

RESOLVING THE AGE-LONG PROBLEM OF EVIL USING INDIGENOUS TIV RESOURCES

Philip Sesugh Audu

Reformed Theological Seminary Mkar, Gboko, Benue State

Abstract

The problem of evil remains a fundamental challenge to theistic belief, particularly regarding the existence of a God who is understood as loving, good, omniscient, omnipotent, and benevolent. The presence of evil appears to contradict these divine attributes and raises questions about the origin, nature, and persistence of evil in the world. While evil manifests through both natural and moral forms, human actions constitute a significant source of suffering and disorder. Among the Tiv people of Nigeria, evil has historically affected social harmony and communal wellbeing, especially through human-induced forms of wrongdoing. Various indigenous mechanisms, including *Namakaa/Haakaa*, *Inyambuan*, and *Inyamoram*, have been employed to address evil but encountered limitations due to lack of universal acceptance, changing relevance, and perceived cruelty. This study argues that the Tiv indigenous institution of *Swem* provides a more authentic and enduring framework for confronting evil. Recognized across Tiv society, *Swem* functions as a moral and judicial resource that promotes justice, identifies wrongdoing, and sanctions persistent evil practices without cruelty. Employing library research and oral interviews, the study demonstrates that *Swem* represents an indigenous solution to the enduring problem of evil within Tiv traditional thought.

Keywords: *Evil, Swem, Tiv Traditional Religion, Indigenous Justice, African Cosmology*

Introduction

The existence of evil poses a great challenge. This has been a problem that over the years attempts to address and find lasting solution have not yielded the desired result. The existence of evil has brought a serious doubt and a debate to the theist assertion that God is good and all powerful among other attributes of God. The theist can neither deny that, evil does not exist because evil experienced on daily basis either natural or moral. To reply to the atheist claim that, because evil exist therefore God do not exist, because God do not create evil more so, evil is a pervasion of God's perfect plan and is opposed to anything that is good. God cannot exist along side with evil or at most, it is showing that God is weak. He is not as powerful as thought and claimed by the theist. This is because, if He does have the powers, He could have used his power to do away with evil. Several theists including Alvin Plantinga responded to atheist disproof and gave reasons why even though God exist yet evil also

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exists.¹ This argument is still on. The above has been the condition about evil and why discourse about God and the existence of evil are un-ending. This has been the cause of the problem given the atheist position about evil as proof to conclude that God does not exist is fallacious.

On the other hand, evil is not only challenging the existence of God, the world and humans are greatly affected by evil. The Tiv people are not exception in the challenge posed by evil and the effect thereof. Evil has caused a lot of setback and underdevelopment in Tiv land. The fear to be confronted by one form of evil or the other has made many Tiv people withdraw to their shell so as not to be harmed. No one is ready to take a bold step to challenge evil and bring the desired development. In an interaction with some personalities, they narrated how several people have bankrupt; either met their death end, were crushed in business, other sacked out of work for just no cause, most farmers narrate the ordeal of poor harvest, others have waited to have good husbands it did not avail their waiting and patience ended in vain, evil of kidnappings, armed robbery, childlessness, miscarriage, people suffer excruciating pain from sickness/diseases, among others.

This has caused a serious concern to both the Tiv society and people in general and search for a way to eradicate this state of affairs created by evil has not provided any solution yet. Several people continuously suffer from the agony caused by evil. As a result of the search for solution different, different approaches and resources were adopted by different people at different times. All of these approaches impacted a minimal change, but not a lasting solution and they all failed for different reasons. Some of the reasons why the approaches could not impact optimal significance was because, the resources used for the course were not nationally licensed or approved by the Tiv traditional authority. In essence, these were resources developed by the people with personal benefits attached to it. It was meant to benefit those people who initiated the ideas. In an interaction with Kyaan Baka, Jeremiah Atswande, and Karna John says, in most places, where invitation was extended to the leadership of the group, the community contributes money as an offer and gives to the people. The resources were also very cruel to health and humanity. The resources/movements brought other issues such as civil disobedience, degradation of traditional constituted authority, hunger; because youths who were to engage in farming dropped farming business and served as human force for arresting culprits. Instead of having the desired end in evil, the movements rather created more problems.

Despite the attempts that are made to resolve the problem, they did not address the problem. To this effect, the search for a solution to the problem of evil is un-ended. This is not just a problem peculiar to the Tiv nation only, but even in academic circle, researchers and scholars are still digging into the

¹Alvin Plantinga. (1967). *God and Other Minds*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press. In the problem of Evil-Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/evil/> Accessed 16/10/2023,,.

root cause of the problem in order to proffer solution to the problem, no permanent solution have been produced.

It is in view of the above that, this research is stemmed, in order to bring a lasting solution to the challenge and problem of evil most significantly among the Tiv society of Benue State, Nigeria. How this will be done will be seen in the discussion below. Still before leaving the introduction, there is need to have an overview of about evil.

In his book on Truth, Freedom, and Evil: Three Philosophical Dialogues. St Anselm gave his view of what he thought is evil, and this is not far from Augustine's. In his view, evil is the "privation of good (or being)."² The good here is what ethicists (Utilitarians) simply say is what is for the "greatest number of people."³ This means, when what is meant for the majority is abated it means they (the people) are evilly treated; in essence that is evil. The definition of evil depicts the general idea and understanding of the medieval scholasticism on the matter. Another source viewed evil to mean something that "calls into question our basic trust in the order and structure of our world."⁴ This means, anything that changes or violates the order and structure in the world, which was meant to produce good is evil. In similar vein, Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson concur to this when they understood that St Anselm attributes the origin of evil to the fall of Satan, who was an angel. They put it in their words thus: "To focus the discussion of the origin and character of the 'origin of evil on the fall of Satan' is characteristic of the entire Medieval tradition, and is not a novelty of Anselm's work alone."⁵ Kant objects to the medieval presupposition that the origin of evil is due to the fall of Satan. In Anselm, Kant did not attribute evil to the fall of Satan, rather to the inclinations of humanity. In essence, humans; everybody is liable to the sin he or she commits not necessarily the venom from the fall. In this way, Kant distances himself even from the will defense.⁶ Despite Kant criticism, there are traceable facts to the medieval scholar's position. Sendan Kendatsuba described evil as a condition or something that causes "painful, harmful and unpleasant effects."⁷ Any condition that result in the above aforementioned state of affairs is evil.

²Anselm of Canterbury. Truth, Freedom, and Evil: Three Philosophical Dialogues. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Eds.). New York; Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967. P. 44

³ Carla Tardi Utilitarianism: What it Is, Founders, and Main Principles. [https://www.investopedia.com/terms/u/Utilitarianism.asp#:~:tex=key Takeaways-,Utilitarianism is a theory of morality that advocates actions that, "the greatest number of people."](https://www.investopedia.com/terms/u/Utilitarianism.asp#:~:tex=key%20Takeaways%2CUtilitarianism%20is%20a%20theory%20of%20morality%20that%20advocates%20actions%20that%2C%20the%20greatest%20number%20of%20people.) Accessed 2/February/2023.

⁴ Mitchell. "Theodicy: A Brief Overview." www3.dbu.edu/Mitchell/theodicy_brief_overview.htm. Accessed 2/February/2023

⁵ Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson are coeditors of Anselm's book: Anselm of Canterbury Truth, Freedom, and Evil: Three Philosophical Dialogues. P. 45

⁶Anselm of Canterbury. Truth, Freedom, and Evil: Three Philosophical Dialogues. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Eds.). New York; Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967. P. 45

⁷Sendan Kendatsuba. Evil. In New World Encyclopedia. <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry.> Accessed 10/10/2023

Concerning kinds of evil, many scholars including Philip A. Pecorino⁸ identified two types of evil: 1. Moral evil⁹ and 2. Natural evil.¹⁰ All people including the Tiv people are susceptible to these two types of evil; nevertheless, the Tiv have more experiences of moral evil. There may be several occurrences of witches and wizards in this paper, but the specific aim of the paper is not to discuss witches and wizards. The paper is specifically concerned with addressing why evil exist, how human beings are affected by it and the possible way to end evil. Most Tiv people want to find solution to the problem of evil which is believed to be caused by witches and wizards. They are believed to be responsible for illness (severe and several accidents, diseases, etc.), cancer, murder, kidnappings, rape, abuse, flood, famine, bad harvest, killings, to mention but a few. In the Tiv society, these evils are believed to be perpetrated by witches and wizards; *mbatsav*. Simon Chiichi consents to the activities of *mbatsav*, he states this in his conviction concerning the Tiv people that, no body dies or is being killed without the knowledge and approval of *mbatsav*;¹¹ “this explains the Tiv conviction that nobody dies of sickness without being killed by *mbatsav*...A seriously sick person may *war ku sha ikyughur* (escaped death narrowly) if not slated for death by *mbatsav* through a particular sickness.”¹² Ahenekaa A. and Achineku I. opined that: “...in schools they (*students*) were taught cleanliness to counteract the belief that the *mbatsav* are responsible for sickness and death.” They furthered that “medical drugs, which were administered to patients, worked wonders to demythologize the Tiv belief in *Mbatsav* and *Akombo*.”¹³ Dzurgba gave a detailed description of how the *mbatsav* may go about and attack a person and kill him or her.¹⁴ It is the interest of this research to address these practical problems as they affect people. The purpose of this research is to proffer solution to the challenge caused by moral evil; sickness, trauma of losing a child, husband, wife, accident, and so on which is believed to be necessarily caused by *mbatsav*. The most appropriate way to resolve this is through the use of indigenous resources.

Evil in Tiv Society

i. Possession of Tsav element

⁸Philip A. Pecorino. Philosophy of Religion. Accessed https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/socialsciences/ppecorino/philosophy_of_religion_text/default.htm 2/February/ 2023

⁹ Moral Evil: this is evil perpetrated by fellow human beings, engaging in activities such as murder, rape, theft etc.

¹⁰ Natural evil: These are disaster that results from nature. They are disaster with no human control or influence

¹¹ Theadus A. Kyegh. The Changing Patterns of the Tiv Culture of Death and Burial since 1900s. Makurdi: Oracle Business Limited, 2007. P. 13; Shii Pp. 204, 205

¹²Chiichi, Simon I. the Challenges of Tiv Traditional Healing in the Era of Globalization. M.A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nigeria Nsuka, 2012. P. 58

¹³ Anjov Ahenekaa and Iortyom Achineku. *NKST at Fifty: the Journey so far*. Makurdi: The Return Press Ltd., 2007 P. 94

¹⁴AkpenpuunDzurgba. Elements of Tiv Culture. p. 93

Evil is *kwaghbo* in the singular and *akaabo* in the plural.¹⁵ Another source holds that evil is the practice of *tsav*.¹⁶ One cannot distance evil from *tsav*¹⁷ completely, because the Tiv believe that moral evil is perpetrated by *Mbatsav* (witches and wizards), either for the good of the people or to harm people. In the worldview of the Tiv people, there are two categories of *Mbatsav*; *Mbatsav* meant for the good of the society¹⁸ and *Mbatsav* for perpetrating evil. The earlier is acquired through birth; one is born with the *tsav* element for the purpose of helping the larger society. The latter *tsav* is acquired through someone. The two types of *tsav* are meant and used for different purposes. The latter is meant for harm or destruction of the people or society¹⁹ that is why in most cases it is considered counterfeit.²⁰ Natural *tsav* is meant to purify, to cleanse and sanctify the society of the activities of counterfeit *tsav*.²¹ This paper seeks to address the challenges (evil) caused due to counterfeit *tsav*.

A number of evils that the Tiv suffer cannot be exhausted. Dzurgba also attributes the cause of evil to the activities of witches and wizards. Using his words, he said: “Witches and wizards are believed to have natural and inherent vices which mean evil or criminal activities such as adultery, stealing, robbery, murder, or assassination, forgery, impersonation, examination malpractice, electoral malpractice and sexual harassment, among other evil criminal activities.”²² *Mbatsav* have the ability to maneuver in the spirit world and cause the above listed evils to people. *Mbatsav* are believed to send poisonous and deadly animals, insects et cetera such as scorpions to sting people, snakes to bite people to death, they destroy agricultural activities (resulting to poor harvest), cause miscarriage, cause accidents, cause death of children and youths, cause untimely sacking or termination of a person from his work, inflict illness on animals either generally or to a particular person under target,

¹⁵ Jonathan Iorkighir. Interview: Reformed Theological Seminary, Mkar 6th February, 2023; Terngu S. Nomishan. “Swem: the Tangible and Intangible Culture and Heritage of the Tiv of Central Nigeria.” *In Journal of Heritage Tourism*, December, 2021. P. 60
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358189395_Swem_The_Tangible_and_Intangible_Cultural_Heritage_of_the_Tiv_of_Central_Nigeria. Accessed 10th February, 2023

¹⁶ *Rescue the Trophies: An Ethnic Survey of Benue State* Lois K. Fuller (ed.) Jos: CAPRO Media Services, nd. P. 115

¹⁷ *Tsav* is a whitish or blackish element or substance that is grown in a person in the chest, beside the heart. This is natural. A person does not choose to grow it, but most people are born and grow to possess it. A person who possesses it has the ability to see and operate in the metaphysical world or realm. A man who possesses this element is called a wizard and a woman is called witch. In most cases this type of *tsav* activity is considered good *tsav*, *tsav* meant for the good of the people, for protection, and to see and warn against a future happening or disaster. There is another form of *tsav* which is not meant for the good of the people; rather for harm. *Rescue the Trophies: An Ethnic Survey of Benue State*. P. 114

¹⁸ Eugene Rubingh. *Sons of Tiv: A Study of the Rise of the Church Among the Tiv of Central Nigeria*. Baker Book House; Michigan, 1969. P. 144

¹⁹ AkpenpuunDzurgba. *The Psychology of Religion*. Ibadan: John Archers, 2015. Pp. 48, 49; Terngu S. Nomishan. “Swem: the Tangible and Intangible Culture and Heritage of the Tiv of Central Nigeria.” *In Journal of Heritage Tourism*, December, 2021. P. 61 Accessed 10th February, 2023

²⁰ Eugene Rubingh. *The Sons of Tiv*. P. 146; Bohannan. P. 8

²¹ Counterfeit *tsav* is the same as *Jebu*. Casaleggio refer to this in his book: *The Land Shall Yield its Fruits*. P. 120

²² AkpenpuunDzurgba. *The Psychology of Religion*. Ibadan: John Archers, 2015. Pp. 48, 49

and cause barrenness among others.²³ Tiv people are predominantly agriculturalists, therefore, they expect high yields on their farms, high fertility in women; miscarriage among women and child mortality mean misfortune. It is also believed that *mbatsav* could cause the drowning of a person (*mbatsavkor* or *shin mnger*). In most cases people who is drowned in water due to the activities of *mbatsav* is often found dead. Amase also hold to this view that *Mbatsav* do kill.²⁴ Sometimes *mbatsav* will smuggle a person and hide in the bush. *Mbatsav* are also accused of involving in cannibal activities. Any negative thing (in form of evil) which is opposed to the societal expectation (for the good of the society) is believed to be perpetrated by *mbatsav*. It is generally believed that, phenomena resulting in suffering and painful experiences by people in the Tiv society are perpetrated by witches and wizards.

ii. Human inclinations of the heart

The Bible says, the heart is very deceitful, who can fathom it? Another kind of evil perpetrated by people is evil due to wicked inclinations by humanity. Human beings generally are liable to one form of evil or the other. This tendency to be involved in evil is different from the former. In the former, one is believed to be influenced by the *tsav* element which one carries. But in the latter, one is not under any influence, but decide by self to be generally wicked. It is likely that, human beings are wicked by nature. Most people do not want any good thing to come the way of another person, there by being generally malevolent. This is at the point Peter Genger refer to the behaviour as envy.²⁵ Human are generally envious of others, and most people do not want others to progress, in which case, these wicked people because of malevolent and envy plan evil against fellow person. People whose heart is inclined toward harm and retrogression of one another, do all they could to reduce and hamper the success of others, such is believed to violate communalism (communal spirit).²⁶ People who engage in this form of evil is stereotyped and is not welcomed in the society. This is because they do it for their personal interest, not the society in general. Given the evil inclinations of people's heart, malevolent people results to stealing others, kidnapping, abuse, assaults, envy, hatred, lies, busy bodying, among others, and the society is against these vices. Morality is a virtue celebrated in all societies, for the sake of morality; to prevent a girl (spinster) from sexual abuse, in Tiv society a girl was secured against been abused sexually, a girl was roped

²³TyozwungweTyoshinnya. Interview: Adikpo; 13/8/2023. Tyoangbagh Dooior. Interview: Adikpo; 13/8/2023. Toryem Aii. Interview: Tombo; 20/8/2023.

²⁴ Amase E. Emberga. Divination among the Tiv of Central Nigeria. MA Dissertation submitted to the Department of Religion and Philosophy, Benue State University, Makurdi. P. 108

²⁵ Peter Genger. "Mainstreaming Tiv Indigenous Peacemaking Approaches (TIPA): Identifying the Enhancing Processes, Steps, and Actors." A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Department of Peace and Conflict Studies University of Manitoba Winnipeg 2020 P. 21

²⁶Theophilus Terlumun Agena. Ikyuryan (Covenant Making) Among the Tiv as a Religio-Cultural Approach to Conflict Resolution in Benue State. 2018 P. 145

with *Ikyor* emblem (snail shell). Any person that abuses her sexually faces the consequences. This notwithstanding, some people who are inclined to evil, still don't mind and result to abusing her. Luther Anum Timin described the above act as envy (*iyuhe*). In his view, envy is the unhappy state by someone over another person's good future and fortune where he or she wishes to personalize the good fortune instead of the ideal person. Someone who is envious of another, do not in any way thinks and wishes well for a fellow person. In a case where another person is progressing, an envious person will begin to plan for the fall of such a person. This act itself is evil. He hold the view that, evil is one factor among others that have caused a setback and underdevelopment in Tiv land.²⁷ In another development, Timin also opined that another factor and reason for underdevelopment in Tiv land is due to fear of evil, evil plans by nefarious people. People hide their true identities from their kinsmen, reason being that, if their wealth and success is revealed to their kinsmen, malevolent people will not be happy therefore plan their fall.²⁸

The greatest challenge was how to identify perpetrators of evil. In what will follow is the resources that were used for addressing the problem of evil.

Indigenous Resources for Resolving the Problem of Evil

Evil over the years has caused a serious predicament and a lot of setbacks in Tiv-land. Thus, the need to find resources to address it is very paramount. To do this, indigenous resources were developed adopted by different people at different times to help deal with the challenge caused by evil. Indigenous resources here refers to, means that were used by Tiv natives in fighting evil. Below are the resources:

3.1 Namakaa/Haakaa²⁹ Movement

Namakaa/Haakaa is one of the Tiv indigenous resources that were used to sanitize the Tiv-land of tsav activity causing evil. This movement started in 1929. The movement was launched by the British Colonial Administration. The purpose was to hunt (against witchcraft)/force the extinction of evil in Tiv society.³⁰ Weor also wrote in support of the purpose of the movement, that it was to hunt

²⁷ Luther Anum Timin. "Challenges of Underdevelopment in Nigeria: The Tiv Experience." *International Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences Studies*. Volume 4 Issue 10 | Dec. 2019
www.ijahss.com

²⁸ Timin

²⁹ Namakaa: this is a word in the verb form, commanding an action from someone. Morphologically, this word combines many parts to it: **Na**=means give, **m**=here is used as a personal pronoun 'me'. If **Na** is combined with **M=Nam**, it then means give me. **Akaa** means things. In the context of this paper akaa here is being referred to the evil things, things that mbatsav have. Namakaa therefore means, give me the evil things. Things a person possesses and is used to perpetrate evil. These things include items such as imbyorivungu, bende, ikpagh (singular), or akpagh (if many), akombo, tojir, atsuku, etc.

Haakaa: Haa means put, akaa means things as explained earlier. Haakaa means put down things, those evil things. But many translate it as throw down things. Throw down your evil things.

³⁰ Rubingh, p. 144. Shii Pp. 197, 204

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against witches and wizards.³¹ Different scholars describe this movement in different context, to some, the movement was political; it was meant to achieve a political purpose.³² In the view of Ityavkase B. Shii the movement has political undertone, according to him, it was when the people of Ukum failed in their promise to one of their own who they promised to make him a chief of their area. The anonymous personality reported the issue to the Katsina Ala local government authority showing evidence with a skull and a piece of fresh as exhibits of the peoples demand to him. Consequent to that, they have failed him.³³ Others interpreted it to be religious.³⁴ The main purpose of Namakaa/Haakaa was not political but social and religious.

Historically Mr. Aganyi³⁵ reported to Captain Down concerning the evil, homicidal and cannibal activity that was done by Ihoon, Agishi, Amu and chief Chembe. In his report these four people conspired and killed his brother, Mr. Dzegeate and cut off his head. Captain Down asked Dzegeate to go and bring the head, Dzegeate went and opened the grave of a woman who was recently buried, and cut off her head and took it to Captain Down. Though Down complained that it was a woman's

³¹ Tyosar J. Weor. Interpreting the Passover in the Exodus Tradition amongst the Tiv as a Narrative Concerning Origin and Migration. Dissertation Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. P. 32

³² Those who viewed the movement to mean a political movement, are those who are of the view that the Tiv were reacting to colonialism and the invasion by colonial masters. Theophilus Terlumun Agena. Ikyuryan (Covenant Making) Among the Tiv as a Religio-Cultural Approach to Conflict Resolution in Benue State. p. 6; bohannan Paul and Laura. Tiv Economy. Evaton: Northwestern Press University, 1968. P. 39; Doward, D.C.A political and Social History of the Tiv, People of Northern Nigeria 1990-1913 (Ph.D Thesis, London 1978); Jacob Owolabi. CTH841 Christianity and Colonialism in Nigeria. Rotimi W. Omotoye (ed.) National Open University of Nigeria. P. 154; James Tar Tsaaio. THOSE DAYS AND THESE DAYS

³³ Benjamin Ityavkase Shii. Christianity in Tivland: A History of NKST. Oracle Business Limited; Makurdi. P. 203

³⁴ Peter Genger. "Mainstreaming Tiv Indigenous Peacemaking Approaches (TIPA): Identifying the Enhancing Process, Steps, and Actors." A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba Winnipeg. P. 213

³⁵ Mr. Aganyi was a man from Gaambe Tyev, Aganyi had a brother called Kpela. Kpela married to Dzungu in Ukande Ukum Local Government. Kpela did not live very long and died leaving his wife Dzungu. Dzungu been a widow, Aganyi, the younger brother to Kpela then married Dzungu as his wife. A relation to Akpela and Aganyi Mr Nyimkaan who was not happy with the marriage between Aganyi and Dzungu, went and reported to the brother (tien) of Dzungu in Ukande that Aganyi is maltreating his sister (Ingyor), if he did not come, Aganyi will kill her sister. The brother of Dzungu did not attend to the report he heard. One day Dzungu went to Ukande and learnt of what Nyimkaan reported to her brother. Dzungu came back and told her husband Aganyi about it. Aganyi did not inquire from Nyimkaan, he went and report to the chief Dwem. Dwem did not give Aganyi the justice he want, though chief Dwem asked Aganyi to go and report to his elder and let the elder sit under the matter and resolve it. aganyi took it to the elders, though was not satisfied with the judgement. Aganyi now took the matter to the higher court; and this was the Whiteman Captain Down. Aganyi filed a suit for homicide and cannibalism against Ihoon, Agishi, and chief Chembe. According to Aganyi, the above people killed his brother Kpela cut off his head and gave to Dzegeate who ate it. Down send his messengers to bring the defendants. Though they all denied killing Kpela, Aganyi said, if Down will listen to them, they will never accept because it is one of the nature of mbatsav not to accept anything; they have sworn Abengamtende, by this even if you want to kill them, they will not accept of a certain offence they've committed.

head not man, this in a way was confirmed to Captain Down that what Aganyi said was really true. Captain Down ordered that the men who were prime suspects should be beaten, and they were tortured severely. Captain Down went ahead and established courts all over Tivland to check the activities of mbatsav and fish out mbatsav so as to surrender their possessions (*ikyav*). Gyangyan Ierve gave a list of items that were expected to be collected from the people (who were believed to be mbatsav) which included the following: *Abengamtende, Ikyehgeh, Adeunee, Akiki, Ambe, Atsuku, Bagu, Boon, Fembatugh, Icigh, Ifi, Ikpaor, Imborivungu, Inyon, Kpandeor, Kuhejoogor, Mtsaan, Poor, Byam, Tsuembatsav, man Uwarbughun*.³⁶ Many people for the fear of torture, gave out their items, others quietly throw them away by themselves.

Haakaa/Naakaa at the end did not provide the desired sanity on evil in Tiv, it became very apparent that, the movement needed to end. Using the words of Shii says: “Many people lost their lives during *Naakaa* and since Tiv continues to die even today, *Naakaa* purpose was defeated.”³⁷ Since *NaakIaa/Haakaa* did not produce the expected result, another movement came ten years after it and this was Inyambuan.

3.2 Inyambuan Movement

*Inyambuan*³⁸ was another indigenous resource similar to *Haakaa/Namakaa* for addressing evil activities in Tiv land due to the activities *mbatsav* who were possessed with *tsav*. There are differing views concerning the person who initiated the movement and the year. One of the view hold that the movement began in Tiv-land in 1934 by a non-Tiv man called Shiki. He was quickly supported by some Tiv men who made it an active movement and who made it to be accepted as indigenous rather than foreign since Shiki was not originally Tiv by ethnicity tribe.³⁹ In an opinion presented by Ierve T. Gyang-Gyang said, the movement was started by Mr. *Gbankwein* 1939.⁴⁰ Though Shii supported the 1939 date but he is inconsistent. This is because he wrote somewhere showing that by 1938, the movement was in full swing in Tiv land, more so, he did not mention the year the movement ended. Rubingh showed that the movement ended November 11, 1939.⁴¹ Bohannan date the movement between 1939 to 1948.⁴² The movement had two purposes at heart: first the movement was against *tsav* and *mbatsav* in Tiv-land causing mayhem, by identifying and collecting from them the objects

³⁶Gyangyan T. Ierve. *Tarsoron u TivMbayiase*. Gboko: Think Twice Communication, nd. Pp.135,136

³⁷ Shii p. 204

³⁸Inyambuan: this is name and a movement in the political and religious history of the Tiv people. The name Inyambuan, Nyam means meat, bua is cow, this means beef meat. In the view of TerfaAor, nyambuan means beef meat has gone sour. This name expresses the idea about the condition of meat. TerfaAor, “Stylistic Analysis of Tivisms in Selected Nigerian Novels.” *In Journal of African History, Culture and Arts* ISSN: 2789-8903 (Print) | 2790-1106 (Online) | Vol. 3, No. 1, 2023. P. 6 <http://journals.jozacpublishers.com/jahca>

³⁹Rubingh. P. 146

⁴⁰ Ierve T. Gyang-Gyang. *Tarsoron u Tiv Mbayiase*. Gboko: Think Twice Communication; nd. P. 145

⁴¹Rubingh. P. 148

⁴² Paul Bohannan. Extra-Processual Events in Tiv Political Institutions. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/665603?typeAccessWorkflow=Ipdf>. Accessed 13/10/2023.

they possessed and secondly, the movement promised the people eternal life.⁴³ Eternal life here means freedom from the terror and evil activities of *mbatsav*.⁴⁴ It was believed that *mbatsav* are the ones who are responsible for killing people,⁴⁵ freedom from evil, witches and wizards activities really means you have eternal life. This kind of eternal life was different from the one in Christianity, this is such that you will be above the powers of witches and wizards, and no evil will be able to take your life. Unlike in Christian religion, eternal life is not this present life, but life one receives after this earthly life. Based on this believe, initiates were led to think that, they were not going to die because of the power and protection from *inyambuan*.

How was counterfeit evil identified? *Inyambuan* has a way of identifying a true man and woman who was evil at heart or who possessed objects for perpetrating evil. The movement had an instrument which they called whisk. This was a stick covered with leather and a fly whisk. Every member who was an adherent of the movement and was declared free of *tsav* was given the whisk for operation. How a person was identified to be a witch or a wizard was by pointing the stick at a person (adversary), and the person who had *tsav*, the *tsav* will recoil upon him, but where the person is not evil, nothing will show. An adversary who denied possessing *tsav* or is not evil, the person will have to drink a dangerous concoction made from sasswood.⁴⁶ Any person who was free of evil will vomit the poison to prove innocence, but any person who was guilty of evil did not vomit rather died subsequently. Jonathan Iorkighir describes *Inyambuan* as way of eliminating evil using evil means.⁴⁷ Through this means, Tiv nation was sanitized of evil.

The movement has issues that were dreadful which were very necessary for its end. Rubingh reported that many people had died, many activities ceased, most youths who were the workforce, all joined. There was famine in the land because nobody was ready to farm. The teaming population in *inyambuan* could not pay their tax. Religious activities were disrupted in most places in Tivland. Rev De Lange, and Rev. Visser, missionaries serving in Shangev-Tiev and Korinya had to relocate from the area due to *inyambuan*. It was a missionary from DRCM who reported to the Government the danger the movement had caused and the need to control the movement.⁴⁸ The movement achieved its purpose at least to checkmate evil. The promise to grant the devotee eternal life did not come

⁴³ Eugene Rubingh. *Sons of Tiv*. Michigan: Baker Book House, 1969. P. 146; Rubingh P. 146

⁴⁴ Gyang-Gyang. P. 146; Rubingh P. 146

⁴⁵ This was the popular and common believe by the people concerning the activities of *mbatsav* and *akombo*. Casaleggio of the opinion that, the hunt and torture of the people in the name of *mbatsav* was without prove, there was no convincing evidence to show that the *mbatsav* existed, their operations too were not convincing. Casaleggio E. N. *The Land Shall yield its Fruits*. Abraham Mbachirin (Ed.) Makurdi: Lamp and Word Books; 2017. Pp. 78-80, 117-121

⁴⁶ Bohannan. P. 7

⁴⁷ Jonathan Iorkighir. Interview: Reformed Theological Seminary, Mkar, Gboko. 7th February, 2023

⁴⁸ Rubingh. *Sons of Tiv*. P. 148

through because people were still dying. Shii viewed the movement as a means of enriching the leaders.⁴⁹

3.3 Anongo Nyamor Movement (1998-2000)

Between 1948 and 1998, is quite a wide gap, the activities that were fought by Haakaa/Namakaa and inyambuan were still reported in Tiv society and were in full force.⁵⁰ Different kinds of evils were still being perpetrated and experienced in Tiv nation.⁵¹ The situation gave rise to the Anongo Nyamor movement.

Anongo Nyamor⁵² felt there was need to purge evil in Tivland. He therefore staged a movement that was addressed after his name ‘nyamor’ movement. The movement started from Gaav area in Konshisha Local Government. In the view of Karna and Atswande,⁵³ Nyamor himself had a way of identifying mbatsav, this was done by casting spell (*haa agbende, shin nengemngerem*), by so doing the culprit (mbatsav) was identified. Nyamor identified many people and they in turn submitted what he or she has. Different people brought out different items they had. When a person brings a particular item, Nyamor will ask the person to demonstrate how it functioned; the person after demonstrating it, Nyamor will go ahead and collect such an item. After collecting the item(s), he will cut into the people ‘contours’ (*niondo*)⁵⁴ using razor and apply a certain medicine that he prepared.

⁴⁹ Shii. P. 208

⁵⁰ Shii. P. 211

⁵¹ Some of these evils included high rate of death and different kinds of sicknesses. It was believed that mbatsav were inflicting people with illnesses (*ta iorangev*) like *agina*, kwashiorkor (*ngyor*), causing accidents, and others. Some poisoning people using poisonous medicines, others undertake contracts to kill people under target (*ingyato*). Mbatsav also attacked and destroyed people’s farms, they sometimes collect (harvest) the value of the farm products, so during the time of harvest the farmer would not get the product in the quantity it was supposed to be (*mbatsavpeggher*). Sometimes, they blew it up such that even if you take it to the market, it would not have good monetary value. Others possessed *apolo*⁵¹ and they pour it on the crops in the field, this affected the productivity of the crops. Others had *atsuku* (bad luck), when you were ready for something either market or journey, in any way a person with *atsuku* happened to come close to you; either by greeting, or handshake, or crossing your way, or exchanging way with you, it meant you had carried the bad luck, you would not be successful in your activity for that day. Mbatsav also used different mechanisms for carrying out their activities. They had *girgi i mbatugh* (airplanes used basically in the night), motor cars, hook for trapping people (*tsuwe u mbatugh*), *ijembe*(axe) *aondo* for tracking a victim, they had telescope (*jingi i nengen tar*) everywhere a person of their target was, they used the telescope to locate him, among other evil deeds. Others possessed a human hand which they used as big spoon in preparing soup in their hotel rooms. Others possessed *ahoma or* (human fats and oil) still for good luck. The Tiv believe that a person does not just die a natural death, someone must be behind it and this is likely mbatsav.

⁵² Anongo Nyamor was a man from Gaav a district in Konshisha Local Government area of Benue State. Having experienced the above situation, he felt there is need to redress the circumstance. He therefore staged a movement for the hunt and eradication of mbatsav. Michael Iordoo Joseph. Interview: Gaav, 14th February, 2023.

⁵³ John Karna. Interview: Ukan, 27th February, 2023. And Jeremiah Atswande Interview: Ipav, 26th February, 2023.

⁵⁴ Akputu Innocent Washima and Mhon Timothy Ter. Tiv Concepts of Tsav and Iyuhwe as Key Factors in The Underdevelopment of Tiv and Tivland.

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The medicine was to disarm the person of tsav. In an interaction with Atswande, he mentioned people who items were collected from them, these include: Agber Bashi, Agune, Mchiga Abaya, Iornenge Ordondo, Sulega Anula, Lian Abanyi, Abur Akpen, Sereki Tasa, Shioron Haako, Adogo Kuma, among others. Nyamor was invited to several places in Tivland such as: Mbakor, Mbayion, Yandev, Tombo, Ipav, Kunav, Ushongo,⁵⁵ et cetera.

Nyamor too did not bring the expected sanity. The movement too challenges associated to it and these include: monetary involvement, before Nyamor was invited in a place, the people will have to contribute money and give to him. Many people were no longer happy and convinced by the movement, people were false fully accused, brutal and cruel treatment of people, and the movement was also seen to violate individual fundamental human right among other things.⁵⁶

In view of this, the government of Benue State under George Akume on November 10th, 2000 banned the activities of nyamor. The movement therefore came to an end. One salient thing I will mention here before moving to another issue is the statement made by Shii is that despite the efforts that were made by various people using different resources aimed at eradicating evil, he said: “The Tiv still die in spite of the huge collection of tsav emblem.”⁵⁷ This statement still leaves our enquiry about resolving the problem of evil unanswered. It is to this regard that the research is proposing swem as an ideal resource for handling and dealing with evil in Tiv society.

https://www.academia.edu/39192647/TIV_CONCEPTS_OF_TSAV_AND_IYUHWAS_KEY_FACTORS_IN_THE_UNDERDEVELOPMENT_OF_TIV_AND_TIVLAND?email_work_card=view-paper

⁵⁵Igbabaka Interview: Ukum, 28th February, 2023. Shii. *Christianity in Tivland: A History of NKST*. Pp. 210-214

⁵⁶ Shii. Pp. 211, 212

⁵⁷ Shii. P. 215

Swem

*Swem*⁵⁸ is central in Tiv religion. This is the most uniting factor for the Tiv people. It is the most sacred object in Tiv religion. The spiritual significance of *swem* cannot be under-estimated. It is the highest object for determining justice. A person who is accused or suspected of something, is asked to swear by *swem* to declare his or her innocence. When such a person swears and is innocent of the charge or accusation, *swem* will not do him or her anything. But if the accused is guilty and swears by *swem*, *swem* will harm such a person with kwashiorkor (*ngyor*: *swollen stomach and legs*) and he or she will subsequently die.⁵⁹ Other scholars refer to *swem* to mean a place for the origin of the Tiv.⁶⁰ The custodian of the *swem* is the first class chief of the Tiv (*Tor Tiv*).

Swem as a resource for addressing evil,⁶¹ a person who is accused of involving in evil activities will be lead to swear his or her innocence before *swem*. By so doing, a person's human right will be protected in the sense that, this is not at all an illegal thing or means. This means is not cruel neither brutal. In view of this a person who is right in his or her actions and deeds will be vindicated of such false accusations. Nevertheless, any person who is guilty of the evil he or she is accused of will face the penalty and justice of *swem*. Through this means evil will be well dealt with in Tiv nation. Sanity will be restored; evil will be reduced and subsequently eradicated.

The choice of *swem* as an ideal resource for addressing evil is not an individual or personal resource developed for self or personal gain. *Swem* is a resource that the whole of Tiv Nation and people pay

⁵⁸Swem: Swem is believed to be object in Tiv tradition for justice. Others referred to *swem* in terms of place or origin for the Tiv. Regarding the last view, it is debatable. Others are of the view that *swem* is one out of places for settlement by the Tiv people during their period of migration. Swem as an object of sacredness, is believed to be constructed by one Mr Karagbe; a Tiv man from Ikyurav. The composition is a pot containing the powder substance of the head of Takuruku. Another source gave a detailed description of the composition of *swem*. In this view, *swem* is a pot inside of it is ashes, pieces of gbaaye wood (*Prosopis Africana*), Ayandegh plant (*Marantochaflexuosa*), *ikyula-nomsu* (*Lophiralanceolata*), *ikyula-kase* (*Sarcocapholuslatiolius*) and a thunderbolt (*Ijembe-aôndo*). Swem is the most powerful object in Tiv religion and culture. The Tiv believed that after Karagbe has prepared the *swem*, the God of the Tiv has put his powers in it and that made *swem* to be that powerful. Terngu S. Nomishan. Swem: The Tangible and Intangible Culture and Heritage of the Tiv of Central Nigeria. In Journal of Heritage Tourism, December, 2021 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358189395_Swem_The_Tangible_and_Intangible_Cultural_Heritage_of_the_Tiv_of_Central_Nigeria. Accessed 10th February, 2023; Rescue the Trophies: An Ethnic Survey of Benue State Lois K. Fuller (ed.) Jos: CAPRO Media Services, nd. P. 113

⁵⁹AkpenpuunDzurgba. *Elements of Tiv Culture: Material and Ideological Studies*. Ibadan: John Archers, 2016. P. 113

⁶⁰Orkar, J. N. "A Pre-colonial History of the Tiv of Central Nigeria C.1500-1850." PhD Thesis, Dalhousie University: Canada, 1979; and Nomishan, T. S. African Myths and the Environment: A Look at some Myths and Totems amongst the Tiv of Central Nigeria. In Kanu, I.A. (Ed.), African Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Systems: Religion, Philosophy and the Environment, pp. 117-132. <https://www.acjoi.org/index.php/jassd/article/view/1905>. Accessed 10th February, 2023

⁶¹Terngu Sylvanus Nomishan. P. 61

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allegiance to. *Swem* is acknowledged in the whole of Tivland. Justice delivered through *swem* is usually ideal and proper justice. It is justice due to a person.⁶² There is no how *swem* may perhaps be influenced to work against a person; *swem* delivers a true, right and proper judgment. Any person who swears by *swem* takes an oath of innocence. A person called to swear before *swem* pot does using the following words: “This *swem* listen! If I know anything about witches, or I have donated my child to be killed by witches, let this *swem* cause my stomach to swell up so that I shall die! But if I do not know anything about his death, but it is by force that my child has been bewitched and made to die, I shall be safe, while all who are involved in the plot shall die.”⁶³ (Aboh, 2005).

Conclusion

This research has delved into a very contentious and enigmatic topic in philosophy of religion in general and as it affects the Tiv people of the North-Central Nigeria in particular. The research has discovered that, evil is a serious problem in the Tiv society. A lot of developments; human or infrastructural have been hampered due to the fear of evil. Evil have caused untimely death of most people in Tivland, who could have added value and bring development to homes, communities, societies and Tiv nation in general. Evil in Tiv land is not operated in vacuum, there are people who stand in the gap to initiate and execute those evil plans. These people are called witches and wizards. Witches and wizards perpetrating these evil are people that possesses *tsav*.

The various resources that were employed in Tivland at different point in time for checkmating evil and associated activities failed in one way or the other. The various reasons why the resources did not yield the desired result are clearly represented in all the resources above. The research has discovered that, the most obtainable and ideal resource for addressing the problem of evil in the Tiv society and which is accepted by all people without any hitch is the *swem* resource. Most people know the power of *swem* and the implication swearing by *swem*. The justice delivered by *swem* is usually a true judgment and justice. Any evil person who is guilty of evil practices is inflicted by *swem* with swollen legs and stomach and subsequently dies.

Recommendations

The research makes the following recommendations:

The Tiv Traditional Council should harness the indigenous resources

Terngu Sylvanus Nomishan. He also holds this view about *swem* in: *Swem: The Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Tiv of Central Nigeria*. In *Journal of Tourism and Culture* Federal University of Lokoja, Nigeria, Vol.3, 2021. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/35819395_Swem_the_Tangible_and_Intangible_Cultural_Heritage_of_the_Tiv_of_Central_Nigeria. Accessed 13/10/2023.

⁶³ Aboh, M. M. *Technological Change and its Effect on Traditional Religious Beliefs: The Tiv Experience*. PhD Thesis, University of Jos. 2005. In Terngu Sylvanus Nomishan. P. 61

So far so good, there is no scientific equipment or technology developed to curtail evil. The indigenous resources are so far, the only plausible way to address the problem of evil. The research therefore, recommends that the Tiv Traditional Council who is vested with the traditional authority to govern at the grassroots should harness the above discussed resources that were used at different intervals in the history of Tiv in handling evil and evil related matters and come up with one proper way that is generally acceptable for addressing evil.

The Tiv Traditional Council should encourage the use of swem as a tool for addressing evil
Swem is a symbol of unity and justice in Tivland. Everybody knows the power of *swem* and swearing by it false-fully. Therefore; anybody who is suspected or accused of practicing evil should be made to swear by *swem* to show his or her innocence. Through the use of *swem*, no one will be led to think is ill-treated. Because the tool used to judge is proper for obtaining true justice.

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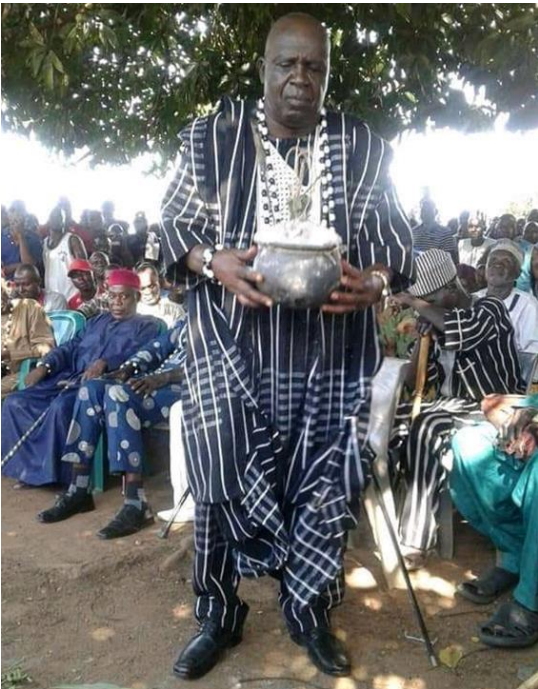
Appendix



Tiv elder holding swem pot in his hands to swear

Source:

<https://theshepherdlohouster.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/wp-1505890388906.jpeg>



Tiv Traditional Ruler holding swem pot in his hands to swear

Source:

<https://theshepherdlohouster.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/wp-1505890388906.jpeg>