

THE REALITY OF TSAV, A TIV COSMOLOGY IN SUEMO CHIA'S ADAN WADE KOHOL GA

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Abstract

Tiv nation is affected by witchcraft, which is called Tsav. The cosmology of the Tiv society establishes the existence of Tsav among the Tiv. Although civilisation and religion have caused some Tiv people to reject the belief in witchcraft, it upsets their psyche one way or the other. This means that witchcraft penetrates the minds of the Tiv people. This paper establishes the existence of witchcraft among the Tiv people as evident in 'Adan Wade Kohol Ga.' It offers an overview of the phenomenon of witchcraft answering such questions as: what witchcraft is, how it is practiced in the text as a culture in the Tiv milieu, how it affects the practitioners, what influences witchcraft, the pattern of witchcraft, the attributes of persons labelled with witchcraft, and its effects on the people in the text and Tiv society. The study adopts the lens of realism as an approach to explore the tsav concept in Adan Wade Kohol Ga, investigating the deployment of tsav by people in the text. It establishes that tsav is utilised for selfish purposes at the detriment of others. The paper concludes that the belief in witchcraft is vibrant, and its practices exist among the Tiv. Tsav affects the psyche of the people as well as controls the physical existence in the Tiv milieu. It is therefore pertinent to utilise it for the sustainability and preservation of the Tiv nation.

Introduction

Witchcraft is called *tsav* in the Tiv language; it connotes the art of mysterious and bizarre practices. The Tiv people, just like any other African traditional society, believe in the existence of witchcraft. In modern times, Western civilisation, migration and contact with other ethnic groups, including religion, have caused some people to deny the belief in witchcraft. It is thus perceived as a product of superstition by others. Witchcraft is rife even in these days. It is used at all levels in the Tiv society; it is even used to govern the land and has penetrated other sections that are not traditional in the Tiv nation, like

government organisations and religious settings. The existence of witchcraft cannot be overemphasised, yet some deny its potency. The denial of the belief in witchcraft, especially among the Christian community in Tiv today, allows the dark forces of witchcraft to continue to operate, causing great damage to those who deny it. It is important to note that witchcraft appeals and affects the physical, mental, as well as social existence of human nature in Tivland. There is therefore no point in continually denying its existence and the belief in it, as most people do nowadays. This is because knowledge is power; when it is known, there is the probability of taking measures to avoid being caught in it, as well as curbing its excesses. Timmonson asks, "How can you fight an enemy if you deny its existence? (247). The existence of witchcraft, its patterns, practices, and its effects on society are emphasised in this study, as it affects all the spheres of life in the Tiv cosmology.

This paper, therefore, establishes that the Tiv cosmology upholds the existence of witchcraft in Tivland, stating its practices and patterns, its effects, the influence of witchcraft, and the attributes of witchcraft and labelling. The paper uses realism as an approach, and analyses *Adan-Wade Kohol Ga* by Suemo Chia; translated as *The Story of Adan Wade* by Tyohdzuah Akosu to elucidate witchcraft. Witchcraft is a practice in its real sense. The practitioners are differentiated according to their gender; the male individual who engages in witchcraft is known as a wizard, while the female practitioner is called a witch. For this study, the indigenous *or-mbatsav* or *kwase-mbatsav* and/or the witch or possessor, all referring to a male and female practitioner, are hereby adopted. The indigenous name for witchcraft, *tsav*, is also adopted to refer to witchcraft henceforth.

Theoretical Framework: Realism

Realism is a literary approach that is concerned with facts or real issues in any piece of work, it emphasises how tangibly an artist presents facts that are readily verifiable at any point in time. Realism in literature captures the real flair of the happenings in the society, the word as applied to literature was first used in 1850 according to Ferdinand Iorbee Asoo, which is a long time today and it has continued to exert some influence on the literary scholarship because writers have always had a

fondness for what can pass as the truth so as to carry readers along or maintain them. Pertinently, literary creativity of whatever form have streaks of the real facts in them, and this has helped the concept to thrive well in the literary domain. Asoo explains that “the preponderance and excessive concern with what is truthful explains the continued relevance of realism several decades after it was first used in literary criticism” (18).

According to Lucy Irene Vajime, realism is a:

depiction of issues in mundane life. That is, the way in which a writer may design a work using as a model what pertains in real life and, through his vision, present society with possibilities of a better society. Realist writers present issues as they are, such as the sufferings of real and oppressed people, which provide rich material for realist writing. They help realist writers create the ‘illusion of actual and ordinary experiences by rendering ordinary people and setting richly and persuasively’. Realism is, therefore, a literary technique which enables the writer and the reader to see society and man for what they are. (143 – 4)

The description by Vajime from the above quotation indicates that the reality of setting, plot, people, and real-life events in the literary pieces is the core essence of a realist critic.

Maria Ajima also explains that the approach of realism enables an author to “create a storyline that seems real to life” (4), and most of the literary texts in African writings set out to depict real people and events, which is the central issue in realism. Asoo notes that George J. Becker categorises realism into several types. The categorisation includes “realism of subject matter, realism of technique, realism of philosophy, surrealism, irrationalism, critical and socialist realism and neo-realism” (22 – 25).

Following the several types of realism made prominent by Becker, this paper adopts the realism of subject matter to elucidate the reality of witchcraft in the Tiv cosmology. The paper states that witchcraft is prominent in Tivland and affects the psyche of the people, even though it is threatened by religion and Western civilisation, as will be further explained during the study.

Realism of *Tsav* in the Tiv Worldview

It is a reality that the traditional Tiv person believes in *tsav* (witchcraft). *Tsav* is used to put society in the right order, thereby balancing the existence of good and evil behaviour. *Tsav* makes people live happily; it blesses people by making them wealthy, healthy and generally successful. However, *tsav* can be used by its possessor to harm people or mar the society at large. The Tiv worldview also has it that even though death is inevitable, it does not just occur. It is most certainly caused by an individual who is a practitioner of *tsav* called *ormbatsav* in Tiv language, or the death is collectively agreed upon by the elders of a clan.

It is interesting to note that, though *tsav* is generally accepted in Tiv as even the young ones and the least expected people are often heard talking about it, no person in Tivland wants to be associated with *tsav* or called its possessor (*ormbatsav*) owing to religion and Western civilisation. They always reject the name, like Agera Iber, a Tiv oral poet would say, even though their immediate community knows that they are possessors and practitioners of witchcraft.

In *Akiga's Story*, Akiga notes that *tsav* is a religious belief in Tiv that is uniform, well defined and in a little way, affected by changes in social conditions. It is observed that every Tiv person generally accepts the existence of *tsav*. It is only the belief in it and its practices that are not universal to the Tiv people, owing to the influence of Christianity and contacts with other traditions. The African society in general, and the Tiv people in particular, believe that no death just occurs. *Tsav* is the ultimate cause of every death and every mishap, and this greatly influences the physical and social life of the people. Today, *tsav* is perceived as an old tradition, and is threatened by religion and modernity. The leader of the Tiv nations also declares having no connection with *tsav*, but the concept is persistent and has remained alive in the psyche of the Tiv people, hence this study.

What is *Tsav*?

Tsav is any kind of supernatural power an individual possesses, which enables him/her to do extraordinary things. It incorporates acts of excessive wickedness that emanate from jealousy, envy, or any kind of evil intention. It is generally used to hamper other people's development and progress and

can be owned collectively by a clan and deposited in the custody of an individual or a diviner.

Akiga has defined *tsav* as "... the power by which a man can achieve that which is beyond his normal faculties to accomplish ... and it is strictly personal, and a non-transferable force or quality possessed by human beings" (261). This is to show that possessors of *tsav*, witches (*mbatsav*) have certain powers (usually magical power) that ordinarily they would not have had. They possess certain powers that they find difficult to transfer to other people, owing to the benefit they derive from such powers. It is pertinent to note that even though Akiga observes that the power is 'non-transferable', this study emphasises that certain reasons make the *tsav* powers transferable to others. Reasons like the death of the practitioner; a dying practitioner can choose to bequeath the powers to his/her relation. At other times, the powers could be purchased with money or with a valuable human life, thus, certain powers can be transferred by the possessors.

According to Akpenpuun Dzurgba, "*tsav* is a supernatural organ with which a person is born" (177). Something beyond the natural order, which is not ordinary. True to the definition by Dzurgba, some people are born with *tsav*, especially if the parents of those born with it are *mbatsav*. In the Tiv milieu, *tsav* is also held by the council of elders of a homestead, clan or district. This shows why every head of a homestead in Tiv society is considered a practitioner of *tsav*.

Classification of *tsav*.

Tsav is classified into the good *tsav* and the bad *tsav* owing to the way it is performed. *Tsav* is a neutral phenomenon that is different only in the way it is used. No wonder Akiga states "*tsav* itself ... is of neutral character and varies in intensity rather than quality. Fundamentally, there is no distinction between good and bad *tsav*, the difference lies in the use to which it is put" (262). Though *tsav* is there in the idea of its practitioners, the way it is put to use, either to harm or do good, which to a larger extent preserves the land or destroys the land (270), is what makes a possessor a bad or good one. Godwin Yina also corroborates this point, as he states that in Tiv

[t]sav per se is a neutral force. It is sometimes considered positive and creative and at other times said to be capricious

and vindictive, depending on the use to which it is put. Thus, the differentiation into good or bad depends entirely on the nature of the possessor and not the *tsav*. *Tsav* that is good can enhance personal or communal welfare or add to the power of natural forces. It can make yams grow bigger than normal, add to the fertility of women, make a craftsman outdo himself in skill and generally make a man wealthy and a woman beautiful and attractive. (45)

The above explains that the idea of good or bad *tsav* is vague. What makes it a good or bad *tsav* depends on the individual who possesses it. If a possessor is a good person, he or she uses the potent power for good, and if the person is bad, then the evil aspect of it is upheld in the person's use. Overall, the good *tsav* is one used to preserve the land. However, owing to the perversity of human nature, it is realistic that bad *tsav* is constantly used to cause tyranny, famine, epidemics, deaths, sufferings and damages to the land. Thus, it seems as though there is nothing good at all in *tsav* to the extent that people grow goose pimples at the mention of *tsav* in Tiv tradition. Although to check the excesses of evil or bad witchcraft, the council of elders has a responsibility to use the constitutional rights to offset the evil *tsav* to put the society in the right order, thus leading to how *tsav* is practised.

The Practice of *Tsav* in Tiv Society

As earlier stated, the practice of *tsav* is apparent in Tiv society, more so that the negative practice of *tsav* seems to outweigh the good *tsav* that keeps up sustainability in the society. Due to contact with other traditions and civilisations, Tiv sons and daughters have acquired different kinds of destructive evil powers alien to the Tiv nation. A story is told about how a Tiv man from Kadarko (a place the researcher is conversant with) inquired and purchased a medicine meant to gradually kill his brother. Unfortunately, a different person stepped on the medicine when it was applied. To his dismay, the man decried his inability to remedy the situation upon the behest of the elders because he had not asked for the remedy from the Fulani man. This caused the death of an innocent person in his prime. The man also died at the order of the elders/kinsmen (*tyô*), resulting in a loss to the society at large. This accounts for why Chia claims that "the way of the Tiv did not permit any one

individual to be more powerful than his clan, neither did it allow him to mistreat his fellow brother” (246). He also asserts that the disruptions commenced with the advent of the white and his evil ways brought when he conquered the land by force and imposed his ways on the Tiv nation.

Of course, the Tiv people protested and compelled the white man to leave them as a homogenous entity. Even at that, the offspring and youths had eagerly imbibed the cultures of other ethnic groups. They picked from these foreigners the kind of *tsav* that was for perpetrating evil, oath administration and fortune telling, including the art of enslaving fellow brothers (245 – 6). All that was borrowed bordered on injustice and evil to be visited on fellow human beings. The result is that the *mbastav* no longer listens to the teachings of the elders. Thus, *tsav* today has degenerated into mostly the evil type that bestows calamity and perpetrates evil on human beings, which is prevalent in society today.

Chia does not fail to capture this reality in his text. Wade in the text epitomises those who have let their contact with foreign cultures penetrate them, thus demonstrating their powers willfully. He narrates:

Wade was one of the young men sent to the Chief of Wukari. Wade borrowed some of the ways and ideas that guided his life from the ways of the Chief. This clashed with the Tiv culture. For instance, the Tiv culture did not permit any one individual to be more powerful than his clan, nor did it allow him to mistreat his fellow brothers. But for the foreigners to whom he was sent, the chief was above everybody else and treated anyone as dictated by his whims. Anzamber Kuma revealed that Wade got the title ‘Kur’, the word for war commander in those people’s language. Adan-Wade had not known the origin of his father’s name, ‘Kur-Wade’, before. (247)

From the excerpt above, it is discovered that the different kind of practice borrowed from Wukari, where the chief ill-treated people and followed his desires, propelled Wade to appropriate the family’s *imbyorvyungu* and care less for the consequences of his actions, resulting in the murder of Abum. He also had an uncaring behaviour and was particularly greedy.

Tsav Patterns and Method of Practices

Diabolism – the use of charms and magical means to inflict agony. The Tiv man believes that a man can transform himself into other animals like birds/snakes/ambe (crocodile)/cats. This collaborates with natural things to scare people (*u cier ior*) or petrify people. For example, when the frog (*shôho*) crosses the road, it is believed that *mbatsav* are being tempted. Birds like *akiki*, *kpîle*, and *ivyungu* are nocturnal birds used as harbingers of *tsav*. Yina corroborates this point and opines that “the Tiv believe in the power of *mbatsav* to leave their natural bodies at night to carry out their work or transmigrate into the bodies of animals, insects and birds of nocturnal habits – cats, leopards, snakes, bat, owls, etc” (45). This emphasises how *mbatsav* carry out their practices.

Unfortunately, even though the bat is ugly and suitable for use as a messenger, it is hardly considered an emissary used by *mbatsav*. However, in recent times, it is considered and is associated with *tsav*. For instance, there are two prominent places in Benue State where bats heavily reside and are associated with *tsav*: the Benue State People’s House and the Mkar town. Bats dominate these two places and usually go out of their abodes in the evenings, filling the sky. The sight is quite wondrous and at the same time baffling. Consequently, there is the general belief that they are there for some *tsav* purposes, as throughout the whole state, nowhere else would one find such large numbers of bats compared to these two places mentioned.

It is a reality also in Tiv that diabolism is used to cause people great catastrophe. I like to wreak havoc in the lives of people. For instance, a witch can convert himself into something like a scorpion, a snake, or a wasp to bite an individual. Most times, the whole leg of the victim rots, causing death or great pain if the kinsmen intervene in the situation.

In the text under investigation, such methods are also used. First, Wade’s arrow that kills Abum is in the guise of a snake bite (8). Secondly, *mbatsav* can use the natural breeze of whatever form to cause havoc. In the text, when Tagude disobeyed her husband, Wade and gave out the *imbyorvyungu*, which was also protecting her and her son Adan-Wade, Abagye noticed and used the opportunity. She reports the issue to the kinsmen, who were vehement to deal with Tagude, stating “that

they would teach Tagude a lesson or two. She had taken them for granted for too long” (47). Not long afterwards, on the night slated for her and her son to flee to her fatherland, Tagude went to the farm by day to tidy up some things. There on the farm, “a tree whose trunk had been burnt and weakened by fire fell on Tagude due to a strong wind and knocked her down ... they carried her near lifeless body home” (48). The narration continues, “Tagude was in severe pain throughout the night and could not sleep. Her son, too, was unable to sleep ... he was worried. Was it not that night they had planned to leave for his mother’s place? ... at midnight approached, it dawned on Tagude that she would be gone before daybreak” (49). The emphasis here is to indicate the use of a ‘strong wind’ to achieve the aim of the *mbatsav* people to cause great pain to people in society, illuminating one of the methods of *tsav*.

Another method used by *mbatsav* is remote control. This is a situation where, even at a distance, *tsav* can be used to fetch an individual for elimination or contamination. Someone somewhere is affected by something that is performed at a distant place. For instance, the witch could call the presence of an individual in a mirror and harm the person’s shadow in the water. Even though a shadow, the person is affected physically and most often this leads to death or a catastrophe that can only be remedied by other strong forces.

The manner of remote controlling incidents is another reality that is captured by Chia in the text. How Shido is murdered indicates that she was controlled at a distance. First, in her dream, Shido saw that “the top of her root was removed, and she could see light descend on her. Next, she saw someone lowering a chain with a fishhook directly on the spot where she was sleeping” (255). This indicates that in her sleep, she was hooked already. The narration continues that as she stepped out, a snake bit her in the right toe. ... For the first time in her life, she knew the meaning of her dream. She realised that fate had signalled to her that her time was up. ... The poison with which the evil force had hit her travelled through her quite fast. Especially as she was pregnant. It polluted the entire blood in her veins. There was no hope that she would survive the poison. (255 - 6)

Hence, Shido died pathetically in her state and prime. This happens even to this day and accounts for why many people of

an alert mind traditionally do not joke with their dreams. They report such dreams to elders and kinsmen outright because they do not consider them ordinary.

Dreams in Tiv connote also the use of *tsav* to *cier ior*, that is to frighten people. Thus, when a person sees a chameleon (*hum*) in the daytime, it signifies something deeper. Traditionally, when someone sees strange happenings or signs around him/her, the person reports to the elders or kinsmen for possible action and prevention of mayhem. Chia demonstrates the different kinds of physical dreams or otherwise of *tsav*.

First, when Wade's Kinsmen were ready to pluck him up, he saw signs that were interpreted for him. The narration states, "one day, for example, he was on the road alone and heard *Mtsaan*, the little owl, intone in the bush: 'I shall die but with someone! I shall die but with someone!'" (16). It is generally believed in Tiv that this bird does not sing in vain. Anytime it sings this song-message, it means death has its claws close to one's throat or one's close relation. This puzzled Wade. The narration continues "[a]nother day a kite flew low from one end of his compound to the other" (17). This too signifies the near death of a great or wealthy man, and it kept Wade perplexed, especially because he killed Abum.

Secondly, when the kinsmen demanded their *imbyorvyungu* from Tagude at the order of Abagye without success. Tagude began to see signs that were extraordinary. Initially, "she finds a chameleon barring her path" (36) twice. Another time, she found "the chameleon hanging on the local dish holder in her house" (36) on waking up. Again, "the shrieking of owls behind her house in the night became a regular occurrence too" (36). These are all ill omens believed to have deeper meanings in the Tiv tradition. It wasn't until she complained to Swande, her guardian, stating that "it was Swande's way of implicitly sending her away from his home" (36) that she rested from these omens.

Apart from the methods of *tsav* related above, witches are also capable of physically poisoning their prey either through food, in drinks or otherwise. For instance, in Dogo village at a drinking joint on a market day, a man narrated how another man had raised his legs behind his buttocks (that is, in between his legs). The victim shouted immediately, *nenge nen ityô yam, ka stroke je or ne a lu tan mo ne*, meaning my kinsmen, this man wants to inflict me with a stroke. The victim as well as

the offender were of alert minds in witchcraft, thus the effect of the act was evaded. This is practically how *tsav* is practised and the different methods it assumes in Tiv setting. To the traditional inept minds, some of these usually appear like a joke, only that it is always weightier than a joke. The various practices of *tsav* and the methods used by *mbatsav* prompted this study to probe into the influences of *tsav*.

The Influences of *Tsav*

A lot of issues encourage *tsav* in the Tiv setting. One prominent issue that triggers people to possess *tsav* in Tivland is the desire for power and great wealth (*u lun shagbaor*). Once this happens, such a person would be clouded with this thought to the extent that he/she becomes blind to humanity and become hostile to humankind. This is caused by over-ambition, greed and selfishness that have corrupted human nature. Overwhelmed by these vices, people are sightless and vigorously in search of powers. It is a known fact that traditionally, power does not just creep into a person's life. It is valued and therefore must be earned. Also, because the world has degenerated in value culturally, as a Tiv man would say '*tar vihi*' – literally meaning the world is spoilt – people are tilted more to the evil practices of *tsav*. This is in contrast with the original *tsav* and its practices in Tivland, but because the world is suffering many other vices, the Tiv nation, as well, has been corrupted and is affected by inhumanity and its diverse forms.

As a result, people are encouraged to perform the negative *tsav* leading to the dark side of *tsav* in Tivland, hence the fear *tsav* instils in the Tiv person. This accounts for why Za-Ayem Agye points out that

In Tiv worldview, the universe is seen as a benign entity in which men and women co-exist to attain happiness, and the state of happiness is the equilibrium that is the natural order. But the stability of this natural order has perpetually been upset since over the millennia, ... the world has been spoilt by evil forces, *Mbatsav vihi tar*. (39)

Agye indicates that originally, the Tiv nation was a benevolent one where happiness was balanced and the nation was stable. However, in recent times, the nation has been upset along with the world by evil forces, thus the practitioners of *tsav* are equally swept along the tide. The resulting changes in Tiv

society have stripped the basic attitudes, sanctions and other values of the society, leaving an upheaval and chaotic society without sympathy for human life. This is why Chia's texts truly reflect the happenings in the Tiv society, where he discloses and simultaneously attacks mostly the evil practices of witchcraft in Tiv society. One notable example is the death of Shido Agena, caused by the desire for wealth and power.

The Desire for Powers and Wealth

Wealth and power are attributes of *shagba*, which translates literally to wealth but encompasses all the powers associated with witchcraft. People of the Tiv community who aspire to be traditionally powerful must make certain sacrifices in life, including ones that are even to their detriment. This is because tsav is valued by witches, and its price must be huge. The price is mostly the death or deformity of a person very close to the desiring party. This is exemplified in the text under study. The father of Shido Agena aspires to erect a loft which has a costly price widely known among members of his community. And because Shido is a beautiful girl of marriageable age without any blemish, the community know that she is to serve her father's purpose.

Agena desires to erect a garret for storing human skin sown into the form of a sack "*wuna poor*" (110), and to possess a human sack "*ikpyaor*" (110). He then requests permission from his kinsmen to erect and have these. These are not just owned, so the kinsmen agreed. They did not have a problem with a flawless human to be used, usually a "young man or woman without blemish, whose skin they would use in making the sack" (110). They hoped for Shido but waited for when Agena would complete the structure. Thus, the implication is that Shido is cut out to serve her father's purpose. This also explains why Agena frowned at the marriage between Shido and Adan-Wade. Eventually, Shido dies, and Agena achieves his aim. Shido's death is a result of jealousy and envy, which is another factor that causes *tsav* in the Tiv tradition.

Jealousy and Envy

Jealousy and envy, all known as *iyuhe* in Tivland, cut across all ages in the society. When a person's inherent nature is evil, he or she utilises his/her wits in destroying the victim who is

causing this psychological or emotional trauma. Even where an individual does not have an inbuilt attribute to harm another, such may engage the services of those who can out rightly harm others for a token or a fee. It is pertinent to state that jealousy in this wise refers to the negative emotions in a person who covets the possessions of other people, which usually demonstrates resentment towards others and not the jealousy that emanates from the love for another. Most people in the Tiv domain are found wanting in this regard. However, a person of ill trait uses this natural phenomenon to cause the death of another individual or cause them agony. A prominent character in the text, Abagye, is used to demonstrate the devastating nature of jealousy and envy.

Abagye is a woman who desires to possess *tsav* but does not have it. She envies the *imbyorvyungu* of Wade. After the death of Wade, the *imbyorvyungu* is transferred to Tagude, his wife, to hold in custody for Adan-Wade, his son. This heightens the resentment in Abagye. But until Tagude gave the *imbyorvyungu* to her father, it protected her, so no calamity befell her. Abagye, in her spite, instigates her husband, Swande, who is also Tagude's guardian, to collect the family *imbyorvyungu* from Tagude to no avail. She is the first to know that Tagude transferred the *imbyorvyungu* to her father and acts immediately; at this time, Tagude is prone to attack because she let out the *imbyorvyungu*. Tagude disobeyed. She didn't follow her husband's instructions, she let out the *imbyorvyungu*, and so her husband's people got her (47). The narration states that Abagye had used the opportunity swiftly; thus, she had quickly gone round to warn her husband's kinsmen of the development. She therefore believed that Tagude had met her death at the instance of her own alertness and quick action. She gave herself credit for seeing beyond the ordinary mind and for taking prompt and appropriate steps. Abagye really believed that, were it not for her, Tagude would not have died at the time she did. (55)

True to her words, it was her jealousy of Tagude's position that caused the latter's death. Even at the death of Tagude, Abagye is determined to possess the *imbyorvyungu*. This caused her restiveness, which she resolved to knock off the offspring left behind by Tagude (55). The narrator states, "Abagye certainly had a finesse in child abuse, and so Adan Wade didn't have it easy" (56) under her. She maltreated him without feeding him

enough until Adan-Wade could take no more and fled to his mother's place, Ikurav-Tiev, but soon returned after his maternal grandfather died.

Abagye, in connivance with some kinsmen, had the police of the native Authority conscript Adan-Wade to the coal Mines (162). This singular act largely leads to the death of Shido. The reason being that had he been around, when all the signs were there, he would have known exactly how to overcome Shido's forebears. Possibly, he would have cut any part of her body to create a scar, causing a blemish and unacceptable for the sacrifice. But as fate would have it, he was away at a time his wife needed him the most due to Abagye's evil machinations. Abagye is simply a character that represents those who let their covetousness cloud objective reasoning, thus harming people and society at large through the means at their disposal.

The Effects of Tsav on the Individual and Society

The major effect of *tsav* is the power associated with it. Apart from displaying certain forms of powers, *tsav* also brings about wealth, good health and good fortune to the possessor. *Tsav*, according to tradition, fortifies *mbatsav* such that no harm befalls them accidentally. To the community, *tsav* affords the elders the wherewithal to put right the land for a balanced society. Yina comments on the effects of *tsav* in Tiv tradition, observing that:

Tsav that is good can enhance personal or communal welfare or add to the power of natural forces. It can make yams grow bigger than normal, add to the fertility of women, make a craftsman outdo himself in skill and generally make a man wealthy and a woman beautiful and attractive. Possessing *tsav*, an elder or *orya* can "make right" the land or *sortar* for good health, abundance and longevity of life during his leadership tenure. *Tsav* in this regard is constitutional and lawful in the service of the community. (45)

The above indicates that *tsav* enhances the development of an individual as well as the society. Especially to the community, *tsav* is used to put the land right (*sôr tar*) by checking the excesses that abound in society for sustainability. To put the land right, the elders of a community use *tsav* to fortify the land and punish offenders of the land for the deterrence of intending offenders.

This is especially in cases of crimes that the elders frown at. This reality is also confirmed in the text under study.

Tsav as a Means of Curbing Offences

To demonstrate the act of using constitutional rights to offset evil in the land, Chia presents readers with a death which is frowned upon by the elders and the repercussions following the death of Abum. Wade possesses the extraordinary power; he is described as “a man in every sense of the word. He was alert in many respects to the way of his people. ... he believed that there was nothing hidden to him regarding the affairs of his clan, be they the affairs of supernatural forces or of ordinary human beings” (4 – 5). Because he had *tsav* and had achieved great feats in it. He became too proud and selfish. He murders the wishes of the elders’ clan. He killed Abum but denied it before the clan, and therefore, there had to be an investigation to determine the killer. The reason being that “Abum, his stepbrother, was ... of the strong conviction that he was the proper person to inherit the *imbyorvyungu*” (7). The kinsmen are also convinced of this effect. As a result, Abum was mad that Wade did not let his brothers have a glimpse of their father’s inheritance, and Wade killed him through a snake bite. The narration states:

but as he neared his house at dusk, a snake bit him. He did not have to think twice to know that it was Wade who had waylaid him. ...It pained him that Wade was that alert and had struck him just at the point when he had just finalised his line of attack. Indeed, his kinsmen had armed him with a weapon from the arsenal of dark forces with which to kill Wade. He was thus coming home aggressively and confidently to pluck Wade off the tree of life. But the incidence of the snakebite only proved to him how much more of a man his half-brother was. (8-9)

From the quotation above, Wade and his brother were at each other’s throats. However, because of his arrogance and over ambition, “he appropriated virtually all the wealth left to the family by their father ... and was unmindful of his brothers’ bitterness over his behaviour”(7). He also believed that there was little or nothing they could do. Whereas Abum complained and had the support of his kinsmen, so they too wanted to right

the wrong Wade had committed, not just to his brothers but to the entire clan and tilted towards Abum. However, Wade once again outsmarted them in the fetish act, and the elders became crossed. When Abum reported that he was beaten, they frowned, expressing their displeasure that “it would be a premature death were Abum to die” (9).

Realistically, the Tiv tradition frowns on the death of an individual, especially when the entire elders of the clan warn against it. Once an individual is struck and reports to the kinsmen, in cases where they do not support the death, they administer an antidote and warn against the death, and sometimes the individual comes out of it. However, Wade enjoys the benefits of his *imbyorvyungu* and is hell bent to have it only for himself; he demonstrated that he could match his might with the collective arm of the clansmen. Thus, the elders reacted just as it is practised in real-life situations in Tivland. The narration states that they “appealed to Anzenke, the most elderly among them, to stop desecrating the land” (10). When this happens, to prove people’s innocence or knowledge about a killing, a traditional inquest is usually performed. From the text, the investigation is performed, and Wade is asked if he is guilty, but he proclaims his innocence, asserting “my clansmen, the death of my brother has taken me completely unawares too. To tell you the truth, I simply don’t understand it at all” (11). Anzenke, as the eldest man, asks Wade who is the possessor of the *imbyorvyungu* in the family. Wade agrees to being the possessor. Making a headway, Anzenke asks, “Now that you have told us you have the *imbyorvyungu*, could you also tell us whether you have offered the mandatory sacrifice of slaughtering a ‘chicken’ to it” (12). Wade could not give any plausible answer to the question; the elders, therefore, concluded that he had killed his brother to satisfy the required purification of one who beholds an *imbyorvyungu*. The Tiv people are people who do not allow any one individual to be more powerful than their clan, and they also frown at anyone who mistreats their fellow brother. As a result, they have an adage which claims that “*orhembe ityô ga*”.

The Tiv people, as well, use *tsav* to govern their nation. In this wise, the elders in the story, having had the conviction that Wade killed Abum, decided that they would all drink from the *kor* test to ascertain the culprit and pluck out the evil from

the society. Discreetly, the elders had known the culprit and advised that he would not come out of the test alive. This is evident from the narration through the explanation of Nor to Wade that “his kinsmen had agreed that he, Wade, should never survive the test. He explained to him that during this time they were all waiting for Andwer to prepare the *kor* test. ... Indeed, Andwer, who was to administer the test, knew exactly what the kinsmen were asking of him” (17). This indicates another reality in Tivland. The *kor* serves as something like an arbiter or adjudicator and is a crude way of divination believed to be poisonous only to the guilty person. It is used to investigate a problem in the Tiv community and determine guilt. According to the Tiv worldview, when there is a problem in a community like incessant death, theft, or any other offence that brings harm to the society, the elders resort to *kor* to deal with such a situation. The use of *kor* is a real-life situation in the Tiv tradition that is practised to this day.

Method of Preparing *Kor*

Kor in the Tiv tradition is prepared with the *Kor* tree bark pounded in a mortar. It is then mixed in a calabash and administered to suspects. When a suspect takes it and is innocent, he vomits it out. However, when a suspect is guilty of the offence, he dies. Its essence is to do away with evil. Discreetly, the elders know the actual suspect who is naturally vehement in denial of an offence. Then the elders use the whiskers of the lion (which are poisonous) or any other poisonous element to put into the actual suspect, as indicated by the elders. As such, the *kor* is never administered simultaneously to all suspects. The calabash administered to the pointed suspect has the poison that will eliminate the offender who is adamant and refuses to confess. The guilty one takes it and dies. This is done to ward off offences in the community and send cold shivers to intending offenders.

The Attributes of *Tsav* and Its Labelling

In Tiv society, witches (*mbatsav*) are stereotypically identified by old age, strange/rigid behaviour, and disfigured appearance. Old individuals are assumed to possess superior knowledge and survival skills, while their experience is linked to occult power, it must be versatile and versed to the extent that they have the

power to summon. Physical markers such as bent backs, hunchbacks, shabby looks**—are key, as Azuah notes, “old and a bit bent... hunch back... looked at as a witch,” 64). Chia’s Hon Gerege epitomises this: ‘senile, toothless, bald, unkempt’ (41) “smooth as a calabash... decomposing tooth,” 42), and “morally monstrous and evil propensities were unequalled,” (43). These traits collectively signal witchcraft in Tiv perception.

Conclusion

The existence of witchcraft and its effects on human existence cannot be overemphasised, even though human sentiments reject these. In the Tiv area, tsav is still prominent in the people’s psyche and is prevalent among the people, including the ‘civilised’. As the people believe so much in tsav, it is in their psyche that mbatsav can do anything, ranging from causing physical harm to death, as they do not spare people with good intent. The fear of mbatsav makes most people and whole families dread visiting their hometowns for fear of ‘village people’. Furthermore, Tsav affects interpersonal relationships, halts people’s development, for example, the fear of mbatsav has stopped some people who have the wherewithal to own houses not to building houses in their hometowns for fear of being harmed or killed. In this regard, this paper demonstrates the existence of tsav, noting its nature, its practices in the Tiv milieu, how it affects the practitioners, what influences it, its patterns and methods, its attributes, and labelling as epitomised by Chia’s *Adan Wade Kohol Ga*. As a contribution to the controversial issue of witchcraft, which is constantly denied yet practised and believed in Tiv society, as evident in the text, the paper concludes that since witchcraft exists among the Tiv and affects their psyche, it should be channelled to the development of the Tiv nation for sustainability and preservation of the Tiv people and Tivland.

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