

THE DANCE OF THE WATER SPIRIT

(Midwest Nigeria)

This dance is customarily for young women. It is a competitive dance to test the strength of the toes. After dancing, the girls measure to see who has covered the longest distance in each pattern. The pattern is usually drawn before the dance. The forearm and the distance between the fingers are used to determine the distance.

Before dancing, designs are made in the sand and later performed by the dancer with the movement of the ft through the patterns. Dancers continue with the patterns as long as there is strength in the toes.

Cts Pattern I

1-4 By gripping with the toes, parallel, comfortably apart, move fwd (ct 1). Extend toes (ct &). Repeat 3 more times (cts 2,&,3,&,4,&).
Arms: Elbow bent and forearm parallel to floor, palms facing fwd, fingers flexed, spread, and tips pointing up. Arms and torso move in a circular motion, down and bkwd (ct 1), up and fwd (ct &).

Pattern II. Moving to the L

1-4 Ft parallel, comfortably apart; knees slightly bent. Keep wt on both heels. Lift and move toes to L (ct 1), wt on toes, lift and move heels to L (ct 2). Repeat (cts 3,4). Note: The number of meas depends on the dancers.
Arms: Remain bent, forearm parallel to floor, hands facing and slightly clenched. During entire pattern forearm and upper arm remain at R angles. Upper torso continues to face fwd. Movement of arm comes from shoulder action and is in opposition to the direction of the toes. Toes point L, R arm bkwd, L arm moves in front of body (ct 1). Heels move L, L arm bkwd, R arm moves across in front of body (ct 2).

Moving to the R. Reverse direction of cts 1-4. Note: The number of meas to the R and to the L should be equal so that the dancer can come back to the original line at the end of the pattern. This pattern may start either to the R or the L.

Pattern III. Circle Pivot in Place

Starting pos: Both knees easy slightly bent. Keep flat ft on floor, bend R knee more. Step R very slightly fwd and straighten knee (ct 1). Pivot flat L so that it is parallel to R (ct &). Repeat pattern for each beat of the music 15 more times, to return to the original direction faced. Arms: Forearms parallel to the floor, hands slightly closed (relaxed). The leading elbow moves in a circular motion fwd and away from the body (ct 1), bkwd and in (ct &).

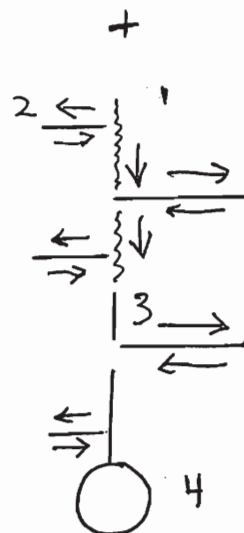
THE DANCE OF THE WATER SPIRIT (continued)

Pattern IV. The Shuffle

Keeping knees slightly bent (easy) and flat ft always on the floor, shuffle R ft fwd (ct 1), shuffle L ft fwd (ct 2). Because the flat ft is never off the floor and the knees must be bent to move it fwd, the rocking and swaying motion will result. Arms: Forearm parallel to floor, hands facing and fingers relaxed and slightly closed. Arms swing fwd and bkwd in natural rhythm with the alternate ft as in walking.

One Suggested Sequence:

<u>Counts</u>	<u>Pattern</u>	
24	I	Toes
16	II	to R
16	II	to L
24	I	Toes
8	II	to L
8	II	to R
24	I	Toes
16	III	Circle to R
16	III	Circle to L
16	IV	Shuffle
8	II	to R
8	II	to L
16	IV	Shuffle
8	II	to R



Presented by Joseph Ayewusi