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***Ura Yilan: The Art and Science of Rain Making Among the Tiv
of Central Nigeria***

Andrew, Philips Adega, PhD

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies,

Benue State University, Makurdi-Nigeria

E-mail: andy4everyoung@gmail.com, aadega@bsum.edu.ng

Mobile Phone No: +2348055220744; +2347031280203

Abstract

Rain is a natural phenomenon in which showers by means of natural causation down-pours water from the sky for the purpose of moisturing the earth, man, plants and animals for their sustenance. Without water, survival for man, plants and animals on earth will be a mirage. The fact that the Tiv are farmers who produce variety of crops implies that the Tivs necessarily need rain for their survival and for the crops and animals they rear. Thus, when the Tivs experience a dearth in rain, they employ the services of the *yilan ura* (rain maker) of the community for the purposes of *ura yilan* (rain making). The art and science of rain making among the Tiv is meant to avert catastrophe in the community for man, plants and animals. In making rain, the Tiv do not usurp or short change Aondo - the Supreme Being; but they do so conscious of the fact that Aondo has given them the arcane knowledge to tap into and control the natural resources of their environment for their benefit. Thus, the study is motivated by the factors responsible for *ura yilan* and the techniques employed by the Tiv to bring about rain and the derivable benefits there from. The study employed both the primary and secondary methods to collect data. Oral interviews were held with rain makers in selected parts of Tivland. In the secondary method, information was collected from books, journals, encyclopaedias, newspapers and magazines, etc. The study established that the Tiv, like other ethnic nationalities across the globe, make rain when

circumstances demand. The Tiv therefore, make rain for different purposes including for productive, destructive/obstructive purposes as well as the detection of evil in the community. *Ura yilan* (rain making) among the Tiv was important in the sense that it procured bountiful harvest, regulated evil and cleansed Tiv society of defilement as well as bringing peace and happiness in the society. Expectedly, several taboos followed the making of rain among the Tiv; for instance, the genuine *or yilan ura* was prohibited from touching a corpse, never interacted with women observing their menstrual cycle and neither was he in the habit of collecting *ingyato* (consent fee) to cause the death of members of his community. In conclusion the study notes that although the art of rain making has drastically receded with the advent of western education and Christianity; where it becomes necessary for the Tiv to make rain, it should be for productive but not destructive ventures.

Introduction

The Tiv of the middle belt or central region of Nigeria are subsistent farmers. This means that their economy is heavily dependent on agriculture. They therefore cultivate several crops for consumption and for sale for themselves, their neighbours and for export. The Tiv are thus, renowned for the cultivation of roots/tubers such as *iyou* (yams) *alogo* (cassava), *atsaka* (potatoes), *ajie* (bitter yams), *anumbe* (yellow yams).

They also produce in large quantity cereals including *chingapa* (rice), *wua* (sorghum), *amine* (millet), *alev* (beans), *ahuma* (cowpeas); as well as fruits and vegetables such as *alum* (oranges), *mungur* (mangoes), tomatoes, *mkem* (pepper), *ityuna* (bitter leaf), *ashwe* (sorrels) etc. In addition to the above, the Tiv are engaged in other agricultural activities such as the rearing of domestic animals including goats, cattle, piggery and chicken.

The implication of the above is that the Tiv economy is heavily dependent on rainfall for its subsistence. As a result, the dearth of rain could cause a devastating blow to the survival of the Tiv, their families and domestic animals-a total collapse of their economy. This explains why if there is a dearth in rain, the Tiv would do everything within their means including invoking rain to fall to sustain themselves (Quarcoopome 44).

However, it is to be noted that when the Tiv resort to making rain, they do not necessarily arrogate the powers of *Aondo u a kum asha* (Almighty God) to themselves; neither do they wish to short change or usurp God for lesser deities but do so with the firm belief that *Aondo* has given *or uma che* (human being) the knowledge to tap and control the supernatural powers or resources of the universe for his/her own benefit (Awolalu and Dopamu 240). The Tiv believe that *Aondo* gave special powers to the rain makers, diviners and magicians and they actually do his will. This explains why Mbiti observed that for most Africans the rain makers know the words of God and that is their work (180).

This implies that Ubrurhe's assertion was correct when he posited that the resort of man to the use of mystical powers to achieve his/her end is very much dependent on the basis that these supernatural/mystical powers are created by God and made available in the universe to be harnessed and manipulated for man's end (10).

From the foregone, it can be clearly seen that rain was Tiv economy and Tiv economy was dependent on rain. The scenario prompted Ayati to infer that:

The social life of the Tiv was badly affected by poverty. Life was indeed very difficult. It (Tiv economy) was entirely a subsistence economy. A bad climatic season of little rain or rain not coming at the right time resulted to automatic famine. Poverty was in the extreme... (3).

Since the Tiv economy was heavily dependent on rain: the period of *ura* (rain) was known and planting of crops decided accordingly. The Tiv designated three types of rainfall and ascribed various activities that followed after each of these rainfalls. Ayati averred that:

The first rain of the year was known as moorambe because it reinvigorated human waste that had already dried. Usually a light shower followed by a short period of drought; it signalled the clearing of the fields in preparation for the year's planting season. The second rain called amendesham was heavier and promoted green shoots. It never lasted long before a heavier rain descended. The third rain was called igbetwev in the sense that it destroyed settlements that were yet to be completed. Massive farming activities for the season commenced after the third rainfall (1-2).

The paper explores the art and science of *ura yilan* (rain making) amongst the Tiv of Nigeria.

Unveiling and Unmasking Key Concepts

This section explains some key concepts and words as appeared in this chapter:

Art: Implies the ability or a skill that a person(s) acquires or develops as a result of constant training and practice.

Science: Refers to knowledge about the structure and behaviour of the natural and physical world, based on facts that can be proven by experiments. It also connotes a system for organising the knowledge about a particular subject, especially one concerned with aspects of human behaviour or society (Hornby 1306).

Rain: This is a natural phenomenon in which showers by means of natural causation down pours water from the sky for the purpose of moisturing the earth, man, plants and animals for their sustenance; hence without water the troika cannot survive in the environment of their earthly existence. Bolander stated that rain refers to the multitude of falling drops of water formed by the coalescing of droplets in a cloud (825).

Similarly, Athens explained that meteorologically, rain or precipitation refers to all forms of liquid or solid water particles that form in the atmosphere and then fall to the earth's surface (494).

Ura yilan (rain making): It is the process by which the *or u yilan ura* (rain maker) possessing the arcane knowledge causes *ura* (rain) to fall artificially by means of manipulation to achieve different purposes. Parrinder refers to the rain maker as the shepherd of heaven. He maintained that the rain maker learns the ways of all the winds and becomes familiar with strange birds and animals which enable him to read the stars and every night the moon shared its secrets with him; Just as the rare heron told him of coming storms (106).

Mbiti further pointed out that Africans generally look upon the rain makers as the shepherds of men, cattle and plants all of which depend on the rain (179). The art and science of rainmaking usually to stave off drought is not a new phenomenon to the world. In this respect, the Holy Bible reports the incidence between Prophet Elijah and the Prophets of *Baal* which ended a three-year drought period in Israel and his subsequent elimination of the 450 Prophets of Baal (cf. 1Kgs 18: 20-46).

The Rain Maker

To be able to perform his functions of *ura yilan* (making rain) among the Tiv, the novice is trained by a qualified rainmaker who is well versed in weather matters, and may spend long periods acquiring the knowledge. The training has no specific period per se; the transfer of the powers all depend on how fast the apprentice comprehends and grasp the information being transmitted to him/her by the qualified rain maker. This knowledge comprises observing the sky, studying the habits of trees, insects and animals, a study of astronomy and the use of common sense to attempt to make rain during the peak of the dry season. The rain makers keep their eyes fixed towards the sky; not only to study the weather conditions, but also to pray to God who is both maker and giver of rain. Thus, when they fail to observe this protocol, they also by implication fail to make or stop rain (Mbiti 181).

Abel Joseph Ashe, Jato Ijir and Abum Icheen both posit that the *ityo* (community) is the custodian of rain making among the Tiv. The *ityo* vest the powers of rain making in the elders to hold it in trust for the whole community. The elders in turn transfer this knowledge to a selected person (s) through apprenticeship. Thus, whenever there was drought and the whole community was in accord that rain should fall the elders instructed the person to whom such powers have been vested in to make rain (oral interview). However, this does not mean that an individual cannot acquire the powers of rain making on his/her own through apprenticeship and or purchase.

Abum Icheen asserts that the rain maker could be a man, woman or a youth, though the majority of rain makers in Africa are men. However, a woman observing her monthly

cycle is prohibited from the art of making rain (oral interview). As a rule, the *ityo* does not just select someone and vests him/her with powers of rain making; the powers are vested in individuals who are worthy in character, lest a person with questionable character brings calamity on the community.

The specific role of the rain maker among the Tiv of central Nigeria or any given African society cannot be over-emphasised. This is because his work is not only to make rain but also to 'stop' it when too much comes in a short time or when it is not particularly welcomed at a given moment such as during weddings, funerals and other important communal/public functions. This explains why the rain maker (s) of a given society are consulted and paid to put the rains on-hold during important function in most communities in Nigeria including the Yoruba, Igbo, Idoma, Igede and Etulo etc.

If the rainmaker fails to produce rain, it would lead not only to the loss of his prestige but may even endanger his life. Also, if the rainmaker causes too much rain which destroys people's fields he could be in danger because the physical life of the people, as well as their prosperity and well-being, depend on rain (180).

The rain maker could also "make" rain for his own personal interests; such as in disrupting an occasion he is opposed to. Ugah gives an account of this where the rain maker of the Apa village of Adoka opposed to the marriage of his daughter Onyechi to Acheme the son of Luke the village catechist; sent rain to disrupt the wedding proceedings in the Church in a classical episode of the conflict between tradition, Christianity and change. He explained that shortly before the commencement of the proceedings of wedding rituals by the white preacher:

It started to drizzle. The bright rays of the sun soon darkened as rain clouds took up positions in the sky. Neighbouring trees stopped swaying. Birds fled to their nests. Then all of a sudden, the little showers of rain disappeared as quickly as they came. The sky opened its eye again... a sudden flash accompanied by a rumbling sound broke out. Pandemonium set in as a powerful rain-storm up rooted the roof of the church and scattered the solemn ceremony. Man, and mammals stood helpless at the fury of the gods. Apa was completely ruined (131-132).

Rain Making Rituals across Global Cultures

In the process of making rain rituals, rain dance becomes very pertinent. According to Goetz, rain dance is a ceremonial dance performed in many cultures from ancient Egyptian to the 21st century Balkan to invoke rain ensuring an abundant harvest (904). Rain dance is also found among some cultures in Nigeria including the Tiv, Etulo, Idoma and Igede in Benue State as well as the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba populations of Nigeria.

When a rain dance is performed, a spirit or god is asked to send rain to the dry earth. Cultures that have little or no rainfall see the rain dances as a way of getting the water they need to produce their crops and they see rain as a very happy event. For instance, Egyptian tomb scenes depicted rain dancers as early as 2700BC. Goetz explains that the elements commonly found in rain dances and rituals are: (i) dancing in a circle (ii) decoration with green vegetation (iii) nudity (iv) the pouring of water (v) phallic rites (vi) the use of young girls (vii) whirling, meant to act as a wind charm (904). The art of rain making is full of symbolism.

The Idoma of Igumale in Ado Local Government Area of Benue State in the event of drought perform the rain making ritual to cause rain to fall. Expatiating on this, the *Ada Ado* HRH. Chief Joseph Otsiko Onazi explained that the rain maker in performing this task implores all the women in the community (Igumale) to fetch water from the stream and pour same on the *Onwu Nze Chon* shrine comprising of a pile of stones. The water flows from the shrine and when it reaches the stream where it was fetched rainfall is recorded. However, a virgin girl must be the first person to pour water from the stream on the *onwu nze chon* shrine (oral Interview).



Plate I: The *Onwu Nze Chon* shrine comprising of a pile of stones at Igumale market square. The pile of stones is used by the Idoma of Igumale in Ado Local Government Area of Benue State to make rain. **Source:** Field trip Observation, 21st October, 2014.

Among the Etulo of Bururku and Katsina-Ala Local Government Areas of Benue State, the rain maker is known as *Okwese Ogbani*. Rain maker are chosen from specific families. Training is long and has no fixed time but depends on how fast the novice is able to grasp the techniques (Oral Interview). When there is drought; the *Otse Etulo*

(paramount ruler) in consultation with the council of Chiefs requests the *Okwese Ogbani* to make the rain. Akofi Okwese explained that it takes seven days to make rain. All the seeds billed for planting are put in a special calabash. The rain maker makes incantation to the *Onjeje* (spirits) who causes the rain to fall. No one sees the *Onjeje* except the rain maker (oral interview).

The rain maker embarks on dry fasting for several days to be able to make rain. This is important as it helps him to cleanse himself of possible defilements and to draw closer to the gods. In the process of making rain, the *Okwese Ogbani* wears special regalia known as *akwashe* which is worn or seen only during special communal ceremonies. Also, it is only when the *onjeje* is seen by the rain maker that he communicates the message to the *Otse Etulo* that rain will fall soonest. If the *Onjeje* is not seen by the rain maker, his family holds a meeting to find out what the problem is by consulting a diviner. The inability of the *Okwese Ogbani* to see the *Onjeje* portends an omen and a sign of his rejection by the gods (oral interview).

Sacrifice of white rice mixed with honey and *burukutu* (local brew) is also offered to the *Onjeje*. After the portion for the spirit is given to it, the general public is invited to have their share of the sacrificial items. The *Okwese Ogbani* only makes rain during the raining season when drought is experienced. He can equally stop the rain when it threatens important communal events like the burial of an *Okwese* (oral interview).

The *Ogbani* stream and the *Okwese* shrine actually assist the *Okwese Ogbani* in the process of making rain. The stream never dries no matter the level of drought experienced. The fish in the *Ogbani* stream are not caught and eaten by any one. Similarly, women observing their menstrual cycle do not fetch water from the *Ogbani* stream. If a woman observing her menstrual cycle violates this one important rule, a snake which guards the stream appears to scare and frighten her away (oral interview).

The *Okwese Ogbani* observes certain taboos including: (i) not to travel outside Etulo land once he has been made the *Okwese Ogbani* (ii) not to eat any food that is prepared with salt; not even by his wife. If his wife violates this rule and the *Okwese Ogbani* tastes the food he will go blind (iii) The *Okwese Ogbani* does not pay visit to people in the community; not even the *Otse Etulo*. Messengers run errands on his behalf (iv) he does not eat any food prepared by a non-Etulo (oral interview).



Plate II: Mr. Akofi Okwese, the *Okwese Ogbani* (rain maker) of Okpashila Achi, Etulo, Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State stands beside the *Ogbani* stream which assists him in making rain. **Source:** Field trip Observation, 18th October, 2008.

Ura yilan: The Art and Science of Rain Making among the Tiv of central Nigeria

For the Tiv of central Nigeria as with most other ethnic nationalities of Africa, rain is regarded as a great blessing. As a result, whenever it rains the Tiv rejoice greatly unless of course the rain is excessive and causes damage to crops, animal and man or devastating flooding. Therefore, the reasons behind rain being a source of joy and blessing to the Tiv are not farfetched. This is because, whether as farmers or as pastoralists, the entire livelihood of the Tiv depends on rain (Mbiti 179). If the rain is delayed considerably there will either be insufficient harvest or none at all, a prospect which causes great anxiety to the Tiv (179).

The Tiv see rain as the most explicit expression of the goodness and providence of *Aôndo* (God) to mankind. As Mbiti further explains, rain is one of the most concrete and endless rhythms of nature; hence as it came, it comes and will come. The Tiv and indeed most African peoples know no end to this vital rhythm of creation. As it comes from above, it (rain) links the Tiv with the divine (181).

Regarded as a sacred phenomenon, the Tiv intimately associate rain with God such that the same word is used for both – *Aôndo* which explains why the Tiv would say *Aôndo (ura) ngu nôôn* literally meaning God is raining. According to Mbiti, the above phenomenon can only be explained in the context that the name for God means “rain giver” (181). The above clearly shows that the Tiv are aware for certain that only *Aondo* can ‘make’ or ‘produce’ rain and the rain makers play the role of intermediaries; they are the focal point of communal need and request for rain (180).

Apart from the discrepancy in weather which could cause drought as natural phenomena; the deliberate withholding of the rains by *Aôndo* is interpreted by the Tiv as a mark of punishment. Commenting on this, Ayua Dominic stated that *Aôndo* hates evil and wickedness and that where evil takes precedence of activities in the society he withholds the rains to call the Tiv to order. He maintained that evils such as:

Stealing, armed robbery, harvesting all crops without leaving *twar* (remnants) for the poor, needy, and the deity responsible for rain to harvest as a sign of dedication, worship and honour lest the deity for rain become angry and withheld the rains.

Other evil deeds which could cause the seizure of rain among the Tiv include, land/communal disputes, killing and destruction of farm products through witchcraft, having sex in the bush and women who get pregnant out of wedlock etc. Children from such unholy union were referred to as *mar-amondo* (born of the ant-hill) or bastards (Ugo Israel Terseer, oral Interview).

Types/Procedures for *Ura Yila* (rain making) amongst the Tiv

The following are the main types and procedures of rain making among the Tiv: (i) Productive (ii) Destructive (iii) Preventive/Obstructive and (iv) Detection of evil purposes etc. The “making” of rain ritual is highly symbolic and involves the performance of rituals and offering of sacrifices sometimes involving humans. Below are the types and procedures for rain making among the Tiv:

i. Productive Purposes: This type of rain making as the name suggests is for productive purposes aimed at making rain for the benefit of the whole community. It involves all the elders of the community and the *or u yilan ura* (rain maker) who cries unto the *uter mbyiase* (ancestors) to intervene and avert the calamity of drought and famine. According to Ayua Dominic, the procedure for this kind of rain making involves singing of songs, trumpeting, dancing, renunciation of evil and praying to *Aôndo* to cause rain to fall (oral interview).

In the *Kwande* area of Tivland, food stuff and *tashi* (local brew) are also offered to the deity and where the drought is extreme a male or female virgin, handsome/beautiful without *iholugh* (blemish) are sacrificed to appease the deity to release the long-withheld rains. No member of the community does any form of work that day. Ayua Dominic further posited that if a member of the community violates this rule he/she is fined or even killed if he/she proves stubborn (oral interview).

During the procession to a secluded place specifically chosen for the ritual preferably a hill, the elders rub *kpagh* (cam wood) on their shaved heads; red turbans/ribbons with red feathers are tied on their heads, they also paint their faces with white powdery substance (i.e sign of repentance). At the end of the ritual sacrifice comes a heavy down

pour. Sometimes, the rain could delay for a day or two but it surely rains after the rituals and sacrifices have been performed (oral interview).

Among the *Tyoshin* of *Gwer* West Local Government Area of Benue State, there was a rain maker named Tyaven Aguva from *Mbalyongu-Udam* who long after his death, his spirit was still invoked by the elders to cause rain to fall whenever they were threatened with drought and famine (Torkebi Solomon, oral interview).

Further providing insight into rain making procedure among the *Mbalyongu*; Unumbe Matthew explained that amongst other items taken for the ritual are: *Iyongu* (gourd), *amine* (millet), *ichenge* (piece of clay pot), *azenga atar* (3 sticks) and *mngerem* (water). The millet was pounded into powder and poured into the gourd together with the water. After this the three sticks were placed into position and the *Ichenge* placed on top of the three sticks/poles. The most elderly person says some incantations and pour the water/pounded millet from the gourd unto the *ichenge* and the ritual party took to their heels to avoid being beaten by the rain; because before they reached their individual houses, rain fell heavily (oral interview).

ii. Preventive/Obstructive Purposes: According to Orvihi Ayem the preventive/obstructive rain is also known as *ambe*. This type of rain is used by the *or yilan ura* (rain maker) to obstruct, prevent or put a stop to occasions and ceremonies that the *or yilan ura* or his/her client disapproves (oral interview). The *ambe* creates great difficulties and inconveniences to the targeted person (s) while putting the perpetrator at advantage. Orvihi Ayem further explained that the *ambe* could be used to obstruct burials or traditional/wedding ceremonies. Furthermore, a man eloping with a girl could cause the *ambe* to obstruct his pursuers from reaching him and his bride. Towards this, the *ambe* causes rain to fall from the point where the pursuers are while the elopers' direction is dry and calm (oral interview).

It is also reported that thieves and other criminals use the *ambe* for instance; if they have stolen and are being pursued will invoke the *ambe* to cause rain in the direction of those pursuing them (thieves). This type of rain is also used by the Tiv during traditional competitions to cause rival troupes to miss performance. Testifying to this, Leva Tarhon asserted that one *Tor Ijov* by the name Iche Akpatu from *Shitile* invoked the *ambe* whenever he was competing against other troupes to obstruct their performance and eventually emerge as the winner of such competitions.

He pointed out that Iche Akpatu would simply join two special stones to cause rain to fall and when he wanted the rain to stop, he would separate the stones from their cloned position. On the other hand, if he wanted the rain to be accompanied with thunder/lightening, he would crash/strike the stones against each other six times. Iche Akpatu could also invoke the *ambe* against his enemies especially witches to prevent them from attacking him (oral interview).

iii. Destructive Purposes: Orvihi Ayem opines that the rain fall caused for destructive purposes is also known as *ura-Aondo*. This type of induced rainfall is targeted at killing a person or group of persons (oral interview). It also is used to destroy orchards, flocks of animals, birds and farms. Orvihi Ayem maintained that to cause this type of rain, the *or yilan ura Aondo* produces a powdery medicine which he/she mixes with *taav u tondon* (native tobacco) and smokes it in his/her *ityu* (smoking pipe). He/she could also roll the tobacco in a piece of paper and smoke.

As the rain maker smokes the tobacco and puffs the smoke in the air, it gradually forms a thick cloud causing rain, thunder and lightning which causes death to the targeted person (s) or destruction to the targeted property. This prompts the Tiv to say: *Aondo gba vihi kwagh shin akaa* (rain/thunder has destroyed several properties) (oral interview).



Plate III: A typical *ityu* (smoking pipe) with *ikyo dar* beside it. When the pipe is lit after filling it with *taav* (tobacco), the *ikyo dar* is placed on it to produce a thick cloud of smoke towards a particular direction where the rain is to cause havoc. **Source:** Mr.Linus Luke Famave, Benue State State University, Makurdi, 24th January, 2015.

Orvihi Ayem further posited that it was the *ura-Aondo* that Mku the mother of Sherev, Ngyohov and Utyondo employed in killing the *Mgbakpa* people whom she dumped in the river *Baban Ruwa*. This made the *Mgbakpa* to flee from Guma and settled at *Mgbakpa* near the Etulo of Adi in Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State. For this reason, the *Mgbakpa* and their descendants have refrained from eating any fishes caught from the river *Baban Ruwa* (oral interview). To make the *ura-Aondo*, the rain maker acquires certain items such as: *ahur* leaves (*Annona senegalensis*), *il-kpiir/kyugh* (dew), and *kyegh gbenda* (ritual chicken) Agungu Venda, oral interview). First, the rain maker plucks the leaves of *ahur* (*Annona senegalensis*) and place it in his palm, pour sand on it and twirls the *kyegh gbenda* and the *ir-kpiir/kyugh* and blows the sand into the air with the dust and sand forming clouds which causes rain/thunder after incantations have been said.

This rain/thunder kills the targeted person or causes destruction to any targeted object (oral interview). It is to be noted that the destructive rain has often missed its target and caused harm to unfortunate persons. However, the level of destruction caused untargeted person(s) is often minimal and at times such persons are flung from the targeted position to safety. The rain maker may also use a proto type (night) gun and a mirror enhanced with mystical power to cause the rain/thunder.



Plate IV: A proto type *gbuuka u tu* (night gun) with a piece of mirror near the trigger. The trigger is made of iron, the muzzle decorated with *tsur* (gum) and rags of different colours. The bullets of the gun are obtained from the seeds of *fii/tii* (*Abrus precatorius*). The mirror causes lightening/thunder when shot. This *gbuuka u tu* was surrendered by Mr. Angor Igirgir of Gbatse, Ushongo Local Government Area of Benue State. **Source:** Field trip Observation, 19th October, 2014.



Plate V: A member of the *Ijov Agera Iber* spiritist and anti-witch craft practitioner displays a *bende* (charm belt) at Ugee council ward of Mbaanyam, Ushongo Local

Government Area of Benue State. The charm belt is used for causing destructive rain.
Source: Field trip Observation, 16th October, 2011.

iv. Detection of Evil

According to Baba Uchocho Uta, the *ura yilan* for detecting evil and enhancing a balanced and healthy society (*tar sôrôn*) is also known as *adugh aôndo/aôndo ngu noon*. This type of rain making regulates and protects the community and enhances stability, comfort, security, good governance, moral uprightness and communal well-being generally (oral interview). Subscribing to the above view, Atsaka Saawuan observed that the Tiv abhor evil deeds and would do anything to expose evil acts to enhance unity, peace, love and the general well-being of members of the community. He particularly mentioned that the Tiv abhor fornication and adultery and when a man and woman were suspected of having illicit affair they were summoned before the communal council (*ityo*) for interrogation and *or yilan ura* with the *akombo* called *an-aondo* was mandated to perform the ritual to invoke thunder and lightning to identify the culprit(s) by striking them dead (oral interview).

According to Atsaka Saawuan, the rain maker uses different materials with symbolic colours. These include: sprinkling of *mtwem* (ashes) for white colour, *kpagh* (cam wood) representing red, *aka a usu a ii* (powdered charcoal) for black etc all in a circle in the *ate* (reception hut) or open space. The suspects stand in the circle and after making incantations, the rain maker evokes the *Aondo* to dispense justice. Clouds form mildly in the sky followed by thunder and lightning which strikes the culprit (s) (oral interview). It is to be noted that the use of the items of different colours is representative of the rainbow which is also associated with rain. White therefore, signifies purity, red for danger and black for evil (oral interview.)

In his variation, Baba Uchocho Uta of Tyoshin in Gwer West local government area of Benue State explained that the materials used for evoking the *an-aondo* are: spear grass pointing to each hut in the compound, circle drawn on the ground facing the West (sun set) and a calabash etc. The rain maker pours powdered medicine into the calabash containing water and every one presents drinks and takes the oath stating that if he/she is guilty, thunder should strike him/her dead (oral interview). Following the oath, the rain maker makes a fire in the circle and the smoke bellows into the sky which brings about rain storm that produces hot droplets of rain from the sky capable of burning plants and the culprits to death wherever they are within the ritual ground. When the culprit has been so visited with the punishment, the rain maker makes incantations to *Aondo* to appeal for the rain to stop (oral interview).

From the above, it becomes an irony the insinuations by some ethnic nationalities in Nigeria who bent on damaging the reputation of the Tiv claim that the Tiv condone illicit sex, promiscuity, adultery/fornication and even offer their wives to visiting male acquaintances. Where lies this claim if rain, thunder/lightening is invoked to detect evil

doers such as adulterers/fornicators? If there is anything that dampens the relationship between a Tiv man with his friend, host, neighbours or relation etc; it is for such acquaintances to make passes at his woman/wife talk less of having an affair with her. If a person needs to be visited with instant death; then nothing would propel it faster than having an affair with a Tiv man's wife.

In fact, some young persons have been made "useless" (impotent) by some aggrieved elders whose wives were taken over by these young bloods. In some instances, such randy young "he-goats" are mystically tied in the adversaries' compounds and would never go back to their families/villages but labour and die in the houses of those whom they had befriended their wives. These unfortunate young people do not even have families/children as a result of their wayward behaviour until they die.

The source of the 'myth' of Tiv 'lending' their wives to their guests can easily be traced to the Euro-American anthropologists who, in a hurry to document on the Tiv without a proper grasp of Tiv language could have mistaken the instruction of the *or ya* (husband) to his wife to "*tar or van inya ne kyav ayav* (prepare a place for the guest to sleep) to mean that the woman should sleep with the guest. Tiv hospitality has not reached that level. Thus, even if a Tiv man's wife is asked by her husband to "*tar or van inya kyav*" it does not mean that such a wife is to *tsa a or van inya* - make love to the guest. What the husband means when he issues this instruction to his wife is for her to provide a minimal level of comfort for the guest i.e., provide him/her bath water, food, drinks and a place to sleep including *ikyondo i cirin* (cover cloth) especially during harmattan; nothing less –nothing more.

The Importance of Rain Making among the Tiv

The importance of rain making among the Tiv cannot be over-emphasised. This has to do with the fact that the entire livelihood of the Tiv depends on rain. Thus, apart making rain for agricultural and pastoralists' reasons, Ayua Dominic specifically enumerated other importance of rain making to include:

- i. Rain making regulates evil deeds and wickedness such as stealing, fornication, adultery, killing of whatever kind etc which are acts of man's inhumanity to man. This helps in regulating the social order in Tiv society as evil is arrested.
- ii. Bountiful harvest is achieved.
- iii. Rain making brings out clearly the role of the elders, priests and ancestors as mediators in Tiv society.
- iv. Tiv society is cleansed of its defilement as a result of the numerous incidents of wickedness and evil deeds.

- v. The poor, the needy and orphans through the process of *twar* have something to feed on.
- vi. Farmers and pastoralists receive rain and drought and famine is averted.
- vii. Rain making brings about peace, happiness and jubilation as a result of the blessings of rain received from God (oral interview).

Taboos and Rainmaking amongst the Tiv

The fact that rain making is a religious activity and it involves *akombo* (rituals); there are several taboos associated with it which the rain maker observes:

- i. The *or yilan ura* (rain maker) refrains from having any contact with a woman observing her menstrual cycle, touching, eating any food prepared by her or making love to her.
- ii. The rain maker always controls his temperament no matter the level of provocation. The probable explanation is that if he does not control his anger; he may bring to bear devastating effects on the community through the use of thunder/lightning (oral interview).
- iii. He does not touch a corpse because it is un-clean.
- iv. He does not collect *ingyato* (consent fee) to cause the death of a person in his community. This is with reference to the productive rain maker.
- v. He always maintains holiness at all times. This is because he is the vessel through whom the deity/ancestors speak to the people.
- vi. Rain making is not performed during the rainy season; especially rain making for the purpose of detecting evil in the community. In addition, women do not go to the arena where the rituals for rain making are being performed. Thus, only men especially heads of compounds are present (oral interview).

Conclusion

Rain making amongst the Tiv is very significant as man, plants and animals benefit from the rainfall. On a general note the art of rain making has declined significantly in Tivland. Several reasons account for this: The major factor has to do with the influence of western education and Christianity. These have ensured that the Tiv no longer have interest in the practice. Also, some rain makers use their powers negatively, thus bringing misery to the community by causing death and destruction using thunder and lightning.

The contemporary Tiv youth is also not patient enough to learn the art and science of rain making; they are more interested in getting money. The implication is that such youth could use their powers negatively to get money via striking dead the enemies of

their clients for a fee. Furthermore, the high charges associated with the training of novices also constitute a major challenge against the art of rain making in contemporary Tiv society.

Thus, rain making whether for destruction or productive purposes is replete with the use of *akombo* (rituals) and the loss of lives as young virgin males/females are sacrificed and their blood used in the process. As a result of the above use of humans for sacrifice to make rain, the paper advocates for the usage of bulls, goats, sheep and other domestic animals in performing these rituals/sacrifices to obtain their blood for this purpose. This when observed would avert the frequent loss of lives and the trauma associated with rain making in Tiv society.

Finally, the paper advocates that in as much as the Tiv value rain and their entire livelihood depends on it; only productive rain should be made by the Tiv. Destructive rain making that causes the loss of lives and property should be avoided as it does no good to the Tiv society.

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List of Respondents/Informants

S/N	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date
1.	Akofi Okwese.	75yrs	M	<i>Okwese Ogbani</i> (Rain Maker)	Okpashila-Achi, Etulo, Buruku, Local Govvt. Area, Benue State.	18/10/2008
2.	Unumbe, Matthew	75yrs	M	Traditionalist	Tse Unumbe, Mbabuande, Gwer West Local Government, Area Benue State	12/01/2014
3.	Agungu, Venda.	82yrs	M	Traditionalist	Ahumbe, Gwer East Local Govt. Area, Benue State.	25/01/2014
4.	Leva, Tarhon	64yrs	M		Tor-Ijov Traditionalist/Herbalist. Cheedu, Gwer East Local Government Area, Benue State	25/01/2014
5.	Orvihi, Ayem.	50yrs	M	Traditionalist	Ahumbe, Gwer-East Local Government Area, Benue State,	26/01/2014
6.	Baba Uchocho Uta.	70yrs	M	<i>Or u yilan ura</i> (Rain maker)/ Farming.	Tse-Uta Village, Mbapunde, Gwer West Local Government Area, Benue State.	19/03/2014
7.	Torkebi, Solomon	30yrs	M	Student	Benue State University, Makurdi	6/04/ 2014
8.	Ugo, Israel Terseer	28yrs	M	Student	Benue State University, Makurdi	6/04/ 2014
9.	Ayua, Dominic.	55yrs	M	Traditionalist	Adikpo, Kwande Local Govvt. Area, Benue State.	18/04/2014
10.	Atsaka, Saawuan	60yrs	M	Farming	Gwer East Local Govvt. Area, Benue State.	23/05/2014
11.	Zaki Mbatsav Nyiter	70yrs	M	Traditional Ruler	Logo Local Government Area, Benue State	25/05/2014
12.	Mr. Angor Igirgir	58yrs	M	Traditionalist	Gbatse, Ushongo Local Government Area of Benue State.	19/10/2014

13.	HRH, Chief Joseph Otsiko Onazi.	70yrs	M	Traditional Ruler (The Ada Ado).	Ada Ado's Palace – Igumale, Ado Local Government Area, Benue State	21/10/2014
14.	Mr. Linus Famave Luke	40yrs	M.	Student	Benue State University, Makurdi	24/01/2015
15.	Abel Joseph Ashe	86yrs	M	Traditionalist	Gyaluwa, Onov-Aondo, Gwer West Local Government Area, Benue State	04/03/2017
16.	Jato Ijir	92yrs	M	Traditionalist	Gyaluwa, Onov-Aondo, Gwer West Local Government Area, Benue State	04/03/2017
17.	Abum Icheen	50yrs	M	Traditionalist	Gyaluwa, Onov-Aondo, Gwer West Local Government Area, Benue State	04/03/2017
18.	Utikili Tyogbihi	78yrs	M	Farmer	Koti-Akpoughul, Gwer West Local Government Area, Benue State	04/03/2017