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**List of Informants**

Name	Age	Occupation	Date	Place of interview
Essien, Out	65	Businessman	January 7, 2022	Henshaw Town, Calabar
Edet, Ibok	42	Civil servant	December 27, 2021	Ikot Ishie Town, Calabar
Effiong, Effanga	46	Trader	January 3, 2022	Creek Town Odukpani
Orok, Okon	70	Member Etubom Council	December 20, 2021	Okoyong, Odukpani
Eneyo, Andem	66	Farmer	December 28, 2021	Duke Town, Calabar South
Essien Effanga	61	Trader	January 5, 2022	Big Qua Town, Calabar

## A'NGEFR TRADITIONAL CLOTH OF THE TIV IN MAKURDI, BENUE STATE

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### Abstract

*The Tiv ethnic group lives in both sides of Benue River. They are one of the minority ethnic groups in Nigeria which is referred to as north central political zone. They are popular for their farming skills and rich culture. The traditional outfit of the Tiv people is unique and stands out like many other ethnic outfits in the country. The Tiv people are known for their colours of fabric, the A'nger, which is popular for its white and black strips. The importance of this fabric encourages the research into its uniqueness and the role it plays in the Tiv cultural eco system. The research methods used in this study are focused group discussions (FGDS) and in-depth interview in the three zones of Makurdi metropolis. Finally, it is recommended that more should be done in the documentation and preservation of A'nger fabric.*

### Introduction

The primary purpose of cloths predates human society itself. Long before man started to settle down in clusters in hamlets, villages and towns, he had the need of food, clothing and shelter. The clothing need of man has been satisfied over time through a variety of textiles such as woven, knitted, felted and many others; from the very crude to the now sophisticated types. The most important of them all is of course, the woven textile. Audu & Kureave (2005) state that "woven textiles are not only the earliest types, but also the most important and most commonly used the world over". They are principally used for the purposes of covering, adornment of the body, identification and so on. Most importantly, woven clothes are found to shape the social, cultural and economic lives of many ethnic groups and societies of the world.

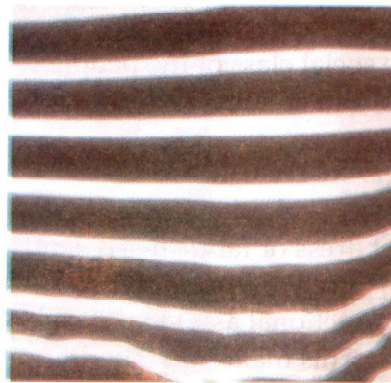
Tiv people of Benue State have cultural peculiarities in both material (tangible) and non-material (intangible) culture. Therefore, material aspects of culture such as clothes are not only meant to please the eyes but they also contain some deep meanings about the Tiv people. According to Yuet and Owyong (2009), clothes do much more than meet our physical and physiological needs. They express meanings in society beyond the superficial enacting power relations between people. This explains why Moses (2009) concludes that clothes should be appreciated beyond their physical appearance in order to know and enjoy their cultural, moral and social significance.

Corrigan (2008) observes that everything about a group of people is reflected through clothing. This implies that clothing has symbolic meaning which

defines the concepts of a person, people and their culture, social relationship, history, beliefs and their comprehension of human experiences and existence. Akdemir (2018) agrees with the above view by stating that the basic expression of social identity begins with clothing and all the social features relevant to a particular society are clearly expressed through their approval. Based on the foregoing, it is obvious that clothes are more than a piece of material. They have important symbols and constitute important part of human cultural heritage.

Clothes have different types of colours. Consequently, colours represent different meanings. Hence, they transcend the beauty of the eyes and reveal some salient features about the social conditions of a social group and their position in the society. A group in North central geopolitical zone in Nigeria whose cultural attire clearly highlights their identity is the Tiv people. They have a population of about 5 million and 6<sup>th</sup> largest ethnic group in Nigeria. They are predominantly found in Benue State and in states like Nasarawa, Taraba, Plateau, Kogi and Cross River. The Tiv people have utilized wearing of clothes so much that they have found their cultural identity in one of their traditional attires known as *A'nger*. The Kwande people of Benue State are considered by Aki'ga (1978) as the cradle of Tiv land and custodians of the Tiv dress culture. They embraced the production and propagation of the *A'nger* more than any other group in Tiv land. This was how *A'nger* became a cultural attire in Tiv land.

*A'nger* is the black and white cultural cloth used by the Tiv people. It is a striped plain-woven cloth that is produced on the narrow hand loom by the Tiv of the Benue valley (Akuma, 2015). *A'nger* is defined by Gwa (2006) as a stencilled black and white (Tiv) traditional cloth. In essence, *A'nger* is a piece of fabric designed in black and white used by the Tiv people.



The black and White (Stripes) of *A'nger*

### **The Significance of Symbols and Colours in *A'nger***

All over the world, clothes carry symbolic meaning. In Nigeria and indeed Benue in particular, *A'nger* the Tiv traditional attire is used in proverbs and adages. Usman (Personal Interview) describes Anger "as the fence around the Tiv nation in general". Accordingly, the cloth symbolically represents the colours of zebra, which is a beautiful and peaceful animal. In a nutshell, the black and white colours of *A'nger* portray the peaceful nature of Tiv people which is the same as the nature of the zebra.

In his response during field work, Joseph argues that Tiv people are straight forward people. A Tiv man does not take a neutral posture on issues. It is either day or night, left or right, yes or no, life or death. A Tiv man would always take a stand on any issue affecting him irrespective of the consequences. A Tiv man by his nature hates injustice and inequality and does not hesitate to rebuff an individual or groups that antagonize these virtues. There is a clear variation between the colours, white and black in *A'nger*. They cannot be mixed up, but only coexist to form an entity.

In another field account, Udzer maintains that the black and white colours on *A'nger* is like the type on the body of *Anyam* (tiger). This symbolizes the agility of Tiv people that can be compared to the strength of the tiger, which translated to their triumphs in wars. The white on the *A'nger* to the Tiv man signifies purity, while the black is a reflection of the shadows of the hills (Swem), which Tiv people believe is their ancestral home-meeting place for peace. The two colours therefore represent peace, love and unity among the Tiv community.

The wearing of *A'nger* is a channel of communication, identity and status. This is because the variety of *A'nger* they wear in rank shows social status in terms of wealth and gender. Wayo, an informant argues that wearing it is to express Tiv culture, values, social solidarity, confidence, pride and the desire for good things. Some people call *A'nger* "Holy family, Benue united or mura-utib" to define the social class of the people who wear it. It is used in marriage, royalty, dance, and as souvenirs.

### **The Importance of *A'nger* in Tiv Culture**

The better way to make the Tiv heritage known is to emphasize the importance of traditional dress or fabric in Tiv land. Clothing is among the prime values, traditions, family heritage, and pride of Tiv people. The *A'nger* fabric has evolved from functional asset to a social symbol, influencing Tiv perception of themselves. This makes the Tiv dress culture worth emulating. Moses, a respondent claims that dressing in *A'nger* in Tiv tradition is a

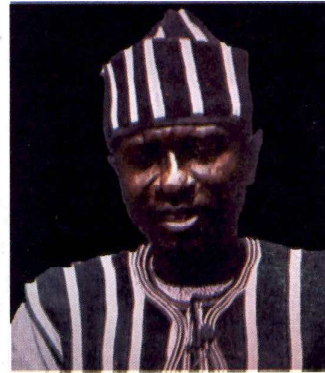
demonstration of personal affluence and style.

Terso (2019) argues that in Tiv nation, the wearing of *A'nger* traditional cloth is a way of preserving culture and history. This outfit can be seen in weddings, funerals, religious ceremonies, cultural dance, coronation, Tiv cultural Day and other events that require the wearing of such attire. It is a symbol of cultural identity, humility, and a means of understanding the past. Wearing of *A'nger* is a channel of communication between the Tiv and other people.

*A'nger* fabric production is a source of employment to reduce unemployment problem in Tiv society. Hence, it is a solution to social vices. The fabric had been used in Tiv nation as medium of exchange. Joseph (personal interview) explains that it was used as currency and also as a standard of value with which other items were priced and exchanged (barter) among the Tiv people. He further asserts that a man could marry a wife through the exchange of *A'nger* clothes.



Tiv Lady Dressed with a Combination of *A'nger* Fabric and Modern Blouse

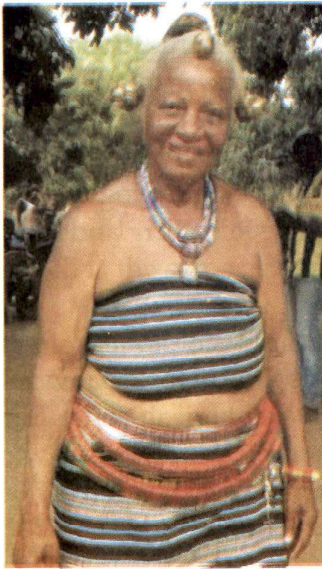


A Tiv man Dressed in Traditional Attire with a Cap to Match



Tiv Men and Children Dressed in *A'nger* Traditional Attire





Tiv woman Dressed in A'nger    Tiv Children Dressed in A'nger and Beads



Tiv Traditional Ruler Fully Dressed in Royal Regalia

#### **Technique of Weaving A'nger**

Weaving is the method of textile (*A'nger*) production in which two distinct sets of yarns or threads are interfaced at right angles to form fabric or cloth. The longitudinal threads are called warp and the lateral threads are the weft, voice or filling. This is usually woven on a loom, which is a device that holds the warp threads in place while filling threads are woven through them to form the final product. The way the warp and filling threads interface with each other is called the wave. This is passed over and under the warp thread.

The weft thread can be passed over and over again on warp thread at a time to produce variations of thread colours to form black and white patterns in the

woven cloth (*A'nger*). As the weaving progresses, the finished cloth is slipped down over the lower beam and up and back. Then, the weaver uses a weaving stick to separate the odd and even warp thread before he winds the weft thread into a long narrow stick which is passed from side to side. The finished processes range from such simple treatment as brushing up on a woven fabric to the use of a complicated chemical process. This is employed for cotton fabric, and the binding system for the weaving is the basic factor that shows the characteristics of a woven *A'nger* in Tiv tradition.



Weaving of *A'nger*



The Researcher Demonstrates Sewing of *A'nger*

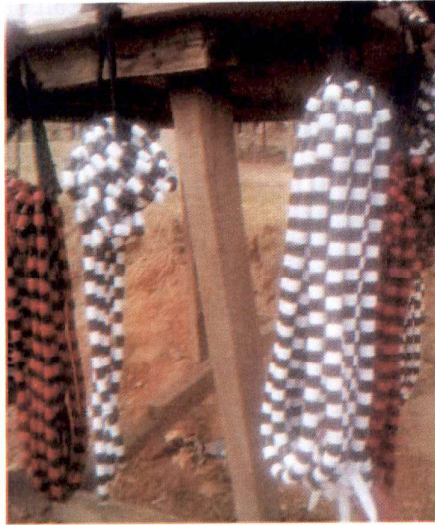


Finished *A'nger* Fabric Displayed for Sale at the Traditional Attire Market

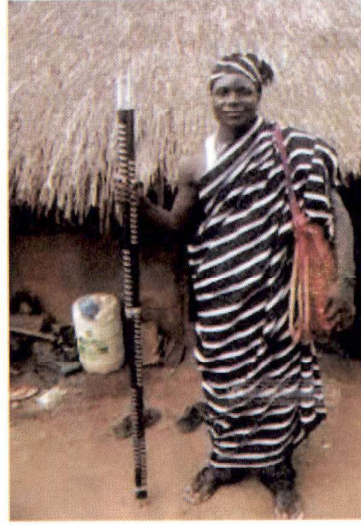
#### Traditional Fashion Accessories in Tiv Land

- Cap - it is worn to beautify the head.
- Spear - This is held to display authority and valour.

- Leather bag – It is held by hand to add colours to *A'nger* traditional attires.
- Beaded necklace – This is worn around the neck for adornment.
- Beaded wrist band – It is worn on the wrist for beautification.
- Head scarf – Just like the cap, the head scarf is worn on the head.



1



2



3



4

(1) Beaded Necklace, (2) Beaded Wristband, Spear, (3) Leather Bag,  
(4) Head Scarf and Cap

### Impact of Modernity on Tiv Traditional Dressing

The basic fact that Tiv had contact with colonialists impacted greatly on the cultural ecology of the host nation. This was achieved with the introduction of cash crops such as benniseed, cashew, cassava and millet. For these, Tiv people then abandoned the cultivation of cotton, which was used locally for *A'nger* production. Hence, the declining of the *A'nger* production due to lack of raw material. Also, the use of modern equipment and yarn instead of

cotton has affected the production of the original *A'nger*.

Urbanization and industrialization aided the migration of Tiv people to the urban areas for industrial job. Farming in general and cotton production in particular suffered a lot of setbacks, which in turn affected the making of *A'nger* fabric.

Acquiring of industrial machines and equipment by the colonialists discouraged the local producers of the cloth because their capital base could not afford to buy industrial machines. Consequently, the quality of the cloth and the quantum of production started declining. That is why the quality of *A'nger* in the market is incomparable to the local ones produced in the past. The texture has also become unsuitable for the wearers because the material make up of it is not real cotton and it is not conducive for Benue weather.

#### **Acculturation**

If a non-Tiv man or woman is getting married to a Tiv man or woman, their wedding outfit is *A'nger*. It shows that Tiv people have accepted you into their culture. On the other hand, due to population strength of the Tiv, non-Tiv personalities may dress in *A'nger* if there is a necessity to enter Government House in Makurdi town. They consider this as social solidarity which on the long run facilitates their demand from the government. During school cultural week, students or pupils from other ethnic nationalities wear it to create social bonding and admiration, which leads to peace, harmony and adaptation.

#### **Incorporating Traditional Dressing into Modern Dressing**

*A'nger* fabric has been incorporated into the modern dressing. This can be seen in various tailoring shops and fashion houses in Makurdi town and beyond. They are evidently seen in traditional wedding, during festivities and a lot of political meetings. Different styles are created in blouses, skirts, trousers, and gowns. The type of fabrics to be combined, and the style of sewing is the free choice of the owner of the cloth. Sometimes, the tailor will use his or her discretion to produce unique and beautiful styles for different occasions.

#### **Problems Associated with *A'nger* Fabric**

*A'nger* fabric has witnessed a lot of changes in its production, wearing and functions among the Tiv people of Benue State, particularly in Makurdi. Some of these problems are lack of cotton as a raw material, technological issue in machine (cost and training), inadequate capital, lack of encouragement from the government and Tiv Traditional Council, as well as

competition between the locally made fabric and the second-hand clothing. It is on this note that the study recommends as follows:

- a. Workshops and seminars should be organized for the weavers to adopt advanced technology for mass production at the shortest possible time.
- b. The youth should be encouraged to use *A'nger* fabric to project Tiv culture and values more than as it is being done currently.
- c. The government should support its production with sufficient funds, equipment, publicity and marketing.
- d. Relentless efforts should be made in the area of conducting research as well as the documentation and preservation of *A'nger* fabric.

### Conclusion

The *A'nger* is a fabric that combines the black and white to produce beautiful attire used by the Tiv people. The black and white signify peace, strength, love, harmony, sincerity which are virtues that define the Tiv people. For the *A'nger* fabric, in spite of the overwhelming negative influence of the modern-day development, it survived with resilience, retaining most of its essential features and characteristics. However, it was discovered in this study that local production of *A'nger* suffered set back because of competition with imported and second-hand products today.

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**Field Informants**

S/N	NAMES	AGE	OCCUPATION	DATE	PLACE OF INTERVIEW
1.	Pauline Udzer	49	Civil Servant	20/01/22	Makurdi
2.	Mercy Wayo	41	Civil Servant	22/01/22	Makurdi
3.	Tse Moses	34	Weaver	15/01/22	Makurdi
4.	Gabriel Ieren	19	Weaver	15/01/22	Makurdi
5.	Abba Solomon	38	Cloth Seller	20/01/22	Makurdi
6.	Enejo Etila	44	Lecturer	25/01/22	Makurdi
7.	Zakari Umaru	46	Civil Servant	25/01/22	Wadata-Makurdi
8.	Rakiya Daniel	50	Business	25/01/22	North Bank Makurdi
9.	Usman Asogani	65	Retired Civil Servant	26/01/22	Abinse-Makurdi