

## **AKOMBO: AN EXAMINATION OF AKOMBO AND TSAV IN TIV TRADITIONAL MEDICINE APPROACHES FOR THE TREATMENT OF PANDEMIC**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines akombo and tsav in the Tiv traditional medicine approach as a viable alternative for the treatment of pandemics and other diseases. This is informed by the fact that the mainstream medical establishments have been overstretched in recent time with the advent of covid-19. Lives that could have been saved, through traditional medicine approaches were needlessly lost. Scholarship has indicated that traditional medicine is an ideal alternative as it has a global appeal especially given its availability, affordability and acceptability. However, nothing has been written on akombo and tsav as viable alternatives to mainstream medical establishment. Accordingly, this work aims at proving that tsav and akombo are indeed relevant in the treatment of pandemics and other ailments. The paper buttresses this with compelling examples and mode of treatment through the application of these approaches. The paper adopts phenomenological methodology because it is important when writing on real existential problems that have influenced people over the years. There cannot be any doubt that health or medical problems are daily existential issues that people face or contend with globally. This problem was even compounded with the advent of Covid-19. The paper argues that tsav and akombo are relevant and effective in the treatment of these diseases and should be accepted as benevolent and not viewed as evil. While the former has been blacklisted largely because the mbatsav are found to be sometimes malevolent, it should be noted that these concepts are not intrinsically evil. The conclusion here is that if and when these two concepts are mainstreamed into the bio-medical establishment and developed into large quantities of drugs like injections, they will forever serve the world that consistently needs medical attention during and post Covid-19 eras.*

**Key words:** Akombo, Pandemic, Tiv, Tiv Traditional Medicine, Tsav

## Introduction

African Traditional Medicine (ATM hereafter) is that alternative medical solution that the world needs right now in this pandemic and in the years to follow. The researchers set out to research on the Tiv concepts of *akombo* and *tsav* in order to establish how relevant and effective they would be as alternatives to the mainstream medical approach. The history of Tiv and the practices of *tsav* and *akombo* in their cosmogony is traced and established. The various uses of these concepts are treated with examples and their peculiarities. *Tsav* is the Tiv word for witchcraft, *akombo* is magic or, by extension, sorcery. Those who indulge in these practices are called *mbatsav*, that is, witches and wizards. “The concept of *tsav* and *akombo* provides a union of man with the cosmic powers” (Nyityo, 50). When properly applied, they are veritable and viable alternatives in the treatment of ailments during and post pandemics as shown in the paper.

Apart from its potency and efficacy, availability and affordability, the ATM is an institution of God. At the end of creation, God said this to the man he created in his own image and likeness:

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.” And it was so (Gen 1:28-30 NIV)

To be fruitful is of dual import. First, it basically means to procreate. Second, it metaphorically gives the man the ability, capacity and the latitude to invent, produce and commit to profitable use all that they were given hence God imbedded humans with cerebral epistemic infrastructure to reform and refine. It is therefore natural that man could find additional uses other than food for the natural ingredients he was generously given by God.

However, with the advent of foreign religions like Christianity and Islam and technological, scientific advancements, and cultural imperialism, some Africans consider traditional medicine as evil and unhygienic. When they become sick and are advised to seek medical attention through traditional means they quickly point to the ‘evil’ nature of *tsav* and *akombo*. Moreover, in the face of the advancement of novel viruses and diseases there is an ever increasing need for alternative measures that would serve humanity and not the dismissal of such alternatives. After all, traditional medicine from *tsav* and *akombo* are not evil in themselves neither are they unhealthy, they only need acceptance and mainstreaming.

It is also a placement of irrational limitations on human thought processes in holding that all medical problems have natural aetiology isolated from the spiritual esoteric involvement and vice-versa. Africans always have the belief that the cosmos is dual as the spiritual and the physical always converge to cause a health hazard that can only be diagnosed through esoteric means and treated as discovered through consultation with the spiritual realm. Dismissing it, is akin to denying someone credible medical attention that could have brought reprieve from pain.

Accordingly, this paper aims at establishing African Traditional Medicine (ATM) as a viable alternative to the established medical system in the world; to establish *akombo* and *tsav* as natural therapeutics and their benign and benevolent nature; establish the potency and efficacy of *akombo* and *tsav* in the treatment of diseases and pandemics; advocate for the mainstreaming of *akombo* and *tsav* approaches for sustainable medical development and call on all African governments to invest in *akombo* and *tsav* for the future wellness of Africans

### **Brief History of Tiv People**

Agber (2015) citing Asante (2009), submits that the Tiv are divided into two patrilineal descent lines from the original ancestor Tiv namely: *Ichôngo* and *Ipusu*. Accordingly, they share a common language and general cultural values or norms. Geographically, the Tiv are located between 6°30' and 8°10' North latitude and 8° and 10° East longitude (Laura and Paul Bohannan 1969; Rubingh 1969 cited by Tsenôngu 2015; Agber, *et al.* 2015). Tsenôngu (2015) further avers that the Tiv share borders with the Chamba and Jukun of Taraba State in the Northeast; with the Igede (Benue), Iyala, Gakem and Obudu of Cross River State in the Southeast; and the Idoma of Benue State to the South. There is also an international boundary between the Tiv and the Republic of Cameroon to the Southeast of their present location. Referencing 1991 census figures, Tsenôngu (2015) puts their population at 2.5 million while Agber *et al* (2015) quoting 2009 census places it at 2,945,994.

### **The Concepts of *Tsav* and *Akombo***

*Tsav* is a concept in Tiv, it may not have its equivalent words in English to define it but it closely means witchcraft. Those who practice it are called *mbatsav* i.e. witches or wizards or both.

*Akombo* are rituals performed for the healing of the sick and repair of the society (*tar*). They contain mystical powers and can only be performed by the masters of such *akombo*. Like *tsav*, they can be used benevolently and malevolently. The pre-occupation of this paper is to bring out its benevolent use and benign nature in the treatment of diseases and pandemics.

Wegh (1998) believes that Tiv religious thought is hinged on three basic concepts. These are *Aôndo*, *Tsav* and *Akombo* — all of which work together for stability, harmony and communal wellbeing. The Tiv religion and culture are intricately intertwined with their cosmology. As a consequence, their religious beliefs, physical and

metaphysical conceptions constitute in its entirety, an inseparable worldview. Tiv cosmology basically centers on the existence of Aôndo (God), *akombo* (rituals), *tsav* (witchcraft), *adzôv* and *ujjingi* (spirits) all conceived as supernatural, while *or* and *umache* (man and human), *tar* (land, district, locality) and *gbaaôndo* (nature) are similarly conceived as natural (Agber *et al* 2015).

The Tiv are concerned with health (and with death, the ultimate manifestation of poor health), with fertility of crops, animals, and themselves, and with social harmony. To be healthy, to have plenty, and to live in harmony are natural states. Although the Tiv have some lore about spirits, no spirits manipulate the forces that interfere with these desirable states; Tiv respect their ancestors, but no ancestors manipulate the forces. Rather, the acts and devices of living human beings activate the forces of evil. Tiv ritual is designed to overcome these forces (Gale 2005).

Sai (2002) averred that Tiv have been practicing *akombo* a long time ago. He further clarified that the *akombo* were divided into only three types namely *twer* (treatment of illness), *ilyum*, and *ihaambe*. These were all the *akombo* that they then practiced. He explained that in those days, there were only a few people versed in the practice of *akombo*. They were so few, that in some cases a whole clan would boast of only one single *akombo* practitioner; such a person was known as the *orsôron twer* (treatment of illness), the man who treats illnesses. This was because the treatment of disease was the first and main job of the *akombo* practitioner (Sai, 75).

The contribution of Nyityo (2014) on the use of *akombo* for therapeutics is of tremendous importance to the thesis of this paper and the researchers feel obliged to incorporate it here. Having defined therapeutics as “therapeutics is the branch of medicine concerned with the treatment of disease and the action of remedial agents” (therapeutic: definition of therapeutic). Tiv therapeutic system is better understood with the concept of *Akombo* (cosmic forces) and *twer* (medicine and healing), Nyityo then testified that *Akombo* and *twer* in Tiv culture was part and parcel of Tiv religion. Tiv cultural religion sought the ultimate good of Tiv just like the practice of *akombo* and *twer* (Nyityo, 37).

Diseases are treated in three ways; by killing something, by simply giving medicine, and by washing away evil thoughts. In each case the nature of the treatment required may be determined by divination. Some ailments can be diagnosed by merely looking at the patient; he is told to carry out the rites and, if only the *akombo* is the cause, the sickness will leave him. But in the case of more obscure disease the *akombo* must be properly revealed by divination before it can be set right. The divining chain will show whether it is necessary to kill an animal, as well as applying medicines (both internally and externally) in order to cure the disease, or whether all that is needful is to wash away the curse in order that the medicine may be effective. Diseases in the Tiv society were inevitable. However, the Tiv had ways of check-mating diseases with cure. The terrible diseases in Tiv history that claimed so many lives were smallpox, influenza epidemic, gonorrhoea, yaws, and the Tiv traditional

medicine and healing was able to hush it before the advent of missionaries and western medicine. Sai (1939, 348) posited that, there used not to be so much sicknesses among the Tiv as there are today, and plagues did not afflict the land as frequently as they do now. The old men say that their land has changed since the white man came (Nyityo, 39-40).

In a very narrow sense, *akombo* are magical emblems and magical forces. In appearance they resemble the fetishes and jujus described for many West African cultures: they are composed of plants, stones, celta, corn cobs, sometimes carvings and pots-almost anything can find its way into an *akombo*. *Akombo* are not shrines, for a shrine assumes a spirit of some sort and *akombo* have no spirits associated with them in any way. *Akombo* are non-human forces (Bohannan 1953).

### Examples of Tsav and Akombo as Therapeutic Approaches

Below are some examples of ailments, diseases or sicknesses some of which have symptoms similar to pandemics and are treated by the use of *tsav* and *akombo* culled from the work of Akiga Sai already referenced:

**Mser:** Fixing up: *Mser* means to treat the suffering or disease one gets from violation of the *akombo*. If one touches an *akombo*, it affects him. The meaning of *sôron* is to treat something to become normal and that is why sometimes it is called *mser* (it is the past tense of *sôron*).

**Agbar Akombo:** Treatment: If you are affected by an *akombo* and a rite is celebrated for you or you are initiated, what is offered by you for this treatment is known as *agbar akombo*, the recompense.

**Mkôr:** Hold or obtain: *Akombo a kôron* means mastery. It is when one is initiated into an *akombo* that he can use it to treat others.

**Ihambe I Ichigh Ki Ityôugh:** Medicine for the headaches: In the *ihambe i ichigh ki ityôugh*, a wasp or hornet, *ihambe*, is fashioned or stuck to the door at the left-hand side of an entrance to a room. The *ichigh* leaves for medicine are from a branch without many thorns but with long thick leaves. It is the main medicine. The *ikarika* plant, a succulent, has no leaves but has branches. Its branches serve as its 'leaves'. It exudes sap that is noxious, corrosive, and if it touches one's eyes and they are not well treated, the eyes become damaged with cataracts. Some people use the sap to treat stomach-aches. If one has a stomach problem and wants to purge, the sap is extracted and put in a pot and an egg is broken and mixed with it and this is cooked on the fire. The person then drinks and it purges him and he becomes better. That is the meaning of *ikarika*. The leaves of the *ator* plant are not thick but are used as medicine for the treatment of wounds. The leaves are roasted and then the water content is extracted and mixed with copper rubbed off on a grindstone and the paste put on the wound. The wound then heals. This treatment is also applicable for eye problems (Sai 2002, 82).

***Twere Kôron***: To obtain the treatment: When a person is interested in buying the treatment for any sickness, he first arranges for some drinks secretly, without disclosing it to anybody. The protective emblem for *ikombo*, a sickness where a child's skull fontanelle remains divided into two, is triangular stones. This is done for *vande*, i.e. a sickness where the stomach is as cemented as a rock, or constipated like wooden planks. When the maternal relative who is the *akombo* master is through with the initiation process and is about to leave, money is given to him twenty-fold. Then you become initiated and are able to treat people affected by these diseases. You can also attend the initiation of another person and take your share (Sai 2002, 85).

***Swende***: Related to viewing violent scenes: If a person experiences a persistent cough, he knows the *swende* is affecting him. Sometimes it causes a pregnant woman to cough until she has a miscarriage. There are two kinds of *swende*: the dry and the wet. If somebody is killed with a cutlass or has a violent death and a woman walks over the blood, the *swende* will affect her. If a dog is killed in the presence of a woman, it affects her too. The wet *swende* is set right by means of a male goat and a cock. Its protective emblem is the fruit of an oil palm. In the dry *swende*, the symptom is a severe cough. Only a slave of the Utyusha clan can perform the rite, not a free man. To be fixed, a male goat and cock are presented for sacrifice (Sai 2002, 90-91).

***Swange***: Affecting the colour of the body and hair: This affects a person by making part of the skin white (vitiligo, in medical terms). The person also grows fat and has lots of curly hair. For its treatment, a male goat, camwood and a fowl are presented. Its emblems are the stalks or chaff of red guinea corn.

***Igbe***: For fixing loose stools: When a person is affected with *igbe*, he excretes blood with his stools or, if a person has a cut, lots of blood comes out. There are of two types: the senior *igbe* and the junior *igbe*. To fix the senior *igbe*, four fowls are required, while two chickens are used to fix the junior *igbe*. For its protective emblem, some knots are tied, at other times a small piece of a broken pot is used by those initiated into it. If you are not initiated into this and violate its protective emblem, it will affect you.

***Ikungu***: Epilepsy: This illness makes a person have a seizure or become epileptic. It happens suddenly and sometimes starts when the affected one is near a fire or in water such as a stream. When it affects a person in water and there is no one to assist him, the person drowns and dies. To put it right, only one chicken is needed. Its protective emblem is a strip of raffia tied around a piece of cotton wool (Sai 2002, 91).

***Dôôr***: Sexual impotence: This *akombo* renders a person impotent when he attempts sexual intercourse with a woman. For its treatment, a fowl is presented and the person's lumbar region is massaged, and he also gives a 'ten' before he becomes well.

***Lough***: Women's infertility: This *akombo* affects a woman's fertility. For its treatment, a pot and a shell is used and two fowls are killed, one in a pot and the other in

the shell. They are then cooked, some conjuration is made towards the woman who is then given the cooked meat. Men are also treated in this way. After this, a snail shell is put in the pot and it is kept under the bed where she sleeps with her husband.

***Ikôôr***: Cessation of menstruation: When *ikôôr* affects a woman, her menstrual periods stop or after she has had a number of children she cannot any more. If divination shows *ikôôr* is to blame, she goes to her first husband, or the man with whom she lost her virginity, and gets a chicken from him. She takes the chicken to an old woman. The old woman then takes a snail shell and hangs it around the neck of the woman, thus freeing her from *ikôôr*. She then takes the hen away with her. An old woman collects a number of shells as the protective emblems of *ikôôr*, threading them on a piece of string and using them for whatever she wishes to guard (Sai 2002, 91).

***Indieregh***: Miscarriage: This applies when a woman conceives but when the pregnancy is terminated by a miscarriage. If this occurs several times and when *indieregh* is the cause, a hen is purified for the cure. The woman's waist or lumbar region is also massaged, after which she becomes normal and bears children again.

***Atsenge***: Child's growth: *Atsenge* attacks children and prevents them from becoming strong; they remain weak and sickly, have pot bellies and their hair grows straight and soft on their heads. When this is discovered, the child is treated. Six moulded clay-sand figures are placed on a post on the back right-hand side of a room, along with pieces of broken native pots. That is all and the child is healed and develops well. This sounds like kwashiorkor. Kwashiorkor is an endemic, serious illness among children who lack dietary protein and have malnutrition.

***Ikombo***: Lack of growth and well-being in a child: When *ikombo* (see *atsenge* above) affects a child, it causes reddish skin, soft hair and a furrow, the fontanelle in the skull, does not close well. For its treatment, a house rat is taken and a stick is inserted into its anus, up through its mouth, and it is put out to dry. On the day of treatment, a cock is taken. Three triangular stones are set next to a road. Food is made of flour and the cock is killed and cooked. A piece of local pottery is put on the stones, and when it is hot the dried rat is put on it to dry out. Then the rat is smashed up and made into a paste with oil. The child is rubbed with this oily substance. The child becomes stronger.

***Agashi***: Syphilis: This illness affects a person's nose and he becomes disfigured. The person experiences dryness of the throat and constant coughing and chest pain or congestion and becomes weak to the point of death. If this is discovered, the person is treated. The symptoms are akin to the covid-19 pandemic. This goes a long way to show that the African traditional Medicine has the capacity and the know-how to treat and heal any pandemic that may arise. It only needs attention and mainstreaming with adequate funding for further research and development.

***Wayo***: The skin abscess: This *akombo* belongs to the Ugenyi people: the Tiv copied it from them. When one is affected by this, it produces sores with deep cuts on your cheeks or hips with constant pus. The person's chest can also be affected with small

sores producing pustules. If it erupts on a person's body, it is fixed up or treated by purification. After this comes the gladdening. The gladdening is like this: the person treating him gathers local leaves called *umanatumba* and *ityembegh* leaves. He ties the leaves together. The person to be treated brings two fowl. The healer kills one fowl and puts the blood on the medicinal leaves he collected. The medicine man then removes some feathers from the fowl and puts these onto the leaves. After this, the children are allowed to take the fowl to be butchered and cooked. Then the person is treated. Afterwards, a 'fee' is discussed. If the person treated wants to get the protective emblem and the power to treat others, he gives a measure of salt to the healer, who in turn initiates him into the *akombo* to become a healer using the *umanatumba* leaves (Sai 2002, 93-94).

**Megh:** Poison: When a person is affected by the *megh akombo* he falls and dislocates or fractures a bone while pursuing an animal in the bush. Or an old man, even in his own backyard, falls and fractures his bone. To fix this condition, a rope is made of spear grass with two strands. If you enter a person's meeting hut and see this rope, mind you, it is the protective emblem for the *megh*. It is treated by killing a fowl and a set fee is paid once or in five parts.

**Imbuwa:** Strengthening of bones: A person affected by *akombo imbuwa* has fragile or brittle bones which are accompanied by a tingly or burning sensation. If pains are experienced in the bones, a diviner is consulted to see if treatment is needed. The affected person goes to the person who can treat him and offers a finger-length size portion of tobacco. This tobacco is dropped on the ground and the healer picks it up and touches it to the body of the affected person. Then the healer applies medicine to him. The medicine for this illness is the scented leaves of a plant called *kunguraku* (Sai 2002, 94). This sickness is akin to rheumatism and one can see that the treatment is very simple and affordable.

### **Cosmological uses of Tsav and Akombo**

*Akombo* occupy an important position which is very central and plays crucial role in all aspects of Tiv person's life experience. They regulate the behaviour of the entire Tiv race through the offer of reward and punishment to those who are obedient to and offenders of *akombo* codes respectively in addition to ensuring peace, unity and enforcement of decisions for the well-being of the Tiv. Through correct propitiations and observance of the *akombo* code, protection and good health, fertility of land and women, provision of wealth to the people and stability of the Tiv society is guaranteed which in turn promotes long life and prosperity (Terhemba and Wayas 2020, 5).

The Tiv traditional worldview attributes much respect to *akombo*. This is demonstrated in the respect given to *akombo* functionaries at occasions and homes and the insistence of the observance of *akombo* laws by community leaders as a way to greatness. To the Tiv, no meaningful fit is achieved in life devoid of *akombo*. Therefore, all aspects of Tiv life are attached to one *kombo* or the other. There is



*kombo* of marriage, disease, hunt, protection and numerous other *akombo*. *Timbe mku* is one of the hunting *akombo* that provides not only game in hunting expeditions but also protect and guide a hunter back home. It generally gives good luck to initiates. Most of the Tiv practices can be found in many other African ethnic groups. It is safe to say that *Akombo* and *tsav* work together in Tiv religious thought. While *akombo* upon violation of the taboos make one vulnerable to calamities and give the appropriate retribution, the *mbatsav* in addition offer their own punishment for the committed offence (Downes 74). The power that *akombo* represent may be controlled by an initiate into such *kombo* (singular of *akombo*); and the authorities (*mbatsav*) of the tar by becoming initiates can release the good and hold back the destructive forces for the good of the society (261-262). This implies that the *mbatsav* (witches and wizards) stand a better chance to interfere with the forces of nature in addition to punishment melted by *akombo*. The *mbatsav* are not evil in themselves however, the awe and dread they inspire are considered evil. Though, it is believed by the Tiv that in situations where an *ormbatsav* is supercharged, he may turn against the patrilineage (*ityô*) and identify with *mbatsav* by bypassing the approved methods of the society to carry out anti-social and dangerous acts (Downes 31 cited in Terhemba and Wayas 2020, 4).

In Tiv ideology, the holistic nature of reality is of deeper illumination to therapeutics; causes of disease and the practice of medicine. The purpose of medicine is to cure disease. The medicinal importance of herbs and animal parts are well known to the practitioners of Tiv medicines. A sick man is interested in cure and the practitioner examines him/her, diagnoses and gives appropriate medicine. The Tiv have an understanding of nature, knowledge of how it works and they utilized this understanding and knowledge for the benefit of human beings through what is called *twer/kwaghsoron* (medicine). Apenda (2008, 32) maintained that the Tiv do not only have the knowledge of the various diseases but they also have numerous recipes for cure of such diseases. It is true that they do not have official published books with list of medicine preparations and directions for their use. Yet, it is known that many Tiv healers transmit orally their knowledge either to their children or apprentices.

Furthermore in his deposition, Nyityo submitted that in Tiv world-view diseases have supernatural or non supernatural etiological causes. Illnesses that are attributed to supernatural causes are those that have their origin in suprasensible forces, agents or acts that cannot be directly observed or have manifestation of causes. Such supernatural causes in the case of the Tiv as in many others are *tsav*, i.e. sorcery, witchcraft and spirit intrusions.

Sai also narrated that in Tiv land, a person is not just afflicted with sickness. Rather, affliction happens in an orderly manner. To afflict someone with an illness the person must be a blood relative and the affliction does not necessarily result in death since there are different types of affliction for different purposes. If a young man shows disrespect to an elderly man, the elder would inflict an ailment on the young man that would result in serious pain for a while before he recovers, and then

he will not disrespect an elder again. An elder may afflict a young man with a stomach-ache. Another afflicts a young man with headaches; another afflicts the eyes; still another causes a sore on the young man. The young man's kinsmen will come and arbitrate before the wound is healed; all of these are inflictions of punishment (Sai, 108).

Sai gives a graphic description of what has been of central significance to this work and it is culled:

The manner by which the *mbatsav* kill is quite different from the *mbatanev*, the day-time folk. *Mbatanev* refers to those who do things without recourse to witchcraft; but those that practice witchcraft are called *mbatsav*, those 'of night', or *mbaimev*, those of darkness. This is how they kill. When a person is offered and accepted, he is killed that very night, but is awakened back to life with *ikehegh* or *ishuragh*, those seeds with magical properties. He appears hale and hearty but they have programmed the person's death from a certain ailment, so that any day that he could fall sick and die. The people would say that this is just as if an old wound had been opened up. The *ikehegh* is the medicine that *mbatsav* apply to someone they kill to bring them back to life temporarily; they drop it into the person's nostrils and he awakens and seems to be healthy. And what is actually called *ikehegh* is the seed of a small tree in the forest. This small tree bears oval fruits the size of a finger, but shorter, and contains small seeds the size of guinea corn seeds, though guinea corn seeds are bigger. The seeds when chewed are *ayegh* [bitter].

The witches, when they kill the person, chew these seeds and pour them into the nostrils of the dead person and it awakens him. However not every witch or *or mbatsav*, can use these seeds to restore life temporarily to the one killed. There is someone else with that responsibility. So before anyone is killed, this person must be present. If he is not around and someone gets killed, the dead man is taken to the bush and one of the witches stands to guard him until this person is sought out and brought in to apply *ikehegh*. When he applies it, the dead person awakens and through their witchcraft it is predetermined what will kill him during the day. The cause of death of the victim is arranged ahead of time so that everyone will say that this is what killed him and the *mbatsav* will thus be absolved. This death comes in various forms and ways: it may be a snake bite, a predator like a lion, a leopard, an elephant or a wild deer or other beasts. The predator cannot kill on its own unless the *mbatsav* have arranged it. On their own, they are not capable of killing anyone. Even if a man is shot at point blank range and the bullet penetrates his heart, the person will not die unless *mbatsav* have prearranged for the person to die by gunshot. If a man climbs to the highest level above everything and slips and falls down to the ground, he will not die unless *mbatsav* have prearranged it to be so (Sai 2002, 109-110).

It bears repeating that this paper is not out to proclaim the works of *tsav* and *akombo* but to see how, whether benevolent (benign) or malevolent (malignant) ac-

tivities could be transformed into mainstream science and technology for the production of drugs and technology for healing and wellness and sustainable development.

If and when these treatments of diseases are mainstreamed, it will go a long way in enhancing the health and wellness of the people. For example, if the government improves on the *ikehegh* to be used in hospitals, especially in emergency wards, to prolong the lives of accident, gun shots victims or those in coma, it will go a long way to saving lives. Cases of people dying from heart failures, or lack of other medical facilities would be well served with this local medical discovery.

Some of the diseases outlined here and treated by these local medical sciences are very much alive and continue to torment. They are also recognized as endemic or pandemic by the science and bio-medical establishment even as some of them bear symptoms much like covid-19. Yet, simple treatment through the use of leaves, roots, animals, animals' blood and words (incantations) set the patients or victims free. Dismissing these treatments as crude, primitive and archaic would be a mistake.

### **Opportunities: Post Covid-19**

The opportunities for traditional medicine are there to reap. Barring the *intervention* of 'science,' traditional medicine should play a central role in mitigating the effects of Covid-19 now and in the days or years to come. The opportunities are summarized below:

- i. **Availability:** Traditional medicine is within the reach of everyone that needs it.
- ii. **Accessibility:** Because it is naturally and traditionally obtained, access to it is almost nearly guaranteed unlike imported drugs. Given that medicinal plants and herbs are readily available, in most cases than not, people have guaranteed access to this healthcare alternative.
- iii. **Affordability:** It is a given that traditional medicines are cheaper than the Big Pharma products. This way, people are bound to make healthcare choices that border on pricing index especially now that Covid-19 has crashed so many economies. By this, there will be a big market boon for traditional medicine.
- iv. **Compatibility:** This means that traditional medicine is naturally extracted and thus compatible with the people of the geographic area it is obtained. In addition, these natural extracts have no additional chemical, additives or flavours that have additional causal (side) effects to healthcare seekers.

### **Relevance, Efficacy Of *Tsav* And *Akombo* As Medical Alternative**

For the fact that the white man does not understand the operations of the African medical system and dismisses it as primitive and archaic does not mean the system is not relevant. It is left for the Africans to mainstream this system and make it work for them by appreciating it and putting pressure on African governments to

double redouble their efforts in making research fund available. This will go a long way in establishing confidence among these traditional medicine practitioners.

From the discussion so far in this paper, there cannot be any doubt that the world needs these methods to be transformed and mainstreamed for the reasons mentioned above. The African traditional medical system is valid, relevant and potent but just need a push for it to be elevated to the position of being accepted by the medical establishment. The discussion was very clear on the ailments or diseases that were cured by the use of *akombo* and *tsav*. Some of those diseases have the same symptoms like Covid-19. Others include kwashiorkor, dysentery (cholera), chicken pox, syphilis, among others that could reach the level of epidemic, even pandemic. Again, the *mbatsav* in Tiv land have potent treatment for snake bite. This could also be developed into useful anti-venom for all sorts of snakes.

The persistence of traditional healing, despite the availability of Western medicine, probably implies that it fulfils some need. Although there are probably advantages to unifying traditional and Western medicines, the two systems are best left to function independently. The efforts of health workers and planners should be directed at fostering mutual respect and facilitating patients' utilization of both systems.

The ultimate goal of African medical doctors, like that of their Western counterpart, is to heal the sick and restore the patient to normalcy. Both forms of medical knowledge and practice have their strengths and weaknesses, and neither should be regarded as inferior or superior to the other. The challenge is to explore how humans can gain a deeper understanding of other forms of medical knowledge and harness them for the progress of all.

### Conclusion

*Tsav* and *akombo* are still relevant and effective medical solutions to a plethora of diseases and even pandemics. There is nothing wrong with them and if or when mainstreamed, they will offer alternative medical solutions that are readily available and affordable. The ways of the Africans could be unintelligible to the West but they are not to be dismissed as unproven. Rather than try to emasculate them out of global medical praxis and spaces, they should be accepted and mainstreamed. Things like the *ikehegh* that the *mbatsav* use to bring life back to those who are in the throes of death could be developed further and used in emergency wards or even in war situations. If they are developed into injections or drips, it will go a long way in warding off death thereby giving the doctors ample time to treat the patients.

*Tsav* and *akombo* have to be accepted as benevolent. While the former has been blacklisted largely because the *mbatsav* are found to be malevolent people, it should be seen that such as those are the rogues who are misapplying *tsav* and turning it into a wicked venture. The same can be said of *akombo*. These two are not bad in themselves. They are not intrinsically evil. It is the application of the holders or practitioners that make them look like what they look. The conclusion here is that if and

when these two concepts are mainstreamed into the bio-medical establishment and developed into large quantities of drugs like injections, they will forever serve the world that consistently needs medical attention.

The paper calls on all Africans and national governments to embrace traditional medicine as a viable alternative that is available and affordable for the treatment of diseases and, even pandemics.

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