

IMPLICATIONS OF RITUAL SYMBOLISM IN SUSTENANCE OF CULTURE AND MEANING IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF TIV IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Ritual symbolism is an essential aspect of understanding a people's way of life. It is an essential tool used by people to interpret and analyze cultural traits in any society. The role played by ritual symbolism is so vital that no society of the world can exist without it. In African society, ritual symbolism is the panacea for understanding the customs, traditions, beliefs and human behaviors in the society. The main aim of this review therefore was to examine the implications of ritual symbolism in sustenance of culture and meaning in Africa, using the Tiv, in North Central Nigeria as a case study. The study also discussed certain cultural traits in Nigeria such as festivals and dance, arts and crafts, body decoration and facial scarification, initiation, among others. It was recommended that these cultural traits which have been influenced by the advent of globalization should be refined to give African culture an authentic meaning.

Keywords: *Ritual symbolism, sustenance of culture, Tiv, Africa*

INTRODUCTION

There is no society in the worlds that exist without its own cultural traits which gives it true identity and values. Each society of the world has its own unique cultural beliefs, customs, traditions and behaviours that has developed throughout its historical experiences and is passed on from one generation to another. Culture is not inherited biologically but it has to be learned from childhood all through adulthood. It is a way of life of a particular society or a group of people which is used as a tool to describe differences and similarities between groups of people (Onibere, 1981).

In African society, culture is determined by cultural trait which provides a comprehensive picture of the society's way of life. In Tiv society, this is not an exception. Culture involves ritual and symbolic aspects such as beliefs, customs, traditions, behaviors, ideal, language, network relationships, attitudes, their way of living, their focus on group loyalties and the way they perceive the world (Udoka, 2000). This ritual symbol gives religious meanings to actions and things that are unknown in the society. Thus, to understand a people's culture, certain cultural traits have to be considered along side with their cultural symbolism. This study, however, examines the implications of ritual symbolism in sustenance of culture and meaning in Africa, using the Tiv of North Central Nigeria as a focus point. Also it discusses certain cultural traits such as festivals, dances, arts and crafts, body decoration and scarification, initiation and funeral rites (the life crisis rituals), among others. For a meaningful understanding of the issue under discussion, it is pertinent to clarify certain key concepts. These include The Tiv, Culture, Ritual and Symbolism.

The Tiv: The name *Tiv*, according to Edwardo (2003), has a triple meaning. Firstly, it is the term that designates the people as an ethnic group. Secondly, it refers to their language. Thirdly, it refers to the one ancestor father, Tiv, to whom all Tiv people trace their common ancestry. The Tiv as a people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and Africa as a whole (Ushe, 2007). They are great farmers who inhabit Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa and cross-River States, respectively. They speak Tiv, a language which belongs to the Bantu-sub-family or sub-branch of the Benue Congo-family (Ushe, 2010). The sociopolitical organization of the Tiv is based on kingship system with compound head (Orya), clan (Ityô), Kindred (Ingyôr) and land or society (tar) as structure of organization (Ushe, 2007). This structure of socio-political organization, however, has undergone some slight changes in the new dispensation due to the advent of modernization.

Culture: According to Isha (1980) culture refers to a people or society total way of life, including customs, traditions, beliefs, emotions, ideas, behaviors and values of things. Adetola (1971) defines culture as a configuration of learned and shared patterns of behavior and understandings concerning the meaning and value of things, ideas, emotions, and actions this configuration of patterns and understandings arises out of language communication with a social group and help an individual to adopt to his physical environment, his biological nature and his group life.

Adetola went further to explain that another meaning of culture often refers to the aspect of human behaviour in terms of his taste, refinement and interests in music and arts. In this direction, culture means civilization, development or improvement acquired through learning and education. Culture is made up of a people's customs, traditions, and beliefs, their behaviour, dress code, language, their work, their way of living, network relationships, and their attitudes to life, the focus of group loyalties and the way they perceive the world. What is important from the foregoing definitions and descriptions is that each society has its own unique culture that has developed throughout its historical experience and is passed on from one generation to another. It is also paramount to point out that culture is not inherited biologically but it has to be learned from childhood all-through adulthood.

Ritual: The word ritual viewed from broad spectrum means different things to different people. According to Goody (1964), ritual is the category of standardized behaviour by which the relationship between the means and the end is not intrinsic (Ushe, 2010). Wilson (1971), describes ritual as primarily religious action directed to securing the blessing of some mystical powers. For Turner (1967), ritual is prescribed former behaviour for occasion which is not given technical routine but has reference to beliefs, mystical beings and power. In the words of Eleah (1934), ritual is mechanical human behaviour, ranging from simple custom of shaking hands and the daily etiquette of greeting, to a complex and solemn act of ritual sacrifice. Ushe (2010), opines that ritual is stereotype sequence of activities, including gesture, words, objects performed in sequestered place and designed to influence or force the actor's goals and interest in the society. It is all rites and forms connected with ceremony or way of performing ritual act. It is sign, mark object representing something unknown to convey a religious idea or meaning.

Symbolism: A symbolism is a channel of self-expression of human realities, which involves signs to help individuals express thoughts, emotions and meaning of their actions (Turner, 1986). This expression involves human realities such as signs, objects, concepts and language representing something that is religious and secular in nature (Ray, 1961). Bell (1992), asserts that through the use of symbolic reference, each individual judge his/her experience and interpret realities in ritualistic manner. For Cohen (1991), symbol is a metaphysical and religious activities involving sign to arouse emotion and conflicting desire in human beings for the purpose of social integration and dramatization of values in the society. Symbolism is the expression of one thing standing for another ambiguously for a multiplicity of meaning, which evoke sentiment, emotion and impel men to action (Ushe, 2005). These symbolic expressions give meaning and add values to things that otherwise, are inexpressible in the community. Sometimes, these symbolic expressions are demonstrated with models, diagrams and body actions for understanding of the items involved. Isha (1986), defines a symbol as the expression of certain attitudes in an individual involving signs to convey a religious meaning that is unknown. Thus, ritual symbolism in the context of this study refers to religious action directed towards securing the blessing of some mystical interpretations of cultural traits (Turner, 1969).

Ritual Symbolism In Africa: In Africa, ritual symbolism is an important aspect of traditional religion. It is a religious action or channels which give meaning to beliefs, customs, traditions, ideas and practices in the society (Firth, 1950). In many African societies, cultural symbolism involves the total way of life of people or society. It gives meaning to unknown things and conveys religious ideas that add values to life in the society. These religious ideas include cultural traits such as festivals and dances, arts and crafts, body decoration, facial scarification, initiation and funeral rites, among others.

Among the Lugbara, ritual symbolism is a network of socialization which involves a total way of life of people or the society. It gives interpretations and a meaning of actions performed by people. Thus, various dances are performed with the sole aim of improving the social relationship among people of different villages. The significance of these musical dances do not only aid in physical, emotional and social developments but also help the individual participants to develop their intellectual abilities. This is because of the creativity, skills and technicalities involved in performance in Lugbara music and Dance Theater (Ikenga-Metuh, 1987).

These dancing styles are performed with professional ability, creativity and agility beautiful to behold and are being improved. The Lugbara ritual arts include among others, body decoration and body painting, the performing arts include music and dance. There are various types of music and dances which are for ritual and entertainment purposes. The visual and performing arts initiation and other ritual performances groups together with story telling and folk-tales form are important part of Lugbara traditional education (Amadi, 1982). In Zulu society, various types of music and dances are performed for ritual and entertainment purposes. Almost all Zulus songs are accompanied by dances. This form of traditional education in the visual and performing arts, and literature aim at preparing individual members physically, morally, spiritually, mentally, socially, emotionally and

vocationally. It also initiates development which aims at building responsible personalities who should be able to shoulder family and community responsibilities (Bell, 1992). The Masaai people have cultural traits such as body decoration and facial scarification which form part of their ritual praxis and education. They are aimed mainly for scarification and identification purposes. Body decoration here includes facial marks and decorations on other parts of the body. Body decoration and painting educates members of the community on certain issues. There is, however, no sacrifice age that an individual must attain to qualify for the facial marks (Aval-Ivano, 1976).

Masaai culture emphasizes traditional education in the form of initiation which has many implications and objectives in the development of their youths, the aims of initiation in masaai chiefdom include among others, to expose children to pleasure and pains, to make children full members of their society, to develop the initiates physically, morally, spiritually, socially and emotionally, to turn them from childhood to adulthood and to make the neophytes aware of their ancestral rituals. It turns boys into men and prepares them for fatherhood, while it transforms shy virgin girls into confident women looking towards motherhood (Isha, 1982).

Considering the above stated facts, initiation in masaai culture can be further described as a community's responsibility which uses the child's work experiences with his father in crafts, rearing and farming to teach him his immediate knowledge and skills (Isha, 1982). Among the Afizeres, ritual arts include body decoration, body painting, basket weaving, pottery making, and mortar carving, among others. While performing arts include music and dances. They have various types of dance which are ritual and entertainment purposes. These music dances include among others: nato asharuwa (flute dances) nato ku-shik (raining dance), nato esa (funeral dances), nato tsom (war dance), nato kawum (hunting dance), nato amata (women dance), and nato ijak, igassang (initiation).

Others include story-telling and folk-tales. These visual performing arts, initiation and other ritual performance groups together with story telling and folk tales form an important part of Afizere traditional education. These forms of traditional education in the visual and performing arts, and literature as earlier pointed out aimed at forming an individual into a capable member of the society (Eagle, 1965). The body decoration and painting also forms part of Afizere ritual praxis and education. This ritual is aimed mainly for scarification and identification purposes and is shared with other neighbours such as Buji and Anaguta. Body decoration and facial scarification educates members of the society on certain issues. For example, the eighteen facial marks of the Afizere inform other members that the individual has grown to adult age. They also show that he or she is brave. He or she is now expected to take up more responsibilities in the family and the society in addition to former ones (Geertz, 1975).

There is however, no specific age that an individual must attain to qualify for the eighteen marks. This also applies to body decoration. Some Afizere even decorate their bodies, using various types of artistic objects before presenting themselves as candidates of the ritual of facial marks or the rite of scarification. The body decorations and facial marks are not only rites of scarification, identification and boldness but they are believed

to enhance the beauty of the individual. As observed among some ethnic groups on the Jos Plateau, body decoration in men and women serve other purposes in addition to their aesthetic purposes (Mary, 1960). It socializes neophytes, both males and females, particularly decorated in white (Isha, 1982). A red painting in women preserves virginity in unmarried girls and ensures chastity in married women. It's resemblance to menstrual flow scares away men since it threatens them with defilement. It is believed that any illicit love affair with a female so painted defiles a man with ritual dirt and pollution. However, red painting, because of its ambiguity could be sacredly used by men to defile their enemies in war. Men may paint themselves before a battle in red to make them fierce, fearless and merciless. The color renders an enemy powerless and defiles his poisonous weapons, rendering him or her powerless.

Men however, may only use red for ritual purposes such as these. Poisons for arrow heads and knives are also blended with red clay to add to its potency. Body painting and decoration enhances fertility, potency and fecundity in both men and women. It thus embodies men in both hunting and war as it provides rare daring spirit, extraordinary bravery and supernatural powers. Training in various vocations in Afizere society may start in the family and extend to specialization under outside experts. This training in various vocations such as basket weaving, farming, hunting, mortar carving, pottery making and the like are meant to give physical and vocational training to children and youths in the society. The skills in these arts are acquired through observation as well as instruction.

Certain vocations seem to be attached strictly to certain families, for instance, black smiting and pottery making. This forms the backbone of traditional education in Afizere land (Isha, 1982). Afizere believe that as the individual participates in various musical dancing and other social activities, he/she will develop not only socially but also physically. It ushers the individual into the process of socialization as he/she participates effectively in the various music and dancing, and therefore, interact freely with others in the group. In all these the Afizere emphasizes a great deal on family training. This family education includes training children to respect their elders. Parts of this training teach them to kneel down when greeting, giving or receiving things from their seniors. They are also taught how to receive and welcome visitors to the family. However, this family training extends to outside gatherings organized in the society. The Afizere cultural awareness is manifested in such attitudes as installation ceremonies of chiefs, various age group initiations, festivals, other life crisis rituals agricultural dance, harvest and funeral festivals.

Exploring Tiv Ritual Symbolism: Ritual symbolism is an important aspect of Tiv Religion. It is a veritable channel for the interpretation of Tiv culture and meaning. Ritual symbolism involves beliefs, customs, traditions, norms, attitudes and material objects associated with them to give an authentic meaning to cultural traits. Some of these culture traits include: arts, cultural symbolism, body decoration, facial scarification, festivals, dances, and initiation and funeral rites. They are used as culture tools to describe the differences and similarities between groups of people. The Tiv are not an exception in this regards. It is therefore, necessary that Tiv cultural traits and their implications on Nigerian society be examined.

Festivals and Dances: These are important aspects of Tiv ritual symbolism. Festivals

and dances are aimed at improving social relationships within and between villages. In the past, most of these festivals and dances were not performed during raining seasons. The Tiv believe that as the individual participates in various festivals, dances and other social activities, he/she will develop not only socially but also physically. It ushers the individual into the process of socialization as he/she participates effectively in the various festivals and dances and, therefore, interact freely with others in the group (Makar, 1975).

In all these, the Tiv emphasize a great deal on family training. This family education includes training children to respect their elders. Part of this training teaches them to bend down when greeting, giving or receiving things from their elders. They are also taught how to receive and welcome visitors to the family. However, this family training extends to outside gatherings organized in the community. The Tiv cultural awareness is manifested in such activities as installation ceremonies of chiefs, various age group initiation, festivals, other life crisis rituals, agricultural harvest and funeral festivals. Other dances like girnya (warrior dance), hinga (acrobatic dance), kwaghir (masquerade entertainment dance), among others are aimed at improving the social life and relationships within and between neighboring villages.

The girnya (warrior dance) in particular is generally believed that if not performed during funeral ceremony of a girnya cult member, may bring misfortune and sickness in the society. In such cases, it is believed that this breach of law and tradition will bring even death in the society. Tiv dances and musical sessions also serve to show appreciation to Supreme Deity for welcoming back the deceased in the spiritual realm. Moreover, they also served as prayers to the divine realm for protection, good health and long life (Rubingh, 1969). The significance of these musical dances is that they not only aid in physical, emotional and social development but also help individual participants to develop their intellectual abilities. This is because of the skills, creativity and technicalities involved in its performance in Tiv music and Dance Theater. However, learning is by listening, observation and instructions. Creativity is an intrinsic part of these musical dances. This is particularly so in girnya (acrobatic dance) which involves a great deal of styles, such as jumping and rhythmic movements of feet and body, Somersaulting and acrobatic displays. These dance styles are performed with professional agility, creativity, and dexterity and twisting of the body, beautiful to behold, and they are being improved year after year (Isha, 1982).

The hinga (acrobatic dance) steps which resembles the jumping and running of an antelope or gazelles and the twisting of body of a tiger and snake exhibit the presence of animalism in the Tiv dancing theater. The dressing in black and white traditional cloth (anger) and the feather which resembles the dressing costume of South African dancing costume, especially those of Bantu Nyanza apparently manifest spiritual essence, particularly that of being on high (Ushe, 2010). Color feathers and animal dance steps are thus typical in native Bantu Nyanza of South African dancing. The bond therefore, might have existed between the Tiv, antelope, snake and tiger families at the early history during hunting-gathering stage as demonstrated in their antelope, snake and tiger dance steps. This indicates that a bond between animals and human is expressed in ritual activities of the Bantu Nyanza where men imitate the movements of antelope, tiger and snake as well as wear their horns

and skins (Isha, 1982). This may be the same for the Ngas Sombi dancers, Afizere nato asharuwa dance steps and the fer dance of the mupun and mwaghavul which follows the dignified walking patterns of cattle and buffaloes species

ARTS AND CULTURAL SYMBOLISM

The Tiv ritual arts include among others, body decoration, basket weaving, farming, mortar carving, pottery making, blacksmithing, and carpentry among others. While the performing arts included music and dances, the visual and performing arts, initiation and other ritual performance groups together with story telling and folk-tales form an important part of Tiv traditional education in the visual and performing arts and literature aim at preparing individual members physically, morally, spiritually, mentally, socially, emotionally and vocationally. The traditional form of education initiates development which aims at building responsible personalities who should be able to shoulder family and community responsibilities (Zuese, 1979).

Basket weaving, farming, hunting, mortar carving, pottery making and the like are to give physical and vocational training to children and youths in the community. Training in the various vocations may start in the family and may extend to specialization under outside experts. Mostly the skills acquired through observation as well as instruction. However, certain vocations seem to be attached strictly to certain families, for instance, blacksmithing and pottery making. This forms the backbone of traditional education in Tivland. They believe that as the individual participates in various music, dancing and other social activities, he/she will develop socially, physically and therefore interact freely with others in the group; In all these, the Tiv emphasizes a great deal of family training, which includes training children to respect their elders. Parts of this training teach them to kneel down when greeting, giving or receiving things from their elders, how to receive and welcome visitors to the family. This family education could even extend to outside gatherings organized in the community. The Tiv cultural awareness is manifested in such activities as installation ceremonies of chiefs, life crisis rituals, agricultural dance, and harvest and funeral festivals (Ushe, 2010).

BODY DECORATION AND FACIAL SCARIFICATION

The body decoration and facial scarification also forms part of Tiv ritual praxis and education. Body decoration which include facial marks and decoration educates members of the community on certain issues. For instance, the two facial marks or the rite of scarification informs other members that the individual has grown to adult age. They also show that he/she is brave, mature and is now expected to take up more responsibilities in the family and society in addition to former ones. Furthermore, the two facial marks are sign of identification for one being a Tiv adult person. There is, however, no specific age that an individual must attain to qualify for the facial two marks. This also applied to body decoration which has undergone changes due to influence of modernization.

LIFE CRISIS RITUALS-INITIATION

Another aspect of Tiv traditional education is initiation which has many implications and

objectives in the development of Tiv youths. The aim of initiation in Tiv chiefdom include among others; to expose children to pleasure and pain, to make children full members of their society, to develop the initiates physically, morally, spiritually, socially and emotionally, to turn them from childhood to adulthood and to make them neophytes aware of their ancestral rituals. It turn boys into men and prepares them for fatherhood, while in girls, it transforms shy virgins into confident women looking towards motherhood. However, because of the sacredness of the rituals and the secrecy involved in initiation, many people regard it as a secret society, while others do not even understand it. Isha (1982), explains this thus:

Initiation may be considered as a social institution which serves as a chief vehicle for transmitting our people's culture from generation to generation....The strenuous inculcation of the pattern of sentiments and behaviour which it is best thought promote people's solidarity and prosperity.

The point Isha is making here is that the elders under these strenuous conditions try to maintain group consciousness and customs largely through expensive emotional and mental school of manhood ceremonies. Considering the foregoing statement, initiation can be further described as a community's responsibility which uses the child's work experience with his father in farming and crafts, to teach him his immediate knowledge and skills. These skills may include the provision of food, shelter, clothing and sound knowledge on mastery of environment. However, it is observed with acute interest that the missionaries, traders, explorers and the colonial administrators did not attach much importance to the indigenous culture when they arrived in Nigeria. They set into motion the wind and machinery of social, economic, political and religious change as captured by Thakur and Ezenne (1980) thus:

Generally speaking missionaries did not attach much importance to the indigenous culture of the people. They wanted them to give up their culture...They believed that Africa was a dark continent. They were in Africa to show light through moral and character training.

What Thakur and Ezenne are stressing here is that the aim of missionary and colonial education was to train school children to wear European clothes correctly, speak English and fit into the new culture. The school child was supposed to be a person who should behaved like a European. For example, a white man in black skin (Thakur and Ezenne, 1980).

LIFE CRISIS RITUALS-FUNERAL RITES

The Tiv have elaborate funeral rites that are organized to show appreciation to the Supreme Deity for permitting the deceased to live a long life on earth. It also educates people to appreciate the contributions of the deceased person to the development of the community. Thus, the funeral festival is in honor of such contribution. It appeals to them to bring fortune and benevolence to the family and the society as a whole. Furthermore, because Tiv believe in reincarnation, they observe proper burial rites to please and implore the spirits or souls of the departed to reincarnate with their family or village. The Tiv culture permits elaborate funeral rites only when the person who died, was of age (from sixty-five and

above or there about). Apart from age, the deceased ancestor should leave behind many grand children to qualify him for proper burial rites. The Tiv believe that the deceased can only be accepted in the realm of spirits or ancestral abode if he is given proper burial rites. Since the organization of such funeral festivals are very laborious, expensive and taxing the village morally organizes itself into a communal labor force and taxes its members to contribute certain amounts of funds, both in cash and kind. This shows a great sense of belongingness, solidarity spirit and care which are vividly seen among the Tiv. During the funeral rites, particular songs and dances are performed. These songs and dances depend on the sex of the deceased. Particular songs and dances accompany departed male's members, while others are associated with females. This is so, because the songs, dances and other activities performed during funeral festivals depict the type of activities and responsibilities played by deceased persons while they were alive. And as is the case with most African ethnic groups, the Tiv have defined roles for male's and females.

It is important to note here that the stage in Tiv funeral celebration symbolizes many things. For instance, the announcement of dead and burial is done for various reasons: Firstly, to attract attention of other neighbors or communities to the scene of the celebration. Secondly, to inform the deceased relations, children, sons-in-law and friends about the date of the funeral so that they would come and pay their last respect to the deceased. Thirdly, the announcement was meant to invite Takuruku (the great ancestor of the Tiv) to receive the deceased who is on his/her way to the great beyond. This announcement is made verbally or through other means of communications such as radio broadcast, television, letter writing, and telephone, among others (Ushe, 2010).

The announcement is also preceded with the reactions of people concerning the news of the funeral. Generally, people fear death most and when its news is broken, people usually react for various reasons. First, because of the sudden departure of the deceased, fear, sorrow and emotional torment permeate amongst other members. Second, the fear of giving information about what led to the sudden death of the deceased. Third, the fear of how to meet up with funeral demands. Fourth, the fear of how to adjust to the new situations created by the departure of the deceased. Such situations include loneliness, stress, bitterness, financial demands and other dispositions of members of the bereaved family. These aforementioned reasons make many people to react negatively towards the news of death. Wake-keeping will be organized by the bereaved family to pay the last honor to the departed as a member of the community.

It also served as a time of sorrows for the deceased person in pre-colonial era, the wake-keep used to be a short and brie time for a variety of reasons: First, to avoid the eruption of the corpse. Second, since most family relations, children, sons-in-law and friends of the deceased were not from distant places, there was no need to keep the corpse for a long time. Third, there were no mortuaries in Tiv society at that time where corpse could be embalmed and preserved for long time. Fourth, there were no extravagant expenditures during funeral celebration. Fifth, events that could lead to emotional and psychological breakdown of the bereaved members during funeral ceremonies were avoided.

The body was properly preserved; it flexed and kept on the wooden bed (Kpande). This treatment of the corpse was for two reasons: first, because of the Tiv belief that the deceased was going on a final journey and has to take bath. And second, the flexing was meant to prevent the body from stiffening before burial. Inquest was conducted before burial by the elders to ascertain the cause of death. The aim of inquest was to determine who killed the deceased and to minimize the occurrences of such future deaths in the society.

If the inquest revealed that the deceased was killed by an enemy or witches/wizards (mbatsavz), then, a post-mortem examination or cutesy was carried out on the chest of the deceased to ascertain whether the deceased killed himself/herself or someone else was responsible. The chest was opened to ascertain the deceased's innocence. The Tiv believe that the possession of too much witchcraft potentials could also kill a person. During the funeral, particular dirges, songs and eulogies were sung. These songs and dances depend on the sex and status of the deceased earlier pointed out.

Particular songs and dances accompanied departed male's members, while others were associated with females. Again, this was so, because the songs, dances and other activities performed during funeral celebrations depicted the type of activities and responsibilities played by the deceased while they were alive. The consolatory songs during the funerals were expressions of mourning and lamentation for the deceased who have parted from others. Some of these songs or dirges which express the good deeds of the deceased, while others are directed towards the Supreme Deity and death as takers of life. Yet, still, some songs accused mbatsav (witches/wizards) for killing the deceased prematurely (Ushe, 2010).

The eulogies and panegyrics sung by the mourners also show resignation and acceptance of the inevitability of death. In all these songs, dirges and eulogies, the primary aim is to express the sorrowful state of the people. Guns were then shot in the air to alert people about the funeral and as a mark of respect to the departed member. It also shows how influential the deceased was in the community. There was no entertainment in pre-colonial era during funeral festivals because the Tiv believed that funeral ceremonies were movements of expressing sorrows and griefs. Thus, to show how painful the eating of food was forbidden. This practice however has changed in Tiv society due to the influence of Christianity and Westernization. In contemporary Tiv community, such funerals have become festivals and occasions to display wealth by bereaved families.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it is imperative to say that Tiv Ritual Symbolism have both direct and indirect religious meaning on the customs, traditions, language and beliefs (culture) of the Tiv people. The Tiv culture which was interpreted symbolically has now become an issue of anarchy. This situation became more complex, with the failure of the European missionaries, explorers, and colonial administrators to encourage the promotion of Tiv indigenous culture, such as respect for elders, use of native language, practice of arts and crafts, trans-survival aspects of traditional education, among others. This has brought about changes that are widely felt today by Tiv people, especially as regards to funerals rites in

modern times. It is usually said that no society operates without the attainment of her set goals. This implies that, the Tiv can only find meaning in their culture if they can strive to maintain, develop and improve upon the rich cultural heritage handed down to them by their forefathers.

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