The Tiv Song Theatre and Genderisation of the Tiv Woman: A Semiotic-Content Analysis

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Abstract
The Tiv Song Theatre is the major expressive medium of the Tiv people of central Nigeria. However, this medium has become a tool for negative portrayal of female sexuality in Tiv land. Consequently, this paper presents some selected Tiv songs and through a semiotic-content analysis gives an insight into the genderisation of the womenfolk as a downward trend in Tiv culture. In carrying out the research, content analysis of Tiv songs, oral interview and participatory observation have been adopted as the methods of collecting data. The paper submits that, women are usually subjugated, ridiculed, insulted, maligned, denigrated, and condemned both in practice and discourse on sexuality by men, who are however usually exonerated. It therefore condemns this development and sues for a change of attitude in order to attain a moral and balanced representation of sex related matters.

1. Introduction
The unification or relationship of men and women in the phenomenon of sexuality in different cultures of the world has brought about certain developments that are questionable. There is

majorly the tendency to dominate and control or exert authority over the ramifications of sexuality by some sex.

In African culture which is patriarchal in nature, sexuality is highly genderised with man, through his own laws, claiming absolute right over sexuality and all that appertains to it leaving womanhood to be a mere object and commodity in sexual relations. For instance, some of the methods adopted by the Tiv in the pre-colonial era for marrying wives failed to give women the chance to make their own choices in the marriage process. One of such marriage forms was called *yamshe*, marriage by exchange which entailed that a man who needed a wife located another man who had the same need. They then exchanged their sisters or daughters as wives. In this marriage form, only the choices and needs of the men involved were considered, the affected sisters or daughters were only subservient to their brothers' or fathers' wishes and demands.

Another marriage form that portrayed the marginalisation of women was called *kwase-ngohol/tsuen/kôrun.* According to Tsenongu:

> ...the *kwase-ngohol / tsuen / kôrun,* marriage by capture was ... divided into two. There was, first, the forceful snatching of a wife from her husband that in Akiga's words was usually done by some "scoundrel[s]" who could fall on a travelling couple and take the wife and sometimes, even harass her husband. This form of marriage, by which the Tiv themselves lost many of their women during their migration, caused many "inter *tar* [that is inter-clan] wars" in Tivland (135).

There are yet other negative attitudes in Tivland even today, which invariably refute and negate the concept of mutuality that naturally underlies sexuality. The genderisation of sexuality in the African

society has reduced woman to a state of servitude. This state of affairs is usually reflected in songs. Among the Tiv, songs are used, not only to reflect these attitudes but also to laud and celebrate them as if they are the norm.

2.0. Definition of Terms

Some of the key words used in this paper are explained in this section. They include: The Tiv Song, Theatre, genderisation, sexuality and semiotics.

2.1. The Tiv Song Theatre

Theatre as a concept is regarded as performance. Performance in the arts refers to action, hence it is described as "a doing art" (Hagher, 1981 p.37). But it is not just a doing art, it refers to any action taken purposefully by a person or a group of persons for some other person(s) to watch. In this wise singing, dancing, laughing, crying, walking, eating, coughing, moving, or even being still and silent in a deliberate manner to attract attention of the other person(s) is all regarded as performance.

Performance therefore draws its resources from daily life activities. According to Robert Cohen, "performance is an action or series of actions taken for the ultimate benefit (attention, entertainment, enlightenment, or involvement) of someone else. We call that someone else the audience" (22). This definition is encapsulating because in theatrical performance there is the performer or actor who impersonates and plays the role of a given character(the action) and in the course of performing the action or playing the role, the various theatrical arts are brought to bear, and all this is done for the benefit of someone else, the audience. In this wise the Tiv song is regarded as theatre since it contains the triad of performer, performance, audience and other elements that

qualify a performative activity to be regarded as theatre. The performer in the Tiv song, refers to the singer(s), drummer(s) and in some cases dancers, and sometimes the audience. The performance refers to the delivery or singing of the song itself, the playing of music and the dancing. Tiv songs are usually performed before the audience which is very judgmental and can boo the performer once he/she fails to meet their principles of judgment.

To put it succinctly, the Tiv song theatre is an art form that hybridizes and harmonizes the various elements of theatre to create a theatrical experience that is complete in itself. It is a grand art form which permeates all aspects of art and positively affects all spheres of Tiv life including sexuality which is our concern in this paper. It evolved and has been with the Tiv people ever since.

2.2. Sexuality

Sexuality, as used in this paper, refers to people's sexual interest in and attraction to others, as well as their capacity to have erotic experiences and responses. In other words, it refers to the "erotic desires, practices and identities" or "aspects of personal and social life which have erotic significance (https://faculty.washington.edu/mlg/courses/definitions/sexuality.htm).

2.3. Genderisation

The term genderisation is a deliberate coinage that proceeds from the original term gender which refers to the social or cultural distinctions associated with being male or female. The term is coined in this paper to refer to the preponderance or biased consideration of sexuality on the basis of male or female in which the latter is deliberately subjugated.

2.4. Semiotics

The term semiotics refers to the study of science of signs. It relates to the signifying systems that are used in sending, receiving, interpreting, and responding to messages more effectively in human communication. According to Keir Elam,

> Semiotics can best be defined as a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society. As such it is equally concerned with processes of signification. i.e. the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged. Its objects are thus at once the different sign-systems and codes at work in society and the actual messages and texts produced thereby (1).

Arising from the above therefore, we can conclude that semiotics is the scientific study of how messages are formulated, passed across, received, understood, and responded to by one another through the medium of sign, as well as a means of identification of a people and other phenomena. This is because, even though there are some universal signs and significations, several others are peculiar to particular cultures, just as the mode of doing some things, such as the packaging and presentation of theatre, entail modes that are peculiar to particular societies like that of Africa. This is the context in which the concept of semiotics is used in this paper.

- **Sexuality in Tiv Culture**

The Tiv culture revolves around men. Like the general African culture, the Tiv culture does not favour women nor is it fair to them. Women are usually considered only second in social ranking next to men, who are seemingly first class citizens. This has debilitated womanhood and made her status regrettably pitiable. According to Schenck as cited in Ahmed Yerima:

> [W]omen are always subjected to competing stereotypes: they are both "beneath" culture – too mired in nature to master the codes of poetic forms–and ..." upholders of" culture–hence rigid, conservative, form-bound, repressive of spontaneity and experimentation. (59)

This is attributed to the machination of man who, through his domineering attitude claims to be a being too superior for woman (the debilitated being) to equate or contend with. Thus, man rules the world fashioning out laws that elevate, amplify, and place him over and above all. This is affirmed by Yerima (2008), who describes man in the context of African culture thus:

> In order to control society, man created, invented and forced laws which made him not only the master of his female counterpart, but of the whole environment. In some societies, the female was forbidden to eat certain nutritious meals like "eggs" or particular types of "meat" because of certain religious reasons or what may be called, "fantastic reasons" created and best known to man alone. This meant that the male dominance or superiority was an unwritten law which constantly was put in man's subconscious. Even within the contextual materials found within folk stories and oral literature, the woman is presented as the co-protagonist, co-hero to man. She was not an integral part of the story; she complimented the male counterpart, even when he was *Ajapa* the Clever Tortise, or *Ananse*, the Spider. Even at this stage the woman was forbidden to be as smart and witty as these two great heroic characters. Man grew with such cultural beliefs, believing in it, guided through life by the society, and practicing such beliefs even in later stories he created, to his death. The female

> counterpart was made to accept it as the "only" way. She was conditioned with time and practice to accept the fact or notion that a woman was disinterested in major aspects of life, development, work and she only was born to serve as a support image or social symbol to the dominant man. Woman was indeed a stereotype, a symbol of life, cocooned by cultural beliefs (p. 60)

The above description of man in African culture is in its entirety true of the Tiv man and Tiv culture as James Tar Tsaior posits that, "Tiv society is essentially patriarchal in nature. This is manifest in the high premium placed on patrilineal rights and privileges in socio-cultural and political engineering processes often to the detriment of the matriarchal heritage" (2). Sex, in particular, is seen to be the exclusive preserve of man to an extent that the woman is conditioned to believe that her body and all that appertains to it is man's property which must not be tampered with by the woman. This can be better expressed where in Tiv culture, a woman was strongly forbidden to have premarital sex and made to wear a snail shell (*ikyôôr*) round her neck as a sign of purity. She was expected to keep her virginity until marriage.

Consequently, if she was discovered on the first sexual intercourse with her husband that she had already been deflowered, the husband would perforate a piece of white cloth and send it to the parents as a symbol signifying that she was already deflowered before marriage. This invariably would bring shame on her and her family. As a tradition this act was common and curiously expected anytime a girl was newly married in Tiv land. Conversely, the husband's virginity was not a question to be bothered about at all as his virginity was not investigated. Up till date, men (some or many of which are very promiscuous) still long and look for virgins to marry. After been married, a woman is forbidden to have

extramarital affairs. Her body is the exclusive preserve of her husband who has right to it and therefore can use it anytime in the way and manner he wants. This includes having sex with her when he wants, not when she wants. How she feels about the sexual encounter does not matter. It therefore means, it does not matter if she is in the mood or not, feels pains or not, satisfied or not, neither does it matter if she is in love with her partner or not. If she is not skilful in bed, she is insulted for being boring, and this is enough reason for the man to go out and look for a woman that can satisfy him. If on the other hand, she exhibits sexual prowess, she is described as a prostitute. Her body is always kept under watch to avoid it been used or even touched by another man. Consequently, her movement is usually dictated by her husband who has the right to mete out punishment of any magnitude he deems fit to her if she violates her dictated movement schedules. She is also liable to be punished even on the grounds of mere and unfounded suspicion. If she married and later remarries she is automatically labelled adulterous and wayward; the consequence being that she loses respect, care, and marriage security.

Her marriage contract can therefore be truncated any time the current husband wants without an iota of mercy shown her. She can be sent packing empty handed and is bound to be derided by both men and her fellow women alike. On the contrary, the man, indeed the superman, has no restriction to his sexual organ and can overtly wield it on any woman he wants. If she complains, she is condemned as not being an ideal woman. In fact, she is expected to welcome her husband's mistresses and even run such errands for him. The husband can marry as many wives as he wants and cohabit freely with women he likes and be justified while the same lady/woman or women he cohabits stand condemned. Even when she is innocently and forcefully raped, she stands rejected or

avoided by men if it comes to their notice. There is no severity to a man's promiscuity or adultery compared to the woman's. Since only the woman's adultery is questioned, it indicates that man's promiscuity and adultery are seemingly certified and enshrined in the cultural canons of Tiv and many African societies at large.

The Tiv woman is de-privileged in sexuality not only in terms of act but also in discourse. Like the Shona of Zimbabwe, as captured by Chimhundu cited in Tsaior, "even everyday language has built-in sex differentials...the total effect is to put the male above the female both physically as during sex and symbolically as in virtually all positions of leadership and authority" (3). This is coterminous with Tsaior who states that:

> This patriarchal order is also interiorized in the dynamics of the Tiv language with its dominantly phallocentric signifying systems, while men have privileged access to language, women are considered marginal and peripheral *others*, making Tiv language an (en)gendered space... men's place within the patriarchal ideological hegemony continues to saturate and prescribe particular patterns of linguistic behaviour for women. Women are seen as relative to men. Prohibitive codes and taboos rule their daily lives while men are immune to these practices because of dominant patriarchal ideological imperatives. Within the very cult of sexuality in Tiv society, the woman is a de-privileged category (2).

Consequently, Tiv men are free to be vulgar and outspoken about their libido; they can publicly speak and sing about it as well as even demonstrate their eroticism while a woman who indulges in the same act is condemned. A man can gather a group of men even right in his own compound to discuss and sing about this matter

but will not want the wife to question him or express how she feels about it. The violent and hegemonic nature of Tiv men and the marginalized nature of Tiv women also find expression in linguistic semiosis. This is also affirmed by Tsaior (2007) thus:

> The Tiv linguistic and signifying codes associated with sexuality, for instance, are replete with violence against women. For instance, the sexual act is represented in forceful or violent descriptive lexical items that portray women as passive receptors of male violence against women during sex. These lexical items include: *kpaa*(a derogatory term that has phonological correspondence with the explosion of a gun). *Kuma* (which means to pierce as with a nail or a sharp object probably drawing blood); *unde* (literally to climb or superimpose oneself on another) and *numbe* (play, a euphemism for male sexual gratification)(p.2-3).

Most regrettable is the fact that, there is no cultural or traditional court that can pass verdict in her favour concerning her sexual marginalisation, suppression, subjugation, and dehumanisation by men. Not even her family will take side with her if she disagrees with her husband and/or recourse to it on grounds of the aforementioned sexual matters. It is therefore stating the obvious to conclude that even though Tiv sexuality is generally seen as an act that unites the two sexes, the relationship is lop-sided with masculine prowess suppressing femininity.

- **The Tiv Song Theatre and the Genderisation of Sexuality among the Tiv**

The Tiv song is a theatrical mode constituting the general African theatrical tradition. It is a robust theatrical tradition with a reservoir

of semiosis. As a performative art form, the Tiv song performance usually involves the three entities that constitute, underlie, and define any theatrical performance. These include: the performer(singer), the performance (the song), and the audience (the people listening and watching) or rather, the "percipient" as Emeka Nwabueze would want it to be rightly called, (20). Tiv singers usually adopt traditional idioms, cultural codes and signifying systems in their performances in order to make them palatable to the audience. This is usually done against the backdrop and consciousness of the fact that, the Tiv and Africans in general tend to understand and appreciate better, the theatrical performances that engage them meaningfully. Consequently, the song mode remains the central and most popular of Tiv performing arts thereby providing a level playing ground for debating both serious and trivial issues of public interest, and propagating messages.

It is to this end that the Tiv song theatre becomes an erotica, aiding and abetting erotic discourse on sexuality among the Tiv. Interestingly, these songs clearly show the line of argument that gains overwhelming momentum over the other. Tiv songs amplify, reiterate, and propagate the patriarchal overbearing, marginalising, subjugating/suppressing, and ridiculing canons that are orchestrated against women. The role songs play in sexuality discourse especially as it relates to gender biasness is not however, peculiar to the Tiv people alone, but other African societies as well. Writing about the Shona of Zimbabwe, Chimhundu cited by Tsaior, for instance states that:

> ... modern singers have continued to project the idealistic image of the woman as the symbol of beauty, family stability and moral fibre of the whole nation... where

> socially prescribed norms and expectations are not met by women particularly, the poets, playwrights and singers alike all portray those women characters who do not conform to sex stereotypes as deviant and then punish them by ridicule, marginalisation, ostracism and sometimes even death (3).

It must however be noted that, vulgarity and vulgar songs are regarded as social deviance and aberration in Tiv land. In fact, because vulgarity in sexual discourse is abhorred, the Tiv recourse to semiosis whereby harsh sexual terms are substituted with soft ones. For instance, the term *kpaa* which literary translates as fuck, is substituted with *yav* meaning lie as in *a yav a na* translated as he/she has lain with him/her, or *unde*, *numbe* (refer to the above for meaning); *Jua* (penis) is substituted with *nomsoor* (manhood); *Ikyul* (vagina) is substituted with *kyum* (pubes); *kyuma* (pube) with *iche* (hair) *as in ichei hen kyum* (pubic hair); and *atumba* (breasts) with *vanger* (chest). For example, an ideal woman whose breasts are touched without her consent will only report that *"a zam/bendemaveshavanger"* translated as "he touched my chest".

The fact that vulgarity is abhorrent and an aberration in Tiv land does not however, stop or mitigate the popularity of vulgar songs as those who compose and/or sing them are not bothered if they are seen as social deviants. Such singers can perform the songs publicly with very conspicuous histrionics to attract attention and drive the message. Others, who like the songs but are restricted by church moral ethics, patronise and participate in their performances covertly. These songs, usually called *Kpingi*(a Tiv word symbolising the twisting of waste during sexual intercourse), are commonly performed at drinking joints and other secular ceremonies where when caught up in ecstasy, many do not help but participate fully in them. Although composers of *Kpingi* songs are

mostly anonymous, few among them include: Atule Hon, Abua, Orshio Ada Uker, among others.

- **Semiotic and Performance Analysis of Tiv Sexuality Songs**

As a society perfused with sign systems, Tiv singers usually lace their songs with both verbal and non-verbal signs with the aim of driving home their messages effectively. With regard to sexuality, the Tiv semiotic and signifying codes associated with sexuality are always brutal to women. Consider this derisive song.

Tiv	**English**
Kwase la waikyulkekpe	That woman's vagina tilts side wards
Ertyouki Felani	Shaping like the Fulani people's head
Madam wam a bunduga	My dear wife please you should have
Ma u we shin anam.	placed it between the thighs
	(By Ature Hom)

The above song pokes fun on womanhood by likening the shape of the woman's sexual organ to the shape of Fulani's head. Even though there is no likeness or similarity between the head and the female sexual organ, the singer deliberately employs it as a symbol of abuse on the woman and then the Fulani people who are perceived to be long-time enemies of the Tiv. The posture, movement, and gesticulations of the performer can be read through the linguistic signs. For instance, "That woman's vagina..." in the first line of the song indicates that, the singer addresses or gives the line to the audience. In this case, his body posture could be full front view to the audience while pointing his index finger towards another direction abstractly. The line "My dear wife...", on the other hand, apparently is addressed to the woman, in which case,

the posture too may change appropriately from the former one. The tone indicates a sarcastic plea which is likely to be accompanied by superimposing or crossing the back of the right hand palm over the left hand palm and then striking them gently and rhythmically in line with the Tiv signifying code accompanying plea.

The Tiv man attaches value to the sexual organs and physic of women. A woman is therefore appreciated and rated high only if she has the physiological outlook(especially as it relates to sexuality) that conforms to the choice of her husband. Usually the average traditional Tiv man likes a massive pubes with dark long strands of pube grown bushy on it. Below is a call and response song that a man sings to appreciate his wife's physiological attributes:

Tiv	**English**
Indiran:	**Call:**
Avilighzenden	My nimbly wife
Kwasewame	You relax with pube
Uyavakyumatyô.	In the lower abdomen.
Mrumun	**Response:**
Avilighzendenkwasewame	My nimbly wife
U yava kyumatyô	You relax with pube
Chôhôô!Mgbeghaa!!	In the lower abdomen
Kyumatyôingigh!	Very bushy! Massive!!
	Pube in the lower abdomen
	Heavy! (By Udoo Mbalagh)

To achieve a well and an apt description of his wife's pube, this singer employs the verbal symbols - *chôhôô*, *mgbehaa*, and *ngigh*-

which signify large quantity and amount. These rhythmic sounds also signify happy and joyful mood of the singer. During such ecstatic performance, the singer and the percipient which joins in performing the song demonstrate with appropriate gesticulations. However, this process of appreciating her is rather shameful since no responsible woman would want her sexuality exposed. On the other hand, when a woman is bereft of these attributes, she is not welcome or treated with affection. The dilemma here is that, whether she has the wherewithal or not, she can never escape abuse. Imagine the following conditions given to a newly married wife right at the occasion of her marriage celebration.

Tiv	**English**
***Indiran*:**	**Call:**
Kwasene a mendekyuma	If this wife grows massive pube
***Mrumun*:**	**Response:**
Ayaaya	*Ayaaya*
***Indiran*:**	**Call:**
Se wua un ivo	We shall kill a goat for her
***Mrumun*:**	**Response:**
Eeeeayaaya.	*Eeeeayaaya*
***Indiran*:**	**Call:**
Kpaunamendegayo	But if she grows only scantily
***Mrumun*:**	**Response:**
Ayaaya	*Ayaaya*
***Indiran*:**	**Call:**
Se wua un iwa	We shall kill a dog for her
***Mrumun*:**	**Response:**
Eeeeayaaya.	*Eeeeayaaya.*

(Composed by Ature Hom)

In this short song, the new wife shall be celebrated and valued only if she grows massive pube, otherwise, she is bound not to be celebrated and well treated. The symbols that are used to help in communicating this message include: the goat, dog, and *ayaaya*. The goat in this context symbolises acceptance. Generally, a goat is the domestic animal which the Tiv customarily use in performing marriage rites. If a woman gets married for the first time, a young she-goat must be presented to her family by the husband. If he fails to do so, the marriage will not be fruitful. But if the young woman had already been married or is discovered to have been deflowered, the young she-goat which is also a symbol of purity cannot be presented because she has violated the law of purity. Again, a visitor who is treated to a goat in Tiv land is the one who is held in high esteem. On the other hand, a Dog is an abominable meat to the Tiv.

In fact, a Tiv woman who eats dog meat consciously or unconsciously is believed to have fertility problem and can never get out of it until the appropriate rite is performed. The consequences are miscarriage and child mortality. Therefore, if the newly married wife is presented with a dog, it signifies disapproval of the marriage. The third symbolic sound *Ayaaya* only signifies happiness occasioned by the cerebration of the new wife.

Sometimes women receive aspersions for sexually related deviant behaviour masterminded by men who stand exonerated. For instance, a husband who has sexual intercourse with a nursing mother causes impediment to the growth of the child which shall exhibit certain obnoxious characteristics such as unnecessary taciturn, perpetual cry, and an awkward shape. When this happens, the woman is to blame for being amorous and over erotic, while

the man's (husband's) name will never be mentioned. The following song signifies this:

Tiv	**English**
***Indiran*:**	**Call:**
Ngushoughkwagh nan wan atumba	She nurses and commits sex concurrently
***Mrumun*:**	**Response:**
Kwasengushougholkwagh nan wan atumba	A woman is nursing and yet committing sex
A er nan man wan a vendega?	Why will the child not go out of shape?
Kwasengushougholkwagh nan wan atumba	A woman is nursing and yet committing sex

(By Solomon Abua)

The verb "*shoughol*" as used in the above song (which means mixing of something with force) is symbolic. It is a hyperbolic description of the nature of the sexual act which clearly signifies the strength with which highly emotive and erotic lovers commit sex. In this case, this woman over enjoys it hence her impatience which leads her to having sex even as a nursing mother. Among the Tiv, the act of "*vendewan''* or "cause a child impediment" by having sex as a nursing mother is the very depth of shame on the affected mother. Throughout this song performance, the husband is not mentioned; it looks as if the woman has the sex alone. No one suspects erotic pressure on her by her husband which must have culminated in the fate of the child. Thus, she receives reproach instead of sympathy. If this culminates in pregnancy, sarcastic songs will publicise it thus:

Tiv	**English**
Mrumun:	**Chorus:**
Nguveren a ooo o	Nguveren oh
Nguverennongokwagh	Nguveren has really achieved
Nguverenngu a wan ave	Nguveren is currently nursing a child
Nguverenshiwayavee.	Yet Nguveren is pregnant.
	(By Asongu Tor)

At this time that the worst has happened, the male singer sees no reason of making the alleged deviant anonymous again. Thus, the name '*Nguveren'* becomes popular and its deliberate mentioning signifies that the deviant is a woman as only women bear the name *Nguveren* in Tiv land.

Any lady who is above the age of marriage but is yet to marry becomes a subject of ridicule in Tiv land. No one cares to know her fate in order to sympathise with her. Rather, a jaundiced conclusion is drawn that she is into prostitution. She is thus prone to attack by the society which awaits the opportunity to disgrace her. If she is induced to a squabble, it will become a very good opportunity to insult her with rhetorical songs such as this:

Tiv	**English**
Mrumun:	**Chorus:**
Ashawo!	Prostitute! (Ature Hom)
Kanyiyan u er nom ga?	What stopped you from marrying?

Tiv men could even have women vicariously insult themselves. This is usually done by creating female characters in songs (composed by men)and matching them with self-indicting lines. The following song is an example in which the female character vicariously portrays herself as a prostitute.

Tiv	**English**
Ayakahamchinkafayam	I have my rice farm
Ngi shin anam	Planted between the thighs by my mother
Ayalôôchinkafa yam	I have my rice farm
Ngi shin anam.	Planted between the thighs by my mother.
	(By Iortim Genyi)

In the above song, the singer has a woman boasts of her ignoble career as a prostitute by claiming that her trade is bequeathed to her by her mother. The aim is to paint a picture of a woman who has gone so wild that she loses her sense of shame. The signifying system employed in this song helps in sending the message in a very concise, comprehensive, and attractive manner. Rice is the major farm product that fetches the Tiv people a lot of money. In fact, it is basically cultivated for economic benefit. It is therefore legitimate and usual for one to make money from rice. If on the contrary one gets money from other unscrupulous means other than from rice, one will therefore be derogatorily said to have made it from rice.

Hence women who prostitute are often sarcastically said to have their rice farm located "*shinanam*" or "between their thighs". *Anam* or thighs as mentioned here is indexical; instead of calling it vagina, the singer points to where vagina which is used by commercial sex workers to make money is located. The performer of this song assumes the female character to play it out. Incidentally, this song constitutes the repertoire of *Swange* songs which are always featured in the Benue State Council for Arts and Culture repertory where women also inexorably perform. A woman can be insulted with her entire family/community by her

husband anytime she has issues with him relating to sexuality. For instance, Faga Adinge, one of the most popular of Tiv singers, was abandoned by one of his wives for a tout at a motor park at Jato-Aka in Kwande Local Government area of Benue State, Nigeria. Mr. Adinge (1979) used a lot of songs to denigrate her, her father, and her community. Consider this abridged version.

Tiv
Yesengi a ihingaga, kai a mar onovkpahingangigaa. Or u nan we dang yoka nan mar onovkpaka dang tsô. Yan mfagatsôô m erkwasepe dang yô dang kur a moveoo.
English
The scorpion does not have a nose and so does its offspring. A wayward man is bound to beget wayward children. I once ignorantly went and married from a wayward lineage and that waywardness has taken toll on me.

The above analogies of the scorpion and the wayward signify the fact that, any character of one symbolises or is characteristic of their history of origin. The effect the singer wants to achieve here is to cast an in-depth disdain that could traumatise the woman as is usual with the Tiv people that an insult that extends from an individual to his/her lineage hurts him/her more as compared to that which is directed at him/her alone.

The Tivalso express their masculine hegemony even with their sex organ. Imagine a man advertising his manhood in the following short song.

Tiv	**English**
Jua yam igba she gaoo	My penis is not costly at all
Jua yam ka naira (2x).	My penis costs one Naira (2x).

Ato a na la kafiiti	The carved portion on its top costs fifty (Kobo)
Gbogboangelana la	Its huge stem (and)
Anhyulana la ka pam gbangela.	Its little orifice all cost two Naira only. (By Ature Hom)

This vivid description of the penis significantly delineates the structure of the penis with the view of hypnotising the female audience. The raison d'être is the consciousness of the fact that, some women are attracted to sizeable penises; moreover, expressing sexual prowess is believed to be enough to lure some women to bed.

Other vulgar songs of the Tiv are used for fun and entertainment. In the following song, for instance, the singer uses pun to emphasise the sound *kpaa* which describes the act of sexual intercourse thus:

Tiv	**English**
Kwase u ***Kpar***	A *Kparev* woman
Va yam ***Kpagh***	Bought camwood
Hen wa or u ***Kpar***	From a little *Kparev* man
Wan or u ***Kpar***	The little *Kparev* man
Korkwase u ***Kpar***	Grabbed the *Kparev* woman (and)
Kpaa	Sexed her

Er a van na un ***Kpagh****na*. That she should return his camwood. (Orshio Ada Kerver)

This song is a prototype of Tiv linguistic and signifying codes associated with sexuality which reflect the violence against women. Apart from the pun which deliberately makes jest of the woman's situation, it speaks of the unmerited assault meted out to

the *Kparev* woman whose patronage, which should be appreciated, is rather unjustifiably returned with sexual harassment.

When a man jilts a woman, he is rather hailed for being handsome with strength of character as men take pleasure in seeing their mistresses crying bitterly for been jettisoned by them (men). But when a woman, on the other hand, jilts a man, Tiv men employ all sorts of signifying systems to portray her. The song below is a paradigm:

Tiv	**English**
Indiran:	***Call:***
Abakpa wamtondoveoo	Oh my slipper has cut abruptly cut
Mrumun:	***Response:***
Hikpan (2x)	Abruptly*(2x)*
Mrumun:	***Chorus:***
Kwasekaabakpaoo	A woman is a slipper
A tondo am	Oh she has abruptly cut off my leg
Hengbendaveoo	In the middle of the road
Hikpan!	Abruptly! (By Yamuel Yashi)

In this song, the metaphor, "A woman is a slipper" is used by the singer to signify the character of a woman. It is usual that, a slipper cuts abruptly without giving its user a warning signal to enable them prepare. Thus, it could happen in the middle of the road when one is in transit, in the market place, or any other place leaving the user in shock, despair, shame, and trauma. The Tiv men therefore find it a suitable metaphor to describe their sexual

relationship with women which from all indications is unpredictable on the part of women who end it any time they want without warning. *Hikpan* is a sound symbolising the abrupt cutting of the slipper.

The performance of these songs, like earlier stated, is usually accompanied by histrionics, postures, movements, and gesticulations employed by the singers and the audience (which usually join in the performances) thereby making them attractive and effective enough to impact on the society.

• Conclusion

This paper submits that, sexuality among the Tiv is highly genderised with women conditioned to be only subservient to men, marginalised, and compelled to believe that they have no say nor right over sexuality both in act and in discourse. Also, it submits that, the ideal Tiv people who forbid vulgarity are however over shadowed by the un-ideal who are popularising and promoting vulgarity and have found expression in the Tiv song Theatre, the major expressive medium of the Tiv people thereby stressing, amplifying, and publicising insults and outright denigration of the womenfolk and their sexuality in Tiv land.

As theatre, the song mode reflects the patriarchal ideology of the Tiv which genderises women sexually. This unfortunate development no doubt portends total dehumanisation of womanhood and legalisation of immorality in the society because this unfortunate inculcation into the Tiv Song is fast becoming the norm and adaptation in Tiv society. The greatest danger alongside the reduction of the womenfolk to sex objects is the decay and eventual death of the Tiv Song Theatre whose origins were noble in nature.

Fundamentally, since no society can thrive when the womenfolk is dehumanised and reduced to a sex object, it is imperative that, the Tiv Song Theatre regain its noble position in Tiv culture. The composers/singers who uphold moral rectitude should come up with songs that intelligently counteract immorality and portray the dignity of womanhood. Tiv Traditional rulers especially should denounce the vulgar trend of such linguistic codes and the celebration of violence and other unwholesome attitudes against women and girls. Thus, and not otherwise will there gradually begin behavioural and attitudinal change which will promote gender balance and uphold moral rectitude in Tiv society.

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