

Mailumo (Self-Centeredness): The Emerging Socio-Cultural Philosophy and Its Impact on Traditional Tiv Values

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Abstract

Societies across the world keep evolving and new values and ideals are imbibed. This makes the assertion that change is the only permanent thing undeniable. The above claim is also true of the contemporary Tiv society which has imbibed foreign values and ideals which are antithetical to values and ideals of the traditional Tiv society. A glaring value which has emerged in contemporary Tiv society is the *mailumo* (self-centeredness) socio-cultural philosophy which is being firmly entrenched as a Tiv value. The research is qualitative and adopts a multi-disciplinary approach for method. Thus, the historical, descriptive and analytic methods are employed. For data collection, the primary and secondary methods are adopted. In the primary method, oral interviews and observation procedures are used; whereas in the secondary method, information is obtained from books, journals and other published materials. The data that is collated is presented using the analytic method. The research has established that *mailumo* (self-centeredness) as an emerging socio-cultural and socio-political philosophy in Tiv society is diametrically opposed to the Tiv socio-cultural philosophies of *ya na angbian* and *ayatutu* ("weism"-group solidarity). The research further established that *mailumo* has brought about greed, hatred, disunity, self-centredness, the promotion of mediocrity and Pull Down syndrome. These ideals have negatively affected Tiv society and retarded its development. The paper calls on the Tiv to return to the drawing board and re-entrenched the traditional Tiv socio-cultural philosophies of *ya na angbian* and *ayatutu* of being one's brother's keeper. These ideals would ensure social cohesion among the Tiv and bring about love, peace, stability and development of Tiv society.

Keywords: *Mailumo* (Self-Centeredness), Socio-Cultural, Social Cohesion, Traditional Values Philosophy.

Introduction

There is no gain contesting the fact that culture is not static but that it keeps evolving periodically. This has ensured that societies across the world keep imbibing new values, ideals and philosophies from neighbouring ethnic nationalities through the process of socialisation. Admissibly, while some of the newly imbibed values, ideals and philosophies may be progressive in nature and set the tone for the development of the imbibing society; others are visibly retrogressive in nature and rather, constitute clogs in the wheels of development of such a society. The Tiv society in central or middle belt Nigeria is not immune from the above scenario as it has evolved and continues to evolve bringing with it

noticeable changes to long held ideals, values and philosophies. Most of the changes noticeable in Tiv cultural values, ideals and philosophies are direct attributes of socialisation as they have imbibed new ideas from their interactions with members of other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

In the light of the above perspective, the contemporary Tiv society has veered off course, abandoning long held values and ideals of the traditional Tiv society in lieu of new ones. It is this process of imbibing new values and ideals which has orchestrated the emergence of a new socio-cultural philosophy *mailumo* (self-centeredness) which is taking centre stage and spreading its ugly tentacles among the Tiv. *Mailumo* as an emerging socio-cultural philosophy is a "philosophy of the self"; it encourages self-centeredness or individualism as against the long held traditional philosophy of *ayatutu* and *ya na angbiam* which are built on the principle of togetherness, "*weism*", communality and group solidarity which are built on the ideal of being one's brother's keeper.

The emergence and gradual entrenchment of *mailumo* has made everything go wrong with the Tiv and Tiv society. *Mailumo* has so much caused damage on social relations in Tiv psychic and Tiv society, such that the contemporary Tiv person only thinks of self, "I", "me" as opposed to "*ka se*" (*weism*) or us. *Ayatutu* is no longer viewed in the perspective of "*ka se*" – (*weism*) but rather, *ka mo* ("I"/individualism).

Mailumo is bringing about the disintegration of Tiv cultural values and ideals and the centre which held the Tiv together is falling apart exposing Tiv society to all sorts of chaos and danger. The impact of *mailumo* on the Tiv and Tiv society is therefore better imagined than expressed. Lamenting the entrenchment of new cultural values by the Tiv with reference to the disrespect for elders by the contemporary Tiv youth; Orkar (2015:8) decried that: the elders have assumed the roles of the youth while the youth have taken over the roles of elders. He maintained that the youths in contemporary Tiv society would prefer that the elders do their bidding instead. It is in line with the above scenario that the research is undertaken to examine the impact of the emergence of *mailumo* on the Tiv and Tiv society. The research is divided into several sub-themes which culminates into a conclusion.

The Problem

The erosion of traditional Tiv values and the ascendancy of self-centeredness, epitomized by the concept of *mailumo*, presents pressing issues within Tiv society. This study aims to delineate the ramifications of this societal shift, focusing on its adverse effects on communal cohesion, unity, and collective progress. The detrimental consequences of this transition include the fragmentation of social bonds, the proliferation of individualistic attitudes, and the erosion of communal ethos that once underpinned Tiv identity. The rise of self-centered behaviors among the Tiv populace has disrupted the cohesive fabric of the society, impeding collaborative efforts, hindering cooperative endeavors, and stifling communal advancement. This challenge is further compounded by external influences such as colonialism, Christianity, and modern education, which have catalysed the dilution of traditional values and the propagation of individualistic inclinations.

Moreover, this study endeavored to probe into the root causes of this paradigm shift towards self-centeredness within Tiv society. In conducting an in-depth analysis of historical, social, and cultural determinants shaping contemporary Tiv values, the study unveiled the underlying factors contributing to the decline of communal ideals and the ascent of individualism. Gaining insights into the drivers of this societal transformation is imperative for devising targeted interventions aimed at revitalising traditional values, fostering solidarity, and nurturing a collective sense of identity among the Tiv people. Through elucidating the intricacies of the problem of self-centeredness and its reverberations throughout Tiv society, this study aspired to lay the groundwork for interventions that can reignite communal spirit, rekindle unity, and propel the community towards sustainable development and harmonious coexistence.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To evaluate the emergence of *mailumo* on the Tiv socio-cultural and philosophical scene.
2. To examine the impact of the emerging socio-cultural philosophy of *mailumo* (self-centeredness) on traditional Tiv values and societal cohesion.
3. To propose strategies and recommendations for reinvigorating traditional Tiv values of communal solidarity, unity, and collective responsibility in order to counteract the negative effects of self-centeredness.
4. To contribute to the scholarly discourse on cultural evolution, societal change, and the preservation of indigenous values in the face of external influences and internal shifts within Tiv society.

Conceptual Clarity

The following concepts as appeared in this paper refer to:

Mailumo (self-centeredness): This is an emerging socio-cultural value and philosophy among the Tiv which promotes the "self" and encourages self-centerness and individualism. *Mailumo* is antithetical to the long held Tiv traditional values of *ayatutu* (brotherhood) and *ya na angbian* (fair share) which were anchored on the promotion of togetherness, *weism*, communality and group solidarity. As Adega and Torhemen (2022:118) exemplified, *mailumo* entails a situation where the "self" takes on a central point of reference with regard to many philosophical activities (i.e conation, motivation, attention, cognition, affect/emotion and behaviour). They maintained that the exaggerated importance given to the self emerges mainly from the *mailumo* syndrome in which the increased degree with which an individual considers that his/her own precedence is more important than that of others and this viewpoint takes unquestionable priority for such a person (Adega & Torhemen, 2022).

Furthermore, the philosophical aspect of *Mailumo* syndrome embodies certain interconnected traits such as biased self-interest, egoism, egocentrism, egotism, and greed

(Adega & Torhemen, 2022: 118). Essentially, *Mailumo* reflects an ideology centered on the self, emphasizing "me," "I," and no consideration for others. This perspective implies a belief that "anything good should rightfully belong to me." Consequently, if I cannot benefit from something, then no one else should—an attitude encapsulated in the Tiv saying, "*ka a kperan ikpa i ande*" (when a bag is dragged for too long, it gets torn).

This mindset extends to desiring ownership of what others possess: desiring a good child, spouse, or prime land. For instance, rumours circulated about a top executive in Benue State acquiring all the prime land in Makurdi, the state capital. Within the negative realm of *Mailumo*, an uncle might undermine his brother's daughter (whether the brother is deceased or alive) residing with him, portraying her as unsuitable for a prospective suitor. Instead, he presents his own daughter as an ideal choice, extolling her virtues as a potential wife. In real life situation, his daughter may be a spoilt little brat that lacks home training—She eats, plays, watch movies and sleeps all day long. On the other hand his brother's daughter presented in negative light is the home maker; she wakes up first and is the last to sleep, handling various chores.

Similarly, an individual subscribing to *Mailumo* ideals may covet a flourishing farm belonging to a neighbour, feeling the neighbour does not deserve such success. When a neighbour's child, working in the city, returns to visit parents in the village, the flames of *Mailumo* are stoked, leading one to metaphorically bark like an aggressive dog, wishing it were their own child visiting. In such instances, where one is solely consumed by thoughts of "me" and "I," it is reasonable to argue that *Mailumo* is tantamount to self-centeredness or extreme individualism.

Values: Cultural values have to do with the moral principles that are culturally determined by members of a given society. Gbor (2006:17) infers that cultural values consist of the ways of thinking, feeling and acting that have been culturally conferred in the individual from birth through the processes of acculturation. Thus, based on the beliefs, feelings, emotions and attitudes, cultural values are external to the person as they are acquired outside of him. These values have coercive powers over the individual as they guide and dictate the individual's day to day pattern of behaviour. Cultural values play very significant role in the maintenance of law and order in society. They are the unwritten laws based on the customs of the people (Gbor, 2006: 18).

Philosophy: This refers to a comprehensive system of belief or an outlook regarding fundamental principles of a group of people. In the light of this, socio-cultural philosophy would mean the fundamental principles or system of belief, a group of people, and in this paper the Tiv.

The Emergence of *mailumo* on the Tiv Socio-Cultural and Philosophical Scene

Prior to the emergence of *mailumo* on the socio-cultural and philosophical scene of Tiv society; the traditional Tiv society was receptive, cooperative and caring. The Tiv were their brother's keeper and the needs or challenge of one Tiv person was the collective need and or concern of the other Tiv.

Tiv society then was not a society of everyone to his/herself as is evident in the contemporary Tiv society. Everyone person mattered in this dispensation. Collectively, the Tiv were stronger together and they were able to wade off onslaughts from the Fulani/Hausa Jihadists, Chamba, Jukun and the Udam. The Tiv traditional society operated the socio-cultural values and philosophy of *Ayatutu* and *ya na angbian* which ushered in love, peace, brotherliness and tranquility. Speaking of *ayatutu*, Karshima (2013:39) opined that it refers to those who are united with one mind to do something. *Ayatutu* was a mobilisation and solidarity slogan hence, the Tiv would say, "*ayatutu ka u no?*" (Who are the *ayatutu*?) which was greeted with a thunderous "*ka se*" (we, us). If and when anyone Tiv person heard the slogan; if his kin who made that call was involved in a fight, it was expected of his brother Tiv to join him in fighting the common enemy (non-Tiv) and when the enemy was done with, the brother would now demand to know what actually caused the fight and if need be apportion blame accordingly.

In his explanation, Wang (2004:118) opined that *Ayatutu* symbolises the oneness, unity and solidarity that held the Tiv people or nation together. He emphasised that hitherto to this time, the Tiv man believed in the collective struggle as the basis of security and strength. On the origin or etymology of the concept *ayatutu*, Orkar (2015: 123-124) observed that it was derived from the eating habit of the Tiv who ate their food while it was hot/warm – *aya/ya* (to eat) – *tutu* (hot/warm). In this circumstance, only the strong willed could partake of such meals. According to him, lazy children were identified in the process of eating the warm food just as the brave ones who could stand the heat. The above representation has the collaboration of Wang (2004) who further explained that *ayatutu* distinguished in whatever circumstance the difference between the Tiv and other ethnic nationalities.

From the foregone, it is evidently clear that, the Tiv Traditional Society (TTS) was enveloped in unity, solidarity and togetherness. There was no place for individualism or self-centeredness in the scheme of things and the Tiv were not easily defeated by their enemies which further buttresses the fact that working of a collectivity is more solid than individuality Orkar (2015:119).

As time lapsed, the Tiv and Tiv society neglected and laid waste the traditional ideals and values of *ayatutu* which they had imbibed from their forebears to embrace and entrench an alien socio-cultural philosophy in *mailumo*. Thus, the strings which bound/held the Tiv together have been broken. The centre can no longer hold and there is chaos and confusion surrounding the Tiv and Tiv society.

Individualism and self-centeredness have taken over the reins in contemporary Tiv society. This explains why Wang (2004:118) avers that nowadays, the story is different; brotherly love has ceased, and has been overthrown by brotherly conspiracy and hatred. Collectivity has given way to egoism and uncompromising individualism. The Tiv society is scattered. All these point to the fact that *angbian kela doo ga* (a brother is no longer good/valued). Two schools of thought offer explanations on why the Tiv have entrenched the values of *mailumo* marked by individualism and self-centeredness in lieu of the ideals of *ayatutu*. The first school of thought attributes this sudden change to colonialism, Christianity and

western education; while the second school of thought fingers the introduction of partisan politics with its winner takes all mentality into Tiv society.

In the opinion of the first school of thought, colonialism, Christianity and western education have brought about a change in Tiv values and ideals of communality to individualism. Atel (2004:94) explains this better where he averred that "Colonialism, and to an extent, Christianity could be said to be some of the major agents of change. Following the advent of colonialists and Christian missionaries, Tiv society which hitherto had no contact with European culture was now exposed to it in a most significant way and to become permeated by western ways". The above simply mean that the Tiv who had contact with Europeans and their culture assimilated some of it and in the process substituted the communal ways of living for the western styled individualism. These new found ideals were promoted in the schools that the missionaries and the colonial government established across Tivland.

The Tiv who had benefited from these schools and missionaries started seeing themselves in the "I" and "me" perspective as against the Tiv cultural values and philosophy *ka se* – "us", "we". This scenario marked the beginning of the Tiv who hitherto lived in open compounds in the villages start building tall fences to protect their compounds from the preying eyes of their neighbours. These tall fences had boldly written on their iron gates "beware of dogs". Adega (2010:8) is of the view that this period also marked when the Tiv stopped eating in the *ate* (reception/common hut) for their parlours and bedrooms under the guise of protecting their food from being contaminated by dust and flies.

The second school of thought which fingered the introduction of partisan politics into Tivland is of the view that before the introduction of partisan politics in Tivland; the Tiv operated an egalitarian and democratic system of sharing positions within and between them. This was represented in the *ya na angbian* political philosophy. In this regard, the Tiv shared positions equally between the two main groupings of Tiv that is Ichongo and Ipusu, so that none will be cheated or feel aggrieved, thus bringing about peace, stability, tranquility and development of society. According to Tarnande (2016:25), fundamental to the conception of the principle of *ya na angbian* is the value of sharing; sharing commonly determined communal resources with one's fellow brother. Tarnande further explained that the conception of *ya na angbian* illustrated above, emanated from the communal mode of production, which predominantly characterised pre-colonial Tiv society. He maintained that while this conception has not changed remarkably despite the transformation of Tiv society, what has however, changed are the resources available for sharing and the attendant practice.

The principle of *ya na angbian* was employed in 1946 when the colonialist having created the paramount ruler ship of Tor Tiv employed it in the selection/election of the first Tor Tiv – HRM. *Ochivirigh* Makir Dzakpe and his enthronement in 1947. However, the introduction of partisan politics in Tiv society steadily began to alter the ideals of *ya na angbian* as the winner takes all syndrome began to manifest in Tiv polity. Tiv politicians began to think of themselves only at the detriment of the collective gain of the people. Things heightened in the second republic when Chief Senator J.S. Tarkar who served as a senator and later

minister of Communications/Transportation also had his son Hon. Simeon Mbakorkaa Tarkar elected a member of the House of Representatives. This was a clear case of entrenching *mailumo* (self-centeredness) or individualism on the collective will of the people – a direct breach of the *ya na angbian* philosophy.

This scenario has continued to loom on the Tiv political terrain and was witnessed in the General elections of 2023 where Distinguished Senator George Akume; who though did not contest an elective position gave the nod for his wife Mrs. Regina Akume to contest for the House of Representatives slot for Gboko/Tarka Federal Constituency, and the former Caretaker and later substantive Chairman Gboko Local Government and Personal Assistant to Senator Akume, Hon. Mrs. Becky Orpin, contested for the Gboko State House of Assembly. Both candidates eventually won their seats and Dr. Akume would be appointed the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF).

There was a mild drama and escalation of tension at the Benue State House of Assembly at the inauguration and election of Speaker of the Benue State House of Assembly in June, 2023 when Senator Akume allegedly tried unsuccessfully to influence the election of Mrs. Orpin as speaker. Rumour mills had it that this turn of event did not go down well with the distinguished senator who saw this as a slap on his face. The distinguished Senator would in further institutionalisation and deep entrenchment of *mailumo* in Tiv polity, influence the appointment of his relation Dr. Tyover Ashinya Dajoh as Provost of the newly established Federal Polytechnic, Wannune.

The distinguished Senator was earlier also allegedly instrumental to the appointment of Prof. Joseph Utsev as Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation in the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (PBAT). At some point in the political life of Tarka Local Government Area, the distinguished Senator's home town/LGA; his immediate younger brother Hon. Akoom Dajoh was Chairman of the Local Government and at his passage, his wife was appointed the Caretaker Committee Chairperson. On the other hand, the distinguished Senator's elder brother HRH. Chief Indyer Akume was the Second Class Chief and Chairman, Mbakor Traditional Council (MTC) until his passage a few years back. It is to be noted however that, apart from the *mailumo* political clout and haze, the distinguished Senator Akume is a political mobilizer, philanthropist, a giver who has impacted many in Tivland and beyond.

Apart from the fact that the *mailumo* behaviour violates the ideal and values of *ya na angbian*; it can be likened to *u yan zwa poo* (having a full mouth). While these may be happening and seem surprising; it ought not be because since the inception of partisan politics in Tiv society and Nigeria in general, the phenomenon of "winner takes all" (*kula wa cica*) has been the operational concept of politicians. This can be seen with the conduct of Local Council [s]elections in which the winning party regardless of the feeling of the people "sweeps all the seats" with none left to the opposition.

The Tiv political gladiators feel more important than the Tiv and often erroneously think that the group is dependent on them and they are indispensable. This was what exactly made the late Wantaregh Paul Iorpuu Unongo to make the insinuation at the formation of

Mzough u Tiv (MUT) in 1985 that so long as he did not support the organisation, it would not stand, concluding that he was not a pushover (Mzough u Tiv, 1988: 32). The Tiv political gladiators feel more important than the Tiv and often erroneously think that the group is dependent on them and they are indispensable. This was what exactly made the late Wantaregh Paul Iorpuu Unongo to make the insinuation at the formation of *Mzough u Tiv* (MUT) in 1985 that so long as he did not support the organisation, it would not stand, concluding that he was not a pushover (Mzough u Tiv, 1988: 32).

This, in my opinion, was an open display of arrogance, and a clear representation of extreme individualism, over-glorification of self-importance, and an excessive or exaggerated emphasis placed on one's own significance or worth beyond what is reasonable or warranted aimed at seeking constant validation, recognition, or attention, at the expense of others or perhaps, without due merit. This behaviour denotes an extreme form of self-centeredness and a belief in one's exceptional significance that goes beyond healthy confidence and self-assurance. What these Tiv political gladiators forget to note is the fact that whatever position[s] of influence they hold; they did not achieve such because of their brilliance but they had such opportunities given them because they were first and foremost Tiv and what they think is their due share is actually the share of the Tiv as a whole. Thus, one cannot be riding on the wings of the eagle and take the credit all by themselves. The enumerated factors have left daunting impacts on the general wellbeing of the Tiv and the development of Tivland as a cohesive unit or force.

The Impact of *Mailumo* as an Emerging Socio-Cultural Phenomenon on Tiv Society of Central Nigeria

It has earlier been stressed in this study that newly imbibed values could be progressive and set the tone of development of a society; while on the other hand, such values, ideals and philosophies could be retrogressive and constitute a clog in the wheels of development of the imbibing society. This is very much alluded to by Wang (2004) where he wrote: the Tiv nation is scattered! There is no internal cohesion and the result is the apparent internal and external aggression on the people both from herself and other(s). From the foregoing analysis, the study will shift its attention to examining more specifically, the impact of the entrenchment of *mailumo* as a socio-cultural philosophy by the contemporary Tiv.

Social Division and Disunity: One of the most profound impacts of *mailumo* on the Tiv society is the increase in social division and disunity. The philosophy has sown seeds of discord and division among community members, creating rifts and undermining the traditional communal spirit. The emphasis on individual success has led to competition rather than collaboration, resulting in a fractured societal structure. Contemporary Tiv society is bereft of *ijoo-zwa* (unity). *Mailumo* philosophical values and ideals have stripped the Tiv of the remaining fragments and shreds of unity it ever had. The slogan now is "Every Tiv Person to his/her hut". As such, if the solidarity slogan *Ayatutu ka uno* is shouted/chanted; it would meet with a dead silence and if anyone dares to respond, the answer would be *Ayatutu ka mo* (I, me) and no longer *ka se* (we, us).

With the above mentality in mind, does it still surprise any one person why less populous ethnic groups like the Jukun, Chamba, Udam, Alago, Mada and the like beat the Tiv and chase them out of their huts launching devastating blows of defeat? As this study is being documented, a large number of Tiv in the Ihyarev and Sankera axis are leaking their wounds in internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps. Such IDPs are faced with hunger, starvation, disease and illiteracy as they can no longer engage in subsistent farming nor are their children attending any form of school.

To worsen matters, the Tiv are up in arms against each other as there are several inter/intra clannish wars raging on in Tivland. The Mbaviur and Mbasombo communal war going on currently with its attendant destruction of lives and properties among the Masev in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State is quite regrettable (Adega, Daniel, & Ortserga, 2022:14). Most annoying is the fact that, it is these same Tiv who had no response to the Fulani herdsman attacks that now have the wherewithal to confront their kith and kin in order to annihilate them. While the *atoatiev* (non-Tiv) look at any Tiv person as Tiv and treat him/her as such; the Tiv look at their kith and kin clannishly as per Masev, Ihyarev, Kparev, Kunav, Jemgbagh, Ukum, Shitile, and Ukan. Tiv unity is gone.

Individualism so thrives in contemporary Tiv society that Agada (2022/2023:14) observed that in a bid to fulfill personal ambitions and swells one's ego the Tiv are ready to do anything. According to him, as one (Tiv) strives to so hard after his/her selfish interest, he/she tramples on the rights of others which further fuels the ambers of disunity among them/members of that group. It is to be noted that it was on the account of the disunity of the Tiv and the need for unity that Tor Tiv III HRM Orchivirigh James Akperan Orshio, OON voiced out his concern on the occasion of his birthday on 6th April 1985 which led to the formation of *Mzough U Tiv* (MUT) to champion Tiv unity (Mzough u Tiv, 1988: 24).

Recently at the burial of Ter Katsina-Ala, HRH. Chief. Benjamin Fedzanga Wombo on the 13/01/2024 at Chief. Akume Atongo Stadium, Katsina-Ala; Benue State Governor, Rev. Fr. Dr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia lamented the spate of disunity among the Tiv and called for a change. He observed that the disunity of the Tiv was denying them several benefits in the Nigerian federation. The implication of the governor's recent appeal for Tiv unity is demonstrative of the fact that the Tiv did not heed the appeal for unity earlier made by HRM. Orchivirigh James Akperan Orshio 39years after.

***Iyuhe* (Jealousy/Envy):** The escalating issue of disunity among the Tiv community, stemming from the pervasive adoption of *mailumo*, is closely accompanied by the challenge of *Iyuhe*. *Iyuhe*, equivalent to feelings of jealousy or envy, embodies resentment towards another person's possessions or achievements, coupled with a desire for these possessions or progress to be one's own.

As a result of the above, *Iyuhe* has gained prominence in contemporary Tiv society and it is indeed trending. It is because of *Iyuhe* that a fellow Tiv would cause willful damage to the farm of a fellow Tiv because the farm is flourishing and blooming. In this perspective, the person filled with *Iyuhe* could employ nocturnal, spiritual and physical agents in accomplishing his/her evil machinations. Thus, the jealous and envious person could send

inyom and *inyam*, *mbatsav* (nocturnal birds and animals) such as *asua* (weaverbirds), *ibagu* (monkeys) and *igyo* (pigs) to destroy a farm or *dwem* (hyenas) to attack a herd of animals (Adega, n.d).

Also, some of the communal conflicts witnessed in Tiv society today are orchestrated on the pedestals of *iyuhe*. For instance, such communal wars could be fought because members of an opposing village want to disrupt the aspirations towards development of another village or clan. It could be that the market in the other village is doing well or better and the need to destroy it.

Iyuhe has fostered a destructive "pull-him-down" syndrome within the Tiv society. Despite the challenging nature of achieving a PhD, many ill-intentioned Tiv individuals have attained this advanced degree (pull-him-down), while their children or dependents struggle to even secure a basic bachelor's degree in practical life situations. This scenario encapsulates the tendency of certain Tiv members to obstruct the progress of their own relatives who are on the verge of success, all due to the prevalence of *mailumo* and the negative influences of *Iyuhe*.

Wang (2004: 130) has penciled down some instances where some Tiv sons and daughters were embroiled in bitter controversies in an attempt to pull down a kin. The case of Tarkar and Dabo, Akure and Aku; Akume and Suswam, Ortom and Akume are green in our memories. According to Wang (2004:130), Nigerian National dailies carry one form of crises report or the other regarding Tiv person fighting each other. This has so moved on without any one raising any eyebrow such that political organization in Tivland are formed along lines of enmity and friendship. This, he maintained dichotomizes and divides the unity of the Tiv.

To the consternation of Utov and Ioratim-Uba (1998:64), the phenomenon of *Iyuhe* has moved into the church and found among Tiv Christians. They lament that "many Tiv Christians engage in *Iyuhe* (jealousy) and *angereke* (gossips) because all Tiv want to be at the top at the same time or to be at the baseline all together. Even Tiv Christians are involved in *mbavia-a-mba via* (this clan versus the other clan) plague. They also give such threats as *me tese u* (I will teach you a lesson). These recurring phrases create disunity...". Utov and Ioratim-Uba (1998) had expressed their dismay when they had not seen it all; regarding the church and Tiv Christian behaviour. This is because at the death of the first indigenous Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi, late Bishop Athanasius Atule Usuh in 2016 and the enthronement of Bishop Wilfred Chikpa Anagbe CMF; more of these unchristian like behaviours were noticed in the diocese which is predominantly Tiv.

The *mba-via-a-mba-via* (this clan versus the other clan) which Utov and Ioratim-Uba (1998) had earlier decried crept into the Church and found a place among the clergy. Rumour mills had it that at the creation of the Diocese of Gboko; the indigenous clergy of Makurdi diocese were of the opinion that those who belonged to Gboko diocese relocate to their diocese and give them a breathing space to assume important positions and postings to lucrative parishes hitherto occupied by priests from Gboko diocese. This caused a lot of stir in the

church and among the lay faithful who felt obligated to go back to their home parishes to contribute to their development.

The *mba-via-a-mba-via* would also rear its ugly head among Tiv Christians when at the demise of Bishop Peter I. Adobo of Katsina-Ala Catholic Diocese; the clergy and lay faithful of the diocese would expect a Bishop from Sankera intermediate area, but the workings of the church would go against that clannish line of thought as Bishop Isaac Bundepuun Dugu from Gboko Diocese would be appointed by the Vatican to fill the vacant episcopal seat.

The *mba-via-a-mba-via*, it is to be noted, is not peculiar to the Tiv alone as most Nigerian Christians generally have been showing the sign of preferring the clergy from their areas occupy important positions. This scenario was witnessed in Jos Archdiocese at the passage of Late Bishop Gabriel Gonsum Ganaka in 11/11/1999. In the most recent times too in the Catholic Church, the Diocese of Ahiara was created by the Holy See; while the clergy and lay faithful joyously welcomed the news of the erection of the new diocese, they nevertheless rejected the Bishop Elect of the Diocese, Most Rev. Dr. Peter Okpalake whose appointment was announced on the 21/05/2013. This imbroglio led to the papal recall of the Bishop and suspension of celebration of the sacraments in the diocese. Most Rev. Dr. Peter Okpaleke who from 2013 had no Cathedral to administer following his rejection by the Ahiara people would remain so until recently when was appointed Bishop of Ekwulobia diocese in Anambra State on the 05/03/2023 by Pope Francis the first.

Poverty: This is a situation of extreme want of the basics of human needs in food, shelter, water, clothing, healthcare, education and the like. As a result of *mailumo* and its spirit of individualism, some Tiv who are well to do refuse to share with the needy in their society. They would rather want their needy kin to worship them as demiurge. In fact, their individualistic spirit would not welcome any form of competitiveness from any quarter such that others who are blessed are seen as potential enemies and sometimes efforts are made to eliminate them so that those who had earlier made it from such communities would retain their relevance.

For instance, in Masev land, it was alleged that the Late Engineer Nathaniel Alaaga once attempted to assassinate late Innocent Mayange on the basis that the later bought a vast land directly behind his own plot. It was alleged that Alaaga requested Mayange to sell off the land to him and the later refused. This led to he (Alaaga) sending thugs after Mayange who fortunately unfortunately, was away in Jos. However, Mayange's wife was beaten and ended up in the hospital at Bishop Murray Hospital Makurdi.

Poverty has so made it that today, most Tiv youth have not married even when they attain marital age because there is no one willing to help them raise a family; *angbian kela doo ga*. Gone were the days in which a Tiv man would marry and his brother would abdicate his room for such a brother because he had no hut or any household materials of his own to cater for himself and the new wife.

Most Tiv persons would today not give yam seedlings (*akôô*) to a fellow brother to start his farm or set up a business venture for a kin with the claim that *a na un nyaregh ki eren kpenga yo una fatyo?* Meaning if he/she is given money to trade would he/she succeed? All these

stems from the fact that if such kin is assisted and at the end he/she succeeds he will be like them. Such unhealthy imaginations creep into the Tiv mind even before the assistance is rendered. The Tiv rather retort cynically that *kpev a nongon a ihyo shin igyo kuna sule je i lehe ye* (everyone for his/herself).

On the other hand, if a Tiv youth is asked to serve as an apprentice in his kin's business or ride a commercial vehicle for the person, he would without thinking twice respond that: *me ta or akam a nyar ga* meaning I will not lay the bricks of wealth for anyone. If the benefactor purchases a vehicle/motorcycle for commercial purposes and entrusts it to a Tiv youth, not only would the youth refuse to give the return/balance to the owner of the vehicle; but such an *iyuhe* (jealous) laden youth would cause wilful damage to the vehicle/motorcycle through reckless driving and overloading but add an injurious cliché: *wua iyou va a iyou* (destroy the vehicle and bring money).

These category of Tiv often think that as vehicle operators they face danger and imminent death on the road while the vehicle owner in the comfort of his/her room expect the return/balance each day which he/she does not really deserve. This destructive and retrogressive behaviour has left the Tiv society of contemporary times very deplorable and its members' abject poverty as no one is willing to help another.

Other effects of *mailumo* on the Tiv and Tiv society include: the promotion of greed which leads to corruption, hatred, wanton destruction of lives and property posing an obstacle to one's personal ambitions. More so, it promotes mediocrity as against competence. The Tiv who hitherto stood for excellence would now say *Alu sha ikpughur kon kpa se penda/har* (even if it is on the stump of a tree, we will crown it with authority). As a result of this, the Tiv have often resorted to the cliché – *ka u wase, ka wan wase* (S/he is our own). This phenomenon has led to the issue of having round pegs in square holes. Another sibling of *mailumo* is the act of sycophancy.

All the above impacts have polled a combined force that has negatively influenced the social, political, educational, religious and economic development of the Tiv and Tivland generally. *Mailumo* represents the philosophy of self-centeredness within the Tiv society, signifying a significant cultural shift in values and social ideals. The term encapsulates a mind-set focused predominantly on individual interests rather than collective welfare. It stands in contrast to traditional Tiv philosophies such as *ya na angbian* and *ayatutu*, which emphasises group solidarity and the concept of being one's brother's keeper.

This self-centered philosophy, as observed within Tiv society, reflects a paradigm where personal gains, possessions, and achievements take precedence over communal interests. It manifests in various social domains, influencing interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and societal structures. It also surfaces in economic pursuits, altering the traditional communal approach to resources and creating a more individualistic ownership perspective. The emergence of *mailumo* has led to a cultural clash within the Tiv society. It challenges the established values that prioritize community welfare and cooperation.

Its impact is observable in the erosion of traditional social structures, increased greed, disunity, and the promotion of mediocrity. This philosophy of self-centeredness poses

challenges to social cohesion, hindering the development and stability of the Tiv community. It results in a negative transformation of values, disrupting the fabric of the society and retarding progress and development.

Way Forward

From the foregoing discussion, it has become evidently clear that the entrenchment of *mailumo* as a value, ideal and philosophy has done nothing other than bring chaos to Tiv society. The *mailumo* issue has robbed the Tiv of the much-needed unity. The Tiv are numerically superior and may be said to be the fifth ethnic group in Nigeria; they are considered as nothing by the other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

While smaller ethnic groups are considered by the government at the centre and rewarded with juicy contracts and appointments, only a few Tiv could be said to have been so considered in the national scheme of things in Nigeria. The Tiv strength and might is only expended on his defenceless kin. The Tiv having a crab like mentality all struggle to be at the top all at the same time, no one Tiv person is ready to assist another Tiv climb the ladder of success and with such a mentality, other smaller ethnic nationalities, come, overtake the Tiv, ascend the ladder and the Tiv remain at the base dismayed and squabbling.

On the political scene in Tiv society, there are far more whales and sharks in the small pond whose strength only makes the water muddy and contaminated. Why are the Tiv sons and daughters not swimming in the tides and drifting to the ocean of national politics? Why is the home with its limited resources more important to the Tiv than the jungle of national politics with large games?

As *Mzough u Tiv* rightly postulates: now is the time for the Tiv to reassert themselves and think along with other Nigerians. That is the only way by which they can regain their true place in the context of the Nigerian nation (21). While this may be desirable, the Tiv cannot do this unless they are united, unless *ayatutu* becomes *ka se*. unless, the philosophy of *ya na angbian* and not *ya na zwa wou* (eat and give to yourself) is restarted by the Tiv.

Furthermore, this can only be actualised by the Tiv if extreme individualism, self-centeredness are done away with. This can be made possible if the Tiv begin to think in line with their communal spirit of togetherness inscribed in *mailuse* (us/communality) and NOT *mailumo*. *Kon mon ngu woho ikyo ga* (a tree does not make a forest) and certainly, one tree never makes a forest. The Tiv cannot become so "Europeanised" just by assimilating their culture at the detriment of his/her more vibrant Tiv cultural ideals, values and philosophy which are predicated on togetherness and unity.

Conclusion

This study has established that hitherto, the Tiv traditional society operated on the principle, ideals, values and philosophy of *ayatutu* and *ya na agbian* which bond the people together in unity. By this, they were able to overcome many challenges and maintained themselves in the Benue valley albeit hostile neighbours. However, colonialism, partisan politics, western education and to an extent, Christianity on their introduction into Tivland

rather than bring about development, brought some setbacks as these socialising agents dissuaded the Tiv from their culture and ushered in the western European individualistic culture. This development has not gone well with the Tiv and Tiv society as multiplier effects have become noticeable: jealousy/envy, disunity etc which hitherto even if operational in traditional Tiv society, operated on a minimal scale. Western style individualism has retarded the development of Tiv society; it has done more harm than good. The study thus calls on the Tiv to return to the drawing board and re-entrenched their communal spirit of *ayatutu, ya na angbian*, which promoted unity and served as a common band or string that held Tiv society together. This is only when the Tiv and Tiv society will take genuine steps towards development.

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