
TRADO- MEDICAL AND CULTURAL TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE TIV SOCIETY IN BENUE STATE OF NIGERIA

By

DR. AFELLA TERNA
*Department of Religion and Philosophy,
Benue State University,
Makurdi.*

Abstract

African technology has played very significant role in the shaping of African society. Among the Tiv also, the indigenous skills of the peoples and their cultural practices including their medical practice have helped in development of science and technology. The writer have in this paper attempted to examine the culture and technological development in Tiv society and have discovered that this has helped in promoting the wellbeing of the people both in making of Tools and health. The writer has noticed that Tiv technological practices have suffered great setback due to secrecy by practitioners, abandonment by the people and non- improvement on the practices which has hindered its development. The paper therefore suggests that the people need to go back to practice their technology and improve on their skills. They should stop keeping their knowledge secret so as to have monopoly because this is preventing the improvement and projection of their technological achievements to the outside world to see.

Nigerian markets are today besieged with foreign goods and products as if Nigerians themselves had no technology of theirs that aided in the production of most of these things they import today. Before colonization, various communities that make up Nigerian nation today developed indigenous technological skills that helped them

produce implements and weapons with which they defended themselves against wild animals and external aggressions from other enemies. They also learnt to construct houses, produced house hold materials as well as other things that made life easier for them as well as enabled them to function effectively in the performance of their different professions in the society. The tiv nation was one of such communities that developed their indigenous technology to take care of most of their needs. How most of these skills were acquired and those who first practiced them is not exactly known hence the early tiv technologist could not read and write, therefore did not document their practices. However, their skills aided them in the production of many things some of which are still produced today using this same old technology.

With the coming of colonial masters, Tiv markets were flooded with foreign materials and goods which looked more advanced, refined and better to use compared to the things they produced. They began to crave for these things and abandoned the ones they produced instead of improving on theirs to compete with the foreign ones. For example, they preferred the metal pots and plates to the clay pots and plates they molded. This also was the case with their textile industries as they abandoned it in pursuit of foreign clothes such that it is very difficult to see a Tiv man dressed in his cultural clothes to work, go to church and other functions.

Most children born in this modern times do not think the Tiv had their indigenous technology with which they produced things except a few of them that live in rural areas where this technology is still practiced, because all they see around them are foreign goods and products. In this paper the writer have earned out a study on Tiv technological practice to show how the Tiv people could produce most of the things they used and which made life easy for them. The writer has also suggested ways of improving this technology so as to attract the youths into its practice to solve the problem of unemployment in Tiv society.

Definition of Terms

African Religion and Medfcine; The concept Religion is not easy to define. Neither is there any definition that is generally accepted among religious scholars. The study of religion involves many religious traditions and perspectives like the sociological, psychological, historical, theological, phenomenological, and comparative approaches. These approaches further pose the problem of providing a wholistic view of what constitutes religion. The above is coupled with the science of religion in which empirical and scientific methods are used in the study of religion. Modern scholars are calling for explicit theories, valid definitions, explanations, and understanding of religion to cement its scientific nature (Ekwunife, 33).

However, religion generally denotes man's experience, awareness, attitude, recognition, conception, and understanding of the existence of the supernatural or the explicitly of spiritual beings and his relationship with them. It has to do with, not only

the beliefs but also, the practices of the society based on divine revelation and their corresponding response to the gods (34). According to Bonquet, religion is:

A fixed relationship between the human self and some non- human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self- existent the absolute or simply, God. Religion is a relationship established between man and transcendent personal being, a deity believed to be in existence (168).

African traditional religion is therefore, the religious tradition of the African peoples that is based purely on their culture. The religion was formulated by the ancestors and handed down from generation to generation. It influenced Ekwunife's definition for African traditional religion as follows:

...living institutional religious beliefs and practices, which are rooted in the past... religious culture; a religion that has transmitted to the present overt and covert votaries by successive... forebears mainly through oral traditions (myths and folktales, songs and dances, liturgies, rituals, proverbs, pithy sayings and names, sacred institutions like sacred specialists and persons, initiation rites, festivals, sacred spaces and objects and religious works of art; a religion which is slowly but constantly updated by each generation in the light of new religious experiences through the dialectical process of continuities and discontinuities (19).

The above definition is comprehensive and all embracing. From it, one can deduce that African traditional religion is a living religious tradition.

Medicine is generally described as a substance used in treating diseases or illness. In a wider sense, it embodies any remedy or solution for some problems with particular reference to ill- health, ill- luck, un- defined fortune etc (Onah 140). According to Adodo, medicine is a substance (solid or liquid) that is used for care and prevention of diseases and for the promotion of general well being. Tiv traditional medicine therefore refers to substances developed by the Tiv for the purpose of treating illnesses, ill- luck, and for protection. The people charged with the responsibility of making and administering medicines are known by different names among different groups in Africa, The Yoruba for example call them babalawo. Traditional medicine is derived from plants and animal parts etc, and can be used to cure complicated cases (Adodo 2).

Technology: according to Charles Singer, technology may be defined as a systematic study of techniques for making and doing things. These techniques he says are essentially methods of creating new tools and products of tools and the capacity for constructing such artifacts is a determining characteristic of manlike species. As other species make artifacts; for example Bees build hives to deposit honey, birds build nests but these attributes are the result of patterns of instinctive behavior.

Tiv Religion and Technological Development

Among the Africans, religion and culture are inter- woven such that it is impossible to separate one from the other. This is also true of the Tiv as their religion and culture are one and the same. Therefore, whatever happens to the culture also affects the religion. It is in this sense that we can say that, technological advancement culturally is also religious advancement.

It is difficult for the writer to give the exact date and the person that first began technological practice among the Tiv. However, it can be speculated that, it began with the existence of the Tiv as is attested by Athur Kooestler that man was a technologist from the beginning and the history of technology encompasses the whole evolution of man (66). This is so because as soon as the people came into existence, they were faced with challenges they had to surmount, thus they began to create things so as to improve their living condition.

In the area of medicine the tiv have systematically observed various ailments and have developed ways of tackling such in accordance with its peculiarities. They have developed ways of safe- guarding their farms through the discovery of methods to make charms that can be placed on farms. In the process of using his rational faculties to devise techniques and modify his environment, the Tiv has attacked problems other than those of survival and the production of wealth with which the term technology is usually associated today. The technique of language, for example, involves the manipulation of sounds and symbols in a meaningful way and similarly the techniques of artistic and ritual creativity represents other aspects of the technological incentive.

Technological Advancement Past and Present

Past: the first effort at technology among the Tiv in the pre- historic period was done using stone. Though it may be assumed that man at the early stage used other materials, such as wood, bone, fur, leaves and grasses, the Tiv learnt the technique of shaping the stone into a weapon. These he used for hunting and as a tool for his protection. He also used stones to make fire. This was done by striking two stones to get a spark that lighted with wool. Stones were used for healing in various ways. For example they were part of materials used for making medicines. It was heated in the fire to be worm and placed on a swollen part of the body to heal. Animal bones were shaped into pipes and flutes for entertainment as well as motivating the spirits to cause healing. Techniques were developed to use wood for carving house hold furniture, statures and musical instruments. Mastery in Clay was developed and used for pottery, bricks; earthen wares etc. skills in use of Fur and cotton were developed to make fabrics used for making clothes to substitute the use of animal skin as clothes.

Present: The technological innovations described so far occurred very slowly and over a long period of time, in response to only the most basic social needs, the search for food, shelter and solutions to some little daily challenges and with few social resources available for any activity other than the fulfillment of these needs. Some decades ago, however, a momentous cultural transition began to take place in Tiv society. It generated new needs and resources and was accompanied by a significant increase in technological innovation. It was the beginning of more sophistication in technological invention in Tiv, For example,

Agriculture: though the Tiv started by gathering fruits, seeds and hunting for food during their wandering days, they began to develop the idea of farming and domestication of animals for food as soon as they began to settle down and build shelters. According to Hungwa Ijen, the Tiv started farming by digging the ground and planting before they began to make heaps and ridges using wood to gather sand and later metal hoes with wooden handles (Interview).

Iron and Steel; the Tiv are well versed in iron and steel technology today. They use this skill to produce a lot of equipments which they use. How and when the skill came in Tivland is not exactly known. The people involved in this are called mba varen fwa (blacksmiths), while the place for practicing this skill is known as Ate Iwa (Hut for Blacksmithing). The ate iwa is a hut made with poles and roofed with thatch grasses, in the ate iwa are things like ikpa iwa (a bag made from animal skin). The bag is sewn to be air tight at the top and sides except at the small portion at the bottom where a pipe is fixed to release air when it is pressed at both sides to fan the charcoals for fire to heat the steel to make it red. This is to enable easy shaping of the iron to the instrument or weapon they wish to make. In the past, Tiv got steel materials through trading by exchange of their agricultural products with communities that had steel. Today however, due to the abundance of steel materials from rickety cars and other scrap metals, they source their materials within their environment. Here, all kinds of metallic implements used by the people are made stemming from big and small holes (Nduhar and Abya), kappa (Knives). Spear (Iwange or Dagi), Arrows (Avaan). Animal Trap (Gbidye Kpan) etc (Tso Agbidye Interview).

Weaving and Dying: the Tiv are lovers of beauty and this is seen in the various beautiful clothes they weave and dye with different colours. The Tiv weaved using the cotton they planted and derived tread from. A manually designed wooden weaving machine was used for this purpose. The machine was made in such a way that it was controlled with the legs while the hands threw tread in exchange between the left and right hands. The Tiv make their dye from plants, one of which is kpagh. The colours made by the Tiv were not only used for dyeing clothes but were robbed on skin especially by the women to make their skin bright and attractive. With the dye the

people make, they dye their clothes with various colours which differentiate them from one another. For example the anger has white and black horizontal stripes; the ivav ityo has large navy blue circles on white background. Other clothes are the tugudu which is usually white in colour, mule u Tiv Chado, Akpende Akulugh, Gbevwar, swem karagbe, which also have their unique colours that ensure their difference (Ulam Agahyande, Interview).

Hunting and Fishing: apart from farming, other professions engaged in by a large population of tiv are hunting and fishing. According to Begh, the Tiv hunted by preserving a large portion of land over grown with grass for over four years to allow animals to habitat in it. When they were ready to hunt in it they gathered round it and set it on fire. The animals that came out of it were pursued and killed. Apart from this, Tiv applied technological means to hunt down animals. This was done through the making of various tools and weapons that were used to kill the animals. These weapons included ada and avaan (Bow and Arrows) Dagi (spear). Gbidye kpan, mgbinden, Abume, Gbeke, Kwar, fyoor etc. For fishing too, the Tiv have developed various technological methods. For example they used tsitwe (hug), kaar (net) and Kua etc for fishing. Tsuwe is a sharp u-shaped hook on a long rope that an insect was hung on it as bait for the fish. Kaar on the other hand is a net that is spread across a stream for a long period or over right to trap fishes. While kua is a process of moulding sand across the stream mostly during dry season to stop water flow and trap fishes after which the people empty the area of trapped fishes of water (Kohol Sua) and catch fishes with bare hands (Interview).

Crafts (Molding and Carving): the Tiv are good in clay molding and wood carving. Tiv have developed skills in molding Tsuwa (cooking pots), Gbande (plate), buufu Pot for drying meat, Shawa water pot which makes water to be cold as if it is from the refrigerator. They also mold images and statues some of which they venerate as deities. This is also true of carving as they carve images and statues from wood for veneration and decoration. Woods are also carved to make farming implements such as big hoe, small hoe, handle of harvesting knife, spear etc (Kwasedoo Iyo, Interview).

Medical Practice: the Tiv have used their technological know-how to develop their medical practice. For example, they have distinguished the ailments that occur amongst them and given names to them. They have gone further to develop various methods unique to particular ailments to handle it. The ailments are ayaakyule (yellow fever), akpiti (stroke), iyav mbu mollun (swollen stomach), agina, sabandawa (chicken pox), Amile (Small pox), Ato Anyion (ear pains), Ashe Anyion (eyes Pain), etc. Tiv prepare medicines in various forms. There are medicines in liquid forms made from fresh leaves, stems, roots, backs of plants, shrubs, soil and animal parts. There are also liquid medicines made from dry materials of some of the materials just mentioned. These

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materials are sometimes grounded in powdery form and licked or taken orally in paste food (Ibie). Medicines are also prepared in paste form to be robbed on the affected part of the skin. Drying medicine materials and also pounding them are methods devised by the Tiv for preservation or storage of medicines for future use (Aunde Ishwa, Interview).

Constructions (Shelter and other things): according to Atsor Ihande, the first form of constructed shelter by the Tiv was done using plant poles, sticks and leaves. Several years later they started heaping loomy soil (Ihambe) to construct their houses that were roofed with sticks and leaves. Then came the idea of molding blocks (Akam) with loomy soil to built and roofing with spear grass as is still done till date (Interview). They made gambe atsor, ikpande as house hold items. They made akem, kucha and mzomdom which served as traditional cups and plates respectively (Maashin Dondo, Interview).

Storage and Preservation: Tiv people developed good skills of storage and preservation of meat and harvest produce. The Tiv made wuna (Barn) and daar for storage of grains. Wuna is a barn that is built with clay soil and an opening is made at the top where grains are poured into the barn. Daar on the other hand is made with four, six or eight wooden poles depending on the size desired and the flat top is covered with canes of guinea corn. Zaar on the other hand is constructed like Daar but in the kitchen above where fire is made to dry meat. Other storage places are sha ihange (inner roof of kitchen or hut). Here some harvested corn, millet and guinea corns are hung especially a few that are kept for another planting season. Another storage facility was adudu. Adudu was weaved with leaves of palm fronds with a cover for keeping personal items including sometimes, clothes (Gba Akem, Interview).

Communication: to disseminate information about the death of an important personality especially the Tor (chief) was done by playing of illu. Invitation to a meeting in the chiefs palace or other information to the community were done in the unique way the illu was played to convey information.

Entertainment: for entertainment, the Tiv people made different instruments with different sounds. They made agbande (Drums) with carved wood covered with animal skin. They made gbange with wood, imya and gido (flute) with wood. Other entertainment instruments are mboro, akacha, shoko shoko, kucha (Calabash), Busa, etc.

Challenges of Tiv Technological Development

Documentation: lack of documentation by Tiv professionals of the methods of carrying out things has been one major problem that has faced Tiv technological. Most

persons that were skilled in this technology where illiterates therefore, they did not document the ways by which they created things for posterity to learn from. Their death meant the end to the skills they had as there was not continuity. There was no way of learning or tapping into their wealth of knowledge. This has brought serious setback in the development of Tiv technology.

Death of Professionals: the death of many skilled professionals who combined zeal and great interest in Tiv technological practice despite the low income it attracted has affected the profession greatly. For most of them it was a family business that was transferred from one generation to the other. Therefore, they did all they could to sustain the practice despite all odds. Their children today have abandoned this skills bequeathed to them by their fore fathers describing it as too local and crude and not so befitting for "young guys" to practice for a living.

Lack of Interest by Youths to Learn and Take Over: as the skilled professionals became old, there was need for younger persons to take over. However, most young persons were not ready to learn the skills of tiv creativity viewing it as primitive. Rather than learning these skills, most youths prefer to pursue western education. Those that cannot cope with formal education also prefer to migrate to the cities and engage in menial jobs such as serving at construction sites, engaging in commercial motor cycling, learning carpentry, mechanic work and other professions that will earn them fast money.

Problem Caused by Westernization: Westernization has brought more advanced technology from more advanced western countries which the Tiv people prefer to imbibe rather than the development of their technology which they often describe as crude and less efficient. This has made the practice of Tiv technology to suffer serious setback. Rather than develop their technology to become advanced just as the westerners did to their's, the Tiv have rather abandoned their technology and embraced that of the west.

Problem Caused by Christianity: one of the greatest problems that has hindered the development of Tiv technology is Christianity. The colonial masters in their bid to colonize Africans effectively introduced Christianity. The Christianity they introduced was one that criticized the people's ways of doing things and promoted that of the west. Christianity described almost all Tiv cultural practices for example medical practice, method of worship etc as evil and discouraged their members from indulging in these practices. Most people for fear of sanction by the church have abandoned their cultural practices. As a result most of these practices are becoming extinct.

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Lack of Sponsorship of Researches in the Area: nothing has been added to the technological advancement that the Tiv fore fathers achieved due mostly to lack of funds to carry out more researches in this field. This is because most of the people involved in this technology are poor peasants who cannot afford to take good care of their families from the proceeds of their skills talk more of re- investing their income to develop or advance their skills to cope with modern challenges.

Secrecy and Desire for Monopoly: Most of the Tiv technologists prefer to keep their skills in secret so that they will continue to have monopoly of the knowledge of the skills they have acquired. They do this to avoid competitors and to be patronized alone. Thus, when they die their skills die with them. They may not have trained anyone to continue with the practice thereby denying the society of the benefit of enjoying the technological advancement.

Way Forward To Tiv Technological Development

Tiv technological advancement has come a long way despite the challenges it has faced over the years. However it has not reached its potentials inspite of its long existence. To take its rightful place in a globalized world, the following will have to be done.

Training: there should be a deliberate policy by state government to sponsor Tiv technologist on training both within and outside the country. This will make them acquire modern skills of making things that will improve the qualities of their products that will meet up with global standards.

Access to Loans: Government should make loan facilities easily available to Tiv traditional technologists at little or no interest attached to enable them carry out more researches into what they produce to improve on it. The funds will as well aid them to expand their businesses. The loans will also assist in mass production of goods which will not only make them available for export but cheap in the market.

Secrecy: Tiv professionals involved in local production of things should learn to train and pass their knowledge to others so that their skills will outlive them. A situation where they don't train people to take over from them is not too healthy as they deny the society of the continuity and improvement of their skills for the benefit of the people.

Documentation: Methods of making things should be documented by way of capturing them in books so that the knowledge will be circulated. This will not only help to preserve this knowledge but people will read and engage in more researches to improve on the existing practice to make it meet up with global challenges.

Make the Practice Lucrative to Youths: The crude, painful and stressful methods of Tiv technological practice should be improved on via researches to make it easy and attractive to the youths. This will make them more willing to engage in the practice. The practice should also be made to attract more financial gains to the practitioners instead of the present situation where those engaged in the practice only make little profit that barely takes care of their needs and that of their families.

Incorporation of the Practice in Schools: The state ministry of education should incorporate these practices into the educational system at the primary and secondary levels. Tiv technologists should be employed to teach students the skills of making the products they choose to learn. This will help those that cannot continue with formal education to fall back to the skills they have acquired to earn a living.

Conclusion

In this paper, the writer has looked at Tiv technology and the numerous things the Tiv people produced from their skills for their benefits. He has seen that all that the people made ranging from the clothes they weaved, pot and plates they molded, farm implements and weapons they constructed, various hunting and fishing instruments they made etc all made living easy and pleasurable. The Tiv technology if encouraged to develop by doing away with the challenges it is facing is capable of providing employment for thousands of Tiv youths that are today roaming the streets in search of jobs. The quantity of locally produced implementations and wares which will be easy to use by the people because they are based on the people's culture will easily be available and affordable for the people as they will not have import duty charges.

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