy to traditional African theatre within a complex world of today.

Consequently, this denial and lack of clear understanding of the unique existence of viable traditional drama in Africa has been aggravated by issues arising from the terrain of indeterminacy in artistic production today. These issues which include syncretism, consumerism, pastiche, bricolage, aporia and the impact of the new media, have further affected the prominence of traditional African theatre which ought to be the pride of Africa. This implies that at this stage, what is gained or lost about *Izara* festival as a result of the present state of indeterminacy and the complex scenario of artistic productions is not known.

Hence, this study is an attempt at establishing and analyzing the dramatic aspects of *Izara* festival of Amo people of North Central Nigeria as a way of restoring its historical and cultural glory.

1.3 Research Objectives

- a) To establish and analyze the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of Izara traditional festival of Amo people of North Central Nigeria.
- b) To investigate the role of performance in enunciating the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of *Izara* traditional festival of Amo people of North Central Nigeria.
- c) To determine the socio-cultural significance of the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of *Izara* traditional festival of Amo people of North Central Nigeria as communicative features.

1.4 Research Questions

- a) What are the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of *Izara* traditional festival of Amo people of North Central Nigeria?
- b) What is the role of performance in enunciating the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of *Izara* festival of Amo people of North Central Nigeria?
- c) What are the communicative and socio-cultural functions of *Izara* traditional festival of Amo people of North Central Nigeria?

1.5 Significance of Study

This study falls under the oral performances of the Amo people and their changing patterns. It is significant in the following ways:

- a) The study can enrich our understanding of Amo traditional aesthetics as it serves to expand our literary knowledge of ritual drama.

- b) The study is a document containing the performance of *Izara* festival with its dramatic and theatrical aesthetics teased out to benefit Amo people, theatre artists, and literary artists and for anthropological studies.
- c) The study has suggested ways of promoting oral performances so that they will be relevant even within their changing forms. This is in view of the fast and rapid advancement in modern technology signposted by globalization.
- d) This oral performance if documented can serve effectively in educating, instructing and conscientizing the people on important socio-cultural, political and economic issues confronting African society.
- e) The study is significant for endangered languages to take note and plan on how to contend challenges enveloping language in performances in the new world.
- f) The rising film industry can benefit from the research in the sense that it can sensitize film makers on the availability of raw materials in traditional African theatre that can draw more market for the African film industry.

1.6 Rationale of Study

This study lays claim to the fact that the African traditional festival theatre, which is predominantly oral in form and content, is declining due to imperialistic mediation of the West, its lack of documentation and other phenomenal changes both within Africa and around the world. This unfavourable situation can be captured through the analysis of the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics (elements) of *Izara* festival which seems to be on the decline. Obviously, a tradition within other cultures is always fluid, in the sense that it gives out and also receives. But

there is need to retain the vital aspects of a particular festival, without which the festival ceases to be what it claims to be.

However, traditional African theatre has survived in spite of the intrusion of modern culture and theatre from outside Africa. Several African communities and cities still hold on to their traditional treasure of entertainment and education which has been passed down from generation to generation. Cabral (1970) argues that people who free themselves from foreign domination will be culturally free only if they appreciate the importance of positive borrowing. He adds that this way, they will return to the upward paths of their culture, which is nourished by the reality of its environment, and which negates harmful influences and subjection to foreign culture. This is because tradition, as an enduring part of culture, no matter its idealistic or ideological inclination, is important to a people's history.

Olaniyan (2007) asserts that Africa is home to several traditions of theatre, conceived as an ensemble of culturally marked and consciously staged practices in space and time, as well as before an audience. Many of these traditions are of ancient origin, while others emerged with formal European colonization of the continent in the nineteenth century, and the subsequent imposition of Western education, religion and culture. The older traditions are mostly non-scripted, improvised, and performed in indigenous African languages. The conception of this theatre space is fluid.

The importance of traditions to a people, not only as theatre and drama, means a lot to their identity, freedom and development, justifies the need for *Izara* festival performance of the Amo people of North Central Nigeria to be documented. This is also a response to the plea by Waziri (2009) that there is need for Amo National Development Association (AMONDA) to constitute a

team of Amo researchers to conduct an in-depth research into the traditions and culture of the Amo people so that the language and traditions of Amo do not go extinct like those of the *Sheni* ethnic group.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study has concentrated on the theatrical and dramatic aspects of the festival while taking into cognizance the relationship of the festival to other aspects of the life of *Amo* people. *Amo* people are concentrated in two states of the North Central region of Nigeria namely: Plateau and Kaduna, but the paramount ruler who happens to be the custodian of culture, traditions and customs of Amo people is in Bassa Local Government Council (L. G. C.) of Plateau State, Nigeria. So the concentration is more in the Plateau State than in the other state.

The researcher has given critical attention to the concept, functions (religious, adjudicative and socio-cultural), and the dramatic and theatrical aspects (language, dialogue, dance, music/song, audience response, arena/setting, plot, character, imagery, make-up, properties, etc) of the festival. The researcher has also looked at the contemporary importance of the *Izara* traditional festival and its potentials for further artistic exploration by literary theatre and film makers.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study stems from the fact that this researcher was not a member of the Traditional Council and so he had to rely on information or data from practitioners and custodians of *Izara* festival. The informants themselves relied on the oral tradition and who had the likelihood of losing some details in the process. They could forget certain issues or refuse to divulge them based on the oath taken to keep and protect the standards of details of the practice. For example, nobody is allowed to visit the children/boys during the period of their seclusion at

Kagi feast. It therefore meant that this researcher could not be allowed to observe live the happenings at *Kagi*, in order to make a statement about it. He had to rely on verbal information from informants. This was not quite different from the experience of similar to Green (1987), while researching the Ivorian masking traditions. She opens up that being a female, she was not allowed access to the sacred forest and so she could not see the Gban masks, or learn about rituals associated with them.

Also important in the limitations faced is the dearth of written or archival materials on *Izara* festival. Not much has been written on *Izara* in order to see their views on the artistic vivacity of the festival. It is always not easy being the first to lay claim to such an initiative. If there were existing documents on the artistic or theatrical potentials or aspects of *Izara*, one could differ or make the existing views give clearer sense like the case with festivals and ritual ceremonies like the *Egungun*, *Ekpe*, *Sharo/Shadi*, *Argungu* Fishing festival among other ones. But only scanty historical materials are in existence which has not fairly covered the performances of *Izara*.

Importantly too in the challenges that affected the study is the time granted during interviews and focus group discussions which was too limited at some times. This directly concerns influential informants like *Ogomo Pengana*, District Heads and other minor chiefs of the festival because of their tight schedules/engagements. They are the custodians of the tradition and so they have more information than other people in the communities about the festival. Even during the focus group discussions, the ordinary practitioners had to listen to the aged ones or the title holders within the group. This made the researcher to see the title holders more than once because he needed more information from them. Some of them would not grant the researcher a second opportunity for interaction. It was to some extent frustrating and demoralizing.

Lastly, one wonders at the level of corruption in Nigeria that has permeated even into the villages. Informants hoarding information because they wanted to be given money was incredible to believe. Some of the informants would even be bold enough to tell the researcher to his face that without money or local brew, he should not expect any information from them. One wonders whether such a demoralizing request was to appease the gods or to pour libation on the land for propitiation.

1.9 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1.9.0 Introduction

This aspect briefly reviews some of the literature regarding the concept and debate on the presence of indigenous drama and theatre in Africa. The section touches on the peculiar worldview of Africa which shapes its indigenous drama and theatre. It also shades light on the dramatic and theatrical aspects to which attention has been paid to in this study. At the end, the section briefly analyzes the three theories that have been used in this study.

1.9.1 Concept and Debate on African Traditional Drama and Theatre

Africa is a continent that is rich and robust in its traditional heritage with so much pride attached to the display of these indigenous oral performances. In Traditional Africa, the great artistic institution is the festival. Contrary to popular understanding, the festival is not just a religious occasion; if it were, it would hardly command more than a fraction of the interest it generated among the people (Ogunba, 1978). Festivals provide the major substance of African oral literature which today has gained critical attention from well meaning scholars and artistes all over the world. From the late nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century, African traditional festivals were looked upon with disdain. They were denied their place as full blown drama and theatre capable of even securing spaces in the academic curriculum of institutions of learning. Unfortunately, this dismal view came from outside of Africa and has been supported by mostly artistic scholars trained in the west whom today are exponents of the evolutionary school. Finnegan (1976) in her highly famous critical work, *Oral Literature in Africa*, argues thus:

Though some writers have very positively affirmed the existence of native African drama (Traore 1958, Delafosse 1916), it would perhaps be truer to say that in Africa, in contrast to the Western Europe and Asia, drama is not typically a wide-spread or a developed form. There are, however, certain dramatic and quasi-dramatic phenomena to be found, particularly in parts of West Africa (p.485).

This definitely was the beginning of highly critical debate on the existence of a separate African drama and theatre in Africa. Finnegan gave illustrations and examples of different performances and narratives in Africa that lacked either the dramatic structure and form of Western drama or the linguistic content in response to Maurice Delafosse and Bakare Traore (Finnegan, 1970), and so many others who at one forum or in one article mentioned the facts of an African drama and theatre. Delafosse (1916) notes that he heard griots recite stories in which their heroes were made to speak stories which, in their hands, came alive in theatrical scenes with several characters played by a single narrator. This was the case of a story-telling performance which was also dramatic.

Much more dramatic is the traditional festival that is fully dramatic not necessarily in the sense of the west that would insist on a particular structure, form and content which even historically had not been static (Enekwe, 1981). The dramatic experience gained by an African in a traditional African festival is wholistic and communal. It could be religious, ritual, social or even individualistic at some point. This shows that experience is at different levels. This has not been dealt with using practical examples in a festival.

Akporobaro (2012) argues that the artist who performs using of the spoken word is engaged in the same creative process as the modern writer who creates through the written word. He goes further to say that though the oral artist is faced with some constraints which include style and form, he/she should utilize factors such as seeing the performance as an artistic communication,

orality as the mode of communication, his personality, his audience, memory and improvisation as factors in his performance. However, Akporobaro apparently excludes the role of dance and songs in a festival.

Akporobaro (2012) also contends that traditional African festivals which are oral performances do provide fertile ground for both elementary institutions and advanced academic exercise. He says that these African cultural institutions are rapidly disappearing and need to be documented and discussed. The numerous angles or frames which can be discussed or analyzed include the religious, philosophical, aesthetic, cultural to the literary and mythological. But this raises a problem knowing the nature of indigenous traditional festival with its institutional embeddedness. For instance, how can one discuss the literary aspect without paying attention to the religious or ritual aspect? This is one of the major points of consideration in this study.

1.9.2 African Traditional Theatre and Religion

Ogunba (1978) posits:

The African is basically religious. He sees spirit in all living objects. The relevance of this dual concept to festival drama is that drama is spirit oriented. Thus, the “festival man” ‘is constantly striving in his performance to approximate a spirit or reflect the spirit behind things (p.41).

The festival theatre is “spirit oriented” because it is believed that the whole performance is engrossed in some superhuman powers with so many advantages to them. Ena (2002) asserts that festival, in each Nigerian society, goes beyond the concept of entertainment. In Nigerian society, it becomes instrumental to the process of societal cleansing; retooling and rejuvenation.

Such an occasion is an avenue for seeking help from the supernatural beings believed to control events that are esoteric or inexplicable (for instance, thunder, earthquake and other calamities).

Haralambos (2000) sees a festival as a culture of the common people in pre-industrial societies, which grew from the bottom up, and was a spontaneous autochthonous expression of the people and was shaped, by the people. The spontaneous implies the cosmic and transcendent nature of the festival, while the shaping aspect points to the creativity involved in it. This is a further projection of the view of the West against African indigenous festivals if Haralambos' argument is to be taken seriously, that they emerged from below, implying it was anti-civilization. But this study is of the view that festival was discovered out of the creative craving of the African at the earliest of times. This helped in ensuring a beneficial relationship between him and the strange environment he found himself.

Kennedy (1973) notes:

In African festival and rituals, the actor is not alienated from the society; he is the sharer of the experience and not the dispenser. The actor is part and parcel of the culture being portrayed; he becomes a complete performer when his speech, mime, music and basic acting style synchronize to create a total life (p.24).

This observation by Kennedy confirms the fact that traditional African festival is a communal drama with the performers seen as fulfilling their religious and societal obligations and not only imitating the misgivings or behaviours of others in the larger society. In such performances, the actors bare their emotions of happiness, sorrow, sordidness, and request; at times, as in *Izara* festival, that the performers actively participate in the lamentations. It is an expression of life, as Kennedy goes further to say that African theatre is mostly a celebration of life whose language is

verbal as well as non-verbal; there is the oral aspect, and its composition is its moment of creation.

The well-choreographed and synchronized dances, and the different body movements and facial expressions constitute the non-verbal aspect, while the songs, incantations, humming, screaming, among others, and form the verbal aspect of the performance (Kennedy, 1973). It can therefore be seen that the traditional African theatre is highly participatory and it is communal and not the product of a single individual, but a composite collectivity of all performing idioms. This is why traditional African festival is better understood within the context of performance itself. These specific aesthetic elements have been captured in *Izara* performance.

Another paramount area in traditional African festival is that of costuming, masking and make-up. The costume that a performer wears denotes his/her social status and his/her position in the festival and the community at large. Some costumes are not allowed to be worn on ordinary days because of their sacred significance. For example, masking and masquerades play very important roles in festivals or ritual performances. In fact, even the carving of the mask is not done ordinarily. It is a ritual activity (Mitchell, 2006). The carver must be appointed by the gods. Mitchell notes that among the Dan and Ngere groups of Liberia and Cote'd'ivoire, masks with distinct features represent ancestors, who act as intermediaries for sending petitions or offerings of respect to the gods. These ancestral emissaries use their spirit power to bring order and control to village life. He also mentions the Dogon Awa society which always commemorates the anniversary of a death. The carving of such masks, which is entrusted to blacksmiths, only takes place after prayers have been offered to the tree spirits. After the Daga ritual, the masks are discarded and left on the ground to rot away. If there are rules governing the use of costumes and

properties during *Izara*, this study has looked at the implication or effects of flouting the rules of the use of these costumes and properties during *Izara*.

Okwori (1998) describes the nature of masquerades as the externalizations of ancestral spirits from somewhere in the cosmos on a temporary sojourn with mortals. This is agreed by Illah (1983) when he maintains that the ancestors are believed to travel back to the living, through the mediant persona to partake and celebrate with their living offsprings in a re-invigoration of their relationship. How these ancestors visit their offsprings is through music which Soyinka (1976) describes as:

...highly charged, symbolic, myth-embroynic...The forms of music are not correspondences at such moments to the physical world... The singer is a mouthpiece of the chthonic forces of the matrix (p.144).

Asigbo (2009), states that African or Igbo world-view does not conceive of beings in the mould of the Christian devil. Malevolent spirits can be tamed or appeased with music and offerings and bribed into yielding blessings and powers that can prove beneficial to the general well being of humanity. This is confirmed by Chinweizu *et'al* (1983) in the following statement: "... in African pantheon, good gods are thanked, difficult ones are appeased, bad ones are bribed, and so on" (p.190).

This means that the Igbo spiritual space is thus conceived as a terrain where nothing is entirely bad as each creature or being has a place in the scheme of things.

Also important is dance which goes with music. Finnegan (1970) observes that one theme that seems to run through almost all African festival performances is the overriding significance of music and dance and secondary significance of the spoken words. This view has been largely compared to *Izara* festival of the Amo people to ascertain its level of truism. But Finnegan

acknowledges the rich tradition in music and dance which form essential elements in dramatic performance.

1.9.3 A Brief Survey of African Traditional Theatre

Africa as a continent has had different levels of development in traditional African festival. The way it has flourished in West Africa has not been the same in East Africa. Nazareth (1978), in his discussion of East African drama, asserts the fact that it is well known that Africa had dramatic forms before the coming of the colonial rulers from Europe. He concedes the fact that West African forms of drama, including religious drama, have survived and have exerted a powerful influence on modern Nigerian dramatists, Wole Soyinka being an outstanding example. Mahood (1973) attests to the existence of traditional forms of drama in East Africa with a particular reference to Kikuyu dances and funeral dances of the Nyakyusa of Tanzania, both of which she takes as examples of African “Pre-drama”. Rubadiri (1971) points out that in East Africa, colonialism was an experience which came to envelope everything totally and which, simultaneously, almost stifled any indigenous attempt at expression through the new-acquired language. This became too serious that even indigenous burial rites were disallowed. Ngugi wa Thiong’o (2009) confirms this in his book, *Re-membering Africa*, when he records how one of the anti-colonial resistance figures, Waiyaki wa Hinga, was buried alive at Kibwezi with his head facing the bowels of the earth in opposition to the Gikuyu burial rites’ requirement that the body faces Mount Kenya, the dwelling place of their Supreme Deity. This totalitarian colonial administration in East Africa resulted in forcing the aspiring East African dramatist to abandon his indigenous cultural forms only to face dramatic ideals which were totally alien and not even the best (Nazareth, 1978). However, there have been efforts in this region to salvage what the

situation has become in East Africa. First, it is Wainaina (2002) who explores into the worlds of Kikuyu mythology by avoiding the atomistic treatment of myth. He looks at myth as a whole and its elements organically connected in order to avoid the phenomenon of paramyth. Nyarang'o (2011) analyzes the aesthetics embedded in the *Okwaroka*, a ritual performed annually by the Abagusii community in Kenya. This ritual is performed during the initiation of boys into adulthood. Were (2014) also, in the same vein, has explored into the initiation ceremony of the Bukusu people as it relates to the *Imbalu* education. The research was conducted in Sibembe village in Bungoma County using sociological theory. The researcher has attempted a brief survey of some of the initiation festivals across Africa with the aim of finding areas of divergence and convergence with *Izara* festival of North-central Nigeria.

Leshoai (1978) notes that just as it has been in West Africa, the theatre of black South Africa has its roots in traditional story-telling, poetry, dances, songs, proverbs, and riddles. These early dramatic styles provided entertainment, education, and spiritual therapy for all members of society. He asserts that these artistic displays usually took place at night around fires or in open spaces, and on ceremonial or festival occasions they would be held outside people's houses or a royal residence. But the use of drums and masks in these performances did not develop to the same extent as in other parts of Africa. Leshoai attributes this to the fact that South Africa came under vigorous Christian and Western influence much earlier than most other African countries. This shows clearly the different levels of challenge that African indigenous festivals have faced. This is because masking and drumming are essential aspects of traditional festival theatre in Africa but South Africa faced a serious setback in this regard. In Nigeria, for instance, the sound of the drum alone alerts the community of the performance, not to talk about its importance

during a performance. *Izara* is not an exception to the value and role of drumming in a festival performance.

It is evident that colonialism with its attendant negative influences through education, religion and force crippled the robust and rich African indigenous festivals and that was why most social anthropologists and literary scholars wrote to further deny the existence of indigenous drama and theatre in Africa. This is one of the reasons why a lot of literary critics from Africa have doubted the possibility and capabilities of Western literary critics or anthropologists positively appreciating Africa's indigenous festival theatre. Emenyonu (1971) argues that what many Western critics issue on African literature is a reflection of a profound lack of knowledge about African cultural traditions coupled with ignorance of the existence, nature and depth of the heritage of African oral literature. In most cases, some vague literary background or a landing on an African soil has not been enough to correct this intellectual imbalance. It is now clear that African literary critics should be seen as the best possible interpreters of their own literature. However, Onoge (1986) advises critics of African drama that the very society of literature requires that criticism goes beyond literature texts, metaphysically conceived as monadic entities; to a dialectical conception which includes the micro and macro structures surrounding their creation as well as appreciation. This recommendation by Onoge has been utilized in this study.

1.10.0 Theoretical Framework

The enterprise of traditional theatre targets meaning at all times. This is the drive that has informed the selection of the theories that have been used in this study. The study has employed

three theories in order to undertake this research work proficiently and creditably. They are: performance theory, myth/archetypal literary theory and the structuralist/semiotic approach.

1.10.1 Performance Theory

This study has deployed the theory of performance by Richard Schechner. The choice of this theory is informed by the fact that analysis goes beyond the text not as one finds it in Western drama because an African traditional performance is hinged on the community's cosmology and ontology. It is the people's way of existing and surviving. Performance theory, according to Schechner (2009), is rooted in practice and is fundamentally interdisciplinary and intercultural. Apart from being ethnic, intercultural, historical, and ahistorical, performance is also aesthetic and ritualistic as well as sociological and political.

Schechner's perspective on performance which was greatly influenced by Victor Turner (1988), is broad and inclusive (www.icosilune.com/200901/richardschechner-performance-theory). He views it as including much more than theatre, but along an entire broad spectrum, which ranges from daily life to rituals and art. He draws this theory from his works amongst the Australian Aborigines, the New Guinea tribesmen and the Balinese.

Performance theory uses two models, the fan and the web. Performance is seen as an organized spectrum of categories and the web reveals the dynamic influences and interconnections among these categories.

For *Izara*, performance depends on many categories of human activities. It becomes crucial for this study to utilize Schechner's performance theory. As will be seen in the work especially in

Chapter Two, *Izara* depends on what Amo people do everyday, daily conflicts, tensions and pressure of life, different rites and ceremonies that have been ritualized in the society. Participants of *Izara* lament about the general happenings in their lives during the performance. They also sing by praising or praying for male children to enable them to participate in *Izara*; they pray directly to *Kutelle* (Almighty God) for blessings.

Performance and its dynamics in *Izara* have been analyzed elaborately in Chapter Three.

1.10.2 Myth/ Archetypal Theory

This study has also used the myth/archetypal theory because of its emphasis on recurring myths and archetypes within a performance. Archetypal theorists argue that archetypes generate the form and function of literary works: that the text's meaning is shaped by cultural and psychological myths (Abrams, 1999). These recurring myths and archetypes can be seen in narratives, symbols, images, and character types in literary works. An archetype is seen here as a quintessence, essence, model, pattern or a recurring motif in a performance. A myth is seen as not just a traditional story, but a dramatic narrative that explains a natural or social phenomenon. This implies that the recurring archetypes in *Izara* would be interpreted through the myths surrounding them. The origin of this theory is noted in two academic disciplines of social anthropology and psychoanalysis. It is a fact that each of them contributed to the development of literary criticism, but the theory became popular as a result of the work of a Canadian literary critic, Northrop Frye in the 1940s and 50s. Sir James George Frazer's seminal work, *The Golden Bough*, which identifies with shared practices and mythological beliefs between primitive and modern religions, is always referred to. Frazer argues that the death-rebirth myth is present in

almost all cultural mythologies, and is acted out in terms of growing seasons and vegetation (Frazer, 1926).

Of the existence of indigenous drama mode, peculiar to Africa which has utilized the myth/archetypal critical scheme, is that projected by Wole Soyinka (1976), in which the cyclicity of the life of the African is described for harmony and essence in the world. Soyinka argues that the past is that of the ancestors, the present belongs to the living, and the future to the unborn; obeying the same laws, suffering the same agonies and uncertainties, employing the same Masonic intelligence of rituals before the perilous plunge into the fourth area of experience in the immeasurable gulf of transition (Soyinka, 2007). Geoffrey Hunt (1986) posits that, for Soyinka, death is the definitive means by which cosmic unity is reasserted and rediscovered, noting that it is the bridge between the physical and the divine aspects of the universe, and that it is through a ritual death that the unity of the two aspects is collectively achieved. Here, the universe that is referred to is that of the African, which is complete and stable if the line of transition is not disrupted.

The study has relied on the postulation of myth/archetypal theory by beaming light on the recurring images, archetypes and myths that guide or dominate the performance of *Izara* festival. These repeated archetypes, images and myths have been identified and analyzed within the context of the performance, and their implications ascertained thereafter.

1.10.3 The Structuralist/Semiotic Approach

Structuralism is the reference to a wide range of discourses with underlying structures of signification. Signification occurs wherever there is a meaningful event in the practice or in the practice of some meaningful action, hence, the phrase “signifying practices” (Williams www.courses.nus.edu.sg/course/elljwp/structuralism.htm2009). Most, if not all meaningful events involve either a document or an exchange that can be documented. This is called a “text”. From the point of view of structuralists, all texts, all meaningful events and all signifying practices can be analyzed for their underlying structures. Such an analysis would reveal the patterns that characterize the system that makes such texts and practices possible. Structuralism is a theory of human kind in which all elements of human culture, including literature, are thought to be parts of a system of signs. Melrose (1994) argues that a sign is a reality perceivable by sense perception which has a relationship between fundamental principle elements in language, literature, and other fields upon which some higher mental, linguistic, social, or cultural “structures” and “structural networks” are drawn. Through these networks, meaning is produced within a particular person, system, or culture. This meaning then frames and motivates the actions of individuals and groups (Microsoft Encarta, 2009).

The two best known structuralists, Vladimir Propp (2003) and Claude Levi Strauss(1972) are the modern theorists in the most influential and exciting perspective to emerge in the 1960s in American folklore. For Propp and his fellow proponents, structural analysis could represent the social context and linguistic as well as the folklore text, construct cultural preferences, predict acculturative and psychological studies. Claude Levi Strauss (1972) based his own structural

analysis on the linguistic theory which relies on the sorting out of narrative features in the myth to reveal the inherent structure (Olatunde 2004).

Another theoretical approach which this study has used that is closely related to structuralism is semiotics or semiology. This theory has been championed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1983), Roland Barthes (1992), Susan Melrose (1994), Elam Keir (2002), Patrice Pavis (1984), Umberto Eco (1990), among many others, especially as it relates to theatre and oral performances. Eco (1990) argues that semiotics is not concerned with the study of a particular kind of object but with ordinary ones insofar as they participate in semiosis. This means that in semiotics, people agree on the fact that words, pictures, objects, actions, space are signs insofar as they are intentionally produced by human beings in order to communicate. For example, in performance, a performer's body alone with its conventionally recognizable properties, surrounded by or supplied with a set of objects, inserted within a physical space, stands for something else to a reacting audience. The space is a material plane and its expressions are concrete things. Eco (1990) further says:

Something is a sign only because it is interpreted as a sign of something by some interpreter when it communicates with the audience, offering meanings and provoking responses, it does so by tangible means; it produces signs, cultural constructs which are read using equally culturally interpretive strategies (p,119).

It means that in oral performance, the stage is well defined. The drummers, singers, fluters, dancers, griot and audience are situated in a designated space meant for the performance. The performer himself/herself is an icon- a real human being who has become a sign par excellence.

In the same vein, Esslin (1990) as cited by Tadeusz Kowzan (1992), one of the leading theatre semioticians of the present, has isolated thirteen sign systems at work in a theatrical

performance: words, voice inflection, facial mimicry, gesture, body movement, make-up, head dress, costumes, accessory, stage design, lighting, music and noise. Each one of these systems has logic in itself. Kowzan, like many other semioticians, rightly pointed out that the object of theatrical semiotics is the performance. It means that, it is in performance that semiotics is achieved and meanings are communicated. The semioticians contend that meaning is not given and does not exist outside the context of performance. It is mediated, produced, or constructed from a complex of words, gesture, objects and context. All these collectively culminate in creating meaning in live performances; especially as they affect oral performances.

This study has used performance theory to include parts of the festival that are beyond text and Western analytical limits. It has also used myth/ archetypal theory to analyze *Izara* festival from the purview of the structuralist theory of arriving at signification, and has ended up with signs and meanings of the semioticians. While myth/archetypal theory has aided in identifying the recurring images, motifs, myths and archetypes, structuralist/ semiotic approach has interrogated signifying structures and meanings in *Izara* performance with the aim of teasing out the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics together with the socio-cultural functions.

1.11.0 Research Methodology

1.11.1 Methodology

A study of this nature requires more than one approach especially because of the fact that there is a dearth of documented materials on *Izara* festival. This study has adopted the qualitative research method also paying attention to a historical approach to gathering data. Crossman (2013) sees qualitative research as an exercise involving fieldwork, in which the researcher observes and records behaviour and events in their natural setting. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, or site, to observe the subject as it normally and naturally occurs or behaves. Guazzo (2008) asserts that qualitative methodology is used by researchers in the study of human behaviour, and may be used in addition to or in place of quantitative methods. He continues that the use of qualitative methods by researchers allows the researcher to obtain a rich set of data that is not easily obtainable with the use of quantitative methods. Qualitative methods encompass a variety of methodologies including observation, interviewing, document analysis, and archival document analysis. Basically, this research has deployed some of these methods of data collection and analysis.

Eguzoikpe (2008) views historical method of research as the study of “what was” and use it to compare with “what is”, that is the past and the present. It digs into the past, compares it with the present and uses the knowledge to predict the future. Osuala (1982) also asserts that historical research may be considered as embracing the whole field of human past as broad as life itself. This study is rural-based where the researcher collaborated with some *Izara* performers and the authorities in charge of the performance in some selected rural areas which are within the *Amo* linguistic communities for the acquisition of vital information on *Izara* festival and its dramatic

and theatrical aspects. For this researcher to gain access to vital information about the past and present regarding this work, he has relied heavily on both primary and secondary sources. To facilitate the research process, the following data collection procedures have been employed and subsequently analysis has been conducted.

1.11.1 Research Design

According to Mason (2007), in qualitative research, decisions about research design and strategy are ongoing and grounded in the practice, process, and context of the research itself. There is still need for a design and strategy which depend on the context and the process of the particular research one is carrying out. This is because it is the logic that informs, not dictates, researcher's decisions as the research progresses.

This study has been descriptive and observational because these are flexible. This has allowed for more freedom during data collection to go in-depth in obtaining vital information. These strategies have also been used because the variable of study which is tradition is not stable and has put the research in the grouping of ethnographic studies.

The researcher has adopted confirmatory and observational methods because they aid in answering the research questions asked and in achieving objectives set in the study. Gorard (2013) argues loosely that if you know what you are looking for, you should be very confident when and where you will find it; accordingly, you only accept a result as significant if it is highly unlikely to have been observed by chance. All these strategies depend on the instrumentality of interviews, focus group discussion and observations done during data collection.

1.11.2 Sample Size

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a sample size of between 10% and 30 % is a fair representation of a target population. This was not workable in this study considering the fact that the population of Amo people which in 2003 was placed at two hundred thousand people has greatly increased now (Capro Research, 2004). This would imply that ten percent of two hundred thousand would be twenty thousand and this would be on the higher side. The festival involves almost all Amo people. Alternatively, this study used a disproportionate stratified sampling since the researcher did not want the same sample fraction for all strata (Guthrie, 2010). A sample size of fifty-six people was used because the location of study is a village setting in which most people are all-season farmers. Moreover, there was an already existing traditional structure of administration in the location which has been utilized. Therefore, the researcher interviewed thirty-two respondents cut across age-grades, gender, and social status. These custodians of knowledge comprised of the two only Chief Priests of *Izara* (one from Kides and the other from Kitara Districts), the paramount ruler of Pengana Chiefdom, the two only District Heads of Amo ethnic group, the seven only Minor Chiefs in charge of seven Amo peaks; , Amo National Development Association (AMONDA) President, five women (two each from Kides and Kitara Districts of Amo, and the Woman-leader of AMONDA); because of dearth of the aged people, five octogenarians/septuagenarians were interviewed. In addition, ten youths from the two districts of Amo (five each from Kides and Kitara) were also interviewed.

Also, the researcher organized focus group discussions with two groups. These comprised of twelve people each for Kides and Kitara Districts. These discussants were drawn from the youths, women and the aged ones in Amo land.

1.11.3 Target Population

This study has been based on a communal practice involving the Amo People in the North-Central Nigeria. Capro Research (2004) estimates the population of Amo people to be about two hundred thousand people. The target population included the traditional title holders of Amo ethnic group, aged people (octogenarians and septuagenarians) women, youths and the active participants in the festival.

1.11.4 Sampling Technique

The researcher used stratified sampling technique in order to draw from the respondents' subjective experiences about *Izara* festival. A target population can be stratified using predetermined attributes or characteristics such as gender, religion, nationality, age, occupation, social status, education, etc (Eguzoikpe, 2008). This study concentrated on age, gender, religion and social status. The study paid attention to age because the festival was an initiation ceremony involving age-grades and also aged people knew much about it. The festival involves all genders (men and women); it is part of their traditional belief which could be hierarchical in its administration. This is why social status and religion were also paid attention to. In-depth interviews were conducted with respondents on the basis of these attributes using English, Amo or Hausa language.

1.11.5 Location of the Study

The study covered Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State and Lere Local Government Area of Kaduna State in Nigeria. Geographically, Amo people are found between latitude 10

degrees North and longitude 8 degrees East. The paramount ruler of Pengana, two District Heads of Amo, *Izara* Chief Priests, Minor Chiefs, among the other stakeholders of the festival were situated in these two Local Government areas in Nigeria.

1.11.6 Research Instruments

The research instruments used for this study included interview schedule, focus group discussions (FGD) and observation schedule. The variable was the human factor since it is a qualitative research method.

1.11.6.1 Interview Schedule

The study was based in rural communities. Hence, this researcher conducted interviews with different individuals in order to extract vital information to facilitate the research process. These interviews have helped in getting first-hand information from the interviewees on the festival. The interviews took two forms, unstructured and focus. These were unstructured implying the less formal type in which although sets of questions may be used, the interviewer freely modifies the sequence of questions, changes the wording and sometimes explains them or adds to them during interaction (Godfred, 2014). While Focus interview as the name suggests, focuses on the respondent's subjective responses and experience on the subject to elicit information.

1.11.6.2 Focus Group Discussion

Another instrument that was used to generate data was focus group discussion. This helped in harnessing standardized data and prompts from the respondents. As an ensemble performance that requires the researcher to harness information that touches on the collective experiences of

the people, the study has used focus group discussion. Focus group as a qualitative research method has been used to get perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes toward a concept, idea or a practice. As pointed out by Wilkinson (2004), focus group discussion is a way of collecting qualitative data, which essentially involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion focused around a particular topic or set of issues. In the study, a set of twelve people each from Kitara and Kides districts was engaged in focus group discussions in order to draw data about *Izara* festival. These groups ranged from youths, women and the aged ones in Amo land to elicit data from them. This is in line with the postulation of Krueger & Casey (2000) that focus group helps in accessing and synthesizing the perceptions, ideas, opinions and thoughts of people about any practice or idea.

1.11.6.3 Observation Schedule

Observation was another instrument that was used in this study. This researcher recorded sessions of *Izara* performance on compact discs (CDs) and took photographs for further scrutiny. This is because the composite of audio and visual data were vital to this research because it is a performance. The researcher used an audio- visual recorder for a complete collection of a comprehensive record of the performance.

Osuala (1982) posits that oral traditions are valuable vehicles for preserving and transmitting valued knowledge of religious, philosophical and moral truth from one generation to another. So it is pertinent for the study to also observe some oral traditions like myths, proverbs, riddles and songs in order to ascertain their relationship with the *Izara* and music.

1.11.6.4 Documented Literature

Documented materials and archival literature on Amo *Izara* festival and its allied concepts by scholars have been reviewed. The views obtained from existing books, journals, archival materials and other related materials on *Izara* performance, published and unpublished have been analyzed and implications drawn.

1.11.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are related to abstracts and the intangible because measurement differs in the social science and arts (Carnines and Zeller, 1979). In many instances, the meaning of the quantities is only inferred.

At a very broad level, the types of measure can be observational, self-report, interview, etc. Nunnally (1978) points out that these types ultimately take a shape of a more specific form like observation of on-going activity, observing video-taped events, self-report measures like questionnaires, and interviews. Each measure has an issue or a task to make it meaningful, accurate and efficient. In order to achieve these, the researcher has stuck to the meanings of validity as the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure (Carnines and Zeller, 1979); and reliability which is the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it measures (Gay, 1987). All these have been achieved in a qualitative mode of research.

1.11.8 Data Analysis

The data gathered through interviews, focus group discussion, observation and documented literature have been objectively analyzed using, heuristically, the theoretical approaches by structuralists and semioticians of arriving at truth by a way of studying the underlying structures of the performance for meaning. This has been done within the periscope of the relativists who assert that there is drama in abundance in traditional African festival performances. These approaches, used judiciously, have led to teasing out the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of *Izara* festival and have further attested to the truth of the existence of traditional festival theatre on the African continent.

1.11.9 Logistical and Ethical Consideration

The researcher got an introductory letter from Kenyatta University in order to enable him access the research location through the gate-keepers (paramount ruler and other chiefs). Normally in Nigeria, a researcher just needs to present such a letter to the paramount rulers and he/she would be given access to the research location. But one would be cautioned to conduct themselves properly according to the laws of the land. Such was the scenario the researcher went through. The researcher also sought the consent of the participants and assured them of confidentiality before data collection.

Conclusions

African traditional theatre and drama can be understood from the stand point of the relativist school that requires African indigenous drama to be judged on its own credit. This implies assessing its aesthetics and credibility on the basis of the context of performance of the festival

tradition. If this is carried out judiciously, it shows that African indigenous drama is capable of engendering more artistic variety in African theatre and film, and also projecting superior identity and image for Africa in a globalized world.

As it has been discussed in the next chapter, it is an exposition into the peculiar performance tradition of the Amo people, and this is one out of the many of artistic heritages of the African people. The next chapter reveals a view of the systematic and organic nature of *Izara* performance, and that all aspects have meanings that are linked to the ontology and cosmology of the Amo people.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DRAMATIC AND THEATRICAL AESTHETIC OF IZARA FESTIVAL

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter explores the aesthetic qualities of *Izara* festival. The assessment of its qualities is preceded by the different stages and typology of the festival: The *Kagi* feast, Pre-*Izara* performance (rehearsal) and the performance through the seven types of *Izara*. The thrust of this study is on the celebration of the circumcision of *Izara*, also known as *Kumusu*.

The importance of this chapter lies in the fact that it introduces the reader to the plethora of dramatic elements within the artistic environment of the Amo world and the undeniable confirmation of the fact of the existence of drama and theatre in Africa. It is important to know that *Izara* is the major festival that vibrates all over Amo land.

This Chapter analyzes what happens at *Kagi*, the circumcision itself before *Izara* festival. It also covers the opening ceremony of *Izara* festival, the different stages of its performances, analysis of dramatic and theatrical aesthetics and the way *Izara* has been theorized.

If aesthetics is for the artist as ornithologist is for birds (Newman, 1952), then there is need for the instrument 'aesthetics' to be used in this work. Istok (2012), in an analysis of the complexity that aesthetics has assumed, argues that in a work of art, multifarious factors and aesthetic elements interact to define and set aside that particular work. Aesthetics, as used in this study refers to the performance elements of beauty which are embedded in *Izara* festival. This forms a major part of the focus of this chapter which is directed at harnessing the dramatic and theatrical

aesthetics of Izara festival. One cannot achieve this without a clear exploration into the stages, from its inception to the final actions of the festival's performances.

2.1 Kagi Feast (Circumcision and Seclusion)

The Kagi feast rite of passage follows the observance of the rite of circumcision and seclusion. In Amo land, it is named as *Kagi* or *Uboon-nono* which is meant only for male children within the families of Amo. The rite of passage contains three basic phases: separation, liminality, and incorporation. The Kagi feast is referred to as a pre-liminal rite.

The integral part of the initiation ceremony to the cosmology of most communities in Africa cannot be overstated as it is a universal traditional representation of religious life in Africa. Mbiti (1991) notes that the essence of initiation in African society is the most important part of life after the birth of the child; this is seen as the second major important part of an African individual. According to him the major activities in the African society during the ceremony is circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls. In Amo land, the boys majorly take part in the initiation ceremonies, because their counterparts do not undergo circumcision. But it should be noted strongly that, women also take a major part in the celebration, lamentation and the artistic displays during *Izara* Festival.

The initiation ceremony where the initiates are separated from their parents and relatives to take part in the ceremony is referred to as Kagi celebration at the Amo traditional peaks (*Kupara*); which takes place four years after the preceding *Izara* ceremony. This ceremony takes place near Kamari and Kawam. *Kupara* is assumed to be the ancestral home of the Amo people because it was the first area of residence after their migration to the area. *Kupara* has a large cave *Kutai Ayili*, where the people once used as a hiding place or protection place during inter-tribal wars,

and it has the capacity to accommodate all the people of the land. Any non-Amo person that comes near the entrance of *Kutai Ayili* will be attacked by magical honey bees (Kakwi, Appendix 2). A sting from a bee results to a person's death. An oral source, *Papa Kalandi Binda* states that it was Wasoli, a warrior-queen with supernatural powers that could pull a large rock from the top of another to protect the Amo people when they were subjected to the Hausas of the far North of Nigeria. The Amo belief is not much different from that of the Chokwe people of Angola who revere ancestral spirits, but above all *Kutelle* (the almighty God). They both believe that these spirits reside on the hills/peaks only. However, the Amo believe that these spirits hover in the affairs of people while the Chokwe view them as distant and only accessible in shrines (Mitchell, 2006). During the *Kagi* feast, the young boys are taken to the Amo peaks for initiation and education, on the values of the Amo and for re-invigoration with *Kutelle* and ancestors (*anta kune*).

The education starts when the period approaches where the young boys are presented by their parents for circumcision. The boy, *Kuzur*, from the paramount ruler's family is presented first for circumcision the same knife is presented to the chief circumciser to be used for the removal of the fore-skin of other initiates. The strong belief is based on the loud cry of the *Kuzur* that signifies the blessings, peace and celebrations that will greet the rite of circumcision and subsequently, the *Izara* festival of the year. The exercise of circumcision is done for seven weeks and at the end of the circumcision, it is followed by the *Kagi* feast around March or April which is announced by the chief priest. This season depends on the consultations between the chief priests (*Sarkin Safi* in Hausa), his minor chiefs, and the District Head of the Amo people.

As soon as the period approaches, the boys or initiates are carried on shoulders by either their parents or elder brothers where each community has a certain number of boys to be circumcised.

The initiates and their parents or elder brothers are led by a minor chief and a number of talented elders through *udinah* or *libau* (road). The accompaniment signifies the fighting of malevolent spirits that might attack or mislead the boys on their way through the road (Obidah, 2004). The selected elders go before the initiates and their families and this is done in an orderly procession.

The *Kuparan Tini* is the first place they go to, which is the hill surrounding Amo Peak, where they take food received from their homes. At this place, they only spend one day as they cannot dwell in one place for a long time. The sitting pattern is according to clans – *Anan Liki* Clan, *Anan Ligula* Clan, *Asana*, *Asirne*, *Anan – dop*, *Akwinas*, and *Adaza* – this is done as they eat separately.

Immediately they finish eating at that place, they have to proceed to *Kupara Tipara* where they are served with delicious traditional meals according to the Amo people which *tuwo* is one of them, with *nsunu-mishifi* soup. At this place they also sit according to the clans while eating. The final destination at *Kagi* during a period of seclusion which goes with a ritual is at *Kupara Majaka* (*Majaka* peak/hill); the movement to the place signifies part of a ritual. The first initiate who walks in front of the clan of *Anan-Liki* wears a red cap known as *Udara* to help him lead the way for his brothers and other clans as well. The *Anan- Liki* people are known for possessing spiritual powers to fight malevolent spirits.

At *Kupara Majaka*, the initiates camp for two days in a hut known as *Kakonto*. On the third day the initiates are stripped naked and have their hair cut in the same style while fresh *Agbaw* leaves (leaves from one of the saprophytic trees) will be used to cover their private parts. They are then assembled according to their clans around a rocky platform. A concoction mixed with water in a special calabash is brought by the chief priest, and leaves of the Locus Bean Tree, known as *afa*

kukalwa, are dipped into the concoction and sprinkled on the heads of the initiates (Baba Abandai, Appendix2). For proper initiation to take place, the chief priest ensures that the substance touches all the initiates' heads. After this the trumpet with the tune of the *Izara* song is blown. The chief priest spends time to educate them on the norms, values and traditions of the Amo people, as well as on the epic stories of prominent warriors of the land such as Adanah and Katurah. This agrees with Mbiti's (1991) words that the seclusion period is usually for education on traditional matters. The education equips them with skills to live as mature men in the community.

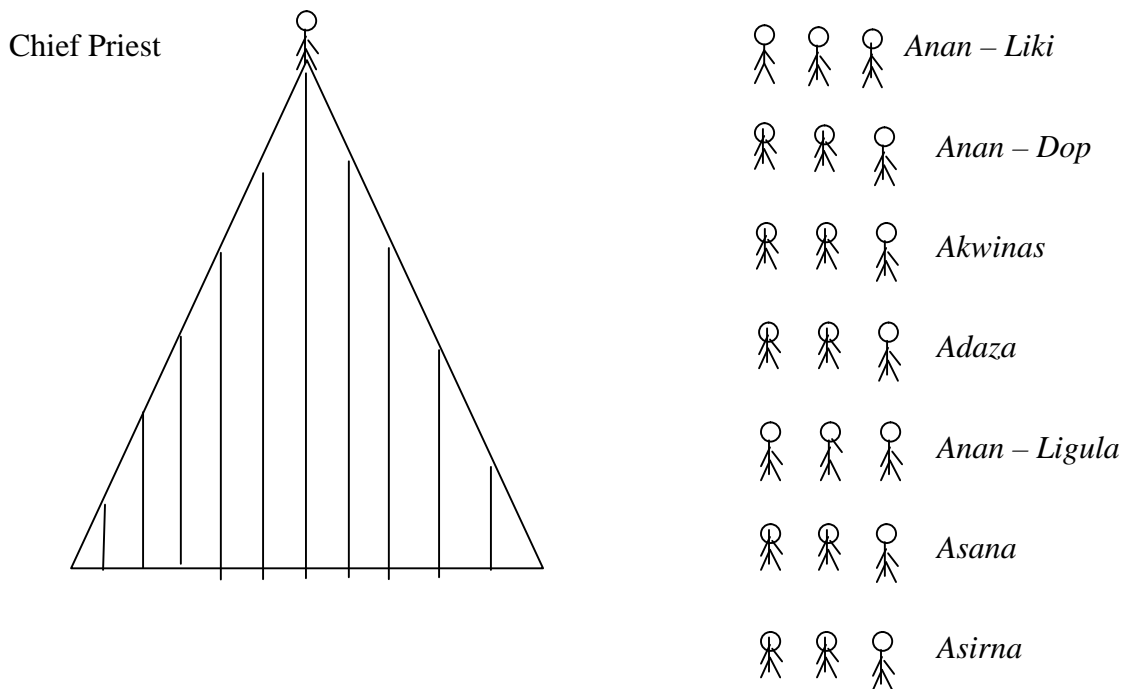


FIGURE 2.2. A Graphical Representation of the Assembly of Clans before the Chief Priest at the Kagi Feast (Obidah, 2004)

Soon after, every initiate is carried shoulder-high again by their father or elder brother in order to uphold *Libari*, to represent a war-like contest to encourage valour, bravery, and courage, to help them in situations of warfare; the initiates usually have a different feeling in their lives. This is

also featured in the *Izara* performance during the final celebration at Kamari. Although, the *Libari* at *Kagi* is somehow different as each initiate is carried high up on the shoulders from one point to the other seven times at a running speed. At this point the initiates are not allowed to step on the ground and they are carried home the same way they left. During this process, new clothes have already been sown for them to dress better. All the initiates are then taken to *Ugo Namap*'s palace (District Head). During their seclusion, no woman is allowed to see boys; she is fined seven goats if she breaks this rule. At the palace of *Ugo Namap*, the initiates are received with jubilation and ululation because they have now passed to another state of life. Looking smart in their new clothes, they will be ordered once more according to their clans, in the presence of *Ugo Namap*. The minor chiefs present are *Ugo Naparan* and the chief priest who has led them through the seclusion period. The local brew referred to as *Ntoro naji* (beer for age groups) is presented to them, and is brought in a basin to be served among the initiates. Before this ritual admission into adulthood, there is a ritual dialogue that is between *Ugo Namap* and *Ugo Naparan* who is the chief priest in charge of Amo peaks. This is to present the initiates to the District Head of Amo.

Dialogue

Ugo Namap (*District Head on a platform before the initiates and the spectators*): Kayika, Kayika!!! (*At this time everybody is quiet. He continues...*) Ugo Naparan duka? (Is Ugo Naparan around?) (*He asks because Ugo Naparan is in charge of the arena for Kagi and he is to take good care of the initiate*)

Ugo Naparan (*Answers*): Nduku, Nkwana baba (I am around, I have answered)

Ugo Namap (*continues*): Ugo Naparan, none nsa vat ta?

(Have all the children returned?)

Ugo Naparan (*answers*): Isa vat (All of them have returned. If one of them is dead or missing, he will tell Ugo Namap).

Ugo Kupara (*who has been in the crowd secretly will intrude in the conversation*). Kashi, Kashi, in pino minu. Inta nuff likwokku (I have caught you. I have put the oil from the mahogany tree) (Obidah, 2004).

This conversation between these parties does not change when the initiates are back from seclusion. Then *Ugo Namap* will chant certain incantation which is meant to make them have a sip of the *ntoro*. The following conversation starts before incantation and a sip of *ntoro*. It is usually between the initiates and the district head:

Gaja ni Azaman Namap (Ugo Namap)

Gaja baba bit (initiates)

Kitimone nsoh liri nlizinu (Ugo Namap)

Ule Ugadwe Unnan baba. Tinah Sili, timah minu,

Kutelle bun minu

Nene anin Soh alime, gajani Kan

Toh, anin mah minon ugadwe?

Ehh baba!!!(Initiates)

Toh, nah ntirin nin na didiyawe (He chants and this usually precedes his sharing of local brew with the initiates).

Translation

I greet you our men (*Ugo namap*)

We greet you our father (initiates)

Today has become a memorable day to you

This tradition has been passed down from our forefathers

We have sworn to uphold it to make you age-mates.

From now you have become men, I greet you as men.

But, are you ready to uphold this gift?

Yes father (initiates).

Alright, let me talk to the father (Here, he is referring to *Kutelle* and the ancestors).

Immediately he finishes his chants, he says *Kaika!!!* This is to draw the attention of all people - initiates and all in attendance. Then he takes the brew from the basin and gives the first initiate to sip at the same time with the one next to him. They will sip from the same calabash simultaneously, this is known as *Ubaru*. This represents the formation of a new bond of friendship and love between the two initiates. The onlookers cheer as they do this. *Ugo Namap* makes sure that all the candidates are served in the same manner. He will then dismiss people to

their premises with his last statement: *Kaika, Kuji zuro!* This means an age-grade has been created. At this point, the initiates know that they have created friendships: *Adong – dong*. It is a day of joy among the initiates as well as their parents and the reverse for parents that have lost their own. Friendship ties established during *Kagi* feast last for eternity. Most of them usually invite their friends to their homes for further celebration. It can be concluded that this is the first stage of the initiation which must be associated with the main ritual celebration known among the Amo people as *Izara* or *Kumusuu*. At the beginning of *Izara*, children are also presented for circumcision by their parents to join in the initiation and be referred to as age-mates with the ones who went through *Kagi* feast.

2.2 Preparation for Izara Performance (Rehearsal Stage)

As an event that takes place once in seven years, *Izara* comes with anxiety to the people of the community that hold such a tradition in high esteem. The first part and most basic preparation is the circumcision of the young boys who were not under the age of knowing what took place at *Kagi*. Mostly they are very active during *Izara* activities because of the symbolism attached to tools they use.

The boys in Amo land are initiated after seven years. These include those children circumcised during *Kagi* feast, and those circumcised before the *Izara* festival. Both categories are in the same age group. Taking part during the period before *Izara* is entirely unrelated to lineage, clan or political ties. The rite is handled by a highly proficient circumciser who takes instructions from *Ugo Namap* (District Head), *Ugo Kupara* (Chief Priest in charge of Amo peaks) and *Ugo Nizara* (Chief Priest in charge of *Izara*). These highly ranked individuals are highly regarded as

very knowledgeable of the rites in Amo land. Their role becomes clearly prominent when the *Kuzur* is to be circumcised. The *Kuzur* is the initiate from the royal family who is symbolically circumcised at the beginning of *Izara* festival.

The professional also known in Amo language as Unan boon – nono (circumciser), follows the instructions from these three chiefs mentioned above, failure to adhere to their instruction can lead to hiccups in the community.

Parents of initiates are expected to slaughter a goat known in Amo as *Kayin*. The fore limb, *Ugap* and the blood (*nmi*), of the goat, after being cooked, are given to the maternal uncles of the initiates. This indicates that their daughters have male children that have been circumcised and the parents are going to participate in *Izara*. Parents with many children will have to slaughter many goats. During circumcision, any *Ugbari* (initiate), who due to fear urinates, his father is fined seven fowls. No woman, under whatever situation, is allowed at the circumcision ground. This particular section shares a lot with the Suku people of Congo as noted by Kopitoff (1958). He relates that circumcision takes place at early dawn, and the children instantly move to a special hut that has been previously built away from the village. During their stay, they learn various dances and songs (most of which are derisive of women) and they are exposed to systematic derisive styles by their elders. The entire ceremony is believed to ensure the boy's ability. Among the Suku, the women who come across the boys by mistake are fined (Kopitoff, 1958). This appears almost the same as the Amo during initiation and feast at *Kagi*, but dances and music are not performed, except *Libari* and education or socialization activities.

The slaughtered goats' skins are tanned and kept for use during *Izara* (*Kumus*) festival. This circumcision, just like the one before *Kagi*, marks yet another turning point in the history of male

children in Amo land. It is the process of initiation which will end up during *Kagi* feast after the *Izara* festival. The initiation is the first important step toward adulthood that is the social and psychological break from childhood, as argued by Kopitoff (1958). This shows clearly that circumcision is done twice in Amo land, one shortly before *Kagi* feast and the other before *Izara* festival. The two events are very important in the initiation process of an individual. There is the third circumcision that is done only on the *Kuzur*, a special initiate from the royal family, which is the family of the District Head of Amo before the start of *Izara* at Kamari. This is simply symbolic of the essence of the event of *Izara* that people are to witness after seven years.

The preparation of properties, costumes, make-up and the area to be used during *Izarais* what follows the circumcision. The active male performers who have slaughtered goats will tan the skins of the goats to be used as costumes or even as regalia throughout the period of the festival. It is of importance to say that these tanned skins known as *kukii*, are used in other traditional performances of Amo people such as: *Iwawa* (the common Amo dance that is performed in ceremonies), *Ugotinu* (traditional marriage ceremony), and *Kusana* (farming festival). In *Izara*, *kukii* is usually worn to cover the genital parts of the male participants, while *Tigalgaba* is placed on top as a decoration. These leather skin shorts gotten during initiation are usually beautifully decorated, also with blue, white and yellow buttons. The *kukii* used to be decorated before with African cowries (*Ikulma*). The women, on the other hand, wear some bunches of fresh leaves and a string-like material called *ije* or *tigana* together with the leaves (Appendix 2).

The women wear a head-band known as *litapa* as the men go to the forest to get their bamboo sticks; in Amo is *Likpuu* (singular) and *Tikpuu* (plural). Usually, the sticks are decorated using *npasi* (the hair of a cow tail), the beard of a goat or polythene materials. This is to form stripes on the sticks, the decoration indicates the healing of the genitals. Also essential is the *nton* (Amo),

or *koya* (Hausa) which is the calico powder or talcum powder that is rubbed on the faces of the performers, as well as on the sticks. Elderly women carry with them to the arena what is called in Amo, *nnuff nikpok*, or *mai madaci* (Hausa), which is ointment obtained from a mahogany tree. The ointment is used as make-up during *Izara* performance. There are these old women who go round rubbing the oil on the backs of male performers as the music and dance progresses.

At this moment during the preparation, *ntoro* (local brew) is being brewed because it is used as food during *Izara*. It can be seen from the moment of seclusion at *Kagi*, *ntoro* is used when the initiates arrive at the District Head's palace to be received as adults. The brew is taken during and after *Izara* performance. It is consumed less these days due to the increased adoption of Christian values in the Amo communities.

At this stage also, it is important to realize that rehearsals also take place but under serious and strict conditions that must be obeyed. This is because the conditions are: first, real musical instruments like the drums, trumpets and gourds are not to be used. Secondly, you dare not sing the *Izara* song. And thirdly, the use of bamboo sticks is not allowed at the pre-performance stage. Another important fact is that a person is not allowed to appear in full *Izara* costumes. According to Baba Abandai, you rehearse the beats of *Izara* song with a mortar and a local sieve, *Kupuruk* (Amo) or *matangadi* (Hausa). The sieve is placed on the mortar and a person beats it with their bare hands and not with a drum stick. Instead of using *likpuu* (bamboo stick which is the staff during *Izara* performance), they use corn stalks to rehearse the dance. Any breakage of these conditions will lead to the culprit bringing a big keg of local brew and seven cocks.

2.3 Opening Ritual Ceremony at Kamari

In March or April, the overall Chief Priest at Kamari in Amo land, informs the District Head of Amo and *Ugo Nizara* of Kitara District about the ritual ceremony, which heralds the beginning of *Izara* festival. That is usually where the major ritual known as *Uteru Kadun* (tying of mortar), and the circumcision of *kuzur* takes place. At this special place at *Kupara* (Amo hill), a select group of people are invited to witness it. The tying of mortar usually precedes the circumcision of the *kuzur* (the initiate from the royal family). The District Head, Chief Priest of Amo land and *Ugo Nizara* (Chief Priest of *Izara* from *Kitara*) are the ones that usually preside over this ritual ceremony.

A mortar is normally brought to the venue and the Amo Chief Priest chants incantations before tying a string around the mortar. As soon as this is done, a cock is slaughtered and its blood sprinkled around the mortar. This is followed by the circumcision of the *kuzur* by a special circumciser. The blood is covered with some small stones at the foot of the shallow rock at Kamari. Mbiti's view on the bloodshed during circumcision/initiation binds the initiate to the land and consequently to the departed members of his society also applies to *Izara* (Mbiti, 1991). It is like a covenant between the initiate and the land. *Kuzur* represents all the circumcised children at *Kagi* and the ones before *Izara*.

The District Head then addresses the gathering about the importance of the period that is beforehand- *Izara*. High points of his address usually touch on issues like the need for purity within the land of Amo, in the sense that no man should make any attempt on another person's wife and vice versa; and that no performer whose child has been circumcised should have intercourse with his wife during *Izara* festival. Breaking these rules is believed to delay or even

inhibit the healing of the initiates circumcised shortly before *Izara*. The speech also emphasizes the essence of the tradition that has been handed down to them from generations. He declares that as a result of this period that is of importance to the Amo people, if there is an epidemic in the land, from that day, it will disappear. The land will witness prosperity, fertility and progress. People will have food to eat, shelter to live in, wives/husbands to marry and no enemy will defeat the land. He warns the people to make sure they do not flout any taboos attached to *Izara* practice. He also asks people to forgive those that have offended them, and pray to *Kutelle* (Almighty God) to bless the land.

The district head states that since the boy (*kuzur*) screamed or yelled during the circumcision, it means *Izara* will be peaceful and joyful. He gives the Chief Priest the power to permit *Ugo Nizara* to give the special cue for the *Izara* to begin in Amo land. But the instructions are given only after reiterating the district head's key points from his speech.

Already, *Ugo Nizara* who has two gourds with him, appears with his tanned skin and uses the small gourd for this special ritual to commence the festival. The two gourds have seven stones or seven seeds of a wild plant known in Amo as *Iyip na Amulshak*. He will shake the gourd rhythmically seven times. After which he will give the cue of *Izara* song seven times to symbolize the seven years before *Izara* festival. The cue goes like this:

Ayeeehh..... (7x)

Then the audience will respond after the seventh time like this:

Ayeeh--- yeehh-- yeeh--- yeeh. Ngyari ma seru men kwa ye-yeh? (Who will be like me?).

Then the drummers start drumming normal *Izara* rhythms. Everyone including the district head, chief priests, and other participants, leave the venue at the same time singing until each chief priest has departed from the main path to his community. The Chief Priest of *Kitara*, who happens to be the *Ugo Nizara*, moves to Katakoko village and Kaya to inform through music of *Izara* the commencement of the festival. The Chief Priest of Kides also goes to Kawam and Lishin villages to inform them through music and signal the beginning of *Izara* festival.

From the foregoing, we have discussed the ritual opening ceremony of *Izara* which is liminal in nature. Liminality, which means a threshold of transformation, implies the in-between, the space between an inciting incident in a story and the protagonist's resolution. Often, it is a period of comfort; a time when old habits, beliefs, and personal identity disintegrate and are replaced by others. He or she has a chance to become someone completely new (www.thewritepractice.com/liminality-story/). It happens in two ways in the life of the community and its dwellers. *Izara* which is a communal practice that initiates boys into adulthood as a rite of passage also represents tension, survival, and transformation for the individual. It also connotes a period of a huge move for the society of Amo. This implies that the nation of Amo, through liminal moments or circumcision and initiation is retooled, revitalized and greatly revamped to enjoy the benefits of the future through harvest from farms and fertility in procreation. The festivals are also believed to re-invigorate the cosmic world of Amo people and their relationship with *Kutelle* (Almighty God), as well as their ancestors (*Anta-kune*, in Amo). However, the birth of the Amo nation and its participation in a quintessential practice, typified by the liminal stages of circumcision and initiation at *Kagi* and *uteru kadun*, are imperfect to attract the full dosage of blessings expected from *Kutelle*. The process has to be perfected by celebrating and contemplating through the performance of *Izara* dance and music that are dramatic and theatrical in form and content. To

the Amo man or woman, everything happens with a leap of faith in the practice of *Izara* festival which vibrates within the land every seven years.

The traditional religious beliefs of Amo people are expressed in terms of a two-tier cosmology as described in Horton's (1971) model of the macrocosm and microcosm regarding most of traditional African belief systems. On one hand, there is the belief in the existence of a Supreme Being or high God, *Kutelle*, and on the other, a belief in the ancestors/spirits, which Horton refers to as the 'underpinners'. The people of Amo believe that even the ancestors or spirits have the powers to control the fortunes of the people. These spirits are divided into two: benevolent and malevolent spirits. The former bring about good fortunes, and the latter bad fortunes. These combinations of progressive and retrogressive powers are shown in the process of *Izara* performances.

According to Carpro (2004), *Izara* is held for boys during a time when many goats and sometimes cows are slaughtered for sacrifice. The Chief Priest leads all men in the tribe for the sacrifice. Also during this period, no woman pounds and no man returns home at mid-night. Any man who does so must throw a stone and say his name before going into his house; else his feet will be tied to the ground till morning. Carpro (2004) has mistaken *Kagi* feast for *Izara* festival itself. It is a fair description to say that *Izara* starts from *Kagi* to the moment of *Izara* performances rather than referring to the former as *Izara* consummately.

Attah (2011) opines that *Izara*, as explained by Baba Avaza, is a festival which takes place at the end of seven years when children are circumcised. On that day of circumcision, parents will use bamboo sticks and dance. During the healing period, after one month, the children slaughter goats for their circumcised mates. After this, they have to spend another seven years (*Kagi*),

before another celebration of initiation will be done; this means circumcision is completed. This mix up has continued in Attah's analysis of the dividing line between *Kagi* feast and *Izara* festival performance. It needs to be reiterated here clearly that *Izara* performances are a culmination of activities that have started during *Kagi* feast. This is in line with Waziri (2009) submission that the festival is celebrated to mark the end of circumcision rites. It is the final stage of the rite of passage in Amo land. Even the sharing of meat that Attah (2011) talks about is not the practice. There is what is known as *lipizingi* in Amo, which is the period when the initiates are nursing the wounds wrought by the removal of the fore-skin of their manhood. The meat of the goats hanging in their rooms is given to the initiates to ameliorate the pain experienced before and during *Izara*.

Waziri (2009) in tandem with Nengel (1989) says that both *Kitara* and *Kides* divisions of Amo land have *Ugo Nizara* and *Ugo Naparan* each. This is also what has been captured by this study. Therefore it is of great importance to show the power flow in Amo land before entering into the analysis of the performance. Below is the hierarchy of powers in Amo land during *Izara* captured in the diagram:

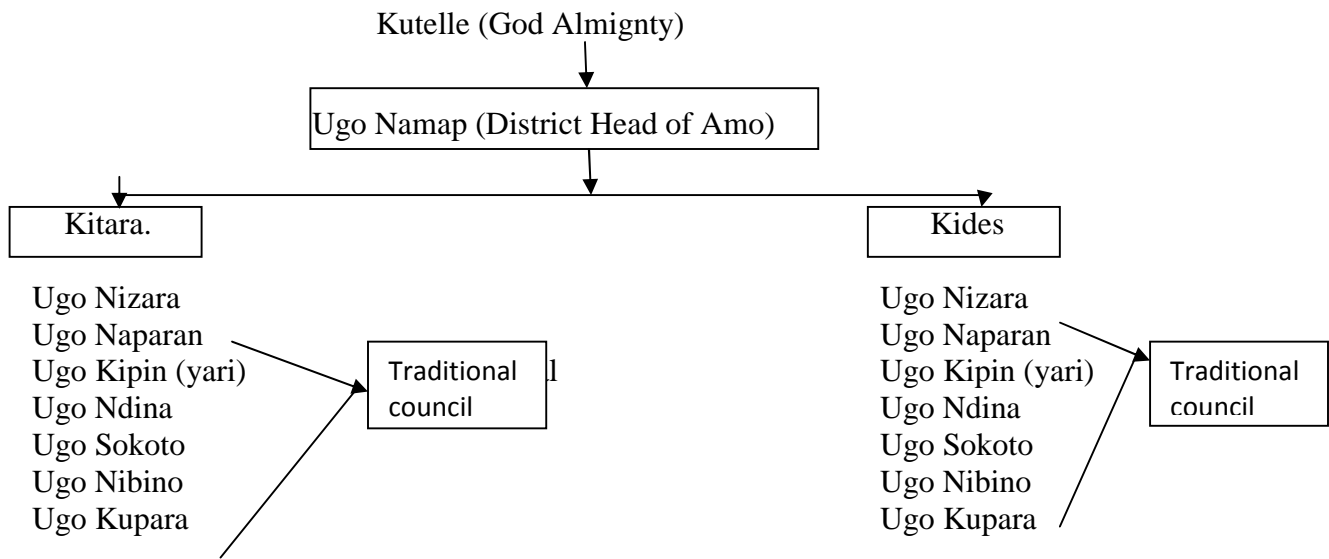


FIGURE 2.3 The Flow of Power from the Top to the Bottom in Amo Land (Obidah, 2004)

Almighty God occupies the top most position in the lives of Amo people because they believe in His presence and existence. The ancestors' authority may be there but cannot be compared to that of *Kutelle*, in the life of an Amo person. Next in position of power is *Ugo Namap* (District Head of Amo) who is highly regarded, respected, obeyed and honored by all people. He is believed to be the chief follower of traditions, customs and values of the land. Other chiefs (*Ago* plural for *Ugo*), take orders and instructions from him. He is recognized and respected by the Nigerian Government.

District heads in Nigeria hold either first or second class statuses depending on their contribution to the peace and development of people in their areas. A district head gives orders and permission for *Izara* to start. He participates in all sessions of *Izara* festival because he is the spiritual and royal father of the Amo people. *Ugo Namap*, as he is called in Amo, performs executive, legislative and judicial duties. He deals with law breakers of different kinds and formulates customary laws that guide behaviours of the people. He acts as a judge on all the

offences committed. *Ugo Namap* is a prominent leader because he checks the causes of all offences in the community. He treats offences in the category of witchcraft, rape, theft, disobedience, divorce, adultery etc. during *Izara*. His duty is clearly seen as he is the person to declare the festival open and later closed.

Izara ensures the functioning of the traditional administrative machinery within Amo land and gives the ethnic nationality a political identity. This is because it is a period of review of the political identity of the people in the sense that its integral part of political authority is emphasized. Hence, the *Ugo Namap* (District Head) with his traditional council is the only one mandated to declare the festival open. This demonstrates that his power is central in Amo society.

The District Head has the full power to punish the law breakers who flout the taboos guiding the festival. The offender is ordered to pay a fine of *ntoro* (local brew), seven fowls or seven goats, depending on the gravity and category of the offence.

This ensures that the warm relationship that Amo have enjoyed with their neighbours like Jere people, Rukuba, Kurama e.t.c is maintained through *Izara*, especially during one of the stages of the performances (*Izara Liku*) and at the end of the ceremonies. This has helped in cementing the friendly relationships between Amo people and others.

Ugo Nizara (Chief Priest of *Izara*) is the chief sustainer and bearer of the traditional and quintessential practice of *Izara*. He is given the permission to commence *Izara*. It is the *Ugo Nizara* of Kitara District, presently held by Akinge Dudu, the son of Onugere that commences it.

He was the third person at Kamari who issued out the ritual cues for the commencement of *Izara*. It is the traditional role ascribed to his family lineage. There are two *Ago* (plural) *Nizara* – those of Kitara and Kides Districts or regions of Amo land. These two chief priests of *Izara* are the chief custodians of *Izara* festival practice.

Ugo Naparan is the chief priest in charge of Amo autochthonous peaks/hills, which are sacred. He opens the historical refuge of Amo at Kamari village. It is known as *Kutai Ayili* – a large cave that used to contain, harbour and protect the people in times of war. He is also charged with the responsibility of protecting the hills against alien spirits who always aim at contaminating them, thereby weakening the spiritual bulwarks of Amo people.

Ugo Kipin oversees the local cult known as *Nchill* in Amo. It is a well known fact Amo did not have any profound traditional practice except *Izara* initiation festival. They adopted the *Nchill* cult from their neighbors and friends, the Kurama people. This was explained by Emmanuel Dariya during an interview with the researcher. *Ugo Kipin* is the chief priest who punishes witches/wizards involved in witchcraft and evil activities. These desperately diabolic individuals attempt such heinous activities during *Izara* initiation festival and they get punished by *Ugo Kipin* of Amo.

Ugo Ndina's jurisdiction involves fore-seeing evil intents and clearing the road for the *Ugo Namap* (District Head), his entourage, *Izara* performers and the audience. Sometimes misleading spirits mislead the people and performers as they head from Kitara to Kides or vice versa during *Izara* performances. At times, the road to such places may even be lost and this is done by these

malevolent spirits because they are fully aware of the importance of the whole event. *Ugo Ndina* also functions during wars to lead the way and makes sure that the warriors get to the strategic points of attack and defence.

Ugo Nibino is in charge of food supply during *Izara*. The basic food is the local brew, *Ntoro*, which is prepared from millet and sorghum. He starts the consumption of millet, sorghum and beans during *Izara* and after. He is also the main chief priest of the festival known as *Unim Para*– millet festival.

Ugo Sokoto usually controls a certain village in terms of any calamity whether physically or spiritually. He sees the enemy from faraway of the village. He receives orders from the District Head of Amo on the penalty for intruders. He is therefore very relevant during *Izara* festival since he ensures peace and tranquility of the practice.

Ugo Kuparan assists *Ugo Naparan* who takes care of Amo peak. He also helps in ensuring the safety of Amo peaks, ancestral and the spiritual home of Amo people.

2.4 *Izara* (As Performed)

Izara performances take place for three to four months within which different stages and types of *Izara* are performed in distinct locations. Once the period approaches and the ritual opening ceremony is done at Kamari village, every other traditional dance and music terminate, *Izara* music and dance takes place and vibrates in the land. The *Ugo Namap* (District Head) usually declares it during the opening ceremony. Other traditional music and dances like *Iwawa*

(ceremonial dance and very common to Amo people), *Idagwai* (trance dance), *Ipanga* and *Alantun* (trumpet music) also stop.

Within the typology of *Izara*, there are seven types of *Izara* performances which take place in seven distinct stages during the three to four months period of the festival. They include: *Izara Kubi*, *Izara Kuji*, *Izara Abandai*, *Izara Kubanaja*, *Ukalu Tigalgaba*, *Izara Nishum* and *Useru Tikpuu* (grand finale).

2.4.1 *Izara Kubi* is the first stage/type and performance of *Izara* which lasts for at least two weeks or more at times. It happens at an arena near the home of each member (minor chief) of the traditional council. Each of the two divisions/regions of Amo land has seven members namely: *Ugo Nizara*, *Ugo Kipin*, *Ugo Ndina*, *Ugo Nibino*, *Ugo Sokoto*, *Ugo Naparan* and *Ugo Kupara*. This activity of *Izara* is referred to as *Abiji* (loosely translated as ‘group’ performances). This means that there are seven group performances meant for the seven council members. Each of the members notifies the District Head (*Ugo Namap*) of the day the performers will perform at his arena to his pleasure and that of his subjects. As soon as the communication between the member of council and the District Head is done, and performers are informed, the host (member) prepares refreshment for the performers. This refreshment is local brew, *ntoro*. Usually during *Izara* performance, the performers enjoy *ntoro* at intervals at the instruction of *Ugo Nizara*. The audience also consumes the local brew even as the feast continues.

Amo people use local names for these group performances of *Izara* representing the family names of the members. For example, *Abiji Kiwa*, *Liku-Adigiwu*, *Anasa*, *Bayaro*, *Dodo-Fijyazi*,

Ugo Ngan – Katika and *Abandai*; each of the seven chiefs' names is mentioned. But these group performances do not get the number of performers witnessed at other stages. They perform with a relatively small population of performers and audience.

2.4.2 *Izara Kuji* lasts for only a day. Usually, this happens when the parents of the initiates prepare the local beer-*ntoro naji* (beer for age-groups), which is served to old people on the arena of the performance. The local brew is prepared and served to the old people in the villages of Amo in order to give thanks to *Kutelle* for giving the community male children who have made it through circumcision.

It is paramount to note that this is the early stage of the festival, and so the participants are expected to be informed of the dance steps and usage of the bamboo sticks. Albeit some of the performers, having participated or witnessed how the dance is done, just need to recall how the movements are displayed; others experience it for the first time.

2.4.3 *Izara Abandai* takes place for one day, at Kawam for the prominent family of *Abandai Kunanzan*, which is known for producing brave people. *Abandai*, himself is the *Ugo Nizara* of Kides region of Amo and doubles up as the *Ugo Kipin* because of the supernatural powers he has inherited from the warrior, Adanah who was one of the warriors who defeated the Hausas at Kauru and parts of Kano and Bauchi.

This family deserves a performance because of their contributions to the progress of Amo land. During this performance, all performers from Kitara and Kides take part in order to show respect

to Abandai. It is usually a relatively large crowd of performers, compared to the previous ones. He also prepares local brew for them because they need energy to dance.

2.4.4 *Izara Kubanaja* or *Liku* is memorable in nature. This performance is held for a single day by performers from Kitara and Kides who move across the mountain to Liku (Rukuba land). According to an interviewee, Mallam Isaac Bawa Sambo, it is believed in Amo land, the royal clan from Kamari originated from Rukuba extraction. Furthermore, the relationship associated with a warrior, Katura, for the reason of love for the Rukubu people, sacrificed himself to the Hausas to save the life of his Rukuba friend and his people. It was as a result of this sacrifice that the two ethnic groups (Amo and Rukuba) resolved to be friends and play together.

Izara Kubanaja has become one of the benefits of that warm relationship between Amo and Rukuba people, and it started with Ugo Doya in about 250 years ago at Kamari. The tradition of taking this particular type of *Izara* to the Rukuba people has continued with Doya's sons: Ugo Sambo and Miango, Bawa and now, Paul Magaji.

Izara Kubanaja is often announced by *Ugo Nizara* who informs performers and council members of the date they will go and perform for the Rukuba people. The designated arena for this performance is at the foot of the mountain near the village of the Rukuba Chief Priest. It is at times done at Karambana village that borders with the Kawam village of the Amo people depending on the preference of the Rukuba Chief Priest. This specific performance usually informs the Rukuba people of the season of *Izara* festival in Amo land. Also, it is seen as a special invitation to the Rukuba people to attend the grand finale (*Useru Tikpuu*).

4.5 *Ukalu Tigalgaba* is the fifth stage and it means ‘the removal of *Tigalgaba*’. *Tigalgaba* is the tanned skin that is worn on the *kukii* which covers the private parts or nakedness of the male performers. It is used for decorative purposes. This performance takes place in all the towns or villages that have minor chiefs or members of the traditional council of Amo. During such a performance, there is usually a symbolic removal of the *tigalgaba* by the respective members of the traditional council. This clearly tells the performers that in the next stage, nobody should be seen with it performing. It is said that no performer tries to do that because the fine must be paid in form of seven cockerels. But the researcher observed performers with *tigalgaba* during *Izara nishum* and *useru tikpuu*.

2.4.6 Izara Nishum

Izara Nishum (*Izara* for beans) is the sixth type and stage in the series of performances of *Izara*. It is highly regarded by the Amo people from Kides axis of Amo land because that is the rendezvous of this great event. It is a day that is full of expression of beliefs of the people which lasts for a day.

According to Ugo Bawa Sambo, the superior ruler of Pengana Chiefdom, the origin of *Izara Nishum* stems from an incident that took place at Kawam town more than two hundred years ago in which beans were involved. Bean crop is one of the chief products and staple foods of Amo people. Initially, what made this particular type of *Izara* performance unique was the use of a big size drum, *Kizing-zing* and the trumpet. More than two hundred years ago, according to Bawa, the dancers from Kitara who were to participate in a dance with the ones in Kides, matched bean

plants on the farm near the venue of *Izara*. This proposed destructive action by Kitara dancers christened the *Izara Kizin-zing* to *Izara Nishum* as in reality it was a blessing in disguise (Appendix 2). Obviously, it has become a blessing to the land because it has become a day for torrential rain and a bumper harvest of beans for that particular year.

An oral source, Mallam Emmanuel Dariya, *Izara Nishum* is a profound tradition that is prior to the day of *Izara Nishum*, the head clans and their performers will be asked to prepare some cooked bean meals to be served to the performers from Kitara while dancing.

This is also the stage that draws a large audience because the district head (*Ugo Namap*) from Kitara at Katako town is expected to lead his subjects and a procession of dancers to Kides. A large crowd from Kitara usually follows to witness this famous event known as *Izara Nishum*.

Ugo Ndina, mandated with supernatural powers leads up front and clears shrubs and puts off attacks from evil and harmful spirits. When the group nears the *Izara Nishum* arena at Kawam, they will stop at a point. Then, the members of the traditional council from Kides will come and welcome those performers from Kitara. At this point, the tempo, enthusiasm, movement and rhythm of the movement in performance will accentuate because this section is perceived as a competition between the two groups of performers from the two places.

Immediately the Kitara dancers join their counterparts from Kides, the former will be given the turn to showcase their dancing prowess. They dance around the circle seven times with all the

movements and music/songs involved in the traditional practice. After the seventh round, *Ugo Namap* will announce the date for the *Useru Tikpuu* (grand finale).

After the announcement, both groups of dancers will go round seven times. During the seventh round, bean meals and local brew will be shared among the performers. Then *Ugo Namap* will recede in the same manner to Kitara with his retinue and performers.

2.4.7 Useru Tikpuu (The Collection of Bamboo Sticks)

Traditional festivals in Africa are supported by certain beliefs that are integral to such practices. It is important to start this last part of the festival by recognizing the beliefs that guide the performance of *Izara*. We have decided to be more circumspect in this stage in order to avoid repetition of some of the activities that occur during the six other stages of the festival. We have started with the sheer beliefs attached to *Izara* practice. This study has not ascertained the potency of these beliefs; they have been written down for the purpose of documentation only.

As it is in the initiation rite, if the stone of any initiate (*Ugbari*) changes position, the boy will die. If in the course of the dance, the staff or bamboo stick (*likpuu*), of a performer breaks in the middle; his son will not survive to see Kagi feast. He may not even witness the conclusion of the festival itself. If by any great misfortune the stick breaks, the performer/dancer starts crying, and it is also a very emotional time for relatives and other spectators (Obidah, 2004).

Furthermore, no performer is allowed to have any sexual inter-course with his spouse during *Izara* festival. The implication or consequences of such is that the wound being nursed as a result of the removal of the fore-skin of the initiate will not heal. If such a forbidden act takes place, the

performer and his father must have to see the chief priest of *Izara* to pour libation and pay a fine to appease the ancestors (*Anta kune*).

Also, during *Izara* festival, nobody is allowed to sing or dance any other song or dance in Amo land except *Izara* music and dance. If a person is caught, maybe singing *Iwawa*, he will be charged a fine of seven chickens. It is usually *Izara* music at weddings, naming ceremonies, fund-raising occasions, and other public ceremonies. And immediately the period of *Izara* is closed, no one is allowed to sing *Izara* music or demonstrate *Izara* dance.

Useru-Tikpuu simply means ‘collection of staff or bamboo sticks’. It is during this stage/type of *Izara* festival that *Ugo Namap* (district head) collects the bamboo sticks from the active performers or dancers of *Izara*. This symbolic collection of staff happens when all dancers have performed a dance around the circle seven times.

Useru-Tikpuu is the seventh and the last stage of *Izara* performance that takes place at the special arena at Kamari village where the District Head’s extended family home is. This final *Izara* performance has several traditional activities which add to the traditional dance display; there are horsemanship, hunting and warfare displays exhibited by the performers using dane guns or muskets.

As it has been noted earlier on, *Izara* performance structure/ formation is circular. This also applies to the *Izara Nishum* at Kawam, and the *Useru-Tikpuu* at Kamari; at the centre of the circle is a rocky platform that has the skull of the defeated Hausa warrior of the early nineteenth

century. This is signified by an ochre-powdered granite stone. The rocky platform is where the District Head sits with his council members. It is also here that he stands to address the people.

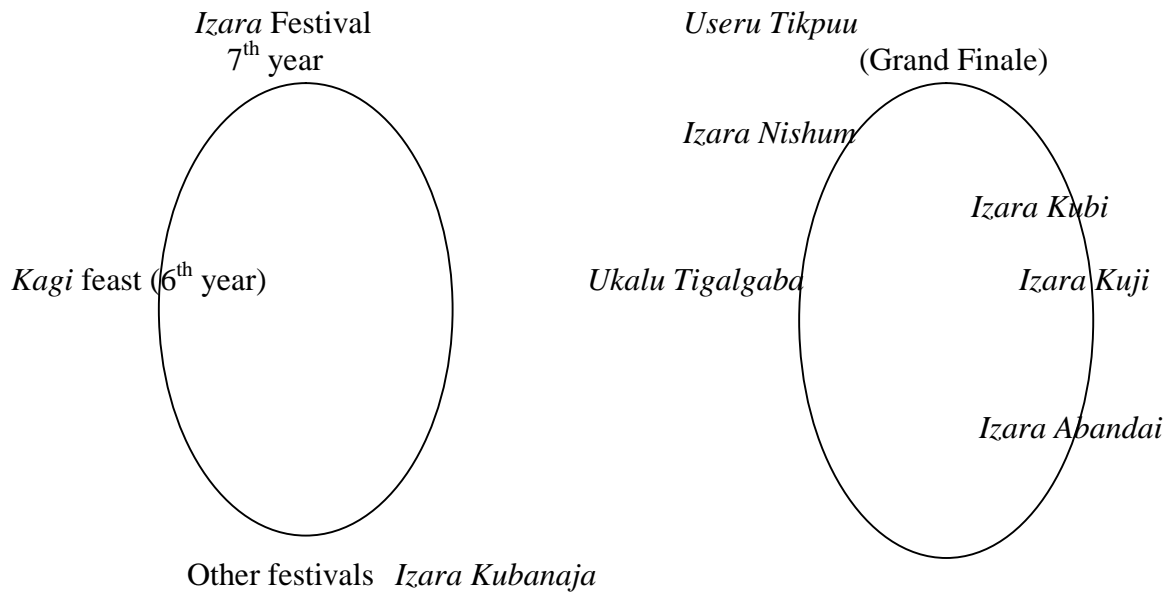
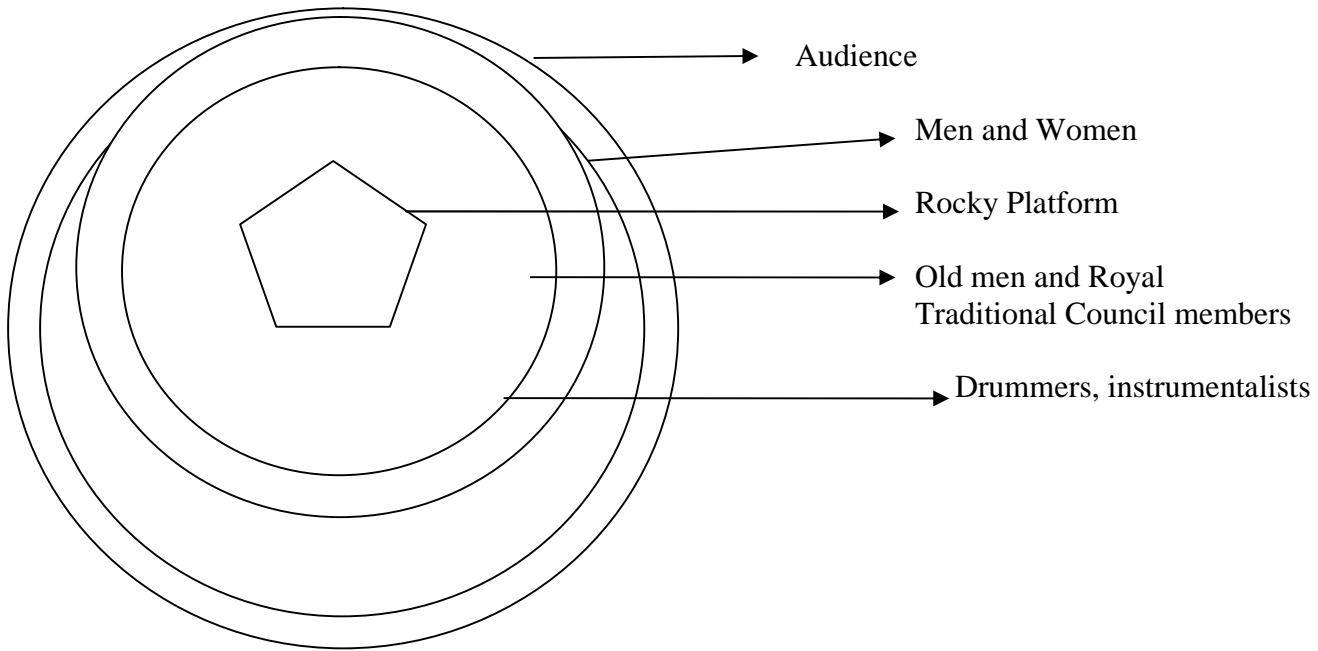


FIGURE 2.4 *The Circular Formation of Izara Performance showing the Groups in it, and the Cycle of Events within Seven Years, and within the Period of Izara festival (Obidah, 2004).*

This is followed by the drum beaters and instrumentalists, who move with the dancers round the circle. There can be two supporting drummers and a lead drummer with a big drum. With the exception of the *Izara Nishum* that is privileged to have the mysterious drum, *kizing-zing* played. Despite the presence and use of *kizing-zing*, the lead drummer is not darkened in the use of his artistry. He is an excellent artist when it comes to accentuating the tempo and rhythm of the performance. He rivals the lead singer by giving cues during *Izara* performances. Instrumentalists are divided into two groups: the women and men that have celebrated *Izara* festival before as a result of the circumcision of their children hold *Abbo* (gourds with seven stones or seeds), and a group of aged men who blow trumpets rhythmically.

Next to the drummers and instrumentalists, are the few old women/men, the district head, and members of the traditional council. Their dance is regal in nature with dance movements different from that of *Izara*. Next to the District Head and his royal council are the active performers whose children have gone through circumcision. They dance shaking (*uzarnu*) their staff/bamboo sticks to the rhythm of the *Izara song* being sung. These active male dancers holding staffs are dancing side-by-side with the maternal grandmothers of the initiates (*Agbari*-plural or *Ugbari*-singular). The performers are surrounded by a large active audience who willingly join in the dance due to the fluid nature of it.

The convergence of performers in a procession from Kitara and Kides is not different from the way it happens at *Izara Nishum*. The arena is at Kamari, which is in Kitara region of Amo land. When it is time for the Kides dancers' arrival, they come with pomp and pageantry. *Ugo Nizara* of Kides must wear his historical red regalia, and he is followed by other traditional minor chiefs.

As soon as Kides and Kitara performers meet on the arena, they go round the circle seven times. At this moment all their movements have been in perfection. The dexterity in handling the bamboo sticks is conspicuous. The joining elements of *Izara* performance are its dance and song/music.

The theatre performance hinges on the dance steps and the song. Someone sees the aesthetics in the creative movements of the legs, and the diagonal and sideways movements of the performers' bodies. No part of the body is atrophied. Another distinctive aesthetic piece is the music. The chorus remains the same and each performer continues with his/her dialogic stanza. Happy and sad moods are dramatized.

It is important to note the fact that there are approved causes for the performers' mixed moods at this performance. One of the important causes for the vaulting mood is because of the male child that *Kutelle* (God) has blessed the performer with. Moreover, having the male child is not enough, but the fact that the child has been circumcised, gives the father greater happiness during *Izara*. *Izara* is the crowning of the process of initiation. The performer, during this revered artistic performance, shows gratitude to his in-laws for their magnanimity in giving him their daughter in marriage. The grandmothers of the initiates also express their joy and happiness during such moments as the *Izara* music is going on in their own separate stanzas. Sorrowfully, those who are sad usually sing lamentable songs/stanzas by telling musically why they are in such moods. Every active performer holds a bamboo stick to show that his child is being initiated. But performers do not hold the sticks or the gourds with seven stones to show that they have not circumcised any male children. This is because they have not been blessed with male

children; they lament and pray to *Kutelle* for male children. This lamentation is known as *Utuzu-nawui* or *Ugozu-nawui* in Amo language (see Appendix 2). Unfortunately, some sons die during the circumcision rite, and their parents lament over their death and pray to *Kutelle* and their ancestors for other male children.

Generally speaking, the performers also lament about the sad events that rocked their homes in the past, like the death of loved ones. At such moments, members of their families who are following the performer's energetic and emotive expression, burst into tears. Even those in the audience who are not family members get affected by these energetic and highly emotive expressions. These expressions can be in deep Amo language that lacks nothing to be called emotive verses. These expressions are delicate and touching. The somehow operative display turns panegyric when a performer begins to praise his ancestors for their heroic deeds and even the ones that are still alive are not left out of his/her praise. But it takes elegiac tone if a performer switches to mourning the death of loved ones in his family. This is usually the crescendo of their sadness; that they wish they had the *mabudin-nlura* (the key to the dwelling place of the dead). *Lura* is Hell where the dead ones are. These touching and probing words from such performers can arouse a strong emotional outpour from members of the audience. This fits

Taiwo's view (1967, p.39):

... the people's beliefs and attitude to life are embedded in their songs and so they have appropriate songs for any situation. These songs are regarded as a major activity during which people show their joy or sorrow or, in the case of religious festivals, their reverence and devotion.

It is the Amo people's belief that they get into a high level of communication with themselves and their God through music and dance. It is at this time that they express

thanks, lamentation and supplication to *Kutelle* and other cosmic powers, like their ancestors.

As the performers dance round the circle, at the seventh time of their joint dance, the District Head together with his entourage makes his way to the centre of the performing area. At such a moment every performer begins to dance cautiously. Then the District Head goes to one of the performers with a bamboo stick and collects it from the dancer. Already, the attention of all the dancers is on him (District Head), they will all stop dancing immediately. Each dancer will keep his bamboo stick (*likpuu*) somewhere or give it to a familiar spectator to keep for him. The sticks remain the performers' properties to be used by their grandfathers as staff thereafter.

The District Head of Amo will immediately take position on the rocky platform in the middle of the arena to lead people (performers and audience) to the next activity, which is *Libari*. We would recall the term *Libari* during *Kagi* feast, which is a highly competitive wrestling or contest. However this *Libari* is different. This aspect is profoundly entertaining because it is a display of fearlessness, valour, spiritual powers, macho strength and warfare prowess. It was through *Libari* that Amo people discovered their two most dreaded warriors: Katurah and Adanah; except Wasoli, a woman-warrior that is believed to have shifted a large rock to crush Amo enemies in one of the battles in the early twentieth century (Waziri 2009). *Libari*, though a show of bravery and valour, is playful. This session engages participation from all and sundry. Every Amo person gets involved in this tug of war except the District Head, his traditional council members, old men and women and other guests.

The participants then separate into two camps: Kitara and Kides. Meanwhile, there is a royal plant that is believed to be planted on that very day of the event; it germinates and grows into a plant on the same day. It is called *Fiqui* in Amo; one of the saprophytic wild plants. It is planted mysteriously by the strongest minor chief priest of Kitara region. It is the communal obligation of the Kides participants to plan an attack by attempting to cut the *fiqui* (Obidah, 2004). It is the duty of the Kitara participants to defend it with all their physical and spiritual powers. It is their royal plant and their pride and honor, so they must defend and protect it from Kides marauders. The plant symbolizes the seat of dynasty that resides with the Kamari people in Kitara. It is germane to note that most of the 'actors' at the contest hold real and makeshift local weapons ranging from spears, bows and arrows, swords, sticks and even leaves. The participants from Kides charge and make attempt six times to cut the *fiqui* that is jealously guarded by Kitara 'warriors'. Usually, *Ugo Kipin* is at the middle giving the orders for all the times these two camps clash. On launching the seventh attempt, the whole situation becomes that of harmless confusion and feigned energy and valour display. Here, participants run fiercely but the *Fiqui* is well guarded by able-bodied men who are endowed spiritually. In earlier times, horses were used for this drama, and it was equally a show of horsemanship because the horsemen were warriors. But these days, only few horsemen are seen participating in *Libari*. However, Ogomo Pengana, the paramount Ruler of Pengana Chiefdom has decried about this missing piece of the festival, and promised it must be returned into the event.

There is something perplexing about *Libari*. It is believed that the plant can be cut, but the implication or consequence of such a 'heroic' act is instant death. The hero does not survive to see the next *Izara*. Most of these 'tragic heroes' have been dying seven months after the

performance of *Izara*. The two known survivors of this daring act were Katurah and Adanah, whom are believed were favoured by *Kutelle*. These two warriors of Amo went ahead to capture so many towns and villages of the Hausa people during the tribal and inter-ethnic wars at the nineteenth century.

Fiqui is a royal plant that is planted by people in the Kitara region, which has the chieftaincy stool of Amo. If any of the participants from Kides cuts the *Fiqui*, it does not imply that the chieftaincy stool will be shifted to Kides. NO! But it is usually cut to the celebration and jubilation of the Kides performers and audience.



PICTURE 2.1 Showing fiqui, the royal and mysterious plant at the grand finale

After a moment, normalcy returns to the arena and attention immediately moves to the platform again. This is when the District Head of Amo on the rock platform gives a vote of thanks, first to *Kutelle* (Almighty God) and the *anta-kune* (ancestors) for coming to intermingle with the people in this event, and also for assuring their protection from harmful spirits throughout the period of the festival. He thanks the participants and the entire audience and dignitaries for observing all

the rites, rituals and processes of the festival, and emphasizes on the need to adhere to the rules and taboos of every traditional festival of the Amo people, apart from *Izara*.

The closing remarks/address of the District Head of Amo will end the festival. This means that there will be no more dances, songs/music of *Izara* until the next edition of the festival. It also means that circumcision will not take place until another period of it comes. Infringement on any of the aforementioned activities will be met with severe punitive measures. Usually, death is the maximum penalty, but if the matter is reported quickly to the chief priest, seven goats and seven cockerels will be offered for the infringement of the rules and to appease the ancestors with.

These taboos are now being challenged as present generations sometimes circumcise their sons without waiting for the traditionally stipulated period. Several Amo people record the circumcision of their children on video and watch this footage in the privacy of their homes.

The next event related to *Izara* is the circumcision rite that takes place before *Kagi* feast. It means that the end of *Izara* festival marks the resumption of other cultural practices that had stopped when *Izara* festival started. The other dances such as *Iwawa*, *Ikarma*, and *Ipanga* can run concurrently during their seasons, but not when *Izara* is taking place. *Izara* is therefore the fundamental artistic, spiritual/religious and cultural institution of the Amo people. Traditional drama and theatre in Africa is artistic, spiritual, religious, ritualistic and cultural.

2.5 Dramatic and Theatrical Aesthetics of the *Izara* Festival

Aristotle (384- 322) deserves to be acknowledged in this study because of the fact he first laid the foundation on the elements of drama in his *Poetics* right from the 4th century BC. Aristotle was the first philosopher to distinguish between literary genres. He was the first to shed a major light on the importance of tragic drama and epic poetry on the human condition. Within his treatise, *Poetics*, he outlined the six elements of a good tragedy which include: plot, character, thought, diction, song and spectacle. This has informed many of the dramatic traditions of the West. We acknowledge the fact that it was Aristotle that brought these elements out and gave them some perspectives and relevance in dramatic and dramaturgical discourse. However, in as much as his discussion on elements of tragedy or drama has informed this study, we have deployed the elements in a way appropriate to Africa. This is based on the contextual dissimilarity which African drama has when compared with Western mode of drama. While aspects of ritual performance which are seen as undramatic in the West, in this study, they are part and parcel of what constitute beauty in African traditional or indigenous drama. Ritual or traditional drama cannot be freed of its story because it has to conform to Western canons of drama. In this analysis, we have referred so many times to the *Poetics* in order to contrast Aristotle's view with the one in Africa.

From the foregoing, the philosophy, structure and process involved in the revered traditional practice of *Izara* festival is made clear. This structure is seen in the typology (stages and types), and the strict ritualistic process that must be followed. The next step involves identifying and analyzing the unique aesthetics of *Izara* festival in order to appreciate it as a form of drama and theatre different from that of Western world. This is one of the major thrusts of the study.

The dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of *Izara* are not discussed separately as they are closely interwoven since the common denominator is that they both receive the attention of the audience. Crow (1983) has dissipated a lot of creative and analytical energy in drawing the thin line that separates theatre and drama. He emphasizes on the “larger-than-life” element in theatre as against drama. Theatre must be spectacular, but when drama is presented in front of an audience, it becomes a spectacular event, and invariably becomes a piece of theatre. Theatre is seen as a spectacular event that subsumes drama. Theatre and drama are performances that deal with actions significant to a people. *Izara* deals with dramatic and theatrical actions significant to the Amo people. In the words of Clark (1981):

If drama means the “elegant” imitation of some actions significant to a people, if this means the physical representation or the evocation of one poetic image or a complex of such images, if the vital elements to such representation or evocation are speech, music, ritual, song as well as dance and mime, and if as the Japanese say of their Noh theatre, the aim is to “open the ear” of the mind of a spectator in a corporate audience and “Open his eyes” to the beauty of form, then there is drama in plenty in Nigeria, much of this as distinctive as any in China, Japan and Europe. (p. 57)

Clark’s words above are as a result of the denigration, denial, and the relegation of the festival and other theatre forms in Africa by other continents of the world. He has mentioned qualities of drama that should be universally accepted. Clark (1981) analyzes the dramatic status of drama in Nigeria, where there is some agreement with the concepts in Europe though with few exceptions. We may even go further to mention aspects of African traditional drama, which are absent in European treatise of drama. This is why Clark (1981, p. 57) asks the following questions which have peculiarized African or Nigeria theatre:

But what form? In what language? And are its functions solely aesthetic and or entertainment values as in the West today or have these functions, in addition, ceremonial and spiritual relevance for both actors and spectators?

These questions are fundamental to this discourse in the sense that they underscore the basic areas of departure of traditional African drama from other modes. *Izara* is being used here to answer these pricking questions that stand to clarify and shed a measure light upon a subject so much in the news these days and yet so much misunderstood by so many (Clark, 1981). This also calls for the need to proffer satisfactory answers for these questions and several besides the ones identified above.

2.5.1 Plot

A plot comprises the events that make up a story or drama, particularly as these events relate to one another in a pattern, or in a sequence, as they also relate to each other through cause and effect (www.google.com.ng/search?q=plotindrama&clien). The plot of drama contributes enormously to the thematic development of the story, and the emphasis mostly falls on causality. Categories of plot include: episodic, major and character plots (Madden, 2009).

The Aristotelian concept of tragedy goes through a number of aspects, which indicate a framework of plot in the classical sense. Tragedy starts with exposition (Hermatia) where background information is given about the drama. Then there is rising action (peripeteia) and it goes up to the climax, condescending through a series of falling actions, and finally the resolution of conflict - denouement or anagnorisis. This is not the pattern followed in the *Izara* festival. In *Izara*, there are the aspects of exposition, progression and purgation of emotions. The performers usually divulge issues about themselves that lead them to tears or laughter.

Plot of *Izara* is an element that is developed and has the capacity for further development. So much importance has been accorded to plot by literary artists, critics, scholars and teachers of drama and theatre. This is why Aristotle (1997) places so much primacy on discussing plot, which combines language, character, thought (with logic inclusive), and action, to arrange a story. According to Aristotle (1997, p. 28):

It is therefore evident that the unraveling of the plot, no less than the complication, must arise out of the plot itself, it must not be brought by the Deus ex machina – as in the Medea, or in the return of the Greeks in the Iliad. The Deus ex machina should be employed only for events external to the drama.

Poetics as the foremost Western dramatic theory was written to prepare drama that is individualistic and not communal. This is evident in the words above. *Izara* as a dramatic performance is controlled by the gods and their medium personas for the benefit of the Amo community. Actions, and how they are arranged, are geared towards the re-invigoration of the ties between humans and cosmic powers. This is why the arrangements of events during *Izara* are relatively stable or consistent. How *Izara* starts, its middle and the end, is not a secret to the Amo people, but is imperative and expedient to view the plot in two ways during the *Izara* festival.

The first way to view it is to acknowledge the general arrangements of *Izara* activities. This begins from *uteru-kadun* at Kamari, through the six stages (*Kubi, Naji, Abandai* etc) and the grand finale (*Useru-Tikpuu*), which is the climax.

The other way to see it is to recognize the events within a particular performance of *Izara*, *Izara Nishum* for example. Broadly speaking, we can say that a single performance of *Izara* provides a

sub-plot to the earlier view, but can become a full story on its own. *Izara Nishum*, for instance, has a beginning, middle and an end. The same is applicable to the grand finale, *Useru Tikpuu*. Crow (1983) sees the plot as the dramatic story telling. This implies that the story is told through the arrangement of some spectacular actions.

During a particular *Izara* performance, a performer gives different stories that pertain to his life in thanksgiving to *Kutelle*, for example, how he met his spouse, and the challenges and the success thereafter. Every line of the lyric ends with ‘eeh eeh’ which elicits a response from his wife or mother- in-law dancing with him. One of the story may go like this:

Lenge-lenge, kiran Kutelle ee-eeh
Nwa se kubura nin libaw kunen eeh-eeh
Abelli men nta yerere, ai ye eeh-eeh
Ayene ikawa adofini, ai ye eeh-eeh
Ti ta akus itaun na gono kilime ba eeh – eeh
Likus Kagi da men se gono ai ye eeh – eeh
Zaman duniya da wuya eeh – eeh.....

Translation

Lanky man that I am, God’s creature
I met my wife on the road to my farm
She said I was too thin to take care of her
She saw my farm produce and followed me
We spent five years without a son
The son came in the year of Kagi

Life in this world is difficult.

From the stanza above, one realizes that the life of the *Izara* performer is tied to the intervention of *Kutelle*. Every other story he/she gives during this performance also indicates *Kutelle*'s presence in it. Even if they are lamenting, which they do a lot in the *Izara* performance, the performers cry out for help from *Kutelle* (God).

By and large, the stories, and lamentations by performers at the different stages of the performance build the actions logically to the grand finale at *Kamari*. This has been relatively stable in practice. Relative because more villages of Amo are springing up and there is need for the dwellers to witness the performance in the neighbourhood. The plot of *Izara* will continue to develop as a result of the de-ritualization phenomenon affecting traditional African festivals. This will lead to an increase in the number of people who witness *Izara* performance. If villages like Masira or Asari witnesses *Izara* performance, then it means there is further development of *Izara* plot.

2.5.2 Characters

Characters are the persons in drama about whom the story is told. A character is that part which an actor recreates. No drama can take place without the presence of characters. They are the channels through which the audience gets the issues, ideas, excitement, messages, and logic of a story. These characters play the serious or humorous scenes of a story. Characters can be round or flat, major or minor (Tanner, 1995). In Western dramatic style, the opinions of dramatists are carried and sustained by the major characters within the drama.

Characters are people in drama with aggregate attributes and idiosyncrasies. Drama of life and artistic drama are run by human-beings who exhibit these attitudes and attributes enshroud in vicissitudes for proper verisimilitude. Characters in *Izara* performance include the ancestors, active performers, traditional council members, and to be fair to the situation at hand, the spectators that are *Amo* by tribe. This fair enumeration is hinged on the fact that the performance is communal and the space is fluid.

Traditional African drama and theatre cannot be outside the belief system of the people. In traditional communities, one cannot separate ritual performance from religion; they are inseparable. Soyinka (1986) introduced spirits and deities as characters because of the nature of Yoruba traditional life and their worldview. It is not out of place to identify *anta-kune* (ancestors) and with *Katurah* and *Adanah* as ancestral heroes of *Amo* land. A lot of performers mention their names during *Izara* performance. We can confidently categorize them as the supernatural characters who plead to *Kutelle* (God) during *Izara* festival on behalf of the *Amo* people. It is believed in *Amo* land that if a person wanted to prove that ancestors live at a firmament close to humans, they would keep some traditional food on the roof of their houses late in the evening, if you like keep vigil on it, by morning you would not find it there.

Active performers, like the male dancers and members of the traditional council with the district head at the top, play the role of mediums. They are medium personas. The male performers are cautioned not to have sexual relations with their spouses because of the sacredness of the period and their being. They are channels through which supplications and thanks reach out to cosmic

powers in *Kutelle* and *anta-kune*. They are also channels through which instruction and blessings come down from these cosmic powers. This is reminiscent of the Greek *Deus ex Machina* (Aristotle, 1997). But in this case, the presence of the cosmic powers in the life of the community and their theatre is permanent. In Greek mythology and theatre, they only intervene when human beings cannot settle their conflicts.



PICTURE 2.6 showing Researcher, Ugo Namap, Ugo Kipin, Ugo Nizara and an elder at the ritualistic opening ceremony at Kamari



PICTURE 2.7 showing a group of Izara performers with props at a venue in Krosha village



PICTURE 2.8 showing the interactive and dialogic nature of Izara

The audience joins in the performance from time to time. Their motivation is partly for the entertainment it provides and majorly for the essence of it. These spectators could be former active performers that have become ‘good’ Christians now, or they are awaiting the miracle of a male child in the family. In the 2014 *Izara* festival, something extraordinary happened. A boy whose father refused to circumcise and initiate him for *Izara*, showed up during the grand finale. He appeared in full costumes of the active performers and performed with them. He was heard lamenting and dancing in a spectacular manner to the amazement of people. This was really iconoclastic and rare because his father should have been the person doing all of that and not the boy.

2.5.3 Dialogue and Language

One of the salient elements of drama is language, which is the avenue of communication between the writer and the audience, and between a performer and the audience. A performance becomes identifiable through signs and codes that are deciphered by spectators during a performance. These signs and codes usually fall within the cognitive parameters of a spectator. This is why drama relies on the resources of every day communication like gesture, facial expressions, speech, etc. However, language in drama is used in a creative way that is often embellished.

Aristotle (1997), in his treatise and one of the most influential books in Western Civilization, *Poetics*, draws our attention to the essence of dialogue, which is tied to language. Though he rates plot above speech and diction, he still acknowledges them as basic elements of drama. Dialogue - the conversation and speeches - are in form of songs during *Izara*. Except the moments when the conversation is between the members of the traditional council and the performers, or the Chief Priest and initiates after the *Kagi* feast; dialogue is usually in music form. The male performer dances and sings close to his wife or mother in-law conversing in music about their sadness or joy. But this depends on their proficiency in everyday language, and the language of performance of *Izara*. Wa Thiong'o (1986) argues that language is not just a means of communication but a carrier of culture. The sublime beauty of *Izara* theatrical practice lies in its usage of language and dialogue. Nowadays these quintessential elements or aspects are disappearing because of the erosion of Amo linguistic content, that words from alien languages like Hausa are integrated into the *Izara* song. The choice of words used by a performer during his stanzas determines the beauty of his/her presentation. Language and dialogue delivered by characters move the plot and action along, provide exposition, and define the distinct performers

(www.homepage.sme.edu/adair-lyrich-temin/ta%205/elements.htm). It plays the same function in *Izara*. However, the dialogue in *Izara* supersedes usual inter-personal communication and advances to a supernatural level. This is in the sense that, through the performer and performer's dialogue in music form, there is also the performers'/community's conversation with *Kutelle* and the ancestors. This means that dialogue is both horizontal and vertical in nature, during *Izara* theatre performance.

It is pertinent to note that performers at *Izara* do not perform at the same level. The knowledge of Amo language is not the same for everyone. Some performers are more proficient in it than others. In a traditional festival theatre of Africa, language is not a barrier to profound universality of music, but a cohesive dimension and clarification of that, with a fully independent art form, which we label music. Language reverts in religious rituals and rites, like those of *Izara*, to its pristine existence, eschewing the sterile limits of particularization. In traditional African theatre, as Soyinka (2007) has argued, language is still the embryo of thoughts and music where myth is their daily companion, for their language is mythopoetic.

During an interview with one of the respondents at Kawam- Kides, he said that his highly attractive and creative speech in music during *Izara*, made a woman fall in love with him and marry him. During that particular performance, a lot of spectators thronged to listen to his conversation with his mother-in-law dancing next to him. That was when the woman fell in love with him, leading to marriage. His art and quality of his voice, as well as his vivid description of his situations in life added up to his spectacular performance. This shows how presentational and

imitative *Izara* traditional drama is. The actions may not be syllogistic or elaborate, like one would find in Western drama, but stylized.

Language in *Izara* is one of the major sustainers of the traditional performance. A spectator feels the difference whenever a performer uses a different language in the course of performing, even if it is just mere interjection of Hausa words or phrases. They know that whatever the supplication or lamentation, it has to be spoken in the Amo language. This has been the case over the generations.

2.5.4 Spectacle

Spectacle in theatre involves aspects of scenery, costumes, and special effects in production. This concerns visual elements of performance created for the theatrical event (www.homepage.smc.edu/adair-iynch-terin/ta%205/elements.htm). Spectacle is one of the attributes/qualities that have placed arts, especially theatre above any other human activity. It encompasses the qualities by which the playwright creates the world and atmosphere of the play for the audience's eye. Crow (1983) calls it the 'larger than life' element in every dramatic production. There is a preponderance of it in *Izara* festival performance.

Spectacle can be seen here as something exhibited to view as unusual, notable, or entertaining. We are referring to the eye-catching aspects of *Izara* performance and the objects of curiosity or contempt in the performance. From the opening ceremony at Kamari where the *kuzur* is

circumcised in the presence of the District Head, to the cues and the shaking of the gourd seven times, one realizes that he or she is ushered into the spectacular aspects of *Izara* festival.

A spectator watching *Izara* performance is taken out of the ordinary again by the dance movements and the use of properties like bamboo sticks and gourds. These are not seen in everyday life, so they baffle the spectators.

During *Izara Nishum*, the extra-ordinary drum *kizing-zing* is brought out. The spectators probably hear that the drum takes itself to the arena of the event and they marvel. They also watch the players from *Anan-ligula* clan beating the drum with bare hands without rings or wrist watches, and ask why and how. They are told the drum will break if it is beaten with a ring. It also cries like a human being when beaten/played by a person from another clan, say *Adaza* or *Asana*. It is also not taken to a different venue other than the Kides region.

2.5.5 Music/Song

Music is a key element in drama. Music to *Izara* is a key artistic substance that encompasses all elements/aesthetics such as dialogue, rhythm, tempo, and character's thematic preoccupations. Music in *Izara* can stand out on its own because it is consummately operatic. Almost all the words are sung except if the Chief Priest or District Head wants to address the performers through speech. There could also be intervals at which the performance is stopped abruptly by the officials to remind themselves of one procedure or another. A performance of a festival

whose stages and procedures have only been committed to memory without documentation exposes the limit of human memory.

Music making is an activity with dramatic and theatrical orientation. Music has augmented the beauty of most existing dramas. Aristotle (1997) identifies three instincts in human nature; imitation, harmony, and rhythm. Music of *Izara* thrives in harmony, rhythm, and the performer's ability to accurately draw from his/her pool of memory the lyrics of the songs he or she sings.

Izara music/song has the same chorus to it which all performers attune to.

Ayeehh----- Song Leader or Lead Singer

Ayeeh – yeeh – yeeh –yeeh----- All

Ngyari ba seru men kwe – yeeh – yeeh All

Ngyari ba seru udelwa – yeeh – yeeh..... All

Zaman duniya da wuya – yeeh - yeeh..... All

Translation

Ayeehh ----- Song Leader

Ayeeh - yeeh - yeeh – yeeh-----All

Who will be like me? -----All

Who will welcome a childless person? – All

Life in this world is difficult. -----All

From one response of a chorus to another, are the different songs of lamentation that form the stanzas of the performance. Their songs/ stanzas are those of lamentation and reflection. It is generally known in Amo as *Ugozu-nawui* and *Utuzu-nawui*, while *ukwa* is the response to the chorus. From the moment that the *kuzur* is circumcised and the Chief Priest of *Izara* announces the commencement of *Izara* through the seven cues representing the seven years before *Izara*, every performer starts to sing about his/her past experiences in life. A lot of what the performers say in their songs elicits a lot of pity and sadness. A performer looks back with nostalgia at his/her struggles, challenges, and battles and caps it with the successes. The success of having a male child that has been circumcised and initiated is second to none in communal life. A performer can decide to mention the names of all the dead people in his family and all the good works they did. He/she thanks the locus of control of Amo land, who is *Kutelle* (Almighty God) and the *anta-kune* (ancestors) for all the good works in life. This is because the lamentation is a form of supplication to *Kutelle*.

Music in *Izara* does not corroborate other aesthetic elements of the performance. It is what Soyinka (2007, p. 366) calls “the embodiment of the tragic spirit...” Soyinka argues strongly that:

The European concept of music does not fully illuminate the relationship of music to ritual and drama among the Yoruba. We are inhibited even by recognition of a universality of concepts in the European initiative grasp of the emotions of the will.

Izara music, like that of the Yoruba, goes beyond the satisfaction of the emotions and will of the performer. *Izara* music stakes to the world of the Amo people the invisible ladder to the lofty stages of the dwelling place of *Kutelle* and the ancestors. This cosmic interaction between the Amo people and *Kutelle* is enabled through music. The performers do this through their myth-

poetic and experiential stanzas of music. This is performed to the amusement or awe of the audience. *Izara* music pulls together the communal spirit and philosophy of the Amo people, in seeking help from *Kutelle* for future challenge, as a community, and as individuals.

The nature of *Izara* music/song is intensive. The nature of its language and poetry is highly charged, symbolic, and therapeutic. This is evident in the multiplicity of blessings experienced by the community. People get physical, spiritual and traditional healing when the gods come down to fight against malevolent spirits. Through *Izara* music, the confusion and maze in the land are cleared. To the Amo people, *Izara* music is a phenomenal, purifying and re-affirming fundamental component of their life as a people. Ordinarily, people do not divulge their secrets before an audience, but the *Izara* festival enables this to herald a better future. Like the Fang of the Central African Republic, *Izara* music gives the premise for showing respect to the ancestral spirits which are believed to help the living solve the problems they encounter in everyday life (Mitchell, 2006). People offer up prayers to these ancestors in the hope that they will be blessed with success in marriage, hunting, farming, or warfare.

Of serious importance are the musical instruments used during *Izara* festival. From the beginning of the festival to the grand finale (*Useru Tikpuu*), there are regular musical instruments that are used, and they fall within three of the Hornbostel-Sachs scheme of musical instrument classification namely: membranophones, aerophones, and idiophones.

Membranophonic instruments are those that produce sounds primarily by way of a vibrating stretched membrane, such as drums. Membranophonic instruments are made from animal skin,

treated and stretched over the hollow of a carved wood, metal, or earthen pot (Ikibe and Ikibe, 2007). One of them in *Izara* is *Kizing-zing* (a big drum), which is used at *Lishin-Izara Nishum*. This drum is beaten by *Anan-ligula* clan and their grand children in other clans. The person beating *Kizing-zing* does not wear a ring. That is one of the membranophonic instruments used during *Izara*. In other stages of *Izara*, the drummers use small and big drums. The lead drummer is always with the big drum while the supporting or auxiliary drummers have the small ones.



PICTURE 2.4 showing the big drum, Kizingzing played by Anan ligula clan members



PICTURE 2.5 showing a main drum and a supporting one

There are also aerophonic and idiophonic instruments used during *Izara* festival. Aerophonic instruments are instruments whose tones are produced by a vibrating column of air. In the pipe organ, the column of air is set into vibration by mechanical means (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/aerophone>). The only aerophonic instrument is *Kulangtung* (horn). This is used to herald or usher in the traditional royal council. It is used by middle-aged or aged individuals.

Idiophones are instruments that create sounds primarily by the whole instrument vibrating; this is without the use of strings or membranes. Idiophonic instruments which are self-sounding instruments when struck, scrubbed, shaken or hit with other objects on their bodies, include: *Akayau* (anklets) that are shaken. Others are *Abbo* (gourds) with seven stones inside which are

also shaken rhythmically during the emotion – laden performance of *Izara*. With all these instruments used that create loud symphony, the song/music leader’s voice has to be heard above it, for the *Ukwa* (response) during *Izara* chorus.

2.5.6 Dance

If an Amo person says *Avuu*, he or she refers to three activities: dance, song and play. These activities are all dramatic and theatrical in form and content. *Izara* dance is undoubtedly one of the key aesthetics in the festival because of its expressive qualities. In *Izara* as in many traditional African communities, drumming and dancing go pari-passu. It is a source of joy to all Amo people. Wherever boys and girls are in Africa, there is dancing (Taiwo, 1967). *Izara* dance is an expression of joy and delight for the fact that male children are given to parents by *Kutelle* and have been initiated. Akporobaro (2012) makes it clear that songs, dance, and drumming, are the purest and commonest forms of emotional, psychological, and social entertainment in the African world and in all cultures. Songs, dance, and some forms of drumming, which generate rhythmic movement, often go hand in hand, in a complex mutual enhancement and aesthetic communication. The beauty of *Izara* dance depends on its music, and vice versa.

Izara dance formation is cyclical and involves active performers and the audience because of the fluid nature of the conceptions of theatre space in African communities (Olaniyan, 2011). The audience stands in circles around the performers, and is able to drift in and out of the performance. The audience either closes in or fans out depending on the space required for performance during the dance.



PICTURE 2.2. Showing performer dancing in their full costumes



PICTURE 2.3 Showing audience watching Izara performance

Izara dance is dimensional and polycentric in the sense that all parts of the body are used in the dance. There is a lot of foot dance and the body movements that are warlike. These movements are uniquely scintillating to the men with bamboo sticks who are dancing to the rhythm of drums and music. The movement expresses valour, courage and thanksgiving. It is said by Avorgbedor (2003), that man is ontologically an expressive being, and both actions and reactions consequently permeate on modes of life and living.

The performers take one stride forward or back while the body movements are sideways, diagonal, and uniformly consistent. There is no part of the body that is atrophied at the moment

of movement. Part of the theatricality of *Izara* lies in the dance as the tempo accentuates from three sources: lamentation, drumming, and the lead singer. The male performs as the female performer admires him. There comes a moment that the male performer moves his left hand with switch or brushes of a cow, round the head of the female while she stoops in a style during the movement.

Drama and theatre hinge on visible and spectacular actions that are comprehensive and have causality (cause and effect). *Izara* dance possesses these qualities and even goes beyond that. Movement is a visible expression of rapport between rhythm and movement, and a manifestation of a state of mind. The dance transcends mere social activity; it is done in appreciation to *Kutelle* and the ancestors (*Anta-kune*) for their benevolence.

The dance movement is replete with symbolism and images. The long bamboo stick is shaken to symbolize the performer's victory in child birth, and thanksgiving to *Kutelle* for his grace. *Izara* is even said to be from the word "*Uzarnu*", meaning to shake the stick in thanksgiving to *Kutelle*. The body movements and pictures derived are images of warriors of Amo land.

By this movement, tensions, struggles, and aspirations are expressed. This is because dance, according to Bakare (2008), is "a language which encompasses geographical locations, biological temperament, religious beliefs, political and historical experience, social practice and economic peculiarities of people". And so, *Izara* dance can be described as both ritual and social. It is ritualistic because it is borne out of the ritual/religious festival of circumcision and initiation

in Amo land. And social because there is so much funfair, interaction, and community participation by people who are initiated, or conducting the initiation.

2.5.7 Conflict

Conflict is said to be the essence of dramatic storytelling, and it comes into play in drama in different forms because it adds substance to its beauty. Firstly, it can be between individuals in drama; such a conflict between the protagonist and antagonist is external (Brodow, 1994). Conflict can also be within an individual - in his/her psyche. This form of conflict is based on the inner demons in the mind of an individual.

Also, another form of conflict comes between an individual and nature/supernatural beings. It transcends the other two forms earlier mentioned above. This is found in *Izara*. Conflict could also be between an individual and the society. Here, that individual decides to pursue a course that goes totally against the will of the society.

The management of conflict within a dramatic performance determines at most times the suspense in a performance. This is why dramatists at times ensure they diversify the conflict to sustain the viewers' attention.

Drama and theatre thrive on human actions. These dramatic actions are materials of a socio-cultural milieu of a group of people. Human actions and intentions are not uni-directional. While one person thinks of what is good, another person is busy with a counter-thought. Conflict in drama is central because it reflects human society. Everyday life is replete with clashes of wills,

interests, passions, powers, dreams, etc. *Izara* festival as the artistic power house of the Amo people is not devoid of these dramatic conflicts, which beautify its artistry. Conflict in *Izara* is tripartite.

First, there is the major cosmic conflict that ensues between *Anta-kune* (ancestors) and malevolent spirits who always plan and will to destroy the Amo people, or to frustrate/thwart the smooth flow of events in the land. Malevolent spirits bring barrenness, misfortune, drought, and witchcraft. But benevolent spirits are always on visit to defend the people.

One can also view conflict during *Izara* theatrical performance at *Libari* – the contest between *Kides* performers/warriors and Kitara regions. *Libari* takes place twice – at *Kagi* feast and mainly at the grand finale – *Useru Tikpuu*. This is when all the bamboo sticks are put down and weapons of war are picked for the contest to cut *Fiqui*. Though playfully done, it is a very suspenseful and tragic contest because any hero that cuts it dies after the contest. It should be realized that the hero's death is altruistic and not egoistic as no nation survives and progresses without the sacrifice of others. Cutting the plant (*Fiqui*) is not hubristic but the hallmark of African heroism.

Lastly, conflict in *Izara* is also intra-personal and interpersonal. Intra-personal conflict is embedded in the struggles, challenges and trajectories that become lyrical during a performer's mytho-poetic presentation. He/she talks about feats that would have been achieved if not for human frailties but prays to *Kutelle* to give him/her the grace to achieve them now. Interpersonal conflict could be from events in the past between a male performer and his wife or his in-laws

that must be settled during *Izara*. This is resolved because they are already dancing together; they cannot afford to continue with such differences. Meanwhile, it is public knowledge that *Izara* period is holy and highly religious when no wrong doing or taboos are condoned in the land. The land needs blessings so the people must be pure, especially *Izara* performers.

Recounting such disagreements in life during *Izara* performance is cathartic as there is the purgation of emotions. However, this is reducing because of the decline in the solemnity of the experience. Amo, being a nation within a globalized world, there are elements of funfair creeping into the festival, and the experience is now less serious.

2.5.8 Suspense

Suspense is the drive, spirit, or mindset of involvement or engagement, that is planted in a viewer, and causes him to want to know more until the performance comes to an end. The spectator develops questions that make him/her want to watch and find answers to them. It is a feeling of pleasurable fascination and excitement mixed with apprehension, tension, and anxiety developed from an unpredictable, mysterious, rousing source of entertainment. (www. <https://ne.wikipedia.org/wiki/suspense>)

Izara festival takes place every seven years and waiting for it ignites suspense in people. If the period is right, all Amo people and their neighbours wait to witness it and hear the lyrics and rhythms that carry the spirit of the moment. Every ounce of suspense is tied to the flow of conflicts identified above. This is simply because the whole period is that of exposition, actions, procedures, and denouement. This is also why spectators throng on a particular performer with

lyrics that are heavily worded and poetic. People rush very early during *Useru- Tikpuu* to see *Fiqui* at the venue that is spiritually planted. They are also eager to watch the now perfected dance movements and the cutting of the mysterious plant, *Fiqui*. Suspense in *Izara* is not the reserve of the audience; spectators also desire to experience every stage of the event.

2.5.9 Imagery

Imagery in drama refers to those moments where descriptive language that appeals to all human senses, as well as objects and properties, and how they are utilized during performance. The language, objects and properties, direct attention to events in the lives of the performers as well as in those of the spectators. Imagery adds layers of deeper symbolic meaning to the performance and is crucial in theatrical performance, when the language and objects are used at strategic moments during a performance.

Imagery is a dominant aesthetic in *Izara* festival. It is visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, and organic in form. These collections of images that are archetypal add depth to the performance of *Izara*. These imageries can be revealed through a sociological analysis of the different activities, which give signification that is artistically driven. They also aid in structuring the performances from the beginning to the grand finale.

Visual imagery encompasses all seeable materials used in *Izara* and seen by the audience. Visual imagery pertains to graphic, visual pictures, or light (www.enm.wi.wikipedia.org/wiki/imagery). In *Izara* performance, there are images that symbolize things in the world of the Amo people. Examples include bamboo sticks, *Kuzur* (initiate from the royal family), *Ubaru* (Joint sipping

of local brew), observance of seven (7) as a number, e.t.c., which are all symbols in their everyday lives, as explained hereafter.

Any person with a bamboo stick has a son who is being initiated at the performance of *Izara*. All bamboo sticks decorated indicate the recovery from the wounds inflicted by circumcision. In those days, the sticks used to be decorated with *npasi* (horse's hair), but now thread, polythene materials, cloth and cow hair are used to give the sticks stripe- like appearance.

Kurzur that is circumcised at the commencement of *Izara* at Kamari village represents royalty. The initiate has to be from the royal family, which holds in trust the customs and traditions of the people.

Ubaru, which is joint-sipping of local brew, portrays the spirit of unity, friendship and peace that *Izara* brings to the community. Performers that do *Ubaru* may not be blood relatives, but try to foster the spirit of friendship and unity.

Seven (7) as a number, is acknowledged in the processes, procedures and materials of *Izara*. It is regarded highly significant in the festival and no one violates such a rule. It is to be observed in the number of seeds or stones in the gourds of performers, the number of times they dance round the circle, the cues that Ugo Nizara gives at the commencement, the number of materials a defaulter brings as punishment, e.t.c.; each must amount to seven. This reflects the perfection, order, and esoteric atmosphere that envelopes the performance.

Auditory imagery comprises a whole gamut of words spoken that suggest pictures and add depth to the performance of *Izara*. We have already described the issues and things that are lamented in the lives of the performers. They include the performers' struggles with poverty, health, witchcraft, deaths, barrenness e.t.c. A performer could wish he/she has *uki nlura* – the key to Hades, where dead people are, to bring them back to life. On the other hand, a performer can recall events that made him/her happy. These expressions attract the attention of the audience.

Tactile imagery pertains to the physical textures or the sense of touch (www.en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/imagery). During *Izara* performance, old women intermittently rub what is called *Ukoya* (Calico or talcum powder) and *nnunffnikpok* (oil from mahogany tree) on the bare bodies of the dancers. This does not serve only as make-up, but also protects the performers' bodies from needles that could be thrown by witches or malevolent spirits. The picture created during such actions is that of protection and care. These old women also feel the texture of the 'warriors' well-built bodies and their preparedness for battle.

Kinesthetic imagery is as dominant as visual imagery because it comprises of body movements. *Izara* dance movements are uniform. For the male performers with bamboo sticks, the movement is war-like and shows energy. It is one step forward, followed by a step backward. But progress is made because the stride forward is longer than the one to the back.

Another movement that suggests meaning is the waving of the bamboo stick. It is known as '*Zarnu*' which means to wave. This wave movement of the bamboo sticks is a sign of thanksgiving to *Kutelle* (God) and the ancestors (*Anta-kune*). The same kinesthetic imagery is

realized through the stylistic and rhythmic shaking of gourds during the performance. The users of gourds shake them with pride and honour. It shows that they once participated as bamboo sticks users who got their sons initiated into adulthood.

Lastly, one important movement that cannot be shoved aside is the act of moving round the head of the female performer by the male dancer with the *Nyasa* – cow switch/brushes. This is done intermittently as a sign of care by the male performer, and respect and ageing by the female performer.

Organic imagery is suggested by the food and local brew served during *Izara* performance. Dynamic imagery has to do with the personal experiences of the performer's body, including emotion and the senses of hunger, thirst, fatigue, and pain (www.en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/imagery). *Ntoro* (local brew) and *Ishum* (bean meals) are served during performances of *Izara*. This is to help rehydrate the performers as a lot of energy is dissipated during *Izara* performances.

2.5.10 Flashback Technique

Flashback is an interjected scene that takes the narrative back in time usually from the current point in the story. Usually flashbacks are used to recount events that happened before the story's sequence of events, to fill in crucial information. This also applies to *Izara* but in a different way.

Flashback as a device used to insert a past event into the normal chronological order of a narrative (www.thetreedictionary.com/flashbacktechnique), is seen in three aspects of *Izara* performance. First, at *Libari* (the tug of war) in the performance at *Useru Tikpuu* (grand finale) reminds the community of what they experienced during their past wars. The cutting of *Fiqui* (plant) is indicative of the beheading of the heads of the Hausa warriors. That is why the grand finale is done where the performers are served local brew in the skull of the most dreaded Hausa warrior that was killed by Amo warrior, Katurah. According to a respondent and minor chief priest, Damina Dodo, the red stone on the rocky platform at the arena of the grand finale symbolizes the skull.

Another profound flashback is pictured from the dialogic lyrics of the performers when they recount their past experiences in a tragic or a comic way. These performers are part and parcel of the community and what they say in their lamentation remind the spectators of what they already know about them. If a performer remembers his loved ones and how they died, it reminds the audience of them as well.

Thirdly, the circumcision of the kuzur (initiate from the royal family) reminds the performers as well as the audience of the circumcision rites before the *Kagi* feast and *Izara* festival. It reassures the people of the essence of the festival and the success or good fortune that is attached to it. This is also emphasized by the district head during his address.

2.5.11 Costumes, Make-Up and Properties

Costume, make-up and properties are essential features of a dramatic production. The use of costume is not merely to clad the body of an actor. The actor moves and speaks in the costume before spectators. In the same vein, make-up does more than just decorate the face or body of an actor or performer. These two have essential socio-cultural significance and are central to the aesthetic value of a performance.

Properties that are used during a performance also have essence that supercedes mere profanity and goes metaphysical. These properties are symbolic and contribute significantly to the artistic display of the performer.

The uniqueness of *Izara* within the galaxy of the festival theatre in Africa is majorly because of the costumes, make-up and properties that are used in the performance. These aesthetic elements aid in pointing to the philosophy, struggles with both nature and the environment, and the metaphysical link of the Amo people to powers within their cosmos. These costumes, make-up, and their usage, are autochthonous in nature.

Utoh – ezeajugh (2006, p. 83) describes costume and make-up as:

... the visual elements in any traditional African performance. They are the effects used to transform a dancer, singer, drummer, bride, groom and any other performer or participant in any of the numerous festivals, into the image or character they are to portray. Before costumes and make-up developed into specialized arts in the theatre, they existed in the African society and played similar roles in the life of the people as they do in the theatre. They constitute an essential part of the people's heritage.

These qualities and functions of costumes and make-up are true, but in *Izara* they also provide what Asigbo (2013, p.3) calls “spiritual fortification”. The costumes that *Izara* performers wear are identified by the *Kutelle* and ancestors. The tanned skin is gotten from the goat slaughtered to coincide with the blood spilled through circumcision of the initiates. This blood of the initiate and that of the animal (for propitiation) bind the former to the land of Amo. This is why it is proper to infer that, what costume is to a masquerade, is the same to an *Izara* performer. This is also why Ododo (2015), instead of naming the Ekuechi performer with a different name, he names him ‘*facekuerade*’. The reason being that the two performers (masquerade and *facekuerade*), have the same attributes except that one lacks a mask.

In *Izara* festival performance, costumes, make-up, and properties are materials that have been created to suit the purpose of the performance. These sacred regalia are only used for *Izara* festival performance, except *kukii* (tanned skin) that is used in other performances like *Iwawa* dance, *ikarma* dance, and *ipanga* trance dance of the Amo people.

The male performers use *kukii* and *tigalgaba* (tanned skins) to indicate they are fathers of initiates. *Kukii* is the general name but *tigalgaba* is worn on the former for decoration. It is decorated with *ikulma* (African cowries). *Kukii* gives the performer an identity. Members of the traditional council can also hang the *kukii* on their shoulders and it falls to waist level. Old men also wear *kukii* in the same way.



PICTURE 2.9 Showing a tanned skin- Kukii



PICTURE 2.10 Showing tinalgaba- decorated tanned skin



PICTURE 2.11 Showing ije worn by female performer at Izara



PICTURE 2.12 Showing anklet or leg rattles used by male performers during Izara



PICTURE 2.13 Showing an Izara performer in his full costume



PICTURE 2.14 Showing a group of Kitar performers at Katako



PICTURE 2.15 Showing the researcher and a group of Kides performers at Kawan

Female performers, particularly old women wear *tigana* or *ije* (some string-like attire) and girdle worn around the waist. *Agbaw* are fresh leaves that are used on the sides of their waists to cover them. They old women shave their heads and are bare-chested. Most of the old women and few men put on what is known as *litapa* (a head band). The old women also wear *likari* (a wrist band).

The male dancers also wear anklets, *Akayau* which serve also as musical instruments that are shaken to add rhythm to *Izara* music. This goes in line with the *abbo* (gourds) with seven stones that are also shaken to add rhythm to *Izara* music.

While the male performers hold bamboo sticks in their right hands, and cow switch (*nyasa*) in the left hand; the old men hold *abbo* in the right hands and cow switch in their left hands. These cow switches add colour to the performance. Cow switch is also what the male performer moves round the head of the female performer intermittently during *Izara* dance.

The old women sometimes wear beads of different colours around their necks. This *imon-toh* (beads) also adds colour to their appearances.

The make-up includes *koya* (calico powder) and *nnuff-nikpok* (oil from a mahogany tree) that is powdered and rubbed on the bodies of the male performer. This is to protect them from the cold weather after a rainy spell. It is also believed that *koya* (calico powder) that is rubbed on the face and the bodies, and the oil, protect their bodies from needles that are thrown at them by malevolent spirits.

The properties that are used include *likpuu* (bamboo stick) and *libbo* or *abbo* (gourds with seven stones). The bamboo stick is significant and essential in Izara performance because every male performer that holds it has a male child that has been circumcised. If in the course of dancing, the stick breaks, it means the child of the performer will not survive. *Abbo* (gourds) are held as hand properties and shaken as musical instruments by old men and women who have participated in *Izara* before.

Also, dane guns are used during *Libari* including spears, bows and arrows, and axes although in a playful and peaceful manner. Dane guns were used in 2007 edition of the festival but none was used in 2014.

It is germane to note that costumes such as *kukii* or *tigalgaba*, *tigana*, *ije*, *lital-kita* are worn throughout the three to four months of *Izara* festival. It is a taboo for performers to wear other clothes at such significant moment in the lives of the people.

It is equally important to reiterate the fact that the bamboo sticks are usually collected during the grand finale. The collection of sticks implies that they will not be used again during another *Izara* festival. That is why the district head collects one or two sticks from the performers, to signify the end of their use in *Izara*. The collected sticks are later used as walking sticks or staff by aged men in the community.

2.5.12 Rhythm

Rhythm can be defined as the timing and pace of drama, and also refers to the beats or tempo of the performance. In drama, rhythm must be altered, regardless of the drama's length, and it corresponds to the emotional state of the performers (www.thedramateacher.com/elements-of-drama-rhythm).

Justin Cash's categories of rhythm in drama fit the atmosphere of the *Izara*. These categories are as follows:

- Rhythm in exchanges of dialogue between performers during singing and dance. This happens a lot during *Izara* as performers continuously sing to lament to each other the happenings in their lives.
- Rhythm in the movement of a performer; this is seen in his/her dance steps, which are synchronized.
- Rhythm in the lyrics of *Izara* performers.
- Rhythm in the repetition of words and phrases during *Izara* performance.
- Rhythm in the non-vocal sounds made by *Izara* performers, like the rattling of the leg rattles or anklets.

It is important to realize that these categories of rhythm in *Izara* make the pattern to be multi-dimensional. It also adds to the beauty of the performance as it gives viewers a sense of variety and roundness.

Rhythm is the movement or procedure with uniform or patterned recurrence of a beat, accent, or the like. In music, it is the pattern of regular or irregular pulse caused by the occurrence of strong and weak melodic and harmonic beats (www.chewnary.reference.com/browse/rhythm). In *Izara*,

it is multi-dimensional rhythmic patterns that dictate dramatic intensity. *Izara* music and dance are the fulcra of the performance's rhythmic patterns. The dance is uniform; the chorus which springs with it has some parts that harmonize to give the piquant symphony. The corroboration by the performers' different stanzas adds to the complexity of *Izara* rhythms. It is not now a matter of double rhythm but perhaps a triple or more of such rhythms that are understood by the people of Amo within the length and breadth of their cosmological life.

2.5.13 Horse-Racing

If horse-racing appears in a performance as a part of the aesthetic display, then it becomes very crucial to include it in the theatrical aesthetics of that performance. Theatre thrives on spectacle in artistic sense. The horsemen during *Izara* festival come to display what they have in their creative portfolio. It is a competitive atmosphere during the cutting of *fiqui* (the mysterious plant at the grand finale).

Horse-racing is usually an interesting and spectacular element of the grand finale of *Izara* festival. It is not merely about horse-racing but horsemanship. Usually, the horsemen compete for space with the other warriors during the peaceful contest (*Libari*), which is cutting of *Fiqui*. But during the 2014 *Izara* festival, horse-racing was conspicuously missing. This was probably because the price of horses had risen in the market. Another factor could be the fact that even members of the traditional council no longer use horses for the festival. In the past, they were the key means of transport. But all chiefs now use cars and motorcycles. Surprisingly, the horsemen appeared in their colours during the Amo Cultural Day on 1st December, 2014. It was a

spectacular feat as it reminded the spectators of the heroic wars fought and won by warriors like Katurah and Adanah.

2.5.14 Arena of Event (Setting)

The arena of *Izara* performance is both physical and metaphysical. It is physical because it is a geographical setting within the landscape of Amo land. On the other hand, it is metaphysical because it goes beyond the physical space on which the event takes place, to the spiritual realm. The performance either takes place near the house of a chief priest or in special arenas at Lishin, Kamari, Katako, Kawam and Likwu. At Kawam and Kamari, the performances take place near or around a rock platform. This is the physical designation of the arena.



PICTURE 2.16 Showing the rocky platform where the District Head addresses the people from at the arena of the grand finale at Kamari



PICTURE 2.17 Showing the District Head and members of the traditional council during the grand finale at Kamari

The arena of *Izara* becomes a metaphysical setting because it is a microcosm of the entire universe of the Amo people. The atmosphere is charged because of the presence of the super-performers, the ancestors, and above all, *Kutelle*. They are believed to come down and intermingle with the Amo people. This is why in the course of the performance; some performers get possessed by an inspiration from *anta-kune* (ancestors), reminiscent of the Muse of the Greeks. A performer woos the ancestors down to dwell with the people through his lamentable lyrics. These ‘super actors’ can only meet the people at an arena designated for the performance. This confirms the saying that ‘belief is worth more than one hundred interests’.

Contrary to the *Ekpe* festival of the Igbo that does not have a raised platform for its staging (Amankulor, 1981), and contrary also to that of the Kalabari people in the Niger-delta area of Nigeria (Horton, 1981) that is done in the mangrove vegetation, *Izara* is staged in two arenas that have rocky platform. It is cosmogonic to allude to the strong nexus between the Amo people and the rocks and mountains, which are considered abodes of Amo ancestors. The Amo people have a large cave, *Kutai Ayili*, which hides and protects them during warfare. Perhaps their benevolent ancestors and spirits live there.

2.5.15 Audience Response, Participation and Performer's Interaction

Audience as one of the basic components of theatre is active in *Izara*. Usually a performance is a direct delivery to the audience. The audience is often involved in the actualization and recreation of a performance. The artiste is usually receptive to the audience's reactions, expectations, and cultural assumptions. Unlike the writer, the performer in *Izara* has the audience at the moment of creation that reacts to the performance.

Just like most traditional African festivals, the audience is a participating one, and it is part of the community of the active performers. Members of the audience come and go at will depending on force of spontaneity wrought by the tempo, rhythm, and inspiration experienced by the audience. The scenario is fluid. The performance is for all present at the arena. Without audience participation, the beauty of *Izara* is lost; there is no performance.



PICTURE 2.18 Showing the interactive nature of Izara performance with a woman involved in from the audience

It is as a result of the audience that *Izara* becomes profoundly interactive. The audience must join in the dance and also say the chorus. Some members of the audience also perform actively with the parents of the initiates. Audacious spectators engage in a dialogic display with active performers. It is obviously interactive.

The level of participation of the audience forces the active performers (parents of initiates) to heighten their level of performance. All of them are aware of the essence of the festival, which can only be realized through a profound participation that is not slipshod or slovenly. The audience knows that every performance of *Izara* has to fulfill a high level of expectation. This is why the audience participates to ensure the success of the performance. At times, the only way to differentiate the audience and the performers is through costumes and properties that are used.

2.6 Theorizing Izara Traditional Festival Theatre and Drama

In the contemptuous words of Eagleton (2003, p. 34):

Cultural theory as we have it promises to grapple with some fundamental problems, but on the whole fails to deliver. It has been shamefaced about morality and metaphysics, embarrassed about love, biology, religion and revolution, largely silent about evil, reticent about death and suffering, dogmatic about essences, universals and foundations, and superficial about truth, objectivity and disinterestedness. This, on any estimate, is rather a large slice of human existence to fall down on. It is also, as we have suggested before, rather awkward moment in history to find oneself with little or nothing to say about such fundamental questions.

Eagleton, as a witty summarizer of the 'foggy' terrain in cultural studies, has aspects of his submission that relate to this study. Perhaps the West has not failed in universalizing dramatic canons that favour its ideologies. Western theorists have not also failed in being dogmatic about the dramatic essences, which have received stiff and ambivalent responses from African critics and theorists. It is the pride of art that it remains one way of unearthing truth. And there is no need to be dogmatic in historicizing canons as they are not sacrosanct to the probing pertinence of arts.

Ododo (2015) contends that:

One constant feature of theatre practice the world over is the creative engagement of practitioners and theorists to evolve new theatrical forms, reinvent old ones and inject fresh air into the existing ones. From the Greek's classical theatre to date, numerous innovative concepts on how theatre practice can be more engaging and meaningful have emerged (p, xii).

It is as a result of the need to forge an all-inclusive canon, which can give traditional African theatre and drama aesthetics robust attention that this study attempts to theorize. This need resonates a profound inner code of African aesthetic values within the larger context of the world

theatre cultures. Indeed, the time has come to re-launch the search for new forms by also suggesting the direction that the search should be pursued (Osofisan, 1998).

As crucial as semiotics is to this study, for us to strategize from the backdrop of performance rather than text, there is need to at certain times 'desemiotize'. De-semotizing can aid in the interpretation of the liminal aspects of the performance practice in order to appreciate quintessential archetypes and myths in the heritage. Semiotics aids in appreciating the easily identifiable aspects and their signification. This is exactly why Fortier (1997) argues that, to treat everything as language, or as dominated by language, seems a distortion of the nature of theatre, which is rooted as much in the physical, sensual and visceral, as in the verbal and ideational.

From the foregoing discourse in this chapter, the researcher has avoided being a mere chronicler of events, by touching on cosmological, epistemological, axiological, and aesthetics issues. These are the principal issues one is confronted with in Afrocentric critical inquiry as identified by Asante (1996). This study has and will remain stuck to these aforementioned issues. The researcher has maintained an un-abstruse approach to this study in the sense that presentation has been elaborate.

Izara traditional African festival theatre offers to one's sensibilities a scenario as thus: in life we look forward. We look forward because human life moves toward progress. In looking forward, we also tend to look backward; while being conscious of where we stand as a people in the present. Moving forward depends on what we know about the past and the present. To the practitioners of *Izara*, the past is known by individuals whose experiences determine the stability

and progress of Amo within a communal sense. These past experiences are not fragmented like we see in Western drama where issues are individualistic and isolated in performance. These past experiences link up with the need for a better communal life and are presented to the audience wholistically. The performance carries a regenerative, re-inventive, and re-invigorative role, and a spectrum of stock-taking within the Amo worldview.

Two broad terms capture, in a lucid and concise manner, the agitative, transformative, and reformist nuances of *Izara* festival theatre. They are ‘folkism’ and ‘wholism’.

Folkism encompasses the communal lore that has sustained the identity and common pool of philosophy of the Amo people. This common knowledge has kept the people’s identity above the swamp of modernism and even post-modernism. This is significantly reliable within the maze of an indeterminate terrain of art. The people believe in the several processes and procedures within the practice and the performance of *Izara*.

Wholism captures aspects of the performance that are mythic, archetypal, spiritual, ritualistic, and essentially entertaining and edifying. *Izara* performance leaves nothing out of consideration within the metaphysical and the artistic domains of the Amo people. It tells the belief of the people, the rituals observed, and the knowledge garnered by performers and spectators, and thrills all people to the wonders of its uniqueness. This is why *Izara* traditional African festival theatre can appropriately be described as wholistic and folkish. This is also why when one watches a traditional festival, as Ogunba (1970) would put it, one is immediately struck by the fact that one has been exposed to a dramatic experience.



PICTURE 2.19 Showing how folkish the art of Izara is with the people attuned to its trance

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, The researcher has looked at *Izara* initiation festival tradition of the Amo people and has attempted to tease out the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics in it. This has led to the theoretical conceptualization of *Izara* as theatre and drama, functioning within an African mode of performance aesthetics. The researcher has demonstrated the need for traditional performance like *Izara* to be viewed as drama and theatre, operating on its terms and not straightjacketing it within the dramatic framework of the West. This would lead to the discussion of the dynamics of

the theatrical performance in *Izara* in terms of the worldview and dynamics of practice. This is well captured in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

PERFORMANCE AND ITS DYNAMICS IN *IZARA*

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter closely examines the concept of performance and its dynamics in the *Izara* traditional festival. It draws from performance theory, especially how it appears to be wholistic, with reference to works by Victor Turner, Richard Schechner, and other performance theorists in Africa. The Chapter also pays attention to the significance of the *Izara* performance as theatre and drama. What follows are the three major components of *Izara* performance: the place, the performer, and the action. The Chapter concludes by focusing on the qualities of a good *Izara* theatre performer.

3.1 The Study of Performance

Performance is a term that is utilized in several fields of human endeavour. The term has made its way into the critical artistic analysis of indigenous traditions, and cuts across different continents ranging from Africa, Asia, the South Pacific and native America, as well as Western Europe and America. The study of performance has become germane because it is a word that has come to subsume all manner of art forms within drama and theatre. After a dramatic show, dance, music, operatic display, or poetic rendition among others, the spectator might say – “It was a good performance.” This is because performance involves expressions through actions.

The study of performance in theatre today has assumed some new relevance because of the persistent need for quality and fruitfulness of action that is being exhibited on stage or on the set. The critical appeal of human taste is consistently on the rise thereby making the artistes to step up their performance in order to meet up with fastidious tendencies in spectators' tastes.

'Performance' is a term that is difficult to define as identified by Embu (2011), yet it has left doors wide for several fields. But theatre and drama arrived to enter those doors quite early. This is due to its relevance and connection with the arts. This is confirmed by Carlson (1996, p.1) when he opines that:

The term 'performance' has become extremely popular in recent years in a wide range of activities in the arts, literature, and in the social sciences. As its popularity and usage has grown, so has a complex body of writing about performance attempting to analyze and understand just what sort of human activity it is.

The popularity of performance studies in humanities is due to the rise of relevance to such fields that have adopted it. For some fields, they have adopted the term in order to avoid the major problem of nomenclature (Okpewho, 2003). Performance is that spectacular activity that catches the attention of the spectator because of its importance to him/her. Performance in theatre studies has its integrity, and hinges on an idiom of its own. This distinguishes it from the literate arts, such as the novel or Western poetry. This fits the artistic credo within which the *Izara* festival theatre is bound.

According to Fortier (1997, p. 4)

Unlike drama, theatre is not words on a page. Theatre is performance, though often the performance of a drama text, and entails not only words but space, actors, props, audience and the complex relations among these elements.

Although defined from the Western sense of the word, 'theatre', it has still captured what is conspicuously lacking, in the sense of performance in other fields in humanities. The dividing line is between strong actions that are persuasive and appealing in performance, as opposed to weak actions that appeal to the reader in a different way. People would mostly want to watch live actions than read of the same on the pages of a book.

In oral performance, the text is important because the art form relies on it but there is need to maintain a balance between the text and the context. Context is in itself the action which is adored and revered by the natives of a particular traditional practice. Malinowski (as cited in Okpewho, 2003), emphasizes the need to ensure this balance between the text and the context of the practice. In his words:

The text, of course, is extremely important, but without the context it remains lifeless. As we have seen, the interest of the story is vastly enhanced and it is given its proper character by the manner in which it is told. The nature of the performance, the voice and the mimicry, the stimulus and the response of the audience mean as much to the narratives as the text... (p,1)

If the step of balancing between text and context is not done properly, the artiste will only be presenting a mutilated bit of reality (Okpewho, 2003). It is important to realize that, to avoid the sweeping statements of Malinowski, there is need for an empirical approach to the study of performance. This is because artistic traditions are not the same globally. The *Izara* performance, to some extent, agrees with the need of this balance since it deals with strongly worded dialogue and dance. *Izara* attains the qualification which Okpewho (2004) believes combines the two

qualities of pleasing the audience through the medium of the words and images, that words aptly combined can create. In Okpewho's words:

...they share certain architectonic tendencies and affects: the fitting description, the portraiture of a character that is true to life or at least to peculiar ideals of the World, within which the character operates, and various other creative tricks and devices (p,1).

For *Izara*, the ideal is that of continuity of a circle dictated by the world view of the Amo person, which is performed through music and dance. In *Izara* the distinction between oral and literary art is difficult to ascertain. The two have come to be together, the movement of the body cannot be separated from the mytho-poetic renditions that capture the essence of the moment of the festival, and the range of personal experiences of the performers.

3.2 Traditional Festival as a Performance

Performance has been defined by Carlson (1996, p. 37) as:

...all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers.

Carlson's focus is on the activity, the presence of observers, and the influence of the activity to the observers. The definition is generic in the sense that it captures a lot of professions that depend on viewership. But what is extractable is the fact that theatre depends on the audience and the influence which a creative activity exerts on the audience. A traditional festival properly fits into the frame of definition provided above. There is no traditional festival that does not involve an activity that is significant to the people practicing it. Whether a festival is ritualistic or highly religious, it emphasizes the activity that is done, as well as the need the society has for it,

and in this way it realizes its primacy to the cosmology, ontology and sociological well-being of its practitioners.

A traditional festival is beyond an ordinary performance in society. It may have the three basic elements of a theatre: performer, place, and audience, but its language is highly respected and distinct. The performance in traditional festival is centred on signs, symbols, and the intangible cultural aspects of the community. This is why *Izara* festival showcases both the material and the non-material aspects of the Amo cultural life. This is also why it ought to be stated clearly and categorically here that although traditional African festival is a performance, it goes far beyond mere entertainment. Its main drive is the stability, continuity, and progress it ensures in the society. In *Izara*, there is a thread that loops through and around the stages of the festival that the Amo people do not divert from. From time-to-time during the performance, the members of the traditional council halt the performance to remind themselves of the line of the activities because of the essence of the festival. Peacock (1990, p. 208) opines that:

One may speak of a performance as condensed, distilled, concentrated life; an occasion where one's energies are intensely focused. One may also speak of Performance as a set apart, marked by various signals as distinct from ordinary routines of living; and one may speak of performance as embodying meaning.

What is called 'performance' in the arts or theatre to be precise is not ordinary. It is constituted by different sorts within a whole and is an artistic institution of its own. A festival such as *Izara* has a series of performances that build up in ascendancy to the general philosophy of the people. It is folkloric, dramatic, and uniquely theatrical. It is through the performances within *Izara* that the "condensed", "distilled" and "concentrated" cultural items of the Amo people are delivered theatrically to the audience to the pleasure of the 'super-performers' – the ancestors. This shows

clearly, as Enekwe (1981) would say when referring to the performance of traditional African festivals drama, that it is both mythic and ritualistic. Enekwe asks of the significance of the Igbo festival, *Odo*; he answers by saying it is both a re-enactment of a primordial event, and an actuality. In a similar vein, *Izara* performers recount past experiences while synthesizing them with the mood, belief, and the prevailing atmosphere of the moment. This synthesis of the past and the present for the stability, continuity, and progress of a people in maintaining their circle of existence, is an undeniable spectre in traditional African festivals. It shows itself, for example, in the *Egungun* and *Oro* festivals of Yoruba, the *Egwugwu* and *Mmo* masques of the Igbo, the circumcision of the Bukusu of Kenya, and in the *Ku Melan* initiations in Central Africa, among others. The African person gets fascinated and enthused by the deep-rooted traditional activities performed during festivals and gets himself/herself awed by the information, education, entertainment, and integrity that these festivals offer. For instance, in *Izara*, even when the performer and the spectator perceive a particular activity to be comic, it can suddenly turn mirthless and tragic, and then turns ribald. In *Izara*, the lamentable lyrics expose all kinds of personal and past issues of the performer. It is not determined by what the spectator expects from the performer. A spectator who has watched some editions of the *Izara* festival can know of what performers said in those festivals, but he or she cannot tell what to expect in a performance that is about to start. It is unpredictable, and herein lays the suspense of the performance.

3.3 Performance Theory

This Chapter analyzes the role of performance in enunciating the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics in *Izara* festival. An attempt to explore theory of performance aids the researcher in achieving this objective as it will put the discourse in perspective. Theory, according to Fortier

(1997), has had a powerful influence in theatre and has been applied to different aspects of it. Fortier contends that theory has not had an open-arm acceptance because it has been assumed to be abstruse, jargon – ridden, and divorced from practicality. Theatre deals with spectacular actions that move an audience, but theory appears to be too contemplative an activity, which offers little help to practitioners. However, performance theory mostly has been interdisciplinary and developing to a more profound stage where it is increasingly interesting theatre scholars.

Performance is at the heart of theatre. But not all performance is theatre. The origin of performance in the theatre stems from a research collaboration between Richard Schechner and Victor Turner. In theorizing performance studies, they have tended to juxtapose theatre and anthropology. Schechner’s perspective is all- inclusive and broad therefore encompassing everyday life to rituals and art. He argues using the “as if” which can turn out to be the “is” (www.icosilune.com/2009/01/richardschechner-performance-theory/). This implies that the imaginary can be real within the context of performance.

Schechner (2009) examines how drama, script, theatre, and performance relate, with the first as the smallest within the rings. He goes on to say:

Drama is the smallest and most intense circle. A drama is independent of the people who carry it, and it may be carried between places and times. Even if the people who Perform drama do not comprehend it, the drama remains preserved (www.Icosilune./2009/01/Richard-schechner-performance –theory).

In relating Schechner’s postulation to *Izara* before we go further, the actions which we have explained quite vividly in Chapter Two that are dramatic are not the smallest as they show themselves in every stage of the festival, which appear contrary to this theory. An element that is of drama in *Izara* may not stand on its own as drama, but combinations of these elements which

have been identified and analyzed in the previous chapter, are drama. Amo people understand it and they preserve it, albeit it is subject to the impact and influence of modernity.

Schechner (2009) elaborately states that:

Drama is what the writer writes; the script is the interior map of a particular production; theatre is the specific set of a particular production; theatre is the specific set of gestures performed by the performers in a given performance; the performance is the whole event, including audience and performers (www. Icosilune.com/2009/01/richardschechner-performance theory)

Izara festival gives its audience the pleasure of theatre in totality, in the sense that the spectator is arrested by the combination of different art forms. These art forms, which include dance, music/song, dialogue, poetry, among others are fused with other dramatic elements to appeal to the psyche of the spectator. It is an ensemble. To say that theatre encompasses merely those specific gestures within the performance is an understatement to a performance like *Izara*. But this study concurs with the fact that *Izara* suites Schechner's model on performance in relation to drama and theatre.

Schechner concedes that it is difficult to define performance in relations to a performance. This is because it is easy to shift between being a performer to a spectator. The fluidity of a festival performance is what makes it uniquely different from a delineated modern dramatic performance. And this fluidity is dominant in *Izara* festival.

It is imperative to realize that the study of performance, just as that of drama, varies from culture to culture. If a scholar of performance is only exposed to performances of Asia or those of Europe, he or she cannot enforce categorizations on African performance, which are unique. For instance; in *Izara*, the drumming alone is an art that is worth the attention of a performance

scholar. The belief that surrounds the playing of *Kizing-zing* (big drum) is connected to the ontology of the people itself. What the sound of the drum does to the performer, audience, and the total flow and patterns of the rhythm of *Izara* performance is unique, in the catalogue of African festivals. The drummer even hails from a family of drummers within the *Anan Ligula* clan of Amo people.

The performance of the *Izara* festival is a broad ensemble that draws several people together to an event meant for propitiation, procreation, rejuvenation of the folk, philosophy and spirit, as well as for thanksgiving and prayers. Theatre throughout history is replete with several theories and practices. *Izara* is a theatre that is performed for spiritual and ritual ideologies. Through the spiritual inclinations, the artistic ideology is discovered. The Amo people, during *Izara*, circumcise children in order to form an age-group. The children are circumcised twice at *Kagi* feast and shortly before *Izara* festival itself. This circumcision is spiritual and ritualistic. But the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics such as music/song, dance, rhythm, spectacle, dialogue, among others, are observed and fused to praise, thank, and appreciate the ancestors who are believed to intermingle with the humans. These aesthetics in the theatre of *Izara* also bring entertainment, unity, information, and education to the people. It can be deduced therefore, that the spiritual ideology that is processual and ritualistic is the base which elicits the superstructure that is artistic, theatrical, and dramatic.

3.4 Significance of *Izara* Performance as Theatre and Drama

According to Miruka (2011), what distinguishes oral from written poetry performance is the active expressing of the art. Drama and theatre are therefore performances because they are active expressions of art. *Izara* festival is an active expressive art that is dramatic and theatrical.

Any work of art that is performed brings up spontaneity from the audience that the written art cannot achieve in the same way in its readers.

The *Izara* performance is significant as theatre and drama in a number of ways:

i. Who performs an activity, homogenous or heterogeneous groups? This is a key significance of performance to theatre and drama. For *Izara*, it is homogeneously made up of the same people and culture. It is the Amo people who speak the same language with the same history and traditions who are practising the festival.

ii. Style of performance – song, recital, drama, pantomime, mime, dance, drumming. *Izara* combines several styles that range from song, drama, dance, drumming etc.

iii. Structure of performance – solo, ensemble, mixed instrumental, and dramatic. *Izara* is an ensemble with aspects of solo displays, for example through the lyrical stanzas by active performers during performance.

iv. Is there an audience? If it is around, how is the performer(s) relating with it? In the case of *Izara*, the audience is active. The spectators throng into the playing circles to dance and also sing. This is because some of the members of the audience were former active *Izara* performers. It is a fluid performer–audience relationship.

v. When is the performance? During which period and time of day does the performance usually take place? Is it restrictive or can the performance be done at any time and occasion? For *Izara*, it is held once in seven years and it starts in March and ends in July. It therefore lasts for three or four months to mark the circumcision and initiation of children to adulthood, by a way of forming an age–grade. Once this period reaches, the

performance can be held either in the morning, afternoon, evening or night. But the performances are usually held in the evening time. The major performances like *Izara*, *Nishim*, and *Useru Tikpuu* (grand finale), start in the afternoon.

vi. What are the subject, tone and mood of the performance? *Izara* celebrates the circumcision and initiation of children to adults in Amo land, and it is the culmination of the process that usually starts at *Kagi* feast (the period of seclusion), to the ritualistic opening ceremony at Kamari.

The tone is that of folk celebrating the ideals of regenerativeness, yet it also laments the sad feelings of not having children, the death of children, and the general loss of lives in a family and community at large. The mood corresponds to the tune of music and dance. The mood alternates between sadness and happiness. A performer recounts most of the happenings in his/her life that call for celebration or lamentation.

vii. The performance reveals the kinds of musical instruments used in the performance. This has already been dealt with in chapter two. But for emphasis, drums, anklets or leg rattles, trumpets, gourds etc., are also used during the festival.

Theatre always presupposes collaborative modes of production, and a collective form of reception. It is only through performance of the *Izara* festival that the concept of theatre becomes meaningful. In it, different parts and art forms come together in a performance to elicit the experience of theatre.

Izara festival performance as drama does not merely celebrate a myth, but as Enekwe (1981) opines, the structure of drama is determined by the functions that theatre serves in a particular culture. It also shows that ritual practices that are indigenous to a people have the capacity to be

drama. *Izara* festival theatre serves a different function in Amo land from the one the Greek theatre served in Athens. Now more than before the controversy about the meaning and purpose of theatre has deepened. Recently, the artistic director of the Scotland National Theatre said, “whatever theatre means” when she was explaining how an actor, Stephen Skrynka attempted to ride a motorbike around the Ken Fox Troupe’s fun fair attraction (www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/content/mediassets/dol/5th%20 Birthday). This was quite a revealing phrase. That fun fair attraction is a six-metre-high spherical wall. She spoke as a director of the National Theatre of Scotland who should know the meaning of theatre. This controversy and lack of appreciation of theatre’s role and meaning, in a postmodern epoch should not lead a traditional festival theatre in Africa, like *Izara*, to serve the purpose of theatre in the West. *Izara* festival theatre is a means of self-expression and empowerment to the Amo people, despite the fact that dominant cultures have laid siege on ‘other’ cultures, especially those in Africa. It is only the recurrent and consistent staging of these culturally lofty performances that will protect the identity, dignity, integrity and philosophy of the Amo people in the face of globalization.

3.5 The Place, the Performer, and the Audience and Action

In the opening chapter of the influential theoretical text by Brook (1968), *The Empty Space* (1968), the following is written:

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged (p,11).

These words by Brook underscore the basic and essential parts of theatre. There must be a place where a performer, who Brook refers to as ‘man’, performs an action to a watching audience.

The key words are: place, performers, actions, and audience. Without any of these parts, the concept of theatre becomes problematic.

Theatre is lifelike and familiar because what is presented is an imitation of human action. For instance, in *Izara* dance, the movement is war-like. But in reality, at that moment of the movement, Amo people are not at war. In theatre also, the actions performed are ephemeral. That is, they are recoverable, and a particular performance of *Izara* can never be exactly like the rest of the performances.

The 'place', as an element of a performance, does not refer to just any space when it comes to the *Izara* performance. This can be applicable to other types of *Izara*, with the exception of *Izara Kizing-zing*, *Izara Nishum*, and *Useru Tikpuu*. Some types of *Izara* performance can be done in arenas that have not been designated because the members of the traditional council of Amo land do not live forever. When new members are appointed, during the early stage of the festival, the performers go to arenas near their houses to perform for them. But three designated arenas are considered special meeting points between *Kutelle* (God), the ancestors, and the performing artistes. The *Kizing-zing* (big special drum) is not played at just any arena during the festival except at the one at Lishin.

These essential qualities of theatre, which comprise the place (environment or arena), the performer (actor, dancer, drummer, singer), performed actions (drama, dance, song), and the audience, all come together during *Izara* performance. No part can be left out of the performance or theatre. Olaniyan (2011), states that festival theatre is performed in an open space in the town square or at an appointed location where the performers dramatize a story or myth, or related sets of stories or myths. These myths or stories connect the subject of the festival to a deity or season

of a harvest, or still to significant events in the life of the community. These performances sustain communal harmony, prosperity, and stability. Artistically, another purpose of the festival is to show the outside world traditional artistic forms, the community's new forms and talents, as well as the advancements and mutations in existing ones. None of these essential elements can be taken for granted. The 'place' is essential because it provides the stage for the performers actions and presentations. The location or place of performance is within the setting of the Amo people. This is why the place of performance provides connection and identification with the action that is taking place, as it happens within the boundaries of land, and it is their tradition that is being performed.

Tied to the place is the 'action', which refers to the lyrics and the body movement during *Izara*. The performers have a duty to tell their experiences in the last seven years to a keen audience. The *Izara* performers tell of their triumphs and disappointments in life. For the active male performers, the actions are those of bravery and gaiety, while the words are those of thanksgiving as well as lamentation. For example, a performer will speak of his wife's rude attitude and shortly thereafter thank her for giving him a male child.

The performers have a duty to the audience and vice versa. For artistic performances, the public is very important. This is why Brook (1968), says in his definition of theatre "...whilst someone is watching" (p, 11). The physical presence of an audience changes a performance, because it inspires the *Izara* performers and creates expectations for the performance. For *Izara*, the performers can cause a spectator to jump into the circle and dance alongside. *Izara* performance is rich theatre and living breathing art. The tempo rises and falls. Some members of the audience were once performers and they may feel the current performers are performing below expectations, and choose to join in the dance. This creates competition between them. Other

members of the audience join in the dance because of the spontaneity it brings to bear on them. The spontaneity also comes with what the active performer says lyrically in a language familiar to the audience in order to impress the latter. They do this to impress the performers, and may not even realize that they are part of the performance.

The presence of a live audience watching a live performance presents one edge that theatre has over film and television. These spectators are free to join in a performance such as *Izara*, and this too is one edge that traditional Africa festival theatre has over modern African or Western theatre. This sense of estrangement, where an audience cannot spontaneously join in a performance, is one of the factors responsible for the dwindling audiences in modern theatre houses. Traditional theatre performances give spectators freedom and powers to join in a performance such as *Izara*, except aspects that are designated for individuals with specialized roles. For instance, a spectator cannot play the *Izara* drum. This responsibility belongs to a specific drummer. Lately, however, there have been certain changes and mutations in the *Izara* festival.

3.6 Izara Theatre Performers

Knowing what a performer is helps in the understanding of *Izara* performance generally. A performer is someone who performs in front of an audience, for example an actor or musician or dancer (www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/perfomer). This is not far from the role an *Izara* performer performs during the festival. His/her role is not merely that of entertainment, education, information, but he/she performs to fulfil traditional and ritualistic obligations with some degree of success within the society of Amo.

The concept of *Izara* theatre performer involves and engages the active distillers of performative idioms that contribute to the whole spectrum of *Izara* performance. This processual and folkish artiste features through the ritualistic opening and closing ceremonies at Kamari. This artiste embodies the collective spirit and aspiration of the nation of Amo. He or she is engrossed in the pathos that becomes the artistic credo, and that is adhered to. The performer of *Izara* realizes that through his/her music and dance, the much needed harmony, progress, and continuity in the land, are guaranteed. The harmony sought through the performance is within the framework of physical and metaphysical planes of the Amo people's existence. And so he must perform to give a positive response to the bewilderment the Amo person faces from the phenomenon of the cosmic location of his/her being. As happenings wrought from the outside world tend to cause untold fragmentation to the oneness in philosophy, ideology, and the pool of knowledge of the society, the *Izara* performer performs to reconcile these inalienable parts.

It is crucial to mention the specific role of the initiates (*agbari*), to indicate the necessity of their participation, as without them there is no *Izara* festival. They are the instruments of continuity, cohesion, progress, development, and reinvigoration in Amo land. They are seen essentially during *Kagi* feast, which is the period of seclusion after the first circumcision. They are also seen during the second circumcision, shortly before the start of the festival. But these initiates are kept at home, given vital meals, and taught several lessons that pertain to the development of the land. However the major sessions of socialization and education take place at the peak of Amo during *Kagi* feast. The initiates are therefore the reason for the entertainment in the land during *Izara* festival.

The duty of *Izara* performers is to deal with inward and outward, private and public, spiritual and temporal, and psychological and physical issues. He/she confidently communicates all these

aspects via strongly worded lyrics and lays bare what has been in his heart and on his mind over the years. He or she goes through myth-poetic renditions in thanksgiving to *Kutelle*. The *Izara* performer dances with every sinew and bit of energy left in him/her. He grasps the opportunity to do this as the festival only occurs once in seven years. He or she knows that *Izara* festival is not as common as *Iwawa* dance, *Ipanga*, *Ikarma*, or any other performance. This one is for regeneration, procreation, creativity, and blessing, and it pulls the spirit of the land into a lofty communion with *Kutelle* and the *Anta-kune* (ancestors). He or she also knows that heroes are bred and discovered here. So *Izara* festival is for now and the future. The *Izara* festival performer is fully aware that the *Amo* society, like most African societies, does not distinguish between culture and religion. Ododo (2015) gets it correct by saying that this kind of traditional society sees culture as all-encompassing. This cultural coverage includes religion, belief system, concept of beauty, and social relations, ethos, ancestral linkages, and taboos to guide human conduct. Every *Izara* performer is surrounded by this belief system and cultural framework.

3.7 Qualities of a Good *Izara* Performer

A good *Izara* performer is an artist who is aware of the dignity, integrity, solemnity and truth that he or she embodies in his/her art of performance. He/she is an *artiste par excellence*. In her inaugural lecture, Sofola (1994, p. 2) submits this about art:

Art in its broad sense is a creative experience which is the only human experience that is nearest to God because it is in that experience that man shares very clearly in the most enduring and significant attribute of the Supreme Deity, God as a creator, the supreme Artist. Art emanates from the soul of man, the centre of his being in which resides his divine quality as the zenith of creation. Art is thus the medium through which the soul of man reaches out beyond itself to transform and make intelligible and prodding within the inner recesses for the ultimate truth, the meaning of

existence, man's place in the cosmos, his relationship to the Supreme Creator and to his fellow creatures and finally the ultimate end of man... For man, through the artist undergoes the process of creative vision which he actualizes through his creation as a secondary creator.

The above submission by Sofola is a comprehensive and vivid testament on art and its duty to human beings. To Sofola, art is life and life is art. It is the spine of existence because art is truth said in a piquant manner. The artiste knows that his/her work is of divine significance. Sofola argues that art is the knowledge that never decays, because it is through the perceptive participation of the artiste in the divine essence and fluidity of life that he/she emerges to unveil the unknown and opaque to mankind in the art form.

In an apt definition of the artist, Sofola (1994, p.5) argues that:

...through the ages and in all civilizations the artist has been defined as a Seer, a Visioner, a Thinker, a Creator, the Conscience of the society, a Gadfly, a Prophet, a Town crier, a Teacher, and a Revealer of the divine mind.

This implies that continuity and progress within the society is as a result of the presence of an artiste. He/she is responsible of the healing and restoring of the sick and battered humanity as a consequence of the lofty prowess he/she is endowed with as a performer in *Izara*. *Izara* and the *Izara* performer represent these qualities to the Amo people.

Enekwe (2009), contends that the impersonator of another person with personal or private intentions is not an actor, because an actor is trained to perform for the good and stability of the public (an audience). The actor's motivation is love. An *Izara* performer cannot evade the truth of life and he is considered a medium *persona* who gives himself for the good of the Amo society.

The study finds a meeting point between a good *Izara* performer and the versatility in Clark's poem, *Agbor Dancer*, in terms of music and body movement. The *Izara* dancer is caught in the throb of a drum. He/she ensures that no part of his/her body is atrophied; all parts are involved in these quintessential movements that tingle down to his/her ancestral core. A good *Izara* performer must show how he or she is entangled in the maze of *Izara* music. The *Izara* dancer, just as the Agbor dancer, is in a trance where he or she treads the intricate patterns rippling crest-after-crest to meet *Kutelle* (God) and *Anta – Kune*, ancestors (www.poetry.onlinigeria.com/ad.asp?blurb=92&topic=Agbor%20Dancer). The tremulous drumbeat causes his body to move spectacularly according to the mood it arouses in him, to the cheers of the audience.

A good *Izara* performer must harness his/her voice and be proficient at the diagonal or sideways movements required of an *Izara* dancer. The lyrical voice, which he modulates, and lyrics are drawn from a perfect and creative memory, and speak of his life experiences. A lyrical voice that carries the spirit of the nation and through supplication brings the ancestors down to dance with mortals.

A seasoned, male *Izara* performer handles and waves his bamboo stick or shakes his gourd with seven stones in style, as this draws applause from the audience when well done.

There should be no excuse for a poor utilization of Amo language. A good *Izara* performer knows that the language of performance and that of everyday life must be synthesized for a good show. He or she should know that Amo language is the carrier of Amo culture. Amo language carries the touchable and the untouchable Amo culture. It must be displayed, expressed, and utilized with pride and dignity. If the language use is poor, then the identity of the *Izara* festival

is threatened with extinction, including its traditional paraphernalia. Amo people who were not born and bred in Amo join in the dance and learn the language; even women from other ethnic groups married to Amo men join in the dance and learn the language in this way. The necessity of the Amo language for use in the *Izara* is therefore not always compromised.

A good *Izara* performer must corroborate his/her artistic displays with full costume and make-up. *Izara* costume and make-up boost the morale of the performer and carry the spirit of the festival. The performers always have this in mind.

When all these qualities are garnered, the performer gives a befitting artistic show that elicits the the cheers of a delighted audience. These qualities also invite the spectators to partake in this communal duty not merely as onlookers, but as meaningful participants, for the advancement of of Amo nation.

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, the researcher has examined the concept of performance and its dynamics in *Izara* theatre. This required an analysis of the qualities of a good *Izara* performer, and his/her role in entertainment, and in ensuring continuity and progress of Amo nation heritage through his performance. A performance of *Izara* must communicate meaning to the audience and to the performer. This leads to the discussion of the socio-cultural significance and communicative features of *Izara* festival performance, which follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DRAMATIC AND THEATRICAL AESTHETICS OF IZARA TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The Chapter's objective is to determine the socio-cultural significance of the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of *Izara* traditional festival as communicative features. This implies the discussion on the significance of the dramatic and theatrical interms of socialization and cultural orientation of the Amo people. This also includes: the communicative, socio-cultural, religious, economic, educational, political, and adjudicative functions of the festival. Also central in the issues discussed in this Chapter are changes and mutations the festival has faced as a result of globalization. The Chapter closes with a discourse on the contemporary relevance of *the Izara* festival and its potentials for film and literary theatre.

4. 1 The Sociocultural Significance of the Dramatic and Theatrical Aesthetics of Izara Festival as Communicative Features

This section investigates the fact that some of the aesthetic elements discussed in Chapter Two also play a part in the socialization process of Amo people during *Izara* festival. Without some of these aesthetics, there would not be sociocultural significance of the festival. These aesthetics help in engendering the transfer of folk knowledge (lore) from the older generations to the new generations. The aesthetics are avenues through which the populace have a grasp of the lessons that are embedded in the festival.

Two most important elements in this regard are music and dance. The way of life of the people of Amo is revealed in what they say in music during *Izara*. Their lyrics are within the limits of their cultural milieu. They are an expression of the permissible and the impermissible aspects of their social life. This is why younger people, whether as performers or spectators get to know the dos and the don'ts within the communities. Again, these young ones also gain some orientation on how to sing lamentable verses about themselves. It is not surprising to hear more loaded lyrics within the ranks of the older performers than the younger ones. This is because it is what one knows that he or she says during *Izara* music. Both sets of performers draw their lyrics within the orbit of Amo customs, values, and other cultural paraphernalia. The nature of *Izara* music (mythopoetic) enables the spectators to grasp lessons from the performers.

Izara dance aids in educating and socializing the people on the past wars fought because the movement is warlike. It also brings the people together in unity. This is seen in the grand finale which pulls a large crowd together. People are implored to perform together in peace and harmony. Long standing conflicts are settled together in order to attract blessings from *Kutelle*. The dance is further corroborated by the joint sipping of the local brew known as *ubarnu*.

Plot is significant in the socialization process in the sense that without the sequence of the several activities carried out to mark the festival, there would not be that engagement of the people in the festival. The people are always anticipating the next stage of the event in its right chronology. The people get to know what happens at Kagi and the activities that usually take place, through the period of preparation, to the last of the activities at the grand finale. This is how the younger generations get to be socialized with the different stages and procedures of the festival.

Language and dialogue as aesthetic elements of the festival are the carrier of the culture or tradition of *Izara*. Without the language as a system of signs, codes and symbols, the people of Amo cannot come together to perform. People positively respond to what they understand. Music is done in the language of the people, instructions are given in the Amo language and it is used to bring out the beauty of the traditional performance. Their stories in songs are told in Amo language; even the non-verbal language that is restricted to the Amo people is understood by the Amo people during the performance. Language in *Izara* is also dialogic and ensures the progression of the performances. It is emblematic and binds the people together.

Properties, costumes and make up which are peculiar to Amo also give members of the community that are performing a sense of belonging in the ethnic group. This is especially true because the performers with these items draw a lot of attention than the spectators who are looking ordinary. These properties such as bamboo sticks, gourds; costumes such as the kukii, tigtalaba and ije; and make up such as calico powder and mahogany oil draw a lot of attention during performance and enhance viewership. These also tell of the material culture of the Amo people.

The sociocultural importance of characters during *Izara* cannot be overstated in this study. We have made it clear that characters are the performers, whether it is the super- characters or the mortals ones help in the projection of the culture of the Amo people. Without the characters, there can never be *Izara* festival. The festival is about them, carried out by them and for their benefit. The whole community is engaged in the performance and the sustenance of the tradition. This is for the purpose of continuity.

4.2 Communicative Functions of *Izara* Festival

Theatre achieves nothing if it does not communicate. Art communicates, whether for itself or the society ([www.https://new.trinity.edu/academics/departments/human-communication-andtheatre](https://new.trinity.edu/academics/departments/human-communication-andtheatre)). It is said that effective expression of ideas is central to both liberal arts and effective citizenship in a society. Brown (2014) opines that theatre teaches us how to effectively express ourselves. It develops our ability to communicate our thoughts and feelings to others, hence improving our relationships and the world around us. Theatre must first be established and ascertained to have the capacity to communicate. This is one of the reasons for the presence of the audience to major its efficiency and entertainment. This is why theatre is referred to as a performing, creative, and communicative art. Whether in its pristine epoch or in the current complex era, theatre has been an instrument of communication in the society. This is why it enjoys or endures complex dynamics of communication.

Izara festival communicates Amo people's traditional and cultural values and is an educative and informative performance. Peacock (1990), states that a performance among other things is a deliberate effort to represent and say something about something, and an action which attempts to communicate meaning. Communicating meaning in *Izara* covers diverse aspects of the festival.

All features of the performance of *Izara*, which are dramatic and theatrical especially in terms of aesthetics, are significant to the socio-cultural system in Amo land. This is because during *Izara* festival, these dramatic and theatrical aesthetics (elements) are pulled together to advance the

traditional system in terms of Amo sociology and culture. This system is tied to the ontology, cosmology, and social interactions within the Amo social system.

It is imperative to note that *Izara* music, song, and dance, embody the belief and personal experiences of the performers. Features of *Izara* music are geared towards re-assuring the performers and the audience of a better future. Another purpose of the music is to reinvigorate and strengthen the ties between Amo people, *Kutelle* (God), and their deified ancestors, and also to bind the people together in a common belief and philosophy. The following is an example of a performer's stanza:

Kutelle wa kelaa eh- eh...

Unan dira uyi eh-eh...

Kutelle wa lanza nlira ningye eh-eh...

Amere wa wesu nmizin bite eh-eh...

ENGLISH

God listens to us eh-eh...

He who is in need eh-eh...

God will hear our prayer eh-eh...

He will wipe away our tears eh-eh...

Izara music also consolidates the place of language, which is pivotal in transmitting the traditional values, customs, rituals, and ideas that the practice is endowed with. *Izara* festival is an avenue through which the folklore is passed on to the younger generations of the Amo people.

Izara dance is meant to communicate the values and primacy of bravery, valour and past triumphs in war and farm work, as well as in hunting. The movement is energetic to reflect the fearlessness of the men within the community. This is why the make-up of the mahogany oil (*nnuff nikwok*) and calico powder (*Koya*) are not ordinary. It protects the performers even spiritually against needles, weapon, and objects from malevolent spirits towards the male performers. This bravery does not stop at the dance but culminates at *Libari* (the contest) at the grand finale.

The costumes, make-up, and properties used as dramatic and theatrical aesthetics communicate to the audience and the performers. The tanned skin tells the people of the goat slaughtered and his blood spilled, which is symbolic of the blood of the initiate, which binds him to the land. The old women shave their heads as a sign of submission to *Kutelle* (God). The bamboo sticks held by the performers signify they have children that have been initiated during *Izara*. Attention is always on the male performers with the sticks because they act as medium personas between Amo land and *Kutelle* (God).

It is this flow of understanding that makes the audience to join in the performance. The communication between the performers and the audience, through the display of the aesthetics that are pulled together in such an ensemble, is the basis for this understanding.

This communication that *Izara* brings about confirms what Turner (1982) says in his critical text,

From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play as quoted below:

The social drama, then, I regard as the experiential matrix from which the many genres of cultural performance, beginning with redressive ritual and juridical procedures, and eventually oral and literary narratives, have been generated. Breach, crisis, and reintegrative or divisive outcomes provide content of such later genres, redressive procedures their form...The social drama remains humankind's thorny problem, its undying worm, its Achilles' heel – one can only use clichés for such an obvious and familiar pattern or sequentiality. At the same time it is our native way of manifesting ourselves to ourselves and of declaring where power and meaning lie and how they are distributed (p.234).

This long citation captures the multifaceted aspects and functions of traditional festivals as 'social drama'. It is the native aspect of human existence engrafted in today's social system.

Festivals like *Izara* locate meaning and power within the society.

To further concur with Turner in the above citation, the researcher examines some specific functions of *Izara* festival that aid in understanding how significant it is to the sociology and culture of the Amo people.

4.3 Religious Function of Izara Festival Theatre

Traditional festival, as a prime artistic institution of traditional Africa, is centrally religious in nature. *Izara* is therefore central to the traditional religious beliefs of the Amo. It is therefore futile to draw a dichotomy between tradition and religion in *Izara*. But it must be made clear that *Izara* religious basis of Amo mythology is more original than that of the *Nchill* (cult) that was borrowed from the Kurama ethnic group through inter-marriage and collaboration in warfare.

Izara plays a religious function because the Amo people believe in the potency of its belief system. Religion as a belief system is consistent in the ritual procedures of the festival from its beginning till the end of it. *Nchill* beliefs are in conflict with Christianity and Islam, but *Izara*,

which is more original to the Amo people, is not. Amo people from time immemorial believed in one God, *Kutelle* as would be revealed even if one checks their pantheon. *Nchill* is held in contempt because of its very violent and mystical tenets and precepts.

Izara belief system shares some similar aspects with Christianity, for example in their regard of the number seven (7) as a number that carries ritual significance. Also, circumcision by spilling of blood is Biblical, and public confession of personal experiences through the lamentation is similar to Biblical confession of sin.

The adherents of *Izara* belief system do not have any problem with *Izara* performers being Christians but the Christian Church has frowned at their members who engage in *Izara* activities. Christian faithfuls have vilified the fundamental beliefs of *Izara*. In fact, some priests that preside over *Izara* activities have been disfellowshipped in the church because of their roles in *Izara*. At most times these Christian leaders rarely find reasons for their actions.

As a dramatic performance, *Izara* performs a religious function and this does not interfere with its performative idioms. Pickering (1975) argues that whether as prayer or magic, 'primitive' drama was always purposeful. He continues that this did not deny its function of entertainment. *Izara* performance strengthens the belief in the significance of the festival. Attendance of the festival is usually a religious obligation especially to the active performers. Pickering notes that the reaction of performers and the audience is usually of prayerful awe. Initiating young people in the society in such a solemn atmosphere assures continued and prosperous existence of the tribe and audience members.

Ogunba (1978), states that the strength of traditional African religion is not its dogma, or in the piousness of its devotees, but in its celebrations. For *Izara*, the observance of the dogma, and the

caution on piety, is serious but the attention given to the celebration is remarkable and notable. In consonance with Pickering (1975, p.5), *Izara* audience, who is largely Amo people, feels varying degrees of:

...security as the necessary ritual was successfully completed admiration for the deeds of the gods and heroes which the theatrical rituals recounted, and pleasure as they were caught up in rhythms of the music and dance.

Consequently, as a result of the religious essence of *Izara* festival, pleasurable and theatrical aesthetics become prominent and pronounced. To put the situation in strong terms one would say the absence of dance and music nullifies the existence or even the occurrence of any edition of the festival. Only certain aspects of the ritual may be skipped. Religious and traditional festival upheld by people work pari-passu and this is the case in *Izara* festival.

Just as in *Izara*, the matrix of the operation of African ancestors is similar to that of the Yoruba people. According to Ogunba (1978):

....ancestors do not quite make up their mind whether they are alive or dead and they continually shop between heaven and earth. Each year, gods, ancestors and all heavenly crew come down to earth in their various forms – some to jubilate with man for the completion of another cycle of events, some to help him purify his environment; and yet on others to remind him of his duties (p, 3).

For the Amo people, the cycle takes seven years and *Kutelle* (God) and *Anta – Kune* (ancestors) come down to perform the aforementioned duties. They come to jubilate over the completion of the cycle of circumcision and initiation; they come to purify the environment by the spilling of the blood; and yet they come to put the land in order by reminding the Amo people, through their leaders, of their duty to the land. Ogunba submits that it is this peculiar chain of

communications, that this complex, earth - heaven, dynamic relationship that traditional African festival is all about. *Izara* does not fall short of this set-up of religious communication that ensures the continuity of the land, and is also a cleansing medium in the land. This is because long accumulated disharmonies are taken away.

4.4 Socio – Cultural Functions of *Izara*

Izara festival theatre plays significant roles of socialization and it promotes the culture of the Amo people. Socialization leads to a way of life in any society. This is closely linked to their ethos and pathos that is earlier discussed when dealing with the dynamics of performance. Thus the District Head of Amo (*Ugo Namap*) tells the audience at the ritualistic opening ceremony at *Kamari* that the practice is the heritage from the Amo forebears. This implies that the knowledge of the practice has been passed through generations. By socialization, we mean *Izara* is an avenue through which norms, values, customs, legends, folk tales, and other moral lessons in the lore of Amo are distilled to the performers and audience of the present age.

Art is culture and vice versa. *Izara* is derived from the life and beliefs of Amo people, who come out *en masse* to tell the world through *Izara* performance what the nation of Amo stands for traditionally. The life of Amo person is an interface between the belief that *Izara* promotes, and the cultural trappings of modernity. This is why during interviews, a lot of the respondents tried to compare their actual traditions with how modernity has impacted them. *Izara* is one of the cultural emblems of Amo that have endured the test of time.

Apart from the socialization that takes place during performance, *Izara* creates a platform of social cohesion among Amo people. This unifying force neutralizes the disharmonies, divisive issues, and bitterness wrought as a result of day-to-day human interaction. It is a platform that

enforces unity and harmony in the land. Long lost Amo sons and daughters come home and together with their brothers and sisters further the ideals of *Izara* and the Amo people through the performance. This is the reason why people during the grand finale are usually caught within the frenzy, trance, and electric atmosphere that galvanizes the event. It is usually a moment of cultural identification, so every man and woman shows up to be recognized as illustrious sons and daughters of the land. *Izara* festival also provide entertainment and fun. This is quite recent in the history of African performance. Art initially had little to do with beauty and entertainment (Fisher, 1963). Traditional practices such as *Izara* were meant for the struggle, stability, and survival of nations. But now, the festival provides a lot of fun because the ritual elements are fast eroding thereby giving way to modern theatre and entertainment. Spectators get amused by what the performers say and how they dance. In fact, some performers deliberately dance and say things in the songs to amuse the audience.

4.5 Economic Function of *Izara*

It is general knowledge in North-Central Nigeria that the Amo people from time immemorial are great farmers, hunters, enterprising craftsmen, and an economically ingenious ethnic group. They are producers of several agricultural products (locust-beans, mangoes, palm, beans, rice, yam, maize, sorghum, and livestock, such as goats, cattle, chicken and others). During *Izara* festival, some of these products are bought to be used for ritual and performance.

The blessing of these agricultural products in form of libation is usually done during *Kusana* festival (Harvest), and also during *Izara*. This blessing affects products that are used as items in the festival, like beans, sorghum, maize etc.

Izara festival generates revenue from the sale of these agricultural products to those who need them or do not have goats, and the bamboo sticks are sold to the families of the initiates for their use during *Izara* festival. A person does not simply go to the forest to cut a bamboo stick. The forest guards are there to be paid money before any person enters the forest. The same goes to firewood that is used during *Izara* festival. Also, only he-goats are used for the festival and not all prospective active performers have them, so they buy from the market, or from families that have he-goats.

Tanning of animal skins is done by experts who are paid for this service. The experts are endowed spiritually to perform this task. Other products such as sorghum, maize, beans are also sold for use during *Izara* festival. These farm products are sold in high quantities because *Izara* is a festival that involves the whole nation of Amo. Sorghum is used for the local brew that is drunk at the festival, and maize is used to prepare *tiza* which looks like Kenyan *ugali*. *Tiza* is food consumed in the houses during *Izara*. Beans are used during *Izara Nishum* (Izara for beans) where the Kides people cook for the Kitara people.

Traders also come to the arenas to sell their diverse produce. Another set of people are the commercial buses and motorcycle riders who transport people to and from arenas of the performances and they charge high rates during *Izara* festival. People from other states of Nigeria, and even from abroad come to watch the festival.

4.6 Educational Function of *Izara* Festival

Before the coming of the colonialists, Amo people had ways of imparting knowledge within the society. *Izara* was one of them; others were through folktales, proverb, story-telling, town-hall meetings, and other traditional performances. From the commencement of *Kagi* feast, initiates

are educated on the importance of the festival and how it benefits the society. The initiates also get educated on the language of Amo and the properties that are used. Wasambo (2014), when he refers to the circumcision of the Bukusu of Kenya, contends that initiates learn a lot from songs and dances during festivals. *Izara* also educates the initiates as well as the spectators on the values and norms of the society, and teaches them good morals and the culturally acceptable character traits.

4.7 Political and Adjudicative Functions of *Izara* Festival

Politically, *Izara* showcases the traditional Amo administrative machinery that is hierarchical in structure. This aspect was dealt with in chapter two. It shows the flow of power from *Kutelle* (Almighty God) through the district head to the council members.

Power comes with responsibility and duty. *Izara* is an avenue for the people of Amo to understand the powers bestowed in traditional leaders, who control the activities in the festival. From the beginning of the festival at Kamari, the district head (Ugo Namap) spells out the dos and don'ts of the festival and the punitive measures meted on defaulters. Some of these offenses include: sleeping with one's wife, performing other dances and music apart from *Izara* dance and songs, and sexual intercourse between an active performer and his wife. Others have to do with exceeding the number seven (7) in any process, and performing *Izara* dance or music after or before *Izara* period. Punitive measures include fines and even death. Defaulters are fined seven goats, bags of sorghum, seven cocks, etc.

Izara festival also speaks to the world about the full strength of the Amo nation in times of warfare when an activity like the *Libari* is carried out during *Kagi* or *Useru Tikpuu*. This can be seen from the dance movements that are war-like. The tone of *Izara* song is that of celebration as

well as warfare. Also important is the peaceful contest at the grand finale at Kamari. The use of dane guns, spears, and sticks, points to the fact of military strength in the traditional Amo society.

Izara festival serves as an avenue for settlement of conflict, and strengthens inter-ethnic relations between Amo and neighboring ethnic groups. These other ethnic groups include Jere, Rukuba, Buji, and Chokobo among other ones. Conflicts settled include land disputes and also broken marriages are reconciled. The land is usually in dire need of blessings and if conflicts are not settled, they hinder the blessing from coming down from Kutelle and the ancestors.

4.8 Izara Festival Tradition: Residual, Dominant, and Emergent

This section deals with *Izara* traditional festival in its depleting form and content. There is no tradition that is static including *Izara*, as it has experienced changes and mutations over the years. This concern of the volatile nature of traditional festivals meets in today's intellectual space with the prevailing counter-currents of postcolonialism and postmodernism. This has dictated the shifting grounds of aesthetic discourse, and has generated new terms and ideological linings. The epoch in arts and particularly theatre is that of indeterminacy, aporia, syncretism, consumerism, bricolage, pastiche and incrustation of mutative elements in artistic products.

A look at the video clip of the 2007 edition of *Izara* festival, compared to the one of 2014, reveals these changes and mutations. *Izara* has gained and also lost due to modernism. What is left of it constitutes its residual elements; the gains are the emergent aspects. The researcher states that *Izara* has been maintained by the dominant forces within the society of Amo.

According to Dariya, in an interview that about twenty-four years ago, an elderly performer broke down in tears and when quizzed about the cause of his wailing, he said that *Izara* festival has changed tragically. To that elderly performer, Amo ethnic group was in trouble because the locus of the operations which was *Izara* has changed.

The changes that have occurred through the recent years are several. They range from costumes, make-up, music and dance, properties, language, procedures of activities, arena, horsemanship, and changes in belief system.

Only few performers apart from the male performers use the appropriate costumes. The male performers do not use complete costumes since only *Kukii* (the tanned skin worn to cover the private parts) is used; the decorated one (*tigalgaba*) is hardly used. Female performers who are supposed to wear Ije (sting-like attire) and fresh leaves hardly do so. These performers perform with ordinary clothes, probably because the materials for traditional costumes are expensive, or because they fear being punished by the Church or because the solemnity of the festival has reduced.

The aspect of make-up is also affected. Old women do not shave their heads as is expected. In 2007, mahogany oil was used on the bodies of the performers. However, even groundnut oil was hardly used in the 2014 edition of the festival. This has greatly affected the appearance of the performers and exposes them to cold if the *Izara* takes place during the rainy season. The bamboo sticks no longer have *npasi* (horse hair), but they are decorated instead with nylon

materials. The male performers used to have anklets or leg rattles (*Akayau*), but not all the dancers wear them today.

Music used to be emotionally laden because of the essence of the festival, but now it is even used for jibing and derision. So aspects of *Ogozu na wui* (lamentation) is fast eroding as a result of the preponderance of the intrusions of the entertainment elements from modern popular performances. The tempo of *Izara* music has also changed and what was slow has now become fast. It used to be slow for the purpose of communication in terms of comprehensive lyrical flow. But now the audience has to be extremely attentive to get what performers are saying. Also, what is known as “*ukwa*”, the general response of the *Izara* chorus, is no longer spontaneous and unified in a clear ensemble as it used to be. The song leader and the lead drummer usually have some telepathy that coordinates their response. The drumming is faster now and not artistically unique. This is why *Izara* drummer is not the same as say, *Iwawa* drummer. *Iwawa* is the general dance that is meant for ceremonies, and it is not seasonal. Lastly, the gourd used to be shaken before the response, but now it is shaken concurrently with the response.

Properties such as gourds and bamboo sticks that were strictly handled and used by performers are now used by all kinds of people. A deplorable case is when a woman handles the stick. Also largely missing are the dane guns for hunter-performers and the horsemen for horsemanship during *Libari* (peaceful) contest. Dane guns used to beautify the performance during *Libari* (contest). Language is worst affected. Amo or Timap, as the speakers call it, has been affected by other languages like Hausa and English, which find their way into the performance. Language is

a vehicle if not the spine of any performance. But Amo language is becoming eroded and it is replete with elements that are alien to Amo language.

Never in the history of *Izara* have people been so daring like now. It was very unprecedented; they took a group of *Izara* performers out of the territory of Amo to Jos city to perform alongside others during 2014 International Museum Day. This is a major change in the procedures and belief system of the festival. Going beyond the traditional venues of the festival makes the act iconoclastic and revolutionary. The belief in the potency of rules is also waning. Bamboo sticks that were used during the festival of 2014 broke, but the owners of the sticks did not lose their children. Today, Amo people play recorded music and videos of *Izara* in the ambiances of their homes without repercussion. The same *Izara* song could never be recorded some forty or fifty years ago due to the taboo associated with it. It looks like *Izara* is being de-ritualized by modern Amo people, or dominant cultures are busy preying on it. What do these changes portend artistically today?

Izara is open to the phenomenal forces of a post-modern world that is in the midst of agitative postcolonial tendencies. The theatre today is indeterminate. This implies that it is a theatre of everything and every possibility and impossibility, because it is eclectic. It is also a theatre of nothing since it may not instruct society morally.

The practice of *Izara* now coincides with forces in the theatre that either batter it, or free its potentials by a way of pulling out new artistic vistas, which can be explored in other genres of arts. This assertion makes it pertinent to state clearly that this study is not attempting a dialectical

mediation between postmodernism and postcolonialism. But to draw attention to the fact that *Izara* festival sooner than later may find itself within the crossfire of these two opposites - postmodernism and postcolonialism. *Izara* is now exposed to the key attributes of postmodernism which comprise of aporia, bricolage, consumerism, and normless pastiche, in an indeterminate state of artistic production.

Izara festival will now find itself in works which capture the uncertainties and fears of a technologically-based world. This is where aporia comes in as an expression of real or pretended doubt or uncertainty in today's system. Aporia expresses itself in the radical contradictions that characterize works of art today.

Bricolage and syncretism take *Izara* through a process of disposal and convergence, where a work of art is a patchwork of many elements interlaced to form a "hybrid". This can be compared to P-Square in Nigeria, picking some key elements of *Izara* dance movements, and mincing and mixing them with popular Western or Nigerian steps to appeal aesthetically to a postmodern audience.

Quayson (2011) calls it "normless" pastiche. No artiste shows any dignity or regard to an original work that is copied or imitated. Today in the arts, and precisely in performances, the original work is battered rather than improved. It looks like postmodernism has taken the arts to a stage of artistic menopause. Adaptation, adoption, and transposition are "holy" words in this regard. Is that the fate of *Izara* that is exposed to the outside hot breeze of a postmodern world? Perhaps, it will be treated with some dignity and regard.

Izara festival encounters a globalized world where money is everything. Artistes spend day and night x-raying the matrix behind changing interest and desire of consumers of works of arts. This is why issues of morality and conventions are being thrown to the wind. Consumerism is shifting the goal posts to different positions. In this higgledy-piggledy and topsy-turvy scenario, *Izara* may be found worthy of utilization in the process of artistic production.

This study cautiously concurs with objectives of postcolonialism but is critical of postmodernism, because it has made theatre rather sloven where the first, second, and third rates, are busy exchanging positions. It is something of a slipshod. As it has been argued by Ekpo, (as cited in Quayson, 2011), that postmodernism is nothing but another stage in the West's crisis of consciousness. He adds that Europe still wants to continue dominating the earth. But Afrocentric theatre scholars are responding appropriately with issues of arts and the genuine questions of this 'divide' a festival like *Izara* appears 'to be or not to be'.

All things being equal, the residual elements will remain even if the strict ritual elements are shoved off. The dominant elements are what the dominant forces within a postmodern artistic world produce through a process of selection and de-selection. In the process of selection and de-selection, the emergent tendencies spring up. *Izara* has been susceptible to this fate. A society such as that of Amo will always select and de-select aspects of its cultural and traditional heritage to uphold or dismiss. But even to that extent, it interplays with a higher process of selection and de-selection outside of Amo worldview.

4.9 *Izara* Traditional Festival and Globalization

A spectre is haunting the world today - that of globalization (Obidah, 2014). Goldbalt (2002) defines globalization:

... as the growing interconnections; a stretching of social relations across space to the point where they are transcontinental or interregional such that day-to-day activities in one part of the globe are increasingly enmeshed with events happening on the other side (p. 12).

Information communication technology (ICT) has made this closeness possible. These growing interconnections have brought about multiculturalism, multi-lingualism, and stiff competition within a global space. Modern art works have reflected and refracted these tendencies. Nations are not at the same level of development. No matter how Africa tries to domesticate ICT, Europe and America are far more dominant in this regard. Globalization in cultural studies implies hegemony and Africa is at the receiving end. Culture itself now refers to a space for the contestation of ideas, ideologies, technologies, and traditions. What does Africa compete with? *Izara*, from Amo people with the population slightly above two hundred thousand suffers the same fate as the other traditions which are not known. African traditions such as *Izara* are either suppressed or preyed upon to the detriment of the communities that practice them.

Inequalities will always characterize international relations. Nations and people will never be equal no matter how the world tries to collapse frontiers and intensify consciousness. Lechner (2002) makes it clear that global consciousness does not imply global consensus. Globalization is imperialistic to Africa because the continent has become a dumpsite of Europe, America, and now Asia. Amo land is a miniature of this disharmony as a result of the cultural fusion and

fission that takes place. This can be seen from the films, clothes, and the alien cultural traits and values that have been infused into the Amo cultural milieu. This is why most aspects of *Izara* performance have been affected. If the scenario were to be of fair cultural diffusion, we would say *Izara* is also on transit now into other continents and cultures to the benefit of Amo land. It is because of this lack of fairness that African literati and theatre intelligentsia have risen to defend the continent. There is little wonder why Gikandi (2002), opines that globalization and postcoloniality are the most important terms in social and cultural theory. While Europe and America are striving to consolidate their positions culturally and emotionally, Africa is making efforts to further de-robe itself from the remaining vestiges of imperialism that are being enforced onto it by globalization and postmodernism.

If *Izara* festival and other lofty and attractive festivals in Africa are labeled undramatic by European cultural anthropologists, the aim is to make Africa silent and inept. Africa's absence is the presence of alienness in the canonical disparity of dramaturgy and drama itself. It is pathetic that in an era when sociologists should be studying African society, Africa is still subjected to anthropological enquiry. This is why Euro-American anthropologists have pitched their tents in Africa, Asia, and Latin America churning out new-fangled theories that are aimed at maintaining Africa at the periphery of contemporary artistic and philosophical discourses.

Izara as a cultural practice within a globalized world must showcase itself or be extinct, or it might even be plundered, to the benefit of other continents. *Izara* has the capacity and the artistry to attract attention in a multicultural world because of its uniqueness. *Izara* offers African festivals a new angle of balance and wholism in terms of its aesthetic appeal. Some festivals depend merely on dance movements. But *Izara* spreads the attention of the audience to what is said and the movements that are ontological.

Globalization ignores the humanity of things. Its aim is to further free borders and expose people to the movement and acceptance of what is produced elsewhere. Africa should speak out about its uniqueness amidst the confusing and dominant forces of an indeterminate postmodern world of arts.

Asia has already established itself as an able competitor culturally and economically in a globalized world. In *The Asian Conference of Arts and Culture, 2013*, the Editor of the annual journal, Prit Supasetsiri, says that Asian identity can be observed through its art and culture. This comprises of theatre, music, language, literature, painting, sculpture, and architecture among other ways. Africa must also become bolder and resolute to sustain its identity through such festivals as *Izara*. This is one of the avenues that *Izara* festival can be brought to lime light.

4.10 *Izara* Potentials for Literary Theatre and Film

Discourse on whether a traditional festival is drama or not, has preoccupied African literary scholars like Echeruo, Mahood, and Irele. Voices like Finnegan's dismiss the possibility of it being drama. They have viewed these festivals based on European canons of dramaturgy. But several African playwrights have depended on the repository of traditional/ritual festival to build their works. Examples of these playwrights are Soyinka, Sutherland, Clark, Osofisan, and Rotimi, among others. These traditional festivals, whether taken as pre-drama or full-fledged drama, are not in written form in the sense of the well structured drama of the West (like that of Shakespeare, Brecht, Pirandello, Ibsen, etc).The traditional festivals in this study are full drama,

but can be structured in the Western sense of the word 'drama'. Ogunba (1978) makes the case intelligible in the following words:

It must be a difficult and pointless task for anyone to try to prove that African festivals are drama in a Sophoclean or Shakespearean sense (p.10).

It is a truism that this task is herculean in the sense of the West, but *Izara* traditional festival can dominate literary drama of today. One can imagine the myriad of dramatic works that spring from Africa, supposing traditional festivals were to be explored.

Izara festival offers freshness and diversity to literary African theatre, if it is explored. Diversity is in terms of the form, style, and content of drama, because the writer is bringing something new to the reader and the audience. It will improve the aspect of plotting the work where several stories are given in form of sub-plots connecting to the main story line. Soyinka has explored that in *A Dance of the Forest* (1960). He attracted unprecedented attention in the 1970's and 1980's leading him to clinching of first Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986. The reason was that Soyinka, familiar with Yoruba mythological pantheon and unique ritual traditions, utilized most of his creative energies into exploring and exploiting these materials in drama and theatre.

Izara is still alive and has the vivacity and robustness to be explored through drama and theatre to capture the world's attention. The observance of seven (7), as a number in the processes, can be explored in written drama, and the cutting of *fiqui* (mysterious plant), which comes with sacrifice and heroism, can also be utilized. The different experiences of the performers narrated in lamentable mood and tone is another aspect that is useful for a literary theatre. The life and times of the two known heroes, Katura and Adanah, can be captured in a story with the use of its property. This is quite unique and is capable of attracting attention of people globally.

When *Izara* is utilized in the literary theatre, there are implicit risks. Olaniyan (2011), commenting on the dramas that extracted substances from traditional/ ritual festivals, alleges that:

...the over fall “mold” of drama into which those borrowings are poured, as well as the language in which they are written and performed, are European and greatly circumscribe their popularity with the majority of Africans who are not schooled in those esthetics or language (p. 359).

Any traditional performance that is carried in another language other than its original language loses a great part of its substance. The level of identification and communication in the communities that own it reduces, but when it is utilized as literary theatre, it spreads faster and wider into other cultures. *Izara* festival is endowed with these potentials and possibilities. Since *Izara* can be exploited in the theatre, its functionality in terms of welding the society of Amo together reduces. *Izara* is connected to the physical, social, and religious needs of the community. Clark (1970) doubts this possibility of traditional performance functioning in literary theatre. He doubts if it is for merit or infamy because the larger world benefits, but the community to which this tradition belongs gets severed from its functions.

The other aspect of this section is the potential that *Izara* festival has for film. *Izara* potential for film is arguably greater than that of the literary theatre because of what the camera can achieve and its impact in the world today. A certain fraction of film series today are based on traditions, magic, epic, and myths. Examples of recent films of this mould are: *Legend of the Seeker* (2008), *Vikings* (2013), *Merlin* (2008), *Game of thrones* (2011), and *Harry Potter* (2001) etc. Most of the films that come from India and China also capture their traditional lives. A film must present something unique, spectacular, and full of passion. This is why these films identified above have produced in a unique manner and out of the repositories of myths, legends, and rituals of ancient

significance in this modern epoch. One wonders why a film on witchcraft or on the rituals of South England during its formative years has been produced in a digital and individualistic world of today. *Vikings* (2013) is an example of such a movie.

As unique as *Izara* is to the theatre, it will also be unique if filmed. This is because of its unique aspects, which are not peculiar to it. There are several traditional festivals and ritual ceremonies in sub-Saharan Africa that the film industry cannot finish unearthing. A documentary or musical/dance film on *Izara*, covering all the aspects of the movements and the songs, will be attractive. It can also be an adventure into the land of Amo people in the last 150 years, and it would serve as a witness to the traditional life of the Amo people.

A production of a film on *Izara* will be one of the responses to Thackway's (2004) call for African cinema world to "shoot back" at Europe. She points out how memory and history are playing part in today's African cinema world by including voices that were totally stereotyped and forgotten as a result of colonialism. Africa, which is endowed with lofty traditions, must speak out its identity and cease to be an inferior culture or continent that is drowned in the swamp of postmodernity. This can be done through the filming of its traditional performance like *Izara* in order to substantiate its identity and position among the comity of nations.

Finally, there is an advice from Osofisan (2001), to practitioners and scholars of African theatre, which this study extends to the film industry. He says in the following:

Most of what we have accomplished is a record merely of refurbishment, of innovating changes within the old shrine and its rituals of performance, but without actually exploding it, turning its traditions inside out, to lead the acolytes to fresh explorations (p. 99).

This seems to be what African theatre and film need to adopt to get Africa at the centre of the mainstream entertainment industry of the world. These traditional performances should be made to explode even if it means turning them “inside out”. If this is done, the performances’ full potentials will manifest and development for Africa will be yielded. African art should be extricated from the domination of colonial art by innovating ways in a manner of counter hegemonic patterns with the hope of making African theatre and film to stand on their own terms.

CONCLUSION

This Chapter looked at the socio-cultural significance and communicative functions of Izara performance, as well as depleting vital materials, and the interference of other trends within the arts, that have affected *Izara* festival. The Chapter has also looked at the potentials of *Izara* festival for literary theatre and film production in Africa. This leads to the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0: INTRODUCTION

This Chapter summarizes the findings of the study and covers the conclusion. The Chapter emphasizes the abundance of drama and theatre in traditional African festivals. Lastly the Chapter makes some recommendations on how to improve the practice of *Izara*, to benefit its communities and the outer world.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

Traditional African festival is evidently the artistic institution of Africa because of its capacity to subsume and capture consummate art forms like drama, theatre, dance, and music/song, among others. This study found evidence showing the abundance of drama and theatre in *Izara* festival of the Amo people of North Central Nigeria. This was confirmed by the presence of several dramatic and theatrical aesthetics, which included: dance, music/song/character, dialogue, properties, conflict, costume, make-up, spectacle, rhythm, suspense, plot, audience, flashback, imagery, horse-racing, and setting.

These aesthetics do not have to tally with the Western specifications of drama and theatre. The drama and theatre found in *Izara* festival has been in existence prior to the advent of the white man in Amo land.

Another finding of the study is the fact that these drama and theatre in *Izara* festival are connected to the ontology and cosmology of the the Amo people. It is part of what defines their identity and ascendancy of ideals. They believe in it and so it is religious to them. The study has confirmed the role of performance as the basis of the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics embedded in the festival. The study has achieved this by closely examining the different stages and typologies of performance within the festival from the beginning up to the grand finale – *Useru Tikpuu*.

There are no cultural practices without a guiding thought or rationale behind it. The study has found out that *Izara* is believed by Amo people to be the medium for transcending to higher powers who are *Kutelle* (Almighty God) and *Anta-kune* (ancestors) for blessing of children and bountiful harvests.

The study confirms the socio-cultural significance of dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of *Izara* festival, as communicative features. A practice such as *Izara* that has been with the people since time immemorial is central to the socio-cultural life of the people. It is part and parcel of their socialization process and a fulcrum from which cultural traits emanate. The performance of *Izara* galvanizes the spirit and belief system, and charts the course for them as people with a common destiny. This is why the festival has economic, religious, educational, political, and adjudicative significance. This also shows the unity that the festival fosters as a result of the strict adherence to its procedural regulations.

Also relevant in the findings of the study is the fact that *Izara* has not been static. It has witnessed changes in some of its performative idioms as a result of post modernism and globalization. These changes and mutations have affected the flow of music, dance, costumes, rhythms, makeup, and the solemnity of the performance. The study has found out that postmodernism and postcolonialism have had a negative impact on *Izara* because they are replete with the phenomenal forces of an indeterminate artistic terrain. These forces include: bricolage, syncretism, aporia, consumerism, and normless pastiche.

Overall, the presence of drama and theatre in *Izara* festival does not give it a capacity and viability to compete in today's globalized artistic world. This is why the study has also looked at the potentials of *Izara* for the literary theatre and the film industry. This will make the festival more appreciable and acceptable in other cultures in these changing times.

5.2 Conclusions

Effort has been made from the preceding chapters to examine the history of Amo, *Izara* festival tradition, *Izara* performance idioms, and its contemporary relevance. In order to carry out this study and achieve the aforementioned objectives, some research instruments were used, which included: interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), observation, and assessment of documented data. Based on the above mentioned findings, we therefore conclude that.

- i) There is drama and theatre in *Izara* festival performances of Amo people and in the other traditional African festivals of sub-Saharan Africa. Every society has its own

- dramatic and theatrical forms that are indigenous to it. In the Western world, drama depends on concrete textual traditions. But in Africa, the traditional mode is typically oral, kinesthetic and fluid, allowing for multi-level participation.
- ii) The performance of *Izara* aids towards the maintenance of ordered relationships, unity, cohesion, continuity, and progress of Amo land. This is why a breach in the procedures and social codes of the festival comes with sanctions.
 - iii) *Izara* festival has witnessed changes and mutations as a result of its exposure to forces occasioned by the indeterminate terrain in arts. Forces such as postmodernism and postcolonialism, have inadvertently presented the need to explore *Izara* use in literary theatre and film in the current globalized world. Some aspects of the festival can be character traits in modern theatre, or be utilized in building suspenseful plots in drama and films.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Study

This study concentrated on the dramatic and theatrical aesthetics of *Izara* festival. There are, however, areas that have not been explored, such as:

- i) A study on the design and technical aspects of *Izara* festival. These aspects can help theatre designers in designing backdrops, costumes, make up and help fine artists in giving them fresh perspectives of their artistry.

- ii) The study recommends a research into the linguistic aspects of *Izara* because of the centrality of language to the practice. Without the language, there would not be any practice like *Izara* in Amo land.
- iii) We recommend that film and theatre practitioners should utilize materials from *Izara* in order to produce unique films based on the traditional materials from *Izara*.
- iv) The study also recommends the setting up of a museum that will preserve materials from *Izara* festival like costumes, properties and make up kits for future use.
- v) Attached to the last point mentioned is the proper use of these materials during *Izara*. It makes it less spectacular when performers use any materials during performances of *Izara*.
- vi) We recommend that a comparative study be carried out between *Izara* festival and other festivals in Amo land like *Kusana* (harvest festival) to confirm the presence and abundance of dramatic and theatrical aesthetics in these festivals. *Izara* is not the only festival in Amo land; it can be compared to others in Africa to ascertain the differences in performance dynamics.
- vii) Other scholars, such as historians, anthropologists, sociologists, folklorists; philosophers, among others, can explore *Izara* festival, to aid in spreading information about the festival and its importance within Amo land and beyond.
- viii) We also recommend that modern methods of circumcision be adopted in *Izara* festival to avoid health problems like HIV/AIDS and other diseases. Gone are the days when a single knife or blade can be used to circumcise more than one child.
- ix) Contemporary areas in theatre can be examined in connection to *Izara* festival. For instance, a study on the impact of the festival to the environment can be carried out.

Bamboo sticks are cut, are they usually replaced? That is an area that concerns ecodrama. Also, researchers can look into the area of psychodrama to assess the impact of the festival on the minds of the Amo people, to ascertain the psychological impact of *Izara* festival on all who are involved in it.

- x) We recommend that an Amo Centre for Research and Documentation be established so that more research on the festival can be carried out and documented. This centre can have a mini museum attached to it to keep artifacts and items of historical and artistic value for use by the locals and others. This will serve as a repository as not all can be stored in memory alone.
- xi) Also, in order for *Izara* festival to be known, there should be a cultural troupe from Amo land which features in arts festivals and carnivals. This will further open the festival to the view of the world.

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APPENDICES

A1 GLOSSARY

Ago Kipin-----	Traditional Council Members
Agbaw-----	Fresh leaves
Akayau-----	Leg rattles or anklets
Amunchi-----	Persons with superhuman powers
Anta- Kune-----	Ancestors
Adong-dong-----	Friends
Fiqui-----	A mysterious royal plant
Ije-----	String-like attire worn by female performers
Ikulma-----	African cowries
Iwawa-----	A common traditional dance of the Amo
Kagi-----	Period of seclusion
Kakonto-----	A hut used during Kagi
Kizingzing-----	A big mysterious drum beaten by Anan Ligula members only
Kubature-----	A Whiteman
Kukii-----	A tanned skin
Kulangtung-----	A trumpet
Kumusu-----	Another name for Izara
Kutelle-----	Almighty God
Kuzur-----	The initiate from the royal family
Libbo-----	gourd
Likpuu-----	A bamboo stick
Litapa-----	A head ban
Nchill-----	A cult religion borrowed from Kurama tribe
Nmii-----	Blood

Npasi----- Horse beard
Nton----- Ochre or calico or talcum powder
Ntoro-----Locally brewed beer
Uboon-nono-----Circumcision
Ugbari----- An initiate
Ugap----- Fore limb
Ugozu na wui----- Lamentation
Uteru Kadun-----Tying of motar
Utuzu na wui-----Lamentation
Uyaba-----Bragging

A2 TRANSCRIPTS OF SOME INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs)

Why does Izara take place in Amo land?

Amo:

Amap pe din suzu Izara dun ukwilzu Namapere une. Asa Amape se Kuji bari Izara. Amap nmino Izara nin muhimchi bari Izara Ugado Namap. Umon ugado di Kimap pe ba. Aji atat ta di Kimap pe. Kuji ku kudiya, kuji kun kitik, kuji kun kidun. Asah Amap suzu avuu nin tinu mine da kuma nin nidawa mine. Ubelen nizara imon navua ba Kimap. Asa kiti ni Nizara asa ti yinno aji nanit. Kuji kun burne daga likus zuwa atat (1-3). Am be, tutung daga anas zawa ataun 4 – 5). Kuji Kidun daga anas shida zuwa kuzor (6-7) Asa ti chizina kiti kagi kafin tido kiti Nizara.

Izara re kawa Kiti wunnu nanit Kimap pe vat. Ko Udi Kikame uma dak tida su Nizara logowe afo nana daga tida su Nizara ligowe afo nana daga Kutelle kurum me. Kuma, ugadu ulele ina nizi narya daga uburne ambaba bita tun ti yita Kipin Kamari kafin ti tolu kenan.

English:

Izara takes place in Amo land because it is a practice that fulfills the philosophy of the Amo people, that of the Rite of passage. It has been practiced since time immemorial. The Amo people have no other practice other than Izara in importance and that is why it takes place after seven years. Izara is the festival that produces the age-grades in Amo land. This age-grading is divided into three. In between two Izara festivals, the Amo people must have these three sets that belong to the same age-group. The first set is the most senior. They are born between one to three (1-3) years. The the middle set who are born between four to five (4-5) years; and the last

set are born between six to seven years (6-7). All of these sets belong to the same age group but with seniority. If they go to farm, the junior set members hold or assist the senior ones with the hoes or any working implements on the farm. Even when the work is shared on the farm, the junior set members can be asked to assist in finishing the remaining portions assigned to the senior ones.

Izara festival is the only event that pulls the whole Amo people together in order to give thanks to *Kutelle* (Almighty God). People come to thank God for giving them male children, who will inherit them and their ways of life. There is need for continuity in the land. Those who do not have children usually come to pray for conception and procreation through what we call *Ogozu na wai* or *Utuzu na wai* (lamentation). If this is done, such people usually get blessed before the next *Izara* festival. The Amo people believe in it that is why they practice it and celebrate with a lot of singing and dancing

What is the origin of Izara?

Amo:

Ina chizin Izara daga anan burnere. Litisa liyavne na fita iyene ri didin suwe. Vat uchin Namap nin Nizara re. Izaran ndondono ka kafin ma ufitu bit kipinye.

English:

Izara has been in practice since time immemorial. Amo people have practiced Izara even before their final settlement here where we now call Kimap (Amo land). Amo people have practiced it all through their years of sojourn and migration. It is as old as the Amo people themselves. We found it when we were born.

Who Participates In Izara Festival?

Amo:

Izara Kimap in konyari. Kofein kulume ko kunan bii. Izare nbita vat. Amma nonone na isa boo kiti kagi, nin na chiffe. Inin anan Nizare dumin inin ngyare asa ita kukii nin ije we, Idoh kiti na avuwe kan, usuzu ogozu na wui nin una sun in none na Kutelle na niti. Ama izara in kongya Kimap.

Amma Agowe Kimap, afo Ugo Namap pe nin na yare a ago kipin nye inin gyere nin Nizare. Inin ngyere Ago Nizara Kimap pe.

English:

Izara is an event that involves everybody in Amo land. But the main participants are the parents of initiates that have been circumcised during Kagi feast and immediately before the commencement of the festival. It involves everybody and this is why the rules guiding the practice apply to the whole land. But in preparing for the festival, the active participants are the ones who slaughter male goats and get the skins of the animals tanned for the celebrations. Both parents of an initiate are the ones that appear differently during Izara performance. But the other Amo people are also free to join in the dance and also sing like others. The whole land or nation gets involved but the parents of the initiates are usually more active than others.

However, the people in charge of the festival are the Ugo Namap (District Head) of Amo and several chiefs who have their different jurisdictions. Notable among them are the Ago Nizara (the chief priests) in charge of Izara and the general chief priests who control the Amo peaks of

Kamari stretching towards Kawan. They can also be referred to as the active participants of Izara festival.

Comment on the Ritual and Religious Nature of Izara

Amo:

Amap na dumin Nchill ba. Amap pe a seru na nachara Naganan dagan Garu. Kiti Nizare, Isa ruu Anta – Akune na ina su ligoninta kimape kafin ikuzu. Nchill dumun kudodo, as a udi piru kiti ki sirne dumun usu usafi feh fe usan fi. Amma Izara in ku ngya Kimape ubauta Kutelle dumin nono na tina she Kimap afo anit arume. Amma kubature na damun Adinin Christa Kimap. Amma Kafin adak, tiwayita nin ngado bit afo amap un Nizara.

English:

Amo people originally did not have a cult. The *Nchill* (cult religion) was borrowed from the Kurama people. Amo people believe in one God whom they call as *Kutelle*. This God is the one recognized during Izara. The people celebrate the festival as a thanks giving event to *Kutelle*. They believe in Izara practice and they did not have any other religious practice even before the coming of the white man who they describe as *Kubature*. Izara is religious and this is why people ensure that solemnity and also show gratitude to *Kutelle*. But Amo had no idol worship before the introduction of *Nchill*. Izara has a lot of religious significance. It is a moment people of Amo always wait for. They wait for it because they believe in its promises and what it offers.

How do the performers (dancers/singers) dress?

Amo:

Toh imongye dizu bidi – bidi yari. Anan navuu ye asa ishono kukii nin tinalgaba. Ugalgaba asa ita adua – du ku dumin isuzu uyaba mun. Asa ita kukii ye asa ishono litapa liti.

Nani – lime asa ishono kukii, awani tutung asa ishono Ije a, awani wa mine daga uyenju nanit. Achara mine, as ita likari ku dumin isuzu uyaba mun.

Nani – lime tutung asa itiza ukoya natin mine nin nidawa mine bar ugado se kidowo. Tutung, asa shafiza nnuf – nikwok baranan lizi nin na chuan. Anit na idin suu ulibun kimap ba. Ana Shifaza a yariya.

English:

The performers appear in a special way. The male dancers wear tanned skins known as *Kukii* and *Tinalgaba*. *Tinalgaba* is usually well decorated for gaiety. They also tie a head ban known as *litapa*.

The female performers wear *Ije* (string- like attire with fresh leaves on either side) covers their nakedness. The old women shave their heads and leave their chests bare. They also have wrist ban known as *Likari*.

The male performers whose children are being initiated hold bamboo sticks known as *Tikpuu* and they have anklets or leg rattles which make rhythmic sound as the dance is going.

The male performers rub talcum powder (*koya*) on their bamboo sticks and also on their bodies. Also important is the mahogany oil (*Nnuff Nikwok*) that protects them from cold weather and

needles from the spiritual world. It is not everybody that likes the progress of the land and success of the festival. The *Yaris* or *Ago* (minor chiefs) and some gifted women are the ones who go round to apply the oil on the bodies of the performers.

What are the Properties used during Izara?

Amo:

Imon minimize na anan navuuye asa imi uyaba nkushe tikpuuwe na isa tiza adadu kubar uyaba. Nin na abbo na assa ita atala nan avuu nin na abbo na asaita atala nanya bar usuzun nyaba kimap? Asa isuzu avuu nin nabbo asa idi foh, ngangan kubi nizara. Toh tutung, as a imino nyasa, kabarak dumin isuzu avuu mun. Ammon asa imino to bindiga kubi Nizara nin utah da uchilak dumin kubi libari kiti Nizara.

English:

The properties are what the performers hold or wear. These include the bamboo sticks (*tikpuu*) which are decorated with the hair of cows or horses; the gourds (*abbo*) which have seven special stones and are shaken to produce rhythmic sound during Izara performance. Others are the cow switches that are known as *Nyasya* or the tail brushes which are held with the hand and shaken during the performance. Hunters and warriors bring dane guns, spears, bows and arrows to blandish with them during *Libari*.

Name the types of Izara you know, if there are any

Amo:

Asa isuzu Izara nin nakus bakwai sa kuzor. Izara di ukashi kuzora. Izara kubi duku, izara kuji, izara Abandai, Ugo kipin, izara kubanaja duku, ukalu tigalgaba, Izara nishum sannan useru tikpuu, iningyere in malzine.

Asa ichizina Kamari, asa iboo kuzur. Asa Ugo Namap su uliru, abelle muhiminchi Nizara na am baba na chin nan mun. Asa imala kikane, ugo Namap ma ni Ugo Naparan udaman su Nizara. Sannan ugo Naparan ma ni Ugo Nizara ku udaman ichizin Izara kimap gaba daya. Ame Ugo Nizara ma yiru libo me a zarnu so kuzor, anin su likyeru Nizara so kuzor, kafin anite kikane tirtin nin navuu nizara.

Asa ichizina nin Nizara kubi dumin ago Kimap. Imam suzu nigwiri namap vat dumin ini ago bit umartaba natet mine, kafin inin dirtin nin izara vat.

In beh iningyere Izara Kuji ko kuma Izara naji. Ile izara asa isusu buru ntoro, umurnan nboo nonon Kimap were vat. Ko ngya ma buru ntoro, inin sono bar nono nane launzan nmang nibinai mine.

Asa imala ibadu Izara Abandai kawam, idi su ngye avuu kikane bar amere ugo Kipin tutung amere ugo Nizara Kides. Sannan Adanah na zu daga kilarire. Toh ile Izara Abandai, asa inutuno Kizingzing ku bar Anan ligula asa ifo unin. Uma foh nin fichanchan ba. kikane ile Izara chaun kan bar in gado dumin uruu Abandai nin Kilari mine vat.

Izara indofine iningyere Izara Kubanaja ko kuma in liku. Asa ita liri dumin idi su nani izara. Akuwe adong – dong bitari kimap. Ugo liku ma ti liri Nizara kikane dumin ida su nani Izara. Kiti Nizara likusa ibelle anit uburnun, lidong-dong min naku.

Asa imala kikane, toh anit te ma du Nizara Ukalu Tigalgaba. Ugalgaba as ita kitenen kukii ye bar u'ado kawai. As a iduru kikane, toh avuu asa ichauna a kitana uburne mah. Kiti Nizara nkalu tinalgabe re asa ibelle anit te ubelen Nizara Nishun.

Izara Nishum asa isu kawam kiti kubi Nizara ida batila ishum me kunen ninishum me. Imini wa ni lisa Nizara inin Izara nishum idin cha anan Kitara idak. Asa ida, ima piru kabije isu avuu so kuzor sannan inani ishume ili. Asa ileu, toh ima bellu nani kubi nizara Nkarshe, Useru Tikpuu nanye Kamari.

Useru Tikpuu, iningyere Izaran karshe kubi nizara. Asa isu Kamari, kitin Ugo Namap nin nago azelen – zelen. Asa ichizina avuu, imaa su so kuzor kafin ugo ma di seru likpuu kitin mon. Asa isu nani, vat anit te ma tinnu icheu tikpuu mine. Toh Ugo Namap ma ngyanu. Kine kutala asu uliru dumin imma chizunu libari dumin ikewe fiqui na fidi Kamari. Fiquiye as ibila lire re. Asa isu libari. Ugo Namap ma su uliru bar uturzu Nizara sai tutung akus kuzor kamin isu tutung. Kikanere amma ni udaman su iwawa nin namon avuwe.

English:

Izara takes place after seven years and once it commences, it lasts for three to four months. Izara has several events that can be categorized into seven types. They are: Izara kubi, Izara kuji, Izara Abandai, Izara kubanaja, Ukalu tinalgaba, Izara nishum and Useru tikpuu

Izara starts with the opening ceremony at Kamari where the District Head (Ugo Namap) leads the people to a certain platform. He is accompanied by the general chief priest and the *Ugo Nizara* of Kitara. The District Head addresses the people on the importance of the festival to the Amo people. Ugo Namap also tells the people about the taboos or the abominable acts that are not condoned during Izara. As soon as he is through with his address the *Kuzur* (initiate from the royal family) is circumcised in the presence of all people he gives authority to the Chief Priest (*Ugo Kipin*) who in turn gives *Ugo Nizara* (Chief Priest in charge of Izara) the power or authority to commence Izara.

Ugo Nizara will tell the selected people how it is done and when to respond with the chorus. He shakes the gourd seven times and gives the cue seven times. On the seventh one, all people answer the Izara song. From that moment the seven types of Izara performances are witnessed with similar dance steps and music. But these performances are called by different names.

Types of Izara festival are in seven stages:

The first stage or type after the ritualistic opening ceremony at Kamari is *Izara Kubi*. This is performed for Chiefs. The dancers of each community will perform near the house of a Chief Priest. Except your community has a Chief Priest, or you move to a community that has a Chief priest. This type of Izara lasts for at least two weeks.

The next type is known as *Izara Kuji* or *Izara naji*. This type is done for the initiates in Amo land. Local brew is prepared by parents of the boys and it is taken to the venue of the performances and given old men and women as a sign of thanksgiving to *Kutelle*. At such venues and usually at strategic points in the community, the performance takes place. The dances and songs do not change. There is a lot of *Ugozu na wui* (lamentation). There is so much lamentation because

those who do not have sons to be initiated are reminded and they lament. But the dances at this stage are not as beautiful as one would see towards the end of the festival itself. At this moment they have not perfected their steps.

The next type or stage is *Izara Abandai*. Abandai is the Chief Priest in charge of Amo peaks from Kides and he is also the Ugo Nizara of Kides. This is one of the major stages because dancers in Amo land go to Kawam to dance for him. This stage is meant for his family. Even if this present Abandai dies, another one will be raised to continue as Abandai and be entertained as custom demands during third stage of Izara. This is also the performance when the mysterious drum, Kizingzing, is beaten with bare hands by members of the Anan Ligula clan. They must not wear a ring or wrist watch to beat it. And nobody should try beating it when the person is from another clan otherwise it will cry like a human being. Of course you know the consequence. Women do not go near it. It is the rule.

Amo people also recognize this family because it is the family where Adanah came from. Adanah was one of the two most dreaded warriors of Amo people who defeated the Hausa marauders during our inter-tribal wars.

The fourth type/stage is *Izara Kubanaja* or *Liku*. This type takes place for a day in the land of the Rukuba people who usually rack jokes with their friends, the Amo people. This performance is done at a designated place near the palace of their District Head to the cheers and admiration of all the people. It is usually a moment when some historical issues are remembered and narrated to the younger generation of dancers. As soon as the day for *Izara Kubanaja* is over, performers start preparing for the fifth stage. This is when Izara begins to get to the main and attractive performances and more and more performers show up to participate. This is because at the

beginning, it is not all performers that get the materials to use readily available because of their cost in the market. Materials/items like goats, bamboo sticks, gourds, or probably the performers' tanned skin is not available for use. The final stages attract more people than the beginning.

The fifth type/stage is *Ukalu Tigalgaba*. The performers start the festival with two tanned skins: *Kukii* and *Tigalgaba*. But the latter one is removed at this stage.

Ugalgaba is the decorated tanned skin which is removed and the *Kukii* is left to cover their nakedness. The performers perform in various towns and villages of Amo. At this stage the dance steps and movements have been perfected, so the performance is at its best. People watching are also very happy to witness these performances because it is not everybody that gets the opportunity to attend it when it is held centrally. This performance can stretch for two days in some villages. At the end of the *Ukalu Tigalgaba* performances, the minor chief announces the agreed date for the holding of the semi- final performance which is *Izara Nishum*.

Izara Nishum is the sixth type which draws a large number of people to Kawam to witness it. It is at an arena at Kawam. It starts with the Kides performers who dance waiting for Kitara performers to come. The arena is close to farms and this particular Izara performance is also believed to attract high yield of beans for that year. That is why it is called 'Izara Nishum' because when Kitara dancers came to Kawam and matched a farm full of beans while dancing that year there was high yield of beans. To the people, it was a blessing for that to happen because they were doing a communal duty. As the dancers combine their efforts in dancing, bean meal is served to the Kitara dancers. They also take local brew at the end. The District Head and the two Ugo Nizara will then announce the date for the grand finale at Kamari. This

announcement does not end there, people are sent to spread the good news to every hamlet, village and town of Amo people. This is why the crowd is usually a mammoth one at grand finale.

Useru Tikpuu is the grand finale which takes place at Kamari the royal place of Amo land. Kamari is also place where most of the traditional or ritualistic activities of Amo take place. It is the ancestral home of the Amo people. Kamari has a cave (*Kutai Ayili*) that used to accommodate the people during war. The place also has the *ki nyau*, a pond whose water gives the people victory and protection in warfare. A lot of activities take place at the grand finale. It starts with the normal dance patterns, first, by Kitara performers. ‘Useru tikpuu’ means the collection of bamboo sticks. This is because the bamboo sticks have been used throughout the festival and need to go to aged individuals who will in turn bless the community. They use the sticks as walking sticks.

If the Kides performers arrive, they join in the circle and dance round seven times. On reaching the seventh time, the District Head goes to collect a stick from any of the performers and immediately, the dance stops. The next activity is *Libari* which is a peaceful contest in order to cut Fiqui which is a mysterious plant on the day. This plant has to be cut by the Kides warriors. The two sets of dancers are separated. The Kitara dancers must protect their royalty and strength by protecting the plant. And any warrior that cuts the plant successfully will die after Izara festival, dying here means transcending to meet with the ancestors. It is a struggle and everybody wants to be a hero even at the point of paying the supreme price. So if the performers from both Kitara and Kides rush to clash, somebody from the latter region tries and cuts the plant. If this is done, the District Head of Amo immediately climbs a rocky platform to address people and

declares the festival closed. He will announce the prohibition on the singing of Izara music or its dance. He will also announce the resumption of the other performances in Amoland.

Describe briefly the dance and song of Izara

Amo:

Avuu Nizara arum mere kimap pe. Ukwawe urum mere. Ase belle:

Ayeeh -----unan bungye

Ayeeh yeoh yeoh yeoh ----- Kongya

Ngyari baseru menkwe yeoh yeoh ----- Kongya Amma anan kide avuu mine as a tiza mas-mas.
Amma anan Kitara din suzu seeng.

English:

Izara chorus is the same and everybody answers it. It is known as “Ukwa” directly translated to mean ‘response’. It goes thus:

Ayee _____ song leader

Ayeoh yeoh yeoh yeoh _____ All

Ngyari baseru menkwe yeoh yeoh _____ All

Ngyari baseru udelwa yeoh yeoh _____ All

(Who will be like me?) It is the male parent of the initiate that asks such a question in the song

The head drummer and the song leader are the ones that command the performance and dictate its tempo. But it is a general knowledge that Kides' way of singing Izara music is faster than that of Kitara.

The dance is the same for the male and female performers in terms of the steps, but the body movement is not the same. It is two steps forward and two steps backward. But the two forward are longer strides in order to ensure progression. The women stoop when the men with the cow switch take their hands round the heads of the women as the dance is going on. It is interesting to watch. They call it uyaba which means bragging.

Where is Izara festival held?

Amo:

Asa isu Izara vat Kimap pere. Asa ichizin Kamari, ido Kides, ido fijyazi ida malzina Kamari re. Asa ida isu useru tikpuu we Kamari ri.

English:

The festival is held throughout Amo land but with particular emphasis on Kamari and Kawam which host some of the major performances like Izara Nishum and Useru Tikpuu. The performances are usually held on an open arena.

Comment on the dramatic aspects of Izara

Amo:

Izara imon yabari Kimap. Kongya asa da ada su Kutelle ugodiya bari ulinbun Kimap.

English:

Izara is highly entertaining and there is the use of costumes. Also there is lamentations where people talk about their past and rejoice with their successes in life. They also talk to each other while dancing and singing. The people sing and dance in thanks giving to Kutelle. People who are watching also join in the dance and sing alongside the main dancers. It is usually a beautiful site.

How is it relevant to Africa?

Amo:

As Kongya din suzu ugado mine. Unbite Izara ri. Asa uchino kilari, th kilari ma chinu fi. Anit vat in Africa dummun nizara mine ku kuma nchill mine ai.

English:

It is relevant to Africa because all people in Africa have their forms of traditional life that they live. This offers them entertainment and stability in the communities. Izara is a pointer to the several beautiful festivals in societies of Africa that have not been explored.

Comment on the use of language during Izara festival

(Interviews and Focus Group Discussions FGDs)

Amo:

Ai Timap pe dunsu ti wulu Kimap bar usuzu Ticheti. Yizyari udumun Timap san nan uchizin usuzu Ticheti kiti izara; Uchauu naniba. Asa none din suzu avuu Nizara asa ida tana Timap nin Ticheti sa ti turanchi, uchaun nani ba.

English:

Language is the strength of the festival but unfortunately the Amo language is being mixed with other languages during Izara performance. These performers do not have proficiency in the way Amo language is spoken. They do not speak it fluently and regularly every day, so this drags itself into Izara performance which should be strictly in Amo language. But the use is still fair enough but Hausa language is intruding into the performance.

To what extent is it suspenseful?**Amo:**

Asa udo Nizara, na asa uyene anit ba. Asa idin suwe ba, imma du ba. Izara ling kan, dole anit doh gwardan idisu uyaba kan, dole anit inyarda nin kan kite kan. Izara ling kan kuma asa anit te do dumin iling kan dumin uyaba.

English:

Did you not see the crowd that turned out for the festival? If people do not like it, you would not see them attend the performances. The people follow every detail of the festival. They do it to compare different editions of the festivals. They know which performer is good at the dance or Izara music. As performers also talk about themselves during performance, a spectator wants to

get everything he or she is saying about himself/herself. The spectators gather towards a performer with an interesting revelation.

To what extent has Izara festival changed?

(Interviews and FGDs)

Amo:

Izara saka kan. Nin burne asa Izara re koso kuji nanit ne. Amma nene konyan chanja kimap vat. Uladabi Kimap na chin kimap pe.

Akii na anan navuu asa Itiza, nene, idin tizu ba. Imongye din niziy nfeu Kimap. Izara dinsu imala. Anan bii da burkurno izara kimap. Kuma Izara di dert nin biiye ai.

Avuu Nizara in saka ma ai nono kimap pere yiru avuwe ba. Asa idi lanza makossa ko ubirek dans, iman damun kiti nizara mun.

English:

Izara used to be the only way to form age groups in Amo land. But this is not what is obtainable nowadays. Children are born and circumcised at any time. Nobody waits for the two periods before Kagi feast and before Izara festival. The concept of seniority is fading away. Nobody has respect for that.

A lot has changed in Izara performance. Performers do not appear in their proper regalia. The heads of the women are no longer shaved. The skins are borrowed and only few men who have initiates even wear the tanned skins. There are men who have children but do not participate in the festival because of Christianity or Islam.

The singing is not done properly. Anybody can say anything. At times such people do not even wait for the song leader to give the cue; they will delve into giving the chorus.

The youths these days are introducing movements that are very strange. The body movements sometimes seem like Makossa or break dance. It is strange to the practice.

The aspects of horse-racing/horsemanship are taken for granted. The horses are not brought to the venues for their display at the grand finale. It is sad not to see them because it adds beauty to the show.

The make-up is not applied properly. One can count few people that apply make-up on their bodies and on the bamboo sticks during performance.

In those days, you could not see performers with foot wears dancing. Every dancer came to the venue barefooted to dance. These days they come with all manner of shoes to dance with them.

Tanned skins had African cowries also known as *Ikulma*. But they do not have these cowries now.

Also affected is the Amo language itself that is not used properly during performance. People mix Amo with Hausa in a traditional performance such as Izara. This has affected the solemnity and seriousness of the festival.

How can Izara festival be improved?

(Interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)).

Ugomo Pengana and Baba Abandai:

Amo:

Arik Ago Nizara nin Kimap nma fitu di su kata bite. Asa unit nta imon ichine ba, ama biu, utara kayin ko iyin kuzor sannan ubelen Timap tutung, tima yirunin navuu ubelen timap tutung, tima yiru nin navuuba. Asa tisu nani imogye ma chonu

English:

We are going to use our authority to make sure that the rules guiding Izara festival apply. For instance, anybody who violates a rule of Izara should be made to pay the fine. Presently we are in collaboration with an international organization that is specialized in constructing the autography of the Amo language.

We will make sure people wear the right costumes during performance of Izara. Some of them do not usually have money to buy the materials; we will know what to do about it.

A3 INTERVIEW GUIDE

Section A

1. Age -----
2. Educational background of respondent -----
3. Occupation -----
4. Tribe -----
5. Religion -----
6. How many times have you witnessed Izara festival? -----

Section B

7. Why does Izara take place in Amo land? -----
8. What is the origin of Izara? -----
9. Who participates in Izara festival? -----
10. What is the duration of the festival? -----
11. What is the age limit of participants? -----
12. Comment on the religious or ritualistic nature of Izara -----
13. How long does it take before Izara is held? -----
14. How do the performers (dancers/singers) dress? -----
15. What are the properties used by performers during Izara? -----
16. Name the types of Izara you know, if there are any. -----
17. Describe briefly the dance and songs of Izara. -----
18. Where is Izara festival held (arena/venue)? -----
19. Comment on the dramatic aspects of Izara. -----
20. To what extent has Izara changed over the years? -----
21. How is it relevant to Amo people? -----

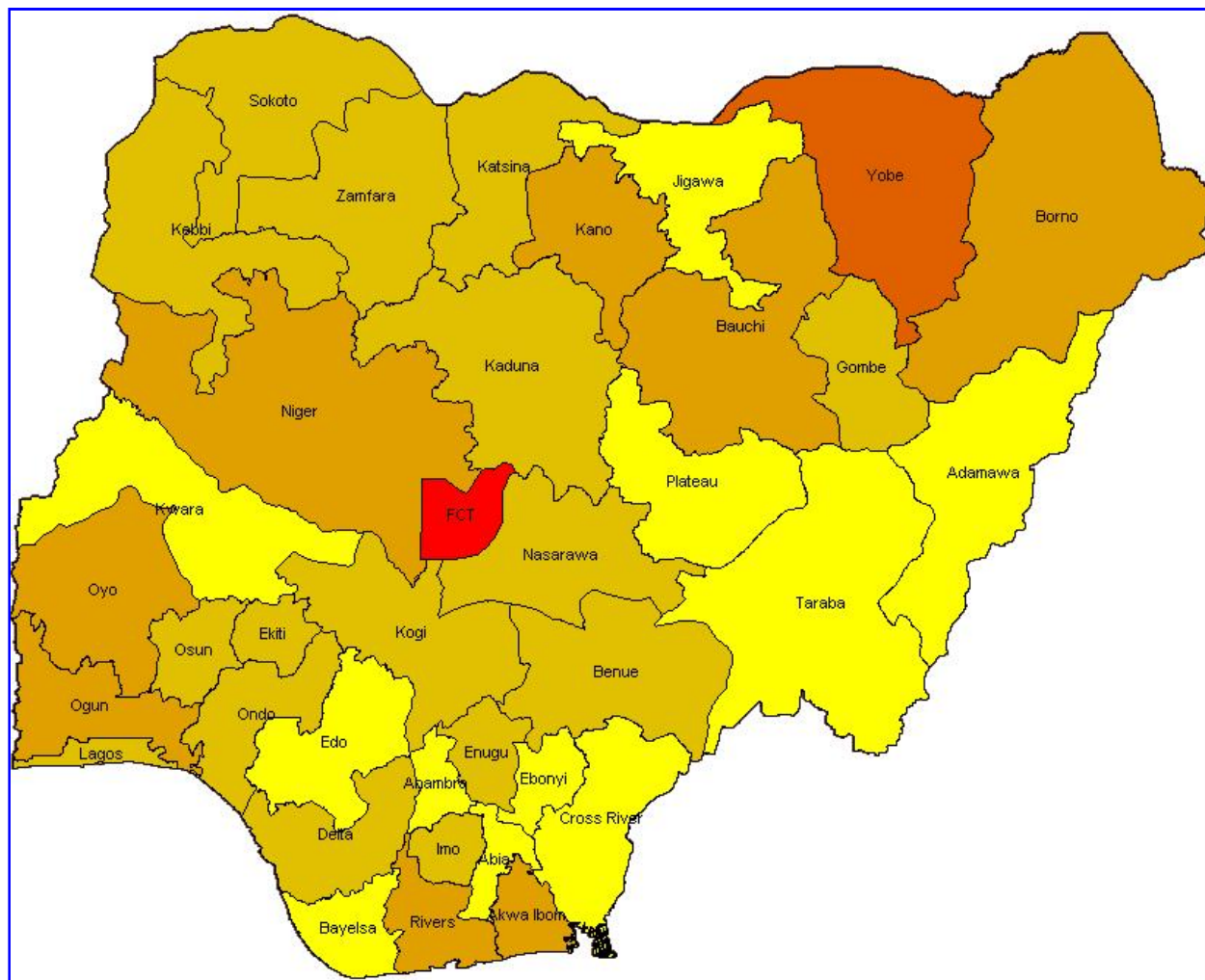
22. How is it relevant to Africa? -----
23. To what extent is it suspenseful? -----
24. Comment on use of language during Izara festival. -----
25. How can Izara festival be improved? -----

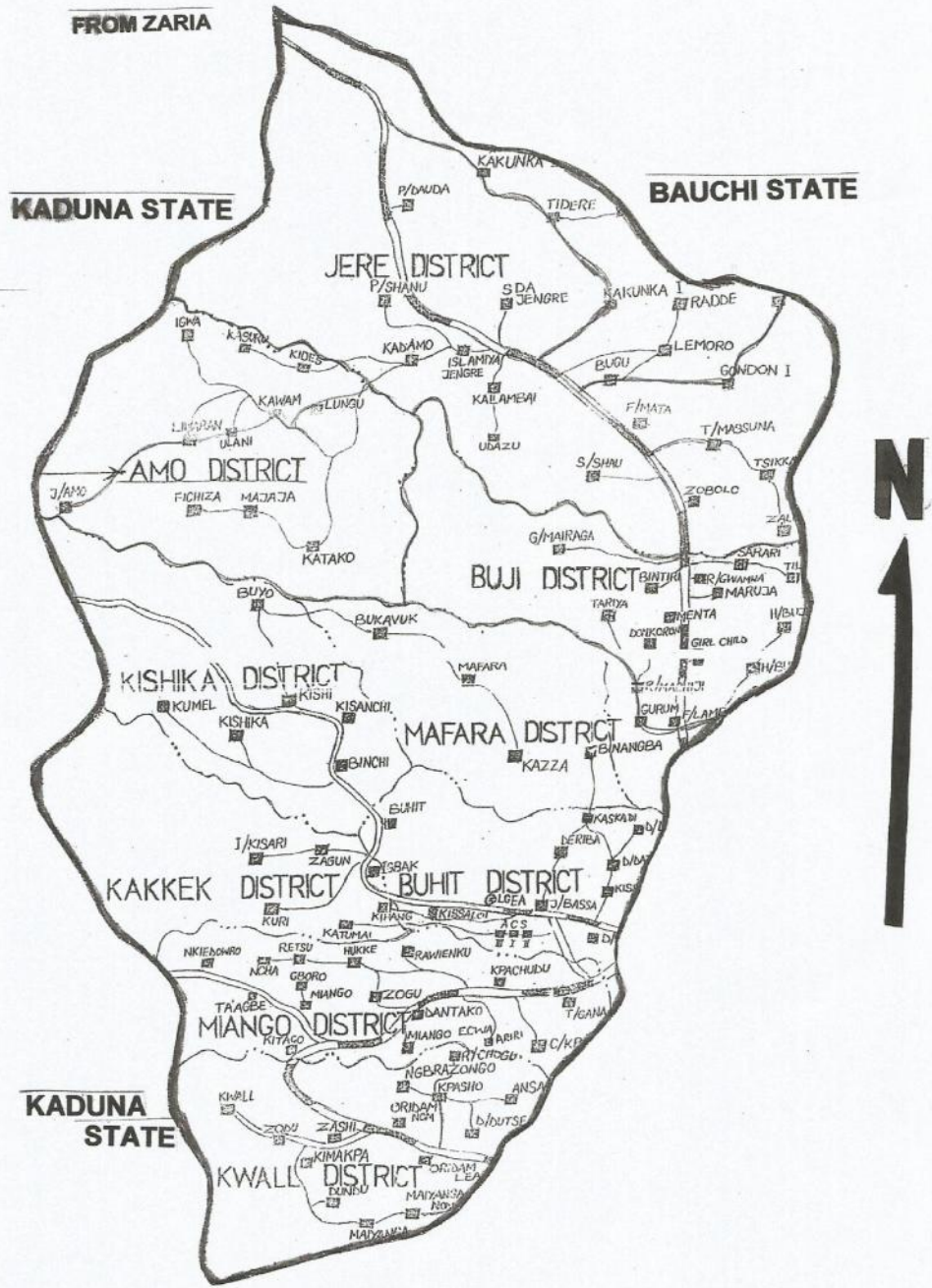
A4 LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND DATES OF INTERVIEWS

Ugo Paul Magaji (District Head of Amo)-----	04/0/2015
Ugo Isaac Bawa Sambo (Ogomo Pengana)-----	29/01/2015
Emmanuel Dariya (Minor chief)-----	1/01/2015
Parah Mallum (Old man)-----	01/01/2015
Samaila Somaki (Minor chief)-----	25/01/2015
Marwa Unya Aniya (Minor chief)-----	04/01/2015
Abalas Marwa (Youth)-----	04/01/2015
Adamu Igodiya (Youth)-----	04/01/2015
Yusuf Jirgi (Minor chief)-----	28/01/2015
Ayuba Gudu (Old man)-----	29/01/2015
Abasalom Kakwi (Old man)-----	29/01/2015
Manoah Jesse (Minor chief)-----	28/01/2015
Willaim Number (Elder)-----	28/ 01/2015
Abandai Kunanzan (Chief Priest)-----	11/01/2015
Mishek Unya (Minor chief)-----	04/01/2015
Ishaku Musa Kawu (Youth)-----	04/01/2015
Jummai Meiduka (woman)-----	04/01/2015
Gideon Kawu (Youth)-----	03/01/2015
Esther Wakai (woman)-----	03/01/2015
Baba Elisha Kiyani (Old man)-----	03/01/2015
Ziriya Kunanzan (Old woman)-----	11/01/2015
Jenny Samaila Kunanzan (woman)-----	11/01/2015
Peter Samaila (Youth)-----	11/01/2015
Samuel Kunanzan (Youth)-----	11/01/2015

Baba Kalandi (Old man)----- 11/01/2015
Yohanna Kubu (Old man)-----11/01/2015
Hosea Ajah (Youth)----- 29/01/2015
James Jamin (Youth)-----29/01/2015
Kefas Nabasu (Youth)-----29/01/2015
I. G. Suleiman (AMONDA President)-----29/01/2015
Somaki Daniel (Youth)-----29/01/2015
Ugo Maitala Kazah (District Head, Babban Fadama)----- 30/01/2015
Safiya Agari (woman leader)-----30/01/2015

A5 Maps of Nigeria and Bassa L.G.C. of Plateau State (Culled from National Population Commission, 2006)





The Map of Bassa Local Government Area, showing Amo District as a case study



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Our Ref: M88/21941/2012

DATE: 15th December, 2014

The Principal Secretary,
Higher Education, Science & Technology,
P.O. Box 30040,
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION SOLOMON OBIDAH YAMMA– REG. NO.
M88/21941/2012**

I write to introduce Mr. Solomon Obidah Yamma who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. He is registered for Ph.D degree programme in the **Department of Film Technology and Theatre Arts**.

Mr. Yamma intends to conduct research for a Ph.D Proposal entitled, “**The Dramatic and Theatrical Aesthetics of Izara Traditional Initiation Festival of Amo People of North Central Nigeria**”.

Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

**MRS. LUCY N. MBAABU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL**

RM/mn

Authorization letter from Kenyatta University.