

# TIV

## LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Tiv is a Niger-Congo language. Although there are some minor dialectal differences in accents between different geographic areas, the language is more or less homogenous. The Tiv is the only language in Nigeria that is without any significant dialectal variations. Tiv is sometimes referred to as *Munshi* by Fulani people, but this term is considered derogatory by the Tivs. Although Christianity is becoming increasingly popular, many Tiv people still practice their traditional religion. The Tiv are primarily agriculturalists both for trade and sustenance. The major crops are yams, sorghum and millet. They also grow maize, groundnuts, rice, cowpeas, beans, okra, peppers, onions and tomatoes.

The Tiv have a lasting musical culture and legacy. There are several instruments unique to the Tiv people. *Kakaki* is a horn-like instrument used to send messages to the community. The *Ilyu* is a light wooden instrument used to announce death. *Indyer* is a heavy mahogany instrument used at celebrations and festivals. Tiv drums are called *Agbande*. *Adiguve* is a stringed instrument that is also used at celebrations and festivals.

## STUDYING TIV IN THE UNITED STATES

Please contact the National African Language Resource Center, or check the NALRC website at <http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu/>



NATIONAL AFRICAN  
LANGUAGE RESOURCE  
CENTER (NALRC)

701 Eigenmann Hall, 1900 E. 10th St.  
Bloomington, IN 47406 USA  
T: (812) 856 4199 | F: (812) 856 4189  
E-mail: [nalrc@indiana.edu](mailto:nalrc@indiana.edu)  
Website: [www.nalrc.indiana.edu](http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu)



TIV CHILDREN

NATIONAL AFRICAN LANGUAGE  
RESOURCE CENTER (NALRC)

## WHO SPEAKS TIV

Tiv people trace their lineage back through one common predecessor named *Tiv* and his children that were believed to have originated from Southern Africa. Common ancestor of all the Tiv people, therefore, is a man named Tiv. He had two sons named *Ichongo* and *Ipusu*. And they formed the major clans among the Tiv people. These clans are based on patrilineage. The Tiv organized themselves into villages called *Tar* that were comprised of small groups of related clans (ipaven). Tiv were also known for their traditional system of exchanged marriage which was outlawed by the British in 1927. This system caused a lot of disputes which was part of the reason for its elimination by the British.

Tiv traditional religion, which is still practiced today, is based on the concept of *Gba-aondo*, which means the world should be as it was made by god. Another important notion in Tiv traditional religion is *Chia-itan*, declaration of innocence among young clan members. Magical forces were seen as intrigues and manipulations among people. According to Tiv, God is not concerned with these magical forces. The Tiv do not worship any objects whether animate or inanimate, but they believe that God is the greatest power, seconded by witchcraft and the ground on which we stand. The treatment for misfortunes that arise from witchcraft is called *Akombo*. The akombo treatment unties any spiritual effect that witchcraft has on a person.

## WHY STUDY TIV

Tiv is a Nigerian language with over five million speakers. The language is most highly concentrated in Benue state, although it is spread throughout Nigeria's middle belt and the eastern regions. There is also a small Tiv speaking population in Cameroon. Tiv is taught in some primary schools and colleges of education in Benue State. Although the Tiv people make up only 2.5% of Nigeria's population, they are a large and pertinent ethnic group in the country. Students may wish to study Tiv in order to communicate with one of the Nigeria's largest ethnic groups. Students studying African History and anthropology may also find the language useful.



*Tiv girls from Benue state, Nigeria wearing their traditional dress.*



*Tiv tribe's man from Benue state, Nigeria holding his traditional (staff) symbol of authority*



*Tiv Dancers*



*Tiv Bride and Bride's maid*