

**INFLUENCE OF CEREMONIES ON AGRICULTURAL AND
ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES IN TIVLAND, BENUE STATE.**

BY

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Abstract

The study sought to identify Influence of Ceremonies on Agricultural and Entrepreneurial Activities in Benue state. A questionnaire survey design approach was employed for the study. The population for the study was 255 respondents, comprising 230 and 25 extension agents. A sample of 155 was drawn from the population using Yaro Yamene's formula. The total of 25 extension agents and 130 farmers formed part of the subjects. Data for the study was collected using structured questionnaire titled Tiv Ceremonies and Agriculture questionnaire (TCAQ). The instrument was validated by 3 experts. Cronbach Alpha method of reliability was used to establish reliability coefficient of 0.86. The researchers personally administered the questionnaire on the respondents. Data for the study was analyzed using mean to answer research questions and t-test was used to test the null hypothesis. Findings of the study revealed that marriage, death/burial and cults are the most observed ceremonies. Furthermore, the high financial and material involvements in celebrations of these ceremonies bring about food insecurity, poverty to the community. The study therefore recommended the cutting down of expenses on marriage; death/burials, among others.

Keywords: Culture, ceremonies, agriculture, farmer, entrepreneurship.

Background of the Study

The Tiv people of central Nigeria are agrarian and well recognized for farming. They are involved in the production of root/tuber crops (yam, cassava, and potato) grains (guinea corn, millet, rice, and maize) and rearing of animals (zebu cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and poultry). Tiv people are into farming for over 200 years. Despite practicing agriculture for a long time, the hoe (*digging stick* latter replaced with the present hoe with wooden handle and iron

blade) and machete that are characterized by high energy waste, high labour requirements and long working hours have remained the major tools for farm operations in the area (Torkula, 2004). In spite of scientific and technological inventions in farm machinery/implement for both on farm and off-farm operations, Tiv farmers seem not to have embraced these innovations, unlike their counterparts in USA, where agriculture has assumed sophistication in food crop and animal

production and farming now is a business (Ricketts and Ricketts, 2009). Agriculture is thus defined as the science or practice of cultivation of land for crop production and animal rearing (Agishi, 2003). It plays important role in the provision of food, provision wealth, employment and supply of raw materials to industries among others. Agriculture is the largest employer of labour and is practiced on subsistence and commercial or large scale by farmers in Tivland.

A farmer is therefore an individual who engages in the rearing of animals or production of crops for his personal use or for commerce (Iwena, 2002). In the state, agricultural extension agents actively train and encourage farmers on skills and entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture for profit maximization and self reliance. An agricultural extension agent is a trained person or a professional who collects innovative farming ideas and techniques from research institutes and disseminates to farmers (Are, Igbokwe, Asadu, and Bawa, 2010). Notable among his duties include conducting and organizing training for farmers, teaching of improved farming practices and demonstrating of innovations to farmers. Despite the role of agricultural extension agents in training/ encouraging farmers, agriculture is still practiced at subsistence level.

One begins to ponder why agriculture in Tivland is still at subsistence level even after centuries of farming, thus calling for urgent analysis of the Tiv culture which has impacted negative influence its economy

(Ikegh, 2007). Culture is defined as a way of life of a people, the collection of ideas, habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). Culture embraces language, food, arte fact, dressing, songs/dances, ceremonies and religion. There is no doubt that ceremonies are the component parts of Tivculture. A ceremony is thus a formal act or custom or tradition performed in observation of an event or anniversary (Collins English Dictionary, 2003). In traditional Tiv culture, burial ceremony *ku-iin*, marriage ceremony *Kwase-u-eren*, cults *akombo*, songs/dances ceremonies *amar-a-mirin*, *ivom-i-mirin*, *amo-a-mirin*, are celebrated. For the purpose of this paper, emphasis is placed on burials, marriage, cults and songs/dancing ceremonies.

These ceremonies are characterized by libation, sacrifices (animal and human beings), incantations, brewing of local beer and cash donation/payment of money. To a traditional Tivman, some of these ceremonies help in removing disastrous evil and prevent it from causing harm on the people. *Ígbyecult* for example helps in protecting the farm against thieves and witches/wizards. *Ibiamegh/poor* (the highest cult in Tivland) is purported to bring about good luck and prosperity (Torkula, 2004; and Iyortyom, 2008, 1976). Dancing/singing ceremonies (*amar-a-wan*), cement cordial relationship between families. Also, ceremonies create an avenue for the display of wealth among age grades and kinsmen, in order to be accorded respect (Torkula, 2004). To the Tivman,

these ceremonies play significant role in their society hence they are observed.

The manner in which a contemporary Tivman observe these ceremonies differ from the pre-colonial era. Death/burial being one of the most celebrated ceremonies today was a moment of deep sadness, grief, sorrow, pains, agony and anguish (Dzurgba, 2011). Burials (*ku-iin*) were not characterized by affluence. Sadly today, burials have completely taken a different dimension (Mdah, 2005). It is now characterized by affluence, merriment and show-off, costing hundreds of thousands or millions of naira's to bury the corpse that could have been used to improve agriculture. The amount well enough to have turned around agriculture, is wasted in the name of a befitting burial to deceased persons that never enjoyed attention from their relatives and had to die in misery. Could this be responsible for poverty in Tivland, as opined by Ikegh,(2007)? The same story is told of marriage ceremoniessince the abolition of exchange marriage (*yam-ishe*) in 1927, and the introduction of money-economy into marriage. (Makar, 1994). Huge sums of money and material resources are used for marriage ceremonies with little or nothing left for investment in farming. This is blamed on the influence of Christianity and western education on Tiv culture (Torkula, 2004). The introduction of affluence in church-wedding just as at burials in Tivland threw young couples into debt paid over a long period of time instead of saving part of the sum for agricultural investments.

The prestige accorded to masters of cults *akombo* and high cost of initiation into mastery of cults is so outrageous (money, animals and human sacrifice) without any thought given to agriculture. The *ibiamegh/ poor* and *imborivungu*-made of human tibia bone, cost not just money/animals but human lives as well (Torkula, 2004). Similarly, animals that should have been used for breeding are wasted. Although scholars on Tiv culture-Torkula (2004), Wegh (1998) asserted that *Ibiamegh-poor* brings about good luck, wealth and prosperity (fertility in women, bumper harvest, and increase in livestock productivity). How can agriculture be accorded proper attention when cultural beliefs are firmly rooted in the minds of the people that human sacrifice to *akombo* brings about fertility in human, livestock and soil? It is a mere illusion, ignorance, and error as improved farming systems, improved animal husbandry, proper soil management and maintenance is capable of enhancing bumper harvest, and animal productivity. It therefore behoves on Tiv farmers to embrace and adopt scientific methods of agriculture rather than *akombo* for a more promising future.

Dances/singing ceremonies *amar-a-awan, imo-i- mirin/ivom-i-mirin* involve a lot of money, foods, animals and are time consuming. Consequent upon this, Tiv farmers perpetually live in poverty and cannot afford entrepreneurial agriculture. Agriculture today is viewed beyond mere production of food but is viewed from a business perspective towards

profit making. Entrepreneurship is a purposeful activity of an individual or group of associated individuals undertaking to initiate, maintain or aggrandise profit by production or distribution of economic goods and services (Ottih, 2011). Entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture include buying, storing, packaging, warehousing, sorting, processing, selling, merchandizing, insuring, and gathering market information which can avail the farmer the exclusive right to set prices, determine production level, control inventory according to the market and constantly seeks ways to provide better products, improve profit and to meet the needs of his customers (Ricketts and Ricketts 2009). To the contrary, farmers in Tivland lack entrepreneurial skills that would have transformed agriculture into a high profit-making business. This is evident in the fact that, farmers in this part of the world lack the bargaining power to negotiate good prices on their products. They are price takers hence prices on agricultural produce are rather determined by buyers (David, 2012). Entrepreneurial agriculture in Tivland is constrained by lack of capital, lack of fertilizers, agrochemicals and labour/farmhands, lack of vision among various other constraints as noted by Odudu (2014). What is now urgently required of Tiv-farmers is to reconsider the extent to which human and material resources are spent on unproductive ventures at the expense of agriculture and entrepreneurial activities.

Statement of the Problem

There is an urgent need for the transformation of Tiv economy from subsistence agriculture to commercial farming with an intention of addressing poverty and under development in Tivland. But personal observation and empirical evidence has however shown that realization of this will be a mirage because greater part of Tiv economy is recklessly squandered on non-profitable ceremonies at the detriment of agriculture (Ikyegh, 2007; and Ushie, 2010). This implies that agriculture cannot be mechanized, there will be continuous reliance on crude tools, food insecurity and poverty in Tiv-land. Spurred by this, the study investigates into influence of Ceremonies on Agricultural and Entrepreneurial Activities of Farmers in Tivland, Benue State.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to identify Influence of Ceremonies on Agricultural and Entrepreneurial Activities of Farmers in Tivland, Benue State. Specifically, the study identified;

1. Ceremonies that are most observed by farmers in Benue State.
2. Influence of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions;

1. What are the ceremonies that are most observed by farmers in Benue State?

2. What is the impact of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State?

Research Hypothesis

The study tested the null hypothesis below;

1. Farmers and extension agents do not significantly differ in their opinion on the impact of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Nyiev community of Makurdi local government, Benue State. Questionnaire survey design was adopted for the study, because the instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. The population for the study was 255 respondents made up of 230 farmers and 25 extension agents. A sample of 155 was drawn from the population using Yaro Yamene's formula. 130 farmers and all the 25 extension agents were sampled. This is because two groups formed part of the respondents.

The study was guided by two research questions and a null hypothesis. The instrument used was structured questionnaire titled "Tiv Ceremonies and Agriculture Questionnaire (TCAQ)". A 15 item questionnaire with 4 points response options of Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly disagree (1) was developed in line with literature reviewed

and used for data collection. The instrument was validated by 3 experts, two lecturers from the department of Agricultural Education, University of Agriculture, Makurdi and one Extension Agent for content and face validity. Corrections and observations made by experts were used in the final production of the questionnaire. The instrument was trial tested in Gboko local government area of Benue state, Cronbach Alpha method of reliability test was used to establish the reliability coefficient of 0.78. The questionnaire was divided into two parts, where farmers responded to the first part, while both the extension agents and farmers responded to part two of the instrument.

The researchers personally administered the questionnaire on the subjects to respond to the items. A total of 155 copies of questionnaire were administered on the respondents (farmers and extension agents) and all copies of the questionnaire were retrieved after responding to them. The data collected were analyzed using means to answer research questions and t-test analysis to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The bench mark of 2.50 was used to determine the level of acceptance or otherwise rejection for each item. Any item with a mean score equal or above the bench mark was accepted, while any item with mean score below was rejected.

Data Presentation

The results for the study were obtained from the data collected on research questions and analyzed. The data are presented below;

Research question 1: What are the ceremonies that are most observed by farmers in Benue State?

Table 1: The mean rating of responses of farmers on ceremonies that are observed most, Benue State (N=130).

S/no.	Item statement	X	SD	Remark
1.	Marriage (traditional and church).	3.68	0.82	accepted
2.	Death/burial (<i>ku-iin</i>).	3.49	0.95	accepted
3.	Cults (<i>akombo</i>).	3.45	0.98	accepted
4.	Singing/dancing (<i>imo-i-gberen</i> or <i>amar</i>).	3.37	1.12	accepted
5.	New yam festival (<i>iyol mbihev</i>).	1.68	1.10	rejected
6.	Naming (<i>iti-iin</i>).	2.28	0.78	rejected
7.	<i>Kwagh-hir</i> festival (puppet theatre).	3.20	1.06	accepted

X=mean, SD=standard deviation, N=number of respondents-farmers.

The data presented in table 1 revealed that five items had their mean values ranged from 3.20 to 3.68. This showed that the mean values were above the bench mark of 2.50. This indicated that the five items are ceremonies that are most observed by

farmers in Benue state. The standard deviation of responses of respondents on the five items ranged from 0.82 to 1.12 indicating that the respondents were not far from one another in their responses.

Research question 2: What is the impact of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State?

Table 2: The Mean Rating of Responses farmers and extension agents on the impact of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State(N₁=130, N₂=25).

S N	Item statement	X ₁	SD	X ₂	SD	X _G	SD _G	Remarks
		1	2	2	2			
1.	Spend money lavishly and left with nothing for agriculture.	3.17	0.29	3.13	1.22	3.15	0.76	accepted
2.	Render families poor especially farmers.	3.44	0.96	3.53	0.69	3.49	0.83	accepted
3.	Bring about food insecurity as much food is wasted during ceremonies e.g. death/burial, that would have been used by the family for a long period of time.	3.72	0.45	3.38	1.13	3.55	0.79	accepted
4.	Sacrifice human beings/animals to ceremonies e.g. <i>Ibiamegh/poor,Imb</i>	3.72	0.72	3.55	0.88	3.64	0.80	accepted

	<i>orivungu</i> at the expense of agriculture.								
5.	Spend many hours on ceremonies without giving enough attention to farm work.	3.72	0.34	3.02	1.78	3.37	1.06	accepted	
6.	Protect farm against witches/wizards and thieves.	3.10	0.65	2.12	1.22	2.61	0.94	accepted	
7.	Bring about bumper harvest and productivity in animals.	3.00	0.65	2.12	0.22	2.56	0.44	accepted	
8.	Higher prices are obtained on farm produce.	2.52	0.69	2.34	0.92	2.43	0.81	rejected	

X_1, SD_1 and N_1 = Mean, standard deviation and number offarmers. X_2, SD_2 and N_2 = Mean, standard deviation and number of extension agents. X_G, SD_G =grand mean and standard deviation of farmers and extension agents.

The data presented in table 2 revealed that seven items had their grand mean values ranged from 2.56 to 3.64 .This showed that the mean values were above the bench mark of 2.50. This was an indicated that the seven items are the impact of ceremonies on

agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State. The grand standard deviation of responses of respondents on the seven items ranged from 0.44 to 0.94 indicated that the respondents were not far from one another in their responses.

Research hypothesis: Farmers and extension agents do not significantly differ in their opinion on the impact of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State.

Table 3: T-test results of mean responses of farmers and extension agents on the impact of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State.

	N	X	SD	Sig.	df	t-cal.	t-cri.	decision
farmers	130	3.30	0.59	0.05	153	1.92	1.64	rejected
extension agents	25	2.90	1.01					

Table 3 showed that t-value of responses of farmers and extension agents on the impact of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State.A t-calculated value of 1.92 was greater than the t-critical value of 1.64 at 0.05 level of significance at degree of freedom of 153.This indicated that the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. This implied that farmers and extension agents significantly

differ in their opinion on the impact of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State.

Discussion of Results

The result of the study in table 1 revealed that marriage, burial/death, cults, singing/dancing, and kwaghbir festival are

ceremonies that are most observed by farmers in Benue state. This finding is consistent with the position of Ikegh (2007); Torkula (2004) and Iyortyom (2008) on ceremonies that are commonly observed among the Tiv people of central Nigeria.

The result in table 2 revealed that there are seven impacts of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State. These impacts on agriculture include; Spend money lavishly on ceremonies and left with nothing for agriculture, render families poor especially farmers, bring about food insecurity as much food is wasted during ceremonies, spend many hours on ceremonies without giving enough attention to farm work are in accordance with Ushe (2010), Ikeyh (2007); Dzurgha (2011); and Mdah (2005) who decried that poverty and food insecurity in Tivland due to lavish spending on ceremonies (especially marriage and burial).

The finding in table 3 showed that the t-calculated value of 1.92 was greater than t-critical value of 1.64 at 0.05 level of significance at the degree of freedom of 153. This indicated that there was a significant difference in the responses farmers and extension agents on the impact of ceremonies on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in Benue State. This is in consonance with Are, Igbokwe, Asadu, and Bawa (2010) and Odudu, (2014) who asserted that extension agents are professionals and more

educated/awareness than farmers on profitable farming.

Conclusion

It is evident that ceremonies e.g. marriage, death/burials, cults and others are a component part of Tiv culture. In the course of celebrating these ceremonies so much time and resources-human and material are squandered on them without leaving something for agriculture thereby leading to poverty, loss of human lives and food insecurity with attendant consequences on agricultural and entrepreneurial activities.

Recommendation

1. Farmers in the community should be admonished to cut down on expenses incurred on the celebration of ceremonies such as burials, marriage and cults for agricultural investment.
2. Non-governmental organizations and the clergies should be encouraged to sensitize farmers on the need to discard ceremonies that impact negatively on human lives and agriculture.
3. Banks and saving agents should be established in the area to advise farmers on sourcing, saving and usefulness of the money in farming.
4. Extension agents in the area are encouraged to educate farmers on the need to adopt entrepreneurial agriculture for profit maximization.

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