

Exhumation of the Dead and Necromantic Practice among the Tiv of Central Nigeria: Evidence from African Science of Witchcraft

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Abstract

Exhumations of the dead and necromantic practices are topical issues confronting African societies. They are metaphysical practices that remain perennial puzzles to Africans and non-Africans. Although exhumation of the dead and necromantic practices are as old as mankind himself and found in every society, they have not gathered enough intellectual grounds in Africa. This, however, raises many unanswered questions on the religiosity and interconnectedness of marketing and rebranding the practices of witchcraft in contemporary African societies. This paper, therefore, examines the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practices in Tiv society. To prosecute the challenge, the paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach which makes use of questionnaires, face- to-face interview, observation, and secondary sources. The paper observes that the fundamental beliefs in the exhumation of the corpse to life and communication with the spirit of the dead are common practices in Tiv traditional society. The paper recommends, among others, that there is a need for infusion and contextualization of Tiv indigenous beliefs and practices relating to the exhumation of the corpses and communication with dead spirits in Tiv religious worldview and philosophy.

Keywords: Exhumation, Death, Necromancy, Witchcraft, Science, Practice, Tiv Society.

Introduction

Death is an inevitable event in human life. It is a reality that must be experienced by every human person due to our mortality. Death marks the period of crisis which brings about physical life that leads to the regeneration of spiritual existence. It is indeed a period of sadness, misery, and loneliness to the bereaved. However, death itself is not the end of everything, not even of life itself; its complement is found in the burial. Death and burial are, therefore, seen as complimentary terms. Thus, to understand death and burial rites in Tivland, we must get the definitions of this term. Death is the ending of physical life and the creation of new life or continuous existence in the spiritual world. Every society has its way of disposing of the dead. In some societies like those of pharaonic Egypt, Ancient Mesopotamia and the Nerina of Madagascar, burial structures are monumental, while in other societies like the *Nankanse* and *Lodagaa* of Ghana, among many others, the grave structures are quite humble.

Still, there are societies like the Nandi of Kenya who practiced abandonment instead of burial. Some western

cultures like the Indians, Ireland, Spain, Hungary, Netherland, United Kingdom, among others disposed of their dead by cremation. However, man's standard of disposing of the dead is through burial which has been in existence for almost eighty-five thousand years ago. Burial in whatever form is an act of spirituality, eternal rest in the-after-world, belief in status quo and symbol of the continuation of life. The Tiv people, unlike other African societies, have diverse funeral rites which are carried out when a person dies, depending on the type of death. But such rite differs and varies from one community to another, age-grade social status or rank and sex. It is based on these facts that this paper will critically examine exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice among the Tiv of North-Central Nigeria.

Conceptualizing Exhumation of the Dead, Necromantic Practice and the Tiv People of North- Central Nigeria

Exhumation is the removal of the remains of the deceased person from the grave or a vault for examination. According to the Tiv people, exhumation is the mysterious metaphysical practice of removing the remains of the deceased by Witches and Wizards (*Mbatsav*) to revive the dead back to life, and making him/her walk, eat and dance before being slaughtered for feasting (Baka, 1991). This was done as an act of retribution, reward, and recompense for the wickedness committed during the person's existence on earth (Mbiti, 1969). Exhumation is a term that has a widespread belief in the partial metaphysical rejuvenation of corpses through different channels by the *mbatsav* (witches and wizards) for various purposes (Bongotons, 2001). Such exhumed dead persons become "ghost" or "wandering spirits, tormenting the living members, causing havocs and possessing people in the society (Callaway, 1971). Thus, for a departed person to be canonized as an ancestor, he/she must be a man or woman of great repute, he/she must have children, he/she should die a natural, peaceful death at old age, be given a befitting burial as well (Ikenga-Metuh, 1989). This indicates that the soul of the deceased person who is exhumed still has its existence in the spiritual abode (*Adômoko*) (Idowu, 1973).

The Tiv people believe that there is no complication about the continuous existence of the departed persons in the world beyond. This also affirms the belief that human life follows a rhythm of nature which nothing can destroy, be it in death or entry into the company of the spirits. This partial immortality is externalized and realized in the continuation of existence that bears traits to their family members and the society at large. The Tiv people firmly believe that not all dead persons are exhumed in Tiv society; only those who lived a fulfilled life according to Tiv traditions and are initiated into cults of *Timbe Nku*, (magical rites), *Ibiamegh* (cult of witches and wizards) and *Ivom maan* (Prestigious cult) can be exhumed. Prayers are offered for them to rest in peace with the ancestors who protect and bless the family members. In a few African cultures like the Ashanti of Ghana, men, and women who lived outstanding lives are incorporated into the ancestral abode. There are several instances of women who lived upright lives and are said to have died and are accepted as –the Living Dead in African Society (Downes 1971).

This belief in the exhumation of the dead which talks more of the continued existence of the departed person requires that the soul takes on a new body as in the case of Hindu *Samsara* or metempsychosis, and is no longer existent as the deceased person enters in the spirit world. But contrary to this view, is the Indian's belief in *Karma* which says that the soul of an exhumed deceased person still exists in the *Sasa* period where it is brought back to life by the *Mbatsav* (witches and wizards) not just as *Zombi* but a spiritual being. The doctrine of *Karma* determined the action and type of life the deceased lived on earth and the world beyond.

The person who lived a virtuous life is expected to be rewarded and elevated to a level of ancestorship in society than was the case in his/her previous life. But if he lived a reckless and bad life, the deceased person will be slaughtered or continues to wander about as –ghost spirit (Ikenga- Metuh, 1987). Karma in India religious thought is a technical term that means actions in general, whether good or bad. Because actions

produce their good and evil fruits, a deceased person reaps what he/she sows. Thus, pain, suffering sickness, and any ill-fortune are not regarded by the Hindus as an affliction rather than metempsychosis or transmigration idea. It makes a reflection in the departed soul which according to Drever (1973) purports that the exhumed deceased person goes to take a new spiritual soul or body in the Ancestral abode. Thus, in Tiv belief, there is no exhumation of the dead in a classical sense. One can only speak of partial exhumation if the word must be used at all. Necromancy is an alleged form of witchcraft or black magic which involves communication with the dead by either calling forth their spirits as a ghost or raising their whole body for divination conveying the means to forecast future events and discover concealed knowledge (Peek, 1991).

Necromancy as a Greek word was adapted from Late Latin, *nekromancia* or borrowed from post-classical Greek term *nekromancia*, which are compound words of Ancient Greek *Nekros* meaning dead body, and *manteia* which means prophecy and/or divination. The classical Greek word *nellyia* was derived from the episode of Odyssey meaning Odysseus visited the real world of the dead. In Middle Age Latin and English works, the word *Nigromantia*, which means Nigromancy, appeared when writers of this epoch replaced the element of the Greek word *necro* with the famous Latin element *negro*, meaning black. In the Renaissance period, magic and necromancy due to their presumed associations with black magic were seen as metaphysical practices closely related. Thus, antiquity early necromancy was related to magical power and most likely evolved from

-Shamanism, which calls upon spirits such as the ghosts of the Ancestors to consult them for the needs of deceased living family members. The practice of necromancy has been in existence since the history of mankind. Death has always been important, though on many occasions tragic. The reasons may vary, ranging from the emotional to the purely pragmatic, but the efforts remain the same. Enormous rituals have been developed overtime aimed at reaching the deceased and summoning them to the land of the living. And thus, the functions of the necromancer were born and the person who is able, or knows the ways, to speak to the lifeless.

The spirit of the deceased consulted by necromancers was aimed at obtaining undisclosed information to the family before their earthly departure to avenge their death and to seek justice on behalf of the family. This process of communication with the dead spirits who are in the *Sasa* period (temporal world) is a reality that is still prevalent in Tiv society and not a myth. The dead spirits are consulted metaphysically and spiritually. Though necromantic practice can be merely seen or demonstrated empirically for everyone to see, its fact cannot be disputed on the grounds of empirical proofs. In Tiv traditional society, witchcraft covers the whole philosophy of life. One cannot talk of occurrence without reference to witchcraft (*tsav*). This is because; the Tiv believed that every happening is caused by the *mbatsav* (witches and wizards). Witchcraft according to Tiv people is the practice or an act of black magic, sorcery, enchantment, interaction with evil spirits and the manifestation of mystical forces as well as the use of evil powers to harm or protect people in the society (Bohannon and Bohannon, 1953). In the context of this paper, witchcraft simply refers to: A cosmic potency internalized in human beings as a quality or form of human personality. It is life energy, the palaver that exists in nature, the unseen force, which is necessary for the good generation and development of all things. Witchcraft is also the potential and ability which may be inborn in a person or acquired in various ways (Mbiti, 1975).

According to Tiv belief, witchcraft is linked with a person's heart and no one can have a good or evil heart unless he/she possesses witchcraft powers. Thus, in pre-literate Tiv society, a good heart means possessing *tsav mbu dedoo* (benevolence witchcraft), while an evil heart meant *bo utsa* (malevolence witchcraft). Based on this belief, the Tiv people subjected a deceased person who was believed to have died without witchcraft powers or suspected to have been killed by human agents to traditional post mortem examination to verify the cause of his/her death. This practice is gradually fading out due to the advent of Western civilization and advancement in technology in contemporary Tiv

society. When one talks of the science of witchcraft in African worldview, he/she is simply referring to the indwelling psychic powers possessed by African people by those who possess them for good or evil purposes in the society.

The Tiv are found in North-Central Nigeria and are the largest ethnic group in Benue State as well as the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria (Ushe, 2007). The word –Tiv‖ has a triple meaning. Firstly, it is the term that designates the people as an ethnic group. Secondly, it refers to their language; thirdly, it refers to the one ancestral father, *Tiv Awange* to whom all Tiv people trace their common ancestry (Ushe, 2006). Tiv land lies between latitude 6°30' North and longitude 8°10' East, covering an area of 3861 square miles (Doward, 1971). The Tiv share boundary in the East with the Idoma and Iggede, to the South by the Ogoja and Obudu people of Cross-River State, in the North by Chamba and Fulla people of Taraba State, while in the North West, the Tiv are bounded up by the Goemal of Plateau State. In the North-East the Tiv shared a boundary with Alago people of Nasarawa State (Dzurgba, 1985). The historical origin of the Tiv people is very complex and difficult to trace.

However, there are three accounts of the origin of the Tiv. The first account recounts that the Tiv originated from a hilly place called –SwemKaragbe, a hilly place located near mount Cameroon. The second account maintains that the Tiv originated from South Africa and migrated south Eastwards and Southwards with sub-Bantu ethnic groups to Congo or what is in the present days known as Angola (Balla, 1991). While the third account of the Tiv origin, which is the most popular tradition, maintains that the Tiv originated from Bantu Nyanza in South Africa, the present-day Democratic Republic of Angola before migrating to *Swem* in mount Cameroon and then finally settled down around River Benue, their present inhabitant. This account is the most popular one upheld by many Tiv and non-Tiv scholars today. Tiv had four children, namely; Ichongo, Ipusu, Pôôr, and Anadenden. However, the last two died without children. Only Ipusu and Ichongo had many children. After the death of Tiv, a quarrel broke up between Ipusu, the first son and Ichongo, the second son, and both of them separated from each other. Baka (1991: Pp 17) explains this thus;

From South Africa, the Tiv sons had settled in the Congo terrains from where they moved as they look the mountainous Nigerian-Cameroon's border near Northward into their present sparsely forested Savannah land on either side of the Benue River.

This historical fact has now come to be accepted by historians that the Tiv are Bantu moreover, the semantic evolution of the word also denotes Bantu as a general name for the natives who came from South Africa, who are neither Hottentots, nor Bushmen but mainly the Zulus, Xhosas, Bsuto, Bachuana, Thongas (Shangaaans) of Delagba Bay region and the people who occupy what was formally called Southern Rhodesia-the Mashona (Shona) and their neighbours (Ushe, 2007). The Tiv people are traditionally farmers, hunters, and fishermen. Statistics gathered progressively from the recent census count of 2006 shows that the Tiv group constitutes approximately 3.5% of Nigeria's total population, and number about 6.5 million individuals throughout Nigeria and Cameroon (Ajayi, 1981).

The Tiv speak Zwa-Tiv, a language that is classified among the Bantoid group of Niger-Congo. The language is spoken by about 7 million people in Nigeria with a few speakers in Cameroon. Greenberg (1966) also classifies the Tiv language among the semi-Bantu group living in the north of Ogoja, Cross-River State in Nigeria which is another semi-Bantu area. The Tiv language, therefore, definitely possesses Bantu based grammatical features, which is closely related to Bantu speaking groups like the Afizere (Jarawal), Anaguta (Waraguta), Irigwe (Maiango) of the Jos Plateau highlands, Fali in Bauchi State, and Nyapa group in East Africa, Kataf, Bajju (Kaje), Ham (Deddu and Jaba), Chawai, Kagoro, Kagoma, Marwa, Nimzon, Kaningkom and other such groups of Southern Kaduna and the Afo in Keffi and Nassarawa State (Bohannon and Bohannon, 1953). The socio-political organization of the Tiv people is based on the lineage and kingship

system (Frazer, 1980). These joined them the formation of the social structures of four bases: The Tar (Land), Ityô (Clan) Ingyô (Kindred) or Council and the Ya (Compound), headed by the various heads, who were said to possess both political and spiritual powers.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To examine the factors that necessitate the need for the exhumation of the dead among the Tiv of North-Central Nigeria.
- Discuss the methodologies for exhuming a deceased person in Tiv society.
Examine the necromantic practice in Tiv society
- Explain how the communication between the dead spirits and necromancers take place among the Tiv people of North-Central Nigeria.
- Provide measures to address the current challenges faced by the exhumers and necromancers in bringing back the deceased and/or to communicate with them on behalf of the bereaved families.
- To highlight the roles of religious organizations, inculturation, and education in meeting the moral needs of Tiv people in modern times.

The overarching research questions for this study are as follows:

- What are the factors that necessitate the need for exhuming the dead in Tiv society?
- What approaches are used for exhuming a deceased person in Tiv society?
- What is the necromantic practice used in communicating with the spirits of the dead in Tiv society?
- How does the communication between the dead spirits and necromancers take place in Tiv society?
- What measures are used to address the current challenges faced by the exhumers and necromancers in reviving the dead or to communicate with them on behalf of the bereaved families in contemporary Tiv society?
- What roles do religious organizations, inculturation, and education play in meeting the needs of Tiv people in contemporary times?

Exhumation of the dead and necromantic practices of communication with the deceased spirits is common features in Tiv society. They are mysterious metaphysical beliefs and practices that could be found in almost all cultures in the world. Based on these facts, this study justifiably examines exhumation and necromancy among the Tiv people of Central Nigeria. With the advent of Western religions and civilization, the traditional practices of exhuming the dead and communicating with the spirits of the deceased have been resuscitated. These traditional practices are relegated by modern beliefs and practices, consequently, the Tiv traditional values concerning death and the rites of exhumation and necromancy are no longer held in high esteem by the Tiv people. This, however, has distorted the practices of exhumation and necromancy, leading to the eradication of African beliefs and values of death and after-life. This calls for critical examinations of exhumation and necromantic practices among the Tiv people.

African Worldview of Witchcraft

In African society, the phenomenon of witchcraft is a reality that no one can dispute. Mbiti (1975) affirmed that the whole atmosphere of African society is characterized by witchcraft activities and mystical forces which adequately promote or affect the lives of the people in the society. Witchcraft is the ability or power that may be inborn in a person or acquired in different ways is determined by

the nature of one's heart. Thus, many African cultures such as the Edo of Nigeria, Akan of Ghana, Tiv people of North-Central Nigeria, Igon people of Nasarawa, Nigeria, Igbo and Yoruba people of Nigeria, among others, have a strong belief that witchcraft is at the heart of African belief system. The scheme of African life and religion, therefore, revolves around this vital and mysterious power called witchcraft. African science of witchcraft is the practice or art of witches, black magic, sorcery, enchantment, and interaction with spirits of the dead as well as evil spirits in African society. Bohannan and Bohannan (1953) posit that witchcraft is a substance, power, and talent-filled with the ability to make mysterious things that are beyond human comprehension to happen.

Abraham (1940) viewed witchcraft as the enlargement of the ventricles of the heart with wisdom, intelligence, and cleverness. Downes (1971) postulates that witchcraft is a necessary evil power for a good life, but it does not function by itself. It exists in an active form in some people as potentials that are present in every society. This quality or power may be called occult wisdom that can be used for the governance of the society or destruction of the same. Those who possess the power of witchcraft to obtain personal benefits or to harm others use it with mischievous motives as an act of vengeance against their enemies. This view of meta-analysis debunks the ideal by some Western scholars that the African science of witchcraft is purely black magic which is unproductive in scientific and technological advancement. It has been argued by many scholars that unlike Western societies, the African science of witchcraft lacks innovative tendencies that can bring about development across the African continent. This led to the demystification of the practice of witchcraft in most African societies in contemporary time.

Consequently, traditional beliefs and practices such as exhumation of the dead, necromancy, and Nigromacy have been infiltrated with Western ideas in the wake of foreign religions in Afro-Tiv societies. The question many ask is: What is now left for the younger generation of Afro-Tiv to carry on? This paper attempts to answer this question and other related once by examining Tiv rites of exhuming dead persons and the practice of communicating with dead spirits as evidence of African science of witchcraft in modern Afro-Tiv society.

Understanding Exhumation Practice in Tiv Society

In Tiv society, the exhumation practice is not a common one, though the belief is so strong among the people. Mbiti (1969) asserts that Tiv exhumation practice has its foundation in the belief that the departed soul is revived and made to eat, walk and dance before they are slaughtered for feasting by witches and wizards (Ushe, 2010). This belief is also prevalent among other African cultures such as Cameroon, Benin Republic, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria and a lot of others, where the exhumed persons are used for feasting and selling, plantation, farming and labour forces (Ushe, 2010). In Cameroon and Republic of Benin for example, the exhumation practice is akin with what takes place in Haiti (Voodism) where the exhumed person is used for different purposes. In other countries such as Kenya, Tazania, Ghana, Egypt, Burkina Faso and Nigeria the exhumed person is used for farming, hard labours, feasting and selling to witches/wizards.

While in Lodagga, Abuluyia, Akamba, and Bosaga, the exhumed persons are believed to live in the community with human beings and they assist them in various ways. Exhumed persons take metaphysical forms and could interact with the living members of their families (Ikenga-Metuh, 1987). This belief is closer to the claims of epiphenomenalism which contends that the human body becomes a mere shadow at death and that an individual can cause the body to move but the shadow cannot cause the mental effect on the dead person to move (Ushe, 2005). The parallelism school of thought also argued that the spiritual soul can cause the physical body to move and not the converse.

Reasons for such an interpretation of causation are not clear but for them; it suffices to say that the spiritual soul causes the physical body to move (Mbiti, 1969).

The Tiv believed that the exhumed could come to their families for one reason or another and that they even requested to be helped in one way or the other, yet such instances are rare, and as matter of fact, they lack empirical evidence which one can hold on and carry out further investigation. For this reason, some Tiv scholars are of the view that exhumation practice is a mere cultural belief and not something that one can prove through scientific means. The exhumation practice in Tiv society can be performed through various channels. These include:

(i) Exhumation by the Use of Divination

Divination is a standardized process of learned discipline based on an expensive body of knowledge expressed literally during the interpretation of oracular message utilizing a fixed pod such as in the Yoruba Ifa, Odu verses or a more diffused body of esoteric knowledge in gathering information (Turner, 1961). The exhumers, usually in a naked state go to the grave of the victim and consult the gods for the cause of the deceased death. He also tries to find out the punishment allocated for the deceased person. If he is found to have lived a reckless and bad life during his stay on earth, then he is exhumed by the witches and wizards (*Mbatsav*) to pay for his sins (Torkula, 2001). The diviner employs some devices with the use of symbolic items shaken in the basket of divination to catch the dead spirits. Sometimes, the diviner uses the body as a channel of communication through spirit medium to operate on a mechanism that is self-explanatory to interpret the metaphorical messages which are mystical to mere human understanding (Ojua, 1962).

(ii) Exhumation through the Use of Hook and Chain

In this second method, the exhumer undresses as in the first method and goes to the grave of the dead person at night. He says some incantations and throws the chain and hook on the grave of the deceased person. The exhumers then goes into rhythmical prayers/incantations that are not decipherable even to him. He does this continuously until the grave of the deceased person is opened. The exhumers says the following incantations:

Mye iyol yam kpaa, ka mya iyol i orgen kpaa! Yan yam iyol yough kpaa jeneoo! In English translation, this statement means, I do eat human meat myself. I can eat another person's flesh. I am going to eat it now" (Dzurgba, 2006).

After the incantation, the exhumers now pulls out the corpse from the grave, making it embrace a tree. The Tiv people believe that if the exhumed corpse embraces a living person instead of a tree, it will harm him/her or another witch/wizard. It is also believed that the force at which the exhumers pulls the deceased person to a certain direction can make it difficult for the exhumed corpse to resist it. This is because without embracing a tree, the exhumed corpse might embrace the exhumers or members of *mbatsav* (witches and wizards) group which can result in death.

(iii) Exhumation by the Use of White Cock

The third method is usually carried out by the exhumers in the night at the graveside of the victim to be exhumed by witches/wizards (*Mbatsav*). The exhumers stands at a distance to the graveyard of the dead person and swings the white cock on top of the grave, after which he begins the grueling dance of wickedness (*Amar a Mbatsav*) saying:

Mo or u kumen indyer ka mpav inya gagherkeke! Mo or u kumen indyer ka mpav inya kera! Due sha ga! Due va shighki-ki-ki! Ggbengeme! This means, I the exhumers, I do break the grave! I can break it by force! Come out solemnly till you remain standing.

As the exhumers continue to sing, he walks around the grave on tip-toes (izwa angahar *nyeke*). The rhythms of the songs and dance are only heard and seen by those who possess similar witchcraft potentials (*tsav*). When the exhumers have finished singing the last two stanzas of the song, he then places the white cock on the actual grave of the dead person and swings it six times. The grave opens up and the exhumed corpse comes out (Downes, 1969).

(iv) Exhumation by the use of Verbal Threats

The fourth method involves the use of verbal threats in the form of a dialogue with the rejuvenated corpse. The exhumers enter into a dialogue with the dead person. The language used by the exhumers to threaten the corpse is as follows:

Bo ikyôônoo, m yila u! Bo ikyôônoo, m yila uve! Due vaooo. Due va! Due gayo Anyam Agulugu va ngunu! Due ase gayo Anyam Agulugu una koroughoo! This is translated into English as a dead person, I am calling you! A decayed corpse, I am calling you now, come up! Awake and appear oo! Awake and appear or else the dreaded lion will eat you up! (Drevers, 1969).

On hearing this threat, the dead person is forced to come out from the grave. After that, all the members of the *Mbatsav* (witches/wizards) rush to the stipulated ground for the meeting, taking nocturnal form of different animals and birds such as *Akume* (masquerade), *Ibaa* (nocturnal birds) *Ivungu* (Owl), *Ugber* (francolins) *Anema* (bats) *Ukpatema* (cats) *Aniwaam* (dogs) *Iji* (flies), *Iyo* (pythons) amongst others. They then begin to make noise as signs of omens indicating that *Mbatsav* (witches and wizards) are about to start the exhumation rites.

(v) Exhumation through the Use of Tunnel

The fifth method implies the use of tunnels and it is mostly used if the deceased was buried in a coffin/casket or embalmed. Sometimes, instead of using hook, chain, verbal threats and white cock, the exhumers employ the use of nocturnal animals and birds such as *Ivungu* (Abyssinian spotted owl), *Akiki* (pear-spotted owl), *Kpile* (bold owl), *Misaan* (African scops), *Gbev* (standard winged nightjar) and *Bagu* (monkey) in the exhumation process. These animals and birds are traditionally believed to be charged with mystical powers. Thus, the exhumers use them to carry out the exhumation task in Tiv society. The Tiv, unlike other African cultures, try to establish the fact that the dead are exhumed both physically and spiritually. The spiritual dimension does not interfere with the essence, which is the pure spirit (*or kpoughkpough*) of the deceased individual. But it rather affects the body or psychosomatic aspects (*ikpa or*) of the individual (Egwu, 2001).

The exhumed individual becomes automated or incapable of any emotions. In other words, he/she becomes what could be called *Zombie* whose body is made to move only by magically induced strategies got from some African and Caribbean religions. And because the exhumed corpse can now act as *Zombie* very well, he/she is used for devilish purposes such as to cause nightmares or is used for labour force in the farms, plantations and so forth. The physical aspect of the deceased individual has to do with the somatic aspects of the person (the body). This is the aspect of the deceased person that is believed to be subjected to capital punishment and torture and can even be eaten or used for ritual purposes. With the advent of Christianity and its teachings on the resurrection, the belief in the exhumation of the dead has been adulterated and many Christians today deny the reality of the exhumation of the dead (Fortune, 1931).

Those who hold such views postulate that there is no empirical evidence to prove that witches and wizards (*Mbatsav*) have such powers ascribed to them. And as far as Christianity is concerned, exhumation is a useless pastime affair that at most instigates fracas and tension in the community. So, when the African says that a dead person is exhumed, he/she unconsciously shows that Africans are incapable of understanding what life-after-death means. The one thing to be noted here is that whether the dead are exhumed in the real sense of the word or not; whether the dead are exhumed in physical or spiritual sense, for the Tiv, the exhumation of the dead are an exoteric and metaphysical practices that cannot be dismissed for lack of empirical evidence or mere wave of hand. It has nothing to do with the doctrinal teachings or beliefs of Christianity about the dead or dying (Gajir, 1992).

Communication with Spirits of the Dead in Tiv Society

Communication with the dead spirits popularly called "Necromancy" is the pretended art of divination through which the dead are consulted or communicated within Tiv society (Abeghe, 1982). This practice is often confused in public minds with -Nigermancyll (the art of divination through the ancient Egyptian method of crying in black-colored water. With the increasing disbelief in the possibilities of magic, necromancy has been applied to almost every form of divination arts or black arts, but have unfortunately been cast aside in the modern rush for western religions (Christianity and Islam). The best-known case of necromancy in the history of the Christian world is the woman of Endor, which is referred to in the Holy Bible as the -Witch of Endorll (I Sam. 28:7- 25).

Even though the woman was called a witch of Endorll, she was certainly not a witch as the entire incident deals with the practice of necromancy. This is because witches are not necromancers (Those who specialize in communicating with the dead spirits). Thus, King Saul who decided to consult the woman of Endor might have reasons for visiting her. According to 1 Sam. 28:7-8; and Chronicles 10:13, King Saul visited the witch of Endor for two reasons: First, the woman had a familiar spirit and was directly in opposition to the Bible-based legal code of ancient Israel, which states that any man or woman who had a familiar spirit should be put to death by stoning. Second, King Saul knew the consequences of asking for the counsel of one who had a familiar spirit.

King Saul knew that he would have to visit the woman (necromancer), even though Saul was the king of his nation, he had prepared to humble himself to visit the woman who had a familiar spirit to obtain some information from her (1 Sam. 28:8). Saul disguised himself and went to visit the woman so that no one except those in his party would know that he was consulting a necromancer. This act led to the death of King Saul. The practice of necromancy is forbidden by almost every religion but the real practice of magic seems to be an art unique to people who practiced it. The practice of necromancy presupposes that, spirits of the dead are accessible to the living, and have sufficient interests in the affairs of the living in assisting them in their daily lives (Mbiti, 1973).

The Tiv belief that the dead spirits are accessible to the living members is strongly held by many other primitive cultures in the world. However, this belief is fast changing in recent times and the need for necromantic practice is gradually facing out in many societies, including Tiv people of North-Central Nigeria. As a result of the advent of western civilization and advancement in science, many indigenous practices relating to necromantic practices have been infiltrated or completely eradicated in the wake of Christianity and Islamic influence in Tiv society. The big question many ask is: what is now left for the younger generations to follow?

Ways of Communicating with the Spirits of the Dead in Tiv Society

Communicating with the spirits of the dead in Tiv Society takes different ways. These include Necromantic

practice, remembrance of the dead, incantations, the use of trance mediums, the performance of *timbe mku* rites and the use of Ouija boards (Bohannan and Bohannan 1966). The Tiv Necromancy involves speaking with the dead to obtain information which is vital for the growth of the family living members in the society.

The necromancer summons spirits of dead people to speak with, by using spirits of the dead to perform works at the request of the family living members (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1953). These spirits can travel anywhere in the world without being seen by most people. In most parts of Tiv society, the dead spirits are more comfortable traveling in areas where they had been while they were alive. The dead spirits are also consulted through remembrance and respect accorded to them. Daily prayers are offered to the –living dead|| assuring them to assist and intercede on behalf of the living family members just as the saints and martyrs of the Christian church (Downes, 1971). The Tiv people venerate them and pour libations on their graves in moments of needs, asking them for help and guidance. Others consult them for progress in their lives (Idyorough, 1998). These –living- dead|| or ancestors maintain an interest in the life of those who are their descendants, especially those whom they knew and loved when they were alive. The implied interest of the departed persons in their family is one of the reasons for the consultation of the ancestors or dead spirits in primitive societies, including the Tiv people. Special offerings and prayers are made to them and libations are poured at their shrines in the homes as a mark of honour by their family members. The dead spirits are consulted through incantations by the diviners on behalf of the society, asking for their assistance and seeking protection in moments of calamities. Through divination, the diviners in trance mediumship enter a semi-hypnotic trance state and allow a spirit to speak through them. This is usually the kind of mediumship practiced in the spiritualist churches and not a form of necromancy because true spiritualist mediums have no control over what is happening to them.

The mediums are only the passive vehicles that the spirits use to give voice to their own words. True trance mediums are usually not those who operate under the façades of responsibility in the spiritualist churches, giving reassuring messages to anxious relatives who consult them but spew forth seemingly endless realms of channeled information. But they are sincere and dedicated mediums of the specialist movement or magico-religious practices which involve mediumship. This form of mediumship has become a respectable form of practice in many cultures of Africa, and other parts of the world, including the Tiv people. Communication with the dead spirits through the use of *Ouija* Boards gives valuable information only when the particular spirit who is speaking through the *Ouija* Board" can provide the information sought.

The quality of spirit attracted to the –*Ouija* Board|| depends not only upon the sincerity of the people who are operating the board, but their abilities to contact a sincere and knowledgeable spirit. The "Ouija Board" is an object which provides information to those using it on how the spirits communicate and reveal their messages to the necromancers. This practice of communication with dead spirits through the use of *Ouija* Board is akin to the performance of *Timbe mku* rites in Tiv society, whereby the necromancer uses the –*Akombo* (Magical forces) rituals to consult the gods on behalf of the people. Many dead spirits can see into the future, depending on the inner ability of the spiritual elevation of the individual spirit. Thus, a necromancer must be determined to use his discretion and discrimination in accepting information from a spirit about his or her supposed powers and abilities.

There are vicious or trickster spirits that could play tricks to the convenience of the necromancers or claim to have real powers, while their efforts can fail when they are put to the test. The necromancer must be in control of the spirit's possession from happening. This makes communication with dead spirits important for various reasons to obtain information that is unknown by the bereaved families in Tiv society. The necromancer summoned the dead spirits and speaks with them through different channels to obtain information that is important for the growth of their living family members. These include three steps of communication:

Telling the dead spirits what it is that you want them to find out

The spirits find out what you want to know and then tell you.

You reward the spirits for doing the work of consultation for you.

These three steps must always be followed in the same sequence or order either in communicating with the dead spirits or banishing them; telling the dead spirits to leave the place it has been found and releasing those spirits that are considered to be lost, as well as those dead spirits that have used their vital energy or those spirits that have reached the point of extinction, passing out of their astral being.

The Processes of Communicating and Exorcising the Dead Spirits in Tiv Society

The process of communication with the dead spirits in most cases starts with arranging the paraphernalia associated with the necromantic practice. This follows placing the photograph of not more than three dead ancestors or family members in separate shrines so that there can be plenty of rooms for each of the dead spirits. Then a small white rice bowl is placed in front of each space of the dead spirit and mark to indicate which of the spirit it belongs to (astral perception).

This should be done to avoid confusing the spirits or cause them to quarrel, in case the bowls have interchanged. Then placed the food that should be given to each of the dead spirits in his or her bowl. After that, light a white candle, while making a silent incantation (prayer) to the supreme deity to reveal the hidden information through the dead spirits and to grant your request. Then, put water and food at the dead person's grave. In case, the departed ancestor was a smoker of tobacco and consumer of alcohol, place the two items on top of his or her grave as gifts for refreshment.

These gifts facilitate the cordial relationship with the departed ancestors and speed the process of communication with the necromancer. Exorcising the dead spirits is a difficult and complex task in Tiv Society. This is because there is no acceptable way of dismantling the spirits. Dead spirits can be dangerous and should be driven away from every human society. Seven precautions can help to reduce the potentials for dead spirits' influence in your society. These include; confusing the spirits of the dead; weakening the vital force of the spirits; discouraging the dead spirits by using the sacramental such as burning incense (Sandalwood), frankincense, benzoin and myrrh in the house; as well as the use of dragon blood, blessed water and cleaning of the house.

Effects of Exhumation of the Dead and Necromantic Practice on Tiv Society

When one considers the innumerable writings on the effects of exhumation and necromancy on the society, the overwhelming condemnation of them as products of utterly unrealities, phantom, fantasy or illusion becomes doubtful. There is little or no wonder that Iortyom (2000) postulates that even now, annals on whether exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice exist have become encyclopedic in bulk and lunatic plenary. But, when one comes across recent works where the authors categorically state that the objective reality of the effects of exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice, then the feeling of wonder is resuscitated. The logical impossibility of the conjoined truth of the contradictory positions makes one think that there is something not yet understood, or to be clarified.

According to Mbiti (1969), the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice, especially among the Tiv people attached much significance to indigenous Religion and Culture. These religious beliefs play significance roles in sustaining the growth of Tiv indigenous Religion and practices. The belief in exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice which has their basis in the strong belief that there is -after-life and that those who departed from this earthly life in consequence of the phenomenon called

-death have gone to live in another world has shown the reality of both exhumation and necromancy in Nigerian Society. As far as the Tiv people are concerned, there is no single soul that does not pass from one embodiment to another in an endless chain of existence.

This means that the dead are not dead, but are in the state of personal immortality. And since the departed souls are now the -living dead, they are exhumed by the *Mbatsav* (witches and wizards) and can be communicated with or consulted by the living family members for different purposes. This belief in the "afterlife" and continuous existence after death is the genesis of the Tiv people's belief in the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice in Tiv society.

Methodology

This study adopts a multi-dimensional approach that makes use of the questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, observation, and secondary sources. The questionnaires were distributed to 30,000 participants drawn from the 14 Local Government Areas of Tiv land of Benue State with an estimated population of 6,000,000 people. 12 Local Government Areas were selected out of the 14 Local Government Areas covering Tivland, using random sampling. The selected Local Government Areas represent the two political zoning systems in Tiv land (Zone A and Zone B). They include: Makurdi 3,008, Gboko 3,000, Kwande 3,034, Vandeikya 3,523, Katsina-Ala 3,072, Ushongo 3,019, Tarkaa 1,635, Ukum 2,711, Logo 1,700, Gwer West 1,802, Guma 2,009 and Konshisha 1,489. All these add up to a total of 30,000 interviews representing 6,000,000 people in Tiv land.

The samples consist of both males and females. Out of the 30,000 questionnaires administered, 6000 were not returned. Hence, only 24,000 participants' questionnaires returned were used for the final analysis. The instruments used in the study were validated by the researcher to elicit responses on the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practices among the Tiv people of North-Central Nigeria. The exhumation of the dead necromantic practice had four-forced choice items. Rear and Parker (2005) recommend that the development of a survey should include different approaches to establish a construct of variables to be tested. These variables presented in tables 1 and 2 were derived from the research questions at the end of the sampling period, which lasted for six weeks.

Table 1: Data collection overview

S/N	State	Sample size	Survey dates	Response rate %	Data collection institution
1.	Makurdi	3,008	January 2019	93	WHO, Nigeria
2.	Gboko	3,000	February 2019	88	UNICEF, Nigeria
3.	Kwande	3,034	March 2019	80	WHO, Nigeria
4.	Vandeikya	3,523	April 2019	61	UNICEF, Nigeria
5.	Katsina-Ala	3,072,	October 2018	83	MSF, Nigeria
6.	Ushongo	3,019	November 2018	73	WHO, Nigeria
7.	Tarkaa	1,635	December 2018	78	CBN, Nigeria
8.	Ukum Logo	2,711	May 2017	62	MSF, Nigeria
9.	Gwer West	1,700	August 2017	60	UNICEF, Nigeria
10	Guma	1,802	June 2016	58	NUT, Nigeria
11	Konshisha	2,009	July 2016	52	NUC, Nigeria
12		1,489	September 2018	48	WB, Nigeria

Source: Author's Field Work, 2019

Table 2: Respondents Demographic Characteristic (%)

S/No	Sample Characteristics	Makurdi	Gboko	Kwande	Vandeikya	Katsina-Ala	Ushongo	Tarkaa	Ukum	Logo	Gwer-West	Guma	Konshisha
1.	Mean age	35	39	34	42	35	44	41	38	32	46	56	36
2.	Male	51	48	50	53	50	59	45	44	38	56	43	34
3.	Uni. Edu.	4	17	17	13	17	28	17	13	16	14	28	16
4.	Married	76	71	64	70	74	50	63	69	71	68	73	54
Religion													
1.	Christianity	9	76	50	23	96	86	92	91	86	92	98	49
2.	Islamic	96	54	50	92	8	40	8.6	29	18	20	40	52
3.	ATR	15	24	18	8	6	27	9	10	23	25	42	41

Source: Author's Field Work, 2019

Interpretation of Results

Research Question 1: Are exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice myth or reality in Tiv society?

The analysis of data obtained through questionnaires and face-to-face interviews has indicated that these phenomena are facts and not cultural fabrications in Tiv society. The burgeoning literature on exhumation and necromancy reveals that these beliefs were prevalent in pre-literate Tiv society and they continue to exist in modern times. As shown in Table 1 below,

Table 1: Distribution of answers given to the question of whether exhumation and necromantic practices are reality or myth in Tiv society.

SN	Forced-choice items	Respondents	Response Rate %
1	Reality	200	80
2	Myth	40	20
	Total	240	100

Source: Modified from Author's fieldwork, 2019.

Research Question 2: What is the perception of respondents on the effects of exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice on Tiv society?

Table 2: Respondents' perceptions of the effects of exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice on Tiv society

The analysis of the data in table 2 has indicated that the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice has great effects on the Tiv society as shown below:

S/N	The effects of exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice on Tiv society	Perceptions of respondents' rate %
1	Positive effects	180
2	Negative effects	60
	Total	240

Source: modified from Author's fieldwork, 2019.

Table 2 is the presentation of respondents' perceptions of the effects of the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice on Tiv society. The table indicates that the phenomenon has both positive and negative effects on Tiv society. About 180 respondents think that exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice has negative effects, while 60 respondents subscribed to the view that exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice has negative Effects on Tiv society.

The Analysis of Data

The data obtained by administering the three instruments were carefully analyzed one after the other, using a qualitative approach to validate and elicit responses that cover questions on the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice among the Tiv people of North-Central Nigeria.

Discussion and Results

Exhumation and necromancy are metaphysical practices that have their roots in the belief of the afterlife. They are mystical acts of reviving or bringing back a deceased corpse by the *Mbatsav* (witches and wizards) and communicating with the dead spirits through different channels to obtained information. Exhumation and necromancy are terms often used interchangeably. Whereas exhumation refers to the art of bringing back or reviving corpse to life by the *Mbatsav* (witches and wizards) to be used for different purposes, necromancy denotes the arts of communicating with dead spirits that are in the *sasa* (temporal world) to ask them for assistance by the living family members. We discovered during the interviews that both exhumation and necromantic practices are prevalence features of Tiv indigenous religion. They are facts that cannot be disputed because Tiv people feel the presence of the departed ancestors who are believed to influence the affairs of the society, and could be consulted in moments of crisis or needs.

Thus, in Tiv religious thoughts, death is not the end but a continuation of existence in the hereafter. This belief has its foundation in the Tiv notion of time that is used to explain in classical sense exhumation and necromantic practices in Tiv society. There are many methods of exhuming a corpse in Tiv society. These include Exhumation through the use of divination, exhumation through the use of the hook, exhumation through the use of white cock, exhumation through the use of verbal threats and exhumation through the use of the tunnel. The most complex of all these methods of exhuming the corpse is the last one. This method is used by the *Mbatsav* (witches and wizards) in modern times. It is important to quickly chip in that all the exhumed corpses must be allowed to dance before being slaughtered for feasting or sold out by the *Mbatsav* (witches and wizards) for ritualism.

The dance ends with the sharing of human flesh after which all the members depart mystically or transform themselves into nocturnal animals to depart to their respective destinations/homes. We observed that communication with the dead spirits in the Tiv society takes place in the threefold level. These include: Telling the dead spirits what you want them to reveal to you the unknown information that you want to find out; the spirits find out what you would like to know, and then you reward the spirits for doing the work of consultation for you. There are also three steps of banishing the dead spirits that are becoming a nuisance to the community. These include confusing the dead spirits, weakening the vital force of the spirits and discouraging the dead spirits by using the sacramentals such as burning incense (sandalwood), frankincense, myrrh, dragon's blood, and blessed water, and cleaning the house.

Though communicating with the dead spirits and exhumation of the dead are realities and not cultural fabrications in Tiv society, they can rarely be seen or demonstrated empirically for everyone to see. This shows that the facts of the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice cannot be disputed on the grounds of empirical proofs. The spiritual dimension does not interfere with the essence, which is the pure spirit of the individual, but instead affects the psychosomatic aspects of the individual. The exhumed dead person becomes automated; that is, someone who is incapable of any emotion or what could be called -Zombiell, whose body is made to move or talk only by magically, induced strategies got from some African and Caribbean religions. And because the exhumed corpse can now act as "Zombie" very well, it can be used for devilish purposes such as to cause a nightmare.

Not all dead are exhumed and consulted in Tiv society. Only those that meet the requirements of ancestorship are consulted by their living members. Those killed by the *Mbatsav* (witches and wizards) or died as a result of too much possession of bad witchcraft (tsav), accidental death, deadly sicknesses, and sexual immortality are not exhumed or consulted by their living members in Tiv society. This indicates that the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practices are metaphysical phenomena that cannot be dismissed by the waving of hands due to their complex and mystical nature.

Conclusion

From the foregone discussion, it is seen that the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice are metaphysical phenomena that are not experienced by everybody, except those who are exhumers and necromancers. Despite the invasion of western civilization and cultural change in Tiv society, the practices of exhuming the corpse and communicating with the dead spirits have come to stay. The Tiv people are eager to uncover the mystery behind the exhumation of the dead and how to communicate with the dead spirits. Their anxiety and eagerness to unveil these mystical acts have helped the process of inculturation, contextualization, and refinement of the practices that seems not

to be in line with Christian oriented values, norms, customs and traditions in contemporary Tiv society. With regards to these facts, the paper recommends as follows:

Adequate steps should be taken by Tiv traditionalists to address the problem of the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practice in Tiv society.

Adequate education should be given to people on the rites of exhuming the dead and communicating with the dead spirits.

There is a need for inculturation and contextualization of the negative aspects of exhumation and necromancy in Tiv society.

There should be re-orientation on Tiv philosophy of life which hinges on the belief in *tsav* (witchcraft), *Akombo* (Magical forces) and *swem* (Tiv Oath of justice).

The enlightenment campaign should be made against misrepresentation and misconception of Tiv cultural beliefs in the exhumation of the dead and necromantic practices which are often exaggerated by non-Tiv that the Tiv can make dead people walk to their graves carrying their coffins for second- burial rituals.

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