



Promoting Lifelong Learning in Today's Global Environment

**A SURVEY OF THE MARRIAGE AND BURIAL INSTITUTIONS AMONGST
THE TIV OF CENTRAL NIGERIA**

BY

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**Being a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

October 2001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The inspiration for this research work came from the members of the Tiv Area Traditional Council – all starting point for my fascination with the subject of Tiv marriage and Burial Customs. My immense gratitude goes to all of them for their contributions in one way or another.

I am particularly thankful to Professor David Iornem, my Academic adviser for his moral encouragement, unrelenting support and in providing reading materials and being the consultant who assisted me to organize the First National Workshop on the Tiv Marriage and Burial Customs.

Many people deserve my special thanks for the contributions especially for their comments and suggestions which have proven invaluable in making this work what it

is. Such people include my Academic Counsellor, Dr. Zacharys Anger Gundu and Dr. Peter T. Iyortsuun.

I am highly indebted to Mr. Paul T. Orshi who has been a good research assistant to me, right from the beginning and to the end of this research work. I owe you a big thank you.

I wish to extend my gratitude to my wives for their encouragement, patience and sacrifice. Their support was essential especially HRH Helen O.M. Torkula whose steady encouragement and great source of inspiration added to make this work a reality.

v

Finally, my children have sacrificed to make the work possible, by doing without my attention from time to time. I thank them too with hopes that they will some day learn from reading as for themselves .

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ABSTRACT

This study has investigated the traditional marriage and burial practices of the Tiv people who reside in Benue State in Central Nigeria. It has also studied the changes which influenced the institutions of marriage and burial as practiced by the Tiv people and identified those changes and the impact they have on the traditional customs of marriage and burial in Tivland. The study has also put forward some recommendations for improvement.

The information collected for this study was obtained mainly from informants who were selected from different parts of Tivland. The data were collected by means of oral interviews by research assistants. The data collected by oral interviews was supplemented by documented evidence from papers presented at the **First National Workshop on Tiv Marriage and Burial Customs** organized for the purpose. During the workshop, prominent Tiv elders, traditional rulers, renowned academicians and others interested in Tiv culture were consulted and valuable information obtained from them.

In the course of this study, related literature on Tiv culture, economy and politics were intensively reviewed and relevant information and ideas obtained for the research. From the data obtained, it was established that:

1. The Tiv had their own culture with regards to customs of marriage and burial. Their traditional practices were strictly preserved and passed on from generation to generation.
2. The traditional custom of Yamshe in Tiv marriage institution was abolished by the British colonial administration with active support of the Christian Church and the Tiv Youth.
3. With the abolition of the Yamshe system, changes began to creep into the marriage practices of the Tiv people.
4. In traditional society, the Tiv really mourned for the dead. There was complete absence of merry-making during the time a member of a family died. Very little was spent on the burial arrangements. There were inherent residual desirable values in the traditional practices of marriages and burials which we need to reposition.

5. The changes which have affected marriage and burial customs of the Tiv people have imposed serious economic and social implications on the Tiv Culture.
6. Though it may not be possible to return to the traditional customs of marriage and burials, those values identified as desirable should be reinforced for posterity. This can be achieved by encouraging communication, first among the various churches operating in Tivland and, on the other hand, among these churches and the TivArea Traditional Council on the need to develop purposeful programmes to revive those aspects of our traditional practices in marriage and burial that are of immense value to our society.

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CHAPTER 1

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INTRODUCTION**1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

This is the study of marriage and burial institutions among the Tiv people of central Nigeria. There are a number of factors that have prompted the researcher to conduct a study of these two important institutions in Tiv society. In the first place, there appears to be some reawakening of the social and political identity among the Nigerian ethnic groups in recent years.

The various social groups now want to re-assert their social and political identities.

One of the ways in which this re-awakening is taking shape is by upholding their traditional institutions despite the fact that western education and modernity have largely affected their traditional way of life. Naturally, the Tiv people would also want to be part of this re-awakening.

This is particularly important in case of the Tiv in view of the fact that a lot of misunderstandings still appear to be associated with the Tiv traditions of marriage and burial institutions. Even the Tiv people themselves are caught up within these misunderstandings. One of the reasons for this, is that most of the traditional institutions of the Tiv people have not yet been extensively studied. Although a number of useful studies have been done in the past by European and American anthropologists, they tend to give misleading ideas of Tiv culture and heritage. Some examples of such studies include Paul Bohannan (1952). *The Tiv of Central Nigeria*, and D.C. Dorward (1971) *A Social and Political History of the Tiv* (1900-1939). Even though some of these studies are unreliable they had been the basis of colonial policy, having been accepted in government, the academia and social circles - even by the Tiv themselves.

Government policy and action by individuals and groups within and without the Tiv society have only succeeded in dislocating the traditional society without providing anything to replace it. For example, the policy of appointing comparatively young people as chiefs which began during

the colonial era and has continued until recent times without reference to traditional values has brought about the dislocation of the power structure of the Tiv society. In the same fashion, the acceptance of certain questionable theories by “specialists” in Tiv studies has led to the teaching and propagation of erroneous ideas about Tiv political and traditional institutions and the perpetuation of ideas said to be essentially “Tiv” in nature which in fact, are quite alien to the Tiv cultural heritage and threaten its destruction (Makar, 1975:2).

The most classical examples of the ideas being propagated including egalitarianism, marriage and burial customs and the nature of Tiv democracy. These misleading ideas are of great concern to us because of the damage they seem to be causing. Our perception of the Tiv customs and traditional cultural values and practices differ profoundly from the views advanced by some previous writers. They also differ significantly from the views of the present generation.

The unfortunate acceptance of some of these misleading ideas and pronouncements on Tiv culture have led to the spread of strong and doubtful views on the Tiv by their neighbours and other Nigerian groups.

These strong and doubtful views are likely to take roots in the mind of even the Tiv themselves, especially those who may be ill informed - and young. Unless some serious action is taken to document the correct versions of the “true” practices of the Tiv traditional customs, the “original” practices of the traditions of the people stand the risk of being swept away by ignorance. The primary objective of this study therefore, is to attempt a documentation of some aspects of Tiv culture as a contribution to keeping the cultural heritage intact for the present and for the future. It seems that even though, changes in thought and attitude to life of the Tiv are taking place, the past is not dead. It still has a strong influence on the traditions and culture of the people. In view of this, the need for the study of marriage and burial institutions of the Tiv people cannot be overemphasized (Iyortsuun, 1985:9). Downes has stressed this need in his study of Tiv Religion when he stated:

as western influence is gradually (now rapidly) increasing with education, changes in traditional way of life of the Tiv people are taking place, and it is important to put on record what is known before the rapidly changing customs and habits of the people render their own recollection more hazy, and the task of filling many

inevitable gaps becomes less likely of even partially accurate achievements (Downes 1971;1)

Before the influence of western civilization and some patterns of external interactions started to creep into the society clear-cut practices of marriage and burial customs among the Tiv were well known in their society. Specific roles, rights, expectations, obligations and even sanctions were prescribed and strictly maintained. With the advent and spread of formal education and western influences on the Tiv society, the traditional systems of marriage and burial seem to have become infused and transformed. The original patterns can no longer be wholly recognised. Scarcely a year passes in the Tiv society in which the social condition of life, the mode of conduct and the very habits and amusement are not subtly and yet surely altered. The patterns of marriage and burial traditions in the whole of Tiv land are undergoing rapid transformation and it is quite clear that the values basic to these institutions in their “original” form are not only changing but are also being replaced by “alien” values whose overall effect on Tiv society is adverse.

These developments have raised many questions among individuals and groups in Tiv society. The elders blame the youth for what they regard as the deteriorating values of the Tiv people. The youths blame the elders for entrenching an outdated value system based on tsav and akombo. Others who are concerned with the distorting situations in which the Tiv traditions have found themselves of recent do not hesitate to point out that formal education acquired in schools is the root cause of the erosion of “original” values. Yet others blame foreign religious practices as the root cause of the changes taking place in Tiv society.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Both the marriage and burial institutions today among the Tiv are caught between two worlds; tradition and modernity. This phenomenon is so great that these two institutions have found themselves at a cross-road, with no specific direction to follow. We may perhaps liken the situation here to the position of the bat in the animal world. The bat could have beautifully fitted into the world of animals if it had no wings. It could have passed for a bird because of its wings but for the teeth it has; a characteristics that is not found in birds anywhere on this planet. The effects of these implications on the Tiv society are so far-reaching that there is need to highlight them with a view to identifying those “impurities” that have permeated the two systems overtime. Though it would be difficult to go back to the “original state” of things, knowing and understanding the “original values” will help in the articulation of a

cultural identity for the Tiv in Nigeria. Besides, the “adulterated” nature of these institutions has unleashed untold socio-economic hardship on the society with far-reaching consequences that are difficult to understand and hence the need for a proper study in order to attempt to proffer some strategies for a more meaningful management and mitigation of these consequences.

The central problem of this study is best stated by considering the following questions, which we believe, will serve as guidelines for the effective conduct of this research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.3.1 Marriage customs in Tiv society

Why was marriage consummated in Tiv society?

How were wives (or husbands) chosen? Were there any external forces controlling the choice of the spouse? Or were marriage decisions imposed?

What was the nature of courtship? And what values underlay it ?

Which were the dominant marriage systems in Tiv society? What endogamic/exogamic rules underlay these marriage systems? What is the Tiv conception of incest and adultery? What had been the role of mothers, fathers (or brothers) in the marriage of their children and what residency rules underlay these marriage systems?

Other questions include the role of traditional religion in marriage and the impact of Christianity and westernisation on marriage customs. Attempts were also made to see the “advantages” or disadvantages of these changes and whether on balance it would be possible to “return” to the old marriage systems.

1.3.2 Death and Burial customs

Here, we were interested in an understanding of the Tiv culture of death. Specific questions include the Tiv concept of death, the link between death, tsav and akombo, what happens at death, the nature of the burial process and the responsibility of the living to the dead.

In the process, we hope to answer questions relating to the location and form of graves, and the values behind the different variations in the burial practices of the Tiv. Just like marriage systems, we intend to attempt an understanding of the changes (overtime) in Tiv burial practices. To what extent are these as a result of Christianity and western influence? What are their consequences on Tiv society and to what extent can these (if adverse) be mitigated?

These, and many more, questions considered fundamental to a detailed study of the marriage and burial customs of the Tiv people of central Nigeria were articulated for analysis.

This study attempted to show that as more changes creep into the Tiv marriage and burial institutions, more socio-economic problems will surface in society with the institutions losing their "purity" and polluting the entire fabric of Tiv society.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

We want to correct for posterity, the erroneous impression that the institutions of marriage and burials were not under laid by a value chain basic to the harmony and well being of the society. Years back, here in Tiv-land, a High Court presided over by a non-Tiv, declared that adultery was not an offence among the Tiv people because tradition and custom allowed it. Nothing can be more damaging, embarrassing and misleading than this. This study attempts to debunk this misleading notion by stating the position of adultery in the original marriage institution among the Tiv people. This study also seeks to demonstrate the importance of marriage in the perpetuation of the "Tiv family" and as a strategy for command and group alliance for the promotion of peace and socio-economic well being of the group. We want to show the advantages derivable from this institution and therefore the need to sustain the institution.

Today, marriage in Tiv society is so materialistic that only a few can afford to meet the requirements of their in laws. We want to point out in this study that this materialistic tendency had not been as much of a problem in the "original" systems as it is today. By the same token, Burial ceremonies today among the Tiv people have been overtaken by a lot of changes most of which have overturned the "original" burial concepts. It now costs a fortune to bury in Tiv society, to the extent that the solemnity of death and burial is lost.

The burial occasion is now an arena for the display of affluence with little or no respect for the dead. In this study, We attempt to document the Tiv culture of death before those "wild" changes to show that these changes are not part of our heritage in which the death occasion was not only solemn but also handled in such a way as to ensure the continued acceptance of the leadership of the elders by the youths and women of the land.

The study attempts to show that for the marriage and death, the more changes that one associates with them outside Tiv worldwide, the more adverse consequences the society suffers.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

For the benefit of posterity and humanity, there is the need to document the “true” position of our cultural systems and values. This is significant not only because of the educational value of such documentation but also because such an initiative will help to clarify the kind of society desired in relation to the environment.

This study is also capable of laying a solid cultural base for the effective integration of youths into a fast changing world, thus leaving them with dependable roots to nourish their growth to adulthood.

This study is also significant because it attempts an understanding of our core cultural values as they relate to marriage and burials in such a way as to help in the regeneration of our heritage and the mitigation of adverse effects on our culture occasioned by European contact.

It is believed that the traditional values of the Tiv people are in general embodied in the manner in which children (youths) are reared by their families and the society (Iyortsuun, 1985:20). This study must be seen as an attempt to document these traditional values crucial in the socialization of children while at the same time bridging the gap in the paucity of documented studies on the Tiv - especially their marriage and burial customs.

Our supreme goal as the custodian of Tiv culture is to seek to understand and document these values (as they relate to marriage and burial) understand the changes in these values through time and ensure that those surviving values most of which are important in social regeneration are protected from further decay, abuse and alienation.

We are aware of the fact that change is inevitable, yet, because society must be seen to be benefiting from change if it is to survive, those interested in its growth must begin to ensure sufficient thought and discussion on the direction and content of change (Gundu, 2001). The rate at which changes have overtaken marriage and burial institutions of the Tiv people calls for caution if Tiv society is to survive. This study is therefore significant because it will highlight the extent of threat to Tiv survival via cultural change.

It is hoped that the results of this study will make valuable contributions to the understanding of the problems of social changes confronting the traditional values of the Tiv society. Finally, it is hoped that this study will provide valuable basis for further studies, which will lead to a greater understanding of the Tiv society in general.

1.6 THE SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The statement of the problem of this study has implied its scope and limitations. The study is an investigation of the marriage and burial institutions of the Tiv people of central Nigeria. The research questions listed under the problem statement clearly give the scope of the study.

The 1991 Nigerian census figures put the Tiv people of Benue state alone at over 2,000,000. This is the target population on which this study is focused. The study excludes the Tiv people who are indigenous to the neighbouring states of Taraba, Nassarawa, and Plateau to the north and the Cross River state to the south east. It would be too colossal a venture to attempt to bring within the purview of the project parts of the Tiv people outside Benue State. Even within Tiv land (in Benue), the study has centered mainly on the northern Tiv comprising *IHAREV-NONGOV-MASEV* super clans where a much more intensive investigation was conducted.

However, in order to obtain a fair and balanced view of the generally accepted customs of the Tiv people concerning the burial and marriage institutions, a few areas from the north-east and southern parts of Tiv land were purposefully selected for data collection. These included Katsina Ala/ Ukum as well as Kwande and Vandeikya/Konshisha and Gboko/ Buruku Local Government areas.

This study has some unique limitations. As a paramount Traditional Ruler of the Tiv people, restricted by tradition in moving about or putting appearances at public places, (except on special occasions), and also restricted to a certain extent in interacting with members of the public (visiting friends at their homes or outside the palace), we were forced to rely on field investigators. In most cases, direct interaction such as interviews, individual group discussions with the researcher was limited to or conducted within the walls of the palace. Thus direct physical fieldwork was limited.

Coupled with this, poor infrastructural conditions of the targeted areas such as bad roads, and deficient terrain greatly inhibited easy access to the people in the field. It is also pertinent to point out that this study is a private initiative, without sponsorship or financial assistance from anywhere. This in no small way affected the extent of coverage and time involved in conducting the fieldwork.

Given the wide scope implied in the consideration of marriage and burial here, it has not been possible to do detailed justice to every aspect of the topic. It is however hoped that the work will be a useful foundation for the full understanding of these two important systems in Tiv culture.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

6.6 THE TIV OF NIGERIA: A BACKGROUND

The Tiv are a dominant group in central Nigeria. Though they are found in large numbers in Nassarawa, Plateau, Taraba and Cross River States, they are mainly in Benue where they are in the majority. Their area of habitation falls roughly within 6° 30' north latitude and 8° 10' east longitude. Tivland is predominantly woodland savannah, characterised by a tropical climate with two distinctive seasons. These are a wet April to October season and a dry November to March season. Characteristic tree species are a combination of forest and savannah types including *Daniella oliveri* (*Chiha*), *Erythrophleum guineensis* (*Kor*), *Batryospermum peraduxum* (*Chamegh*), *Terminalia ovicenioides* (*Kuegh*), *Spondias monbin* (*Konkwagh*), *Strychnos spinosa* (*Maku*), *Chlorophora excelsa* (*Leke*), *Azizelia africana* (*Yiase*), *Antiaris africana* (*Ten*), *Baphia nitida* (*Kpagh*), *Ficus Thonningii* (*Akinde*), *Ficus gnaphalocarpa* (*Tur*), *Afromosia laxiflora* (*jiagba*), *Khaya senegalensis* (*Haa Kiriki*), *Khaya grandfoliola* (*Haa tamen*), and many others (see Gundu 1999).

Geologically, Tivland is a combination of the precambrian basement comprising the lower and upper cretaceous sediments in addition to some volcanic deposits (Pugh and Buchanan 1955). The Tivland are predominantly farmers with an all year farming system based on the cultivation of roots, tubers, grains and tree crops. Common crops include, *Dioscorea* spp (*Yough*) *Pennisetum americanum* (*Amine esculenta*) *Zea mays* (*Ikuleke*) *Oryza glaberrima* (*Chinkapa*). Others are *Manihot esculenta* (*Alogo*) *Ipomea batatas* (*Atsaka*), *Glycine max* (*Suanbin*), *Sesamum indicum* (*Ishwa*) as well as a variety of beans, vegetables and the more recently introduced tobacco, mangoes and citrus. Supplementary agricultural systems include the exploitation of tree crops, especially *Elaeis guineensis* (*Ivile*), *Antiaris africana* (*Ten*), *Dracryodes edulis* (*Mzembe*), *Irvingia gabonensis* (*Ive*), *Parkia biglobosa* (*Nune*), *Ceiba pentandra* (*Vambe*) and livestock especially poultry, goats, piggy and the dog. Hunting and fishing are also an important subsistence component.

6.7 TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN

Tiv are speakers of a “Bantu related language”. Their early history is covered by three theories of origin (see Gundu 1999). These are the Creation, Bantu and Family theories of origin.

The outline of the Tiv Creation theory (see Rubingh 1969, Agber 1989, Makar 1975, Gbor 1974 and Akiga 1933) attributes the creation of the world (*tar*) to God (*Aondo*). In Tiv mythology, *Aondo* (God) had created the world and settled closer to it until He was hit with a pestle by a woman who was pounding food. In response, He moved into the skies (*kwav Aondo*) which is his present abode. Though there are different versions of the creation theory, and there does not seem to be any particular sequence in the creation process, in at least, one version (See Rubingh 1969 p.59) *Takuruku* rather than *Aondo* is argued to have been responsible for creation. In all the versions however, *Swem* is identified as the “place” of “creation”.

The Bantu theory of Tiv origin is founded on the works of Johnston (1929) and Talbot (1926). These were the first to argue that Tiv are a Bantu People and speakers of a Bantu related language.

R. C. Abraham’s work “The Tiv People” in 1933 improved their argument with a sixty seven (67) word list showing “similarities” between Tiv language and the language of “Bantu Nyanza” in present day Malawi. Additional evidence of the “Bantoid” origin of the Tiv was provided by Abraham in the form of shared traits in dance, physique and worship with other central African groups.

Even though, the Tiv/Bantu connection has been popularised (see Gbor 1974 and 1979) and more recent linguistic studies (see Greenberg, 1972) and Blench (1993) have “confirmed the Bantu affinity of the Tiv it has been argued that the “confirmation” (and popularisation) is inadequate to found Tiv origins (see Gundu 1999). For according to Gramly (1979) and Andah (1983) the use of linguistic evidence to found origins can only stand if the methodological complications of subsuming people and culture under language are classified and there is proof that the three (people, culture and languages) have travelled on the same path of history. In the absence of a clear meeting point between Tiv language, its speakers and their culture, it is thus difficult to support their origin in the context of over 400 individual Bantu languages whose origin is still hotly contested in Bantu Studies.

Aside from the Bantu theory another theory upon which arguments around the origin of the Tiv are based is the family theory. Oral traditions in support of this theory have been documented by Rubingh (1969), Ihembeato (1987) and Agber (1989). In outline, the theory traces the origin of all “Tiv people” to one man, thus members of a “single family”. Tiv is identified in some versions of this theory as father of all Tiv people while in other versions, it is either Takuruku, Anyamazenga, Karagbe, Shon, Gbe, Akem or Awange who is the founding father.

Whoever the founding father was, the genealogy of the group is hinged on two of his children. These are Ichongoa and Ipusu. While Ichongo (the older of the two) begot Gondo, Ikyura, Nongo, Ihar, Mase and Turan. Ipusu begot Shitire, Kum and Kpar. There is a dispute as to the position of Tongo for while Makar (1975) and (1994) argues that he was begotten by Ipusu, Akiga (1933) places him improbably as a son to both Ipusu and Ichongo. All Tiv today are descended from these ten (10) children through whom they are linked to the Tiv family tree.

In Tiv “worldview” their earliest point of origin as acknowledged in traditions is *Swem*. Though its exact location is still a matter of debate, a 16th century AD date derived from the study of Tiv genealogy has been argued for its settlement by Orkar (1979). For reasons of over population (see Akiga 1933, Gbor 1974 and 1978) the Tiv left *Swem* and spread in streams of the hills of south eastern Tivland from where they further spread into the middle Benue valley.

According to Makar (1975 and 1994) Kparev and Ukan were the first group to move to Ngokugh hill while Tongov, Ikyurav, Nongov and Turan moved to Barakur, Womondo and Ityoughkyegh hills with Masev, Iharev, Ugondo and Shitire moving to Ibinda hills. Though archaeological studies (see Andah 1983, Folorunsho 1993, Ogundele 1990 and Gundu 1999) have confirmed the Tiv settlement of these hills, in the absence of a rich suite of carbon 14 dates we are yet to clarify the sequence in which these hills were settled and the extent of archaeological contribution to the study of early Tiv history.

The Tiv spread from these hills over the Benue plains was propelled by a three pronged attack from the Chamba (referred to in Tiv Tradition as the Ugenyi) on the western banks of the Katsina-Ala River (at Ushongo hills), the eastern banks of the Katsina-Ala River (at Dikpo hills) and the western banks of the Donga River (at Mdema hills). The Tiv victory over the Chamba in these war enabled them to spread rapidly with the Kunav

and Gaav sections moving towards the south-west (displacing the Udam) while Jemgbar, Ugondo and Ikyurav moved north-west (pushing the Etulo and Idoma) and Ushitire, Ukum, Iherev, Masev and Nongor moved north-east against the Jukun. Arago, Koro and Migili who were displaced to make room for the Tiv habitation of their present area.

2.3 SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The social organisation of the Tiv is founded on kinship constructed by tracing descent “exclusively” through the male. The Tiv are thus a descent group, which in “etic” terms can be referred to as patrilineal. Though the four universal features of kinship — a lengthy infant maturation time, a marital bond creating an exclusive sexual and economic relationship between individual members of the group, a gender based on division of labour and an incest regulation are here, Tiv kinship is unique with three distinct forms (see Wegh 1998). These are consanguinity (kinship based on blood) affinity (kinship based on marriage) and secondary kinship based on choice outside blood and marriage. The architect of the social system is based on the concept of *tar* — an area peopled by units of families tracing their descent to a single ancestor — and known in “emic” terms after the plural form of the ancestor’s name. In this way, Tar Tiv which is peopled by the sons of Tiv can in turn be understood as aggregating other *ityar* (plural of *tar*) each of which is known after the plural form of the children of Ipusu and Ichongo.

Bohannan (1965) has identified the “principle of segmental opposition” as basic to this social structure. According to him, *ityar* made up of descendants of ancestors who were brothers developed overtime into an inclusive tar (lineage) named after the plural form of their “fathers” name as opposed to lineage descended from more distant relations. The lineage system is the basis of the Tiv family as well as the pattern of settlement and the political system. Because the individual’s place in society was determined by kinship and genealogy, group challenge was in continuity, balance and co-operation. Egalitarian values and other cultural systems like exchange marriage and leadership based on gerontocracy were therefore invaluable ingredients of this continuity, balance and co-operation.

In classical anthropological writings, the Tiv are a stateless society characterized by the absence of a central authority supported by administrative and judicial machinery. Their political system is

characterized by law and order maintained by elders meeting at the different levels and depths of the various lineages.

While the compound is the basic unit of the political organization, the lineage is the most elaborate. The Tiv recognize authority in the roles and status of their social order, (see Tseyayo 1975) they conceptualize the object of politics as *tar soron* which literally means the repair of the land. As Wegh (1998) has argued, *Tar Soron* is not just a physical activity but a social and piritual initiative designed to ensure that there is balance and harmony in the land. In the process of *tar soron*, two councils are important. These are the *Ya* Council and *Ityo* Council.

Ya is the compound. Each compound is named after its head (*Orya*) and is administered by a council made up of senior male members of the compound. The *Orya* chairs this council whose responsibilities include, the pursuit of the political, social, religious and economic well being of the compound. The *Orya* as the head of the *ya* council has the responsibility of keeping daily peace (of the compound) and settling such other disputes that arise between members of the compound. In doing this he is vested with the authority to punish and ensure compliance depending on the nature of the offense. In addition to these responsibilities, the *Orya* is also vested with the power to determine sites for new buildings, admit, entertain and expel visitors, distribute farm land and identify burial positions (see Wegh 1998). The *Orya*'s ability to discharge his responsibilities can build or split the compound. Every compound head therefore tries to be fair and firm in administering his compound.

The *Ityo* Council on the other hand is supreme in Tiv "worldview". No person can go above his *Ityo* (or *hembe Ityo ga*). *Ityo* provides political and social context within which a man is known and placed in society. It is his patrilineage. The *Ityo* council called *Ijir* (Judgement) has funeral, religious, economic and political responsibility which they discharge in accordance with tradition. Its membership representing the different "family" or sublineages that comprise the particular lineage. The council has sovereign responsibilities and its decisions are normally accepted as binding on all members of the group (see Tseyayo 1975).

2.4 TIV RELIGION

Tiv religious thought is hinged on three basic concepts. These are *Aondo*, *Tsav* and *Akombo* — all of which work together for stability,

harmony and communal well being (see Wegh 1998). Though *Aondo* is the Tiv word for God, the Tiv do not have a personal relationship with Him. As explained earlier, *Aondo* used to live nearer the earth but was forced to retreat into the skies after he was struck by a woman pounding food. There is however a deep acknowledgement of the hand of God (*Aondo*) in the physical setting as in rain (*Aondo ngu noon*), thunder (*Aondo ngu kumen*) lightening (*Aondo ngu nyiar*) and sun light (*Aondo ta yange*).

According to Wegh (1998 p.42) though the relationship between the Tiv and *Aondo* may seem “remote” to outsiders, the Tiv acknowledge that most of the actions necessary for the existence and sustenance of life are carried out only by God (*Aondo*). This world view leaves the day to day regulations of relationships between individuals on the one hand and between individuals and the cosmos on the other hand to *Tsav* and *Akombo*.

Tsav is a reference to “a cosmic potency internalized in man as part of his personality” (see Rubingh 1969). Gundu (1980) has argued that it manifests in people in three different forms. The first and most potent form appears like the crown of a cock and covers the heart of the individual with “claws”. The second is a dwarf type with no “claws”. (*Kpum utsa*) while the third type is a small point projection from the heart which gives the possessor some awareness of the supernatural. This is called ‘*ishima nomsoor*’ (a man’s heart) by the Tiv. Those who possess *tsav* are called *Mbatsav* (singular is *Ormbatsav*) and their activities are theoretically geared towards good governance (*tar soron*), personal comfort, security and communal well-being. Practically however, the extent to which any *ormbatsav* can be beneficial to society in the context of his activities is a factor of the type of *tsav* “growing” on his heart and particular *akombo* being manipulated at the point in time. This is probably why Bohannan (1965) argues that *tsav* is morally neutral and can be deployed for either good or bad. If deployed for good, society is assured of a potent social control mechanism. On the other hand, if it is deployed for evil individuals can be bewitched — leading to sickness and sometimes death. Other malevolent aspects include crop failure, bad dreams, ill luck, barrenness and the like.

The third basic concept in Tiv religion which is *akombo* can be defined as some unique mystical forces deployed to ensure a balanced and healthy *tar* (community) in which individuals are at peace with each

other and the physical components of the environment are regulated and protected from “damage”. Each *kombo* (singular of *akombo*) is represented by an emblem, which could be any relic ranging from a potsherd to a carved piece of wood. Though an acceptable classification of the whole range of *akombo* is yet to be done here, the Tiv see *akombo* in two major categories. Category one is *akombo a kiriki* (lesser *akombo*) while category two is *akombo atamen* (greater *akombo*). Each ailment and socio-economic component in society has its *kombo* with full compliments of emblem and a structured process of “restoration” (*sorun*) when its foundation is undermined or violated by people who come into contact with it. Each *kombo* has its master whose specialty is in ensuring a viable role for the *kombo* in the community. He does this by “restoring” (*sorun*) the *kombo*’s equilibrium if and when it is violated, thus, neutralising the damage that would otherwise have been visited on the violator or even the whole community as the case may be.

6.6 COMPARATIVE MARRIAGE SYSTEMS

Though it is very difficult to define marriage, the concept connotes a contract by which a conjugal relationship is formalised as an enduring condition. Others (see Murdock 1949) see marriage as existing when a sexual union extends into some form of economic co-operation. Anyebe (1985) on the other hand sees it as a voluntary relationship of one man and a woman (or group of women) to the exclusion of all others. To Goodenough (1970), marriage is a social contract in which a person of either sex (corporate or individual) in person or by proxy has a subsisting claim to the right of sexual access to his/her partner(s) in which it is culturally acceptable for children to result. From these definitions, it is at least clear that marriage involves at least two people (most commonly of the opposite sex) who agree to live together (or sometimes apart) in a relationship capable of producing children who are recognised as legitimate constituents of the society. The object of marriage in society has been changing over time. In the very early stages of humanity, the marriage contract could have been predominantly entered into for survival reasons. The imperative then could have been to ensure continuity of species since only marriage could have given the couple better chances of making it through to their children’s maturity by combining to get shelter, food, water and security. Prior to this, when marriage could have been absent, the lone woman impregnated by a casual contact could have been left alone to give birth even at the mercy of the elements, beasts and even other humans. Marriage could have therefore given the woman more chances of surviving the hazards of pregnancies and nurturing children to maturity.

Further human development could have thrown up convenience as an additional meaning of marriage. This was the era of “arranged marriages” in which the poor contracted marriages as a strategy to pool resources and to connect through space and time. The rich could have on the hand, married as a strategy to combine wealth and property. In between these two reasons are other related to sexual gratification, religious obligation (depending) on the society and economic reasons.

There are two main forms of marriage across cultures. These are plural marriages and singular marriages. Plural marriages are referred to in anthropological parlance as polygamy and have two basic variants. The first polygamy is the marriage form in which a husband has several wives while the second, polyandry is the opposite where the wife has several husbands. About 80% of societies recorded by anthropologists are polygamous (see Bergstrom 1994) thus making polygamy the most popular form of marriage in the world.

Singular marriages otherwise referred to as monogamy are exclusive marriages in which one has a single spouse for life. Between the two main forms is a complex range of variations depending on the different histories and cultures of mankind. While marriage may be contracted through the exchange of sisters in other societies, in others, it is through paying the appropriate dowry or bride price as the case may be. Other variations are predicated on the rules of endogamy and exogamy. While endogamous marriages occur between members of the same social or kin groups, exogamous marriages occur between members of different social/kin groups. Without exception, all human societies – even those that are endogamous – recognize incest and prohibit sexual relations and marriage between people who are “closely related by blood”. Examples includes brother/sister and parent/child relationships, though specific incest rules and sanctions for dealing with breaches may vary from one culture to the other. Another aspect of marriage that underscores the complex differences in the marriage institution across cultures is the issue of residency rules. Each marriage system has its own unique rule guiding where the couple would reside. There are all together about seven residency rules. These are neolocal, patrilocal, matrilineal, matrifocal, avunculocal, ambilocal and natalocal. Neolocal residence rule requires each partner to a marriage to move out of his/ parents home to a new and neutral residence which becomes the core of an independent nuclear family. Neolocal residences are common in complex societies

with a high rate of geographical and labour mobility as well as in simple hunting and gathering societies in which nomadic movements are part of the subsistence strategy. In the patrilocal residence rule, the couple reside in the man's father's house, their offspring are counted as part of the extended family which overtime develops into a patrilineage. In its simplest form, this rule involves the movement of the woman to the man's house upon marriage. This is sometimes referred to as virilocal residence. Matrilocal residence on the other hand evolves the movement of the man upon marriage to the wife's place. Their children become part of the matrilocal extended family which also developed over time into a matrilineage. Uxorilocal residence is the simplest form of matrilocal residence and involves the husband moving to join the wife in her place of birth. The next residency type, matrifocal arises when a woman and her children and daughters children have to establish a home without their husbands nor adult men. Matrifocal residences are often as a result of war or situations when the husband(s) are unable to support their wives. It is therefore not a common residence rule in most cultures. Avunculocal residence rule is a two-stage rule. The first stage involves the virilocal rule in which the wife joins her husband in his father's place after being married. The second stage is when their children are matured and the couple is required to relocate his family to live with his mother's brothers – who together with him make up an avunculocal extended family. Avunculocal residences are characteristic of matrilineal societies. In ambilocal residence rule, the couple makes the decision to either join the wife's parents or the husband's parents. Whoever they agree to join an ambilocal extended family is created. In the last residency rule, natolocal partners to the marriage remain apart. Each with his/her parents. Children for obvious reasons remain with the mother. Natolocal residences are characteristics of matrilinear societies and in societies like the Ashanti where the rule is common, settlements are in large towns where husbands and wives can be within reach of each other.

Given all these complexities in the institution of marriage, any deep understanding of the institution must not only be situated in the context of a particular culture and tradition, but also a specific time period.

6.6 COMPARATIVE BURIAL SYSTEMS

The first disposal of the dead is argued to have been done during Neanderthal times – and could have been a response to the horrors of the decaying corpse. Since then, changing conceptions of death have led to a wide array of mortuary rituals leading to other disposal practices. Some of these include sky burials (the practice of abandoning the dead to be

eaten by birds and other animals), water burial (the practice of dumping the dead in water to be eaten by fish) and the fire burial (the practice of burning the dead to ashes otherwise is called cremation).

While each of these disposal modes is supported by a distinct philosophy of death, earth burials have remained a unique mode involving different philosophies and the formal construction of the disposal facility. Changes in the form and pattern of this facility can be seen within and across cultures through time. This invariably means that even if the idea is to understand a comparative body of knowledge on burial practices (through time) each form and pattern of burial must be understood in the context of its culture and time. For example, early attempts at dressing the dead in their best cloths and burying them with food were designed at stopping them from returning to haunt the living for food. In other societies, the rationale for grave goods was slightly more complex than this, with reasons ranging from attempts to save trapped souls in grave (see Rattray 1932) to just a mere show of wealth. In between this range as pointed out by Gundu (1988) were reasons of religion, after world belief and the identification of the social personality of the deceased. The Egyptian mastaba and pyramids were mortuary facilities designed to take the dead as well as all those things they would need in the after life. Consequently all those things ranging from food to boats thought to be necessary in the after life were included in the grave. This was in addition to domestic staff including house wives. Nubian tumuli graves were also constructed to house similar funerary furniture including domestic staff. Slaves in ancient Benin Kingdom were also buried to accompany their king in order to continue providing him with essential services even in death.

Other ethnographic examples however indicate that burial goods were not always placed inside the grave. Amongst the Tiv, the personal effects of the deceased were normally thrown on the grave. This was a way of cutting whatever attachment the living would otherwise have with the deceased if they were to keep these effects (see Gundu 1980).

The Taroh (of Plateau State Nigeria) on the other hand used on-the-grave burial goods mainly pottery as markers to identify the graves of men and women.

Other variations in the design and construction of the burial facility could have arisen as a result of differences in the comprehension of the death situation. Initial attempts at protecting the dead from the fillings of

the grave could have led to a design change in the grave structure leading to the construction of side partitions which would have enabled the placement of the dead outside the reach of infilling material. Subsequent improvement in this protection strategy could have led to the use of coffins. Though we are unable to know the exact time coffins were used in the disposal process, earlier attempts at covering the dead with skins, mats or large potsherds could have developed into the use of coffins whose earliest examples in Africa are from the predynastic Egyptian sites of Badari and Mostagedda (see Gundu 1988) where assorted coffins of wood and clay have been found in the archaeological record.

Increased interest in attempting to protect the body could have gradually led people of wealth to start distinguishing the burial facilities to reflect their identity and status. In ancient Egypt and Nubia, this was achieved through the process of mummification, the construction of stelae on the grave, the elaboration of the burial facility in addition to the use of subsidiary burials. Though the process of mummification did not entail a change in the design and construction of the burial facility, the other elements did. Stelae for example, were constructed as memorials on or besides the grave, and were most probably the earliest tomb stones and grave markers known to man. The elaboration of the burial facility and subsidiary burial led to complex construction underground and above the ground. The Egyptian pyramids were the climax of this form of burial facilities. They attested to the power of the Pharaoh's who built them and one of them (the pyramid of Cheops) is today not only one of the seven wonders of the ancient world but also the largest man made structure in the world (Abu Bahr 1981).

Similar structures in Nubia culminated in the construction of tumuli graves, one of which had up to three hundred and twenty-two (322) human sacrifices presumably made to accompany the king on the journey to the after life. These examples do not however validate a simplistic correlation between monumental burials and wealth. This is because ethnographic records especially around the Merina of Madagascar (see Ucho 1968) indicate that the groups lithic tombs in spite of the immense labour and resources put into their construction were communal burial facilities used for the disposal of members irrespective of their status.

Other variations in the form and pattern of the disposal facility are predicted on location. Major determinants in the location of the burial

facility include environmental factors, health/medical considerations, cause of death and a wide array of socio-cultural issues linked to the “*socia persona*” of the deceased.

Where graves are cut out of rocks, physical factors related to local geological conditions determine the location of graves. The dolmans and the hypogea characteristics of parts of Northern Africa during the early metal age were located on the basis of local geological conditions (see Camps 1982). This is also true of Nubian graves of El Kurru, Nuri and Jebel Bakar during the Napatan era (Adams 1977).

In societies that distinguish burials on the basis of the cause of the death, victims of epidemic and related ailments are buried in different locations. Likewise, in some societies, location of the graves can differ depending on age, sex and even status. Grave depth can also vary depending on some of these indices.

Though we are unable to exhaust the complex variations in mortuary practices through time and space, it can be said that variations identified through time and space can only be meaningfully understood if each is placed in the context of the Tiv culture of death.

2.7 MAJOR HYPOTHESES OF WORK

The hypothesis articulated below are linked to the major research problems of the work. The idea is to focus on those details that would throw more light on the hypotheses and support my conclusions as to whether the hypotheses are valid or not. The following hypotheses will therefore be inquired into.

1. Whether or not Tiv traditional culture of death and marriage systems were underlain by a value system.
2. The extent to which such a value system (if it existed) has been lost as a result of changes traceable to European contact.
3. Whether the defunct value system around which the Tiv culture of death and marriage system were built can be revived or rejuvenated.
4. The extent to which the in-built social control mechanisms in the culture of death and marriage systems have broken down as a result of changes following European contact.
5. Whether or not changes in Tiv traditional culture of death and marriage systems are fostering materialist values on contemporary Tiv society.
6. Whether changes in Tiv burials and marriages systems are conceived and welcome by the Tiv as superior to what was obtained before their contact with Europeans.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

6.6 INTRODUCTION

This study is an investigation into the traditional marriage and burial institutions of the Tiv people of Benue State in central Nigeria. The major objective of the study was to document the “genuine” traditional practices of the marriage and burial customs as they were performed by the Tiv people before the introduction of the Tiv society to western education, Christianity and other external influences. We also hope to determine to what extent those external influences have affected (negatively or positively) the traditional customs of the Tiv people with regard to their marriage and burial institutions.

Given this focus there has been no need for the identification of research variables. This is because it is not designed as an empirical study. We do not therefore necessarily need to manipulate or control independent variables in order to ascertain relationship to observed phenomenon. In other words it is a study that does not seek to compare groups, but merely seeks for factual information from uncategorized population and samples. The study does not compare groups opinions. It is essentially a Descriptive Survey Research. It has described and interpreted what was and what is. It seeks to find out the conditions that exist, opinions that are held, the processes that are going on, effects that are evident as well as trends that are developing. It is therefore a non-experimental research.

The problem of this study was therefore stated by raising a number of research questions which served as guidelines for the design of the research procedure, and the collection of necessary data.

For the marriage institution, the following research questions were used:

- 1. What were the characteristic marriage systems known to the Tiv before their contact with the Europeans?**
- 2. What core values are discernable from these systems?**
- 3. What was the position of women in pre-colonial Tiv society?**
- 4. How significant were children in the context of these marriage systems?**
- 5. To what extent were these marriage systems sustained by the belief system in *tsav* and *akombo*.**
- 6. What discernable changes have taken place in Tiv marriage practices as a result of European contact.**
- 7. To what extent have these changes undermined the prior values underlining the Tiv marriage?**
- 8. What new value system is behind the changes “forced” on the Tiv?**

- 9. To what extent do the Tiv consider this “forced” value system vis-a-vis their old marriage value system.**

For the Burial institution, the following research questions were used for data collection.

- 1. How is death and burial conceptualized amongst the Tiv?**
- 10. What are the characteristic components of the Tiv culture of death?**
- 11. What core values were behind this culture of death?**
- 12. To what extent was this culture of death sustained by the belief system in *tsav* and *akombo*.**
- 13. What changes were discernable in this culture of death before European contact?**
- 14. What are the major changes in the culture of death arising from European contact?**
- 15. What is the new value system upon which these major changes are predicated?**
- 16. What are the major implications of these changes (and their underlining values) to the socio-economic development of the Tiv people.**

17. To what extent do the Tiv people consider these changes as a positive development in their overall exposure to the colonial experience and its inevitable consequences?

6.7 POPULATION AND SETTING

The population of this study consists of the entire people of the Tiv people who reside in Benue State. The 1991 Census figures put the population of the Tiv people of Benue at over 2,000,000. The population of the Tiv people resident in Benue State are spread over fourteen (14) Local Government Areas, namely Logo, Ukum, Katisna-Ala, Ushongo, Kwande, Vandeikya and Konshisha (in zone 'A'). Zone 'B' is made up of Gboko, Tarka, Buruku, Gwer-West, Gwer, Makurdi and Guma Local Government Areas. The scope of this study therefore covers only the Tiv people resident in these local government areas. It does not include the Tiv people who are indigenous to the neighbouring states of Plateau and Nasarawa to the North and Taraba to the North-East. It was not considered necessary to bring within the purview of this study parts of the Tiv culture area in other states because of resource and time constraints.

Even within Tivland, my primary area of concentration was centred on the Tiv people of the Northern geo-political location covering IHAREV-NONGOV-MASEV Super clans. The Local Government Areas covered by this geo-political areas are Makurdi, Guma, Gwer and Gwer-West with a total population of over 500,000 (1991 Census).

6.8 SCOPE

This study was limited to the Tiv people who are resident in the 14 Tiv speaking local government areas of Benue State. Reasons for concentrating on these local government have already been stated.

Though we were not able to extend the study to cover the Tiv culture area in Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau States, since these areas share the same cultural heritage with the Tiv of Benue State, our study can still be used to extrapolate to cover the culture and heritage of the Tiv elsewhere. The intensive nature of the study itself demanded that even in Tivland, we limit the study primarily to the Northern Tiv especially the *Nongov*, *Iharev* and *Masev* super clans.

6.9 METHODOLOGY

Owing to the problem of finance, time factor, and the documentary nature of this study, it was not feasible to use an artificial sampling technique in identifying informants. We were aware of the fact that theoretically, it was possible to get just any Tiv person in the area of our interest with sufficient knowledge on the aspect of marriage and burials, yet we did not go for just any body. Realizing the dangers posed in the uncritical use of the “colonial library” and even the works of Tiv scholars in the mode of Makar (1975) and Orkar (1979), we decided to identify in each of the super clans constituting my primary area of focus, a few knowledgeable people with whom the research assistant sat to discuss issues relating to marriage and death.

Though we preferred individual interviews because they are more focused and easier to control, because

of the republican nature of the Tiv, even individual interviews ended up being group interviews with neighbours and even “children” participating. Given the wide nature of the components under consideration, it was not possible to follow a strict questionnaire. For each interview, the research assistant first explained the research objectives and sought the cooperation of the individual or group. Time was given for the individuals or members of the group to ask for clarifications and when it was clear that the issues at stake were known and there was sufficient understanding of the information or clarification required from the respondent(s), the interview was left to flow under the direction of the research assistant.

As a further way of getting more materials and clarifying concepts, we organized a workshop around the topic. This workshop under the auspices of the Tiv Traditional council tagged the First National Workshop on Tiv Marriage and Burial Customs took place at the Tiv Traditional Council Chambers in Gboko on April 28th 2001. Sixteen scholars and experts in Tiv studies were invited to present papers. Also invited were members of the Tiv Traditional Council including Second- Class Chiefs (*Uter*), District Heads (*Utyombaiorov*), Tax Collectors, Community Leaders and other titled Chiefs (*Ati a Tor*). Over three hundred (300) people attended the workshop including notable members of the academia, titled women chiefs and government functionaries.

Each participant was given an opportunity to make a presentation on a topic drawn from the general

corpus of the two components of death and marriage in Tiv society. Each of the presentations was thoroughly discussed with a view to clarifying issues, identifying changing trends and ascertaining the extent to which values forced on Tiv heritage from these changes have transformed and benefited Tiv world view.

6.10 MAJOR STAGES OF THE RESEARCH

This study was proposed into three major parts.

These are:

- (i) A documentation of the outline of marriage and burial systems using available written records. Our reasons for starting with this documentation was to use the information provided in these records to build an outline upon which to predicate the fieldwork. Both the “colonial library” on the Tiv (comprising the works of colonial administrators, missionaries and teachers in the Tiv field). “Akiga’s story” and historical works by “Tiv Sons” were consulted for this study. Though the historiographic value of the “colonial library” has been questioned and the historical works of some “Tiv Sons” also questioned as having been uncritically, founded on the library (see Gundu 1999) we non-the-less found useful insights into the topic from the study of these records. It was this insight that helped us to sharpen our objectives and questions before venturing into the field.**

- (ii) The fieldwork as indicated earlier was handled by research assistants who were engaged to cover each of the major segments of my primary area of interest. Starting from Guma, the assistants moved to Makurdi and then to Gwer and Gwer-West Local Government Areas.**

- (iii) The third stage involving the organization of the workshop was handled using a consultant. A careful list of sixteen scholars in the Tiv field was drawn up and consulted to prepare on specific aspects of either marriage or death. Papers turned in were printed and circulated at the beginning of the workshop while discussions and clarifications were noted.**

6.11 PROBLEMS OF THE RESEARCH

Though doing research amongst your own people gives you obvious advantages over and above one who is doing it in a different cultural setting because of limitations imposed on us by tradition, in terms of movement, and interaction, we were unable to personally get involved in the collection of primary oral data in the field. Our inevitable dependence on research assistants was fraught with many problems, many of which were beyond our control. Judging from the transcripts of the interview, it was clear that not all of the assistants involved were in firm control of some of the interviews conducted. In some cases, informants were left to discuss from issues under consideration to others that were not relevant. Clarifications were not also sought in certain

instances necessitating repeat visits to some of the informants.

Much of the study is also predicated on a clash and change in values. Each informant clearly came across as subjectively as allowed by the extent of his/her acceptance or rejection of the new trends and values under discussion. It was therefore quite difficult to draw a line between objectivity and subjectivity.

Related to this was the issue of identifying and getting introduction to informants. Luckily we were able to use the network of Tiv Traditional Council members to identify knowledgeable people in their domain who were also introduced to the research assistants. Though, this did not automatically solve the problem since the assistants still had to spend a lot of time explaining our research objectives with a view to getting the full confidence of the informants.

We had difficulties in going around some of these problems primarily because we could put a hand to some of them only after the research assistants returned from the field to provide feed-back and review their notes with us. Because we got feed-back regularly from them, one of the ways we used in correcting problems especially those arising from insufficient clarification was to send back the assistants to informants whom in our opinion needed to provide more information or clarification as the case may be.

CHAPTER 4

TIV MARRIAGE SYSTEMS

6.6 THE TIV CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE

Though in some societies, marriage is acknowledged to be in existence once there is both sexual and economic cooperation (union) between people of the opposite sex, amongst the Tiv, such union does not necessarily imply marriage. To fully appreciate the Tiv concept of marriage, one must first understand the way they conceptualize the family. The Tiv word for the family is “*tsombor*” (see Wegh 1998). *Tsombur* is also the word for the umbilical cord, which joins mother and child before birth. Conceptualising the family as *tsombur* is acknowledging its organic unity and the common blood implied in its composition. Consequently, the Tiv family which is also the basic genealogical unit can comprise the couple and their children or the man, his several wives, their children including their wives after several generations. The family is therefore theoretically speaking an “endless” line of relations and offspring tracing their descent to a common ancestor. Marriage to the Tiv is therefore more than a sexual and economic union. It is also a strategy to perpetuate the family through having more and more children. This strategy also allowed the development of complicated group alliances aimed at maintaining societal equilibrium and cohesion. Because of all these, the perceived “ability” of the woman to have children and contribute to a farmland (in producing food) were primary considerations in the choice of a woman as a wife — since it was only additional children (produced by the new wife) and food (also produced by her) that could ensure the growth of the family and guide against its extinction. Male children derived their rights primarily from their affiliation with their father’s kinsmen (*ityo*) on the one hand and their mother’s kinsmen (*igba*) on the other hand. While a male child regarded his father’s kinsmen as his *ityo*, they in turn regarded him as their “*anter*” according him the full compliments of rights and privileges due to him as the son of their brother.

Conversely, his mother’s kinsmen regarded him as their “*anigba*” and also accorded him full compliments due to the son of their sister (*ingyor*). As “*anigba*”, a man could demand and get full attention from his mother’s kinsmen and in time of stress and conflicts, he was the most appropriate person to act as an emissary between his *ityo* and his mother’s kinsmen.

6.7 PRECOLONIAL MARRIAGE SYSTEMS

About five types of marriage systems were known to the Tiv in Pre colonial times. These include *yamshe*, *kwase ngohol*, *kem kwase*, *kwase yamen* and *kwase dyako*.

4.2.1 **Yamshe:** Yamshe otherwise known as exchange marriage involved the “direct” exchange of sisters and was the earliest institutional system of marriage known to the Tiv. Under the system a father was required to distribute his female children amongst his male children (or brothers as the case may be) who would then use them to exchange for wives. Through this system, each male child had a sister called (*ingyor*) with which he could exchange with another person for a wife.

In circumstances where *angor* (plural of *ingyor*) were not enough to go round, the distribution formula was based on age with the oldest taking their turn before the younger ones. For example, if a father had three sons and one daughter, the lone daughter was given to the first son to exchange for a wife and it was mandatory for the two brothers to wait their turn until their elder brother had daughters from his marriage to give them (for exchange) or suitable females identified in the extended family and given to them for exchange. Because, these two were getting their “sisters” for exchange from their “brothers” instead of their father, they were incurring a debt which they were obliged to pay at a later date by returning one of their female children to the brother who gave his daughter (or sister) for his exchange.

The whole process was designed to guide against “loss” in the family. By exchanging fertile sisters (with a capacity to work on the farm), continuity of the family was assured and the productivity of the entire compound preserved. Though the woman had “little” say in the exchange process, the status of the exchange wife was very high. She had complete control over food supply in the house and her control over domestic matters was virtually total. Her position was also enhanced as the true “replacement” of her husband’s sister (*ingyor*) who would raise children and carry on the direct line of her husband’s sister. Because the young depended on their parents (elders) to give them *angor* with which to exchange for wives, the elders had an

efficient social control value with which to hold the society. Exchange marriage also provided an excellent guard against the disintegration of the society since no one could opt out of the group and still have a chance to marry from within. As pointed out by Makar (1975), exchange marriage (and other related forms of marriage) were social ingredients functioning to hold society through group alliances linked by corresponding obligations which each party to the exchange was bound to respect. Children of the exchange marriage were not only a special link between their father's kinsmen and their mother's kinsmen in time of stress but also highly respected emissaries of peace.

The actual process of marriage by exchange started when a person identified a woman outside his lineage he wanted to marry. He then introduced himself to the father of the woman or her brother (*tien*) who normally requested him to come a second time if he was really serious. On his second coming, the initiator of the process would then invite the person whose daughter (or sister) he had seen and admired to come over to his place, to also have an opportunity to meet his daughter or (*ingyor*). After the second man to the exchanged might have seen and consented to the arrangement in principle, each party to the exchange was required to identify a witness, normally one whose mother came from the same lineage with the partner (*anigba*). This witness thus became the main broker to the exchange or "*Or sughur Ishe*". As a broker, he was required to lead his mother's kinsmen to the father or (*tien*) of the woman to be exchanged. By this time, the man was allowed to sleep together in the same hut (*yough*) with his intended wife. If in the course of the night the man was able to sleep with the woman, he wrote her off as a flirt and had reason to reconsider the whole proposal. If on the other hand, the woman refused his entreaties for love making, the man was elated in finding a good wife and proceeded on the final lap of the exchange.

On the final lap, he was required to take his *ingyor* to the other partner to the exchange through the broker. He was normally accompanied by the woman's mother (*Ngo kem*) at least a kinsman and a composer whose main task was to announce the object of their coming through songs. On arrival (normally timed for the night) the host *tien* was required to give a token present to the wife brought for him before she could sit down. This token gift

was called “*tile shisha*” literally meaning ‘stand up’. Similarly, the girl was required not to eat until her “mouth was opened” by another gift from the host *tien* called “*ivende ruam*” – literally meaning refusal to eat food. While all these gifts were collected by the wife (to be) they were actually intended for the mother-in-law (*ngo kem*).

On the following morning, the host invited his kinsmen particularly those in the primary endogamic circle (*iye igo, ikoko genga or iye ingyor*) to witness the actual exchange at which both women were required to publicly consent to the exchange and asked to embrace their husbands. After the embrace, the host was required to kill a chicken (*mtanshe*) and prepare food for his visitors, who after eating could decide to take their wife and leave. Some people however returned and requested their host to also bring his sister (*ingyor*) and give them in their own place.

To ensure that the chain of life and fertility remained intact (see Rubingh 1968) through the generations, each husband after the exchange, was required to erect a fertility *akombo* by the door (on the left as you entered the hut) of his exchanged wife’s hut. These fertility *akombo* as identified by Akiga (1963) are *Ihambe* and *Twer*. The erection was on the left because this is the side the couple sleep, and the idea is to ensure peaceful sleep by the couple and forestall the couple having bad dreams.

Ihambe is a “two leg” *akombo*. The first leg (*ihambe i chigh ki ityough*) is erected using two wooden posts. One of these has a pointed end while the other has a blunt end. The post with the pointed end is called *Ihambe* while the one with a blunt end is called *mtam*. These posts are erected within a circle of *Borassia* (*akuv*) together with three vegetable plants – *ichigh*, *ikarika* and *ator*. The ‘second leg’ of the *ihambe* (*ihambe i onbango*) is erected in a similar way to (*ihambe i chigh ki ityough*), the only difference is in the propitiation, for while the first leg is propitiated using a male animal, the second leg is propitiated using a female animal. The *akombo twer* on the other hand are erected using stones placed in a circle (called *twer*) within which is a wooden figure of a human being (called *mtam twer*) carved out of the *gbaaye* tree (proposis oblonga). The

ikarika shrub is also a component of the *twer* normally planted in the circle of stones. Another component of the *twer* is a drum (also built from the *gbaaye* tree) covered with the skin of a he-goat (*kperivo*). During the propitiation of the *twer*, the drum (*gbande twer* or *gbande mtam*) is hung on the *mtam twer* after which it is taken inside for upkeep. Because *twer* is a fertility *kombo*, it is normally propitiated in order to correct sterility in the couple.

The importance of exchange marriage was underscored by the special position of male children. Only these could aspire to both temporal and spiritual leadership in the community. They were the only initiates of *akombo a ibiam* and were also the only people who could aspire to erect a “*poor biam*”. Given this importance, every exchange aimed at a balance. If in a particular exchange, one party was blessed with more children, the husband whose wife had less children went and got one of his sister’s daughters and used her to exchange for a second wife.

6.6.1 **Kwase Ngohol:** *Kwase ngohol Sha-utaha* generally arose out of a complication of exchange marriage. Because a man had to wait even into old age to get a sister (*ingyor*) with which to exchange for a wife, late marriages were the norm and anxious children who did not want to wait their turn started raiding their neighbours or ambushing lone travellers to forcefully seize their women and or daughters. The Tiv learnt this type of marriage from Udam who regularly raided and ambushed them for women (Akiga 1933). Because the Udam did spare deformed and wounded women during their regular raids, the Tiv were able to devise a strategy in which each person with a wife (or daughter) pounded the bark of *Bridelia ferruinea* (*kpine*) into a paste and applied on the legs, holding it together by a net. Because this contraption produced an effect on the legs akin to a wound, the raiders were convinced that Tiv women were generally dirty and deformed thus paving way for their husbands to have safe passage through territories which they could have otherwise lost some of their wives or daughters.

On settlement and consolidation in the middle Benue valley, people (as earlier indicated) who could not wait their turn of *angor*

– or had no money with which to marry begun to seize wives forcefully from others. A traveller from another segment passing through another with his wife or daughter stood the risk of losing his wife (or daughter). Sometimes when this happened (within the group) and the victim reported promptly to his *ityo* elders, an emissary (normally *anigba*) was sent to the elders of the aggressor with the *ayande* plant (a symbol of peace) with a request for the return of the “captured” woman. Sometimes this request was honoured, sometimes it was not thus leading to a full blown war. Though, this process did provide wives, it gradually heated the landscape and increased hostilities and tensions. Because of the implications of these hostilities to the corporate existence of the group, elders desirous that their anxious children (who could not wait their turn of *angyor* or for use in the exchange process) should marry without frictions within and between communities improved on the concept of forceful seizure with the introduction of *iyé*. The improvement involve an initial peace and covenant pact (*ikur*) of elders of the two communities who desired that their children should marry each other. Such pacts were sometimes sealed by human sacrifice as in the *ikur* (pact) between Shitire (Kpav) and Kparev (Mbagen) where Avaan was sacrificed to seal the pact (see Akiga 1933). At other times it was sealed with the death of a dog or just the mingling of blood. In the case of a blood pact, volunteers from each side were slashed on the hand to collect their blood on a grinding stone which was mixed with locust beans, (*nune*) salt and palm oil and eaten by elders to the pact. In all, blood covenants (pacts) parties to the pact could not fight each other nor could they inflict injury on each other. If one party inflicted unintentional injury on the other as in the process of shaving, it was mandatory for the injured party to symbolically retaliate. After the *ikur* was thus sealed, young men of the two communities to the pact went into each other’s territory (in groups) in search of wives. Each visit was designed to identify and woo a wife for a member of the group and as long as the covenant subsisted, the group continued to return until every member had a wife. In most cases, (see Wegh 1989), *iyé* ended up as exchange with the *tien* (in-law) coming to claim the sister (or daughter) of the one who married his *ingyor* as his wife. This was however done only after his *ingyor* had given birth to a child.

6.6.2 **Kem Kwase:** The *kem* marriage system is said to have been copied by the Tiv from the Chamba people (Ugenyi). Though, it varied from one section of the Tiv to the other, fundamentally, it involved installmental payments in cash (and or kind) to the parents of the girl or her *tien*. Because the payments were installmental and the process could drag over a very long period of time, they were called *kem* while the father (*tien*) benefiting from them *terkem* and the mother (*ngokem*).

Traditionally, *kem* kicked off with the presentation of a necklace (*isha*) to the woman by his intended husband. Because of the extended nature of *kem* it was possible to even identify a twelve-year old girl and kick start the process by sending her a necklace. After this initial deposit, the man continued to send other gifts to the girl and her parents according to his ability. A farmer could send part of his farm produce, a hunter part of his game, a blacksmith part of his craft and a fisherman, fish. Initially there was no minimum expectation such that after a series of installmental payments in kind one could seal the marriage contract with something as simple as harvesting mushroom(*ijor*) for the mother in-law.

Increased monetization of the economy however led to the gradual insistence on cash in addition to payments made over time in kind. At this stage, parents started making specific monetary demands on in-laws as a condition for the marriage. Even after these monetary demands were met, the man was still expected to make a final gift of a bed and a goat to his in-laws. This is moreso with the Ukum and Ushitire (see Akiga 1933). Amongst the Kparev, and Masev an Iherev, the situation was slightly different. Amongst the Kparev for example, after a man must have warmed himself to his in-laws through a series of installmental payments in kind, he was allowed full access to the woman. While others chose to elope with woman after having been allowed full access, others ended up putting them in the family way thus compelling the woman to have her first child in her father's place. In the case of elopement, the man was required to meet the material expectations

of the parents of his wife failing which his wife was taken back from him.

The Masev-Iharev-Nongov on the other hand had a more elaborate arrangement called *ikyar nyoron*. Under this arrangement, each woman was required to attach herself to a man within the endogamic circle in a quasi marriage arrangement in which sexual activity was allowed – until she finally got married outside her endogamic circle. Her partner prior to full marriage was called her *ikyar* and took full responsibility for her upkeep and “training” prior to full marriage. On conception in her new home (after full marriage) she returned with her husband to her parents place in order to be cleansed of all those *akombo* she must have breached while in her father’s house and with her *ikyar*. The object of the cleansing ritual was to pave way for her safe delivery. The ritual called *iee* involved a ceremony at which both her *ikyar* and the “current” husband competed after which a he-goat was killed on the *ilyum* altar. This altar is normally erected at the border between two groups for good governance (*tar soron*) and is represented by a stone *stalea*. The *ilyum* was normally consulted and propitiated in time of stress, poor harvest and when there was a general desire for more children. It was only after this cleansing that the woman finally went to settle in her “true” husband’s place.

The point ought to be made that just like *kwase ngohol*, *kem* (irrespective of the variations) ended up involving the exchange of sisters. This was so because, no matter how much gifts and money were expended on the *kem* process and (*kwase ngohol*) if one was yet to give out his sister in exchange for his wife, his marriage was still not given full recognition. Even when such marriages produced children, they were merely regarded as *isheiko* — children outside exchange marriage and could be recovered together with their mother by *or ngyorough (tien)* anytime if he so desired.

To ensure full recognition of the marriage and the legitimacy of the children (and forestall their recovery by an irate *tien*) it was

mandatory for a man who had married either by *kwase ngohol* or *kem* to complete at a later date, the process by giving his sister in return for keeping his wife. The concept of *isheiko* was so important that even if there was a complete exchange and one of the woman to the exchange suddenly died – without an issue, her *tien* (brother) if he so wished could reach out to the other party to the exchange for one of her sister's daughters as a “replacement” with which to exchange for another wife to take the place of his deceased wife. Another important strand running through both *kwase ngohol* and *kem* was the process of courtship (*kwase soor*). This process as indicated earlier, was guided by an *anigba* who was also the broker to the marriage. In addition to this broker, the man also scouted for a friend who gave him confidential information on his intended wife. This friend was called *Orafotso* (plural is *Mbaafotsov*).

Most courtships according to Akiga (1933) started at the communal pond (*ijor*) where the man waited (in the morning) for his intended wife to come for water. On identifying her, he requested for water to wash his face, once the girl accepted, it was signal enough for the courtship to commence in earnest. From that point onwards, the man (and the friends who accompanied him) were obliged to follow the girl anywhere she went extolling her virtues and giving her reasons why he was the preferred marriage partner. This process dragged on for days on end and because it was expected that the woman and the man (including those who accompanied him) would not eat in front of each other through out the initial days of the courtship, the woman had her first opportunity of eating everyday in the night after the man might have retired to rest (and also eat) at the broker's place. The idea was to pile sufficient pressure on the girl (and her family) into accepting the hand of the man in marriage. The woman's acceptance (though confidential) came by way of *ibumun* — a token gift of the woman to the man which was anything ranging from a bangle to a necklace. The gift signified that the woman was ready to even elope with the man.

Typical elopement in Tiv culture takes place either in the afternoon or the early hours of the evening. On elopement, the new wife is normally taken to the husband's brother's house or his age grade (*or kwagh*) who has the responsibility for the ceremonial reception (*kwase kuhan*) welcoming the woman to her new home. The host is required to kill a fowl (*ikyegh avure*) and the only people permitted by tradition to eat it are the new husband and other married couples. During the course of the reception the blood of other animals (particularly goats) killed for the entertainment of the new couple and guests are sprinkled on the two sides of the entrance (*igburhunda*) leading to the hut housing the new couple. In the meantime, the new husband (*or kwase he*) was required to distribute gifts (*ichegh*) to his friends and age grades. At the end of the reception, the host was required to accompany the new couple to their house where depending on whether the man's father was a man of means, another elaborate reception ceremony called *genga* – (*amar a kwase*) was organized for the couple.

6.6.3 Kwase u sha Uika: This was a system of marriage through which the individual could purchase or buy women already sold into slavery as house wives. It was not a very popular mode of marriage, since only a few wealthy people could afford the cost. It was also a marriage relationship strictly between the Tiv and other neighbouring groups.

6.6.4 Kwase Dyako: This system of marriage allowed a brother to inherit the widow of his dead brother. A son could also inherit the widow of his father (other than his mother). Such women were also called either *kwase ikoson* or *kwase ichoghol*. In all cases where the widow had children for the deceased, all additional children arising from the new arrangement remained the children of the deceased since the widow's relationship with the new "husband" was not recognised technically as marriage. The idea was to forestall the disintegration of the family, ensure continued protection of the widow and support for her to still champion the line of her deceased husband. To ensure maximum protection of the widow in the new relationship, she and her new "husband" were taken through the "megh" ritual. Essentially the ritual "u aver megh" was a process in which the widow and her husband joined

their legs under which a fowl was passed to ensure the ability of the widow to still bear children.

4.3 SOCIAL VALUES BEHIND PRE-COLONIAL MARRIAGE SYSTEMS

Despite the obvious variations in the pre-colonial marriage systems (some of which have been considered) they were held together by a very complex system of values all of which were internalized and accepted as part of the Tiv world view. Though it has not been possible to articulate all these values, the following were the most dominant having the most impact on these marriage systems.

4.3.1 Non Materialism: This is perhaps the most obvious beginning of the value chain running through most of the different pre-colonial systems of marriage in Tivland. Exchange marriage in spirit and content de-emphasized materialism since the crucial thing in the marriage was the simple exchange of sisters by the two men connected to the exchange. Even after the introduction of *kwase ngohol* and *kem*, no man could legitimately be said to have married unless he also gave his sister out to his in-law in exchange for his wife. Because of this, no man could purely on account of having paid bride price on a woman, ever hope to keep her (and her children) unless and until he had given his sister in exchange for the wife. This had the tendency of playing down the significance of *kem* (whether in cash or kind) and the value (in material terms) placed on the head of the woman by the father. Virtually anything could be accepted as *kem* including “*ijov*” (mushroom). Because of this, husbands could hardly regard their wives as mere objects (or slaves) and each strived to give her the best of treatments in the fear of a parallel retaliation against his sister. This point cannot be overemphasised, if we note that some women under persistent scorn from their colleagues for the inability of their husbands to complete and seal their marriages through exchange had sufficient reasons to desert their husbands irrespective of whether material things could have gone into their marriage.

6.6.1 Unity and Group Alliances: As pointed out earlier, these marriage systems (especially exchange marriage) was an efficient deterrent against societal disintegration. Marriage was more than

just a two people affair. It was an activity in which the entire people at least at the level of the primary endogamic circle were involved not just on the side of the man but also on the side of the woman. While the woman married into an expanding family the man by implication also expanded his family and the incest circle within which sexual relations were prohibited. Through marriage, covenant packs were initiated between groups thus ensuring greater peace and forestalling conflicts.

6.6.2 Chastity and Fidelity: Many of the popular views regarding fornication and adultery in Tiv society are based on a poor understanding of the deep rooted values of chastity and fidelity underlining Tiv culture. It is quite clear that chastity was a cherished value here. There were clear incest taboos that set the boundaries within which sexual relationships were allowed or sanctioned. Details of these boundaries have been clarified by Atuu (Atuu 2001) and it is quite clear that every breach of incest was sanctioned ranging from ritual burning to stigmatization. Similarly, even where incest boundaries were not of the essence, stiff sanctions existed against rape and fornication. Each girl at puberty underwent the “*ikyoor*” ritual to forestall rape and ensure chastity. In the event of rape (or fornication) the “aggressor” was required to propitiate the *ikyoor akombo* without which he run the risk on the one hand of persistent ill luck while the woman (victim) on the other hand could have problems ranging from irregular menstrual circles to inability to conceive. Because of these sanctions, prior to the actual exchange process, each woman was given the opportunity to confess whether he had been sexually violated so as to set the records straight and get the “culprit” to propitiate the *ikyoorakombo* and cleanse the woman before marriage.

The same exemplary level of faithfulness was expected in the woman at marriage. She was expected to abstain from both *ijimba* (loose manners) and *idya* (adultery). There existed stiff sanctions against infidelity and no man could violate the chastity of his neighbour’s wife and still expect the approval of the society since such violation was capable of killing friendship and undermining

filial love. Age grades had strict codes against members caught in compromising situations with the wives of other members. Culprits were heavily fined (and asked to “*wua tia*”) and stigmatized. As a way of reinforcing sanctions against adultery, it was believed that if an adulterous person was wounded in a hunt or war, his friend (or brother) whose wife he had, had an adulterous relationship with, attempted to help, instead of surviving, he would surely die. Though, all these were effective deterrents, aggrieved individuals probably not satisfied with these sanctions, still went as far as poisoning or stabbing those going out with their wives.

Against this background, Umaru Eri’s ruling of 1987 in the case between Denen Tofi and Ushe Uba to the effect that adultery amongst the Tiv was not an offense known to Nigerian Law can only be understood (see Suemo Chia 2001) as arising from a purely technical oversight in drafting the 1955 “Tiv Marriage Law and Custom Order”. As explained by Justice Terna Puusu, the Chief Judge of Benue State (personal communication) Umaru Eri’s landmark decision did not deny that adultery is an offence under Tiv native law and custom, the decision taken was in cognizance of the constitutional provision, the failure to declare it an offence in a written law made it an offence unknown to Nigerian Law for which a person could be tried and punished. This unfortunate lapse has since been corrected through an appropriate amendment of the order.

Similarly, curious references have been made to the idea that Tiv as part of their hospitality gave their wives to visitors. Let it be emphasized from the onset that these references are not substantiated anywhere in the extensive anthropological literature on the Tiv and it is difficult for such a unique practice to have escaped being documented in the colonial library on the Tiv given the fact that administrators and anthropologists on the African field seemed hungry in reporting the “exotic” in African societies. It is not unlikely that a husband’s normal words asking a wife to “*nenge sha orvanya dedoo*” (take good care of the visitor) or “*tar orvanya gambe a yav*” (arrange a bed for the visitor) have been

misunderstood to imply more than what was really meant. It is contradictory and patently absurd that a people who sanctioned adultery and even killed their blood relations to avenge an affair with their wives would abandon this strong stand to please a total stranger.

6.6.3 **Discipline:** Discipline also runs as a core value through the fabric of the pre-colonial marriage systems. The period of courtship as indicated earlier was one in which the man spent following his wife (to be) religiously from morning to evening. During this intense period, none of them ate until late in the night when each was alone. This amounts to a fast and as pointed out by Akiga (1933) it did wear both man and woman down. Considering the significance of the fast, in even present day religion and its importance in spiritual cleansing, it is little wonder that both man and woman considered the period of courtship critical enough to refrain from food and possibly reflect on the up coming marriage.

6.6.4 **Respect for Elders:** Elders had a pride of place in all pre-colonial marriage systems. They were saddled with the responsibility of distributing *angor* to their children and brothers. Young men literally depended on elders for wives and no person could separate himself from the authority (of elders) and obligations imposed on him by the society and hope to get away with it. Though the youths resented the pride of place of the elders, charging it was being misused, it proved to be an efficient social control value ensuring stability and intergroup harmony.

6.6.5 **Fairness:** Fairness as a core value of Tiv pre-colonial marriage systems was reflected in the essence of exchange marriage itself. The whole idea of marriage was to retain the reproductive force within the community and there was no better way of doing this efficiently than through the exchange of sisters. In the rare cases where one couple to the exchange had less children, it was mandatory for the couple with more children to give those with less, a daughter which was used to exchange a second wife for the man. This process of equalization also applied on the death of one

of the women to a particular exchange arrangement and any man resisting it run the risk of having his wife and children recovered by an aggrieved *tien*.

6.6.6 The Igba Factor: As pointed out earlier, children of an exchange marriage were considered more than others. They could aspire to positions of temporal and spiritual leadership and were the only legitimate heirs of their parents, with a voice in their assembly of their father's kinsmen (*ityo*). In time of stress and conflict, they stood as bridges between their father's kinsmen and their mother's kinsmen. They also acted as emissaries. These children could thus forestall crisis and begin to take those steps that bound communities and neighbours together because of marriage.

6.6.7 The Widow's Factor: Protection for widows was a core value of the Tiv world view. After the death of their husbands, they had latitude to decide who amongst the eligible children (brothers) of his deceased husband was to be her new husband. Once the person she preferred also consented, he becomes obligated to protect the widow (and her children) working towards their welfare all in furtherance of the interest of the deceased.

4.4 **THE ABOLITION OF EXCHANGE MARRIAGE:**

Exchange marriage was abolished on 15th July 1927 following a council meeting of District Heads at Abinsi with the British colonial administration. It was substituted with the *kem* system of marriage. Though, the impression is created in colonial sources that the abolition was a consensus decision of the District Heads, it is clear that it was actually a conspiracy by the colonial administration and the missionary bodies operating in Tivland – especially the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM).

For while the colonial administration wanted to transform traditional socio-economic structures to align with the objectives of the colonial enterprise (see Atagher 2001). The missionaries claimed that exchange marriage had advanced immorality and was making it difficult for their younger converts to marry when they wished to. Thus finding a meeting point and getting the support of the youths whose eyes were beginning to open to the opportunities of the cash economy, every tactic including blackmail and intimidation was used to secure the elders “support” for the abolition. This point is underscored by the fact that just before the Abinsi council meeting, Tor Ugba was arrested and exiled to far away Kaduna due to some minor infraction. No District Head could therefore hope to oppose the proposal for abolition and return to his domain, not when there were reports of “strange vehicles” at the venue of the meeting and threats by those close to the administration that elders opposed to the abolition would be hoarded in the vehicles and taken into exile.

Though the elders saw the abolition as the beginning of the collapse of their heritage – and called for its reconsideration repeatedly up to 1932, the development was applauded by the younger generation including women who felt that once “freed” from the clutches of the elders they could take advantage of the cash economy to marry as they chose. No man could wait indefinitely to find an *ingyor* for marriage nor could women be forcefully given into marriage to old and sometimes deformed men against their will.

6.6 **CONSEQUENCES OF THE ABOLITION:**

Following the abolition of exchange marriage, Tiv society was rapidly transformed. There was increased monetization of the economy. Since

marriage no longer depended on the availability of *angor* but the ability to pay cash, there was a boost in the production of cash crops (to service European industries) to raise money for marriage and taxation. The abolition also encouraged the commodization of labour (which was a further boost to the monetization of the economy). Though, more young people were able to marry depending on their means, and both the colonial administration and the missionaries had finally succeeded in aligning the marriage system in line with their interests, it was clear that the abolition led to the decay of the traditional structure of Tiv society (Atagher 2001). The fundamental structure, holding the society in equilibrium in addition to underlining core values were either overturned or made redundant. Elders were no longer in control and since the colonial administration (and missionaries) were in conspiracy with the youths against Tiv heritage, the youths began to openly defy the elders on all matters depending on the protection and support of the administration (and the church). The increased defiance of the youths led to a gradual gap between them and the elders. This gap soon degenerated into a divide between modernity and tradition. Unable to come to terms with these developments, most elders resorted to *tsav* to even scores with “their children”. It was not uncommon for a man who gave out his *ingyor* in return for money to discover sooner than later that while his money had finished, his *ingyor* was “multiplying” in her new home. For many, this was enough reason to “finish” their sisters through witchcraft. Increased deaths as a result of these sentiments were reported and there was apprehension for the future of *kem* as imposed by the colonial administration. The abolition also led to increased monetization of the marriage institution. Hiding under the elastic nature of *kem*, parents began making exorbitant demands on their daughters. The ability to meet these demands more than anything else was the major determinant of the marriage arrangement leading to all sorts of shortcuts most of which undermined some of the core values inherent in the exchange marriage. Because the wife was no longer “an exchange”, she could be treated anyhow without fear of parallel retaliation. Most women resorted to deserting their husbands at the slightest excuse since divorce could not possibly trigger any retaliatory measures. The situation has continued to degenerate over the years leading to specific changes in *kem* marriage with aggravated and additional consequences.

6.6 ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY CHANGES IN *KEM* MARRIAGE SYSTEM

The following is an analysis of changes noted in contemporary *kem* marriage system.

6.6.1 Increased Tendency Towards Exogamy (and intergroup marriage): As indicated earlier, the Tiv tended to marry from within during much of the pre-colonial period. During the pre-colonial period, movement was difficult and risky and since marriage was by exchange, “endogamic marriages” were the rule. Marriage by purchase and other “forceful means” was the exception. During this period, the Tiv also resisted giving out their daughters to non-Tiv people.

The abolition of exchange marriage increased the tendency towards exogamy and intergroup marriages – as opposed to endogamy and intragroup marriages. This tendency as articulated by Jibo (2001) can be explained at five levels. First the abolition of exchange marriage and the introduction of the cash economy led to increased liberalization of Tiv world view. Young men in search of jobs ventured into heterogeneous urban centres far away from their homes where they established liaison with non-Tiv women some of whom they ended marrying. The 1969 civil war also increased the scope of Tiv exogamy. Many Tiv people enlisted in the army and were thrown at the war front where as a strategy of conquest, they were encouraged to marry Ibo women.

Many of such marriages exist amongst the officer’s corps and men of the Nigerian Army. A third level is related to increased economic prosperity as a result of cumulative earnings from farming, trade and wage employment. This has empowered travel, mixing and settlements in heterogeneous areas leading to more intergroup marriages. The next level is the “international dimension”. There is a growing Tiv community in diaspora especially in North America and Europe.

Most members of this community in diaspora are professionals (with permanent residency status in these areas) who have since married women of other races thus expanding the exogamic circle of the Tiv. This and the other factors already stated have increasingly weakened the prejudice against marriage to *atoatiev* (foreigners) leading to acceptance and willingness to give even

Tiv daughters (into marriage) to non-Tiv an idea which in the past was very objectionable.

6.6.2 Increase Monetization and Materialism of the Marriage

Process: As indicted earlier, *kem* marriage which was adopted to replace *yamshe* involved installmental payments in cash and kind. Increase in income levels, the resources implied in the training of daughters and the tendency towards materialism has continuously heightened the stakes in *kem* marriage. First is the understanding that *kem* is endless thus allowing the father in-law (*ter kem*) to continue coming for it at intervals determined by the birth of every additional child. Sometimes, even after the death of a husband, the children may be asked to *kem* their mother. Though the aggravation of *kem* differs from one Tiv group to the other, with differences in the amount of money required or expected differing across groups, generally when one goes for *kem* now he is expected to go through the following processes most of which are monetized.

1. *Wonov mba fan* (knowledge of in-laws)
2. *Kwase soor* (courtship)
3. *Msorum ma ndorom* (this is not monetized and could be anything from three cartons of beer and soft drinks).
4. *Msorum ma ombor* (monetized drinks)
5. *Ibughun* (opener for the drinks – which is also monetized)
6. *Mbaate mba nyoron* (homage to elders based on the number of compounds in the *eye ngyor* or *eye igo*).
7. *Asua ayangen* (monies to young in-laws intended to stop them from disturbing the *kem* process. *Asua* are noisy set of birds. The idea of *yangen asua* is the attempt to stop this “noisy set” of young men from talking and thereby disturbing during the *kem* process.
8. *Iviha i terkem* (Meat for the father-in-law when *kem* was principally in kind, hunters for example were expected to occasionally bring game to their in-laws. Today this meat (game) is expected from every son-in-law and though it is monetized, it is called *iviha* (grasscutter) *i terkem*)
9. *Ikondo i terkem* (Garment for the father-in-law. This is also monetized)
10. *Uvegh vegh* (these are miscellaneous payments).

11. *Ihyo azenga* (The actual kem is symbolically fixed using grass stalks (azenga). *Ihyo azenga* is a reference to the knife with which your father-in-law will cut these stalks and hand over to you.)
12. *Kwase sonun* (After one must have done all the above, he is required to formally ask for the girl by making some token payment called *kwase sonun*, after which he is told the specific figure of *kem* which in theory could be any amount. Because kem is endless, any amount the son-in-law in turn offers to “deposit” is also accepted by the father-in-law who now directs the husband to the mother-in-law.

Though mother-in-law’s requirements vary from group to group, generally they include a goat (*ivo*), salt (*bar*), a table (*tebul*) a basin (*gbanyi*), a chair (*ikyonugh*), an umbrella (*nima*) and a container with which to measure and distribute the salt amongst the women of the *eye igo (aur)*. After satisfying the mother-in-law, and having given the elders a pig (*igo*) the husband is formally allowed to take his wife to his father’s compound or his own house as the case may be.

6.6.3 Increase Parental Support for Daughters going into Marriage:

Though the amount given by husbands as *kem* for their wives has been on the increase as stated above, there has also been a correspondent increase in the support of parents to their daughters going into marriage. It is not unusual for parents to use part of the money given to them as *kem* to buy presents including cooking utensils and other household items for the couple. This has tended to blur the high cost of *kem* and helped a lot of young couples to stabilise their marriages.

6.6.4 Increased Church role in the Marriage Process:

The abolition of exchange marriage as indicated earlier, was supported by the Church especially the DRCM. Over the years, Church influence on marriage has continued to increase. For most couples, the culmination of this increasing influence is marked by weddings presided over by the clergy. In the Catholic Church for example, couples can only partake in the Holy Communion (*za sha atse*) if they are formally married before a priest. In the *Nongu U Kristu U Sudan Hen Tiv (NKST)* Church, on the other hand, though a couple

can partake of the communion (*tebul*) if baptised, a married man cannot have any lay position in the structure of the church until he is formally wedded in the tradition of the Church. Weddings have tended to legitimize and stabilize marriages, leading to increased marriage related expenditures and ceremonies most of which are “alien” to the Tiv concept.

6.6.5 Consideration of Women’s Feelings and Opinions in the Marriage Process: Though consent of the woman was sought in pre-colonial days prior to marriage even under the *yamshe* system, the abolition of *yamshe* and the transformation of Tiv society with its attendant implications has expanded the consideration given to women’s feelings by all stake holders in the marriage contract. Now a man has to first seek the approval of his intended wife before approaching her people for support. It is rare to beat and force a woman into marriage. Before the commencement of *kem*, the girl is required to endorse the husband (to be) in public. Women can more openly turn down marriage proposals from men and the reasons can be anything from old age to ‘lack of love’. Sometimes it is even possible for a couple to marry against the expressed wish of their parents. This has tended to undermine the hitherto dominant influence of elders in society especially on matters of marriage.

6.6.6 Increase in the incidence of divorce: Pre-colonial marriage system especially *yamshe* was virtually “divorce proof”. The stability and peaceful co-existence of one couple in the exchange arrangement depended on the stability and peaceful co-existence of the other couple. There was a balance of stability and no man could maltreat his wife without a prompt and effective retaliatory measure at which his sister (*ingyor*) was at the receiving end. This mutual deterrence led to very low incidence of divorce. The abolition of exchange marriage and the return of *kem* produced a divorce prone system of marriage at which any party to the marriage even if solemnized in the church can opt out at the slightest excuse. The safeguards built into the *yamshe* system are no longer in existence and even the fear of *tsav* and *akombo* which hitherto kept husbands and wives close to each other has been completely erased paving way for an avalanche of divorces. For each divorce, the father-in-law is required to return all items of

kem collected from the husband though some men do not really insist on this.

6.6.7 The diminishing Role of Chastity: As indicated earlier, chastity was a cornerstone of pre-colonial marriage especially *yamshe*. Though women who had lost their virginity still found husbands, they were required to “confess” in order for the culprit to propitiate the *ikyoor* ritual to cleanse the woman before she could settle down into the marriage. The exception to this “rule” was the practice of *ikyar* amongst the Iharev and Masev super clans already discussed. The emphasis on chastity had the added advantage of setting the records straight and ensuring that the woman started her marriage in purity and was not blameworthy before any *akombo*. The abolition of *yamshe* and attendant changes have subverted the value system underlining chastity to a point that no woman is expected to “confess” her state before marriage and undergo the *ikyoor* ritual again. There is therefore no ‘cleansing’ for ‘blameworthy’ women. One of the consequences of this development is increased promiscuity amongst young people, for there is virtually no opportunity to count the cost of indiscriminate pre-marital sex when they decide to marry.

6.6.8 Over Exposure of Widows: One of the ways through which widows were protected under the *yamshe* system was through the practice of allowing children (or brothers) to take over the wives of their deceased father (or brother). The idea of “taking over widows” also ensured that the other couple to the exchange were not threatened or undermined just because a husband had been lost at the other end of the exchange. The abolition of exchange marriage has distorted the value system around this concept, to a point that most women today do not subscribe to the idea. This is also true of most men. This has exposed widows to untold hardships and embarrassments. In the pre colonial period, they were “distributed” as part of the deceased’s “property”, there was an extent to which they could be conceptualized as inheritance (*Iyako*). In this sense, what could have been their own automatically passed over night to their “new husbands”. The new trend complicated by increase in wealth and property means that widows who refuse to be taken by their step children (or brother

In-laws) are for all practical purposes claiming the wealth and property of their late husbands at the exclusion of other members of the family. Resisting this claim has pushed other families to seize the wealth and property of their “brothers” from “undeserving wives” – who are normally accused of killing their husbands. This has triggered an association of widows (*kasev mba ikosun*) with the aim of giving support to distressed and abandoned widows and putting pressure on society to rethink their hostility to the widows.

6.6.9 Increased Tendency Towards Family Planning: The concept of family planning was virtually alien in pre-colonial marriage systems. Children were the essence of every marriage and no attempts were made to place the limits of the number of children a couple could have. Even when a woman separates from a man and was living with her parents, if she had any children in her father’s house (by other people), the children were still considered as the children of the “first husband” provided the bride price on her had not been returned; and she had not been formally given to as a wife to another man. Things are significantly different today. Couples are now planning their families and most men do not accept children indiscriminately especially from wives who are no longer living with them.

6.6.10 Changes in Residency Rules: As indicated earlier in the chapter, the basic residency rules underlining all pre-colonial marriage systems was patrilocal. This allowed the couple to live with the groom’s family. As children were born, they became automatic members of the paternal unit resulting into a patrilocal extended family most often going back to many generations. Nowadays, there is the tendency towards neolocal residences because of the rapid structural transformation of Tiv society following colonialism and its attendant effects.

All these changes and trends have combined to weaken the core values inherent in pre-colonial marriage systems. Though some residue of these values still exists most have been distorted and replaced by a new value system based on materialism, Christianity and western education.

CHAPTER 5

TIV BURIAL SYSTEMS

5.1. Tiv Concept of Death

The Tiv conceptualise death at the main levels, the first *Ku daa*, does not involve loss of life, it occurs however on account of a very grievous misfortune, Examples of *Ku daa* include destruction of a man's house by fire or a sudden dissolution of a husband by his wives. The second level involve actual death of the body and this is called *Ku swendegh*, involving loss of life through accident, war small-pox, catarrh, a wound, leprosy and similar other ailments. The third level is the "normal" death called *Ku anange* occurring due to old age or some other disease. In Tiv world view, nobody dies unless he/she is killed by *mbatsav*. Death is therefore primarily explained from the perspective of the purpose for which *mbatsav* want to put the body to instead of any disease which could have been an obvious cause. The purpose for which a person is killed by *mbatsav* is realised only when he is raised (*dugh*) from the grave. It is however clear that not every person is raised (*dugh*) from the grave since several inquests into certain deaths do not reveal clear reasons for death aside from the fact that certain death situations seem too gory even for *mbatsav* to attempt to raise the dead for whatever purpose. Burial with inhibitory objects especially ornaments and red textile pieces could also hinder *mdugh* by *mbatsav*. In such cases however, a relation of the deceased was normally killed as a substitute. This compelled strict compliance with the traditional mode of burial ensuring that no prohibited item ever entered the grave.

The process of raising (*dughun*) the dead by *mbatsav* is metaphysical and is handled by a specialist called *Ordughun*. One of the ways this is done is for the specialist to approach the grave of the deceased with a small mock grave and a white cock. The cock is whirled six times over the actual grave during which times incantations are made and the grave opens up for the deceased to be snatched with a hook. After this, the cock is whirled another six times over the grave to close it up.

Another method is the use of a chain (*tsue* or *lijam*). With this chain one could stand a few kilometres away from the grave (See

Akiga, 1933) and snatch the deceased from the grave after a whirlwind is generated to open the grave for the chain to hook the deceased. Other specialists prefer direct verbal threats to the deceased. He could thus be threatened to “come out! or a leopard will devour him” (*due ga anyam akorough*) and because of the implications, he comes out on his own to meet his captor. Yet another method is tunnelling (*Agevanyi*) This is resorted to especially when the deceased grave was closely guarded on the night of burial to see who could rush coming for him. A tunnel is normally dug from a distance to the grave and the deceased is drawn without the knowledge of those guarding his grave to face his captor. Another method is through the use of animal mediums especially birds and monkeys.

The most commonly used birds by *mbatsav* for this purpose are *Ivungu* (abyssinian spotted owl) *Akiki* (pearl spotted owl) *Kpile* (sjod based owl) *Mtsan* (African scops owl and *Gbev* (the standard wing night jar).

After being snatched from the grave and brought back to life (through the *ikyehegh* ritual) he is made to embrace the nearest tree from where he is chained to be taken in an underground carven (*ivungu*), a forest (*gbor*) or *wuna poor* (the strong room where command *tsav regalia* are kept.

Once the person reaches the place of his captivity, he is made to reckon for his deeds during his life on earth (this is not a parallel of the biblical hell). During this period of reckoning, a person could be tortured while at the same time those with vital information for *mbatsav* are required to confess same. The main food during this captivity was beniseed and human excreta (*ishwa man ambi*). Though, we do not seem to know whether this diet was of raw beniseed or fried, it was believed to be a fattening and sedative diet that ensured the complete submission of the deceased in custody. After information must have been extracted from the individual (and he had been sufficiently tortured) he is butchered with the *Kashosho* knife on a bent bushy tree (*Akiga*, 1933) or inside an underground carven, (*ivungu*) or on a specially made slaughter mat of wood (see Abraham, 1933). The flesh is shared amongst *mbatsav* with the head reserved for the one who killed the victim. In cases where the victim is a baby, those who finally eat the flesh are those closest to the baby (by blood) and normally in the same *iye igo* or *iye ingor*. Though we were unable

to investigate the claim of *mbatsav* to ascertain the extent to which the dead were actually raised from their graves living for a period of time before they were slaughtered, Abraham (1933) had reported that a blood analysis of some of the so-called slaughter mats recovered by agents of the colonial government in 1930 across Tivland showed no trace of blood whatsoever. He also recounts a drama in which two people brought before the colonial authority confessed to killing their relation, raising him and butchering him for “food” . When the grave was opened for the hard evidence of the case, the deceased body which had not yet decomposed was found intact. According to him no single case of killing and eating by *mbatsav* brought before the colonial government and investigated could be substantiated.

5.2 Burial Rite

Burial rites follow strictly the two different types of death and other variation in the death situation depending on the “socio persona” of the deceased. For example, the burial of one who had mastery of *akombo* and had been initiated into the higher forms of *akombo* like *Ibiamegh* was different from that of other ordinary people. Generally however, both *swende* and *anange* deaths are preceded by an open inquest to determine the cause (and purpose) of death, unravel those behind it, forestall reoccurrence, and protect the living from similar fate. The inquest (*ku oron*) involved accusations and counter accusations and in extreme cases, it was determined by divination (*ishor Kpahen*). In cases where the inquest was not conclusive, an elaborate post- mortem was carried out on the deceased to determine whether he had killed himself using the *tsav* in his chest. The post- mortem involved putting a big potsherd (*chenge*) on the chest (*vanger*) of the deceased (to contain the spiritual might of the chest). Using charcoal, a semi-circle is drawn on the chest of the deceased after which water is thrown on it. The charcoal marks are not washed away entirely, the chest is cut along the charcoal marks and tongs (of the *Ibohough* tree) used in opening up the chest. On opening, the *tsav* growing on the side of the chest “flies” out before settling back to enable a more thorough examination.

If the inquest confirmed that the death was *swende*, it became mandatory to propitiate the *swende kombo*. Though each type of *swende* (*swende ndor* or *swende ombor*) was propitiated using a he-goat (*kpev*) and a cock (*ikyegh*) while *swende ndor* (involving death in war or by accident) was propitiated by any person initiated in the appropriate rites, *swende ombor*(involving death by cough, leprosy etc.) could only be propitiated

by a slave. The basic emblem of *swende* are palm fronds (this is also the origin of the present day practice where palm fronds are erected on the road leading to the compound of a deceased). Unless these *Swende* rites are performed, food can not be cooked and eaten in the compound of the deceased. After the propitiation, if the deceased died of leprosy (*Swende ombor*) he is taken to the back of his hut by other lepers to be buried in the bush. Those who died of small pox (*agina*) are also taken through the back of their huts by survivors and it is not unusual for a compound to be razed to the ground after such burials as a way of containing the spread of the deadly disease. *Swende* graves aside from their unique position (outside the compound in the bush or near a stream) had no side partition to place the deceased away from the grave in-filling.

The rituals following the inquest of *anange* deaths differ from those of *swende* deaths. This is more so in the death of those who are initiated into the higher *akombo* of *Ibiamegh* or one who had during his life time *wa genga* (sponsored the drum festival) *yam nyinya* (bought a horse) *wua bua* (slaughtered a cow) *wa ivom* (sponsored a stage dance) *gber indyer* (commissioned the indyer drum) or was as the case could be with a woman, *kwase kem u tyoo- atee* (a right hand wife by exchange survived by many children and grand children). These achievements are considered the physical manifestations reflecting the level of attainment in the spiritual (*tsav*) realm. It was therefore mandatory for the heads of such people to be severed at death for keeps as *amboravungu* by their children or kinsmen. Subsequently, they are guarded very closely at the point of death by their children and kinsmen who normally struggled with each other over their heads. If a head was severed” prior to burial, a mock one (*kumen*) made of clay was fixed in place of the original and the news of the death announced normally by the beating of the *indyer* in codes capable of travelling over 60 kilometres in radius and easy enough to be comprehended by the average person. Mourners arriving as a result of the announcement can not cry until a person of similar status with the deceased is summoned to perform the opening rites (*kusoron*). For example, if the deceased is an *Ibiamegh* initiate, another *Ibiamegh* initiate (*oribiam*) was summoned to perform the rite. This person also called *Orsorun ku* was required to climb with a cock and chicken on top of the roof (or *yough*) in which the deceased is lying in state, kill the chicken and chant spells (*ta achia*) making generous references to the supernatural powers acquired by the deceased in his life time after which he laments the demise of the deceased saying *ayioo via kpe veoo* (oh he is dead!). This lament is immediately taken over by members of the

compound. On coming down the cock is killed while its blood is splashed on the chest of the dead man, the heart is normally given to the man's last born to swallow. The next rite to this is the burial service (*ku kasen*). This involves dance troupes especially *mbaakume* and *mbaagbaka*, the *ityar* (wake keeping) tributes to the dead, drills over the *indyer* and symbolic human sacrifice. While the dance troupes are primarily for entertainment, the wake keeping principally a women's concern is observed in an *ate* (a shed) especially erected for that purpose. The deceased is placed in a boat (*tso*) and covered with a ritual cloth (*ichaverikondo*) and laid in state in the *ate*. While in state, the body of the deceased could be dehydrated by piercing holes through the back and making fire around it to enable the body fluid to run out (Downes 1933).

While in state, the deceased nails are cut and put in the *tso* and the *indyer* is tuned towards paying tribute to the deceased. The tribute is directed toward Takuruku (the ancestral father of the Tiv) with the aim of informing him of the deceased's "homecoming" part of the message in cord when broken down means "*Takurku Anyamazenga tile jigh jigh Kheghen waningo, ngu van sha kumun a tamen, kumun u tamen.....*" (Takuruku Anyamazenga, stand still, stand still, wait for your kin who is coming on the eternal highway. Though the interpretation of this tribute with reference to its substance and relationship to the after death in Tiv worldview is not clear, it is certainly a worthy tribute for the dead. Similar tribute are also paid to the deceased by sporadic gun salutes that continue after the formal announcement of the death to a few weeks after burial must have taken place. The next major aspect of the burial service involves the jumping of the *indyer* by *or sorun ku* who was required to jump the length of the *indyer* for six times (and the sides) without touching it – a breach of which was paid for by a human life. Following this jumping a cow (*bua*) was brought before the mourners and stabbed by the *orsorunku* with a spear, The stabbing represents the symbolic killing of whosoever led the cow before the mourners. What follows after this is burial procession led by elders in which the deceased is carried shoulder high around the compounds for six(6) times after which the *ityar* is closed formally by sacrificing one of the deceased's daughters by exchange marriage (*iyohol ityar aa wanna u kwase u tan ave vanger.*)

Despite these complex variations in the pre-burial rituals, the treatment of the body prior to burial virtually follows the same pattern. Because Tiv burials are flexed, as soon as death was ascertained, the body was washed. Old women who could no longer bear children were responsible for washing the bodies of women (since it was a taboo for other women to

touch a dead body) while adults washed the bodies of men and children. After washing, the mouth of the deceased was tied with a piece of cloth and his waist similarly tied with a loin cloth to form a pant (*ibor*) camwood (*kpagh*) and *akeshi* (palm kernel oil) were applied to the body. While the well to do use other cloths like *tugudu*, *alishi*, *anger*, *akpem* and *gbajir* as mortuary clothes the poor do not necessarily have textile material covering their bodies. Throughout the period prior to burial those who kept vigil over the deceased had the added responsibility of constantly contracting (*tsuwe*) parts of his body to forestall the body becoming stiff.

6.6 THE BURIAL FACILITY

The grave is the characteristic burial facility here. This is generally a rectangular pit with an elaborate side partition (*kpar*) to accommodate the deceased. Its depth is anything between 0.75 to 1.2 metres depending on the **socia-persona** of the deceased, his age, nature of the soil, and even laziness on the side of the grave diggers (the Tiv do not have professional grave diggers). For example, a deceased who is survived by many children would likely have a deeper grave than a poor man who dies with no surviving children. Similarly, the grave of a child is not as deep as that of an adult nor does it have a side partition. The results of the inquiry conducted at death determines the location of the grave (with reference to the compound) and it is the duty of the compound head (guarded by the inquiry) to show the exact position of the grave. Variables used in the final determination of the location of the grave are the type of death, age of the deceased, standing in the *tsav* and *akombo* domain, as well as partrilineal affinities. The elder whose responsibility it is to show the location of the grave completes this on the night of the burial when he leads *mbatsav* to it for the *mdugh* process. As already indicated, when death is as a result of *swende*, (*ndor* or *ombor*) the grave is located away from the compound in the bush, near a stream. A breach in locating the *swende* grave according to tradition triggers more death of the particular *swende* type in the community. Fear of this ensures compliance with the tradition on this. There is however a lone case of *swende* burial reported by Gundu (1980) at the *tse* Kerekere Kyokor in Tombo in the kitchen gardens (*ken akongo*) of the compound of the deceased. This report seems to have been the exception rather than the rule.

Children as a rule were buried by the side of the road at the outskirts of the compound. Young men and old men are buried in the kitchen gardens of their households. Others who had however been initiated in the higher *akombo* of *ibiamegh* were buried in the centre of, or in their *ate* (the reception hut). The *kwase kem u ityo atee* was however buried by the door side of her hut. Ordinary women without many children were buried by the road leading to the direction of their kinsmen. Her kinsmen had the responsibility of rasing (*dughun*) her from the grave and the idea was to site the grave in such a way that when they came for this purpose, they would not disturb the entire compound by way of noise, storm or thick darkness. This reasoning also informed the location of the strangers' grave towards the direction of his kinsmen. Additional factors relevant in grave location are the nature of soil as with respect for the wish of the individual agreed prior to death.

6.7 THE BURIAL AND POST-BURIAL RITUAL

These rituals also follow strictly the different types of death already discussed. The burial and post burial rituals associated with initiates of the higher *akombo* like *ibiamegh* and others of similar standing were also different. Generally however, all Tiv burials are flexed laid on the left side with the face towards the rising sun. This is a compulsory requirement indicating the direction (*Swen*) through which the Tiv entered Benue Valley. This is also the most common sleeping position of the Tiv.

After a deceased must have been placed there in the grave, it is filled back with the top soil going in first while the laterite follows to make a mound upon which his personal effects like foot wears, clothes, beds, walking sticks, smoking pipes etc are thrown. After filling the grave, diggers are given pieces of tobacco to chew and a flaming grass torch (*ikyagh*) which they whirl around their heads and between their legs for a number of times. The person who first started the grave is normally the last to perform this ritual after which he extinguishes the grass touch on the grave at a point where the dead man's head is supposed to lie. Thereafter, the grave diggers proceed to the stream to wash their bodies. Throughout the actual burial process both women and children are not supposed to go near the grave (nor look into it). Women who breach these rules stand the risk of losing their pregnancies (for pregnant women) unless the appropriate rites are performed.

At the burial of the *ibiamegh* initiate (and others of similar standing) short posts are inserted into the grave upon which the blood of a cock is poured (representing the blood of the person 'killed' to accompany the deceased). A white thread is tied on the right hand of the deceased and brought out of the grave and held to a post or tree nearby. Another unique feature of these graves is the practice of using wooden slabs to cover the corpse before infilling. While this practice is still very common particularly among the *Iharev* and *Ukum* people, it has virtually been abandoned in other parts of Tivland. Elsewhere (Gundu 1989) has pointed out the commercial relevance of this practice linking it to flourishing "honey farms" whose collection (from the graves) is a major pre-occupation of these people.

Once the *ibiamegh* initiate (and others of similar standing) are buried the initiate who handles the *ku kasen* (*orkasen*) is requested to take down (from the dead man's reception hut) all his medical and religious insignia (*u lough mba akombough*). This removal is necessary as there is the desire to continue using the hut afterward. Thereafter the grave (if in the sit-out hut) is turned into a facility upon which one can sit or even sleep. Where it is in the middle of the compound, it is normally covered with a thatch and textile roof over a grave of small poles erected over the grave. The textile is normally of superior quality (*ikpa mkir*). Today this practice is most common among the *Iharev* and *Masev* super clans having faded out in other groups.

Once a deceased head was severed by either his son or kinsman on account of its significance or as *imborvungu* head, his death was observed annually for five years in the case of men. These annual observances featured various dance forms involving drink and merriment and the *ingbianjor* ritual involving the symbolic feeding of the *ingbianjor* statue with human flesh as a way of stabilising society. It is after the completion of these ceremonies over the years that the deceased is said to have been finally laid to rest.

The use(s) to which the severed heads of deceased are put vary. On severance (by the sons) it is taken to their matrilineal kinsmen who receive it and cast it finally by the *cire perdue* (lost wax) technique into an intricate head called *imborvungu ii poor* or sometimes *imborvungu i ingbianjor* or *ii uter* or *ityough ki ter* or *imburvungu i duran adura*. It is sometimes made of terracota. Though there is another type *imborvungu* made of the femur of the deceased or a bronze cast or terracotta, the

“skull” type is the most respected because of its powers. The head is normally dressed with human hair and decorated with cowries (*anyi a shoho*) and abrus heads (*apii*) with *yough yough* to match by its neck. The two are normally used together to ensure fertility of the land, good governance, protection and general success. The potency of the *imborvungu* is regularly rejuvenated by human blood.

6.8 CORE VALUES UNDERLINING THE TIV CULTURE OF DEATH:

Tiv culture of death is underscored by a lot of core values each of which held together and gave meaning to the different aspects of the culture. As indicated earlier the handling of each death situation depended on the type of death **socia-persona** of the deceased, age and the results of the death inquest.

1. In all cases materialism was played down, burial was reduced to the barest minimum except where a man of means (*shagbaor*) was being buried — in which case it was part of his wealth that was expended to run the burial. Though food could be eaten during burial, it was mostly prepared for children and other visitors most of whom came from far distances to pay their last respect to the deceased. In most cases such food was not even prepared in the compound of the deceased but was brought by women from adjoining villages.
2. The inquest was significant because it sought to identify the cause of death and the person(s) behind it. It also gave elders the opportunity to warn (*ta chin*) and take steps to forestall similar deaths in their domain. During or shortly after an inquest concerned elders could go to a diviner (*za shor*) and return with some insight into a particular death which could enable them sometimes to propitiate certain *akombo* in order to ensure better health for their communities. Even when inquest (and or divination) indicated that a man had killed himself such information became useful in the instruction and guidance of the youths towards a more fulfilling and longer life.
3. To underscore the solemn nature of death (and burial) both women and children were shielded from direct contact with the dead. They could not go near the grave or look into it. Once death was announced women were expected to shave their heads while the

men as a sign of mourning remained unkempt with a loin cloth around their waist (*ta nyagba uya*). While lamentations (*ukwelegh*) and crying were a general part of the mourning process which also provided dance troupes (in case of a *shagbor*) and specially composed songs, the whole process was still managed in such a way as to underscore the solemn nature of the death situation, bringing out the respect for the dead without which it was difficult to see the living as having discharged their responsibility properly to the deceased.

4. Another core value of the culture of death here is related to the timing of burials. Though Tiv burials were not as prompt as Islamic burials, they did not drag beyond a few days. Once a death was confirmed, if the deceased had given his/her daughters into marriage all their in-laws were formally informed of her/his demise by special messengers (no inlaw could respond to information on the death of his wife's kinsmen unless he was given formal notice). Besides inlaws, *igba* (mother's kinsmen) were also notified. Though the in-law was under obligation (discharged in relation to means) to bring a cloth with which to bury his wife's father, the *igba* were under no such obligation.
5. Generally there were a complex of taboos related to the death situation here and each was significant enough to cause serious problems in case of breach. Post-burial harmony and well-being of society depended on a strict adherence to these taboos and both individuals and society had a stake in ensuring that every involvement in the death situation was in full compliance with the latter and spirit of the taboos.

5.6 CHANGES IN THE TIV CULTURE OF DEATH

The earliest changes in the Tiv culture of death as argued by Gundu (2001) are directly tied to cults. Prominent amongst these are *girinya*, *budeli*, *ijov*, *ivase*, *naakaa*, and *nyamibuan*. While *girinya* stands out alone, all the others were cults against *mbatsav*. The knowledge of *girinya* spread from Udam into Tivland and today the cult is widespread amongst the Tiv communities that border the Udam of Cross River State especially amongst the Jechira people of Kunav and Gaav. Elsewhere (see Gundu 1980) the historical background to the introduction of these cults and the way its adherents are treated at death has been given. Essentially, the *girinya* is a head hunting cult. Though women can be

ceremonial initiates, it is normally a man's cult led by a *nomor* who might have killed a person and cut off his head (*itiam chegh*) for keeps.

At the death of an initiate, members discretely spread out into neighbouring territories (occupied by other groups) to hunt and bring human heads for the burial rites. The number of heads required depends on the standing of the deceased and it is only after these must have been successfully brought in that the death is announced. Elders who may not be initiates but desire the cult's burial rites are required to kill a baboon (*ikyā*) on their death bed. Characteristic burial rites include the cult dance climaxing into the ritual killing of a chicken and goat. It is done in the case of a chicken by slashing its head against the edge of a sharp knife and in the case of the goat by a singular machete blow the breach of which involves the substitution of the chicken or the goat for a repeat performance.

During this dance and the drills, the deceased is dressed and seated on a chair in the open with his feet resting on the head(s) he personally brought in as a member of the cult as well as those brought in by other cult members in his honour. These funeral rituals are rounded up with the symbolic cult feeding on cooked yams. All those initiates having human heads to their credit partake of this feeding as well as those who might have witnessed killings done by other members. The yams are dipped in oil (palm oil) and taken out using the tip of a sharp knife or a stick. The grave of the *girinya nomor* is in the centre of the compound and all other considerations that go with the burial of other people including the orientation of the body and inhibition of certain colours and objects (metal and ornaments) into the grave are observed here. The heads are not buried with the deceased. While those gathered by the deceased pass to his elder son for keeps, the fresh ones gathered for his burial go back to those who brought them.

The anti *mbatsav* cults on the other hand were an amalgam of popular uprisings against *mbatsav* each with a different origin and philosophy.

To the extent that each sought to undermine belief in *tsav* thereby encouraging changes in society especially on issues bordering on fear and belief in *mbatsav*, one can say each contributed in undermining the Tiv culture of death which as indicated earlier was based on a firm belief system around *akombo* and *tsav*. *Budeli*, for example was a movement of youngmen who were embittered by the activities of *mbatsav*. Though it had a very short life span, it attempted to undermine *tsav* through the medium of song and dance. Though as pointed out by Gundu (1980)

there was a limit to which mere ridicule and abuse of *mbatsav* could lead to drastic changes in the culture of death, such changes came only after some of these cults started taking active steps to checkmate *mbatsav* in relation to their perceived role in death and burials. *Ivase* which originated amongst the Utange of south-eastern Tivland around 1902 had the sole aim of neutralizing the activities of *mbatsav* in the compound of the adherents. Initiation into the cult involved the erection of a fence in which a pot was put on a stand with an egg. A fowl or a dog was killed and its head put in the pot (while the body of the fowl was cooked and eaten, that of the dog was thrown away since the Tiv do not eat dogs). After this must have been done, the initiate was given a staff with the skin of a leopard (*anyam*) on which an egg was broken. With this, the initiate could proceed to initiate others in his locality. Once a member was fully initiated, *mbatsav* coming to his compound for their activities stood the risk of instant death. At the death of a member of the cult, burial deliberately included a red piece of cloth (prohibited in Tiv burial) which was tied to the *lvase* fence to deter *mbatsav* from *dughun* the deceased.

Nyambuan (or *ageregenyi*) adherents also attempted to actively check the activities of *mbatsav* in relation to death and burial. Though, there is a dispute to its origin (see Makar 1975 & Tsayo 1974) initiates were required to eat uncooked eggs and drink special brew. During the initiation, the adherent who was *ormbatsav* was expected to confess and turn over any *tsav* regalia he had as a sign of true repentance after which he was armed with charms and a fly whisk which he used in detecting those with *tsav* in society. At the death of a cult member, concerted intimidating attempts were made at *mbatsav* of the area. The deceased was left to decompose under guard. Ashes were then thrown over the body and beaten to a pulp with clubs and sticks. The pulp and the bones were then bundled into the grave and closed. Because the *Nyamibuan* also aimed at undermining the colonial authority, the colonial government descended heavily against it stamping it out before it could spread and consolidate over Tivland.

Besides these changes, others originated from European contact. The earliest documented contact between the Tiv and the European goes back to 1954 on the southern banks of the Benue River. Though there was sporadic contact after this, it was the British occupation of Tivland in 1907 that led to increased changes in the cultural world view of the Tiv. The occupation led to the construction of schools, churches and health

centres. These became the centres of change since no man could come into contact with these and still keep his belief and acceptance of *tsav* and *akombo* intact. The churches preached a belief system diametrically opposed to *tsav* while the health centres offered alternative health remedies based on new diagnosis opposed to indigenous medical practice which was founded on divination (*ishor*) and *akombo*. From the perspective of the culture of health, changes as a result of the Tiv contact with Europeans included the changing conception of death, the introduction of cemeteries, the use of the casket and grave building.

As indicated earlier, the Tiv concept of death was closely tied in with the belief in *akombo* and *tsav*. No one died unless he was killed by *mbatsav* who also had power to raise him from his grave. All rituals were tied into these belief system while a fear of ruthless sanctions provided enough grounds for compliance. The coming of Europeans and the introduction of the Christian faith replaced the central place of *tsav* and *akombo* in the culture of death with God and disease. There was consequently a shift in the culture of death. The inquest was reduced in significance for death was no longer the handiwork of any man but God and the immediate cause of death could not be anything more than disease (*angev*). Pre-burial and post-burial rites that were central to the culture of death were also no longer significant. Following mass conversion to Christianity, taboos and beliefs in the culture of death were not only ridiculed but denied with impurity leading to increased demystification of death to a level where not only food and merriment have become part and parcel of the death situation but one at which both children and women are active participants in the culture of death. Through this ridicule and denial, the belief system in *tsav* and *akombo* as relating to the culture of death has gradually weakened.

The development of cemeteries in the Tiv culture of death is also tied up with European influence. Though cemeteries had been known in Nigerian history and places like Egypt, ancient Nubia and the Katanga area (of Central Africa) the phenomenon had remained unknown in Tiv where the circumstances of each death including the **socia-persona** of the deceased determined the location of the burial. With the establishment of the colonial administration in Tivland, semi-urban settlements starting growing around the various administrative and health centres. In these heterogeneous settlements, the disposal of the dead was primarily a health problem thus leading to specially designated burial areas in each urban area. Over the years a few families across Tivland have resorted to

burying their dead in earmarked burial places. The growth of urban cemeteries has however, been frustrated by the practice of urban residents (for whom the cemeteries are designated) of carrying their dead back to their villages of origin for burial. Those few cemeteries still in use are patronized by the other groups whose culture of death allows more liberally for the use of cemeteries and public health officers or the police who are sometimes required to bury unclaimed bodies or those of criminals.

As indicated earlier, the burial in Tiv culture was initially in clothes. The body was wrapped in either *tugudu*, *gbeleve*, *alishi*, *anger*, *akpem*, or *gbagir*. Some were even wrapped in leaves or mats. Certain objects were also prohibited from entering into the grave. The introduction of the coffin changed all these and more for it did not only alter the basic orientation of the corpse from being placed on the left side to a face-up position. With the coffin, metals also started entering the grave (coffins are built with nails) thus posing a major challenge to the *tsav* belief system.

Grave building (*war suen*) was another change as a result of European contact. Prior to the colonial contact, graves were simple pits closed to form mounds. There were hardly any grave makers and the grave was for all practical purposes not intended to be a permanent structure. Grave building here must be seen as part of the attempt to make for a more permanent disposal facility. The construction (with implication in the resolution of land dispute and the search for political power) involves a sub-surface brick structure, plaster and paint work. Designs vary and may include the sign of a cross, a tomb stone with some inscription or some other signs. Both the coffin and the grave building have implications for the structure of the grave. They make the grave longer and deeper than was the case when burial was flexed. More recent changes are by way of superstructures constructed over the primary disposal pit some of which are designed and supervised by professionals involving a lot of money.

The gross effect of these changes is a monumental increase in the cost of burial. Though there is no study that can help us put the average cost of burial in Tivland, basic cost elements are on the increase. This include (but not limited to) preparation of the body including mortuary expenses as the case may be, communicating the news of death, cost of the coffin, disposal facility and the cost of entertainment and logistics. These in

addition to all those hidden cost inherent in every burial situation. Though some of these elements were part of the overall burial cost prior to colonization, their values (cost implication) have been on the increase since colonization. Preparation of the body in pre-colonial times for example, involved only washing and applying camwood (*kpagh*) and palm kernel oil (*ate*) on it. It was only in the uncommon case of the *ityar* that dehydration was adopted but even here, what was required was just wood for drying up the body. Today, because of long delays in burying the dead even those who die at home are injected with chemicals to preserve their bodies while those who die in hospitals are not only embalmed but kept in the mortuaries pending burial. The cost incurred here therefore depends on the length of time a deceased is kept in the mortuary and the type of embalming used. On the communication of the news of death, use was made of foot messengers, the *indyer* drum and weeping and wailing. Considering the fact that the Tiv were then a virtually homogenous group without many living outside the boundaries of the group, no considerable cost was expended on this element. Since the coming of the Europeans there has been rapid transformation leading to a complex scatter of individuals far away from “their homes” each of which is required by tradition to be informed of the death of close relations. Given the improvement in the infrastructure of communication, the print and electronic media are increasingly being used to communicate the news of death including the use of posters. The cost of the coffin and burial facilities have also been on the increase depending on quality and the materials used. Because of the time element that may be implied in the use of particular coffins and disposal facilities many burials run into delays that probably could have been avoided if there was no insistence on the use of particular coffins and particular disposal facilities.

Entertainment and logistics in the past were minimal since only children and distant visitors were allowed to eat in funerals in pre-colonial times. Emerging changes from the colonial period have increased the cost element in entertainment and logistics to involve the movement of “mourners” and materials over long distances, creation of access roads, manufacture of souvenirs, uniforms (for the family of the deceased), renovation of residences (which sometimes involve building houses from the scratch).

Though pre-colonial society had devised ways of sharing burial cost amongst “interested” parties, the idea has since been improved upon to

an absurd level. When in-laws are not coerced into taking full responsibility for the burial of the parents (relatives) of their wives, they are taxed heavily in cash and kind towards the burial. Sometimes they are given a shopping list including *akwati u ken ikpa* (a shrewd reference to money). At times, when the cost of meeting the burial of the deceased is too high, others have resorted to “mortuary dumping” of their dead to buy time to look for money. Yet others have resorted to the phenomenon of “first burials” (*wa shin nya*) after which they take their time to raise resources required to complete the “second burial” which is normally not more than entertainment.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 6.6 This work has attempted to document details of Tiv marriage systems and culture of death. The study was intended to fill part of the gap in our understanding of Tiv culture in addition to bringing out the core values inherent in traditional burial and marriage practices of the Tiv. A further objective was to look at the changes in these two areas of Tiv culture (overtime) and ascertain the extent to which they can be argued as "positive" or "negative" in the overall consideration of Tiv cultural heritage. Though our theoretical and methodological approach was for an essentially descriptive survey research, we did articulate some basic hypotheses linking the major research problems of the work.

We have found in the study that there was a value system holding the Tiv culture of death and marriage systems. This value system has however been lost (or distorted) as a result of changes traceable to European contact. We have however identified traces of some of these lost (or distorted) value systems but they can be hardly revived or rejuvenated. We have also found out that the in-built social control mechanisms in the culture of death and pre-colonial systems have broken down as a result of changes following European contact. Another issue that has come up from this study is the fact that changes in death and marriage are continuously fostering materialistic tendencies on contemporary Tiv society and most of the changes are perceived by the Tiv as inferior (or negative) in comparison to what was in practice before.

These findings were arrived at using a methodology which allowed us to use both primary and secondary sources to build an outline upon which the field work was conducted. Basic field research techniques included group and individual interviews in addition to a specially organised workshop with the primary aim of bringing together, a group of knowledgeable people on aspects of Tiv marriage systems and culture of death to clarify and help form our concepts.

As explained earlier, our techniques and methods have to be understood in the context of our limitations as the paramount ruler of the Tiv. This limitation could not allow us to personally go out to collect data in the field. We were however able to use research assistants who were

properly guided and sent out into the field to identify informants on the two components of Tiv culture covered by the research. Basic data was elicited from these informants.

Though we did not use a tape recorder, each interview was carefully transcribed and reviewed with the research assistants. A few people, notably District Heads and members of the Tiv Traditional Council were invited to sit with us at the palace for discussions around the topic. In these discussions, we sought to get clarifications on aspects of the fieldwork covered by the research assistants. These discussions also enabled us to identify other people in different areas covered by the research whom we were able to point out to the assistants to meet for further information.

The specially organised workshop tagged the "First National Workshop on Tiv Marriage and Burial Customs" was held at Gboko on 28th April 2001. Sixteen people were invited to discuss specific aspects of Tiv marriage and culture of death with a view to giving us more insight into the complex issues involved in the research.

- 6.7 We have been able through this methodology to attempt a detailed outline of Tiv marriage systems before and after the colonial period. Though the most characteristic of these was *yamshe*, all other systems especially *Kwase ngohol*, *kem kwase*, gravitated towards *yamshe* and were underscored by a common value system reinforced by the *tsav* and *akombo* belief system. With the abolition of exchange marriage in 1927 by the Colonial administration, a forced version of *kem* was "imposed" on the Tiv, thus eroding almost all the values that had hitherto underscored their marriage systems. *Kem* has been under continuous change up to the present.
- 6.8 Similar trends were also observed in our study of the culture of death. Here we also attempted a documentation of the different aspects of the culture of death including the variations in the treatment of the dead as a result of the different indices recognised by the Tiv as significant in death. Two types of deaths are known to the Tiv these are *ku swendegh* and *ku Anange*. Though each was treated differently, the Tiv believe that no person died until he is killed by *mbatsav* who then raised him from the dead to put him to the use for which he was killed. Because of this belief, the death situation is reinforced by a complex set of taboos and norms which have severe sanctions attached to their breach. In the

variations basic to the treatment of the death situation, the type of death in addition to indices like age, sex the "socio-persona" of the deceased and his or her standing in the *tsav* and *akombo* world are crucial. Variations are reflected in the treatment of the body, the location of the grave, its construction and other burial and post burial rituals. The study noted that prior to European contact, a few changes started creeping into the Tiv culture of death notably from the *girinya* cult and some other movements each of which was aimed as an uprising against *mbatsav*. Though most of these proved ineffective in dislodging the *tsav* and *akombo* belief system basic to the culture of death, *ivase* and *nyambuan* stand out for having taken remarkable steps to challenge *mbatsav* and question their role in the death situation. *Ivase* adherents did not only guide the graves of their members at death, they also used materials (especially red textiles) in the burial of their members thus disregarding the taboo against the use of red textiles (and metals) in burial. *Nyambuan* adherents on the other hand beat their dead to a "pulp" before burial so as to deprive *mbatsav* of "their meat", thus confronting them directly. Though, one of these cults, (*ijov*) has continued in one form or the other, all the others faded out and non can be said to have had any extensive and enduring influence on the Tiv. Such influence was only possible with European contact.

Though the European contact with the Tiv goes back to 1854, it was only in 1907 that the Tiv were effectively occupied by the British. The Colonial enterprise here was founded for the same reasons as elsewhere on the structures of thought aimed primarily at reinforcing the policy of cultural alienation, domination and exploitation, (see Gundu 1999). Schools, health centres and churches were set up to work in tandem to overturn the cultural heritage of the people and replace it with a more amendable worldview. The *tsav* and *akombo* belief system was undermined and a parallel worldview based on the Christian faith in addition to western values was imposed. New changes gradually set into the culture of death and have continued to the present.

6.4 UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGES IN TIV MARRIAGE:

Culture is dynamic and from this study, it is clear that even during the colonial period, the systems of marriage known amongst the Tiv underwent some changes. These changes developed to meet particular needs in society. Each change was accepted insofar as it did not subvert or distort the core values basic to it. For example, the acceptance of *kem* and *iyé* as alternative ways of marrying was still predicated on taking

steps to ensure their legitimization through an ultimate exchange process.

The significance of these marriage values was reinforced by a set of taboos and *akombo a kwase* especially *Hyambe* and *twer*. Care was taken by every body in the “marriage contract” to respect these taboos and conform to the marriage norms behind the different marriage systems. The abolition of exchange marriage in 1927 changed all these. For though, the preferred system of marriage (*kem*) was in all respects not new to the Tiv, it was no longer predicated as a marriage step to be completed at a future date by a full exchange process. Current changes resulting from the contemporary marriage system of the Tiv articulated in the work include, increased tendency towards exogamy and inter-group marriage, increased monetization and materialism in the marriage process, increased parental support for daughters going into marriage, increased church involvement in the marriage process, consideration for women's feelings (and opinions) in marriage, increase in the incidence of divorce, diminishing role of chastity, overexposure of widows, increased tendency towards family planning and changes in residency rules. The acceptance of the changes has significantly eroded and distorted the traditional values basic to the previous Tiv marriage systems. A new value system reinforced by Christianity and formal education underlies these changes in terms of direction and content.

Though a residue of the previous values still exists, majority have been discarded. The resultant transformation has always been conceptualised as “bad” for Tiv heritage. This explains the elder's constant charge that “*buter vihi tar*” (the white man has spoilt Tiv country). To the extent that they could not reverse the transformation triggered by the white men (and the missionaries) it was difficult to ascertain the damage and distortions visited on their heritage. The situation has continued to worsen not only in the consideration of marriage but other sub-cultural sectors of their heritage.

6.5 UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGES IN TIV CULTURE OF DEATH

Tiv culture of death had also been predicated on core values each of which was reinforced by the belief system in *tsav* and *akombo*. Our study of the culture of death showed that just as in the study of marriage, taboos and norms around the treatment of death were faithfully respected not only for fear of severe sanctions but also as a way of ensuring peace

and protecting the living against forces which would have otherwise destroyed them if the taboos were disregarded. Given the central place of *tsav* and *akombo* in Tiv culture of death, it was difficult for any change to take place in the culture of death unless it conformed in direction and content with the *tsav* and *akombo* belief system.

The change could also succeed if it aimed at totally replacing the *tsav* and *akombo* belief system with a paralleled belief system. Because the transformation of Tiv society (through colonization) and the activities of the missionary bodies imposed a parallel belief system on the people based on the tenets of Christianity, there was a rapid erosion of the hitherto known values in the culture of death leading to the different changes, we have been able to enumerate. Though the Christian faith is basic to the explanation of these changes, they are not entirely rooted in the Bible (nor church tradition). Most of them are today, resisted by the church in Tivland. (see Antiev 2001 for a catalogue of tendencies in contemporary burial practices amongst the Tiv not supported by the Bible nor the Tiv church). The Catholic church has also clarified her position on various aspects of burial which is against some of these changes. This clarification include disapproval for *ku oron*, (the inquest) encouragement for prompt burials, discouragement of indiscriminate use of food and drink as well as disapproval for the practice of trading during burials.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions and recommendations are predicted on our role as the custodian of Tiv culture. This role requires us to defend and preserve Tiv heritage and ensure its protection from destruction, ridicule, abuse and adulteration. We also make them in full cognisance of the fact that culture is not static but a dynamic institution evolving slowly and steadily in the service of its owners. Having regard to the "damage" done to our heritage by these changes, our suggestions are an attempt at "damage control" and a more responsible attitude towards the direction and content of change.

6.6(i) Identification and projection of residual values

As indicated earlier, we have been able to identify some traces of the value system basic to traditional marriage and burial practices. These residual values are continuously under attack and some are fast disappearing from the cultural landscape. This is a threat to the entire heritage of the group and all attempts must be made to identify these traces and audit them in each system of the culture for adequate protection and projection. This would require increased cultural education at the formal and informal levels. Our children must be given the opportunity to learn more about our heritage including the source of the various changes noticeable in it. Such an opportunity will underscore traditional values and the importance of using our heritage as the basic building block of our development.

6.6(ii) Revival of Festivals and Ceremonial occasions

We have seen the fact that death is increasingly being celebrated. This has increased the cost of burial (both socially and materially). It has also encouraged a lot of commercial activities around the burial point. Most people are also looking at burials as social occasions susceptible to political exploitation. The dearth of festivals and ceremonies has put a heavy strain on the culture of death, since kinsmen unable to benefit from the hospitality of their "wealthy" sons have begun to see death as the only time where they can "catch" their "wealthy" sons and extract their pound of flesh. In-laws are indiscriminately taxed and all sorts of plots are designed to ensure full merriment of the death situation. We are of the opinion that if ceremonial and festive practices are revived and people are encouraged to regularly celebrate life, the solemn nature of death will be revived and a distorted value corrected.

6.6(iii) Dialogue and partnership.

As indicated earlier, the church is central to the reinforcement of many of the new values that have transformed the Tiv culture of death and marriage system. Despite this, many of the new changes are against the letter and spirit of church tradition. We recommend an increased dialogue between the various churches in Tiv land aimed at finding the core values in the transformation of Tiv society. Such a meeting point will also give them an opportunity to partner with traditional structures in finding ways and means to reinforce those values protective of our heritage.

6.6(iv) The individual as change agent

In the matter of responsible cultural change and the protection of our cultural heritage, each person must be encouraged to think globally and act locally. Burial and marriage touch every person no matter how detached he maybe from society. It is recommended that each person should be active on behalf of the ideas that would strengthen and protect his heritage. In this way, it will no longer be difficult to foresee those "positive" tendencies in our day to day lives that would increase the chances of our heritage being a durable component of our development process.

6.6(v) Identification of "positive" values in the current transformation for increased projection

Though, there is agreement that the Whiteman "spoilt the land" (*buter vihitar*) there is an extent to which we can see changes brought about by colonialism as not totally "negative". We recommend the identification of such "positive" values for projection. For in the survival of our heritage attempt must be made to reinforce it with more durable values from other cultures.

We have attempted to document Tiv marriage and burial practices taking into consideration the various changes that have taken place especially following the Tiv contact with Europeans. Though we appreciate the fact that change is inevitable, if we are to survive the "cultural damage" visited on our society, we must seek to understand all aspects of our past in addition to projecting all those values that will strengthen and empower our resolve to live over culture as an exemplary way of life. Though the study touches only two aspects of Tiv culture, it is hoped that subsequent research will focus on other aspects and that in the very near future, we will have a more comprehensive response to the protection of our heritage.

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APPENDIX A

Oral Interviews: List of Informants

S/No	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Date	Group or Single	Place
1.	Ade Udam	54	F	Civil Servant	19/6/001	Group	Tse-Tyende {Uvir District}
2.	Uyier A. Uleva	47	F	“ “			
3.	S. W. Atero	71	M	Farmer			
1.	Luga T. Kershio	36	M	Civil Servant	20/6001	Group	Iye {Uvir District}
2.	John Tyodzer	37	M M M	“ “			
3.	Shaku Apera	25	F	B/Man			
4.	David I. Kershio	41		Farmer			
5.	Nancy N. Igba	28		B/Woman			
1.	Martha Kpandegh	26	F	Civil Servant	26/6/001	Group	Pakera {Uvir District}
2.	Alexander Chia	40	F	“ “			
3.	William Ukorave	32	M	“ “			
1.	Apeilu Kpega	54	F	Retired Soldier	21/6001	Single	“
1.	Baki Agba	68	M	Farmer	23/06/2001	Group	Torkula Village (Mbadwem District)
2.	Targema Mbiur	60	M	“	“		
3.	Zungwe Atule	50	M	“”	“		
4.	Konguul Sorga	25	M	“	“		
5.	Jirgba Torkula	33	M	“	“		
6.	Ternenge Abako	17	M	Student	“		
7.	Ahambe Bernard	19	M	“	“		
8.	Inyoon Ikyaabo	18	M	“	“		
9.	James Ankor	24	M	“	“		
10.	Thmas Ato	33	M	Civil Servant	“		
23	Abughur Gwayem	27	M	“	“		
24	Tsetim Chahul	36	M	B/Man	24/06-2001	Group	Tse-Akpa (Mbawa District)
.	Chief Shima Akpa	51	M	Trad. Ruler	“		
25	Tyosho	48	M	Farmer	“	Group	Tse-Akpa (Mbawa District)
.	Mbakpenev	46	M	“	“		
26	Uhange Akpa	36	M	B/Man	“	Group	Tse-Akpa (Mbawa District)
.	Tarhembra Chahul	42	M	Farmer	“		
27	Tamenbee Akpa						

28							
29							
30	Joshua Dewua	43	M	Civil Servant	26/06/2000	Group	Tse-Humbe (Mbabai District)
31	Isho	106	F	Farmer	“	“	
32	Mrs Uleva Tule Clement Unum	64	M	“	“	“	
33	Clement Kukume	34	M	Not Stated	29/06/2000	Single	Yogbo (Mbagwen District)
34	Chief Igbawua Nyiekaa	89	M	Kindred Head	29/06/2000	Single	“
35	Mrs Uson Upaa	47	F	B/Woman	29/06/2000	Single	Udei (Nyiev District)
36	Kwaghshir Agbe	128	M	Farmer	30/06/2000	Group	Kwaghshir Agbe Village (Nyiev District)
37	Chia Kwaghshir	63	M	“	“	“	
38	Asaawe Iorkyaa	48	M	“	“	“	
39	Tyohena Chamegh	73	M	Farmer	01/07/2000	Single	Daudu (Mbawa Dist)
40	Sambe Mpev	40	M	B/Man	12/07/2000	Single	Gbajimba (Ndorov Distric)
41	Simon Mfe	35	M	Civil Servant	11/09/2000	Group	“
42	Mkeran William	36	M	“	“	“	
43	Nyior Martins	40	m	“	“	“	
44	Targema Kudza	29	M	“	“	“	
45	Terka Awua	38	M	B/Man	17/07/2000	Single	Agasha (Kaambe District)
46	Julius Lukposu	32	M	Civil Servant	17/07/2000	Single	“
47	Denen Ikyegh	25	M	Student	17/07/2000	Single	Tse-Ikyo (Saghev District)
48	Isaac Aker	42	M	Civil Servant	17/07/2000	Single	Tse-Aviaka
49	Tyokyaa Udeker	63	M	Farmer	18/07/2000	Single	Imande Akpu (Mbawa District)
50	Terzua F. Ajebe	39	M	Student	21/07/2000	Single	Low Cost, Naka Road, Makurdi
51	Orhena Kwaghbo	58	M	Farmer	22/07/2000	Single	Kwaghbo (Adaka)
52	Shihon Tyokohol	51	M	Trader	23/07/2000	Group	North Bank, Makurdi
53	Nyiongu	49	M	“	“	“	
54	Asemakaha	43	F	“	“	“	

	Esther Ikpa						
55	Abahia Nyikyaa	54	M	Farmer	25/09/2000	Group	Gever, (Daudu Village)
56	Julius Damuha	36	M	“	“	“	
57	Abagur Sough	62	M	“	“	“	
58	Joseph Adawa	60	M	B/Man	13/08/2000	Single	Ikpayongu
59	Marda Gbaka	47	M	Farmer	Not Stated	Group	Igbor
60	Franka Tyungu	30	M	“	“	“	
61	Abdusalam Mbatsoron	32	M	Civil Servant	14/08/2000	Single	Akiade, Ngohov
62	Sham, A. I.	52	M	Not Stated	14/08/2000	Single	GDSS, Aliade
63	Ityokase Bagele	45	M	Farmer	14/08/2000	Group	Taraku
64	Aloysius A. Utsua	36	M	“	“	“	
65	Kwaghsende	68	M	Farmer	16/08/2000	Group	Agagbe Nyoon Ordoon
66	Shaakaa	49	M	B/Man	“	“	
67	Agba I. Ordoon	46	M	Farmer	“	“	
68	Tsetim Anagbe	52	M	Civil Servant	17/08/2000	Group	Aondona
69	T. T. Anakpa	36	M	“	“	“	
70	Maga Ukircha	60	M	Farmer	“	“	
71	Pa Ayeve Zugu	64	M	Farmer	17/08/2000	Single	Naka

Personal Communications

1. Justice Terna Puusu
2. Chief Akadi Uoroyev
3. Chief Chile Pever
4. Chief (Mrs.) Ashitile Avaa
Chief (Mrs.) Elizabeth Shuluwa
5. Chief (Mrs.) Rebecca Apedzan
6. Chief (Mrs.) Elizabeth Ivase