KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY, MALETE

...the Green University for Community Development and Entrepreneurship

The Twenty-First (21st) Inaugural Lecture

Title:

THE ILORIN ROYAL DANCE TRADITION (IJO ỌLỌMỌ ỌBA): A CATALYST FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY, ARTISTIC EXPRESSION, AND CREATIVE ECONOMY

By

Professor Binta Ajibola Sulyman

B.A (Hons.), Fine Arts, Masters F.Arts, PGDE,

Dip. Comp. Sci., Ph.D (ABU, Zaria), FCAI, FHNR, IPMLD.

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Professor Binta Ajibola Sulyman

Professor of Fine Arts and Arts Education
Dean, Faculty of Environmental Sciences and
Head of Osi Campus, Kwara State University

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Professors and other members of Senate,
Directors of Academic Units and Centres,
Friends of the University and Special Guests,
My Lords, Spiritual and Temporal,
Distinguished staff and students of the Faculty of Environmental Sciences,
Distinguished staff and students of the Department of Fine and Applied Art,
Esteemed Invited Guests, Friends and Relatives,
Great KWASU Students,
Gentlemen of the Press: Print, Electronic and New Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Preamble
An Inaugural Lecture typically serves as an opportunity for Professors to share their academic journey, highlight their research interests, and outline their contributions to their field. Many universities encourage that these lectures be delivered in an accessible manner, to ensure that even those outside the lecturer's discipline can follow and appreciate the presentation. In keeping with this tradition, my lecture will also provide a concise overview of my professional path.

Arts Education and Music Arts are like two peas in a pod. Arts Education is the broader field that encompasses Music Arts, Visual Arts, Drama, Dance, and more. Music Arts, specifically, is a key component of Arts Education, helping develop creativity, cultural awareness, and emotional intelligence. Also, Arts Education and Music Arts do wonders in several ways;

- Boosts creativity and imagination
- Enhances cognitive skills and academic performance
- Folds cultural heritage and identity
- Supports emotional expression and wellbeing

Vice-Chancellor Sir, my educational journey began at the old United Primary School, Taiwo Road, Ilorin, where my siblings and I were enrolled by our late grandfather, Alhaji Muhammed Basharu while our daddy was abroad on both study and official assignments. Despite his lack of formal education, he was a remarkably enlightened and focused Arabic scholar, and an intelligent individual. His unwavering support and wisdom laid the foundation for our education, and provided us with daily stipends, new uniforms, books, shoes, and other essentials. He also ensured that we enjoyed seasonal fruits; thereby, making our primary school years memorable and well-supported.

After completing primary school, my late uncle, Engr. Sadiq Basharu, helped me with admission to Oro Notre-dame Girls College, Oro, where I began my secondary education before I was transferred to Government Girls College, Sokoto. There, my father encouraged me to pursue science, which I did until form three. I was fortunate to be selected as one of the three students to attend the Citizenship and Leadership Training Course in Shere-Hills, Jos, which gave me a unique and formative experience.
When my father was transferred to Zaria, I continued my education at Government Girls Secondary School, Kawo,

Kaduna. It was there that I discovered Fine Arts, thanks to the encouragement of Mr. Potte, my Fine Arts teacher. His guidance inspired me to switch to the Arts, and for the first time, I realised my talent for drawing. This pivotal moment marked the beginning of my journey as an artist, and eventually it led me to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where I earned all my degrees and gained invaluable knowledge and experiences.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, as the third child in my family, I graduated with a B.A. (Hons) in Fine Arts from Ahmadu Bello University in 1982 and immediately pursued my Master's degree after completing my NYSC in Kano in 1984 to 1986. Turning briefly to my personal background, my artistic journey began at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in the 1970s, under the tutelage of distinguished scholars and practitioners such as the late Prof. Nwangboje, Prof. Aliyu Sulyman, Prof. Gani Odutokun, Prof. Jerry Buhari, and Prof. Tony Okpe, amongst others. Their mentorship shaped my trajectory, particularly during the period of specialisation when I ultimately committed to painting: a decision that continues to inform my engagement with the intersection of performance, visuality, and cultural expression.

I have taught various courses in Fine Arts, particularly in Painting, Drawing, Art Appreciation, Batik and Tie-and-Dye, Adire, Art Education, and other related areas, with class populations often exceeding fifty students. My teaching approach combines practical instruction with critical analysis, course design, and the creation of engaging opportunities for student participation and creative activities.

In smaller seminar-based classes of about 15–20 students, I facilitated in-depth discussions on diverse artistic and academic topics, while emphasising active student engagement through

regular and purposeful assignments that enhanced learning outcomes. Since 2015, I have also supervised practical projects at the Master's, Bachelor's, and NCE levels, contributing to the academic and professional development of students across different stages of study.

My career began with the Federal Civil Service Commission as a Fine Arts teacher at Federal Government College, Ogidi, Ilorin, where I taught for 10 years before I later joined the Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, as a lecturer. I worked there for 14 years. My transition to Kwara State University (KWASU) was facilitated by the esteemed former Vice-Chancellor, Professor AbdulRasheed Na'Allah, who invited me to establish the now fully accredited Department of Fine and Applied Arts which happened to be the first department in the new Faculty of Environmental Sciences. I served as the pioneer coordinator and later as Head of Department, overcoming numerous challenges with the guidance and support of God Almighty and the full support of Professor AbdulRasheed Na'Allah.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, at KWASU, I was appointed as the pioneer Director of the Centre for Archives and Documentation in 2014. During my tenure, I developed the KWASU Recreational Art Garden, a project appreciated by the late Vice-Chancellor, Professor M.M. Akanbi SAN, under whose leadership I attained the rank of Professor. His support remains a cherished part of my journey. I am deeply grateful to Professor Shaykh- Luqman Alade Jimoh for his kindness and for entrusting me with significant responsibilities, including my recent appointments as Dean of the new Faculty of Environmental Sciences and the pioneer Head of Osi Campus of the university. These roles have been both challenging and rewarding, and I am sincerely thankful for the trust placed in me.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, Kwara State University created the School of Visual and Performing Arts from inception and was designed to house five programmes but started with four, Performing Art, Music, Film Production and Dance. The Visual Arts is the Fine and Applied Arts which started later when I was employed by the Pioneer Vice-Chancellor, Professor AbdulRasheed Na'Allah to establish the Department after which I also proposed and advocated for the establishment of the Faculty of Environmental Sciences, which was successfully approved by the NUC in 2015 after considerable efforts.

I give all glory to Almighty God for the remarkable growth of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, particularly the successful approval of its Master's, PhD, and Diploma programmes, achieved through dedicated efforts despite numerous challenges. *Alhamdulillahi Rabbil Alameen.*

I remain deeply grateful to Professor AbdulRasheed Na'Allah for his unwavering support and firm commitment to the establishment and development of the department, especially during challenging periods.

Today, I am honoured to present a summary of my contributions to scholarships, to this distinguished audience by discussing the Ilorin Royal Dance Tradition *(Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba)* as a Catalyst for Cultural Identity, Artistic Expression, and Creative Economy. With great pride and cultural appreciation, I will share a brief historical perspective on *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* a dance renowned for its rich heritage and cultural importance.

Background

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, Almighty God, in His infinite wisdom, created the beauty and wonders that make the universe habitable and meaningful. He created the skies, moon, stars, flowers,

fruits, vegetation, diverse foods, and humanity in its different races and colours. These magnificent creations reflect the essence of art in its purest form, affirming that GOD ALMIGHTY is indeed the ORIGINAL and SUPREME ARTIST.

Fine Arts education involves the study and application of artistic skills and creative education in areas such as painting, drawing, music, and other related forms of expression used to communicate ideas, represent realities, and support performance. In a series of scholarly works published over the years, Sulyman (2003, 2012, 2017) consistently emphasised the significance of Fine Arts to national development, cultural advancement, and human communication. I opined that effective Fine Arts education contributes meaningfully to educational development and strengthens a nation's cultural influence across diverse areas of human endeavour. I further highlighted the importance of indigenous artistic expressions, including traditional dance performances, while also affirming that art serves as a vital medium for visual appreciation, expression, and communication.

Mr, Vice-Chancellor Sir, Africans believe in their cultural ties. This belief provides the hope and the desire to inculcate their culture in their children, especially those aspects that have to do with the family continuity folklore, festivals and various forms of annual celebrations (Sulyman & Wesley 2012). Traditional oral performances in Ilorin undergo rapid departure from their sources. Despite this development, a large body of studies have skirted the margins, and have not recognised the essence of cultural aesthetics that predominantly belong to indigenous people of the Emirate. Therefore, this lecture interrogates the creative possibilities of the fusion of the various indigenous arts resident in Ilorin, and how they reflect the motifs of collective cultural practice, tourist attractions, cultural unity, and performance aesthetics within the purview of Ilorin's oral arts.

Ilorin, the largest city and administrative capital of Kwara State, is situated in Nigeria's Middle Belt, specifically within the North Central geopolitical zone (Adebayo, 2010). Ilorin Emirate, being a cosmopolitan city, includes the following Local Government areas: Asa, Ilorin-East, Ilorin-West, Ilorin-South and Moro. The city is a conglomeration of diverse tribes, cultures, and beliefs. Although it began as an outpost of the old Oyo Empire which eventually evolved into a cosmopolitan settlement. This transformation brought together a multitude of ethnic groups, including the Fulani, Yoruba, Hausa, Nupe, Baruba and immigrants from beyond Nigeria's borders, such as those from Mali and the Niger Republic. This multicultural composition has significantly influenced the city's cultural and social landscape (Al-Amin, 2025).

The name "Ilorin" originates from *"Okuta* Ilorin," meaning "the stone for sharpening metals." According to oral tradition, this stone was used by the city's founder, Ojo Isekuse, a Yoruba hunter, to sharpen his metal implements (Adeyemi 2008). The Okuta Ilorin can still be found at Asaju's compound in Idi-Ape Quarters (Kwara State Tourism Board, 2023). Ojo Isekuse's settlement in Ilorin attracted various groups, leading to the city's growth as a multicultural hub. Initially, Ilorin's population included animists and a small number of Muslims. The city's religious and political landscape changed dramatically following the death of Afonja, the Oyo Empire Generalissimo stationed in Ilorin. In the 1820s, Abdulsalami, son of the itinerant Muslim cleric Shehu Salisu (commonly known as Alimi) a descendant of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, was installed as Emir. This event marked the beginning of Ilorin's transformation into an Emirate theocratic state (Jimoh, 1994; Jimba, 1997). Islam became the dominant religion in Ilorin following Shehu Alimi's ascendancy, influencing local customs, greetings, and dress.

Elderly men are usually dressed in jalabia with turbans, while the women use long dresses with hijabs, reflecting the city's deep-rooted Islamic traditions (Adebayo, 2010).

Ilorin is often referred to as "*Ilu Alufa*" the city of Islamic scholars due to its reputation as a centre of Islamic learning and culture (Olaniyi, 2015). Despite the strong Islamic presence, Christianity is also practised, owing to migration from other parts of Kwara State and Nigeria. Till date, the population is ethnically diverse: comprising of Fulani, Hausa, Yoruba, Nupe, Baruba and other minority tribes, with Yoruba as the predominant language and Hausa as the second most widely spoken language (National Population Commission, 2006). The growth of Islam in Ilorin, particularly under Fulani leadership, introduced new religious chants and practices. As Na'Allah (1997) and Adeogun (2006) explained, these Islamic rituals gradually supplanted the traditional animists'. Islamic religious practices, including prayers, sermons, and Quranic recitations, became more prominent, reflecting the city's new theocratic identity. However, cultural expressions such as the *Pakenke, Senwele, Dadakuada, Waka, Kengbe, and Ijọ Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* play crucial roles in royal, secular and spiritual activities and ceremonies, symbolising unity, identity, and the continuity of tradition.

The Place of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* in Ilorin

Oral performance in Ilorin represents a mosaic of oral-musical tradition that integrates symbolic actions, costume, and performance environments to communicate meaning (Al-Amin 2025). The water pitcher and calabash are central to the practice of this Ilorin royal dance, embodying notions of abundance and communal unity, while the accompanying songs and dance, transmit cultural knowledge and comment on contemporary social issues. As observed during performances, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* is a female-led oral art form that has become a defining feature of

Ilorin's cultural life. It is usually performed on special occasions where royal families are central. A similar tradition exists among the Oyo people, where it is known as *Igba-titi* court poetry at the Alaafin of Oyo's palace. *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* developed its distinct form within the Ilorin Emirate socio-cultural setting, where royal influence shaped its aesthetics. In this sense, it reflects Olatunji Vidal's categorisation of special music, being informed by a royal doctrines and values. Using Agu's framework, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* falls under "occasional music," since it is performed only during special events, and it typically employs the Ilorin sociolect of Fulani ancestry, situating the art form firmly within its local cultural identity.

Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba may be described as the performative embodiment of the Ilorin royal tradition. While the calabash, water-pitchers, sticks and talking-drum provide the instrumental foundation through the resonant tones of the percussion, royal dance enacts the corporeal dimension, where dance, movement, and bodily expression translate the rhythms into visible performance aesthetics. Together, they illustrate the inseparability of sound and movement in Ilorin royal traditions, where music and dance are not discrete but contain mutually constitutive elements of communal expression.

More than a mere artistic expression, the *Ijọ Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* is a sacred tradition that encapsulates the community's fundamental values, including unity, respect, loyalty, and the safeguarding of their royal lineage. Central to the *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* is the Emir of Ilorin, who embodies the spiritual and political heart of this cultural practice. The dance is a tribute to the royal family, reinforcing their leadership role and spiritual authority in the governance and prosperity of Ilorin. What distinguishes the *Ijọ Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* is not only its historical and cultural significance but also its ability to transcend ethnic and religious divides. Rooted

in Ilorin's layered history, the dance reflects the city's fusion of indigenous customs with Islamic traditions introduced through Fulani and Hausa influences, creating a composite cultural identity (Peel, 2000; Last, 2012). As Drewal (1998) noted, Yoruba performance traditions often operate as sites of syncretism, where ritual, symbolism, and aesthetics converge. *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* exemplifies this by incorporating elements of Yoruba ritual practice, Islamic resonances, and borrowings from neighbouring ethnic groups, producing a performance that simultaneously celebrates plurality and reaffirms unity.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, this lecture examines the spiritual and cultural meanings embedded in *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* situating it as a living emblem of Ilorin's royal family. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, the dance embodies the values of authority, continuity, and communal cohesion, serving as a symbolic expression of cultural preservation in the face of social transformation (Nzewi, 1991). Its choreographic patterns, costuming, and musical accompaniment demonstrate how oral traditions are preserved through embodied performance, making the dance a vital marker of Ilorin identity.

As Barber (1997) argued, African performance genres operate as both archives and agents of culture, mediating between past and present. *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* therefore provides a performative link between Ilorin's ancestors and its contemporary community, sustaining shared values through the universal language of art and tradition. By celebrating this royal dance, we not only honour Ilorin's heritage but also reaffirm the resilience of a community whose identity is grounded in a history of cultural synthesis and artistic innovation.
The performance transcends traditional concert; it is a dynamic embodiment of the arts, reflecting the integrated cultural heritage of the Ilorin Emirate, through movement, aesthetics, symbolism, and creative expression.

Visual arts and Fine Arts Education disciplines such as painting, sculpture, textile design, and performing art are deeply connected to *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba*, which functions as a medium for storytelling, cultural preservation, and identity formation. This synergy between dance and Fine Arts Education underscore their joint role in sustaining Ilorin's historical and artistic legacy (Barber, 1997; Drewal, 1998).



Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba Performance



Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba Performance



Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba Performance

Plate 1: Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba Royal dancers

Purpose and Significance of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba*

Ilorin, historically established as a frontier city between the Oyo-Yoruba and the Sokoto Caliphate, reflects a unique socio-cultural function shaped by Fulani, Yoruba, Nupe, and Baruba populations (Jimoh, 1994; Falola, 1998; Akinjogbin, 2010). This diversity underpins the city's reputation for hospitality and vibrant cultural traditions, particularly in music, art, and craftsmanship (Ogunbiyi, 2004; Ajayi, 2012). A defining marker of Ilorin's identity is its deep-rooted Islamic orientation. Since the nineteenth century, Ilorin has been recognised as a centre of Islamic learning in Nigeria, where Islam informs not only religious observances but also social conduct, attire, culinary habits, and moral frameworks (Laitin, 1986; Adediran, 2015). Within this context, music emerges as both an artistic and spiritual expression.

The *dundun* (talking drum) and other indigenous instruments are central to communal ceremonies such as weddings and religious festivals, where performances often weave together praise, history, and Islamic values (Falola & Genova, 2006; Vidal, 2012). Beyond music, Ilorin is celebrated for its artisanal heritage, particularly in weaving, embroidery, and pottery, which serves as both a repository of tradition and a source of economic resilience (Ajayi, 2012; Ojo, 2018). Its culinary practices also reveal syncretism. Dishes such as *amala with gbegiri* soup, *tuwo shinkafa, fura da nono, suya*, and jollof rice embody the fusion of Yoruba, Fulani, and Islamic influences, while symbolising communal identity and cultural continuity (Ojo, 2018; Akande, 2020). Collectively, these features position Ilorin as a microcosm of Nigeria's cultural hybridity, where Islamic scholarship and indigenous practices merge to produce a resilient and dynamic heritage.

The Origin and Historical Development of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba*

Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba is a distinguished royal traditional dance integral to the cultural heritage of the Ilorin Royal family. This dance holds a prominent place in the ceremonial life of the Ilorin Emirate, particularly during wedding festivities, thanksgiving events, and the turbanning of Princes and Princesses. Also referred to as *Ere Olomo-Oba,* this dance is one among many traditional practices and socio-cultural expressions in Ilorin, which encompass theatrical and musical arts (Adeyemi, 2010; Salawu, 2015). The dance is celebrated not only for its aesthetic beauty but also for its cultural symbolism, which vividly represents the identity of the Ilorin Royal family. It provides a significant moment during weddings where the bride formally greets the Emir of Ilorin, who in turn offers prayers for the couple's prosperity (Ogunbiyi, 2004). Ilorin itself is a historic city located in the middle-belt of Nigeria, where it serves as the capital of Kwara State. Founded in the late 18th century by the Yoruba people, Ilorin was historically a vassal state under the Oyo Empire before evolving into a culturally diverse emirate (Falola & Genova, 2009).

Influence of Fulani, Yoruba, and Hausa Cultures on *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba*

The *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* dance was popularised by the 6th Emir of Ilorin, Emir Sulaiman dan Aliyu (also known as Sulaiman bin Alliyu), who ruled from 1896 to 1915, and exemplifies the unique cultural synthesis characteristic of Ilorin. This dance embodies a fusion of Fulani traditions and Yoruba cultural elements, creating a hybrid form that is distinct to this region (Smith, 1988). The rich cultural tapestry of Ilorin, shaped by centuries of interaction among Fulani, Yoruba, and Hausa peoples, has significantly influenced the dance's musical rhythms, stylistic movements, and spiritual significance (Bello, 2012). This confluence of ethnic influences has produced a

dynamic and unique dance tradition that reflects Ilorin's historical role as a cultural crossroads in Nigeria. The *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* thus stands for a vital cultural heritage, symbolising the Emirate's identity and the city's diverse cultural landscape. This is a key reason why I am committed to researching and promoting *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* as an emblematic traditional dance of our city and Emirate.

Cross-Cultural Synthesis

The fusion of Fulani, Yoruba, Nupe and Hausa influences in the *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* dance exemplifies the harmonious coexistence of these cultures within Ilorin, a city marked by a rich history of ethnic interaction. Over time, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* has emerged as a powerful symbol of Ilorin's multicultural identity, blending the unique traditions of these ethnic groups while maintaining a shared respect for the royal institution (Ibitoye, 2019)

This cultural collaboration has given rise to a distinctive dance form characterised by:

1. Diverse Musical Elements:
   The integration of Fulani melodies, Yoruba drumming, and Hausa rhythms creates a vibrant and intricate musical foundation for *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba.* Such a rich combination mirrors the varied cultural influences in Ilorin by shaping and re-shaping the dance's unique character (Ibitoye, 2019).
2. Cultural Unity and Symbolism:
   Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba embodies the unity of Ilorin's diverse ethnic communities, with each group contributing to the dance's visual style, performance techniques, and symbolic meanings. This cross-cultural blend highlights the monarchy's role as a unifying force, drawing on multiple traditions to celebrate shared values.

The impact of Fulani, Yoruba, and Hausa cultures on *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* underscores its status as a dynamic and evolving cultural

practice. These ethnic groups have played a crucial role in defining the dance's musical, aesthetic, and symbolic aspects, ensuring it remains a vibrant expression of Ilorin's rich cultural tapestry. *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* more than just a dance, stands as a testament to ongoing intercultural dialogue and cooperation in the region. Through its performances, it honours the shared history and unity of the Yoruba, Fulani, and Hausa peoples, while paying homage to the royal traditions that unite them (Ibitoye, 2019).

Evolution Over Time: From Tradition to Modernity

As a vital part of Ilorin's cultural heritage, the *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* royal dance has experienced significant transformation, evolving from a traditional ceremonial performance into a contemporary art form that still preserves its cultural core. This progression reflects broader social, cultural, and technological shifts within Ilorin and beyond. Even as the dance adapts to modern contexts, it continues to symbolise the enduring importance of the monarchy, community cohesion, and cultural pride (Ojuade, 2021). The journey of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* from its traditional origins to its present-day expressions illustrates the resilience and adaptability of Ilorin's cultural heritage.

Traditional Expression of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba*

Historically, *Ijọ Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* was performed during significant royal ceremonies and cultural events, serving as a sacred form of expression that honoured the Ilorin monarchy and ancestral spirits. The dance is deeply rooted in the community's social, spiritual, and political structures, reflecting the cultural heritage of Ilorin (Sowoolu, 2018).

Key features of the traditional *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* include:

1. **Royal and Ritualistic Significance:** The dance was primarily performed in the presence of the Emir (king)

during royal celebrations such as coronations, anniversaries, and other important events in the Ilorin emirate. It held spiritual meaning, often invoking blessings from ancestors and deities, thereby reinforcing the king's authority and divine status (IEDPU, n.d.).

2. **Traditional Costumes:** Dancers wore ornate and symbolic attire made from *Aso-Oke*, Adire, and Kente fabrics, which represent royalty, wealth, and cultural identity. The costumes were often complemented by intricate beadwork, jewellery, and headgear that reflected the dancers' status and the ceremonial nature of the event (Ibitoye, 2019).
3. **Music and Instruments:** The dance was accompanied by indigenous percussion instruments such as *bata* drums, *dundun* (talking drums), and *gangan,* which provided rhythm and served as a communication medium during performances. The talking drums, in particular, relayed messages and echoed the themes of the royal ceremonies (Ibitoye, 2019).
4. **Traditional Choreography:** Movements were slow, deliberate, and dignified, designed to convey respect for the royal family and cultural traditions. The choreography emphasised balance, control, and grace, with footwork and posture reflecting reverence and power (Sowoolu-Coates, 2018). The performance space is cyclical

The spiritual and cultural meanings behind the dance movements

Spiritually, every movement in *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* carries deep meaning, connecting performers and spectators to divine forces and ancestral spirits. The dance is a form of spiritual communication performed during royal events, where gestures

and rhythms symbolise reverence and communal identity. For example, during festivals, unique sounds are created by pouring water into a mortar and striking an inverted calabash, around which dancers move rhythmically, enhancing the sacred atmosphere.

Over time, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* has adapted to contemporary contexts, evolving from its traditional ceremonial roots into modern expressions that still uphold its cultural essence. This evolution reflects broader social and technological changes while continuing to symbolize the monarchy's enduring significance, community cohesion, and cultural pride in Ilorin (Adekogbe, 2023).

Representation of the Ilorin Royal Family and the Connection to the Emir

The Ilorin royal family is central to the cultural, social, and political life of Ilorin and maintains a close relationship with the Emir of Ilorin, who serves as both the spiritual and political leader of the community. This connection holds deep historical significance and remains a vital part of Ilorin's identity today.

The Emir symbolises not only monarchy but also the continuity of Ilorin's history, traditions, and cultural values. Cultural practices such as the *Ijo Olomo Oba* royal dance play an important role in honouring the royal family and their link to the Emir.

Historical Origins

The Emirate system in Ilorin developed through the interaction between the indigenous Fulani people and the Yoruba, whose influence began during the early 19th-century Jihad. The first Emir, Aliyu (Sultan), was installed following Fulani leadership over the region. Despite this, the royal family remains deeply rooted in the traditional Fulani monarchy, blending Yoruba, Nupe, Baruba and Islamic traditions (IEDPU, n.d.; Sowoolu-Coates, 2018).

Spiritual and Political Role:
The Emir holds dual authority as both political ruler and spiritual head, representing divine leadership and serving as a link between the people and their ancestors. This dual role strengthens his position as a central figure in maintaining social harmony and cultural continuity in Ilorin. As the highest traditional authority, the Emir ensures that royal ceremonies such as the *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* Royal Dance uphold the cultural values and religious practices of the Ilorin people (Sowoolu-Coates, 2018; Ibitoye, 2019).

Civic Contributions

I. ***Social cohesion:*** Uniting families events organised by *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* dance create opportunities for families to reunite, celebrate, and reinforce bonds across generations, fostering a strong sense of community connection (IEDPU, n.d.).

ii. Mediating conflicts: The group often serves as a mediator in disputes, promoting dialogue and unity within the Ilorin community, which is characterised by diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds (Sowoolu- Coates, 2018).

iii. Engaging youths: By involving younger generations in its activities, the congregation ensures the transmission of values such as respect, unity, and cultural pride, helping to bridge generational divides and sustain cultural heritage (Ibitoye, 2019; Ojuade, 2021).

iv. Community engagement by Ìjo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba dance; Demonstrating loyalty By actively participating in royal events, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* expresses steadfast allegiance to

the Emir and the royal institution, thereby reinforcing their importance within Ilorin society (Adeyemi, 2018).

v. ***Bridging generations:*** These gatherings unite individuals across all age groups, promoting intergenerational learning and fostering unity through shared cultural traditions.

vi. ***Encouraging inclusive participation:*** *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* adopts an inclusive approach that ensures every community member, irrespective of social standing, feels connected to the royal ceremonies and festivals (Bello, 2019).

vii. ***Preserving traditions:*** Through their involvement, the group plays a crucial role in transmitting traditional knowledge and cultural practices to younger generations during these celebrations (Alabi, 2017).

viii. ***Promoting cultural diplomacy:*** Their vibrant displays of Ilorin's cultural heritage during royal events attract admiration and respect from external communities, enhancing the city's cultural diplomacy.

ix. ***Engaging in philanthropy:*** During festival periods, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* often organises the distribution of food, clothing, and other essentials to vulnerable community members, exemplifying the spirit of communal generosity (Ibrahim, 2019).

x. ***Fulfilling social responsibility:*** These occasions also serve as platforms to address broader community needs, thereby promoting goodwill and strengthening social solidarity (Salami, 2022).

xi. ***Enhancing festive atmosphere:*** Through traditional music, dance, and drama, *Ìjo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* infuses royal events with vibrancy and excitement, creating memorable experiences for attendees (Adekunle, 2016).

xii. ***Instilling cultural pride:*** Their active participation inspires pride in Ilorin's rich history and cultural legacy, thereby reinforcing the collective identity of the community (Fatunmbi, 2018). *Ìjọ Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* serves as a vital guardian of Ilorin's cultural and spiritual heritage. Their indispensable contributions not only preserve and celebrate the city's traditions but also promote unity, inclusiveness, and social cohesion within the community.

The Impact of *Ìjo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* on Art Education, Tourism and Cultural Industries in Ilorin and beyond

Impact on Art Education

One of the most significant contributions of *Ìjo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* lies in its role in art education, particularly within formal and informal learning contexts. In Ilorin, where traditional arts co-exist with modern education, cultural performances provide a practical framework for teaching indigenous knowledge systems.

Firstly, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* enriches curriculum development in fine arts and creativity, performing arts and cultural studies. Institutions and cultural centres can incorporate the dance into teaching modules on choreography, costume design, musicology, and performance theory. This aligns with broader efforts to preserve Nigerian cultural heritage through education. Given that Ilorin has historically relied on crafts such as pottery, weaving, and wood carving for economic and cultural

expression, integrating performative arts like *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* ensures a holistic approach to art education.

Secondly, the dance fosters experiential learning. Students and apprentices engage directly with practitioners, who are elders or palace-affiliated custodians, and thus bridging generational knowledge gaps. This mentorship model promotes skills acquisition, discipline, and cultural pride. It also counters the erosion of indigenous arts caused by globalisation and Westernisation.

Thirdly, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* contributes to research and scholarship. It offers rich material for interdisciplinary studies in anthropology, theatre arts, history, and cultural studies. Scholars now explore themes such as identity formation, gender roles, and the interplay between religion and art.

Influence on Tourism Development

Tourism is another sector significantly impacted by *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba.* Cultural tourism, which involves travel motivated by the desire to experience a community's traditions and heritage, has become an important driver of economic growth in many regions. In Ilorin, traditional festivals and royal ceremonies provide opportunities for showcasing *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* to both local and international audiences.

The visual appeal of the dance, such as its colourful attire, rhythmic movements, and ceremonial context, makes it an attractive feature for cultural festivals. Events such as durbar celebrations and other festive gatherings in Ilorin already draw attention for their display of horsemanship, music, and dance. Incorporating *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* into such events enhances their diversity and cultural depth, thereby increasing their tourism potential.

Moreover, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* is positioned as a unique cultural asset in tourism branding. Just as festivals like Ojude Oba in Ogun State attract global audiences, Ilorin can leverage its own distinctive traditions to create signature cultural events. This would not only boost visitor numbers but also stimulate local economies through hospitality, transportation, and related services.

Beyond Ilorin, the dance has the potential to feature in national and international cultural exhibitions, festivals, and exchange programs. Such exposure promotes cultural diplomacy, positioning Nigerian heritage within global cultural conversations.

Contribution to Cultural Industries

The cultural industries, comprising music, film, fashion, crafts, creative, visual and performing arts, benefit immensely, from traditional expressions like *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba.* In Ilorin, where handicrafts such as weaving, pottery, batik/tye-dye, etc., and local industries already contribute to economic activity, the integration of performative arts expands the scope of creative production.

Firstly, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* influences the performing arts sector. Dance troupes, theatre groups, and cultural ensembles can adapt its elements for stage performances, thereby creating new artistic productions. These adaptations can be showcased in theatres, cultural festivals, and media platforms, generating income and employment opportunities.

Secondly, the dance inspires fashion and costume design. The traditional attire associated with *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* often characterised by elegance and cultural symbolism, influences

contemporary fashion trends. Designers reinterpret these elements for modern audiences, contributing to the growth of Nigeria's fashion industry.

Thirdly, the music associated with the dance contributes to the preservation and innovation of indigenous soundscapes. Musicians and producers incorporate traditional rhythms into contemporary compositions, creating fusion genres that appeal to wider audiences.

Additionally, digital media provides new avenues for the dissemination of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba.* Through film, social media, and online platforms, the dance reach global audiences, thereby enhancing its visibility and economic value. This aligns with the broader trend of digitising cultural heritage for preservation and commercialisation.

Vice-Chancellor Sir, in essence, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* is more than a traditional dance; it is a dynamic cultural resource with significant implications for art education, tourism, and cultural industries. In Ilorin, it serves as a bridge between the past and the present, preserving heritage while inspiring innovation. Beyond Ilorin, it holds the potential to contribute to national identity and global cultural exchange. As Nigeria continues to explore the economic and social value of its cultural assets, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* stands out as a compelling example of how tradition can drive development. For academia, policymakers, and cultural practitioners alike, the task is to harness this potential, ensuring that the dance remains a vibrant and influential part of Nigeria's cultural ecosystem for generations to come.

The Influence of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* on my Creative Experience

Vice-Chancellor Sir, may I quickly intimate the audience that my creative prowess, styles, techniques and artistic signature is

deeply rooted in the Arts Education and connected to *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* costumes, which serves as a vibrant expression of Fulani cultural identity and social values. The ceremonial costumes are not just clothing but are also integral to artistic beauty and cultural symbolism of my artistic expression and creativity.

My art works also mirror ethnics and religious diversity blending Fulani, Hausa, Yoruba and Islamic influences. The *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* helps in connecting with the Fulani cultural identity, which embodies my traditional values and royal symbolism, offering rich thematic materials for my artistic expression.

May I also let you know that the *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* inspires my visual aesthetics, whereby the vibrant concepts provide me a dynamic source of creative ideas in the production of my visual arts. Also, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* encourages me to blend traditional motifs with contemporary creativity. My dressing today depicts strong traditional Fulani ceremonial attire.



Plate 2: *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* song and parade by the mothers in Ilorin

Lastly, the *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* influences my creative ability by grounding it in Fulani royal and cultural aesthetics, inspiring by the form and content of my artistic endeavours through its rich symbolism and expressive movement.

My Creative Experience and Contributions in Arts Education

Vice-Chancellor Sir, the primary purpose of exhibitions and performance displays is to engage relevant artistic and cultural issues by showcasing works of arts and dance performances. My interest in creative activities began in my youth, during secondary school, where I explored drawing using magazines, photographs, colours, cutting, and design and through my university experiences at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

My creative experience is largely rooted in exhibitions, alongside my educational background. I have been fortunate to receive mentorship from distinguished artists such as Prof. Wangboje, the late Prof. Soliu Suleiman, the late Prof. Surende (Indian), late Prof. Mbahi, Prof. Mrs. House (Briton), Mr. Sharp (American), the late Prof. Bentu, the late Prof. Gani Odutokun, Prof. Ben Enkanem, and Prof. Mamza, amongst others. These eminent teachers and scholars from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, have greatly influenced my career and artistic development.

My Exhibition History

Regarding my exhibition history, I have participated in numerous solo, and group shows and completed a variety of commissioned painting projects. These include portraiture of notable figures such as former Vice-Chancellors Prof. Ango Abdullahi (Ahmadu Bello University); Late Gen. Tunde Idiagbon; the executive Governor of Kwara State, Mallam Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq; the Deputy Governor of Kwara State, Elder Kayode Alabi,

Ambassador Yahaya Seriki; Prof. AbdulRasheed Na'Allah; the late Prof. M.M. Akanbi SAN; as well as traditional rulers like the late Emir of Zaria; the late Emir of Kano, Alhaji Lamido Sanusi; former Emir of Zaria; the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Dr. Ibrahim Sulu Gambari; the Emir of Ilesha Baruba; and the Olosi of Osi, Oba Alhaji Soliu Abdulkareem Adasofegbe. I have also undertaken commissions for institutions such as TETFUND Abuja, the National Universities Commission, and the Faculty of Law at Kwara State University. Samples of these works are shown hereunder.



Plate 3: Presentation of Flower Vase to Mr. Femi Adebayo (2019)



Plate 4: Presentation of Portrait Painting to Former Emir of Kano Alhaji Sanusi Lamido Sanusi in Kano (2020)

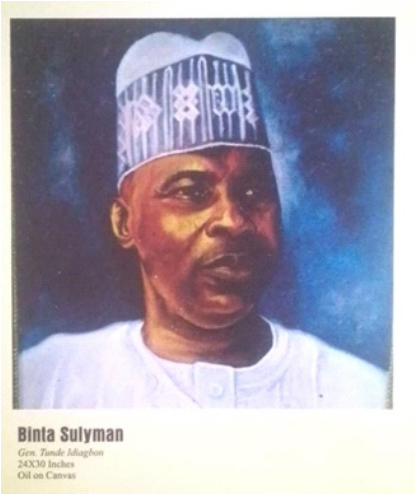


Plate 5: (Exhibition) of Portrait Painting of Late Gen. Idiagbon



Plate 6: Opening Ceremony of the Centre for Archives and Documentation by Former VC, Prof. AbdulRasheed Na'Allah (2020)



Plate 7: Presentation of Portrait Painting of Deputy Gov., Elder Kayode Alabi at the Convocation Arts Exhibition (2024)



Plate 8: Presentation of Art Souvenir to Amb. Yahaya Seriki by KWASU Management (2021)



Plate 9: Official Commissioning of the KWASU Arts Garden by the Late VC, Prof. M.M Akanbi SAN and Management Team.



Plate 10: A View of the Arts Garden



Plate 11: A View of the Arts Garden



Plate 12: Convocation Arts Exhibition Inspection



Plate 13: Presentation of The Portrait to the Emir of Zaria on our visit, the VC, Prof Na'Allah, Prof Ali Agan, myself, and the Students' Union



Plate 14: Another View of the Opening of Centre for Archives and Documentation

Vice-Chancellor Sir, in addition to individual projects, I have organised and co-organised various community development initiatives and Exhibitions far and near, like SNA Arts Exhibitions in Lagos, NUXARTS EXPO Exhibitions in Lagos and Ilorin. My Exhibitions experience spans academic, institutional, national, and international, e.g. Ghana, Egypt, Dubai and western Germany and many other numerous ones as mentioned below;

1. Facilitator, Exhibition on "Arts and Crafts of Ilorin Emirates today, yesterday and projection to the future", at the 5th National Conference of Centre for Ilorin Studies, University of Ilorin (Dec. 1st to 3rd, 2020 at the IEDPU National Secretariat, Ilorin.
2, Our Exhibition of Centre for Archives and Documentation of the Official Opening of the new library complex by the former Vice-Chancellor, Prof. AbdulRasheed Na'Allah, 2019.
3. NTA children's "EXPO" Exhibition, (Judge) 2018
4. 1st Living stream Foundation Arts Exhibition held at Nigeria Union of Teacher Multipurpose Hall, Asa Dam, Ilorin, Kwara State, 2018.
5. Inaugural Exhibition of Kwara State Chapter of the Society of

Nigerian Artists, Kwara State Council of Arts and Culture, Ilorin, Kwara State, 2018

6. Kwara State MSME Bureau Ministry of Commerce and Cooperatives Exhibition (Potter for self-reliance), 2017.
7. NTA Secondary School "ARTS EXPO" Exhibition, (Judge) 2017
8. 19th Anniversary Celebration on the throne of the Emir of Ilorin, Theme "Arts for Self-Reliance" Kwara Council for Arts and Culture, Gari-Alimi, Ilorin, Kwara State, 2014
9. Kwara State University, Malete (School of Visual and Performing Arts) 2nd Convocation Art Exhibition, 2014
10. 1st Convocation Arts Exhibition, School Visual and Performing Arts, Kwara State University, Malete, 2013
11. Kwara State University, Malete (School of Visual and Performing Arts) Painting Exhibition "Flames of Arts", 2013 (FSP), Fate Road, Ilorin, Kwara State.
12. Kwara State University, Malete (School of Visual and Performing Arts) 1st Convocation Art Exhibition, Kwara Hotel, 2013
13. Exhibition under National Festival for Arts and Culture, Ilorin, Kwara State, 2012.
14. NUXART Nigerian Undergraduate Exhibition of Arts, Lagos, 2012
15. NUXART National Exhibition, University of Lagos, 2011
16. Exhibition Organised in Honour of NCCE Verification Team, 2007
17. Exhibition of Instructional Materials, by management strategies for successful implementation of the universal basic Education scheme in Nigeria, Kwara State College of Education. 2005
18. National Museum, Esie, Artwork Exhibition on international museum day celebration, G.R.A, Ilorin, Kwara State, 2003
19. National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Kwara State Art Teachers Exhibition, 2002

20. Final Year Arts Exhibition (Masters) Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1986.
21. Final Year Arts Exhibition, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1982

These also include empowerments and training programmes for pottery women in Dada, where I facilitated the construction of a throw-wheel to ease moulding and a warehouse for displaying finished products. I also coordinated training in batik, tie-and-dye, soap, and pomade making for housewives and young women in Malete, Elemere, Asomu, and Shao. On several occasions, I led staff from the Department of Fine and Applied Arts to secondary schools in these communities to teach drawing, with great success.

Among my notable commissions is the design of the decorative calligraphy murals at the Ilorin Central Mosque, completed with the support of dedicated staff such as Mr. Kazeem Yusuf, Mr. Kabir, and Alhaji Sheikh. I have also executed similar projects in various capacities.

Most recently, I have conducted research on *Ijọ Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* a unique traditional dance, which I have presented verbally and will soon demonstrate practically for this audience.

My Community Development Activities

My community development activities have been focused on arts education, skills training, and community empowerment—particularly through fabric decoration techniques such as adire-eleko, tye and dye, batik, bleaching, and general arts and crafts. These initiatives began from early involvement in school-based mentoring and community outreach and expanded into leadership and recognition roles in student and community programs.

In 2020, I contributed to hands-on fabric decoration training at Adventist Secondary School, Shao, Moro Local Government Area, Ilorin, where I delivered instruction on tye and dye and adire-eleko as techniques in fabric decoration. That same year, I received the Meritorious Award from the Ilorin Emirate Student Union at KWASU. Earlier, in 2019, I served as Special Guest of Honour for the Ilorin Emirate Student Union during a Quran recitation competition, and I also facilitated community batik and tye and dye workshop training in Malete, Asomu, and Elemere villages. In 2019, I further strengthened arts learning by teaching adire-eleko, tye and dye, and bleaching as techniques in fabric decoration at Senior Secondary School, Asomu, Moro L.G.A., Kwara State.

Before these larger workshops, I supported practical learning and community engagement through arts and crafts activities. In 2017, I conducted practical exercises in tie and dye, batik, and general arts, and I also organised and facilitated a community outreach sensitisation workshop at KWASU Centre for Community Development. That same year, I presented a career-path orientation in the arts for secondary school students in Malete and its environs. In 2015, I led an arts training workshop at Malete Secondary School in Malete.

My community engagement also extended to rural women empowerment through arts training. In 2012, I organised and delivered batik and tye and dye workshop and training for the empowerment of rural women in Asomu, Elemere, and Malete communities. Alongside direct training, I served in leadership and support roles within student union structures. I served as a matron for the Ilorin Emirate Student Union at Kwara State College of Education in 2008 (including repeated service), and I later took on advising responsibilities in 2004 as an adviser to the Ilorin Emirate Student Union. In 2003, I served as a school

adviser at Ekolagba Nursery and Primary School, Okelele, Ilorin, Kwara State.

I have also been recognised for service and contribution through appreciation and merit awards from Kwara State College of Education. In 2006, I received appreciation awards from the College Clinic/Counselling Unit and from the Provost Office. In 2004, I also served as an adviser to the Ilorin Emirate Student Union. Earlier recognition includes appreciation and acknowledgement awards from the Office of the Registrar in 2004, and further recognition through merit awards. In 2001, I received a Merit Award from the University of Ado Ekiti at the Kwara State College of Education campus.

As part of sustained involvement in arts development, I served as a Senior Judge at Adesoye College, Offa, for arts and crafts exhibitions and performing arts events in collaboration with the Kwara State Council for Arts and Culture, featuring Geri Alimi in Ilorin. This judging role took place in both 1998 and 1990, reflecting a long-term commitment to nurturing creativity and cultural development within the community.

Overall, my community development activities demonstrate consistent dedication to improving skills, encouraging youth and women empowerment through practical arts training, and supporting community and student programmes through leadership, mentorship, and service.

Conclusion

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, as a distinguished cultural emblem that encapsulates the rich history, values and identity of the people of Ilorin, the dance serves not only as an artistic expression but also as a profound link to the royal customs and social fabric of the community and as a symbol of the Emirate. The performance

embodies the cultural heritage, dignity, and authority of Ilorin's royal institution, while promoting unity and social harmony among the diverse ethnic groups within the region.

The importance of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* extends beyond royal ceremonies; the performance functions as an educational tool, a unifying force, and a vital means of preserving and promoting Ilorin's cultural heritage. Its continued practice ensures the transmission of traditional knowledge across generations, thereby reinforcing the cultural identity of the Ilorin people.

Moreover, the dance's capacity to transcend ethnic, religious, and generational boundaries highlights its unifying influence, bringing together the young and old, the local and the global. In this way, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* is not merely a dance but a living tradition that bridges the past and present, shaping the future of Ilorin's cultural landscape through art education.

Preserving and promoting *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* is essential to safeguarding Ilorin's cultural heritage and ensuring its vitality amid the forces of modernization and globalization. This can only be achieved through the active involvement of communities, cultural institutions, government, and youth. By celebrating and supporting *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* we contribute to a continuing cultural dialogue that enriches both the local communities and the wider world, securing this unique tradition as a powerful symbol of pride, heritage, and unity.

Vice-Chancellor Sir, the future of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* holds a great promise in sustaining and enriching the cultural legacy of Ilorin and its people. As a vibrant embodiment of the region's royal history, social traditions, and communal identity, the dance reflects the spirit and resilience of Ilorin's cultural heritage. In an

age marked by rapid modernisation, globalisation, and shifting cultural dynamics, it is imperative to ensure that *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* remains a central pillar of Ilorin's cultural identity.

The preservation of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* requires a comprehensive approach involving active participation from youth, local communities, cultural institutions, and government support. By integrating the dance into modern educational curricula, leveraging digital platforms for wider exposure, and fostering collaboration between traditional custodians and contemporary cultural practitioners, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* can continue to thrive as a relevant and celebrated art performance.

Vice-Chancellor Sir, the responsibility to preserve *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* is collective. It rests on all of us parents, educators, students, dancers, elders, community leaders, and policymakers to ensure this dance flourishes, embodying the strength, resilience, and pride of the Ilorin people. By revitalising and promoting *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* we do not only protect our heritage but also guarantee that it remains a source of cultural pride, unity, and inspiration for generations to come.

Together, we can safeguard and celebrate *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* ensuring it continues to shine as a beacon of Ilorin's cultural richness today, tomorrow, and for future generations. Let us act now to secure the future of our cherished heritage.

My Recommendations

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, despite its cultural richness and social relevance, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* continues to face serious challenges that threaten its sustainability. These include declining youth participation, inadequate documentation, and weak institutional support. The growing dominance of Western cultural forms, alongside the perception of indigenous arts as outdated, has

further contributed to their marginalisation. To safeguard and reposition *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* as a dynamic cultural asset, a multidimensional strategy that integrates education, community engagement, creative innovation, and policy support is essential. A central recommendation is the deliberate integration of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* into arts education at all levels. As a traditional dance rooted in Ilorin's royal heritage, it offers immense pedagogical value. Students should be taught its fundamental dance movements, rhythms, and performance techniques as part of practical arts instruction. Beyond performance, its cultural significance and historical context must be embedded within theoretical components of the curriculum. This will enable learners to appreciate not only how the dance is performed, but also why it exists and what it represents within Ilorin's socio-cultural framework.

To ensure relevance in a rapidly changing cultural environment, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* should also be creatively adapted through fusion with contemporary music and dance styles such as Afrobeats and Hip-Hop. Such innovation does not imply cultural dilution; rather, it provides a bridge between tradition and modernity. For instance, choreographers can introduce contemporary arm movements, spatial formations, and stage dynamics while retaining the symbolic gestures and rhythmic footwork that define the dance. Beginning with traditional beats and rhythms ensures authenticity, while collaboration with other Ilorin-based cultural groups can enrich choreography and deepen cultural insight.

In addition, the incorporation of traditional music arts into educational frameworks is vital. Nigerian indigenous music, spanning Yoruba, Fulani, Hausa, and Igbo traditions, should form a core component of music education. Schools should adopt curriculum models that include traditional instruments,

vocal styles, and rhythmic patterns. Cultural exchange programmes can further enhance learning by inviting local musicians and cultural practitioners to teach, perform, and mentor students. Community-based workshops and festivals should also be organised to provide experiential learning opportunities.

A particularly promising approach lies in the promotion of fusion projects that combine traditional elements with modern musical genres. Students should be encouraged to experiment with blending *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* with contemporary beats, thereby fostering creativity and innovation. Schools should establish music and dance clubs dedicated to traditional-modern fusion, where students compose original pieces and stage performances. Collaboration with local musicians can yield unique soundscapes that incorporate indigenous instruments such as the talking drum and *djembe* alongside modern production techniques. Hosting fusion festivals will not only showcase these creative outputs but also attract wider audiences, thereby strengthening the cultural economy.

Furthermore, integrating *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* into cultural education contributes significantly to the teaching of identity and history. The dance embodies Ilorin's royal traditions and serves as a living archive of its historical evolution. Through its choreography, costumes, and music, it narrates the story of Ilorin's diverse ethnic composition and the unifying role of the monarchy. Embedding such narratives in educational curricula fosters cultural awareness and historical consciousness among young people. It also aligns with the broader objective of using arts education as a tool for societal transformation and national development.

The dance also provides a platform for promoting multicultural understanding and social cohesion. As a cultural expression that reflects influences from Yoruba, Fulani, Hausa, and Nupe traditions, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* symbolises unity in diversity. Teaching and performing the dance in schools can instil a sense of pride in cultural heritage while encouraging respect for diversity. In this way, it becomes not only an artistic activity but also a vehicle for social integration and community building.

The transmission of traditional knowledge is another critical area requiring attention. Elders and cultural custodians should be actively involved in mentoring younger generations. Their role in teaching the intricate steps, rhythms, and meanings of the dance is indispensable for preserving authenticity. Schools and community centres should organise regular workshops and training sessions led by experienced practitioners. Such intergenerational engagement ensures continuity and strengthens cultural bonds.

Public performances and cultural festivals also play a vital role in sustaining *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba.* Featuring the dance in school events, community celebrations, and state-sponsored festivals provides visibility and encourages participation. These platforms create opportunities for cultural exchange, attracting diverse audiences and fostering mutual appreciation. Family and community involvement in such events further reinforces cultural values and strengthens intergenerational ties.

Equally important is the role of media and documentation. Systematic recording and archiving of performances using modern technology will preserve *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* for future generations and support academic research. Broadcasting the dance through television, radio, and digital platforms can expand its reach and enhance its cultural relevance in contemporary society.

While adaptation is necessary, it must be guided by a commitment to preserving cultural integrity. Efforts should be made to retain the essential elements of the dance, its music, costumes, and symbolic meanings, while allowing for controlled innovation. This balance between authenticity and creativity is crucial for ensuring both preservation and evolution.

Finally, institutional support should be strengthened through the establishment of cultural museums and exhibition centres in Ilorin. Permanent exhibits dedicated to royal traditions, including *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba,* will serve as repositories of knowledge and hubs for cultural education. Government agencies, educational institutions, and private stakeholders should collaborate to provide funding, infrastructure, and policy frameworks that support these initiatives.

In conclusion, Vice-Chancellor, Sir, the sustainability of *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* depends on a holistic approach that integrates education, innovation, community participation, and institutional backing. Embedding the dance within formal curricula, promoting creative adaptations, engaging communities, and leveraging modern technology, *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* can be preserved as a vibrant symbol of Ilorin's cultural identity. More importantly, such efforts will ensure that *Ijo Ọlọ́mọ Ọba* not only survives but thrives, gaining recognition both nationally and globally as a valuable component of Nigeria's cultural heritage.

Acknowledgements
Vice-Chancellor Sir, in my life's journey and academic career, reaching this esteemed position has been made possible by the support and guidance of many exceptional individuals, all of whom Allah Almighty SWT has used as pillars for me to lean on. While the list is extensive, I humbly wish to recognise and

appreciate a few key persons. First and foremost, I offer my profound gratitude to Almighty Allah SWT, The Most High, for His infinite mercies and for making today's achievements a reality.

Vice-Chancellor Sir, once again, I sincerely thank Almighty Allah (SWT) for the blessing of becoming the pioneer Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Sciences and the Head of Osi Campus. I devotedly contributed to the establishment and successful approval of this new faculty by the National Universities Commission in 2015. Today, by the special grace of Almighty Allah (SWT), I stand before you with profound gratitude and appreciation to our exceptional and dedicated Vice-Chancellor, who appointed me as the pioneer Dean and Head of Osi Campus. I express my heartfelt thanks to you, sir.

My sincere thanks extend to Council Chairman Prof. Ambali, our dear and wonderful Emeritus Professor Akanji for their continuous mentorship and fatherly roles and support. I specially appreciate our amiable and dedicated Vice-Chancellor, Prof, Shaykh-Luqman Jimoh and the specially wonderful Management Team for their dedication and support. The entire KWASU Management, including the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Administration, Prof. Moshood Jimba; Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic, Prof. Olubukola Christiana Dada; Registrar, Dr Kikelomo Sallee; Bursar, Alhaji Abubakar Mohammed; and the University Librarian, Prof. Abdulsalam Salman. You are all specially appreciated for your special dedication and hardwork in running the affairs of the university smoothly, well done to you all.

Under the visionary leadership of our late Vice-Chancellor, Prof. M.M. Akanbi SAN, I initiated the creation of the KWASU Arts Garden, a serene space for the relaxation of staff, students, and

visitors. I also founded the Association of Women in Academics directed by the late Vice-Chancellor, serving as its pioneer president. Notably too, under late Prof, M.M. Akanbi SAN, I was elevated to the position of the first female professor in KWASU, first female emirate professor in KWASU and first female professor of fine arts in Kwara state. Alhamdullillahi Robbil Alameen. Late M.M. Akanbi SAN entrusted me with various significant roles and contributed greatly to my success. I will forever remember to pray to Allah Almighty SWT to continue to grant him the best Aljannat Fridaous.

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