

Abbreviated Key Title: Int. J. Arts Humanit.

ISSN: 2360-7998 (Print) & Open Access

Vol. 10(6): Pp 008-017, May, 2022.

International Journal of Arts and Humanities: ISSN-2360-7998 (Print) & Open Access: DOI/ijah/10.54978

Volume-10 | Issue-6 | May-, 2022 |

Full Length Paper

Or Vanya Ka Mngerem (A Visitor is Like Flood): The Tiv Notion of Hospitality

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Corresponding author: Adega AP :Received: 05.05.2022 | Accepted: 07.05.2022 |

Published: 10/05/2022

Abstract: *The paper Or Vanya Ka Mngerem (A Visitor is like flood): The Tiv notion of Hospitality examines the issue of hospitality in Tiv traditional and contemporary society. The motivation for this research is necessitated by the inhospitable nature of contemporary Tiv society. In collecting materials for the documentation of this paper, two main sources of data collection procedures were followed; the primary and secondary sources of data collection. In the primary source of data collection, the phenomenological, observation, and oral interview methods were used. In the secondary source, library materials from documented sources related to the topic under discussion from books, journals, e-sources, newspapers and magazines were collated for use. The paper established that the Tiv were hospitable people in the traditional society and would hardly eat without inviting those present or even passersby. Towards this the Tiv ate in the open court yard or in the ate-the reception hut. However, in the contemporary Tiv society, things have changed with the collapse of the Tiv social values and ethics. No one cares to invite a visitor to a meal or show any sign of hospitality to a guest, wanderer or passersby. In the current state of individualism, the paper calls on the Tiv to note the fact that Or Vanya Ka Mngerem (A Visitor is like flood); therefore like the flood which soon dries and empties itself in the river, a visitor leaves sooner than later. As such, while the visit lasts, the host should treat the guest well and make him/her comfortable. The paper concluded that a return to this basic principle and philosophy will once again propel the Tiv on the threshold of development, peace, tranquility and progress.*

Keywords: Hospitality, Or vanya, Mngerem, Tiv

Publish by IJAH 2022.

INTRODUCTION

“You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:20).

There are no two ways on interpreting the biblical injunction from Exodus 22:20 above than a clear admonition for hospitality. Being hospital to a guest entails welcoming, receiving, hosting and entertaining such a person(s). In being hospitable, one is to be friendly towards the guest bearing in mind that at one point or the

other in a person’s life, s/he may be a guest to someone else or be a stranger needing help and hospitality in foreign lands. Hospitality has been an aged-long practice amongst humanity and hospitable persons are known to have recouped generous and bountiful rewards by their act of hospitality. The act of hospitality is not strange to Africans and the Tiv in particular. In fact, the Tiv practice hospitality with passion and all sense of responsibility;

viewing it as a divine mandate.

Ezenweke and Nwadiakor in subscribing to the above line of thought suggested that before the advent of western civilisation and culture to Africa, the sense of brotherhood and hospitality were some of the cardinal values of an indigenous African man (61). This is also true of the Tiv. Indisputably, to say that the Tiv are hospitable would be an understatement. Indeed, the Tiv are hospitable to a fault. In the words of Ihagh, the Tiv tend to like outsiders over and above their kith and kin (26). This explains why in Utov's conception,

Tiv friendliness and hospitality are today evident in the refusal of several non-Tiv civil servants to leave Tivland when reposted out (on transfer). Some have opted for retirement and they stay back to establish businesses in Tivland (12).

Also, the Tiv act of hospitality had generated a lot of negative insinuations from foreign anthropologists and other *ato atiev* (non-Tiv) who unable to understand the dynamics of Tiv culture made categorical but erroneous statements regarding Tiv sense of hospitality.

The paper examines the Tiv notion of hospitality. This has been looked at from both the traditional and contemporary Tiv society. Following this attention is shifted to discussing the Tiv notion that *Or vanya ka mngerem* (a visitor is like flood). Some suggestions are proffered and a conclusion drawn.

The Concept of Hospitality

Hospitality refers to a friendly and generous behaviour exhibited towards guest(s) and or visitor(s). It connotes greeting somebody in a friendly way or manner when they arrive somewhere. In another dimension, the concept hospitality would mean the business of providing catering, lodging and entertaining services. The later has to do chiefly with running/operating a hotel, lodge or guest house on commercial basis.

On the etymology of hospitality, Vozinagwa opined that it is from Latin *Hospes*, meaning "host", "guest", or stranger. According to him, it is the relationship between guest and the host or the act of or practice of being hospitable. This includes the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers (218). In a slightly different dimension, J. Quenum explained that it is from the Latin word *hospitalitas* which means friendliness to guests. He therefore defined hospitality as a practice or social expression of genuine concern for the wellbeing of the guest, visitor, traveler or stranger (1). Similarly, J. Quenum further opined that in African languages, myths, proverbs and symbols, hospitality is associated with the fact of providing food, drinks and shelter to a guest. It does not just conjure up the idea of wellbeing, someone outside the household; but is based on the belief that all fellow human beings outside their communities of origin need social safety, provision and companionship. It is a prominent form of solidarity without community borders (1).

In the above perspective, hospitality becomes solidarity in action in which the guest, stranger, visitor or traveler is taken for a brother or sister; making them to feel at home, loved and cared for and honoured as members of the extended human family (1). Approaching the concept hospitality from an African perspective, Gathogo enthused that:

African hospitality can be defined as the extension of generosity, given freely without strings attached. It is an unconditional readiness to share (give and take). It is the willingness to give, to help, to assist, to love and to carry one another's burden without necessarily putting profit or reward as the driving force (39).

Furthermore, Gathogo citing Olikenyi explained that, African hospitality is a vital aspect of existence in Africa in general; it is one of the few facets of ancient African culture that is still intact and strongly practiced today by most African ethnic nationalities irrespective of the forces of recent external influence or even internal pressures (39).

Elaborating more on African hospitality, Gathogo posited that African hospitality is grounded in the fact that "no one is an island" in himself or herself, each and everyone is part of the whole. This is premised on the African philosophy of "I am because we are and since we are therefore, I am". The emphasis of African hospitality is on interdependence (48). This is the foundation on which African hospitality is built. In other words, hospitality in the social context plays the role of the life affirming and life sustaining. This is because the individual is never alone (Gathogo, *Some expressions* 283).

According to Ezenweke and Nwadiakor, Africans have symbolic ways of expressing hospitality or welcome. These, they pointed out are in forms of presentation of kola nuts, traditional gin, native chalk and so on (66). J. Quenum also added that sub-Saharan African traditional societies provide drink, food, shelter and companionship for hosts, guests, travelers and strangers. Thus, as soon as they are introduced into family homesteads, they are offered greetings, water and local beer (2). All these are done by the Africans in recognition of human needs via communal solidarity because the survival and fulfilment of any human is dependent on meeting his/her needs of food, drink, shelter and companionship (2).

More so, a ritual of slaying chickens, goats or sheep for hosts, guests, travelers and strangers is a symbol of the sacredness of hospitality. The family homestead, friends and neighbours are delighted to welcome the host the guests, travelers and the strangers. Even the ancestors of the homestead are associated with welcoming ceremony through libations, songs and prayers (2).

Adegas stated that for the Tiv, a sure sign of hospitality and welcome is any of the following: a piece of roasted yam, ground nuts, ginger, garden eggs, water and smoking pipe/tobacco (for smokers), (24) Alligator

pepper, native kola and palm wine are also offered in Kunav area of Tivland. A chicken, goat, cow, sheep or pig could also be slaughtered for a guest(s) as deserving of their social status, mission and occasion. For the Idoma and Igala, gruel (*kunu*) and water will be sufficient; while kola nut is a sure symbol of welcome among the Igede (24).

Vozinagwa opines that there are two parties to the practice of hospitality: The host and the guest (i) The Host: Anybody can be the host. The host can either be an individual; an adult or a teenager or even a child or a group i.e a family or even an entire community or clan (ii) The Guest: The guest, as a person is considered sacred in African societies. He/she is highly esteemed and treated with respect and care. The guest could be known and unknown, expected or unexpected. The guest is always warmly received (219-220). On the reciprocity in African Hospitality, Vozinagwa further explained that the host shows love to his/her guest. This is because of the believe in African societies that if the guest has bad intention towards the host, the love shown by the host wards off the evil intention (221).

The preceding assertion by Vozinagwa is nothing but true among the Tiv hence on several occasions it was revealed that a generous host escaped death from the hands of *mba ngohol ingyato* (witches/sorcerers who were hired to kill someone) who confessed to the motive of their visits but who had changed their minds from carrying out their evil assignment because of the hospitable nature of their host.

On the whole, being hospitable is both beneficial and rewarding for both the giver and receiver. The person who is hospitable is helpful to those in need and s/he develops positive character traits and behaviours in his/herself. The hospitable person sees life from someone else's perspective i.e their struggles, hardships, triumphs and strengths. It offers the hospitable the privilege of being a witness to another's life and in so doing gain appreciation and gratitude for his/her own life (Being Charitable 4). Also, all human beings wish to be treated with respect and dignity and to feel valued and listened to. In the spirit of hospitality, humans would strive to do the same for others. The Golden rule spells it out "do to others as you wish done to you" (4).

Hospitality in the Revealed Religions

Hospitality is not a strange idea to the revealed religious traditions of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. In this regard, the sacred books of these religious traditions are replete with the subject matter of hospitality. For instance, in Jewish theology, hospitality is considered a form of compassion, an act of righteousness (*gemilut hosadim*) and a legal obligation. The Torah in the Book of Leviticus 19:18, the Jews are instructed "you shall love

your companion as yourself". In the Passover *sedar*, the Jews recite: "let all who are hungry come and eat..." (A Jewish value...1).

In addition to the above, in Judaism, showing hospitality (*hakhnasat ochim*) to guests is considered a *mitzvah*. Thus, when a person knows of strangers who are hungry or need a place to relax, it becomes a legal obligation. Some *Rabbis* consider *hakhnasat ochim* literally the "bringing in of strangers" to be a part of *gemilut hosadim* (giving loving kindness) (*Jewish Practice*, 5).

Relatedly, the first time hospitality comes to the fore in the Torah happened when Abraham invited the three wanderers from Mamre to relax while he brought them water and food (Gen. 8:1-5). In the years that followed, when Abraham sent his servants to find a wife for his son Isaac a bye-product of Abraham's hospitality to the three strangers, Rebecca would graciously water the travelers' thirsty horses (Gen. 24:28-32). Hospitality is extended to a guest among the Jews for a maximum of three days.

Speaking of Islam, Carey writes that, hospitality is a common feature that characterizes Muslims around the world. This explains why Muslims are often perceived as very generous people. He postulated that for most Muslims, hospitality lies at the heart of who they are. Families judge themselves and each other by their generosity to guests when they entertain. Guest are welcomed into the home and shown kindness regardless of whether they are relatives, friends, neighbours, or strangers (1).

Muslims are to be generous and show gratitude and be kind and happy when receiving guests. A Muslims should respect and welcome his guests, in particular when they are strangers, or have no family or friends in that country. Guest(s) who come to the home of a Muslim should be made welcome, shown respect and be provided with whatever food and drinks are available. In the spirit of hospitality, the Muslim is to sit with his guest(s) in order to make them feel comfortable and happy, and take care to pay great attention to them. Allah increases the provision of the Muslim if they welcome their guests and give them food and drink, and will reward such on the resurrection day (Hospitality towards...1).

The Qur'an also urges Muslims to make the guest comfortable by identifying his/her possible needs so that they can be met before the guest mentions them. In the light of the above, the way in which Prophet Abraham treated his guests is a good example of this and displays an important feature of hospitality (cf. Surat adh-Dhariyat 24-27). The point to note here is that it is better to offer a guest something before s/he has the chance to ask for it because a courteous guest may hesitate to mention any need. Out of his thoughtfulness, such a guest would try to prevent the host from offering anything; thus, the need to meet the guest's possible needs in advance (Hospitality

1). Hospitality in Islam also extends for three days and anything beyond it is considered charity.

Sharp opines that some Christians possess hospitality as a spiritual gift. The Bible holds that every believer is given at least one spiritual gift for the purpose of building up God's Church and serving the body of Christ. These gifts are given not for the benefit of those endowed with them, but for the enrichment of others (1). In Romans 12:13, Christians are encouraged to practice hospitality whether it is a spiritual gift or not. This entails that affection towards strangers. Above all, Christians are to maintain an intense love for each other, since love covers a multitude of sins. Christians are encouraged to be hospitable to one another without complaining. Based on the gift each one has received, they are to use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God (Cf. 1 Peter 4:8-10).

In the words of Sharp, St. Benedict upheld that, "hospitality maintains a prominence in the living (Christian) tradition... the guest represents Christ and has a claim on the welcome and care of the community. This is represented in other words: if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected within us and is showered on those with whom we come in contact" (1). Most importantly, Christians are admonished: Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this, some have entertained angels without knowing it (cf. Hebrews 13:2; see also Romans 12:9-13; Job 31:32; 1 Peter 4:8-9, etc on the Christian view on hospitality). Duration of hospitality is not specified in the Christian sacred text. This gives the impression that Christian hospitality is limitless.

Hospitality in Tiv Traditional Society

Hospitality in Tiv traditional society was an interpersonal relationship fashioned by the customary rituals of the Tiv. It was the pride of a person to show hospitality to a stranded stranger who was welcomed into a household served pounded yam, water to drink and bath while a chicken, goat, sheep or pig could be slaughtered depending on the status, occasion and circumstance or mission of the visitor. However, the most common symbol of hospitality was the slaughtering of a chicken for a guest. Indeed, the Tiv value and prize the chicken for its numerous benefits as in providing meat, eggs and it's very often used in healing rituals.

Thus, as soon as the *or vanya* (guest/visitor) arrived the homestead, the *or ya* (family head) welcomed and made him feel at home. Entertainment started on a light mode i.e provision of drinking water for the visitor who must have been exhausted from the long trek hence there were no cars/buses then. Only noble men had and rode on horses. Garden eggs, groundnuts and smoking pipe and tobacco were made available to the visitor who smoked. The Tiv did not wait for the visitor to request for

these items.

Following this was the pounding of yam and slaughtering of a chicken for the guest. In the absence of a chicken, smoked fish or bush meat was prepared with *ichegher* (melon) or *ishwa* (beniseed) soup and vegetables and drinks. Hospitality has no limit in Tiv society hence some guests could stay for even years; only misconduct could send a guest away from his/her host. When the guest had his/her fill; the head of family instructed his wife to prepare a place for the visitor to pass the night. Water was also warmed for the guest to bath especially when it was cold.

Adegas noted with nostalgia and consternation how some armchair anthropologists from the west misconstrued the Tiv sense of hospitality by insinuating that they "offered" their wives to their guests (*Ura yilan...*88-89). The truth of the matter however, is that if a person desires to die very quickly in the hands of a Tiv man, he should make passes real or imagined at his wife, daughter. This misplaced insinuations regarding hospitality peddled by western European armchair anthropologists and now been spread by some ethnic nationalities in Nigeria is nothing but a ploy at defaming the Tiv and casting them in a bad light before other ethnic groups in Nigeria.

As noted by Utov, it is not against Tiv hospitality to welcome friends and visitors from other ethnic groups. This is due largely to the fact that the Tiv are very liberal minded people who hate manipulation. The open disposition of the Tiv to welcome others in their midst explains why several non-Tiv civil servants working in Tivland refuse to be transferred to other places. Some retire and establish businesses in Tivland and are also given brides to marry (12, 38).

It is to be noted that the Tiv show hospitality to complete strangers offering them food and water to keep them strong on their journeys. Commenting on this, Ayati narrated of how the Iyoshin people through their hospitality aided Terhile in his search to re-unite with his father's kinsmen at Agagbe thus: "the hospitality of rural Tiv people is unequalled... He was offered roasted yam by farmers as he passed through their farm fields" (48). Adegas also observed that it was for her generosity and hospitality to famished travelers in offering them roasted yams on her farm that the famous *igyungu i wan Wade* (daughter of Wade's hill) in Iwarev, Gaav, Konshisha Local Government Area of Benue State got its name from the benefactress of the passersby for her kindness (*Ikyev Ruam...*14).

Furthermore, the Tiv easily incorporated strangers or Tiv from other clans and kindreds into their own communities and often gave them lands to settle on. Sometimes, the strangers from other clans and kindreds were evacuated from their *Ityo* (patrilineage) by the *Igba* (matrilineage). This was often the case when such evacuees were experiencing some challenges in ill-health, death and witchcraft attack from their patrilineal

kin group. An elder of worthy character offered to protect the evacuees and requested their matrilineal kin group to leave them in his custody. This phenomenon may probably explain why some kindreds of Kunavland such as Mbaduku, Ningev, Mbayongo, etc are found in the lhyarev clan of Tivland. The Mbaduku originally from Kunavland are also found at Koti, Shangev-ya clan of Kwande; just as the Mbajir clan of Shitile in Katsina Ala are found in Mbakor, Tarka Local Government Area of Benue State. Ezenweke and Nwadiolor explained that this was a demonstration that the visitors/evacuees were welcomed and safe (66).

Another way of showing hospitality in Tiv traditional society was the act of eating food in the *ate* (reception hut), in the open courtyard of the compound or under tree shades in the absence of the *ate*. The Tiv never ate in their huts or backed the road which was considered signs of stinginess, miserliness, meanness and greediness. Adega viewed that the eating of food in the *ate* or open courtyard was an “open invitation” to passersby who may be hungry to eat before continuing with their journeys (*Ate...8*).



Plate 1: A man eats food with his children in an open space in the compound. This practice is an open invitation to passersby, neighbours and other family members to join in the meal. So seated, he is not expected to back the road but face it and to call on passersby who may not even notice the eating party. The children are expected to sit in a circle *kwa ruam* (food circle) one backing the other in that manner with the hand used in eating in the circle while the other is out of the circle. At the food circle the father identifies the child that is absent and he also cautioned the children in the

manner they ate especially those eating greedily. If two plates of soups are served, the children are not expected to eat the sauce containing meat but to eat the other soup-okra until the father permitted them to eat of the sauce. The import of this was to avert a situation where the children without caution are ensnared into *ikpindi* (flesh debt) by a dubious neighbour. The children are generally taught table manners by the father who disciplines any one of them showing signs of indiscipline. **Source:** Field trip observation by the researchers



Plate 2: A group of youths eat food in the *ate* (reception hut). The act of eating together strengthens family bonds. Important issues could also be addressed at the food arena. Also, eating together by family members and or their friends highly reduces the chances of a person poisoning the food hence, he also participates in the meal. As men eat in the *ate* or open court yard, women and girls ate in the *iyou i yoron* (kitchen) or in its frontage where they keep an eye on the men in case they call for soup or addition of the pounded yam or flour meal. Home management techniques are taught the girls by their mothers as they eat together. **Source:** Field trip observation by the researchers.

Among the Tiv, the general principle was to invite everyone present or passing by to a meal. So whenever there was food to be eaten, everyone present was invited to eat even if the food was prepared for a far less number of people without anticipating the arrival of visitors. Good housewives thus often took into cognizance the eventuality of visitors and increased the quantity of food they were preparing and this extra portion was kept warm by the fire place in a calabash. In this perspective,

Ezenweke and Nwadiakor aptly stated that: “it would be a height of incredible bad manner for one to eat anything however small, without sharing it with anyone else present or at least expressing the intention to do so” (66). This could pass for what the Tiv would say “*vese ga ye iyol na ga*” (a piece of cricket never escapes the crushing of the teeth/ a small piece does not eat itself).

It was indeed awful for the Tiv to eat without sharing with others present. This, Gathogo explained was tantamount to eating alone and dying alone. If we eat together, we can also happily die together (*Some Expression...*283). In all of the protocols of hospitality and reception/harboring of guests/visitors by the Tiv in a homestead, the role of the *orya* (compound head) in the safety (spiritual/physical) of the guest was significant and of paramount importance. This is because as Bohannan and Bohannan pointed out, the *orya* was the oldest living person in the group of families. His duties included but not limited to leading and directing all the activities relating to agricultural production and choosing of new sites for the erection of buildings (83).

He also settled family disputes, led the

compound in negotiation for marriage involving the sons and daughters of the household. The *orya* similarly played a leading role in the religious activities necessary for the wellbeing of the compound. He was thus, the chief representative in all dealings with outsiders. He guaranteed safe conduct in the compound and decided on the admission, entertainment and expulsion of guests/visitors (83). He defended and protected the compound against external threats both spiritually and spiritually.

Above all, the Tiv in their traditional society were civilized and socialized not to treat visitors, guests, wanderers and those in need badly just in case they may be the *Adzov/Azov* (spirits/fairies) who stood to avenge the injustice done to the poor and who rewarded good deeds accordingly with bountiful harvest, healing powers, children, animals and luck in games and hunting (East...266). In the absence of angels in Tiv cosmology, the *Adzov/Azov* could be said to conveniently fill the void, bearing messages of goodwill or otherwise to the Tiv.

Hospitality in Contemporary Tiv Society

An adage says that “change is the only permanent thing”. In this wise, behavioural trait, physical physique and even cultural values and societal orientation changes with time as new values are imbibed through socialization and other agents of change. There can be nothing more true of the statement above than what is happening to hospitality among the Tiv in the contemporary society.

Biggs et'al were incisive when they observed that hospitality in today's world has become little more than being friendly and considerate to one's guest. There are no universal rules for the conduct of the host or the guest; much less a threat of violence if a person does not behave in a certain manner (4). Biggs et'al could have had the Tiv in mind when they penned down the preceding lines of thought. For indeed, Tiv *musaninja kua ieren* (the Tiv have changed behaviour). The above statement clearly depicts that the Tiv are no longer the people they were at least not the ones known by all who came into contact with them. The Tiv are no longer hospitable!!!

Unarguably, the Tiv have indeed *wuhe hinda sha shigh ki vanya* (the Tiv have shut the doors on hospitality); a scenario which has forced Wende Akasi to lament that *tar Tiv gba* (Tivland has fallen/collapsed) (11). This is indicative of the collapse of Tiv social values which has crashed with a change in orientation by the contemporary Tiv. Thus, hardly does one witness the fun fare associated with the welcome of *or vanya* (visitor/guest). The *or vanya* is in contemporary society seen as a nuisance who has come to disturb the peace of the host and his family. Hardly would one notice the children chasing after a chicken or goat to be slaughtered for a visiting guest. The

or vanya may spend days in the house of a bad/uncaring host without water for him/her to bath if s/he does not ask. Food may be served in minimal quantities as an indirect way of chasing the person away.

The Tiv in contemporary society demonstrating very clearly that the *or vanya* is unwelcomed have electrified tall fences surrounding their homes with tall and heavy metal gates with the inscription boldly written on such gates “Beware of dogs”. Meals are no longer eaten in the open court yards, tree shades or the *ate*; but in the innermost parts of the room away from preying hungry eyes (Adega, *Ate*...8-9). Similarly, it is not uncommon to see the Tiv of contemporary society backing the road as they eat so as not to see the passerby not to mention inviting them to a meal.

The contemporary Tiv society has completely shut the doors on hospitality demonstrated by women who have now devised a means of mashing yams and *akpu* (fufu) instead of pounding same so as not to attract the attention of others. In the homes of contemporary Tiv men, the wife is not ready to accept the husband's relations who are seen as unnecessary burden and their frivolous money requesting visits. Such are not welcome. The contemporary Tiv family is re-engineered and remodeled after the western pattern of the man, his wife and the children. The extended family members and their communalistic ideas are aliens. The insistence of a man to incorporate his relatives to live with him could lead to deep crises and separation/divorce from the wife.

In addition to the above, the Tiv of contemporary society do not easily incorporate, *mba vanya* (visitors/guests) from other clans or ethnic nationalities into their communities as was the case in the traditional Tiv society. No Tiv would want to live the communal spirit of being one's brother's keeper. As a matter of fact, the Tiv from other clans so incorporated into certain Tiv communities in the past have had their residency revoked and such *mba vanya* (visitors/guests) asked to leave unceremoniously.

This has created communal skirmishes and bickering in contemporary Tiv society. A case in point can be seen from the Mbakume who were chased out of Mbasombo, Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State and lives and properties worth millions of naira destroyed. The Mbakume as far as the Mbasombo were concerned had overstayed their welcome and must relocate to their own ancestral clan/land. The feud between these brotherly clans of Masev lineage of Tiv is still raging as this paper is being processed for publication in April, 2022. The magnitude of damage and loss of lives can best be imagined than experienced.



Plate 3: A house in Mbakume burnt down by Mbasombo youths during communal clashes between Mbasombo and Mbakume at Ikpayongo, Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State. This picture represents the inhospitable nature of Tiv contemporary society characterised by *Ma ilu mo* (Individualism) Phenomenon where no one is any one's brother's keeper. Source: Researcher's Field survey, 2020

There are also recurring crises involving the *mba vanya* (visitors/guests) and their hosts at *tyo mu* involving the Kparev and Ihyarev and at Agboughul settlement and Adaka in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State where lives have been lost and property worth millions of naira were destroyed. Incidentally, Makurdi Traditional Council (MTC) and the Tiv Traditional Council (TTC) led by His Royal Majesty the Tor Tiv V were caught in a web of silence over this matter. Not even the state government issued a press statement in the fracas which began in 2019 and climaxed between February and March 2020. According to the Catholic Star Newspaper, the Catholic Bishop of Makurdi Diocese, Most Revd. Wilfred Chikpa Anagbe in a meeting at Aondona, Gwer West lamented the tale of crises, conflicts and death that was threatening to cripple Tivland and sold the idea of peace to the traditional rulers, political leaders, and youths in attendance(2). However, as this paper is being documented, the Kparev are still displaced and are unable to return to their homes and properties. Any attempt at accessing their abandoned homes leaves the person dead.

Such is the sorry state of contemporary Tiv society and their inhospitable and unwelcome attitude where Tiv kill fellow Tiv said to be *mba vanya* while on the other hand *atoatiev* (non-Tiv) also kill and destroy the Tiv and their properties in the guise of the Tiv being visitors or settlers. This can be seen in the incidence involving the Tiv and the *atoatiev* in Nasarawa and Taraba States in Nigeria (Kachii 21). The irony of the above is that these *atoative* live and do legitimate businesses in Tivland and go about unmolested. Meanwhile, the Nigerian Constitution stipulates that if an individual stays in a place for a period of 10 years, s/he has become an indigene of that area and can vie for elective positions.

**Or *vanya ka mngerem* (A visitor is like flood):
The Tiv Notion of Hospitality**

As stated elsewhere, the Tiv in their traditional society were civilized and socialised not to treat visitors, guests, wanderers and those in need badly. In other words, the Tiv were taught not to maltreat visitors/guests. This was inscribed on the mind of the Tiv from a tender age as elders told moonlight stories after a heavy day's work as the leisurely reclined after the evening meal.

Thus, every Tiv person, man or woman, boy or girl, the child and adult knew *abinitio* that a visitor was not to be maltreated on whatever account. This philosophy inscribed on their hearts they grew up and lived with the notion that *or vanya ka mngerem* (the visitor is like flood).

Several related factors can be attributed to this social philosophy of the Tiv. Chief amongst these factors was the very cogent reasoning of the Tiv that like the flood no matter its level dries up or is drained into a larger body of water sooner than later. In the like manner, visitation does not last forever and therefore the *or vanya* would leave some day irrespective of how long s/he stays. The competing demand was therefore, to take care of the *or vanya* properly and treat him/her kindly and with love.

For instance, if a man harboured his relatives who are studying in a school, the wife must not be unnecessarily vexed because the visiting relatives are blocking her chances of bringing her own relations. Such relations are bound to leave someday at the completion of their studies and she could then invite hers over. Life is give and take as far as the Tiv are concerned.

Also, the Tiv reasoned that they had sojourned amongst other ethnic nationalities like the Jukun, Kuteb, Fulani and the Chamba/Ugenyi as they migrated from the Congo to the plains of the lower Benue (Gbor, 1 ff). Thus, even if these ethnic nationalities had been hostile to the Tiv provoking some skirmishes; their presence on the way and their hostility shaped the Tiv character or determination and oneness.

Similarly, the Tiv cosmology and world view makes provision for the existence of incorporeal beings like the *Azov/Adzov* (spirits/fairies). As omnipresent beings, the *adzov* make divine visitations to the Tiv and it would be foolhardy for anyone to maltreat the *ijov* (singular) disguised as an old man/woman, a boy/girl or a disabled wonderer deaf/dumb or other form of misfortune thinking it is a mere human being (Dzurgba 194). The *Adzov* would surely punish this evil. For instance, they could cause the pregnant woman to give birth to an imbecile.

On the other hand, the *Azov* bring wealth, good harvest and long life via fighting against the witches who kill people in Tiv society indiscriminately and cause crops to fail. The *Azov* also ensure the fertility of women, as well as good luck and good health by bestowing healing powers on medicine men/women across Tivland. The above is given credence by Dzaki Shagwa Dze Kyogen and Ukase Emmanuel Kyogen when they revealed that an *ijov* (spirit) had endowed their mother Mama Kumachan Igila with the recipes for healing fractures (oral interview).

According to them, Mama Kumachan had shown hospitality to an unknown passerby by inviting him to come eat roasted yams. She did not stop at that but equally gave two tubers of yams to the passerby to take home. In his reciprocity, the unknown passerby instructed her on how to heal fractures prescribing certain roots and shrubs (oral interview). Her hospitality has since then paid off with the fracture healing reward from the passerby who disappeared. This episode pointed to the fact that she

was dealing with an *Ijov* unknowingly. The healing powers now belong to the whole family of Ikyogen in Nyiev-Mbanoughul in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State. Any male member of the family can heal any kind of fracture and the whole family is reaping the fruits of their mother's hospitality (oral interview).

Incidents such as these prove to the Tiv on the incumbent need to treat a visitor well. Afterall, in the absence of Angels in the Tiv worldview, *Adzov* naturally fills the void by bringing divine manifestation and being harbingers of good news or otherwise to the Tiv depending on the circumstance of their appearance in their midst. Relatedly, just as the Jews could receive visitors not knowing they were angels (cf. Gen.18:1-15; Heb. 13:1-2); the Tiv could receive an old wretched man/woman not knowing they it is the *adzov*.

Similarly, hospitality "enslaves" a person or group of people. A person or persons who have sojourned in a foreign land and is/are treated well; becomes integrated in that community and do not think of returning to their own communities no matter the favourable conditions back home. While such visitors are free, the hospitable nature of their hosts makes them technically "slaves"; not wanting to go back. If the host community is not receptive, open-minded and hospitable, this cannot happen because the visitor would crave to go back home even if conditions are bad back home in what the Tiv would say *iwya ya tar wam ga* (a dog has not eaten up my own community).

Added to the above factors is the unassailable truth that hospitality breeds development. Even in traditional Tiv society, it was a known fact that visiting paid labourers did far more great work than their hosts. They also helped in opening up hamlets and increasing socialization and growth of the primal economy as they make purchases of cigarettes, biscuits, and drinks/beer and patronised food vendors in the evenings after work.

Generally, therefore, communities that are open, receptive, welcoming and hospitable to visitors develop faster as opposed to those that are closed, unreceptive, unwelcoming and inhospitable. Adega gives several instances of the above scenario where he stated that the visiting Kparev farmers and Igbo traders/businessmen are responsible for the growth/development of major Tiv towns such as Gboko, Makurdi, Adikpo, Zaki-Biam, Katsina-Ala and Vandeikya. On the other hand, places like Adaka-Makurdi, Saai-Katsina Ala, Tsar-Mbaduku, Mbaakpur-Shangev Tiev have experienced stunted growth in development because they are closed communities not favorably disposed to accepting visitors (*Gerasha...* 50).

Or vanya sôn yemen, er ana dedoo (The visitor soon leaves, treat him well): The Way Forward

The paper has examined the Tiv notion of hospitality in *Or vanya ka mngerem*. It established that the Tiv traditional society was more prone to hospitality as compared to the contemporary Tiv society. However,

seeing the benefits accruing from the act of hospitality in which an individual was blessed amongst other good things, the paper seeks a way forward in *Or vanya sôñ yemen, er ana dedoo* meaning the visitor soon leaves treat him well.

This call is imperative because, no matter how long a visitor stays with his/her host, s/he leaves someday. No matter how overwhelming a flood is, it sooner or later quickly drains and empties away its swelling contents into a river; drying up. In any case, it is better often to part in peace than in pieces. Those who part in peace live to meet another day.

Also, considering the fact that communities which are receptive to visitors develop faster than those closed to it; making visitors potential agents of development, transformation and positive change makes this call even more imperative. It is also natural that if a person visits other people/places and is well received, that creates a sense of happiness and security. The act of reciprocity on being hospital and making other people welcome in one's own domain will not be out of place. This will be anchored on the understanding that one good turn deserves another. What's more, hospitable people have reaped the sweet rewards of their hospitality.

In view of the above, the change of values noticeable in the Tiv in contemporary society which has not just shut the doors of communalism for western style individualism is not encouraging. The contemporary Tiv now opt for the "*ma ilumo*" (it should be me) philosophy of the self which is tantamount to operating in an "idol of the cave". While the Tiv in the contemporary society would not open their doors to famishing next door neighbours; their Alsatian dogs eat sumptuous meals clearly showing their preference for a dog over a human being. Why has food suddenly meant so much to the contemporary Tiv person such that s/he would not want to share with others?

As a teacher in the primary, secondary or tertiary level, how often have you welcomed your students into your office? Are you hospitable to them or do you take advantage of their frailty and insecurity? Do you welcome your colleagues? Are they favorably disposed to approach you and discuss their personal problems? How have you positively impacted the lives of those around you? Are you the hospitable type?

The Tiv need to re-evaluate themselves they need to return to the basics and to the drawing board. Their choice of individualism has created chaos and confusion in the social system and network of extended and close family kinship. The most important thing to note however is that, those who eat alone, die alone.

CONCLUSION

The paper has established the fact that the Tiv *abinitio* were hospitable people who were openminded and ready to integrate even *atoatiev* (non-Tiv) in their

midst. They operated the communal system with its network of close and extended kin system. Being hospitable was beneficial both to the guest and the host. This is because when the Tiv treated a guest well it was tantamount to the host treating himself well. This is why the Tiv often say that *or vanya yima mba yaav* i.e the visitor has helped the host in the sense that meals which ordinarily could not be prepared at certain times for the householders are prepared for the guest and the host also joins in such delicious and palatable meals.

A good example of the above analogy can be drawn from the slaughtering of a chicken or goat for a guest(s). Under normal circumstances it was difficult to see the traditional Tiv family wake up and slaughter a chicken or goat for its entertainment even if they have these domestic animals their pens or could afford to buy same. An incalculable behaviour of slaughtering a chicken for self/family entertainment could attract *tambe* (bewitchment) from an evil neighbour or relation in whose egalitarian sense of judgment; the person who has slaughtered the chicken was trying to show off or being above the rest members of his immediate community. It was thus, cheaper to get vegetables in the neighbourhood than risk any unforeseen spiritual attacks. However, the arrival of a guest changes that perception as the host is only taken to be treating his guest well. Forfeit it to state the obvious fact that modernity has reasonably changed all that negative conception now.

Furthermore, it is to be noted that hospitality breeds development just as the blessings which hospitable people receive. Furthermore, the Tiv were not known to be misers, stingy and greedy but people who loved to share their food and welcomed passerby to meal even if it were not prepared with them in mind. However, all these positive values have changed creating chaos and confusion in the social and political system. Skirmishes, confrontation and open wars have now been fought in Tivland relating to conflicts involving *mba vanya* (visitors/settlers) and indigenes.

Since it is an established fact that the Tiv were their brother's keepers, the paper concludes by calling on the Tiv to return to the basics where *or vanya* was considered *mngerem* and was treated well and given the sense of peace and security. A return to this basic principle and philosophy will once again propel the Tiv on the threshold of development, peace, tranquility and progress especially in a hostile and inhospitable contemporary world where the welfare of fellow humans mean nothing to any one even if they are dying under their yoke.

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Oral Interview:

S/no	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Place	Date
1.	Zaki Shagwa Dze Ikyogen	M	90yrs	Healer/bone setter	Tse Kyogen, Mbanoughul, Nyiev, Guma LGA, Benue State	09/06/2020
2.	Mr. Ukase Emmanuel Kyogen	M	71yrs	Healer/bone setter	Tse Kyogen, Mbanoughul, Nyiev, Guma LGA, Benue State	09/06/2020

