

‘DO YOU HEAR ME? IT IS ME, AKIGA’: *AKIGA’S STORY* AND AKIGA SAI’S *HISTORY*

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As yet there is no full biography of the Tiv writer Akiga Sai.¹ This essay does not aim to fill that gap but to show why it deserves to be filled by someone able to research in both Tiv and Hausa.

The dates of his birth and death suggest a perfect fit for Akiga Sai as a colonial-period subject. According to the recollection he recorded in his *History of the Tiv*, Akiga was thirteen years old when missionaries settled in his central Nigerian village in 1911. Rupert East, the first translator of Akiga’s celebrated work, tells us in an ‘Introduction’ to its second edition that his friend died in May 1959.² A life of sixty-one years that began in the year before the British revoked the Royal Niger Company’s charter in 1899, declaring Nigeria a Protectorate in 1900, ended in the year before Nigerian independence in October 1960: an almost exact match with the short, but formative, six decades for which Nigeria was a British colony.

Other than chronologically, Akiga was anything but a typical colonial subject. For the Nigerian political scientist Atah Pine, to whom my account owes much:

[h]is pioneering credentials in all the facets of human endeavours, particularly arrayed against the backdrop of being a Tiv and Tiv society are awe inspiring. Akiga Sai was the first Tiv man to be baptized as a Christian, the first Tiv man to read and write, the first Tiv man to write a letter, first Tiv parliamentarian, first Tiv newspaper editor, and first Tiv man to write a book. (Pine n.d. 3: 1)

The culminating item on this comprehensive list of Tiv firsts (tellingly, the ethnic term appears eight times in two sentences), Akiga Sai’s *History of the Tiv* (hereafter, simply *History*),³ took him twenty years to research and existed in a Tiv language version by 1935. It has since become known internationally in an edited translation under the title *Akiga’s Story: the Tiv tribe as seen by one of its members* (*Akiga’s Story* from now on).

Akiga’s Story was published by the International African Institute (IAI) in 1939 (with a revised reprint in 1965). It consisted of just under two-thirds of the *History*.⁴

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¹As Atah Pine has bemoaned from a Tiv perspective (n.d. 3: 3–4).

²The date 26 May 1959 is part of the inscription on Benjamin Akiga Sai’s headstone cross in Mkar (as is apparent in a photograph provided to me courtesy of Atah Pine).

³The title page of the Tiv typescript from which the new translation has been made is hand-designed in English capitals as *Akiga’s History of Tiv*, under which is written cursively *History of the Tiv by Akiga*, but whether by Akiga we do not know. Pine attributes to Akiga both a transliterated Tiv title, *Histeri u Tiv* (n.d. 1: 13; n.d. 2: 1) and an alternative title that he translates as ‘Tiv Culture’, *Ieren i Tiv* (n.d. 3: 1), which in a slightly different transcription is also the title of Akiga’s final chapter.

which Rupert East had supplemented with wide-ranging notes and contextualizing materials amounting to around half of the published content. *Akiga's Story* was a handsome volume, illustrated with twenty-four full-page photographic plates in glossy reproduction, including a frontispiece of the young author and endpapers featuring a beautifully drawn map of 'Tivland' by Rupert East and a collaborator.⁵ Its marginally less attractive 1965 reprint sold for 45 shillings, a considerable sum for a postgraduate student in the 1970s when I bought my copy. Thanks to the online resources made available through its Local Intellectuals initiative, the IAI is now able to make the full text of Akiga Sai's *History of the Tiv*, both in its Tiv typescript and in a new English translation, available to a wide readership as part of the journal subscription, and also in a Nigerian-published book edition, thus fulfilling an intention from the 1930s. It will be easier to return to the history of the text and its translations if we first explore how Akiga came to be able to achieve so many firsts. About this, Akiga is himself the source of most of our information.

AKIGA SAI IN HIS OWN WORDS

It was in May 1911, to return to those events, that the South African branch of the Sudan United Mission (SUM)⁶ established a station in eastern Tivland in the village of Sai Dekpe, a senior elder of a section of one of the largest Tiv patrilineages, called Shitire (or Shitile).⁷ Three years earlier, the place had been reconnoitred by the founder of the SUM, Dr Karl Kumm (Rubingh 1969: 93, consistent with Akiga's account). Sai's village sat handily alongside a trade route between two locally significant, non-Tiv towns: Wukari and Takum (East 1939/1965: 1). Sai was a smith and a prominent man in his local community, and on both of these accounts he was generally considered to be endowed with a measure of that power Tiv call *tsav*, a capacity to be effective and imposing, including by occult means. Akiga tells us that his father was around forty when the Europeans (*Buter*) first came to Tivland, which probably means – depending on which

⁴East states only half (1939/1965: 7) but Karin Barber and I calculate that his was an underestimate.

⁵Both images are available with the supplementary materials included with this article online at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0001972015000613>>. The map is credited to RE (Rupert East) and KR, almost most certainly K. (Kenneth) A. Robertson, who had been seconded to East's organization as one of two book illustrators in 1938 (Hayatu 1991: xii). The style of the map for *Akiga's Story* is similar to that of illustrations attributed to Robertson in books of Hausa stories by Abubakar Imam published by the Literature Bureau in 1939 (reprinted from 1954) under the title *Magana Jari Ce* ('Speech is Capital'). Also in 1938, Alhaji Abubakar Imam OBE, as he became later, had been appointed one of the editors of the newspaper *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*. Kenneth Robertson has the unusual distinction of being the subject of a sculpture now in the collection of the British Museum by the Yoruba artist and government school carving instructor Bamgbose (1890s–1978): <http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aoa/c/carving_of_a_european_official.aspx>.

⁶Succeeded after 1916 by the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk) Mission, or DRCM, when it was determined that the SUM would concentrate on evangelization among Hausa (Akiga Sai 2015: 275). For an account based largely on Casaleggio (1964), see Dzurgba (2014).

⁷The letters [r] and [l] are interchanged in different transcriptions of Tiv. I shall not continue to remark this.

Europeans Akiga had in mind – that he was born around or just after the middle of the nineteenth century, making him about fifty by the time he met the missionaries. In full, Sai's name, and the name his village took from him, was *saa i utu*, meaning that nothing could overwhelm him 'except the affair of the night', a reference to the work of the adepts of *tsav*, or *mbatsav* (Rubingh 1969: 92). Pine adds further details about Akiga Sai's parentage.⁸ His mother, Nanyi of the Ukum patriline, was Sai Dekpe's ninth wife; they had one older child together, Akiga's only full sibling, his sister Kasevdue (spelt Kasevevduwe in Akiga) (Pine n.d. 1: 5). Soon after Akiga's birth, Nanyi left her husband, and her young son remained behind to be brought up in his father's compound, as would have been normal in this patrilineal society. Following E. N. Casaleggio's history of the DRCM, *The Land Will Yield Its Fruits: fifty years in the Sudan* (1964), the Tiv historian Tesemchi Makar repeats without editorial comment how the mission branch founder, Mr Zimmerman, requested Sai to let him have one of his children to stay with him as houseboy.

Sai considered the matter wanting to get out of the predicament with the least possible loss to himself. To give a child of his to the missionary was as good as reckoning him as lost. His gaze lighted on the neglected Akiga. [...] One of his eyes was blind, and part of his foot was eaten away by ulcers, among all his children, Akiga was the least value to him. (Makar 1994: 188)

Pine attributes Akiga's missing toes to a snake bite. Whatever their origin, there is agreement that Akiga suffered from minor disabilities. Sai's attitude might seem hard-hearted but their relationship appears in a benign light in the account of his son, who describes himself as his father's favourite child (2015: 94). Sai emerges from Akiga's retelling of the events in his life as a savvy survivor, a man with an eye for the main chance. In a long passage I can quote only in part, Akiga recounts with relish a slaving adventure that Sai only just pulled off.

Sometimes, even in absence of issues over debts, the strongmen of a particular clan would – without any provocation – attack people of another clan who were travelling through their territory. [...] In fact, if then a person wanted to be initiated into the *biamegh* cult but had no money to finance the initiation, he might go and lie in ambush along a road that non-Tiv travellers also used. [...]

My father Sai was almost lynched by non-Tiv travellers for this kind of thing. [...] Since he did not know cotton spinning or the weaving of *tugudu* cloth, slave trading was his main business. It was Hausa travellers who suffered most in his hands. His other means of making money was through the blacksmith trade. He could make spears and sell them to a non-Tiv monarch, who would pay him with a slave. I witnessed this myself. One time he made a spear and delivered it to Garbushi,⁹ who was the Takum monarch, in exchange for a female slave named Nyandi. Even though I was still at a tender age, I remember this very well.

⁸Cited from the funeral programme of the last-born child of Akiga's first wife, *A Portrait of the Artist: Solomon Tor Sai Akiga 1943–2008*, no author specified (Pine n.d. 1: 8).

⁹We can date this story relatively narrowly, supposing that Garbushi is Chief (*Gara* in Chamba Leko) Boshi II (hence Gar-Boshi); he was recorded as reigning from 1896 to 1907 by Fremantle (1920: 39).

The story continues with Sai and his friend Gbaa almost coming to grief in their effort to restrain three Hausa men and a woman travelling with them.

They lay in ambush near the roadside by an *iyiase* tree, exactly where the Uke [Hausa] travellers used to make a stop-over to rest. As they lay hidden there for a while, four Uke travellers arrived. The travellers even had bows and arrows tied to their luggage. As my father emerged with Gbaa, his friend, he struck down one of the travellers [...] As Gbaa went to subdue another, the third traveller came and struck Gbaa on the head [...] my father was then left alone, wondering what would happen. By that time, he had already finished tying up one Uke traveller. So, he left him and was able to pursue and get the one who had struck Gbaa down. He also got the woman who was with the travellers. Only one traveller was able to escape.

[...] He gave Gbaa the very person Gbaa had first struck down, while he took two slaves for himself. My elder brothers grew up to see many of the slaves my father had. Suffice it to say that if we talked of men of valour of the old days [Akiga names some]. These were men of valour in [he names places] whose names the women exalted in singing lullabies for lulling their children to sleep. (Akiga Sai 2015: 213)

The mission convert is far from disowning the renown his father gained for his derring-do. Akiga was attributed strong *tsav* himself, or so he tells his readers in passages that speak of Tiv ambivalence towards possession of this power.¹⁰ Sai was in the habit of performing *akombo* (or cult) rites in the fields of his head wife, El of the Turan patriclan, to which Akiga and Akiga's half-brother Hirekaan accompanied him. Sai had acquired an iron box from the John Holt trading company and left it in Hirekaan's care. When he neglected to lock the box, Hirekaan sought to exonerate himself by accusing Akiga of unlocking it by *tsav*. Akiga continues the story (also in East 1939/1965: 243–4).

My father asked me how I knew that the box was not locked. I told him that the hasp was up on the outside. My father then called Hirekaan and asked him about this. When he was asked, Hirekaan proclaimed that he had locked the box securely and that I had used witchcraft to open it. Then my father loosened his belt and beat me thoroughly [...] saying Akiga is so full of witchcraft that he even opened the iron box with his witchcraft to see *imborivungu* [owl pipes] inside. [...] My father beat me that day and I sustained wounds in several places on my body. When I was able to break free, I ran away and hid. But since I was his favourite child, he searched for me and found me in the room of his eldest wife Adzande and he comforted me.

Next day, I became the centre of attraction and fabrications by all the villagers, calling me *tsav*. [...] they said if I grew older, I would surpass Hirekaan on *tsav*. When I became aware that a lot of people were awed [...] I became very pleased with myself. I indulged and told blatant lies about witchcraft and no one ever dared dispute me. So I was very happy about this. I postured as a great witch and people were in awe even though I was just a youngster. (Akiga Sai 2015: 94–5)

¹⁰Iyorwuese Hagher argues strongly for a clear-cut distinction between positive and negative powers in Tiv thought, but older sources (including Akiga) suggest to this reader that a contemporary opposition may be influenced by Christianity (Hagher 2014: 6ff.). Boyd and Fardon (2014) demonstrate an antiquity for the Bantu root form of *tsav* of several millennia, and a current distribution with different senses (including the Hausa for magic, *tsafi*).

By accompanying his father, Akiga witnessed the *akombo*, and in looking into the chest he saw the *imborivungu* or ‘owl pipes’, composite voice disguisers including human remains (or cast in brass) associated with the repair of the land but also with the night and *tsav* (Bohannan 1955: 146–9; Balfour 1948). Akiga adds further episodes that enhanced the reputation of his powers: one of the most striking involves him driving away black pigs (East 1939/1965: 244–5; Akiga Sai 2015: 95). As evidence of his close relationship with his father, Akiga tells us that he used to sleep in the hut of the wife whose turn it was to co-habit with him. So as not to annoy them:

I always went outside to urinate. As I was going out one night, I saw two black piglets; one ran to my right-hand side and one ran to the left. [...] When I went back inside the house, my father was awake so I told him that I had seen two black piglets and wondered who had left the piglets unattended for the hyenas to devour.

[...] my father asked me if they were all black or whether there was a white one among them. I answered that I perceived them all to be black, since it was night. In the morning, my father told this to Hirekaan. Hirekaan summoned me and asked what I had seen when I went out the previous night. I told him that I saw two black piglets. When I said this, Hirekaan became furious and shouted at me, saying I should stop lying and that if I did not tell him the truth he would beat me up. At first, I was not aware of what he wanted from me so I repeated what I said before. When I said it, he picked up a stick from the ground to beat me for not telling the truth. [...] I quickly thought it over. If I told the truth, Hirekaan would not be satisfied, so maybe he would be content with a lie. So I turned the whole thing into a *tsav* matter. I said I would tell him the truth – that what I saw that night were two owls that belonged to witches. They were covered by *mbaalishi* [indigo cloths], and when I came out they ran away. Hirekaan agreed with this and said that I had now told the truth! When people heard of this they spread stories of my fame in *tsav* witchcraft, saying that the witches launched an attack on Sai but Akiga went out and chased them and they ran away!

In recounting these and other episodes, Akiga is not *only* recording things of the past for future generations of Tiv who will otherwise not know about them, although he avows, and achieved, this intention; and he is not *just* translating the increasingly salient notion of Tiv custom to missionaries, colonialists and educators, although he is willingly involved in that project too; nor is he *primarily* pre-occupied with self-knowledge, although we can sense his awareness that he has fallen into curious and exceptional circumstances. Rather, his writing emanates from a specific early twentieth-century nexus of translational urgencies – between past and future generations, Christians and seekers after occult powers, Tiv and Europeans, his life story and that of his people, and so on – in which Akiga’s complex subjectivity has both been produced and is ensnared. Part of what he explores, and evidently finds satisfying, concerns the possibilities of translation, not just of words, but of ideas, values and reputation between these categories that increasingly, he finds, are penetrating one another. This should be unsurprising when we consider that Akiga had worked as a translator from Hausa to Tiv for the missionaries from the age of thirteen.

To follow the implications of reputation a little further, father and son both were attributed and cultivated – or at least winked in the direction of and did not strongly deny – a reputation for *tsav*. To a degree, Akiga’s renown was secured against that of his older paternal brother, Hirekaan, who is again an actor in the next family drama. Conflict between brothers, particularly those with different mothers, was anticipated

by Tiv because of competition for resources. This could have serious repercussions, as occurred when Akiga's full sister, and only full sibling, died during one of the periodic anti-witchcraft movements among Tiv (Akiga Sai 2015: 113).

When my sister, after whom I came next in age, died [...] people said that since she was a beautiful girl, my father had killed her and given her to his eldest son, Hirekaan, to skin, so that he might have the smartest appearance during night dances. When the *ijôv* [anti-witchcraft] movement came, I was interested in seeing whether or not Hirekaan would bring out the skin of my sister Kasevevduwe. When my cousin Ndeer had brewed the *ijôv*, I took up my position next to the man who was giving out the beer so that if Hirekaan brought out my sister's skin I would be able to see it. No one stood closer to him than I. The only things that Hirekaan displayed openly were our father's *imborivungu* and some women's medicine. Everyone saw those, me as well, I saw them clearly, but he never brought out a human skin. Yet when the people went back to their homes, they spoke openly of how Hirekaan of Sai had that day done a thing which was not good: he had brought out the skin of Kasevevduwe in a public place.

Allegations of witchcraft always mattered, but they mattered in new ways during the colonial period because witchcraft panics were acted upon by the British colonial authorities according to their best – and changing – understanding. In 1935, Akiga was writing in the aftermath of a particularly intensive pursuit of witches by the British and their African colonial officials (see Abraham 1933; Downes 1933; Bohannan 1958; Edwards 1983).¹¹ Witchcraft was only one strand in a knot of cultural and social features with which the British system of indirect rule was ill-equipped to cope. Tiv were more egalitarian than the Northern Nigerian societies, notably the Hausa Emirates, where indirect rule had 'worked' – from the colonial viewpoint – most effectively. What's more, this egalitarianism was increasingly, but inconsistently, becoming a satisfyingly distinctive element in Tiv self-conception and self-appreciation. Equality did not come from lack of contest. On the contrary, the power idiom of Tiv witch beliefs chimed well with a society based on competition between prominent men, and this competition particularly took the form of an accumulation of rights in people: slaves, as we have already seen, and marriageable women and the marriage wards who gave access to them through exchange (Fardon 1984). The new religious and political orders presented a systematic challenge to this Tiv complex of institutions, a challenge that came from the young, from others empowered by money, who sometimes included chiefs, and from Christianity, as much as it came from the colonial regime. If Akiga's account of the earliest years of colonial rule over Tiv relies heavily on the perspective of his older informants, notably his father, which makes it an important supplement and corrective to the contemporary British record, it is also written from his perspective as a relatively young man (in his late thirties) and as a member of the class that arose in

¹¹Skulls and *imborivungu* pipes made of human bone were particularly suspicious objects to this investigation (see East 1939: Plate XVI; 1965: Plate XIa (cropped) for a photograph by Reverend W. A. Malherbe of these objects). Confiscated *imborivungu* were donated by Downes to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford and by Abraham to the British Museum in London. The significance of relics of the dead among Tiv relates to their power rather than to any 'ancestor cult' (Edwards 1984). Akiga notes that the elders of his day mocked the missionaries' belief in an afterlife (2015: 277).

association with the not wholly consistent religious, educational, economic and political aims of the various parts of the colonial apparatus. In short, Akiga is a complex narrator, because he is a complexly meshed subject.

Akiga's subjectivity is highlighted by Gaurav Desai (2001) in his arresting discussion of a notorious case of witchcraft allegations. Desai contrasts the view of the colonial anthropologist Abraham, who proposes a mystical explanation for Tiv continuing to believe a body to be missing from the grave when other testimony declares that it was present and intact, with Akiga's pragmatic sense that Tiv used accusations of witchcraft tactically. To claim that a corpse has been removed from the grave is to direct an accusation against some specific other person of having colluded with witches to exhume it. From this reasoning, Desai deduces that Akiga has abandoned belief in *tsav* on converting to Christianity. But there are flaws in imputing a state of mind on such grounds. Anthropologists find that Christianity is not just compatible with belief in satanic powers, but may be experienced as a powerful protection against them, which, in a roundabout way, reinforces their reality. Recognizing the strategic character of a witchcraft accusation does not imply disbelief in witchcraft. To take a contemporary parallel, Nigerians are well aware that corruption charges are most commonly pressed against those who have lost political impunity; noticing this is not an argument that corruption is not widespread, it is an explanation of who gets away with it, and for how long. Simply by dint of noticing that Tiv use accusations of *tsav* instrumentally, and contrary to his explicit protestations to the contrary, Akiga is not committing himself practically and always to a world in which *tsav* does not exist.

TIV IDENTITY ON THE MARCH

By the later nineteenth century, Tiv expansion from the south-east may have been making substantial inroads into the valley of the Rivers Benue and Katsina for a couple of centuries. The earlier history is not agreed, but its details do not affect our story unduly (Bohannan 1954; Iyo 2002). The pre-existing powers of the Benue Valley, predominantly speakers of Jukun and Igala languages, had witnessed the peak of the Atlantic slave trade during the eighteenth century with its associated violence, followed by the dislocations of the Fulani-led jihads of the early nineteenth century (Kasfir 2011). These had involved not just occasional raids of devastating scale launched against particular settlements from Fulani strongholds, but a general deterioration of security that was conducive to other freebooters, who might occasionally ally with Fulani powers. The Chamba Leko-led raiding confederacies entering from the east (and settling in places such as Takum and Donga) fit this pattern, and so, in their different way, did the Tiv. Tiv farming communities were sufficiently strong, and apparently also elusive, in military terms to be able to occupy the lands of the people whom slave raiders had harried. Identification as Tiv may also have offered security to some of the remnant communities or uprooted individuals the times had produced. Whatever the combination of reasons, their overall effect is clear: the expansion of Tiv identity was rapid, and, by the end of the century, the Iharev clan and part of the Nôngov clan had crossed the River Benue to farm on its right, or northern, bank.

Aside from some early travellers' traversals on foot or up the Niger–Benue river system, the first instance of intensive contact that at least some of the Tiv outliers had with Europeans accompanied the expansion of Royal Niger Company trading posts in the late nineteenth century (Fremantle 1920: 4–16). These early encounters gained Tiv a reputation for recalcitrance among the Europeans. Within a year of the trading posts opening in 1885, all except the one at Abinsi had been closed on grounds of insecurity. Then, on the declaration of the Nigerian Protectorate, Tiv north of the River Benue disrupted the work of engineers erecting a telegraph line across their territory, in part apparently because they did not want incursions onto their farms, and in part because copper wire was a desirable commodity. This action led directly from January 1900 to the 'First Munshi Campaign' (*Munshi* being the derogatory Hausa term for Tiv), a substantial action led by thirty-eight officers, in addition to NCOs (non-commissioned officers), under the direction of Colonel Arthur Willoughby George Lowry Cole (Royal Welsh Fusiliers). Further engagements followed in April and May of the same year, and an 'unsettled district' was declared in 1904. Relations came to a head again when local Tiv took the Jukun side in a feud with Hausa merchants in 1906 and helped destroy the Royal Niger Company's remaining trading station at Abinsi. The 1906 'Munshi Expedition', under Colonel Julian Hasler with twenty-six officers, stalled when his troops were called into action elsewhere in the North to fight the 'Mahdist' uprising at Satiru, near Sokoto.

Shortly afterwards, British policy towards Tivland changed. In the year Lord Lugard was replaced as Governor of Northern Nigeria by Percy Girouard (Kirk-Greene 1984: 220–5), the Tiv came under the administration of a new Resident, the experienced Captain Upton FitzHerbert Ruxton (Akiga's 'Chafa Rokson'), who had been political officer to the first 'Munshi Expedition' and also served briefly in the Royal Niger Constabulary, and of his Assistant Resident, Captain Charles Forbes Gordon (Akiga's 'Chafa Godi'). David Dorward, historian of the Tiv under colonial rule, to whom this account is indebted generally, describes them both as 'gradualists' who were encouraged by the new Governor to pursue the peaceful expansion of British influence in Tivland between 1907 and 1910 (Dorward 1969; 1974). Episodes from one of Gordon's (Godi's) earliest tours (1905, apparently) as recounted by Akiga, reporting what he had heard from elders such as his father, give a vivid sense of eastern Tiv experience of British colonial adjudication, and of the establishment of Katsina Ala as an administrative hub.

Gordon has arrived at Katsina Ala and pitched his tent when a delegation of Etulo (an enclaved population speaking an Idomoid language) summon Ahungwaor (of the Kpav clan in Mbamo) to court because he has sold Tika into slavery. This is the first ever case in Shitire. It turns out that Tika, a Tiv on his father's side, had taken refuge with his mother's people (his *igba* in Tiv terms), from where he repeatedly stole boats from the Mbamo. Having arrested Ahungwaor, Gordon continues his tour and is confronted by the case of Boshi, a fellow clansman of Ahungwaor. It transpires that Ahungwaor had taken two men (including Tika) and two women, and had given one of the women to Boshi. But Boshi has transferred her to the local chief, also of Kpav. Gordon orders the release of the slaves and puts both Ahungwaor and Boshi into the chief's custody. So Gordon continues to another place where another woman complains of the seizure and sale of her child. Again, the child is released. And so it goes on until:

[w]hen they left Takum, they arrived at my father's compound at Sai, Mbaijir, of Shitire. [...] Then the Whiteman asked Sai to lead the way since he understood the Hausa language and was familiar with them [...]

They slept at Sai. The next morning, Sai took his white horse [...] and led Chafa Godi and the white soldier to Ukum [...] The Hausa that followed the Whiteman through Tivland from the beginning were Mamadu, Ali, and Malam Audu, who later became the chief of Katsina Ala. [...]

The Hausa's job was to go around with the Whiteman in Tivland and interpret from Hausa to Tiv for the people. They did not know how to speak the Tiv language very well. The person who knew the Tiv language and culture well was Audu, who is the chief in Makurdi today. But the person who was constantly with Chafa Godi was Mamadu. He was not very versatile in the Tiv language, but whatever they said, the Tiv tried to make some sense out of it. (Akiga Sai 2015: 243)

Colonial officers toured with a motley entourage, consisting notably of Hausa interpreters who acted as colonial intermediaries (see Ochonu 2008; 2014) and had to make judgements about complicated running struggles over rights in people. A little later, Akiga resumes his account of this episode:

When Sai led the Whiteman to Ukum, Chafa Godi told Sai that they would like to build a town in Katsina Ala, just as they had built Ibi. They wanted Katsina Ala to be a big city one day like Ibi. Sai said that the Hausa were used to staying in big cities, but the Tiv preferred to stay in their compounds, so how could Katsina Ala grow to become a big town? He replied that once a settlement started, the Tiv could settle, and the Hausa would settle, and so it would eventually become a big town.

[...] Ajang of Ashwe killed someone because of a woman and this was brought to the attention of Sai. Sai relayed the story to Mamadu, who then told Chafa Godi about the incident. There were two Whitemen there, but they had separate jobs. Chafa Godi was a judge and the Whiteman soldier [probably Lieutenant Stone of the West African Frontier Force] was the only one who could do battle. The white soldier was lanky and would usually just sit and watch the proceedings of cases without interfering. But when it came to battle issues, he was a ruthless man, and no Tiv man was his match. When the Whiteman heard about the killing by Ajang, he sent for Ajang. But Ajang refused to come, saying the Whiteman should come and kill him in his house.

A chase ensues after Ajang tries to shoot his way out of being ambushed and he is shot and his household sacked by the labourers and soldiers.

When they finished taking spoils, the Whiteman took a piece of cloth and wrapped it around the wound sustained by Ajang, and put him on a wooden bed and he was carried away by four young people led by Sai. [...] When they got to the outskirts of Zaki [from Hausa *sarki* or chief] Biam's residence, Ajang asked them to stop and requested water to drink, saying he was thirsty. When they gave him water, he drank and died. By the time they got to Zaki Biam, it was midday. The soldiers then sat around and the Whitemen rested and ate. In the evening they took a knife and chopped off Ajang's testicles and thing and then put it in a lovely white plate. They told Sai to inform Zaki Biam to take Ajang's body and bury it.

[...] they came to the banks of the river Katsina where there is a cut *yiase* tree [Latin: *Azelia africana*] near where the company store is located. The Whiteman invited all the people who were around this area [who] met with the Whiteman and discussed the building of his house at Katsina Ala.

[...] The Hausa made their huts and Tiv made huts for the soldiers. At daybreak, the bugle was played and the soldiers gathered and started practising shooting down the road leading to Wukari. After a few days, the trading Whitemen came and established a store at Katsina Ala. People could buy beniseed, iron, beads, and gunpowder and the Tiv were happy. The establishment of Katsina Ala was in 1905. (Akiga Sai 2015: 245)

Tours like these and others that Akiga describes, with their interlacing of casual violence, adjudication, trade, administration, competing Tiv interests and so on, which gave rise to colonial towns such as Katsina Ala, allowed Girouard to claim success for an approach that did not rely on punitive campaigns. Girouard was inclined to trust his residents and their staff on the appropriateness of local arrangements, and in Gordon, David Dorward argues, Ruxton received particularly able support.¹² Ruxton pressed for a more direct system of administration of Tiv. The colonial officers closest to the ground judged that indirect rule through neo-traditional chiefly offices (a model adapted from an Indian precedent and applied effectively, for reasons that were both ideological and practical, within the extensive Sokoto Caliphate and Bornu Empire) was difficult to implement with those peoples of central Nigeria who were not Muslims and lacked centralized structures of governance. The approximately half a million Tiv were the most populous of them, and, in many respects, they showed the most marked of departures from the kinds of organizations that lent themselves to a pragmatic synthesis of British colonial-administrative needs and Nigerian hereditary-elite interests. There were, of course, Tiv men who outshone their competitors to become men of prestige, and some of them claimed to be chiefs, but their pre-eminence was ambiguous in the eyes of their followers (since power implied *tsav*) and rarely lasted a lifetime, and they gave rise to dynasties even less often. The clear alternative, to rule directly through district officers, was rejected as too expensive. Some kind of compromise had to be found that was neither indirect rule achieved through local chiefs nor direct rule through expatriate colonial officials.

The upshot of this impasse was the introduction of what was called the *jiri* system: indirect rule through councils drawn from groups of residential compounds or *yaa*. This worked after a fashion, and some grounds for it could be found in local practice, but it was unable to bear the unprecedented demand for raising taxes, the extra burden of which caused it to break down between the years 1912 and 1916. Given the limited circulation of coin currency in Tivland, taxes had to be collected in kind and sold immediately to Hausa traders. According to Dorward (1969: 321), Governor Temple in particular judged the implementation of administrative control by the success of tax collection, and he reacted to the inefficiencies of the *jiri* system in this regard by introducing *sarki* or chiefs (in Hausa). This ran contrary to Ruxton's view that Tiv should be taxed only when the benefits of rule, such as the administration of justice, became apparent and not before. The upshot was a 'pseudo-Hausa' system of indirect rule.

Efforts at taxation intensified when Captain John Morton Fremantle (Akiga's 'Maimadubi' or 'Madubi') became Muri Resident in 1914. Madubi appears in a consistently poor light in Akiga's account.

¹²Dorward (1974: 461) finds Gordon's (1907) 'Notes on the Munshi tribe' the most insightful of early reports.

Madubi once treated my dad Sai in this way [making him climb a tree like a monkey]. This was when my dad and Peva were competing against each other as to which of them would be chief. Another humiliating punishment was getting offenders or wrongdoers to dig the ground with their mouths as pigs do, making them grunt the same as pigs do. (Akiga Sai 2015: 248)

Dorward epitomizes the years 1914–32, precisely the period when Akiga would have been researching and writing his book, in terms of moves towards orthodox indirect rule and their failure. The appointment of fifth-class native chiefs went along with the abolition of the *jiri* system. In 1917, in an attempt to control Tiv territorial expansion, Fremantle reversed Ruxton's policy and ordered the expulsion of Tiv from Wukari District, which was considered to be Jukun territory. Any Tiv returning there were to be placed under Jukun authority, a policy consistent with the views of Acting Lieutenant Governor of Northern Nigeria Richmond Palmer, who saw in the Jukun the faded remnant of a once great empire with a capacity for leadership that might potentially solve the colonial search for suitable indirect rulers.

By 1926, Richmond Palmer had placed all Tiv living east of the River Katsina under the administration of the Jukun capital of Wukari. On the basis of a 1921 visit to Ibi (on the River Benue), he had reached the conclusion that the colonial regime itself had been responsible for the degeneracy of the Jukun rule and empire (Avav and Myegba 1992: 5). This provided one half of a plan to place the entire Benue Valley under either the Igala Atta of Idah, in the west, or the Jukun Aku of Wukari, in the east. The Resident of Munshi Province, Gordon, had warned in 1907 against the unrest this would cause. Governor Sir Hugh Clifford was also against the scheme, so it was not until Clifford departed to take up the governorship of Ceylon in 1925 that Kabba and Benue Provinces were formed to implement Palmer's plan, which, according to Dorward, turned out to be the failure that had been anticipated and had to be reversed.

Only Abinsi District (west of the River Katsina and north of the River Benue) continued under Tiv heads uninterruptedly. Thanks to an expansion of income from the cultivation of beniseed as a cash crop (Dorward 1975) and from labouring on the building of the railway, and with the active encouragement of the DRCM, younger men in particular began to agitate for the abolition of exchange marriage and the introduction of dowry marriage as a modern alternative (Wegh 1998: 55–7). To gain a wife through an exchange marriage, the most prestigious form of marriage, Tiv men were forced to wait until they became entitled to a marriage ward to offer an exchange partner. But older men, and others who became important in the colonial administration, could choose to use these wards themselves, thereby delaying the age of marriage for younger men while obliging young women to become the polygynous wives of elders, contrary to their wishes in the matter. In 1927, a meeting of heads in Abinsi agreed to the replacement of marriage by exchange with marriage by payment as the only officially recognized form. A council of elders was set up, and Audu dan Afoda, a long-standing resident Yoruba and chief of Makurdi, was appointed its President. In 1929, Jato Aka (the District Head of Turan in south-east Tivland) was appointed to the same position in Katsina Ala. Increasingly, the colonial district officers came to rely on such heads. The turnover of colonial personnel was rapid, and during the 1920s officers on the ground grew increasingly distant from local knowledge. Dorward notes that only a few of them – Bargery, Cooling, East

and Phillips – sat Tiv examinations in that decade and, as the colonial officers became more distant, the heads behaved more autocratically, abusing the powers with which they were vested. These abuses were interpreted by their subjects in the idiom of *tsav*.

In November 1929, a complaint reached Captain Rupert Downes (Akiga's 'Chafa Don') from a man aggrieved because he had not been appointed to a district headship despite sacrificing a member of his family (whose skull and skin he showed). The Resident, E. S. Pembleton, ordered an enquiry and the seizure of *akombo* materials; this was the pretext for the predominantly Hausa local police, or *Dogari*, to unleash a reign of terror among the elders, sparking the *haakaa* witch-finding movement among Tiv youth. In 1930, investigations were undertaken by Captain R. C. Abraham, an anthropological officer in Northern Nigeria, and Captain R. M. Downes, the District Officer, each of whom wrote a book based on his experience and published by the government printers in 1933.¹³ Downes' explanation of the double-edged character of *tsav* was accompanied by a criticism of the 'younger generation ... especially when they have been alienated from their home influences' and suspect the elders of 'evil practices with the foulest of motives' (1933: 45).¹⁴ As Abraham articulated it, the aim of the Nigerian government was to 'disturb as little as possible the existing fabric of native institutions and to pave the way for their development along their own natural evolutionary lines', and the periodic witch scares should not have been an obstacle to this because investigations into the *mbatsav* had not proved a single case of cannibalistic killing or eating. If this indeed occurred 'sporadically', it would not pose a 'serious menace' (1933: 106).

The new image of the Tiv that emerged from these investigations emphasized their linguistic, hence cultural, relationship to the Bantu, and the fact that they lived in what Downes called a 'family State' with no 'natural organisation beyond that of the "kindred"' (1933: 24, 26). '[L]ike all the Bantu,' Abraham generalized, 'the Tiv is essentially a democrat' (1933: 2). Leadership or 'natural authorities' (Abraham 1933: 33) within family-based units had been eclipsed by the appointment of lesser men as tax collectors, which was an error on the part of the colonial authorities (a view with which East concurred). Downes' reform proposals of 1932 advocated three tiers of administration, from a Tiv central council, to a clan council of kindred heads, and a kindred council with an elected *Tor* (head or chief) meeting annually. In 1933, shortly before Akiga completed his text, Katsina Ala and Abinsi were merged into Tiv Division – largely aligning administrative and ethnic subjects – and the reforms went ahead. By 1936, however, the number of clans needing recognition had grown by half in three years (from thirty-six to fifty-seven) and clan councils had expanded to include more elders, making them unwieldy instruments of administration. The growth in power of spokesmen who could no longer be dismissed by the councils

¹³Abraham's book went into a revised second edition in 1940, for which he acknowledges the loan of Akiga's book manuscript by Rupert East. For a highly critical evaluation of the man and his work, see Harding (1992).

¹⁴Downes later recalled: 'Everywhere I went I began to get deputations of young men demanding that I should do something about the *mbatsav*. They said, "We die and we don't know who is killing us, soon we shall all be dead and the old men do nothing about it"' (1971: 11).

was accompanied by outbreaks of *hoyo* or witch-outings and beatings by youths. Periodically, this phenomenon came to the attention of the district officers, as it did in 1939, when the Wukari officer noted the outbreak of *Inyamibuan*, an anti-*tsav* movement that, among other measures, promoted extreme treatments to make corpses unpalatable to consumption by witches.¹⁵

By the later 1930s, Tiv modernizers were calling for a Tor Tiv, or Tiv paramount chief, in part because they missed out on the advantages of other neo-traditional positions. Orodi Ugba and Akiga Sai began to promote their candidacies in 1938 (Dorward 1974: 471). *Inyamibuan* has been interpreted as a reaction to the British blocking this discussion, and the modernizers' desire to hold existing Tiv authorities to account in the context of rapid, but often temporary, conversion to the Christianity of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM), as well as the perceived failure of the council system. The historian David Dorward portrays the movement as an attempt to establish an alternative administration (Dorward 1974: 471). D. F. H. McBride (the District Officer in Tiv Division) carried out investigations that suggested that the holding of a *swem*, or oath, pot conferred legitimacy at each clan level. Dorward suggests that this patriarchal structure was more likely to have been the form taken by the legitimation of the elders who became powerful after *Inyamibuan* by virtue of their control of *swem*. In 1942, Governor Bourdillon supported McBride's plans for reorganization, strongly opposed by Downes, to create a council of 'sept' (or major clan) patriarchs. But this also proved another ineffective initiative, and Sir Arthur Richards finally yielded to the desire for a Tor Tiv. In 1947, presumably to the disappointment of Akiga Sai, Makere Dzakpe was appointed Tor Tiv; he was an ex-sergeant major in the West Africa Frontier Force and a former chief of the Native Authority Police. The appointment reinforced the ethnic identity of the Tiv with respect to the predominantly Hausa North of Nigeria, providing that identity with a focal point from which a more hierarchical version of history could be added to the egalitarian legacy (Luga and Tortema c.1991). The following year a council of the Tor Tiv was established with eight councillors from the 'septs'. David Dorward concludes his account by noting that, while councils might have corresponded most closely to Tiv political culture, they struggled to be able to discharge the administrative functions demanded of them. When Laura and Paul Bohannan arrived in 1949 to commence the field research that was the basis of their celebrated accounts of Tiv patriliney, clans had been the contentious basis of British administration for at least two decades.

FINDING AKIGA'S STORY

With this background, let us return both to Akiga's story, where we left him aged thirteen, and to *Akiga's Story*, the book. Thanks to the efforts of Harold Bergsma, Martin Akiga and their team of Tiv translators, those of us unable to read Tiv finally have access to a complete English-language translation, of nearly

¹⁵On *Inyamibuan*, see Akiga Sai's report (2015 [1939]), apparently written for a mission magazine, and newly translated by William Burgess (available as part of the supplementary materials published online with this article at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0001972015000613>>), as well as Bohannan (1958).

190,000 words, of the typescript of the *History of the Tiv* that Bergsma saved from destruction in 1964 when he came across it in the Government Secondary School in Gboko in central Tivland (Bergsma, this issue).¹⁶ This Tiv text was the source for *Akiga's Story*, published by the Oxford University Press for the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (IIALC) in 1939. What is the relationship between the versions?

Since it reflects upon that process, Akiga Sai must have written his 'Introduction' to the typescript of the *History* after it had been typed up; consistent with this, the introduction is not numbered consecutively with the main text. Akiga tells us there that he completed his *History* in manuscript in 1935, the date that recurs alongside his contemporary observations: he acknowledges the encouragement of the DRCM missionaries, notably 'Ortese Uhe' (Reverend Dr William A. Malherbe, born 1888, who served in Tivland from 1915 until 1934). Akiga could not afford to have his completed manuscript typed, and the missionaries were unable to fund its publication either, but, realizing its value, they brought it to the attention of the colonial authorities who enlisted Rupert East, Superintendent of Education, who also spoke Tiv. The two men worked together on the manuscript both in Mkar (not far from Gboko), where East joined Akiga, and in Zaria, where Akiga stayed with East. East then returned to meet Akiga in Gboko and they toured Tivland together to interview those of Akiga's informants who were still alive.

The archived file relating to publication sheds more light on this process.¹⁷ East had brought the text to the attention of P. G. Harris, who wrote on behalf of the Acting Chief Commissioner in April 1935 from the Secretary's Office Northern Province Kaduna to A. B. Mathews, a colonial officer apparently on home leave, asking him to enquire into the possibility of a learned society being interested in publishing a bilingual edition. Given the date, it is unsurprising that Harris specifically mentions Akiga's material on witchcraft as likely to be insightful. Harris's letter proposes publication in Tiv with an English translation and necessary notes amounting to around 400 pages of text, an underestimate so substantial as to suggest that the scale of Akiga's work had not yet been appreciated. The Tiv typescript alone is 380 pages long. The minutes of the IAI Executive Council for 1936 and subsequently¹⁸ reveal that East had been the recipient of an IAI studentship to work in Berlin for two months with Diedrich Westermann¹⁹ on linguistics. East had intended to resume

¹⁶Another copy of the typescript at the Mkar DRCM station in 1952 was typed with help from a Tiv typist by Paul Bohannan. He wrote to East: 'The manuscript as it then existed, and still exists in my files, shows the impression of your hand as well as Akiga's, because the order was the same as that in which your translation was published with the added material in the interstices.' Bohannan added that he meant to make Xerox copies to deposit with the IAI and Northwestern University. I am grateful to Kevin B. Leonard, archivist at Northwestern, for confirmation that no copy was deposited there. Bohannan to East, 8 January 1964, IAI/M3392/1/11.

¹⁷The archives of the IIALC (from 1939 the International African Institute) are held at the London School of Economics. The archive box containing the publication file on *Akiga's Story* is IAI/M3392/1/11.

¹⁸The papers of the annual Executive Council meetings of the Institute are also archived at the LSE: IAI/1/20-24 for the years 1935-39.

¹⁹The German scholar Westermann had been appointed first Co-Director of the IIALC in 1926 with Maurice Delafosse. When the latter died shortly afterwards, he was succeeded by Henri Labouret in 1928. Until his death, Westermann's work in this role, and as co-editor of *Africa*,

this work, with a small further grant from the IAI, but had been unable to secure leave. Presumably on the basis of this prior acquaintanceship, and the fact that the IALC was one of Harris's suggested learned societies, East sent a proposal to Westermann to publish this 'honest attempt by an untrained African to write the story of his own tribe'. Westermann reported that he was able to recommend to the IALC Council publication of a book of around 300 pages in English translation with notes. The proposal chimed with his plan to inaugurate a series of African-authored texts.

In January 1936, the Institute offered £50 towards the cost of producing 'A history of the Tiv Tribe by Akiga', as the title was then envisaged, on the basis of additional funding from the government of Nigeria. Following a series of negotiations, it was agreed by May 1936 that the Commissioner for Northern Nigeria would provide another £150 towards publication. East expressed the hope that he would complete the work in a year. The length of the work exceeded initial estimates, however, and the cost eventually settled with Oxford University Press by late 1938, following various confusions over typographic design and font sizes, required additional funding of £81, secured by East from the Tiv Native Authority. Neither the publication file nor the council minutes reveal who made the decision to retitle the book *Akiga's Story*. The final title appears from early 1938 in the surviving documentation, but not to the exclusion of the old title. In later years, when issues arose over reproduction rights, East distinguished clearly between Akiga's *History of the Tiv* and his own *Akiga's Story*. The retitling was consistent with the prejudice that Akiga's work was not a history, nor was it an ethnography, but perhaps a 'story' or piece of literature, and it may be indicative that East used the term 'story' in his original publication proposal quoted above.

Westermann contributed a three and a half page 'Preface' (with the byline 'Berlin April 1939') that was to be contentious. This was not on account of what now seems its patronizing tone, but for claiming that East 'encouraged and guided the author throughout his work' (East 1939: viii), which provoked a response from Reverend Attie J. Brink,²⁰ by then Chairman of the DRCM in South Africa, about which Hanns Vischer, unable to contact Westermann after the outbreak of war, wrote to East on 21 November 1939. Brink averred that: 'The idea of the work ... was born in 1914 when Mrs Brink gave the author a note book and a pencil and encouraged him to write down all that he told her, and asked him to get out of the old men all he could while they were still alive. And she and others helped him through the years' (Brink to the Secretary of the IALC, 3 October 1939). East responded: 'He is quite right in saying that I had nothing to do with the draft of the original manuscript. This was shown to me in a rough form in 1935, and I worked with the author on it after that, chiefly from the point of view of English expression' (East to Vischer, 19 December 1939), which still leaves a degree of uncertainty about the relationship between the manuscript and typescript versions of Akiga's *History of the Tiv* that may be impossible to settle completely.

The first edition of *Akiga's Story* had a print run of 500 copies of which only 250 were ever bound: the other 250 quires were discarded, and later the printing blocks

was interrupted only during the war years. See his obituary by then Director of the IAI Daryll Forde (1956).

²⁰Reverend Attie J. Brink, born 1885, served in the DRCM in Tivland from 1912 until 1934.

were also destroyed (letter confirming permission to the printers from the IAI, 16 October 1956). In this light, the 1965 reprint of the book might seem surprising, but it followed a resurgence of interest, which East partly attributed to Margaret Mead referencing the work in her 1954 *Cultural Patterns and Technical Change*. Because the blocks had been destroyed, the main text of *Akiga's Story* had to be reprinted lithographically. New text was added at the beginning of the book (replacing Westermann's contentious 'Preface' with a two-page 'Foreword' by Daryll Forde as the IAI Director, and a two-page 'Preface' by East) and at its end (a bibliography of works on Tiv largely compiled by Paul Bohannan). East himself suggested suppression of the 'Preface' by his 'old friend' because, as he put it, 'The situation is not quite the same as when he wrote it' (East to Wolfe, Secretary of the IAI, 26 June 1964). The photographic plates posed a more difficult problem since the originals had all gone missing (East, 2 December 1964). Whereas each of the twenty-four illustrations had occupied a full-page plate, inserted at the relevant place in the text, in the 1965 reprint, with the exception of the frontispiece portrait of Akiga, the photographs were assembled into a single insert of twenty illustrations, all but four as half pages.²¹ While perfectly serviceable, a comparison of the original and the reprint reveals that text, and especially images, are less sharp in the latter, which is true also of the endpaper map.

How does East's editorial hand affect the way we have been able to 'hear' Akiga until now? The response has two halves to it: additive and subtractive. Given the use of distinct type sizes, what East added has always been evident from the pages of *Akiga's Story* where extended, sequential excerpts from Akiga are framed with introductory and explanatory notes, many of them helpful to a readership unfamiliar with Tiv culture: what *tsav* or *akombo* are as religious and ritual concepts; how exchange marriage involving wards, or *angól*, worked, and so on. This allows East to retain a few key terms that are difficult to translate exactly, including the three in the previous sentence. Doing so imparts an ethnographic, authorial voice of East's own to the book, signalled most obviously by Akiga becoming part of the book title rather than its author on the title page. It also bears remarking that the new translation demonstrates just how accurate was East's translation, which, of course, was achieved with Akiga's help. The major change in our appreciation comes from the other, negative half of the response: our being able to see what East left out and how he rearranged what was retained from the entirety of the Tiv typescript in its final order. Entire sequences were excised, but there is also more subtle remodelling to create some of East's chapters through rearrangements of larger and smaller chunks of text, as well as micro-tinkering, as in the suppression of many of the names of individual European colonial functionaries. The three largest sections excised consisted of historical materials, including accounts of: the migrations of the Tiv clans into their present territories;²² the coming of British traders and the ensuing colonial conquest; and the advent of the Dutch

²¹Three images were omitted: VII 'Hunters', facing p. 95; XIX 'Gbator, chief of Nõngov, with some of his wives', p. 314; and XX 'The smaller tree drum', p. 334. The reprint also neglects to attribute Plates III (II in the 1965 edition) and XVI (XIa in 1965) to the Reverend W. A. Malherbe, the rest having been taken by East expressly to illustrate the text.

²²Later translated and part-published with extensive annotation by Paul Bohannan, who acknowledges personal communication with Akiga in English and, unlike East, attributes authorship to Akiga Sai (1954).

Reformed Church and Roman Catholic missions in Tivland. The effect is to focus more closely on the ethnographic present of the ‘Tiv tribe’ than does Akiga, whose account is more extraverted in its insistence that the Tiv had copied almost all their culture from outsiders over the course of their history. As a result, *Akiga’s Story* resembles the published ethnographies of the Tiv that were roughly contemporary with Akiga’s manuscript more than does the *History*.

The new translation of the *History* is divided into eleven ‘chapters’ (*itiough*), which are convenient for comparison with East’s eight chapters. However, even without knowledge of Tiv, it is evident from inspection of the source typescript that the ‘chapter’ headings – other than the first two – are later additions by hand, presumably by East (which is why I place ‘chapter’ in quotation marks when it refers to the *History* and translates *itiough*). Of the two typewritten ‘chapter’ headings, only the second is titled. Otherwise, the typescript of Akiga’s manuscript consists of a single, 380-page thread divided into numerous sections, some with centred titles and some with headings justified to the left margin. Annotations such as ‘small capitals’, along with the addition of accents and the deletion of double vowels, suggest that this surviving typescript was a work in progress. We know that the initial plan for a complete Tiv edition foundered because of its length, which may have stranded this typescript in editorial limbo. Comparison of the two sets of chapters is informative only with this proviso.

East’s chapters

1. The origin of the Tiv tribe, and of some of the tribal customs
2. The homestead, the farm, and the bush
3. Marriage and tribal organization
4. *Akombo*
5. *Tsav*
6. The individual and the group
7. Diseases and their treatment
8. Chiefs and administration

Akiga’s *History* ‘chapters’

- MPASE* – Introduction
1. *TIV* – history of Tiv
 2. *YA* – customary practices (according to Bohannan and Bohannan [1953: 17] the term refers to the compound/village; see Bohannan [1955] for associations between land and culture generally)
 3. *AKOMBO A MAR* – *Akombo AKOMBO A IKÓR*
 4. *SWEM IKARAGBE*
 5. *KWAGH UN ANGE* – anti-*tsav* movements
 6. *MHEMBE U TIV SHA IBENDA* – Tiv migration from Ibenda
 7. *KWASE YAMEN* – marriage
 8. *KWAGH U UTOR AGBANDE* – the paramount chieftainship
 9. *NDUGH U BUTER* – coming of the European
 10. *AÓNDO FAN U TIV* – knowledge of *Aóndo* among the Tiv
 11. *AEREN A TIV* – Tiv culture

East’s Chapter 1, ‘The origin of the Tiv tribe, and of some of the tribal customs’, matches Akiga’s opening closely. Akiga relates the origin of the Tiv to their adoption of circumcision from their neighbours and he pursues the associations between bodily modifications – facial scarification, pierced ears, chiselled teeth, patterned cicatrizing on women’s stomachs – with Tiv historical differentiation

from other peoples, as well as with differences among Tiv, such as the fashion introduced by travellers for the lighter facial scarification of the 'nail men'. Narration of the migration and dispersal of the Tiv is linked to bodily modification so that marks made upon the body can be construed as the traces of history.

East's Chapter 2, entitled 'The homestead, the farm, and the bush', follows Akiga as he broadens the theme of making the body into the making of the home, with its leisure area, specialist locations such as the forge (for smiths), granary, and reception hut (for strangers). The chapter moves from places to the products of them: examining tools and foodstuffs – grain crops (including sorghum, adopted from the Chamba), lingering over the prize crop of the yam (adopted from their southern neighbours the 'Dam'), from which East cut an extensive listing of types, then varieties of sweet potato – before encompassing non-food vegetable products such as bark cloth, cotton cloth (from the Chamba) and camwood. A section on magical rites has been inserted (East 1939/1965: 90–2), and, finally, a section specifically on relations with the Ugenyi or Chamba.

It is in Chapter 3 that the first major break with Akiga's sequencing occurs when the sections on marriage are moved forward and together titled 'Marriage and tribal organization'. This makes sense in terms of the conventions of an ethnographic monograph (livelihood being followed by family organization), but it alters the thrust of Akiga's account, which next outlined religion. The abolition by the colonial administration of exchange marriage on 15 July 1927, and its replacement by a system of bride price, remained a lively issue for Tiv long after 1935. Akiga's succinct opening to this section lays out the logic fundamental to exchange marriage: wives who were acquired for sisters 'would procreate to replace the sisters who had been given out for marriage', and hence the names of these sisters would not 'be consigned to oblivion in the family circle' (Akiga Sai 2015: 167). Perhaps counterintuitively to a non-Tiv reader, exchange institutionalized the respect due to sisters in this patrilineal descent system. But exchange marriage was already in the past, so Akiga, and East following him, devote twice as much text to marriage by purchase and by capture. The legitimacy of marriage related to another fraught concern of the time: changing eligibility for chiefship, which had earlier been restricted to the children of exchange marriage. These interplays provoked an 'inundation' of cases and litigation that Akiga evokes through case histories that reveal the bias of witnesses. East removed from Akiga's account the names of the colonial officers involved in the summit with chiefs and council members that passed the legislative change (these names are restored and identified in the new translation: 'Mogan'/Morgan from Makurdi, 'Fishi'/Feasey from Abinsi, 'Saim'/Smith from Katsina Ala²³). Various factors account for the chiefs' acquiescence to the change: there was a convergence of interests between young men flush with cash from railway work and some of the cash-rich chiefs, who were strongly in favour of marriage by bride price; and the chiefs were anxious generally because one among them, Chief Ugba, had recently been deported to Kaduna by Feasey and they feared a similar fate. Akiga claimed that a ruse by Nigerian officials in the employment of the colonial authorities convinced those assembled that they were about to be deported to Kaduna in

²³The full listing of the names (Dorward 2015) is available with the supplementary materials included with this article online at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0001972015000613>>.

lorries recently arrived for the purpose. Nonetheless, any who had daughters complied reluctantly with the new ruling. East commented on the younger men and women being most satisfied with the change, and expressed a hope for the spread of Christianity ‘bringing with it a higher view of the status of women’ and thereby a more ‘satisfactory form of marriage’ (than by bride price, presumably). The district officers themselves considered that the step might have been too drastic (East 1939/1965: 168, note 2), and that it was responsible for driving a wedge into the crack in relations between generations, thereby contributing to the rising of the young against their elders in the *haakaa* movement only two years later (East 1939/1965: 169).

East’s Chapters 4 and 5, based on materials in ‘Chapters’ 3, 4 and 5 of Akiga’s *History*, deal with the more positive powers of cults (*akombo*), the oath pot (*swem*) and body protectors (*kuraiyol*) in Chapter 4, and in Chapter 5 with the predominantly negative power of witchcraft (*tsav*). There have been several excisions from Chapter 4, including a lengthy story about the origin of *akombo*, as well as references to the severity with which Downes sought out witches in 1929; sections on *kuraiyol*, or body protectors, are moved to the end of the chapter. Significantly, a section on the Tiv High God (*Aôndo*) is moved here from its position before Akiga’s penultimate ‘chapter’ on missionaries, which otherwise is dropped. The chapter on *tsav* is heavily editorialized by East, from his initial declaration about the ‘well-defined’ character of Tiv beliefs to a closing admission that the 1929 colonial anti-witchcraft campaign had been based on a misconception (East 1939/1965: 235, 289–95). Akiga begins his account with a statement that East tells us translates literally as ‘That which is not in Tiv, as *tsav*, is not’, or, more idiomatically, ‘nothing is more illusory in Tiv than *tsav*’ (East 1939/1965: 240). The succession of anti-witchcraft movements is well known to specialists thanks to Paul Bohannan’s classic description (Bohannan 1958). The latest, the *haakaa*, had been provoked by conflict over an inherited wife leading to accusations of ritual murder coming to the attention of the colonial authorities, particularly Downes as the Resident at Katsina Ala. It ended while Downes was on leave, when investigations into another alleged ritual murder, followed by an inquiry, concluded both that Tiv fears of witchcraft were largely illusory and that they had been exacerbated by the introduction of chiefships thought to require human sacrifice. The *mbatsav*, the inquiry concluded in a reversal of previous wisdom, traditionally were upholders of welfare (East 1939/1965: 292).

Much of the interest of the complete new translation for readers already familiar with *Akiga’s Story* will be found in its second half. The *History*’s ‘Chapter’ 6 on migrations, absent from East, was translated and heavily annotated in a version by Paul Bohannan that remains essential but does not present the integral text of the original. In addition, most of what became ‘Chapter’ 7 of the *History* was included in East’s Chapter 3 on marriage. As East explains, his Chapter 6, ‘The individual and the group’, was created largely from the materials placed in Akiga’s final ‘chapter’ (*Aeren a Tiv*), which was called ‘Tiv culture’ in Bergsma’s translation and ‘Tiv custom’ by East (1939/1965: 296). How much Akiga considered the final shape of his account we do not know, but the use of the titles *Ya*, or home, near the outset, and *Aeren*, or custom, at the end imparts a recursive sense to the grounds of ethnic identification, which is both the opening and final subject. This was obscured by the make-up of East’s Chapter 6, which selected from Akiga’s more extensive range of subjects those

particularly to do with life stages and rearranged them with a lifetime sequence in mind. Akiga's closing comments in his book about Tiv character, notably their worrying improvidence, are moved to the end of this chapter, which is followed by a brief chapter on 'Diseases and their treatment' that has been excised from Akiga's section on anti-*tsav* movements.

With Chapter 8, 'Chiefs and administration', East's account is made to culminate, unlike Akiga's own, with the contemporary issue of the role of Tiv chiefs. East's readers would have been in a weak position to contest his view that Akiga had not written the book of history he intended because *Akiga's Story* either reordered or omitted much of the material contained in the sections that make up 'Chapters' 8, 9 and 10 of the *History*, dealing successively with Tiv chiefs, European trade and administration, the idea of God and the coming of the missionaries. Before returning to Tiv custom, Akiga's history of modernization culminates in the missionaries' impact, particularly in education and healthcare.

Turning again from *Akiga's Story* to Akiga's story, what more can be added about the author? After his father gave him to the Zimmerman household, Akiga learned quickly to read and write in Tiv and began to develop into a mission worker himself. Rubingh records with exactness that, 'On January 21, 1912, Akiga declared Christ to be his personal savior' (1969: 92). He was the first Tiv to do so. Two years later, Atah Pine (n.d. 1: 7–8)²⁴ tells us that Akiga 'had scripted the first-ever Tiv letter by a Tiv man'.

Mo su we sha u chi u ka se kwagh Aôndo. Asuma ase do kpishi, u ungua de? De ka hunishima ga. Mo su we kpishi je do ga dom je. U ungua ve? Mo fa u ka mimi ayanga ayanga. U ngu ka se anyanga ja sa mo hen dido. U ungua do do? Ka mo Akiga

I greet you because you tell us good things of God. Our heart rejoice greatly. Do you hear? Do not let your heart grow weak. I greet you very much. It is good to me. Do you hear? I know you speak after day. You are telling us daily I learn thoroughly. Do you hear me? It is me, Akiga

In July 1914, Akiga was sent to the SUM's evangelist school in Wukari, where he completed the course to become the first Tiv evangelist (Dzurgba 2007: 70). Baptism followed on 30 December 1917 as one of four converts (Rubingh 1969: 92); the other three are identified by Atah Pine as Alam, Alam's wife Kime, and Akiga's brother Teiyor.²⁵ Teiyor trained as a mason with the mission and helped build the church in Mkar. He predeceased Akiga, who was buried alongside him in Mkar in accordance with the wish expressed in his will. A third grave there belongs to Akiga's first wife, Dina Yagana, described as a freed slave girl of Kanuri or Beri Beri extraction. She shared this status with Alam's wife Kime, who was in the group baptized with Akiga. Both girls came from Rumaisha, a 'Freed

²⁴Pine sources his quotation to Sefan Gyanggyang (ed.) *History of the NKST Church, 1911–2000*, Makurdi: Lamb and Words Books, p. 22; the version here follows the citation by Harold Bergsma (see Bergsma, this issue, p. 614).

²⁵Rubingh notes that a year later all four were found to be 'living sinful lives' and were 'put under discipline' (1969: 92). Akiga's marriage in 1918 might relate to this circumstance. His wife, Dina Yagana, was baptized in 1922 (Dzurgba 2014: 259–60).

Slaves Home' on the River Benue that was funded by the colonial government, but run by the SUM, in response to the large numbers of slaves on the move after the defeat of the Sokoto Caliphate (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993: 111–26). Akiga Sai and Dina Yagana married in 1918 when Akiga was around twenty years old, considerably younger than would have been typical in the recent past, particularly for less-favoured sons of successful men. Over the next twenty-five years, they produced four surviving daughters and five sons, who in turn produced a Tiv dynasty.²⁶ Later, Akiga would take three more wives, which contributed to his dismissal from the church.²⁷ Unlike his first wife, all were Tiv: Jato Akiga of Shangev-Ya clan, Zaiyol Akiga from Mbaikyobo of the Ukan clan, and Achivir Rachel Akiga of the Nanev. The last of these had two children with him.²⁸

The mission station did not remain long at Sai. Initially, the SUM was permitted to evangelize only to the east of Sai, but in 1912 they gained permission to work the larger area east of the River Katsina Ala (and so established themselves at Zaki Biam in 1913, and at Sevav in 1919, where there was a school for girls). In

²⁶Atah Pine's personal communication expands the information about Akiga Sai's family provided in his online article and enumerates the ninety-four grandchildren descended from his first wife: Aya Salome Mbatsahan Akiga (1919–2003) who had five children; David Iyortsume Akiga (1921–79) (a nurse, see footnote 28), twenty-seven children; Esther Anyor-Apine Akiga (1925–95), childless; Lydia Dooshima Emberga (1929–96), nine children; Jonathan Iyangetso Akiga (1931–64), seven children; David Kwaghfan Akiga (1933–85), twenty-three children; Ezekiel Aker Akiga (1937/38–95) (one of the first two Tiv graduating with a university degree in 1964, see footnote 28; Dzurgba 2007: 70–1), seven children; Catherine Erdoo Akiga (1940–2007), eight children; Solomon Tor Akiga (1943–2008), eight children. According to her headstone cross, Dina Yagana died on 26 May 1978. The two children of Akiga's last wife are still living: Jane Mbanan Akiga and Samuel Agee Akiga. They had three and two children respectively when Pine interviewed them in 2008 (Pine, 24 May 2015).

²⁷Heinz Jockers reports that: 'He was later dismissed by the Mission because, in spite of all the Christian teaching he had received, he was after all a Tivman. As the Mission put it: "Akiga was a leading Christian until the latter years of his life when prosperity and the Tiv's polygamous tradition caused him to backslide"' (Jockers 1992: 165, quoting Anon (1961) *The Coming of the Bible into Tivland*, Mkar: Sudan Interior Mission, p. 31). Akiga's 1939 account of *Inyamibuan* had a byline including his baptismal name and affiliation 'B. (Benjamin) Akiga DRCM Mkar', suggesting that expulsion from the church occurred during the last twenty years of his life (see Burgess's translation of Akiga Sai's 'The story of *Inyamibuan*', which is available with the supplementary materials included with this article online at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0001972015000613>>). See Wegh (1998: 94–100) for continuing Tiv ambivalence towards polygyny.

²⁸Atah Pine attributes his published information to a homage produced on the death of Solomon Akiga, the last-born of Akiga Sai's children with his first wife, and also the last of them to die, *Portrait of the Artist: Solomon Tor Sai Akiga 1943–2008. A burial programme of Late Mr. Solomon Akiga* (quoted in Pine n.d. 1: 7–8). A newspaper article on the death of a grandson of Akiga Sai, who had become a member of the Nigerian government under Obasanjo, suggests the likely interest of a fuller family history:

All those who knew Stephen Akiga before his death ten years ago knew him as a cultured man. There is a long family history to it. His great grandfather, Chief Saaiutu Deekpe pioneered the advent of Christianity to Tivland. He it was who in 1911 admitted South African Missionaries to his home from where they spread Christianity, leading to a situation where over 90% of Tiv population is Christian today. His grandfather Akiga Sai was the first Tiv man to be baptized a Christian and first Tiv man to be literate. His father, Daniel Akiga was a British trained nurse who traversed the Northern Region, offering medical services. His uncle Ishoribo Sai was the first Tivman to be ordained a Priest. Another uncle Ezekiel Akiga was the first Tiv man to earn a University degree. (Emmanuel Yawe, *Peoples Daily*, 26 October 2014, <<http://www.peoplesdailyng.com/ten-years-after-steven-ibn-akigas-murder/>>)

1923, permission was granted to extend their work west of the Katsina Ala, and Mkar was established (since 2005, the site of a private university under the auspices of the Nongu u Kristu u Sudan hen Tiv or NKST, the successor to the SUM and DRCM). By 1926, the mission decided, among other things, that Sai was altogether too far to the east in Tivland and efforts there had been 'very fruitless', so it was closed and, to save money, its personnel and materials transferred (Rubingh 1969: 122; Dzurgba 2007: 78). The South African missionaries had a 'strong aversion' to teaching the Tiv in English or Hausa, which might be interpreted as not just cultural paternalism but incipient apart-hood. The decision to switch the medium of evangelization and instruction to Tiv was taken by 1912 (Akiga Sai 2015: 272–5). Corporal punishment was administered by the missionaries to schoolchildren who tried to speak English, wear shoes or ride a bicycle (Rubingh 1969: 100–1). This background makes Akiga's writing his history in Tiv awkward to interpret only in terms of cultural nationalism or authenticity. The DRCM was to experience keen competition from the establishment of Roman Catholic missions with a more welcoming attitude towards the consequences of modernization.

East recalled in 1965 that, in the two decades after their book was first published in 1939, Akiga had first become the editor of a monthly Tiv language news sheet (*Mwanger u Tiv*) for the Gaskiya Corporation, a publishing venture East himself played a major role in establishing (Furniss 2011). He then spent five years from 1951 as a member of the Northern House of Assembly (which had been created by the 1946 Richards Constitution; Tseyayo 1975: 193–8), as well as working with the Tiv Native Authority in the fields of literature and adult education (Akiga Sai 1954: 295, note 1). As a representative for Ukum-Shitile constituency, Akiga joined the Sardauna of Sokoto's Northern People's Congress (NPC), the predominantly Hausa and Muslim party of the North. He was one of the delegates sent to the London constitutional conference in 1953 (Dzurgba 2007: 70; Sklar 2004: 132–5). Although a much younger man, his political contemporary was Joseph Tarka, the populist leader of the United Middle Belt Congress, which mobilized with the Action Group against Northern hegemony (and its NPC supporters, who were portrayed as reactionary), and it is Tarka rather than Akiga who is remembered among the first post-independence generation of Tiv politicians (Makar 1994).

Akiga's life transpires to have been that of a man more deeply immersed in current affairs than his own effacing 'Introduction', or East's first-edition editorial commentary, had foreseen. Akiga had presented himself as a historian keen to pass on knowledge of the 'forefathers' to generations of Tiv to come, but his text culminates with a rallying call to his Tiv brothers in the new generation to take pride in their past as a source of strength, a timely call as the salience of ethnicity was becoming increasingly apparent within the modernizing, colonial Nigerian state.

As well as a revelation in itself, the full translation of Akiga Sai's *History of the Tiv* allows us to see Rupert East's hand as editor and translator more clearly. For all that he was committed to African writing, which he spent much of his life promoting, and was fluent in some African languages, the culturally conservative frame East puts around Akiga's picture has dated, notably his rigid genre

expectations. Akiga, he asserts, set out to write a 'History of the Tiv' but had not succeeded because 'the Tiv, like most African tribes, have no history in our sense of the term'. Akiga's effort failed to meet the threshold for anthropology either: 'Anthropology has already grown up, and is preparing to enter the age grade of the exact sciences.' The book should be 'judged [not] as an anthropological treatise, but as a contribution to the newly born African literature' (East 1939/1965: 6).²⁹ Given East's promotion of African literature, this was not faint praise, but it does not align with Akiga's ambition for a work that brought together all the genres of written expression familiar to him to bear on the burning issues of his day. So we find oral histories, biography, ethnographic description, imagined exemplary episodes and conversations, annotated lists, and eyewitness accounts, mashed up together to record what mattered to Akiga's contemporaries. On the evidence of his book, during the mid-1930s these issues did not revolve around resistance to colonialism as such. Conquest had been ruthless, as Akiga documented, but life had been hard before then too, as Akiga also demonstrated, on occasion with relish as when recounting his father's slaving exploits. Both the precolonial period and the colonial conquest are treated as history. Akiga's main focus is on the controversies of his own time: the abolition of exchange marriage in 1927 and the reasons polygyny was so attractive to Tiv; the excesses of chiefs and of other African colonial personnel (both Tiv and others such as Hausa), and the degree to which British officials were or were not aware of this, and were or were not willing to do anything about it; the periodic attempts by both Tiv and British officials to detect and deal with the use of occult powers or *tsav*; the changes in livelihood that were occurring in farming and labouring; the impact of the missionaries and the particular admiration of the Tiv for the practical abilities they demonstrated in relation, for instance, to medical care. For all that East was a sympathetic collaborator, who expended immense efforts in translating and interpreting Akiga's text predominantly with a non-Tiv readership in mind, *Akiga's Story: the Tiv tribe as seen by one of its members* is not *A History of the Tiv People* by Akiga Sai. Contemporary readers are unlikely to concur with East's attempt to look into the future.

It was for his own people that he wrote, but to the modern generation, more sophisticated than their fathers, the old lore and tradition may already appear outmoded. Indeed, Akiga's declared object was to record this for posterity before it was too late. The events too that he described, which seemed so important at the time and gave rise to such violent emotions, are probably long forgotten. But the book will be valued not so much for its brave appeal, but for the sympathetic and vivid image he draws of the life and character of his own people. (East 1965: viii)

East's future gazing has not turned out to be accurate. Akiga was encouraged by his missionary and colonial circles to interpret his task in terms of a translation of wisdom between tradition and modernity. Occasionally he echoes these ambitions,

²⁹Perhaps not independently, Paul Bohannon echoes this view when editing Akiga's chapter on Tiv clan migrations: 'No anthropologist, working against time as all of us must, could have collected all these data; no modern anthropologist would have dared to slash and select his material in such a way in order to make a unified story. Akiga, writing literature for Tiv, not ethnography for Europeans, had only logic and consistency to consider' (Akiga Sai 1954: 295).

and his younger self had acted as an interpreter to the missionaries. But what he wrote was a much more complex mixture of autobiographical engagement, family history, oral tradition, eyewitness accounts, contemporary contentions, and much else. The events described continue to resonate in a Nigeria that has been independent for more than half the century since its unification in 1914, and where what is understood to be 'traditional' – whether in land rights or cultural prerogatives or chiefship – plays an important part now. For reasons I have tried to suggest, Akiga's *History* transpires to feel more contemporary than East's and Bohannan's edited translations of it. Akiga's well-intentioned translators altered the overall balance of his many-genred text in ways that restricted its purpose, making it into an ethnography from the 'native point of view' rather than a multi-form history written by a contemporary actor engaged in that history. From the viewpoint of the present, the second kind of text seems the more interesting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Primarily, this essay is indebted to Harold Bergsma, Martin Akiga and their team of translators. I have collaborated closely with David Dorward, who has shared his knowledge of Anglo-Tiv colonial history with great generosity both with me and with other readers of the supplementary online resources, and with Karin Barber, as editor of the Local Intellectuals series of *Africa*. Graham Furniss and Murray Last were generous with insights into the Translation Bureau, Literature Bureau and Gaskiya Corporation during East's time. Paul Gifford was again a touchstone of advice on African Christianity. Anna Towlson, Archives and Special Collections Manager at LSE, arranged my access to the relevant files in the IAI archive housed there. Particularly warm thanks are due to Atah Pine of Benue State University for allowing me to share some of the findings from his own researches into Akiga Sai's family with readers.

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ABSTRACT

The publication of a new translation of Akiga Sai's *History of the Tiv* invites reappraisal of Akiga himself as a local intellectual. This essay presents a biographical account of this early Tiv convert to Christianity, locating his celebrated *History* in its social, cultural, ethnic and historical contexts, and presents a provisional narrative of his career subsequent to the publication of *Akiga's Story*, the version of the *History* edited by Rupert East. As such, it is intended as an invitation to a full biography. The essay reconstructs, insofar as sources permit, the complex relationship between Akiga, East, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission and the International African Institute that led to the publication of *Akiga's Story* in the form known until now, comparing that version with the complete translation. Akiga's *History* emerges from this re-examination as a compellingly contemporary narrative engaged with the lived experience of ethnic identification under colonial rule.

RÉSUMÉ

La publication d'une nouvelle traduction de l'ouvrage *History of the Tiv* d'Akiga Sai invite à repenser Akiga lui-même comme un intellectuel local. Cet essai présente un exposé biographique de l'un des premiers Tiv à s'être convertis au christianisme, situant son célèbre ouvrage *History* dans son contexte social, culturel, ethnique et historique, et offre un récit provisoire de sa carrière à la suite de la publication d'*Akiga's Story*, la version de *History* éditée par Rupert East. En tant que tel, il se veut être une invitation à une biographie complète. L'essai reconstruit, autant que le permettent les sources, la relation complexe entre Akiga, East, la Dutch Reformed Church Mission et l'Institut africain international qui a conduit à la publication d'*Akiga's Story* sous la forme qu'on lui connaissait jusqu'à présent, en comparant cette version avec la traduction complète. Ce réexamen fait apparaître *History* d'Akiga comme un récit remarquablement contemporain traitant de l'expérience vécue de l'identification ethnique sous le régime colonial.