

## Digitalization of Folklore among the Tiv of Central Nigeria

**Dr. David Sankara Atsongu**

Corresponding author: [davidasung75@gmail.com](mailto:davidasung75@gmail.com)

Department of English, College of Education, Akwanga, Nasarawa State

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### Abstract

*The importance of documenting Tiv folklore for generations yet unborn cannot be over-emphasized. Folklore is a repository of Tiv world view and values that clarify social attitudes, promote national pride, group cohesion and cultural continuity. It also reflects the people's fears, hopes and aspirations. As a result of this thematic amplitude, these lores are common stocks of each community's oral memory. Though, these forms of folklore are seemingly endangered. Thus, it is imperative to collect, collate, analyze and document various aspects of our cultural heritage. This is not merely a return to the past, however, it embodies the attitude of a people to the future of their cultural values and when faced by the demands of modern technology as an essential factor of development and progress. This study, therefore, explores digitalization of folklore among the Tiv in Central Nigeria as an academic endeavour in order to document these lores and prevent them from further extinction. The participant observation method is used in this study. The paper concludes that digitalization is important in the arts, because it unlocks new thinking and approaches in how oral art forms perceive their roles within its ecosystem and its opportunity for increased profitability. The paper recommends that resistance to change will require cooperation between local communities, government, cultural institutions, and digital platforms.*

**Keywords:** Digitization, Digitalization, Folklore, Tiv, Central Nigeria

## Introduction

The Tiv in Central Nigeria has a culture that is seemingly reflected in its forms of folklore. These generic forms of folklore like all of literature reflect the culture and world view of the people; hence Ker (2002) asserts that, "Literature reflects the society that produces it" (p. 8). The Tiv literature is rendered orally and appreciated aurally. These oral art forms are inherited from the fore-fathers and communally owned by the members of the society, stored in memory and when appropriate, recalled at the moment of subsequent transmission. The literature is divided along the lines similar to those of other peoples. Its aspects include oral narratives, oral poetry and folk speech.

Oral narratives are made up of folktales or *kwagh-alom* or thing of the hare, *kwagh-hir* or magical thing, legends or *kwagh u mbayiase*, parables, fables, anecdotes, riddles or (*kikya* for singular, *ukikya* for plural) with a variant name *itine kyula* (Akpengwa: oral interview) or stem of rubiaceae, tongue-twisters or (*ati-alunkyengemyom* for plural, *iti-ilunkyengemyom* for singular), which are all given a common name as *injakwagh* for singular, *anzaaka* for plural. The same word is also given for proverbs. The Tiv also have idioms which are also known by the same word as proverbs and legends (Tsenongo, 2000). Equally about Tiv folklore are cultural festivals. These festivals are usually and ordinarily staged or organized by the community that centres on some unique aspects of the community. The festivals consist of series of performances involving music, dances, plays, rituals, and puppetry, and others. The festivals are usually organized annually or as agreed upon by the people to come together to celebrate and share a common tradition, dine and wine as well as co-ordinate virtually all art forms of the community (Oyin, 2000). Tiv traditional festivals include wrestling, *ikyor-dar* or game of holes and nuts. The Tiv also have *Ivom*, *Amar*, *Ier*, *Ibiamegh*, *Mzough u Tiv* or National Tiv Day, and *Mamiwata* carnival, among others. All of these forms of folklore among the Tiv are seemingly universal and found in nearly all human societies, though, the names or nomenclature may differ.

## Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore Digitalization of Folklore among the Tiv in Central Nigeria as an academic endeavour.

Other objectives are to:

- i. provide academic community with reference material for study of Orature, and

- ii. document these lores that are seemingly endangered as a result of the influence of major or foreign cultures and languages.

The study beams its light on the efforts of scholars who explore folklore as source materials for their creative works. Thus, the inclusion of folklore in the school curriculum helps students in the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. More so, the study allows scholars to develop a deeper understanding of the changing nature of literature in light of the digital technologies.

## Methodology

The participant observation method is used in this study. By this method, the researcher relied on conversations, narration and contextual uses of lores within the study areas: Tse-Kimbir Daah, Njiriv in Gwer-East Local Government Area of Benue State and Tse-Mhembe Dugh, Keana Local Government of Nasarawa State. Both states are located in Central Nigeria with a significant population of Tiv people. The Tiv people in these areas are predominantly rural dwellers and who have seemingly not caught much of attention of researchers, while their counterparts in urban centres in these states may have been studied repeatedly. The participants consist of different sexes, ages and elders in different occasions of usage. These forms of folklore were recorded and saved in both video and audio files. These forms of folklore were then transcribed and translated into English language. These translations were scrutinized and verified by elders in each of the states under study to determine the extent of the validity of the translated pieces. The translation was not rendered in “pure English” (Tsenongo, 2000). In addition, Gboko town in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State is the seat of the *Tor-Tiv*, a custodian of the people’s culture is avoided because of its urbanized settlement pattern.

## Literature Review

First, “digitization” and “digitalization” are often used as synonyms. Though, digitization refers to the process of converting analog information into a digital format. It involves the conversion of physical objects or analog content (such as paper documents, photographs, records, or videos) into digital files (such as PDFs, JPEGs, or MP3s) that can be stored, accessed, and processed by digital devices. Digitization focuses on transforming data and information from physical (analog) formats to digital formats. It involves the technical process of scanning, encoding, or converting information into binary code (1s and 0s) that can be read by computers, thus, easier to store, retrieve, and share information. It allows information to be preserved in a format that is more durable and less prone to

deterioration compared to physical forms (Legner et al., 2017). Digitization is commonly found in libraries, archives, museums, and other institutions dealing with physical records or artifacts.

Digitalization goes beyond the simple conversion of data. It refers to the broader integration of digital technologies into everyday life, business operations, and societal practices. Digitalization involves using digital technologies to transform and optimize processes, systems, and models for greater efficiency, innovation, and value creation. The focus of digitalization is on how digital technologies are applied to redefine workflows, improve user experiences, create new business models, or enhance existing ones. It is not just about converting data, but also about transforming how organizations or societies function through digital means. Digitalization aims to enhance productivity, innovation, and user experience by leveraging digital technologies in broader organizational and societal contexts. It often leads to new ways of working, new products or services, and changes in behaviour or interaction. Digitalization is an emerging, open and dynamic concept; a means rather than an end (Hagberg et al., 2016). In the context of Tiv folklore like other indigenous cultures in Africa, Digitalization may encompass the broader integration of digital technologies to preserve, distribute, and interact with folklore, as well as to redefine how it is shared, disseminated, and experienced across digital platforms. This definition suits this study because literary works are aspects of our cultural heritage. Although, with globalization and its attendant effects that certainly seem to have affected Tiv folklore; though, not destroyed it; because oral art forms among the Tiv defies extinction. Rather, these oral art forms transform into new forms when threatened by the demands of modern technology ... (Ker, 2016).

Sone's position is apt about the Tiv people whose tales, for instance, initially were told by adult members of the household to the younger growing children as part of traditional education and counseling necessary for the upbringing of the youths. But in art, the Tiv seem to be restless, always recreating new forms or variations from the existing ones so as to provide renewed interest in the arts, because the Tiv are seemingly happy with their creative dynamism. This experimentation encouraged Tiv people to move tale-telling sessions from the home to the village square and made the rendition of these tales a competitive business among village bands, and sometimes among villages or lineages. This dynamic adaptability is recognized by Harper (1970). Harper (1970) remarks that, "The Tiv is remarkable for their ability to adapt old oral art forms to new conditions and their delight in inventing style" (p. 7). Digitalization describes the transition from an industrial age characterized by analog

technologies to an age of knowledge and creativity characterized by digital technologies and digital business innovation. Alongside literary innovation, digitalization is the development of digital innovations – is one of the most important business trends for the future of the society. It is the use of digital technologies to change the reading habits and practices; E- readers, online platforms and apps to facilitate new forms of reading that differs from traditional print experiences. It is done to process, store, and transmit information through digital circuits, equipment, and networks. It is easier to access, preserve, and share information. It is essentially a process of converting oral art forms into digital format. The term “folklore” was first used by the English antiquarian, Williams John Thoms in a letter published in the London journal titled *The Athenaeum* (1846) to take the place of the rather awkward expression *popular antiquities* (Darah, 1981). Finnegan (1970) refers to folklore as a “generic term to designate the customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical practices, proverbs, sayings, spells, songs, others, ...; in short, the accumulated knowledge of a homogenous unsophisticated people” (p. 50). Although, early scholars of folklore like Taylor and J. C. Frazer for one reason or the other, devote little attention to the study of folklore. Folklore is essentially a study of culture and tradition (Stith, 1946). It is not the survival, remnants of the cruder stages of the primitive past.

This study, therefore, describes folklore as those oral art forms such as folktales, myths, historical facts, legends, fables, artifacts, chants, performances, and proverbial assertions, jokes, and riddles, curses, traditional conventional sounds amongst others usually disseminated through oral, written and electronic media from generation to generation for the purpose of cultural propagation, preservation and education. Stories about religious myths like *Swem* (ancestral land), *Tsav* (Witchcraft), *Adzov/Mbaterev* (Non-human spirits), *Ikyarem* (proverbial green snake), *Wankwase hungwa Idyeregh* (Descended naked woman from the east). Symbolic folk materials like *Idyer* (wooden ritual gong), *Anger* (weaved traditional dress) and tales about animals characters like *Alom* (Hare, the trickster) and human characters like *Tor* (the human king) in relation to *Aondo* (supreme being) which are told and performed through the raconteur amidst songs, music, dance and other renditions is what characterizes folklore amongst the Tiv people. Equally about Tiv folklore are cultural festivals such as wrestling, *ikyor-dar* or game of holes and nuts. Tiv people also have *Amar*, *Ivom*, *Ier*, *Ibiamegh*, *Mzough u Tiv* or National Tiv Day, and *Mamiwata* carnival, among others. These festivals are usually and ordinarily staged or organized by the community that centres on some unique aspects of the community. The festivals consist of series of performances involving music, dances, plays, rituals, and puppetry. The



festivals are usually organized annually or as agreed upon by the people to come together to celebrate and share a common tradition as well as co-ordinate virtually all art forms of the community (Oyin, 2000). These forms of folklore have the capacity to inculcate values, virtues, wisdom, and ethics, morals, among others into members of the community and beyond. All of these forms of folklore among the Tiv are seemingly universal and found in nearly all human societies with different nomenclatures. Folklore is a broad field of study that encompasses all concerns of humanity. Dundes (1980) points out the broad spectrum of folklore studies that literary scholars treat folklore as literature or as source material for literary masterwork. Historians regard folklore as data supplying folk attitudes towards historical events and figures. The anthropologists see folklore as a people's autobiographical description of themselves. The educators think of folklore as part of the treasured heritage of national and ethnic groups which can be used to enrich and enliven otherwise routine curricular offerings. So, the different disciplines come to the materials of folklore with different interests as to how folklore should be understood and utilized. Therefore, attention is paid to oral art forms of Tiv folklore that yearn for digitalization, namely; folktales, myths, proverbs, riddles, tongue-twisters, songs, chants, incantations, and festivals shall be discussed in detail.

#### **i. Folktales**

According to Gbilekaa (1977), Tiv folktale is called *Kwagh-alom* (tale about the Hare) or *Kwagh-hir* (something of magic) because the *Alom* (the Hare) is the protagonist of the Tiv folktales (p. 219). Furthermore, the feats performed by the Hare are so supernatural that he must be a magician to accomplish them. *Kwagh-alom* or *Kwagh-hir* therefore refers to the same thing. The nomenclatures refer to the tales told by a raconteur surrounding the exploits of the Hare and how he is able to outwit other animals and men who are physically bigger than him but are less intelligent. Furthermore, Gbilekaa (1977) also classifies folktales according to thematic focus; those that deal with the making and breaking of friendship, the dilemma type and the trickster type" (220). Gbilekaa (1977) further states in the light of the trickster classification that:

The trickster animal hero cuts across many cultures but the animal type varies such that amongst the Hausas and Ashantis, it is the Spider. For the Yoruba it is the Tortoise while the Zande of South Africa has the "Ture". For the Tiv and some other African nationalities, it is the Hare...The trickster hero in Tiv folktales is an idealized embodiment of the philosophy, emotions and moral codes of the people. (p. 221).

Hagher (2003) captures the characteristics of Tiv folktales events as thus: “The story-telling art is a communal art in Tivland, There are elaborate props and costumes to imitate the characters in the narration, There is a spontaneous audience response, which also offers criticism of the art, Songs and dances are the main musical events accompanying the narration” (p. 51). Apart from these stunning characteristics, there are also other important inherent features of the art, such as the use of an explosive opening glee, the audience willingness to contribute, audience response to indicate the success or otherwise of the art, and contribution of the local elders who serve as judges in the storytelling performance. Most of these storytelling elements are harnessed in the folk plays and their performance. For instance, the common captivating and motivation-prone opening glee of the *Tiv Kwagh-alom/Kwagh-hir* story telling sessions goes thus:

**Tiv**

**Narrator:** *Kwagh-alom wam nahan ga oo!*

**Audience:** *Nahan Zeo*

**English**

My folktale is not like the others!

Not like the others

Hagher (2003) enumerates six of such occasions, namely; during communal work, members of the community come together, whether to farm, or hunt, or build a road, Itinerant story-telling; where particular story tellers tour either as individuals or in groups, Story-telling competitions-these were organized by the clan for the sole purpose of knowing who excelled amongst the narrators, and to determine which groups in the district or clan had a superior artistry in story-telling. Hagher also states that the folktale characters can be classified into three categories corresponding to the composition of the Tiv world view: i. Humans, ii. Naturals (Animals), iii. Spirits (*Adzov*, *Mbakuv*) and other supernatural phenomena like giants, strange animals with strange characteristics like *Jongul*, whose anus sparkles like a well-made fire. The children alongside adults, some of whom may be narrators sit under the moonlight to listen to tales. The tales serve for entertainment, didactic, utilitarian and other purposes. Kabir’s (2003) comment regarding Hausa tales like the Tiv is relevant here that, “It has been one of the medium through which the Hausa people like other Africans, hand down their tradition and culture, educate their children and entertain them ...” (p. 42). However, the present day technological advancements, improved social and economic lives of rural dwellers and the reinvigoration of extensive availability of electronic gadgets are uncommissioned undertakers of the folktale genre, and folktale as an entertainment genre has been turned into an unappreciated art form ... (Amali, 2024, Mama Gbendakighir Shima: oral interview).



Plates 1 and 2 showing the researcher and assistant recording the narrators in the study areas.

**Source:** Researcher's Fieldwork photographs, December 2023.

## ii. Myths

According to Jones (2014), “a myth is a story which is believed to be true and has its origin in the far distant past history of a people” (p. 9). Among the Tiv generally, myths contain three kinds of stories, namely; stories of origin, explanatory stories and didactic stories, for example, why women have no beards and men do not have breast, and why the sky is far from the earth, among others. Each of these stories is meant to explain a particular phenomenon. Tiv use myths to explain how things came to be through the efforts of a supernatural being. It is concrete and expresses life better than abstract thought can do. For example, a myth in Tivland tells a story about the green snake or *ikyaren* that stretched itself across a river, precisely River Congo and became a bridge. The “green snake bridge” enabled all members of the Tiv family to escape from their approaching enemies. Based on this myth, Tiv men, women, boys and girls do not kill a green snake or *ikyaren* whenever and wherever *ikyaren* comes into contact with them. To date, the Tiv do not harm or kill the *ikyaren*, and forbid anyone in carrying out the act in Tivland (Nomishan, 2022). Similar myth also is found among the Israelites during the crossing of the Red sea, where “the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind ... and turned the sea into dry sand ... and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, ... (Exodus 14:21). Myths have been a rich source of inspiration for literature, art and various forms of creative expression throughout history.





Plate 3 showing Tiv myth about the mysterious Green Snake or *ikyaren* that formed a bridge across River Congo and enabled all members of the family to cross the river.

**Source:** Internet picture.

### iii. Proverbs

One other endearing aspect of Tiv culture that defines their folklore is Tiv proverbs known as *anzaakaa* for plural, *injakwagh*, for singular. They are wisdom-laden sayings usually used by elders in conversations on challenging subject matters and general showcase of language mastery. According to Dzurgba (2011), “Tiv proverbs have remained largely oral expressions which communicate perpetual and valuable ideas which are practically relevant to successive generations without an end” (p. 118). Accordingly, the Tiv so value proverbs in beautifying language for effective communication purpose, *anzaaka* also serve pedagogical purposes. Tiv people who persistently failed to understand certain phenomenon are guided to appreciate them through the medium of proverbs. Farmers for instance, who depend on hired labourers but are not good at feeding them stand the risk of not getting people to work on their farms. To help such people understand the cause of their difficulty in getting labourers, such proverbs as below may be used:

- i. *Kwase u sule o, mo m yam hue wou la ga*, translated, Madam, I can’t endure hunger like the comodo dragon; and
- ii. *Kwase ka kwayan u kun lu u ya a eren u ke nya ye*, meaning, Madam, it is the food in the stomach that produces the one on the farm.

Proverbs are context dependent and culture specific (Ilim: oral interview). Context refers to the situation in which proverbs are used; it is important to know what circumstances allow the use of certain proverbs. These are proverbs about actions and example, advice, ambition, criticism and judgment, greed, loyalty, life and death. But it is often impossible to grasp the meaning of proverbs without some knowledge of the cultural background and what the proverbs mean to those who first use it in their cultural context. This is why they are derived from human experiences that reflect the general Tiv cultural background, beliefs, philosophy and world view.

#### **iv. Tongue-Twister**

The Tiv word for tongue-twister is *iti-ilunkyengemyom*, *ati-alunkyengemyom* for plural. Finnegan (1970) writes that in Africa, as elsewhere, people delight in playing with words and on words. Tongue-twisters, for example, “are sometimes popular with children or even adults and even these represent one type of awareness of the potentialities of language for more than just conveying information” (p. 452). Finnegan adds that tongue-twisters are forms of speech play that exists in almost every language. It is a play on sounds whereby the syllables of a word are subjected to a variety of tonal and other changes to produce different meanings that are meant to create fun” (4204). It is typically based on the difficulties of articulation when a sentence with several similar sounds (in alliteration or assonance) is uttered rapidly. For example, an English tongue-twister reads *She sits and shells, she sells and sits* as it contains the similar consonants /s/ and /ʃ/ which are brought into juxtaposition. It is worthy to note that, there are certain sound sequences that are difficult to alternate because of the changing position of tongue in the mouth. It is also used to create humour by challenging someone to repeat them very fast and listening to the funny result. However, tongue-twisters are not only for light-hearted linguistic fun and games. It serves a practical purpose that helps the teachers’ to improve students’ pronunciation on difficult sounds. They are very useful in all stages of teaching especially foreign languages, because of their shortness, capacity and full sense. Also, they are used as perfect exercises to check up how the pronunciation rules are learnt. For example, a typical Tiv tongue-twister reads, *Agundu nuu gyundu sha agugu unden agungu gungula gungula u yemen Gongola*, meaning, *Agundu* poses on the motor-cycle and gallop the hills on his way to Gongola (Shima: oral interview).

#### **v. Onomastics**

Onomastics is thus the study of proper names. Bright (2003) points out that, “such study is carried out as part of some larger fields in linguistics, ethnography, philology, history, philosophy,

literature and others. Bright further discusses the term ‘name’ which, he says, people use when they refer to almost everything (e.g. “Banana is the name of the fruit”.)” (p. 669). Agyekum (2005) argues that, “Naming can be considered as universal cultural practices, every human society in the world gives name to its new born as tags, majorly as a means of identification, but how the names are given, the practices and rituals involved and the interpretations attached to the names differ from society and culture to culture (p. 21). According to Nyitse (2008), Naming among Tiv people is one of the privileges men enjoy as the practice is for the exclusive preserve of family heads who are males and that such male privilege could be accorded to elderly women who have the experience and privilege for naming. Nyitse’s study also points out that, “There was a clear demarcation of male and female roles and delicate task requiring wisdom; it was the preserve of elderly men, since the society believed that age conferred experience and wisdom” (p. 112). However, in some instances elderly women, who were beyond childbearing named children as they were now conferred with honorary male hood. Tiv names had meanings, they were meant to serve as repositories or reminders of people’s experiences so that each name told a story of the namer’s philosophy of life in the face of vicissitudes. Although, it may be a truism that some parents in Tiv land may name their children depending on their sex and life experiences. However, it is observed that most Tiv converts to alien religions are forbidden to name according to Tiv naming system in the modern age.

#### **vi. Oral Poetry (Songs, Music and Dance)**

Miruka (1997) defines oral poetry as “the verbal expression of feelings, ideas and thoughts using versified language” (p. 6). The oral poem is principally composed and rendered using word of mouth to provide entertainment, give information and create form through which the African man adopts process and worship of deities. Outlining the pragmatic and utilitarian features of Tiv oral poetry, Jenkwe (1998) avails that, “Tiv oral poetry mirrors the whole spectrum of societal life” (p. 3). In the discussion of Tiv oral poetry, Shoja (2010) explores the aspect of Tiv song composition and states that, “song composition among the Tiv depends both on the understanding of Tiv culture and on ritual initiation into the art” (p. 3). Keil (1979) argues that there are three prerequisite for Tiv song composition:

Inheriting the art from the composer who hands over the career to his laziest son;  
receiving the song from *adzov* or fairies or *mbatsav* or wizards who may favour  
a child born with a physical disability and give him the art of song composition;

and traumatically striving to compose songs due to mere love of song composition” (p. 101).

Another method of the art of song composition among the Tiv is where the initiate takes a young cockerel to the master poet who initiates him and gives him a mixture of ground tree barks known as *jiagba* or *gyegwe* which helps him to compose new songs or in remembering old ones. According to Nyitse (2006), “several poets have attested to the efficacy of *jiagba*; Obadiah Okor claims it clears the mind of cobwebs ... it helps them to remember old songs” (p. 22). The symbiotic relationship between music and dance in Tiv culture makes it very tasking to equate it with the western concept of music and dance. Keil (1979) argues that the word music does not exist in Tiv culture. In this light, Hagher (2003) believes that music in Tiv does not exist solely for itself. It is used for dancing or singing or as a song as in *Imar* (flute) or leading processions. This unique concept is not exactly the same with western concept of music. However, with the British penetration of Tivland from 1900 to 1914 (Makar (1994), everything changed.

#### **v. Tiv Festivals (*Ivom*, *Amar*, *Ier*)**

The source and history of festivals are speculative in Tivland. The origin is not specific; others view it as married to a lady from upper Cross River in Nigeria popularly called by the Tiv people as *Udam*. Others see it as *Ivom*, the yam heap as a style of farming which explains the Tiv people’s source of wealth. Most researchers commenting on the historical aspects of the Tiv people put the date for the beginning of *Ivom* and other festivals around the ninth century. *Ivom* is almost the last and the highest traditional prestige or *shagba* one can attain in Tiv society. As one is matured, he first finds a simple marriage or *ikyar* within his community. He must marry and *kuha kwase* (traditional marriage rite); he again will *wa genga* (a dance that dancers drum themselves) for his age mate; he must also buy *nyinya* (horse); he will *gber idyer* (slit wooden drum); *unde Ivom*; (climb *Ivom*); and lastly *miir amar* or *wa ivom*” – hosting of *Ivom* festival (Tijime, 2024).





**Plate 4.** Side view of *Ivom*.



**Plate 5.** *Ivom* dance performance.

**Source:** Researcher's internet picture of *Ivom* in Njiriv, Benue State, Nigeria.

Significantly, the obvious domains of festivals are oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and traditional craftsmanship (Ullrich, 2020). Obviously, the main purpose of this festival is to display wealth and to score a point against one's age-mate. Others see it as an avenue for the return of lost antiquities of the land such as *Ikyav mbi mba tugh* like *imborvyungu*, *ityoor ki ayu* and the host of others which are believed to be sources of wealth of an individual or community as a whole that are usually kept in other neighbouring communities. Sometimes to retrieve such items normally results to communal crises which is an attestation to the fact of constant communal crises in Tivland. Festivals such as *Ivom* remain the only way where such items are returned in peace. When such "items" are returned to the right ownership, there is *mndorom* (peace), fair riches, and good harvest among other desirable wishes (Akenbe: oral interview). However, it is gathered that, the dwindling nature of *Ivom* festival is based on the over ridden consequences of modernization education.

### **The Benefits of Digitalization of Folklore among the Tiv**

The significance of digitalization of folklore among the Tiv of Central Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. First, Tiv folklore has always been the foundation upon which a culture is based. Thus, the folklorists have a duty to discover a people's heritage and pass it to others (Mohammed, (2014).

Tiv folklore in particular, is understood from the point of view of how it contributes to the development of the indigenous people, and the nation at large for the purpose of development. The



composition of Tiv folklore in its nature is a yardstick of human development. Hence, human development is anchored on people through their innate capabilities trying to find meaning to their activities in order to improve their standard of living. Dandaura (1995) affirms that, A process of change, which should start with man himself ... should strive to raise his dignity, and intellectual abilities so that he can effectively transform his economic, social, cultural and political environment into a better environment that meets his dreams and aspirations. Tiv folklore, especially aspects that are occupational and performance-based embodies many activities that endear the people to artisanship, artistry, oratory, and other productive skills and talents. It is in this wise that Tiv people are usually described as excellent farmers, dancers, weavers and generally industrious full of strength and intellectual alacrity. Leo Frobenius submits that, “The Tiv people are the best story-tellers he has encountered in Africa” (Keil, 1979). Digitalization of folklore can continue to serve as a powerful tool for moral instruction, especially in a rapidly changing world. Stories that teach respect, honesty, and community values are preserved in a form that can continue to educate future generations in both traditional and modern settings. Through digital media, important rituals, dances, and ceremonies that are central to Tiv society can also be documented and passed down. This preserves not just the stories, but also the performance contexts and ritualistic settings in which these stories come alive, ensuring that younger generations learn to appreciate the deeper meanings behind these practices like the *Ivom* festival that its significance is anchored on the fact that, it is a conglomeration of dances, songs, music, merriment and prestige in the context of Tiv life.

The digitalization of Tiv folklore offers rich educational opportunities for both Tiv children and broader audiences interested in African culture through:

- a. **Teaching Tool:** Digitalized folklore can be used as an important teaching tool in schools, universities, and cultural institutions. By incorporating multimedia resources—such as audio recordings, animated retellings, and digital textbooks—Tiv stories can be brought to life in a way that engages students and encourages deeper learning about African oral traditions.
- b. **Language Preservation:** The digitalization of folklore also plays a role in language preservation, especially as the Tiv language may face challenges from the dominance of English and other regional languages. Digital texts, video, and audio materials allow the Tiv language to be taught and practiced by younger generations, helping to preserve it alongside the stories and knowledge it carries.

## Challenges of Digitalization of Tiv Folklore

The digitalization of folklore among the Tiv people in Central Nigeria presents several challenges such as:

- i. **Technological Limitations:** one of the primary challenges in the digitalization of Tiv folklore is related to technological access and infrastructure like:
  - a. **Limited Access to Digital Devices and Internet:** Many rural and remote areas where the Tiv population resides face poor access to digital devices, such as smartphones, computers, and internet connectivity. This limits the ability of many Tiv people to engage with digital folklore materials or contribute to the process of digitization. Even in urban areas, the digital divide between different socio-economic classes may hinder equitable access to digital content.
  - a. **Concern over Cultural Misrepresentation:** The Tiv may fear that the digitalization of their folklore, especially when done by outsiders or without proper cultural understanding, could lead to misinterpretations or distortions of their stories and customs. There is a long history of misrepresentation and stereotyping of African cultures, and the Tiv might be concerned that digital media could perpetuate these issues.
- ii. **Language barriers and Linguistic Challenges:** Another challenge of digitalizing Tiv folklore is that it often involves translating stories from the Tiv language into more widely spoken languages, such as English or Hausa. This translation process can lead to loss of meaning and nuance, particularly in proverbs, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references that are difficult to capture in other languages. Also, the younger generation, especially those growing up in urban areas, may have limited proficiency in their indigenous language. As a result, digital content might be presented in languages or formats that are not as relatable to the older generation who are still the primary bearers of the oral traditions.
- iv. **Digitizing folklore is not just about converting traditional stories into digital formats, but about doing so in a way that ensures the material is preserved for long-term accessibility, because digital formats are vulnerable to data corruption, file obsolescence, and technology upgrades that can render old digital files unreadable. This presents a challenge in ensuring that digital folklore is not only captured but also properly archived and maintained for the future.**

## Conclusion

The technologies underlying digitalization continue to evolve rapidly, even as they are being adopted throughout culture and society. Digitalization is important in the arts, because it unlocks new thinking and approaches in how art forms perceive their roles within its ecosystem and its opportunity for increased profitability. With digitalization in place, these art forms can begin to create new value chain and experiences that are collaborative, interactive, sustainable, and profitable. Tiv society therefore, need to develop digital strategies and focus on what are the key success factors of digital transformation by ensuring that literary works are accessible to diverse audience (including those with disabilities and non-native speakers), staying relevant in a rapidly evolving digital landscape, and remaining flexible to adapt to technological advancement. The digitalization of Tiv folklore presents both opportunities and challenges. While it can help preserve and share the rich cultural heritage of the Tiv people, it requires careful attention to the technological, cultural, and social factors that influence its success. Overcoming challenges such as limited access to technology, language barriers, intellectual property issues, and resistance to change will require cooperation between local communities, government, cultural institutions, and digital platforms. By addressing these challenges, the Tiv people can harness the power of digitalization to protect and promote their folklore for future generations while ensuring that their traditions remain respected and authentically represented.

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### Oral Interviews

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- ii. Akenbe, D. Male. 65 years. Farmer. Tse-Kimbir Daah, Njiriv. 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2025
- iii. Akpengwa, T. Male 55 years. Farmer. Tse-Mhembe Duugh, Keana. 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2019

Shima, M. Female 85 years. Farmer. Tse-Mhembe Duugh, Keana 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2019